

# Wexford County Childcare Committee

## Annual Report 2013



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## WxCCC's Annual Report 2013.

### Section 1 – Introduction

Looking back, 2013 was yet another busy but rewarding year. During this time WxCCC continued to consolidate its role as a critical support to childcare providers, childminders and parents, in addition to making significant progress in almost all of its Core Objectives.

The five core objectives of the National Strategic Plan (NSP) (2011 – 2013,) and the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, formed the basis of WxCCC's work during 2013, again leading to a focus in the main to supporting the administration and implementation of the three national programmes, namely: ECCE, CCS and CETS. This support work linked with Objectives 1 and 3 of the National Strategic Plan (2011 – 2013), and two of the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, namely:

#### NSP (2011-2013)

*Objective 1: To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure.*

*Objective 3: To develop comprehensive ECCE supports, infrastructure and services where the holistic well-being of children and families are fundamental.*

#### Key priorities (2013)

*Supporting the delivery of the three national programmes (ECCE, CCS, CETS).*

*Supporting childcare providers.*

During 2013, issues of sustainability continued to create an intense need for one-to-one contact/mentoring/support. As stated in previous reports WxCCC has learned in the past that outsourcing consultancy/mentoring for such one-to-one support has not always proved the best solution in terms of finance and process and so it continued to use the capacity and expertise within its own team, to provide one-to-one support. However, where the mentoring required was outside WxCCC's expertise, services were afforded the opportunity to avail of a free or subsidised mentoring session from a business consultant. The level of mentoring provided would not have been possible without the financial support from Wexford CEB.

Further focused support on financial sustainability was provided by WxCCC to services identified through case management meetings with Pobal. This type of collaborative support contributes to

protecting state investment in the sector and so supports the implementation of Objective 5 and Objective 3 of the National Strategic Plan (2011-2013) and two of the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, namely:

### **NSP (2011-2013)**

Objective 3: *To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure.*

Objective 5: *To ensure effective and transparent collaboration, communication and consultation and optimum use of resources by all stakeholders in early childhood care and education.*

### **Key priorities (2013)**

*Supporting sustainability throughout the sector.*

*Supporting childcare providers.*

In addition to issues of sustainability, increasing governance demands placed on voluntary groups means that many community childcare committees find themselves challenged in terms of onerous financial and HR requirements. In response to this, WxCCC prioritised the delivery of a governance workshop facilitated by a Business Consultant, with 16 participants attending representing 25% of community childcare services. Again this type of support links with Objective 3 of the National Strategic Plan (2011-2013) and one of the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, namely:

### **NSP (2011-2013)**

Objective 3: *To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure.*

### **Key priorities (2013)**

*Supporting sustainability throughout the sector.*

The success to date, of the type of support outlined above is evidenced by the high level of participation in all three programmes, namely: 96% of childcare services currently operating in the county are participating in the ECCE Programme, 68% of community childcare services are participating in the CCS Programme and 41% of childcare services are participating in the CETS Programme.

Prioritisation of a number of other actions during 2013 was also influenced by other policy developments and strategies such as: *Siolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education*. *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *The National Strategy to Improve*

*Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020).*

In support of quality, WxCCC continued to prioritise informal engagement with Siolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, through the provision of four workshops. Childcare provider's willingness and enthusiasm to engage with Siolta albeit on an informal basis is evidenced by the high attendance rate at each of the workshops, (110 childcare providers attended Siolta training). In addition to delivering the Siolta and Aistear workshops, WxCCC also initiated a Siolta pilot project. The three services involved in the pilot programme and the staff of WxCCC attended one initial cluster group meeting. On-going support from the staff of WxCCC included telephone, email and on-site support. In December, individual clinics were also arranged for each of the three services, which the services found extremely valuable. These clinics were facilitated by an experienced tutor who also participated in the formal National Siolta Pilot Project, (EYEPU). The work with Siolta and Aistear contributed to achieving the outcomes of Objective 2 and of the National Strategic Plan (2011-2013), and two of the key priorities for 2013, as defined by the DCYA:

#### **NSP (2011-2013)**

Objective 2: *To enhance quality early childhood care and education and school-age provision.*

#### **Key priorities (2013)**

*Siolta – the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education.*

*Aistear – the early Childhood Curriculum Framework.*

WxCCC worked closely with the PSOI, in identifying a small number of services that required pre-quality support, before Siolta and/or Aistear became a priority. This collaborative action contributed to achieving the outcomes of Objective 2 and of the National Strategic Plan (2011-2013), and one of the key priorities for 2013, as defined by the DCYA:

#### **Key priorities (2013)**

*Pre-quality supports.*

#### **NSP (2011-2013)**

Objective 2: *To enhance quality early childhood care and education and school-age provision.*

In support of *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020)*, WxCCC in partnership with County Wexford VEC delivered a FETAC Level 6 Module in Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy, for which, it received 60 applications for 18 places. WxCCC is hopeful that this successful action will lead to further

collaborative actions with County Wexford VEC. In addition WxCCC also collaborated with Wexford Library Services in the delivery of a number of Read2read workshops.

These collaborative actions link with Objective 4 of the National Strategic Plan (2011 – 2013), and two of the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, namely:

### **NSP (2011-2013)**

*Objective 4: through ongoing professional development, to build on the capacity of the ECCE sector to enhance and develop quality ECCE services for children and their families.*

### **Key priorities (2013)**

*Supporting the implementation of the National Strategy to improve Literacy and Numeracy.*

*Workshops supporting Literacy & Numeracy.*

From a local perspective, communicating and collaborating with childcare providers continues to be prioritised and further enhanced through the provision of additional information via text, email, ezine, website and Twitter. A formal slot on the Boards monthly agenda for Childcare Provider and Parent representatives continues to afford the representatives an opportunity to bring the issues of providers and parents on the ground to the attention of the Board and staff members, ensuring that the Board continues to be proactive in addressing and prioritising local childcare needs.

Members of the childcare sector itself and best outcomes for children also continued to be an influencing factor at the core of WxCCC's work during 2013. As a result, WxCCC prioritised the distribution of its resources and only delivered focused and worthwhile training, bearing in mind, the need for such activities and the demands currently being placed on providers.

WxCCC participated in the national Child Protection collaborative action In order to support the effective implementation of 'Children First' within the Early Years Sector. This involved two staff members being trained to deliver the new accredited Children First training entitled 'Child protection and Welfare: Basic Level'. As a result WxCCC plans to deliver a number of child protection courses in 2014.

This collaborative action links with Objective 1 of the National Strategic Plan (2011 – 2013), and two of the key priority areas as defined by the DCYA, namely:

### **NSP (2011-2013)**

*Objective 1: To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure.*

## Key priorities (2013)

### *Child Protection Early Years Committee*

#### *Roll out of Children First Training*

Interestingly, progress and contact with childminders increased during 2013, with 5 childminders applying for the CMDG Grant, 12 childminders voluntarily notifying WxCCC, compared to 9 childminders voluntarily notifying WxCCC in 2012. 2 QAP's were facilitated, 12 home visits were carried out and 12 office visits took place. In addition, the Board took a conscious decision this year, requesting that the Childminder Co-ordinator deliver the QAP. This has worked extremely well, in that the Childminders attending the QAP developed a trusting relationship with the Childminder Co-ordinator, resulting in an increase in the number of incidents of contact recorded. This decision was taken by WxCCC in an effort to consolidate and utilise the expertise and resources within its staff team, and provide value for money.

The long tradition of collaboration and networking in the childcare/community development sector continued to be prioritised by WxCCC and the success of WxCCC's work during 2013 has been dependent on a number of such collaborative actions. Such collaborative work offers value in terms of time, cost and human resources, thereby avoiding duplication and providing value for money.

A highlight for WxCCC this year was the fact that Pobals Annual Beneficiary Questionnaire indicated that WxCCC was one of the top scorers across a range of factors amongst all CCCs nationally.

A notable trend emerging during 2013 has been the increased confidence and competence exhibited by childcare providers implementing one, two or all of the three national programmes. In 2010 WxCCC established a very successful CCS Network which over the years met at critical CCS administrative times in an effort to support community childcare services. However, CCS participants, when consulted in 2013, stated that they felt there was no immediate need for such a meeting. The turnover of personnel managing community childcare services is also extremely low, which is another contributing factor to this increased confidence and competence with regard to the CCS programme.

A major change in WxCCC's work during 2013 occurred as a result of a decision taken by the Board to terminate its long standing funding contract with Childcare Network Loch Garman (CNLG), due to the fact that much of the work carried out by CNLG on behalf of WxCCC no longer fitted with the priority areas as per DCYA guidance. The termination of this contract afforded WxCCC the opportunity to fund additional hours for development staff and to fund the position of the Childminding Co-ordinator albeit on reduced working week of 35 hours to 14 hours. This restructuring enabled WxCCC to consolidate the capacity within its staff team, in addition to continuing to support the childminding sector.

The formation and development of Childcare Committees Ireland (CCI), the defined key priority action areas as outlined by the DCYA and collaborative working approach among CCC's while welcomed has meant that WxCCC has had to change and adapt its priorities, which at times proved challenging. This is reflective however of any transition period, which requires embedding as WxCCC shifts from a more autonomous local level approach, towards a more nationalised and streamlined approach.



Although WxCCC has always prioritised the development and enhancement of quality service provision, an increased focus on quality of service provision emerged due to RTE's Prime Time programme, resulting in WxCCC placing even more emphasis on the quality agenda for the second half of 2013 and into 2014. Part of this focus will involve even deeper commitment to implementing its Siolta Pilot programme, in the hope that there will be a national formal roll out of Siolta and Aistear in the near future. It is hoped that the staff of WxCCC will be able to harness the knowledge and skills learned during the pilot and so be well placed to implement and support such a programme.

Supplementary to the actions originally outlined in WxCCC's LIP, 2013, WxCCC also supported the implementation of the Childcare Capital Programme (2013), through its direct appraisal of Strand 1, in addition to acting as a point of information and clarification on all other Strands. Sixteen childcare providers were awarded funding under Strand 1 and three providers were awarded funding under Strand 3, totalling €126,700.

Also supplementary to the actions originally outlined in WxCCC's LIP, 2013, WxCCC has become a member of the steering committee of the Local Area Partnerships (LAP), set up by the Children and Family Agency. The steering group aims to facilitate a process of engagement with voluntary, community and statutory partners to have an area based approach to prevention, partnership and family support.

The tabulated narrative in the latter half of this document outlines the specific details of the outputs of the plan.

## Progress

### Core Objective 1

*Under Core Objective 1, WxCCC aimed to develop comprehensive childcare supports, infrastructure and services where the holistic well-being of children and families are fundamental.*

One of WxCCC's main priorities under this objective was to partake in the national Child Protection collaborative action in order to support the implementation of 'Children First' for the Early Years Sector. Part of this prioritisation involved WxCCC's Development Officers becoming 'Children First' Trainers.

As a result of this action two members of WxCCC staff acquired the knowledge and skills to deliver child protection courses, enabling them to enhance the knowledge and understanding of childcare providers in relation to the skills necessary to protect themselves and the children in their care. The development of a standardised national programme and the formation of a national bank of CCC child protection trainers allows greater consistency and understanding of child protection across the sector. WxCCC welcomed this role as it stands to further build capacity both within the WxCCC staff team and the sector in general. See Appendix 4, for more detail.

In addition to the above national action, WxCCC in collaboration with the PSOI, strove to support childcare providers at local level to understand the complex requirements of Regulations 8 and 14 of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (no. 2) Regulations 2006 and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (no. 2) Amendment Regulations 2006, through the delivery of a workshop entitled '*Understanding the requirements of Regulations 8 and 14 – Recruiting staff and Garda Vetting*'.

Again, in 2013, WxCCC experienced a decrease in the number of incidents of support required by parents. This reduced level of contact with parents in relation to the national programmes affirms WxCCC's view, that in most cases parents are receiving the information and support from the childcare providers themselves, indicating that providers have become very proficient in implementing the three programmes.

### **Highlight**

One of WxCCC's highlights under this objective was the continued availability of grant aid for Parent and Toddler Groups. WxCCC received 20 applications and all were successful in their application. Funding to the sum of €7,286.70 was awarded overall to Wexford under the Parent and Toddler Grant Scheme.

## Core Objective 2

Under *Core Objective 2*, WxCCC aimed to enhance the quality of early childhood education and care and school age provision.

It is WxCCC's opinion that it prioritised and progressed the actions under this objective by supporting childcare providers to operate effectively under the ECCE, CCS and CETS Programmes, in addition to supporting new providers to enter the programmes and supporting parents to access free or subvented childcare places. Support in the main, as in previous years, took the form of one-to-one meetings, telephone support and general information dissemination via post, SMS texting and e-mail. The success of this objective as mentioned earlier in the report is evidenced by the high level of participation in all three programmes. In response to this level of participation, WxCCC continues to act as a central contact point for providers and parents to enable them to access information, support and advice on the three programmes.

In support of quality, WxCCC continued to prioritise the informal implementation of *Siolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* through the provision of four workshops, and the implementation of a pilot Siolta Programme, the success of which has already been discussed.

WxCCC continues to support the development of the Childminding sector, with a view to promoting the quality of childminding service provision. With this in mind, WxCCC is currently mentoring two Childminders on the informal implementation of Siolta. A positive development in 2013 has been the fact that the number of Childminders voluntarily notified to WxCCC has increased from nine in 2012 to twelve in 2013.

It is interesting to note, that when members of the CCS network were consulted on an ongoing basis during 2013, their response was that there was no immediate need for a network meeting. This is very positive as it indicates that participating CCS providers have become confident and competent in administering the CCS programme. It also indicates that services are receiving all the support they need from WxCCC, as they need it. However, if there are any changes /amendments to the programme in 2014 the CCS network will reconvene and continue to provide vital support for providers.

Under the direction of the DCYA WxCCC agreed to participate in a CCC national collaborative action on Quality. Details of progress to date can be found in Appendix 1.

Also, under the direction of the DCYA, WxCCC agreed to participate in a CCC national collaborative action on managing children's behavior in a positive manner. To date, a wide variety of information/resources have been collated from CCC's, NVCO's and the HSE, and the collaborative group are looking to recruit a researcher to review all information and examine the latest research and best

international practice. An Irish resource will be developed from this research and a work plan based on same will be submitted to DCYA in 2014.

**Highlights:**

The main highlight under this objective has been the continued high level of participation by providers in the three national Programmes, and how the implementation of the programmes by CCC's at local level further solidifies WxCCC's role as a critical support to childcare providers and parents.

Another particular highlight involving the programmes was the fact that the CCCs role in relation to the CETS programme was further strengthened by the DCYA keeping the CCCs continuously up to date with regard to payments to services. This information enabled the staff of WxCCC to support providers locally, keep track of CETS places, and inform the DCYA of any errors if and when they arose. This process has proved beneficial to both providers and the DCYA, as providers can access payment information directly from WxCCC, thereby directing some queries away from DCYA. The widening of the CETS scheme to include CE participants was also greatly welcomed by WxCCC, as more parents in need of support with regard to their childcare needs are being brought into the frame.

As stated previously, a further highlight for WxCCC under this objective was childcare providers' willingness to engage with the informal implementation of Siolta and Aistear and the roll out of its Siolta Pilot Programme.

A final highlight for WxCCC under this objective was the continued availability of the Childminder Development Grants. WxCCC received 5 applications and 5 Grants were approved, although only 4 Childminders drew down the Grant. Funding to the sum of €3,630 was awarded overall to Wexford under the CMDG Grant Scheme.

**Challenge:**

Challenges continue to be posed for School Age Childcare services who are experiencing poor uptake of places, although this is being alleviated to some extent by the CETS programme. It is also hoped that the Department of Social Protections 'Activation Programme' currently being implemented will increase the demand for school age places.

**Core Objective 3**

*Under Core Objective 3, WxCCC's priority was to consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of a stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure.*

Broadly speaking, WxCCC's main priority under this objective was to support the sustainability and development of the childcare sector within the county. It was WxCCC's experience, through direct

contact with providers during 2013 that the economic downturn continued to raise issues of sustainability, particularly in relation to changes in the numbers attending and the pattern of service uptake. WxCCC also found that supports in relation to business skills and management continued to take on a far greater significance in its work than before. In response to these needs, WxCCC provided one-to-one support meetings, and offered targeted business mentoring sessions on a needs basis. In the past WxCCC issued a carte blanche invitation to all childcare providers to avail of Business/HR one-to-one mentoring delivered by an external consultant. However, on reviewing this action and the associated costs, WxCCC came to the conclusion that it is more effective to offer external mentoring on a targeted basis and for WxCCC staff to carry out all other mentoring. In 2013, ten childcare services received one-to-one mentoring sessions from local Business consultants. This action was carried out in collaboration with Wexford CEB.

In response to a need identified at a Pobal case management meeting, further support was provided to voluntary management childcare committees through the provision of a Business and Governance workshop. The feedback on the workshop was extremely positive with 16 participants.

Under this objective WxCCC also continued to support the Providers Network by combining a short Network meeting with a workshop. The first Network meeting of 2013, held in March, entitled ‘Understanding the requirements of Regulations 8 and 14 of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006’, was co facilitated by WxCCC and the Pre-school Service Officer, with 23% of the county’s childcare providers attending. The second Network meeting took place in April, prior to a workshop delivered by a Speech Therapist (HSE), with 37% of the county’s childcare providers attending. The Network events continue to be an invaluable source of support for providers as they afford providers the opportunity to access peer support and share information.

**Highlight:**

The level of one-to-one mentoring, particularly that provided by WxCCC’s Development Officers to services has greatly contributed to improving sustainability outcomes, as evidenced by the improved Financial Impact Returns submitted to Pobal by a number of services.

**Core Objective 4**

*Under Core Objective 4, WxCCC aimed through ongoing professional development, to build capacity of the ECCE sector to enhance and develop quality services for children and their families.*

As mentioned earlier in the report, WxCCC in collaboration with County Wexford VEC, continued to support the implementation of the Work Force Development Plan and *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020)*, through the delivery of a FETAC Level 6 Module in Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy,

In a further effort to support the implementation of *The National Strategy to Improve Literacy and Numeracy among Children and Young People: Literacy and Numeracy for Learning and Life (2011-2020)*,



WxCCC collaborated with Wexford Library Services in the delivery of the Ready2Read Literacy Programme, which resulted in the majority of parents now spending more time reading with their children having attended the course.

WxCCC supported the national collaborative Literacy and Numeracy action to promote the services of NALA. In particular WxCCC distributed a large amount of information to childcare services to promote the NALA TV programme 'The Family Project'.

Efforts to support the continuous professional development of providers involved WxCCC's continued support of the National Association of Childcare Professionals (ACP).

WxCCC also continued to impact on the professional development of the sector through its ongoing consultative relationship with Wexford Campus (Carlow IT).

**Highlight:**

The main highlight for WxCCC under Objective 4 was the huge demand for places on the FETAC Level 6 *Early Childhood Literacy and Numeracy* module, demonstrating childcare provider's commitment to on-going professional development and to enhancing the literacy and numeracy skills of the children in their care. The feedback from this course was excellent, with all 18 participants finishing the course and submitting their work for assessment.

**Core Objective 5**

*Under Core Objective 5, WxCCC aimed to ensure effective and transparent collaboration, communication and consultation, and optimum use of resources by all stakeholders in early childhood care and education.*

The long tradition of collaboration and networking in the childcare/community development sector continued during 2013. Such a collaborative approach clearly leads to a sharing of expertise, knowledge and resources to the benefit of all organisations/ agencies and the number of collaborative actions carried out to date is a testament to the success of this collaborative process.

Some of the collaborative actions completed include:

- Collaboration with the HSE in the delivery of 'Understanding the requirements of Regulations 8 and 14 of the Childcare (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006', delivered by the Pre-School Services Officer and WxCCC staff.
- Collaboration with the HSE in the delivery of 'Supporting the Speech and Language Development of the Pre-school Child, with particular emphasis on supporting children whose first language is not English', delivered by a Clinical Specialist Speech and Language Therapist (HSE).
- Collaboration with County Wexford VEC in the delivery of FETAC Level 6 Literacy and Numeracy Module.



- Collaboration with Wexford Library Services in the joint delivery of a literacy initiative 'Ready2Read'.
- As part of a national CCC initiative and in support of NALA, WxCCC disseminated 3,382 Bookmarks, 624 flyers and 282 posters to childcare services, P & T Groups to promote NALA's Help My Kid Learn initiative and its TV series 'the Family Project'. In addition, an A5 Booklet on literacy and numeracy supports and resources within Wexford was compiled in house by WxCCC.
- Collaboration with County Wexford CEB in the delivery of business mentoring.
- Collaboration with CCI in the delivery of a number of collaborative actions as directed by the DCYA.

WxCCC also prioritised attendance at local, regional and national group meetings along with workshops and information sessions.

### **Highlights:**

The collaboration, support and consultation that exists between WxCCC and other stakeholder agencies continues to be one of WxCCC's major highlights.

WxCCC's drop-in Information Centre continues to be central to the implementation of all actions and the provision of information. WxCCC continue to encourage all stakeholders to visit the centre and engage with staff and resources. In an effort to keep up with technology WxCCC consistently updated its website and developed an active Twitter page which now has 136 followers compared to 73 followers recorded at this time last year.

Finally, an additional highlight is how the work of, and communication between, CCI members has developed to the benefit of all over the last six months. A more detailed Report of CCI's work and its communication strategy during the first six months can be found in Appendices 2 and 3.

## Section 2 – Implementation Plan

### 2.1 Standard Programme Activity

The two Childcare Development Officers are responsible for overseeing the administration of the 3 Programmes on a local level. In a continuous effort to reduce the costs of communication in relation to all 3 Programmes; the main mode of communication from WxCCC to Childcare providers is implemented through SMS text messaging and email.

The CDO's strive to provide Childcare Services with a prompt and efficient response to their queries by working closely and collaboratively to maintain a strong and effective record keeping system. The establishment of an efficient record system within the CCC has proven to be invaluable in ensuring that all documents received from childcare services are recorded, monitored and accounted for. All documents, forwarded to the CCC from Childcare Services, relative to the 3 Programmes are put through a two step process of firstly being registered as received at reception, and subsequently directed to the CDO's to be recorded and approved. The system is constantly being reviewed and enhanced where necessary.

In general, the administration of the 3 Programmes on a local level works very well. WxCCC constantly strive to build on the relationship it has with Childcare Providers in ensuring that they receive the level of support they need to meet the terms and conditions of the schemes. This support is provided over the phone, via emails and through office visits where services require assistance and support in reviewing financial sustainability factors, completing Fee policies and completing online returns. In addition to this WxCCC aim to ensure that the parents availing of these services receive the help and support they require.

The system which WxCCC maintains to record the occupancy of CETS places throughout the county has proven very beneficial and efficient in ensuring that the needs of Childcare services and parents are met while also maximising the use of the counties CETS allocation. WxCCC feels that this process enables them to support parents to access childcare as quickly and as transparently as possible, so that they can take up their place on their training course.

In 2013; the ECCE/CCS combined fee policy again proved to be very valuable in identifying those services who required assistance in remaining financially sustainable. In 2013 WxCCC found that, in the process of completing the fee policy; services were becoming increasingly aware of how cautious they need to be when setting fees for the year ahead, which also resulted in some services reviewing their expenditure for the year ahead. The commencement of the new term in 2013 proved quite challenging for some providers as they awaited payments under CETS and clarification of new entrants/transfer under ECCE and clarification of bands under CCS.

On the whole the three schemes provide many opportunities for WxCCC to work directly with Childcare Providers and parents in the locality. The Case Load Review meetings offer an opportunity to merge WxCCC's local knowledge and experience with community services, with Pobal's financial knowledge, and collaboratively identify CCS services in need of immediate support and assistance. In most cases WxCCC has the capacity to support the service as needed, however, from past experience; WxCCC have found that the need for professional mentoring is sometimes required and has proven invaluable. Throughout 2013 the main areas of support required by services through the medium of business mentoring was HR issues, financial sustainability and Marketing issues.

Currently, there are 140 Pre School services in operation within the County. This total is inclusive of 2 HSE notified childminders. Wexford has a 96% uptake of the ECCE scheme, 134 providers of the total 140 Pre School services are participating in the scheme. The balance of Community and Private Services currently stands at 44 community services, and 95 private services. Currently 30 of the 44 community pre schools operating within the County are participating in the CCS Scheme; this represents a 68% uptake. 41% of Pre School services are contracted to the CETS Scheme. In addition to the 140 Pre School services, there are currently 5 solely school age services in operation also, 1 is privately operated and participating in the CETS scheme. The other 4 are community services that all participate in the CCS scheme, with 2 participating in the CETS scheme.

Support to WxCCC's client group, which includes providers, parents and childminders, in relation to the three national schemes (ECCE, CCS & CETS) is multi faceted; generic support takes the form of letters, texts, group e mails, local media advertisement, Twitter posts and updates through the WxCCC website and bi-annual newsletter. Information leaflets for parents, centered on each scheme, are disseminated at every opportunity. However support to providers, parents and childminders in relation to the three national schemes is in the majority of cases given on a one to one basis via telephone and/or on a 'drop in' basis in the WxCCC information office.

## Conclusion

As stated from the outset, 2013 has been a rewarding year, particularly in terms of acquiring new skills, greater levels of expertise, broadening of staff roles and continuing to build positive relationships with members of the sector.

In addition, working with limited resources, has resulted in greater efficiencies and positive outcomes for staff, who have willingly expanded their roles to include additional tasks/actions. This level of commitment and flexibility amongst the staff team is one of WxCCC's greatest assets and is well recognised and acknowledged at Board level. However, none of this would be possible without the trust, commitment and leadership of the Board, clearly evidenced by the low turnover of Board members, consistent attendance at Board meetings and the strategic leadership provided by the Sub Committees.

Maintaining a high level of service delivery with which WxCCC prides itself, was challenging particularly with a reduced budget allocation. It involved making difficult choices along with setting priorities, which at times proved challenging for staff and Board alike. However, many of these choices resulted in a number of practical cost saving mechanisms such as the production of an ezine newsletter, the increased use of SMS texting and emailing, delivery of the QAP by a staff member, terminating staff training budgets, implementing additional collaborative actions etc.

Realising the desired outcomes of the defined key priority actions (DCYA 2013) would be challenging at the best of times, and WxCCC is cognisant of the fact that it was not in a position to complete all of the CCC collaborative actions by the end of 2013, as the implementation of some of these actions is under review, with a small number of them postponed until 2014.

It is clear from the report that issues of sustainability continue to pose challenges for the early years sector and so in 2014, WxCCC will need to continue to prioritise targeted one-to-one mentoring, and where the mentoring required is outside WxCCC's expertise; services will be afforded the opportunity of availing of a free or subsidised mentoring session from a business consultant.

2013 posed immense changes for childcare providers. In addition to facing sustainability issues, providers now also face other challenges, including those listed below, but not limited to:

- Pressure to justify and promote the quality of their service, (a fall out from RTE's Prime Time programme).
- HSE Inspection reports and responses to same will be published online for the first time
- Stringent recruitment practices.
- Obligation to implement Siolta and Aistear albeit currently on an informal basis.

While these developments are welcomed by all for quality service provision and more importantly in the best interests of children, it is still a time of change which no doubt at times proved challenging and required further support from WxCCC in 2014.

WxCCC looks forward again with renewed energy to applying the learning acquired in 2013 to 2014.

## APPENDIX 1

### ***Quality Collaborative group***

Having held two meetings and following a consultation with colleagues within constituencies, it was agreed that some primary examination of current resources is required prior to finalising how best to advance the quality agenda.

In that context, and following consideration by DCYA, it was agreed that:

- DCYA and EYEPU will together review priorities in terms of the quality agenda and its direction in the short to medium term.
- An audit of current programmes / tools / materials to support the quality agenda will be compiled (this will be coordinated by Pobal).
- DCYA & EYEPU will undertake a review of the quality resources collated and will further reflect on priorities.
- DCYA & EYEPU, in consultation with (a representation from) the CCCs & VCOs, will define what is required of the organisations in terms of progressing the quality agenda.
- In the interim, while the proposed audit/review is underway, organisations will continue with quality related work where it has already been agreed.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### ***Childcare Committee Ireland***

Childcare Committee Ireland the national network for CCCs has remained active and has met on four occasions during 2013. The national network has provided all CCCs with the opportunity to discuss key issues of concerns, review collaborative actions and progress along with input in to key agenda items which the national representative group will raise on its behalf at Department Meetings.

CCI meeting 31<sup>st</sup> January. The main purpose of the meeting to discuss implications of framework allocations for CCCs and supports required from DCYA to manage its implications

A further two national meetings of CCI took place 1<sup>st</sup> March 2013 and 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2013. Mays meeting provided leads from various collaborative working groups an opportunity to present progress on actions.

#### *Childcare Committees Ireland review day*

A review day took place on 9th July; this was open to Chairs and Managers. The review day was facilitated by Caroline McCamley, a work plan for 2014 is now being finalised.

The National Reps Group has met with Pobal & DCYA through the Representative Co-ordination Group at three meetings, 5<sup>th</sup> February, 14<sup>th</sup> March and 15<sup>th</sup> May. All CCCs have been circulated with outcomes from this meetings and issue discussed and follow up actions agreed.

*Pobal Capital-* CCI reps met with Pobal in February to discuss and support new Capital programme in particular to map out the role CCCs could play with the new programme.

#### *Programme Planning Operations Sub Group*

This group met on Friday 1<sup>st</sup> February to discuss planning and time lines for the three national programmes, the group will also meet to consider issues highlighted by CCCs concerning the administration of the three national programmes. Dublin City Childcare Committee and Kerry Childcare Committee sit on this group on behalf of CCCS

In addition the group facilitated national consultation on proposed changes to CCS. It has been agreed that Illness Benefit will remain in the Band A category (with medical card). A review will be completed later in the year on this payment but the method will be streamlined and done via the Dept of Social Protection. It will then only be required for parents to appeal the review when it is finalised. More information will issue closer to the review time. With regard to the proposed changes to the CCS timeframes, the only change being adopted is the half session place being reduced to 1 hour.

### **Community Employment**

Representatives from CCI met with Dept of Social protection to discuss the proposed new CE programme for Childcare. As part of these discussion CCI complete a national survey to highlight current

access by community childcare providers to the CE programme and key issues they are experiencing with the programme, a summary of these findings were presented to the Dept of Social Protection. A number of proposals from CCCs regarding the new programme were taken on board by the Department.

### **Skills Audit**

CCI facilitated the collation of information on the skill set within CCC staff teams, a report was prepared from this and submitted to DCYA.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### ***Communication Strategy***

#### *Membership of Subgroup*

Joe Rynn Dublin City Childcare Committee, Mary Giblin Galway City & County Childcare Committee, Sinead Mckeeon Pobal, Mina Walsh Saint Nicholas Montessori Society, Chris O Hara St Nicholas Montessori Society, Rita Melia Early Childhood Ireland.

The Communication Sub Group put forward a number of recommendations which were accepted by DCYA, these included specific recommendations and templates which they group have developed.

#### **Recommendation 1**

Development of a Visual chart to provide clarity for service providers on the point of contact for issues relating to returns, payments and compliance. This Chart was completed and issued to all CCCs for circulation to service providers, VCOs, Pobal & DCYA staff.

#### **Recommendation 2**

National document / materials to be developed for promotional purposes on the four current funding programmes for both parents and providers. DCCC have finalised revised programmes guide which was submitted to Programme Planning Group for approval, this document will be issued to all CCCs and VCOs in July for circulation.

#### **Recommendation 3**

A joint planning session to be facilitated between CCCs and VCOs to support improved co-ordination of plans and implementation locally, these will be aligned to the 5 national objectives. This planning meeting to take place in 2013 with a view to supporting increased co-ordination of activities in 2014.

As a first step a facilitated session took place at the National Management Meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> June to consider how we can collectively address quality supports in 2014.

## Appendix 4

### Child Protection

The National Early Years Children First Committee was established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the HSE. The purpose of the multi-agency committee is to ensure the effective implementation of Children First in the Early Years sector and includes representatives from the HSE, County/City Child Care Committees, the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and the VEC. The Committee reports to the interdepartmental group supervising the implementation of Children First.

The National Committee developed and agreed a National Early Years Implementation Plan in 2013. The objective of the committee is to provide training and policy development support to the Early Years sector in accordance with *Children First Guidance 2011* and Children First legislation.

#### ***Aims:***

- To run a Training for Trainers programme to upskill Trainers based in Childcare Committees to deliver Children First Basic level and Designated Liaison Person level training
- To offer **4,000** training places per year and **12,000** training places over 3 years between 2014 and 2016
- To monitor training needs and delivery to ensure consistent access across the country
- To develop a quality assurance system and a support system for trainers
- To support the development and implementation of best practice child protection policy and procedure in services

The National Committee agreed an implementation Plan under three headings:

- Training
- Quality Assurance
- Communications and Data Management

A great strength of the committee has been the collaborative nature of the work and the National Child Protection Training Programme is supported across the sector. The development of the programme has benefited greatly from the collaboration of member agencies in sharing and contributing information, time, resources and expertise and this will further support the successful roll out of the programme. The commitment of the sector, in particular the CCs, to the work on child protection and to implement Children First has been clear through the commitment and energy that participants have brought to the training process and to the roll-out of the National Training Programme

- A National Implementation plan was agreed and a National Coordinator was recruited in July 2013.
- At the end of 2013 there are **31** Trainers who have been trained and are ready to provide child protection training to Early Years Practitioners.
- The training is for all early years practitioners and will be delivered locally by Childcare Committees throughout the country.

## Appendix 5

### Promoting Positive Behaviour

Membership of the group: Lead Barnardos – Jean Currid; HSE, Helen Rouine; Kerry CCC, Oonagh Fleming and Early Childhood Ireland, Maria Doherty.

Jan to December 2013:5 meetings

A call to VCOs, CCCs and HSE PSITs for any resources on the topic, a wide variety of documentation and resources has been received by the group.

The group were looking to recruit a researcher under one of the government schemes such as Jobsbridge etc. to be in place by September to perform the desk top review of the information received and also to examine the latest research and international best practice on the subject. However, Barnardos were in a position to assign a researcher, Aileen Murphy, to this piece and having received permission from the Clearing House a publication will be developed by Barnardos in consultation with the Positive Behaviour Management Collaborative Group.

### Guidebook for Practitioners

Overall:

- The publication will be a practical guide for early years practitioners on how to promote positive behaviour and help children to develop their social and emotional skills.
- It will be set in an Irish context and link with both Síolta and Aistear.
- This will be a very accessible guide, which is practical and reflective, and is full of examples, case studies etc.
- Need new title / terminology to replace ‘promoting positive behaviour’

Following on from this a training tool will be developed through the Positive Behaviour Management Group for CCC and VCO development workers. Barnardos will be in apposition to produce approximately 750 copies of the practitioners’ guide and free copy to each CCC and VCO and additional copies sold at a reduced price to practitioners undergoing mentoring/training with the CCCs or VCOs.



## Acronyms / Abbreviations

❑ ACP	Association of Childcare Professionals
❑ CCC	City/County Childcare Committee
❑ CCI	Childcare Committees Ireland
❑ CCS	Community Childcare Subvention Programme
❑ CEB	County Enterprise Board
❑ CETS	Childcare Education and Training Support Programme
❑ CMAO	Childminding Advisory Officer
❑ CNLG	Childcare Network Loch Garman
❑ CTEC	Community Training and Education Centre
❑ DCYA	Department of Children and Youth Affairs
❑ ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education Programme
❑ EYEPU	Early Years Education Policy Unit
❑ FETAC	Further Education and Training Awards Council
❑ HSE	Health Services Executive
❑ LAP	Local Area Partnership.
❑ NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment



- ❑ NCIP National Childcare Investment Programme
  
- ❑ NVCO National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
  
- ❑ PESC Project Evaluation Sub-Committee
  
- ❑ VEC Vocational Education Committee
  
- ❑ WLD Wexford Local Development
  
- ❑ WxCCC Wexford County Childcare Committee