

New Funding Model for ELC and SAC
Expert Group Meeting
Tuesday 23 September 2020
Skype for Business
Minutes

Participants

Michael Scanlan (Chair)
Tove Mogstad Slinde
Eva Lloyd
Edward Melhuish
Tim Callan
Rory O'Donnell
Niamh Callaghan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)
Bernie McNally (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Anne-Marie Brooks (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Gillian Martin (Secretariat, Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Laura Brady (Secretariat, Department of Children and Youth Affairs)

Also in attendance (for relevant parts of day)

Martin Quigley (Director of Data and Analytics, Pobal)
Toby Wolfe (Principal Officer, Early Years Quality Unit, Department of Children and Youth Affairs)

Apologies

Philip Crosby (Department of Education and Skills)

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Expert Group to the meeting and noted the apologies as indicated above.

Minutes from last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd September were adopted. It was agreed that the minutes and agenda would be published.

Topical Issues

Gillian Martin provided an overview of recent developments in the DCYA, drawing particular attention to the establishment of an Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) to review the operating model for ELC and SAC, COVID-19 supports for ELC and SAC services and uptake of supports, data on permanent closures and new services, and pre-Budget submissions which feature proposals for ELC and SAC. Updates on the IDG will be communicated to the Expert Group as the project progresses.

Testing and evaluating options to address affordability in the Irish context

Michael Scanlan gave a presentation on affordability, outlining various options for the Group to consider to address affordability of ELC and SAC.

It was agreed that options to address affordability would be explored further at October's meeting. In addition, the Group would give further consideration to the potential for the report of the independent review of costs to inform this element of the project.

Stakeholder Engagement and consultation update

Anne-Marie Brooks provided an overview of Phase 1 of the consultation and engagement plan. This included initial findings from the parents' survey conducted by IPSOS/MRBI, and the joint call for submissions on the Funding Model and Workforce Development Plan. There was a discussion of the introductory webinar hosted by DCYA on 22 September and the planned focused discussions with providers, practitioners, and parents, commencing in October. Anne-Marie Brooks presented the seven themes identified for specific sessions in the focussed discussions with providers and practitioners and agreed to circulate the schedule to the Expert Group shortly. Members agreed to revert if they had any further observations on the seven themes.

Presentation and discussion on Childminding Action Plan

Toby Wolfe gave a presentation on the Childminding Action Plan. This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Expert Group noted the importance of the sequencing of the actions contained within the Childminding Action Plan and the possible impact of the Childminding Action Plan on the wider ELC and SAC funding landscape.

Testing and evaluating approaches to identifying children or settings in need of additional support in the Irish context

Martin Quigley gave a presentation on potential data-driven approaches to identifying children and settings in need of additional support, having regard to existing data holdings.

The Expert Group discussed the topic broadly and in particular noted research from the UK that found that services which offer provision to a mix of children from advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds lead to better outcomes for children in need of additional support.

Anne-Marie Brooks noted that a data-driven approach may not capture all children in need of additional support and suggested that a supplementary application approach could also be used. Anne-Marie also suggested that the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) could be expanded to include other cohorts of children and/or other additional needs.

Anne-Marie Brooks agreed to work with Pobal to explore options further and draft a proposal for next steps to present to the Expert Group at October's meeting. The follow up research paper on the allocation model will inform further work on the identification model. Engagement with subject experts would also be necessary to devise data-driven options for testing.

AOB/Close

The next meeting of the Expert Group will take place on 28th October. The secretariat will be in contact about the potential of holding shorter meetings over consecutive days.

ENDS