

# Double Disadvantage

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Reduced Access to Early  
Childhood Care and  
Education for Children at  
Risk of Poverty in Fingal

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- **Úna Caffrey**, FCYPSC
- **Adeline O’Brien**, Empower
- **Gráinne McKenna**, Dublin City University
- **Clodagh Carroll**, Barnardos
- **Adrienne Doyle**, Fingal County Childcare Committee

This report was written by **Clare Dalton** on behalf of FCYPSC.

# Contents

<b>4</b>	<b>Foreword</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Contributions from Key Stakeholders</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Terminology and Acronyms</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Section 1: Introduction</b>
11	Research Aims & Objectives
12	Methodology & Data Collection
<b>14</b>	<b>Section 2: Findings</b>
16	Service Profiles
27	Eligibility and capitation rates of NCS (compared to CCS)
28	Reduced access to and participation in ECEC for children at risk of and experiencing poverty
32	Financial sustainability of not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings
36	Administrative and operational difficulties, including challenges in securing ‘sponsorship’.
<b>41</b>	<b>Section 3: Conclusion and Recommendations</b>
42	Local Level Recommendations
	Enhanced Childcare Infrastructure in Fingal
	Targeted Supports for Disadvantaged Children
<b>44</b>	<b>References</b>
<b>46</b>	<b>Additional Information</b>
<b>47</b>	<b>Appendices</b>

# Foreword

**Fingal Children and Young People's Services Committee (FCYPSC) promotes an ethos and culture of interagency work across statutory, voluntary, and community sector organisations involved in managing and delivering services to children and young people in Fingal. A key priority in the [Fingal Children and Young People's Plan \(2019–2021\)](#) is to increase access to and availability of high-quality, sustainable, community-based early childhood care and education for children and families across Fingal.**

In 2019, FCYPSC broadly welcomed the [National Childcare Scheme \(NCS\)](#), a programme of financial supports that aims to improve the affordability of quality childcare for all children and families across Ireland. However, the current subsidies and income-based funding mechanisms have, in some cases, resulted in reduced participation in early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children experiencing social and economic deprivation, particularly children experiencing

poverty, those from marginalised communities, and children of parents experiencing long-term unemployment. Furthermore, a reduction in ECEC funding for these children threatens the sustainability of community-based childcare settings across Ireland.

Members of the FCYPSC Early Childhood Working Group are concerned that the current income-based funding and unwieldy systems of 'sponsorship' do not adequately respond to the needs of children, families, and communities experiencing socio-economic deprivation. Reduced access to ECEC will only exacerbate and perpetuate educational disadvantage within disadvantaged communities. Failure to provide high-quality, affordable early childhood provision for children at risk of poverty and social isolation damages their early development and future life chances.

The following report outlines the important work undertaken by community-based settings across

Fingal. It highlights serious and valid concerns regarding the sustainability of community-based childcare provision in Fingal due to inadequate capital investment, cessation of the [Community Childcare Subvention \(CCS\) Programme](#) and inadequate NCS funding mechanisms for children experiencing poverty and socio-economic deprivation. It calls for meaningful consideration of a sustainable, not-for-profit community-based funding model designed and delivered using community development and partnership principles.



**Cathriona Sheehan.**  
Interim Area Manager, North Dublin

# Contributions from Key Stakeholders

**Úna Caffrey, Coordinator of Fingal Children and Young People's Services Committee (FCYPSC), Tusla**

A key priority in the Fingal Children and Young People's Plan (2019–2021) is to increase access to and availability of high-quality, sustainable, community-based early childhood care and education. Figures from CSO in April 2016 indicated that 24,899 pre-school children aged 0–4 lived in Fingal. Despite such a significant population, Fingal has the lowest proportion of community-based childcare services in Ireland (6%). The value of community-based settings for children experiencing poverty cannot be overstated. Well-resourced community services play a vital role in addressing disadvantages, are cost effective and have the potential to ensure that children are retained in their family and community of origin. This research identifies the enormous challenges facing community childcare providers working in the most disadvantaged areas of Fingal. The solution-focused recommendations contained in the research provide a road map to address the difficulties.

**Adeline O'Brien, Chief Executive Officer, Empower Local Development CLG**

Empower is a registered charity and the social inclusion and local development company for Fingal. Our vision is to ensure that all people who live in our community are valued equally. As part of the Irish Local Development Network, the representative body for Ireland's 49 local development companies, we build inclusive, vibrant communities and better life chances for people in Fingal. Empower has identified the lack of community-based early years services in the region and asserts that this is a significant barrier to vulnerable children regarding the integration of their families into their community. The lack of a robust community-based infrastructure is also a barrier to women engaging in education, training and employment.

**Grainne McKenna, Assistant Professor, DCU Institute of Education**

DCU aims to drive social and economic development in our local and regional community through civic engagement and collaboration between the university and the community. My contribution to Fingal Children and Young People's Services Committee has highlighted the unique value and importance of Not-for-profit, community-based childcare provision. These settings are important places and community spaces that provide high-quality care and education, family support and early intervention for children at risk of socio-economic deprivation. Unfortunately, the current funding system threatens the sustainability of community childcare services and places children at risk of educational disadvantage at further risk of inequality and deprivation.

**Adrienne Doyle, Operations Manager, Fingal County Childcare Committee**

Fingal County Childcare Committee is one of 30 national city/county Childcare Committees and was established in 2001. The main focus of the FCCC is to encourage the development of childcare locally. FCCC offers information and support to early years providers, parents, childminders and employers to improve accessibility, affordability and quality of early years services in Fingal. There are 318 childcare providers in Fingal, of which 16 are Community Services (5%), and ten of these are community childcare providers that participate in community childcare subvention CCS. In Fingal, community childcare providers participate in the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), which started in November 2019 and the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Programme, which runs in tandem with NCS as a legacy scheme for existing CCS registrations. The NCS has been in operation for over two years, and FCCC felt this research was important to see the impact the NCS has had on the ground with community childcare providers, parents and children in Fingal.

**Clodagh Carroll, Assistant Director of Children's Services, Barnardos, Dublin North**

Barnardos' mission is to deliver services and work with families, communities and partners to transform the lives of vulnerable children affected by adverse childhood experiences. Across all of our work, we bring a holistic mind, body and heart approach to our families, drawing on recent progress in understanding human development, how the brain works, and the significant impact of early childhood trauma on children. Barnardos has been operating early years services since 1980, with seven early years community childcare services currently in operation nationally. One of these services is based in the D15 Fingal area of Mulhuddart. We work with some of the most vulnerable children and families in the region, empowering and supporting parents to understand, respond to and meaningfully engage in their children's educational, emotional and physical development and needs. A significant indicator of positive educational outcomes for young people is regular attendance in high-quality early education settings. Access to these settings must be prioritised for our most vulnerable children and families, with the barriers that limit their access and engagement removed. Unfortunately, the current funding scheme has created several additional barriers both for these services and families alike, which threatens sustainability, quality of services and access to service provision for vulnerable families, and the capacity of these families to engage in and benefit from them.

# Terminology and Acronyms

## Terminology

### **Early childhood educator**

This term is used throughout this report to describe all staff working with young children in early childhood education and care services.

### **Not-for-profit, community-based childcare setting**

For this study, a community-based childcare setting is defined as a service established to provide ECEC for children experiencing socio-economic deprivation, historically funded under the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCS).

## Acronyms/Definitions

<b>ABC</b>	Area-Based Childhood
<b>AIM</b>	Access and Inclusion Model
<b>CCS</b>	Community Childcare Subvention
<b>CCSP</b>	Community Childcare Subvention Plus
<b>CCSR(T)</b>	Community Childcare Subvention Resettlement (Transitional)
<b>CCSU</b>	Community Childcare Subvention Universal
<b>CE</b>	Community Employment
<b>CHICK</b>	Childcare Identifier Code Key
<b>CLG</b>	Company Limited by Guarantee
<b>CSO</b>	Central Statistics Office
<b>CYPSC</b>	Children and Young People's Services Committee
<b>DCEDIY</b>	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
<b>ECEC</b>	Early Childhood Education and Care
<b>ED</b>	Electoral Division
<b>EV</b>	Economic Vulnerability
<b>FCCC</b>	Fingal County Childcare Committee
<b>FCYPSC</b>	Fingal Children and Young People's Services Committee
<b>HACCP</b>	Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point
<b>HSE</b>	Health Service Executive
<b>LINC</b>	Leadership for Inclusion in the Early Years
<b>NEYAI</b>	National Early Years Access Initiative
<b>NCS</b>	National Childcare Scheme
<b>NYP</b>	Neighbourhood Youth Project
<b>PHN</b>	Public Health Nurse
<b>SAC</b>	School-Age Childcare
<b>SILC</b>	Survey on Income and Living Conditions

## Definitions

<b>Pobal</b>	Pobal works on behalf of the government to support social inclusion and community development. They act as a mediator in delivering programmes funded by the government.
<b>Tusla</b>	The Child and Family Agency is the dedicated State agency responsible for improving children's wellbeing and outcomes.
<b>Hive</b>	The Early Years Hive is the name for the service provider portal for early years programmes.

## 1

# Introduction

## Child Poverty in Ireland

Current figures from the [Poverty Focus 2021 report](#) show that, in 2019, 190,000 children living in Irish households are experiencing poverty. In Ireland, more than one in four people living in poverty is a child. The [CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions \(SILC\) 2019](#) indicates that in Ireland, children aged 0–17 years are the demographic group most likely to be in consistent poverty (8.1%). Persistent poverty in early childhood is notably harmful in its effects on later outcomes. At this stage of development, a family's

economic situation has the greatest effect on children's outcomes (Hayes, 2007). National research on child poverty shows that certain family characteristics are notably linked to persistent poverty. These include lone-parent families, families from ethnic minorities, and families with low levels of education. Families with these indicators require specific policy attention to prevent or buffer the effects of persistent poverty on child outcomes (Maître et al., 2021).

The negative consequences associated with child poverty for children's outcomes are widely accepted by researchers, with concerning immediate effects

on the child's wellbeing and early development, as well as the impact of long-term exposure to poverty on mental health, wellbeing, academic achievement and anti-social behaviour (McLeod & Shanahan, 1996). Additional negative effects on society include higher rates of early school leaving, increased crime rates, low educational attainment, and social welfare dependency (Duncan et al., 2012). It is universally accepted that positive and consistent early experiences can help to buffer the long-term effects of deprivation by providing learning opportunities for self-regulation and peer relationships (Duncan et al., 2007). Despite this, little progress has been made

in political and policy commitments to ensure the provision of high-quality early childhood services and intervention programmes that have the potential to mitigate the harmful impact of economic deprivation and social exclusion for children in Ireland.

## Early Childhood Care and Education and Socio-Economic Deprivation

International research over the last forty years has consistently demonstrated the benefits of high-quality early childhood experiences, particularly for children experiencing poverty and deprivation (Currie & Almond, 2011; Heckman, 2008; Kim, 2013; Knudsen et al., 2006; Pradhan et al., 2013). This ever-increasing body of evidence details the benefits of high-quality early childhood education and early intervention, and highlights the fact that the children who benefit most from specific interventions and family supports are those experiencing poverty and social isolation. Early intervention and support programmes such as the High Scope Perry Preschool Study in the USA demonstrate the effects of high-quality early care and education for three- and four-year-olds experiencing poverty, not just in their transition to formal schooling, but in the positive impact on long-term outcomes such as health, wellbeing, school completion, future earnings and likelihood of participation in criminal activity (Heckman et al., 2013).

## Early Childhood Care and Education for Children Experiencing Poverty in Ireland

A well-established body of international research and practice consistently demonstrates the benefit of high-quality early childhood education and care (ECEC) for low-income families and children experiencing poverty. Despite this, in Ireland, provision for children experiencing social isolation and economic deprivation has been inconsistent, with input and influence from multiple government departments working independently, with limited coordination or agreement on how best to meet the needs of children experiencing deprivation. This has resulted in inconsistent approaches and models of community-based provision and a lack of continuity in ECEC for children and families experiencing poverty (Brocklesby, 2016).

Historically, provision for children and families experiencing deprivation has been offered by community-based childcare services funded under the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme. Introduced in 2007, CCS was a targeted scheme that aimed to reduce childcare costs for low-income families and those experiencing socio-economic deprivation. Under the CCS Programme, disadvantaged parents and parents in training, education, or low-paid employment could access childcare at reduced rates at

participating community childcare services. In 2016, the scheme was amended with the introduction of the Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Programme, which aimed to reduce childcare costs at privately owned childcare services and participating not-for-profit childcare services. Despite an increase in the number of services offering CCS funding, as per the Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report (2019/20), the total value of approved CCS Programme (including CCSP, CCSU and CCSR(T)) contracts across private, for-profit and community-based services in 2019–20 was €94,732,642, a reduction of 30% since 2018–19.

[The Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Report \(2019/2020\)](#) indicates that private, profit-making settings account for almost 74% of all ECEC services in Ireland, while 26% of settings identify as 'community-based' (Pobal, 2020, p. 11). Within this group of community-based services, there is a mix of private settings operating from community centres, not-for-profit and charitable organisations not receiving CCS funding, and not-for-profit, community-based services established to provide ECEC for children living in areas of deprivation and disadvantage. In the current study, the term 'community-based settings' refers to not-for-profit, early childhood settings established to provide ECEC for children experiencing socio-economic deprivation, historically funded under the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme.

## Community-Based Provision in Fingal

Between 1993 and 2013, the population of Fingal increased by an unprecedented 79.4%, the largest growth by a single county in Ireland, and from 2011 and 2016 Fingal increased its population by a further 8.4%, which was more than twice the national average of 3.7% (CSO, 2016). Figures from CSO (2016) indicate there were 24,899 pre-school children aged 0–4 in Fingal. Despite such a significant population, Fingal has the lowest proportion of community-based childcare services in Ireland, with current data from the [Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Report \(2019/2020\)](#) reporting 20 community-based settings in Fingal (6%). Of these, only ten (3%) were part of the original CCS Programme and continue to receive funding under the CCS Scheme's current iteration, which concludes in August 2021. This figure is extremely low compared to the national average of 26% and significantly disparate to community childcare provision in the wider Dublin region (Dublin – Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown (23 Services, 12%), Dublin – South Dublin (42 Services, 16%), Dublin City (158 Services, 35%).

Fingal Children and Young People's Services Committee has repeatedly identified the need for a sustainable childcare infrastructure and local-level provision for young children (birth to six years) and families, especially those living in areas of deprivation and at risk of poverty

and social exclusion. This includes, but is not limited to, support for: members of the Traveller and Roma communities, families experiencing disability, single-parent families, families that speak English as an additional language, and children and families experiencing socio-economic deprivation. At present, children and families experiencing poverty in Fingal do not have access to the Area-Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, a national prevention and early intervention initiative targeting investment in effective services to improve outcomes for children and families living in areas of socio-economic deprivation. CSO data (2016) indicate that single-parent families account for 23.1% of all families in Fingal, with a concentration in EDs that have significant levels of local authority housing; for example, the lone parent rate exceeds 50% in the Blanchardstown-Tyrrelstown area.

Local-level consultation with parents and stakeholders indicates that in Fingal, early childhood care and education and targeted early intervention services required specific and dedicated attention. This report aims to offer further insight into the important role and function of community-childcare settings in Fingal and to document the impact of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) on families and children attending community-based childcare settings in Fingal.

## Research Aims and Objectives

- 1 To review the provision of not-for-profit, community-based childcare in Fingal.
- 2 To evaluate the impact of the implementation of the NCS on the provision of childcare places and the financial sustainability of community-based early childhood settings in Fingal.
- 3 To provide insights into the impact of NCS on early childhood educators, parents, board of management and other relevant stakeholders.
- 4 To provide case-study examples of the impact of NCS on ECEC provision for children and their families.
- 5 To make recommendations for approaches to community-based childcare provision for children at risk of deprivation and social isolation.



## Methodology

This study aims to highlight the important role of community-based childcare services in Fingal. It also considers how the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) will influence children's access to and participation in early childhood education and care and impact the financial sustainability of community-based childcare settings.

### Research Approach

The study adopts a qualitative approach; it explores the local context and experiences of 10 community-based early childhood settings operating across Fingal. Each setting completed a service profile that garnered key information about the unique context of their setting and the community they serve. The managers of the settings also completed a questionnaire that investigated the impact of NCS on their service. In addition, individual interviews were completed to further investigate key themes arising from the questionnaire. The study commenced in October 2020, with data collection taking place from November 2020 to February 2021.

### Recruitment Strategy and Participants

The managers of the community-based settings were made aware of the study with support from Fingal County Childcare Committee (FCCC) and the Fingal Community Early Years Network. All ten services were invited to take part in this study, with all agreeing to participate.

The ten services that participated in the study offer early childhood education and care for children between 12 months and six years who are eligible to receive funding from the NCS.

## Data Collection

### Service Profile

All settings completed a service profile that recorded the total number of staff, number of childcare places offered, the types of provision, number of one-parent families, children from the Traveller and Roma communities, and families that speak English as an additional language attending the setting. Services also detailed their hours and weeks of operation and were asked to identify any additional services offered to children and families. Services were also asked to provide insight into their current funding sources.

### Survey of Managers of Services

Following an initial consultation with centre managers and members of the FCYPSC Working Group, a survey was developed. Concerns put forward by the centre managers and key stakeholders were used to develop the survey content. The service profile and survey were administered in October 2020 using Survey Monkey, an online survey tool that was accessed through a link sent by email to managers.

The survey focused on the experiences of services in four key areas:

- Financial sustainability of the service
- Provision of early childhood care and education for children attending
- Family support and services offered to parents and caregivers
- Collaboration with outside agencies, including NCS sponsorship places.

### Individual Interviews

All services that completed the initial online survey were contacted by phone for a follow-up interview. During this phone call, centre managers were provided with an opportunity to discuss concerns that specifically impacted their setting and the children attending in more detail. Managers from ten settings completed the service profile and questionnaire, with seven managers taking part in an individual follow-up interview.

### Data Analysis

The questionnaire data were considered, with summaries of closed questions. Thematic analysis of qualitative data emerging from open-ended questions in the survey and interview responses was completed using six phases of thematic data analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Interpretation, recommendations and conclusions were considered and discussed with the FCYPSC Working Group before the final preparation of this report.

### Study Strengths and Limitations

This study does not claim to represent all community-based childcare services, and it is intended to be a profile of the experiences of those serving children and families in Fingal. However, it does provide important insights that should contribute to a wider discussion and evaluation of the implementation of the NCS, particularly for children who are experiencing poverty and at risk of educational disadvantage. The findings will promote further discussion on the impact of policy implementation in the community ECEC sector.

## 2

# Findings

## Overview of Not-For-Profit, Community-Based Provision in Fingal

Community-based, not-for-profit services are more likely to be located in areas of disadvantage, whilst private services are typically situated in areas of affluence (Pobal, 2020). In Fingal, updated figures provided by Pobal in 2021 indicate a total of 19 community-based childcare services (see Appendix 4). There is significant variation in governance structures, service models, and profiles of the families attending within this group. Ten of the settings are not-for-profit community childcare settings that offered CCS Programme registration

up to 2019. Two of the services are operated by charitable organisations (Barnardos Mulhuddart Early Years Service and Ashleigh House) but did not receive CCS funding. An additional four settings have not-for-profit status, providing sessional care (three hours per day), while the remaining three settings listed by Pobal as community-based services could not be located on the Register of Charities.

In Fingal, there are currently ten not-for-profit, community-based ECEC services that were previously in receipt of funding under CCS. Seven of these services are located within the Dublin 15 area, with the remaining three located within Baldoyle, Donabate and Balbriggan. These settings completed a service

profile, a questionnaire, and follow-up interviews exploring their experiences of implementing the NCS. Two additional community services took part in the service profiles as examples of enhanced provision (see Appendix 1 and 2).

At the time of data collection, across the ten settings there were a total of 494 childcare places and 137 staff, including early childhood educators, managers, ancillary staff and community employment staff. All ten settings offer sessional places, with nine offering part-time care and only five services offering full-day provision, with four of the settings also offering school-age childcare (SAC). A number of the managers commented that the hours of operation and availability of

places for young children (less than two years old) had been adjusted to ensure financial sustainability over the last five years. This included moving from full- and part-time care to sessional provision and reducing childcare places for babies and young children.

Not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings in Fingal offer important ECEC provisions for children living in areas of deprivation and at risk of poverty and social exclusion. Both Blanchardstown and Balbriggan have high concentrations of socio-economic deprivation and above-average levels of unemployment, lone-parent families, Traveller families, and foreign nationals (Exodea, 2015). Within these groups, children are those most likely to experience the immediate and long-term negative impact of deprivation. Within Fingal, not-for-profit community services are working with and alongside these families to support their needs and reduce the harmful impact of poverty on children's development. Across all ten services, there are examples of enhanced provision for vulnerable families; this includes access to play therapists, counselling supports for parents and free school meals. Not-for-profit community services regularly engage with outside agencies such as Tusla, social workers, and speech and language therapists to support the children and families attending their service. Some children are mandated to attend the ECEC setting as part of their child protection plans. In 2011–14, all ten settings took part in the Fingal Parenting Initiative, a project funded under the National Early Years Access Initiative (NEYAI), to deliver

preventative parenting support programmes. However, this initiative was not sustainable following the cessation of funding.

Local-level findings from Empower in 2019 indicated that not-for-profit community services are more likely to cater for children with a disability; 23% of children attending community services in Dublin 15 have a diagnosed additional need, with another 19% awaiting assessment. Not-for-profit community services in Fingal provide ECEC for children who may have otherwise struggled to participate in private, for-profit settings, including children who have been 'expelled' from private settings due to their learning or behavioural needs. Local figures indicate that 34% of children attending services in Dublin 15 were referred to the service by Tusla, a PHN or GP.

Not-for-profit community services in Fingal provide high-quality, responsive provision, early intervention, and family supports to reduce the risk of poverty. Fingal is the youngest and one of the fastest-growing local authority areas in the country. Despite a population of 296,214, the third-most populous local authority area in the country (Fingal County Council, 2019), and 24,899 pre-school children aged 0–4 (CSO, 2016), there is no access to the Area-Based Childhood (ABC) programmes or provision of HSE/Tusla-funded nurseries for children and families in the county. Provision for the most vulnerable children and families relies on community-based, not-for-profit settings wholly dependent on operational funding under the National Childcare Scheme.



## Home Start Blanchardstown

Blakestown Road, Dublin 15

Home Start Blanchardstown was established in 1988, and opened as a respite creche in 2003. It is a charitable organisation that supports families with young children in their own homes to prevent family crisis. The setting is primarily a referral-based service and works closely with the local Public Health Nurses, General Practitioners, Social Workers and other local voluntary and community groups such as Barnardos, Cross-Care, Oakridge Children’s Services, and The Rotunda Peri Natal Mental Health Unit. Home Start offers sessional and part-time care to children aged from 4 months to 5 years. Many of the children attending the setting are at risk of educational disadvantage due to socio-economic deprivation, family vulnerability, poverty, and special educational needs. The centre has a maximum capacity of 70. In recent years, to respond to exceptional levels of need and demand for the service, the management team worked tirelessly to secure funding to build two additional classrooms and extend the outdoor area.

Home Start has a team of 19 staff, including the centre manager, 13 early childhood educators, 3 voluntary play therapists, a chef, housekeeper, and an administrator. In addition to high quality, play-based curriculum, children attending the setting are provided with nutritious snacks and meals prepared and served onsite. In addition, Home Start works closely with the local community to provide families with food hampers, with significant demand for this support over the Christmas period. There is an extensive outdoor play and learning space, where children benefit from a range of play materials and equipment to support their physical health and motor development, including raised flower beds, and an outdoor story area. They also provide yoga and music classes for the children attending the service. Home Start work closely with families and recognise that parents are the primary educators of their children. They provide family supports, with staff offering the Parents Plus Early Years Programme to all parents attending the service. Children and parents also have some access to a Play Therapist, and the service makes space available for counselling services and therapeutic supports.

Almost all funding for the service is provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) through Pobal. The service does not receive any additional ‘operational’ funding. Where possible, the management team and Board attempt to secure additional funds from Tusla, HSE, the Citizens Information Board and charitable donations.

Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Blanchardstown-Blakestown	
Small Area ID	267028019
Total Population 2016	230
Pop Change (2006-16)	0.02
Pobal HP Index 2016	-8.20
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally below average
Age dependency ratio (%)	39.57
Lone parent ratio (%)	21
Prop. primary education only (%)	18
Prop. third level education (%)	16.06
Prop. local authority rented (%)	1.28
Unemployment rate - male (%)	15.79
Unemployment rate - female (%)	6.25

## Donabate Nurturing Centre

Sophia Housing  
Donabate, Co. Dublin

Donabate Nurturing Centre is located in a purpose-built facility in Sophia housing, who provides short-term emergency accommodation for families. It was first established in 1999 and provides childcare for families who are experiencing homelessness. The majority of children are referred into the service by homeless support workers. Donabate Nurturing Centre provide early years services for children aged 1 to 5 years for families living in the service, and may also cater for some local families living in the community. They offer both sessional and SAC for up to 20 children. The majority of children attending this service are experiencing homelessness and other challenges that are associated with being homeless, such as social isolation, poverty and health issues. This service offers vital supports for children, and puts a heavy focus on children’s identity and belonging within the service. The childcare service offers a protective measure to buffer the effects from homelessness.

Donabate Nurturing Centre has a team of 12 staff including the centre manager, five early childhood educators, six staff from Government employment schemes and ancillary staff. The three full-time staff have a Level 8 qualification, other qualifications include a Diploma in Counselling/Hypnotherapy/Neuro Linguistic Programming, and a MA in Child, Family and Community Studies. Staff in Donabate Nurturing Centre are committed to enhancing their practice through additional training. Topics include; Domestic Violence Awareness, Trauma Informed Care, Therapeutic Crisis Intervention, Mental Health First Aid, Key Working and Care Planning, Parent Plus Facilitator, Anti-Bias Training, Play Therapy, High Scope Curriculum Implementation, High Scope Conflict Resolution Workshop, Drug Intervention/ Sharps Training, Children’s First/DLP Training, Special Educational Training.

Donabate Nurturing Centre implement elements of the High Scope curriculum which supports children’s development through an emergent play-based curriculum. Children attending the service are provided with 2 nutritious meals prepared daily and served onsite. In addition, Donabate Nurturing Centre provide additional services for families which include parenting programmes, developmental checks, individual play sessions, and they also work closely with a speech and language therapist to offer additional language supports. In addition, the service can offer family sessions and one to one parenting support if it is required. Donabate Nurturing Centre are funded mostly through the DCEDIY with additional funding secured through the HSE.

Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Donabate	
Small Area ID	267065015
Total Population 2016	454
Pop Change (2006-16)	-0.03
Pobal HP Index 2016	3.48
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally above average
Age dependency ratio (%)	35.24
Lone parent ratio (%)	14
Prop. primary education only (%)	1
Prop. third level education (%)	48.21
Prop. local authority rented (%)	10.77
Unemployment rate - male (%)	13.01
Unemployment rate - female (%)	13.98

## Little Learners Crèche

### Parslickstown Childcare Facility CLG, Dublin 15

Little Learners is located within a community centre owned by Fingal County Council and run by a private management company. The childcare service is located within a disadvantaged area of Dublin, as defined by Pobal Deprivation Indicators. Little Learners offers full-day, part-time and sessional services to children aged between three and five years, over 50 weeks of the year. Due to its location, many of the children attending this service are at risk of experiencing deprivation. The majority of children attending are from one-parent families. The service also caters for children with English as an additional language and children from the Traveller community. They have the capacity for a maximum of 38 children.

Little Learners has a team of eight staff, including a manager, six early childhood educators, and ancillary staff. Little Learners is dedicated to supporting staff training, and similarly, the staff are dedicated to improving quality for all children. One staff member has a Level 8 qualification, another is working towards a Level 8, and two staff members have a Level 7. There is one LINC coordinator in the service, and some of the staff have completed the Hanen programme. Staff in Little Learners have undergone additional training, with topics including Parenting Delivery, Nursing and Community Development, Tutor Training, Art in Education, Diversity and Inclusion, Child Protection, Sign Language and Additional Needs.

Little Learners offers the High Scope curriculum, which is designed to support children to be active learners and to become secure, independent and in control of their learning experiences. In addition to these rich environments, Little Learners offers nutritious meals on site, and staff complete additional developmental checks. They also work closely with parents to deliver parenting programmes and one-to-one parenting sessions. Little Learners is located in a disadvantaged area with a high level of need; staff can refer families to local agencies, which is a large part of their work. Little Learners offers training and mentoring for all staff, including those on a Community Employment scheme and Tús. Engaging in education and training to qualify in childcare is encouraged and supported through a mentoring programme. Little Learners is fully funded through the DCEDIY and receives no additional operational funding.

#### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Blanchardstown-Tyrrelstown

Small Area ID	267034001
Total Population 2016	1,649
Pop Change (2006-16)	1.98
Pobal HP Index 2016	1.11
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally above average
Age dependency ratio (%)	39.18
Lone parent ratio (%)	40
Prop. primary education only (%)	8
Prop. third level education (%)	32.13
Prop. local authority rented (%)	34.68
Unemployment rate - male (%)	18.21
Unemployment rate - female (%)	33.70

## Balbriggan Community Childcare Group CLG

### Balbriggan, Co. Dublin

Balbriggan Community Childcare opened in 2009 and serves children and families living in the Balbriggan area. It offers full-day care, part-time care, and a sessional service for children aged 12 months to six years. The service operates over 51 weeks of the year. Children attending this service are at a high risk of social isolation, exclusion and persistent poverty. The centre has a maximum capacity of 35 children, which includes after-school provision. Balbriggan Community Childcare currently employs eight staff members: early childhood educators, ancillary staff, and Community Employment staff who are gaining experience working with children. All staff are fully qualified in line with government regulations and are highly experienced, committed and dedicated to improving outcomes for children in the Balbriggan area.

Their main aim is to provide a quality service for children and families in the Balbriggan area through a child-centred approach. Balbriggan Community Childcare implements the Aistear curriculum, which provides rich learning experiences through child-led and initiated activities. Quality environments extend into the outdoor area, thoughtfully designed to support children's outdoor play and physical activity. Design features include hilled grass, inbuilt tunnels, steps and soft matted areas. As well as providing safe and stimulating environments for children, they also offer additional support for parents. This has previously included the Parents Plus Programme; however, it has not been possible to offer parenting classes due to the current pandemic.

Balbriggan Community Childcare Group is fully funded through the DCEDIY and receives no additional operational funding.

#### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Balbriggan Urban

Small Area ID	267003011
Total Population 2016	236
Pop Change (2006-16)	0.14
Pobal HP Index 2016	-3.06
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally below average
Age dependency ratio (%)	27.97
Lone parent ratio (%)	35
Prop. primary education only (%)	19
Prop. third level education (%)	26.43
Prop. local authority rented (%)	7.02
Unemployment rate - male (%)	18.97
Unemployment rate - female (%)	16.13

## Kidz Zone

Church Road, Dublin 15

Kidz Zone was founded in 2004 and is located within a community centre in the Mulhuddart area of Blanchardstown. It offers sessional, part-time and full-day care across 50 weeks a year for children aged between one and six years. This service is located within Mulhuddart Community Centre in an area of deprivation which can mean that the children attending are at risk of persistent poverty and the factors associated with food poverty and educational disadvantage. Six children (22%) attending this service receive the AIM Level 7 provision. Kidz Zone has a capacity for up to 28 children. The majority of children attending this service come from one-parent families or marginalised populations.

Kidz Zone has a team of nine staff, which includes seven early childhood educators and two CE staff. Two of the staff have a Level 8 qualification, with two more undertaking a Level 7 qualification. All staff have extensive experience within the early childhood sector. Kidz Zone implements the Aistear curriculum and is passionate about the individual child and supporting their independence and emerging interests. The setting provides meals on site for the children attending the service. Its overall aim is to provide a safe space for local people and support children and families in the Mulhuddart area.

Kidz Zone is fully funded by the DCEDIY through Pobal and receives no additional operational funding.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Blanchardstown - Mulhuddart

Small Area ID	<b>267032008</b>
Total Population 2016	<b>193</b>
Pop Change (2006-16)	<b>-0.03</b>
Pobal HP Index 2016	<b>-3.91</b>
Pobal HP Description 2016	<b>marginally below average</b>
Age dependency ratio (%)	<b>35.23</b>
Lone parent ratio (%)	<b>19</b>
Prop. primary education only (%)	<b>5</b>
Prop. third level education (%)	<b>32.00</b>
Prop. local authority rented (%)	<b>26.09</b>
Unemployment rate - male (%)	<b>15.56</b>
Unemployment rate - female (%)	<b>22.00</b>

## Blakestown & Mountview

NYP Crèche

Clonsilla, Dublin 15

Blakestown & Mountview NYP crèche was established in 2005 and is located on the grounds of a youth project. It serves the local community in Clonsilla, Dublin 15. It offers sessional, part-time care and an after-school programme for children aged two to six years over 50 weeks per year. This service has a maximum capacity of 59 children.

Blakestown & Mountview NYP crèche has 13 early childhood educators, five CE staff and two ancillary staff. There are currently four staff with a Level 8 qualification. The early childhood educators working in Blakestown & Mountview NYP are highly dedicated to the children and families attending the service. They undergo continuing professional development to ensure they maintain a high-quality practice.

This year, to respond to the need for gross motor movement and physical activity, the service installed an extensive and attractive outdoor area with various materials supporting the development of fundamental movement skills, gross motor skills, and promoting physical health.

Blakestown & Mountview NYP crèche is fully reliant on funding received from the DCEDIY through Pobal and receives no additional operational funding.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Blanchardstown - Coolmine

Small Area ID	<b>267029005</b>
Total Population 2016	<b>284</b>
Pop Change (2006-16)	<b>0.04</b>
Pobal HP Index 2016	<b>-16.97</b>
Pobal HP Description 2016	<b>disadvantaged</b>
Age dependency ratio (%)	<b>32.04</b>
Lone parent ratio (%)	<b>52</b>
Prop. primary education only (%)	<b>42</b>
Prop. third level education (%)	<b>10.63</b>
Prop. local authority rented (%)	<b>39.51</b>
Unemployment rate - male (%)	<b>35.37</b>
Unemployment rate - female (%)	<b>18.84</b>

## Anchor Childcare Centre CLG Baldoyle, Dublin 13

Anchor Childcare was established in 2001 and serves children and families in the local community of Baldoyle, Dublin 13. It offers sessional, part-time and full-time care for children from one to six years over 51 weeks of the year. Anchor Childcare has a maximum capacity of 65 children.

Anchor currently employs 18 staff, six early childhood educators, eight CE staff, and four ancillary staff. Anchor offers additional services for families, including freshly prepared meals on site for children, and supports parents through open communication and informal parenting advice.

Anchor follows the principles of the Aistear curriculum to plan learning experiences for children. In addition, some of the staff are also being qualified in delivering the Montessori curriculum. The staff in Anchor are highly responsive to the needs of the children, and they undertake ongoing additional training to support children's development. Training topics include Child Protection, DLP, First Aid Responder, Paediatric First Aid, HACCP, Adminstrating Medication, Managing Epilepsy, Workplace Food Safety and Stress Management Training. Anchor closes for four days per year for mandatory training days as staff focus on training. They strive to go above the minimum training requirements as they see value in additional training to support the children and families attending their service adequately.

Alongside curriculum planning, the staff in Anchor pay careful attention to the environments they create for children to support engagement with different materials and promote independence. As important as their indoor learning environment, the service has a large 2,500 sq ft outdoor play area with a safety surface and a roofed area that supports outdoor play in all types of weather. In addition, staff have been trained in delivering Buntus, which promotes physical development for young children.

Anchor is mainly funded through the DCEDIY and receives additional funding through the Community Services Programme to help with staffing costs.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Baldoyle

Small Area ID	26700400
Total Population 2016	234
Pop Change (2006-16)	0.06
Pobal HP Index 2016	7.34
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally below average
Age dependency ratio (%)	44.87
Lone parent ratio (%)	26
Prop. primary education only (%)	30
Prop. third level education (%)	16.67
Prop. local authority rented (%)	1.15
Unemployment rate - male (%)	8.00
Unemployment rate - female (%)	9.09

## Corduff Childcare Blackcourt Road, Dublin 15

Corduff Childcare was founded in 1982 to support the advancement of community welfare. It is located within a purpose-built building in the Dublin 15 area. It offers morning and afternoon sessional services and part-time and full-time care to children aged up to six years. Corduff Childcare opens for 51 weeks per year for seven hours per day with a maximum capacity of 103 children.

Corduff Childcare has a team of 30 staff consisting of 22 early childhood educators, five CE staff and three ancillary staff. Four of the staff at Corduff Childcare have Level 8 qualifications, with an additional four working towards a Level 7 qualification. Early childhood educators working in Corduff Childcare are committed to ensuring high-quality practice for the children in the service and have undertaken a variety of additional training topics, including Lámh, Mindfulness for Children, and Sensory Processing, and all staff are trained in HACCP. Three of the staff are trained as LINC coordinators for the service. In addition, Corduff Childcare offers daily opportunities for children to engage in outdoor play experiences alongside their peers.

Corduff Childcare offers additional services for children and their families, such as parenting programmes and family supports, developmental checks for children, and speech and language supports. This service aims to support children and families living in Corduff to reach their fullest potential.

Corduff Childcare is almost fully reliant on funding received from the DCEDIY. It does not receive any ongoing additional operational funding.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Blanchardstown-Corduff

Small Area ID	267030009
Total Population 2016	316
Pop Change (2006-16)	-0.06
Pobal HP Index 2016	-20.53
Pobal HP Description 2016	very disadvantaged
Age dependency ratio (%)	36.08
Lone parent ratio (%)	73
Prop. primary education only (%)	39
Prop. third level education (%)	7.85
Prop. local authority rented (%)	40.95
Unemployment rate - male (%)	28.99
Unemployment rate - female (%)	26.32

## Ladybird Lane Childcare Service

Huntstown Way, Dublin 15

Ladybird Lane was established in 2003 and opened its doors in May 2004. It is located in Huntstown Community Centre, Dublin 15. It offers sessional and part-time care over 50 weeks per year for children aged three to six years. Ladybird Lane has a maximum capacity of 35 children.

There are five staff members in Ladybird Lane, including four early childhood educators and one ancillary staff. Ladybird Lane aims to provide a safe, caring environment that embraces all children. The setting values parents as the primary educators of their children and works in partnership to improve outcomes for children living in the Huntstown area. Ladybird Lane can provide access to washing machines and dryers as part of their family support work for families in immediate need.

The staff at Ladybird Lane are deeply passionate about supporting families and providing stimulating and nurturing environments for children to learn and develop. In addition, Ladybird Lane supports training to ensure that all staff maintain high levels of practice. There are currently two LINC coordinators in the service, and a third staff member is undergoing training. Staff at Ladybird Lane engage in additional training when budgets allow. They are on a waiting list to undertake Hanen training and have undertaken additional training topics such as Special Needs, Lámh, Behaviour Management, Sensory Processing, and Speech and Language, delivered by Elklan. Ladybird Lane provides engaging learning environments that support each child as an individual, and it embraces all children and their values.

Ladybird Lane is fully reliant on funding from the DCEDIY through Pobal and receives no ongoing additional funding from other sources.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Blanchardstown - Blakestown

Small Area ID	<b>267028008</b>
Total Population 2016	<b>342</b>
Pop Change (2006-16)	<b>0.01</b>
Pobal HP Index 2016	<b>-4.11</b>
Pobal HP Description 2016	<b>marginally below average</b>
Age dependency ratio (%)	<b>26.90</b>
Lone parent ratio (%)	<b>34</b>
Prop. primary education only (%)	<b>12</b>
Prop. third level education (%)	<b>20.20</b>
Prop. local authority rented (%)	<b>1.94</b>
Unemployment rate - male (%)	<b>14.29</b>
Unemployment rate - female (%)	<b>16.30</b>

## Blakestown Community Crèche

Blakestown Way, Dublin 15

Blakestown Community Crèche was founded in 1986 and is located within Blakestown Community Resource Centre in Dublin 15. It offers part-time and sessional services over 50 weeks per year for children aged two to six years. The service has the capacity for up to 41 children.

Blakestown Community Crèche is made up of a team of seven staff, six early childhood educators and one CE staff member. Two members of staff are currently undertaking their Level 7 qualification. There is a LINC coordinator in the service, and the service is on a waiting list to undertake Hanen training. Staff engage in any additional training provided, and Blakestown Community Crèche supports this development when budgets allow. Additional training topics include: Incorporating Families, Integrating Children with Special Needs, and Diversity, Equality and Inclusion. Staff aim to provide a quality service that is child-centred and inclusive of children and families in the Blakestown area. They are highly dedicated to improving outcomes for the wider community.

Blakestown Community Crèche promotes learning through play and recreation, and this is supported in their environments, including a large indoor play area for children to use in all weathers. The setting also offers additional services for children and their families, including speech and language supports, information for parents, and help with accessing additional community initiatives where required.

Blakestown Community Crèche is fully dependent on funding received from the DCEDIY through Pobal.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area

Blanchardstown - Coolmine

Small Area ID	<b>267029007</b>
Total Population 2016	<b>510</b>
Pop Change (2006-16)	<b>0.09</b>
Pobal HP Index 2016	<b>-12.24</b>
Pobal HP Description 2016	<b>disadvantaged</b>
Age dependency ratio (%)	<b>33.14</b>
Lone parent ratio (%)	<b>37</b>
Prop. primary education only (%)	<b>22</b>
Prop. third level education (%)	<b>14.44</b>
Prop. local authority rented (%)	<b>33.79</b>
Unemployment rate - male (%)	<b>27.42</b>
Unemployment rate - female (%)	<b>23.81</b>



The purpose of this study was to provide insights into the implementation of the NCS on not-for-profit, community-based ECEC services that previously participated in the Childcare Community Subvention Scheme. Within community childcare settings in Fingal, there are four main areas of concern regarding the implementation of the NCS:

1

## Eligibility and capitation rates of NCS (compared to CCS)

2

## Reduced access to and participation in ECEC for children at risk of and experiencing poverty

3

## Financial sustainability of not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings

4

## Administrative and operational difficulties, including challenges in securing ‘sponsorship’.

### 1.

## Eligibility and capitation rates of NCS (compared to CCS)

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme was introduced in 2008 to support community-based childcare services in continuing to provide quality childcare at reduced rates to disadvantaged parents. Since then, there have been several changes to the scheme, including changes to eligibility criteria and a reduction in higher capitation rates and the inclusion of private, for-profit settings in the funding programme. Under the CCS/CCS Plus bands (see Appendix 3), parents were eligible for assistance with childcare costs, with the Band A payment of €145 available to a broad base of parents at risk of social isolation or economic vulnerability.

The NCS is a universal and income-related subsidy. The universal subsidy is set at a rate of €0.50 per hour. It is available for up to 40 hours per week for a child aged between 24 weeks and 36 months (or until the child qualifies for the Early Childhood Care and Education programme if later). The income-assessed subsidy is available for children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years. It provides a higher subsidy rate than the universal subsidy for working parents with an annual income below €60,000. The level of subsidy depends on the child's age and parental income (DCEDIY, 2020). The NCS does not currently make any special provision for children in families experiencing long-term unemployment. Registration to the NCS requires parents to disclose

their personal details and those of their partner, with PPS numbers, in order to gather data from the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection as part of the assessment and verification of income (DCEDIY, 2020, p. 14).

A key concern regarding the transition from CCS to NCS is that children at risk of social isolation, economic deprivation and educational disadvantage will see a reduction in their access to early childhood care and education. This also impacts the financial sustainability of not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings. Under NCS, a significant number of families that were previously eligible for full-time ECEC provision, based on their financial circumstances (e.g. in receipt of a medical card and a social welfare payment), are no longer entitled to financial assistance to access full-time care. As NCS is an income-related subsidy, children from families experiencing unemployment are entitled to a maximum of 20 hours of universal provision per week. The NCS allows for ‘sponsored referrals’ where ‘designated bodies’ can make childcare provisions for a child based on ‘child welfare, child protection, family support or other specified grounds’ (DCEDIY, 2020, p. 73). The criteria for sponsorship vary greatly across the designated bodies, and there are regional variations in the level of childcare provision awarded to children. The settings

reported significant disparity in access to personnel within designated statutory bodies and the levels of support approved for individual children under the NCS programme. Not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal report that ‘where there are not many full-time working parents, in areas of extreme disadvantage, childcare provision will be reduced’ (Participant 4).



## 2. Reduced access to and participation in ECEC for children at risk of and experiencing poverty

The overview of services provides insights into the levels of provision and high-quality service offered by not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal. The profiles also provide insight into the levels of deprivation and socio-economic disadvantage within these areas where poverty and social isolation are known to have significant and pervasive effects on children's lives and development.

The findings of the questionnaire and interviews with centre managers indicate that the implementation of the NCS has resulted in reduced access to ECEC for children at risk of poverty. Staff working in these settings are deeply concerned that implementation of the programme fails to meet the childcare and educational needs of children attending their settings and families within the local community, with one manager stating; *'the NCS doesn't consider the cohort of families accessing the service'* (Participant 1).

### Reduced access to ECEC

All ten services expressed concerns that for the children attending their services, the eligibility criteria for financial assistance under NCS will result in a significant reduction in funding per child and a reduction in funded hours available to them. One setting manager stated, *'next year, we anticipate not having many children*

*on full-time hours; they are now only receiving only four hours per day compared to full-time hours on CCS'* (Participant 3).

One setting reported that they 'lost' four families as parents did not complete the NCS registration. This was attributed to several issues, including: low literacy levels and IT skills, parents not having an email address, and limited access to computers. While managers stated that assistance with registration is available to parents through the Childcare Committees, some parents were unwilling to discuss and disclose personal information with unknown personnel. It was also reported that some parents were concerned with how their information would be used and whether declarations for Hive registration would impact social welfare payments or housing provision. Therefore, they chose to withdraw their children from the setting rather than complete NCS registration.

In particular, settings expressed concerns for: single-parent families, children from the Traveller and Roma communities, and families experiencing long-term unemployment. The settings report that these children have seen a significant reduction in eligibility for full-day and part-time care due to NCS eligibility criteria. Settings

stated that the most vulnerable children and families had seen a reduction of hours, primarily due to their family's employment status or parental difficulties in completing the cumbersome registration process. Across the ten services in this study, just four children from Traveller and Roma families attended; managers stated that this was a significant reduction from previous years when funding was provided under CCS.

Staff report that the introduction of NCS has resulted in reduced financial assistance and provision for many children, particularly those from single-parent families and families experiencing long-term unemployment. In some cases, parents have attempted to retain full-time care by paying increased parental contributions. In almost all cases, this has not been sustainable, with parents unable to meet the cost and choosing to leave the setting due to outstanding payments. Nine of the services that participated in the study reported that funding under NCS does not provide adequate support for vulnerable families and their children. One manager stated, *'most vulnerable children are getting a lot fewer hours than previously, especially if parents are not working'* (Participant 6).

It was reported that the reduction

*"Next year, we anticipate not having many children on full-time hours; they are now only receiving only four hours per day compared to full-time hours on CCS"*

of hours, from full-time care (40 hours per week) to part-time care (20 hours per week), means that for some parents, the journey to and from the setting is not feasible, and they have chosen to keep their children at home. One setting reported that one family, where the children were previously able to access full-day care under CCS (Band A), would now see increased fees of €1,569 per child per year for a family with five children, three of whom attend the setting. The family attempted to pay for six weeks but could not meet the cost and left the service. They enrolled the eldest child in a sessional service close to their home. As this setting does not cater for infants and toddlers, the two younger children are no longer enrolled in an early childhood service.

### » Case Study

*Kayla is a three-year-old attending a not-for-profit, community-based childcare service in Dublin 15. Kayla lives with her mother, Sharon, who is parenting alone and holds a medical card. Kayla had been attending crèche full time (35 hours per week) under the CCSP scheme. This provided Kayla with access to full-time early childhood education and care, and two meals (one of those being a hot meal) and two snacks every day. To avail of this scheme,*

*Sharon paid €44 per week for a full-time place for Kayla.*

*When commencing the setting, Kayla had displayed aggressive behaviours and had lashed out at her friends when she felt angry or scared. Kayla finds it difficult to process information and can misunderstand social cues. Kayla can be clingy to adults and often lacks boundaries when meeting new adults. She can become aggressive very quickly, and staff reported that she tended to run from them at any opportunity. Sharon reported finding her behaviours and needs at home extremely difficult to manage. Sharon has caring responsibilities for her elderly parents also, and they all reside in the same home. Sharon feels overwhelmed most days. After attending the service for several months, Kayla's behaviours had settled, and she had learned to communicate more effectively, displaying less aggression and managing to cope better in social settings. Sharon noticed similar improvements at home and noted that times in the day like bedtime and dinner time were much less stressful. Kayla now eats a more balanced diet, and her sleep has improved.*

*In July 2020, Sharon was offered a part-time job, and it was suggested that she would benefit from*

*transferring Kayla to the NCS. Under NCS, Kayla attended for 35 hours per week, and Sharon paid the same 'top-up' fee of €44. Unfortunately, due to caring commitments at home, Kayla's mother was unable to maintain her employment. When she reapplied for Kayla's NCS place in September 2020, she was informed that she would only be eligible for a maximum of 20 hours' ECEC per week. If Sharon wanted to maintain a full-time place, her weekly fee would increase from €44 to €87 per week.*

*Sharon tried to keep up the weekly payments but found that this put her under too much pressure financially, and following three weeks of funding under NCS, she removed Kayla from the service.*

### Negative impact on health and wellbeing

Settings also report that reduced provision for children has impacted their health, physical wellbeing and development. Children attending full-day care in Ireland are provided with two meals (including one hot meal) and two snacks per day, as per the Early Years Quality and Regulatory Framework (Tusla, 2018). Due to the reduction in childcare provision and reduced hours of attendance, settings are not required to provide two meals and two snacks. Therefore, children attending sessional or part-time care

will have reduced access to nutritional meals and snacks throughout the day. This is particularly worrying for children at risk of or experiencing food poverty. Some of the settings that participated in the study reported that while children's hours of attendance are reduced, they continue to provide a hot meal to all children; however, this is not financially sustainable in the long term.

Three managers expressed concerns about children's opportunities for outdoor play when hours of attendance were reduced. The outdoor learning experiences available in childcare settings are extremely important for children's development. It was reported that many children live in accommodation that is cramped and overcrowded, with insufficient space and materials to support children's play and movement. A significant number of children attending the settings live in homeless accommodation with limited access to outdoor play. In addition, the local areas and communities often offer little in the way of safe, accessible play spaces for infants and young children. For many children, it is reported that their time in the setting may be the only opportunity for outdoor play, movement and exercise.

#### » Case Study

Jake is a four-year-old attending a not-for-profit community service in Fingal. Jake's mother died when he was two years old, and he currently lives with his father in a two-bedroom apartment. Jake has been attending

childcare since he was three. Under the CCS scheme, because his father receives a widow's pension, Jake was awarded Band A, which provided €145 towards the 36 hours of education and care per week. Within the setting, Jake received two meals and two snacks, twice-daily outdoor play and activity, and access to a play therapist, and his father took part in a parenting group.

Jake presents with delayed speech and can present as very withdrawn in social settings. After three months of attending the service, staff began to notice that Jake was appearing more relaxed, more capable of using his speech to express his needs. His angry outbursts had lessened, and he was developing good self-care skills such as toileting, handwashing and independent feeding.

During a period of high stress at home, Jake's father became overwhelmed and struggled to cope with the management of the household. He could not get Jake to the centre and withdrew him from the setting. In September 2020, Jake's father sought to re-enrol him in the setting. Upon his return, staff noticed that Jake's behaviour had somewhat deteriorated, and he was presenting as withdrawn again.

Jake was registered under NCS and, under this scheme, was entitled to a maximum of 20 hours per week ECEC. If he wanted to avail of a full-time place (36 hours per week), the parental contribution would be €75 per week. Jake's father was not previously required to contribute to childcare costs and found the €75

per week cost unaffordable for him, based on his family's current income and financial circumstances.

Jake currently attends 15 hours per week from 9.30am to 12.30pm. He is provided with a snack during the sessions and brings a packed lunch from home. Jake's key worker reports that he has found the transition to sessional care difficult, and Jake does not understand why he cannot stay in the setting for a full day with his friends and teachers. Staff report that Jake can become distressed easily and that the initial gains in independent skills, self-regulation and cooperative play have been negatively impacted.

#### The disparity in provision for siblings

Due to the gradual introduction of NCS, the CCS scheme has been retained for those children who were enrolled before November 2019. In many cases, older siblings qualified for and retained full-time provision under CCS. In contrast, their newly enrolled siblings are eligible for a maximum of 20 hours, based on the parents' employment status. This means a minimum of three collections and drop-offs for families, depending on the start and end time of the sessions. More recently, full- and part-time drop-off times have been staggered due to COVID-19 infection control measures. This means that parents must wait outside the setting for an extended period or return home with younger children.

#### » Case Study

Paul is a single father of three young children attending a service in Dublin

15. Paul's two older children are registered under CCS and receive financial assistance for full-time care at no additional cost to Paul. Paul's third and youngest child will soon be joining the setting but will be registered under the NCS funding programme. Both Paul and the staff working in the setting have noticed the differences between the experiences of the older two children and Paul's youngest child.

Paul does not have an email address or access to a computer, so staff from the service supported Paul's Hive registrations and CHICK allocation. As Paul has difficulty with literacy, numeracy and computer skills, staff have provided access to a computer and assisted Paul through the process. To do this, they had to ensure that Paul was given time and support to log online and complete the application for a CHICK number. Paul had to share personal details and data with staff, including personal circumstances, family income and employment status. The registration process took approximately three hours to complete over three separate visits to the setting, meaning staff were required to fit this into their schedules and remove themselves from their work with the children and their family support work to complete this.

Under NCS, Paul's youngest child was awarded 20 hours ECEC per week. The top-up cost for full-time provision, to match that of his two siblings who receive CCS, would be €104.75 per week for Paul. Paul was unable to afford the additional cost of full-time care for the youngest

child. While the family are at risk of poverty and social isolation, the children would not meet the criteria for a sponsored referral. This means that Paul was forced to accept the 20 hours per week for his youngest child whilst his older children received full-time care. Paul now spent an additional hour of his day managing the multiple collections from the service while also providing dinner and care for his youngest child in the afternoon, whilst his older children remained in the service.

Paul has been seeking employment for some time now, but this search is becoming increasingly difficult given the reduced childcare provision for his youngest child. Paul is also worried that he will struggle to manage all the daily requirements if he gains employment or a place on a training course.

#### Summary

The case studies are just some of the many examples offered by settings to highlight the negative impact of childcare funding under the NCS. It is well known that children experiencing poverty and social isolation are most likely to benefit from more hours of quality early childhood care and education. These children benefit across all areas of development, including health, wellbeing, capacity for learning and social interaction. The questionnaires and interviews with managers of not-for-profit, community-based settings indicate that funding under the NCS has reduced children's access to and participation in ECEC relative to the financial supports available under CCS.

Reduced access to high-quality ECEC means that the poorest, most vulnerable children, a group most likely to benefit from early childhood education, are placed at an additional disadvantage. Implementation of the NCS, without targeted provision for children at risk of poverty, will widen the disadvantage gap.

The current funding system has resulted in a reduction in educational support, learning experiences, and interactions. It lessens the time and space available for children to cultivate relationships with their peers and educators. A move from full-time to part-time care means that settings, both private and community-based, are not required to provide two meals and two snacks per day; this is particularly important for the significant number of children in Ireland experiencing food poverty. Children most at risk of poverty will miss out on these vital experiences, cementing the impact and harmful effects of disadvantage before they even begin schooling.

### 3. Financial sustainability of not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings

In Ireland, early intervention and prevention services for children experiencing deprivation are predominantly delivered by the community and voluntary sector (Brocklesby, 2016). There is little continuity in how these services are funded, with input from a range of government departments and statutory agencies, each with different roles, remits and policy priorities. For not-for-profit, community-based, early childhood settings, these differences and discrepancies in funding are reflected in significant variation in early childhood provision in terms of hours of operation, staffing profiles, curriculum approaches and additional supports for children and families. Currently, no government-led, cross-departmental cooperation is specifically targeted at supporting young children at risk of deprivation, social exclusion and educational disadvantage from birth to six years.

For the ten settings that participated in this study, provision for children and families is inextricably linked with financial sustainability. While many not-for-profit, community-based settings in Ireland receive operational funding from Tusla or the HSE through grant-aid agreement, none of the ten services that contributed to this study receives this. All ten settings rely on funding from DCEDIY and parent contributions.

All ten settings indicated that their operational models have had to change over the last decade due to reduced levels of government funding and significant increases in operational costs, such as rent and insurance. The reductions in funding have been ongoing and incremental, with changes in scheme eligibility and reductions in the capitation rates made under CCS in 2013 and 2016, and most significantly, the implementation of NCS in 2019.

The following were the key areas of concern for the ten settings that participated in the study:

#### Reduced Income and Capitation per Child

All ten settings indicated that they would see a reduction in the funding per child based on NCS hourly rates; this was particularly pertinent for children aged three years and older attending on a full-time basis. For the five settings currently offering full-day education and care, only a very small number of children will qualify for financial assistance for a full-day place (40 hours per week). Staff reported that to remain financially viable, they would have to prioritise provision for children of working parents who are likely to qualify for the maximum financial assistance of 40 hours per week. This means that there would be reduced availability of places for children whose parents are

not working and cannot afford to pay increased parental fees (who would be entitled to a maximum of 20 hours per week). One manager commented that *'full-day care is unsustainable due to vulnerable families not being entitled to it'* (Manager 3). This means that a cohort of children, those most at risk of poverty and social exclusion, are placed at an additional disadvantage in securing a place in a not-for-profit, community-based setting.

#### » Case Study

*Busy Bees is located in an area described as 'very disadvantaged' by Pobal Deprivation Indicators. In 2019, almost all parents attending the setting qualified for CCS Band A based on One-Parent Family, Illness and Disability Payment, Carer's Allowance and PHN referral.*

*Under NCS, parents receiving the One-Parent Family, Disability or Carer's Allowance are no longer eligible for financial assistance. Furthermore, the local PHN has not been conducting developmental checks due to work demands and COVID restrictions, and therefore sponsored referrals from the PHN have not been possible. As a result, children funded under NCS can only qualify for the 'standard hours' subsidy' of 20 hours per week. This means a reduction of almost 50%*

*in capitation per child compared to funding under CCS. For a three-year-old child, this is the equivalent of a reduction of €55 per week or €2,750 per child per annum.*

*The manager is currently providing five children with full-day care (30 hours per week) due to high levels of need for the children and families. The setting is only receiving capitation for 20 hours, and the manager is hopeful that the PHN will have availability to support sponsorship in September 2021. If the PHN cannot complete the assessment and paperwork for sponsorship, full-time provision for these children will result in a funding shortfall of almost €15,000 in the year.*

#### Reduction in Hours of Operation

Nine of the ten not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal indicated that their current operational model and fees structure would not be financially viable following the withdrawal of CCS and full implementation of NCS. Implementation of NCS significantly reduces hours of ECEC for children living in homes experiencing unemployment. As a result of this, five of the settings stated that they would have to consider reducing opening hours, from full-time ECEC (28–40 hours per week) to part-time (maximum 20 hours per week), or for part-time services, a move to sessional services only (15–20 hours

per week). While this may reduce staffing costs, lighting, heat and food costs, it does not reduce the large overhead costs of rent and insurance and represents a significant loss of ECEC provision.

#### » Case Study

*Happy Days Community Childcare Setting has a maximum of 35 full-day care places available. In 2019, 23 children (65%) were eligible for CCS Band A funding of €145 per week, for 28 hours of education and care per week, over 50 weeks per year. Depending on individual circumstances, parent contributions ranged from €5 to €40 per week, with almost all parents making a small contribution to their child's care and education.*

*Due to high levels of unemployment in families of children attending the setting, under NCS only three children attending the service (8%) would qualify for financial assistance with the full-time provision (28 hours per week). For the few children eligible to receive financial assistance, funding under NCS is paid at an hourly rate of approximately €3.95 per hour (€114 per child per week for 28 hours). In contrast, the hourly capitation per child under CCS (Band A full-time) was €5.20 per hour (€145 per week for 28 hours). Implementation of NCS, for those*

*eligible for more than universal provision, equates to a reduction in funding of more than €30 per child per week for the same level of provision. Parents attending this service cannot afford to pay the shortfall in funding. If the service tries to maintain full-day provision for their existing cohort of children, they are likely to see at least a 50% reduction in their gross income due to NCS eligibility criteria and NCS hourly rates.*

The setting is therefore considering two options:

*Option A is to 'hold' 50–70% of places for children of working families that qualify for maximum financial assistance and those that can make parental contributions. This leaves only 8–10 places available for the 65% of the cohort that previously qualified for the Band A subvention.*

*Option B is to move from full-day care (28 hours per week) to part-time provision (20 hours per week), reducing staff, operating at lower adult:child ratios to reduce costs, and no longer providing a hot meal for children at lunchtime. Option B dramatically reduces provision for children and families but is unlikely to increase sustainability as rent, insurance, and overheads will remain at the same level irrespective of opening hours.*



### Staffing Costs and Service Delivery

As outlined in the service profiles, all ten settings have established well-qualified teams with degree-led staff cohorts committed to quality provision and enhanced support for children experiencing poverty and social isolation. Some settings are fortunate to have retained their core staff for over a decade. Despite their commitment to high-quality ECEC, seven of the ten services stated that the current funding model does not adequately cover the costs of providing high-quality early childhood services. Specifically, the settings are concerned that they cannot afford to train and retain staff on a decent wage based on NCS funding rates. One manager explained that the children attending their setting require highly qualified educators, more so than their same-aged peers attending private settings:

*‘Maybe our staff earn slightly more [than a private ECEC service], but we need the skills, we need the experience. I can hire a Level 5 for less money, but they can’t do what we need, it’s not the same quality, and they won’t last’ (Manager 7)*

While the settings remain committed to well-qualified staff, many spoke of the difficulty in meeting salary expectations,

retaining staff within squeezed budgets and losing staff if the business model moved from full-day to part-time hours. *‘Our staff are our biggest cost, so if we lose funding, it makes sense we lose jobs’ (Manager 2)*. Another commented, *‘I can’t pay full-time pay for part-time hours, and we will lose them’ (Manager 8)*.

Nine out of ten services had staff working under a government-funded employment scheme. While these staff are not included in ratios, they increase the adult:child ratio and enhance care and supervision for children. While such schemes support settings, they are meant to be short-term and transitional, and the settings should not be dependent on them. Those taking part in the government schemes should be provided with adequate training, support and supervision to ensure they benefit, but with reduced funding these supports are not always available. While all the settings highlighted the value and importance of CE workers, they acknowledged the limitations of employment schemes, both for the employee and the setting.

### Financial Planning and Projections

For many children attending the settings, their family’s personal and employment circumstances can be

subject to change. CCS funding was determined based on a ‘snapshot’ of children registered in services contracted under CCS during a particular period, with eligibility for approval of funding based on the parent or child meeting the eligibility criteria in that period. While this process was not without its challenges, the settings could make reasonable financial projections based on the snapshot week.

The managers reported that financial planning under NCS is much less clear, as NCS capitation can change weekly, and managers are not notified of claims ending or changing. One manager reported that the administrative load is extremely burdensome: *‘It is far more difficult than before; I even find it hard trying to do it all’ (Manager 3)*. Six of the managers highlighted difficulties faced when attempting financial forecasting; this was attributed to inconsistency in capitation per child and the continually changing funding levels under the NCS, resulting in variations in parent fees and ongoing administration throughout the year.

### » Case Study

**Blanchardstown Babes offers sessional, part-time and full-time provision. Kai is a four-year-old**

*“Maybe our staff earn slightly more [than a private ECEC service], but we need the skills, we need the experience. I can hire a Level 5 for less money, but they can’t do what we need, it’s not the same quality, and they won’t last”*

boy who has been attending the setting for three years. Kai’s mother is parenting alone, and under CCS he qualified for Band A provision of €145 per week for a full-time place.

Kai left the setting in 2019 as his mother secured a job and housing in another area of the city. Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, Kai’s mother lost her job, and they had to return to Dublin 15 to live with his grandmother and extended family.

When re-enrolling in the setting under NCS, Kai is no longer eligible for financial assistance for full-day care as his mother is currently unemployed. He therefore participates in the Early Childhood Care and Education programme in term time for 38 weeks per year and NCS for the remaining 12 weeks. To receive funding for Kai, the setting must reapply for his NCS place using the Hive portal a total of five times each year: three mid-terms, Christmas and Easter breaks. While the level of sessional provision remains the same, the capitation received by the setting is €80.25 for 38 weeks per year and €59.25 for non-term time, which is a shortfall of €21 per week.

Kai’s access to ECEC is reduced due to the NCS, and his mother is finding

it difficult to look for and secure employment and housing in the three hours each day that Kai is in the setting.

### Increased Costs: Rent, Overheads and Insurance

All ten settings reported increased overhead costs in the last five years, with significant increases in rent, insurance and utilities. While staff salaries account for approximately 70–80% of all costs, even small increases to rent and bills can significantly impact financial sustainability. One setting located in a local community centre reported that attempts were made to increase the rent by over 147%. With no possibility of meeting this cost, the voluntary board of the service could not agree to the increase, as a result the sustainability of the service is under threat. This service will be required to source additional funds to pay this through fundraising in the local community. Across Ireland, childcare settings report increased rent and overhead costs, particularly insurance premiums that have skyrocketed in the last five years. This presents a double dose of disadvantage for not-for-profit settings as these increased costs cannot be recouped from other income sources such as parent fees.

### Summary

Not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal offer early childhood care and education and responsive supports for families. This type of local, accessible service provision is well documented to be the most effective in supporting children and families at risk of social isolation and economic deprivation (Gilligan, 2004). Despite the important service offered by these settings, nine of the ten not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal indicated that their current operational model would not be financially sustainable following the withdrawal of CCS and full implementation of NCS. The current findings suggest that current funding under the NCS is inadequate to meet the cost of high-quality provision.

## 4.

## Administrative and operational difficulties, including challenges in securing ‘sponsorship’.

The settings that participated in this study indicated a significant number of administrative and operational difficulties associated with the implementation of the NCS. These have included registration for the income-assessed subsidy as well as the process of sponsor subsidies. This has resulted in difficulties for parents, for staff within settings, and in provision for children.

### Parent difficulties: Hive registration and CHICK numbers

Not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal offer early childhood care and education and family support to some of Ireland’s most economically vulnerable and socially isolated families and children. This includes children from lone-parent households, newcomer families, families living in homeless accommodation, parents who have experienced domestic or intimate partner violence, and parents with drug and alcohol addiction. Many of the families have busy and sometimes chaotic lives. These aspects of disadvantage and deprivation have been found to limit the parents’ capacity to engage in the process of registration, application for the CHICK number and CHICK updates for many reasons, including: limited access to computers or smartphones and poor IT skills, difficulty with aspects of language and literacy, and a reluctance to engage with unknown professionals or agencies to advocate for themselves or their children.

While the NCS aims to provide ‘an innovative and user-friendly online application process, all ten settings

reported that parents had found the process of Hive registration and application for a CHICK number to be time-consuming and complicated. This was attributed to several factors: no MyGovID, no email address, no access to a laptop or smartphone, no internet access, and limited digital literacy skills. Parents who did not have a Public Services Card to set up their MyGovID indicated that it took four weeks to get an appointment with their local Intreo office to apply for one.

The managers reported that parents had found the process of declaring these difficulties to staff in the settings to be invasive and embarrassing and were reluctant to contact the local Community Childcare Committee for assistance over the phone. Some settings stated that they had offered support to parents, setting up email addresses and helping with registration, but this process of declaring income and details of those living in the family home can be challenging. In some cases, individual parents have refused to complete the registration because they were scared that the declarations would impact their social welfare allowance or housing assistance.

The difficulties experienced have directly impacted children as the setting does not receive funding until the place has been approved. This means that parents either have to pay full fees to the service until funding is approved or the child does not attend until the application is complete. Some services have allowed children

to attend, despite no funding, or the setting has ‘reserved’ the childcare place for these families for the duration of the application process.

### Administrative Issues

All ten services indicated that the significant administrative burden associated with the NCS requires additional input and staff time, with one manager stating, ‘*the admin time is much more intense, and far more time-consuming*’ (Setting 9). Managers reported that the current process is much more cumbersome than the processes required for CCS. This was primarily attributed to the difficulties that parents were experiencing with Hive registration and CHICK numbers. In all cases, settings had to individually support parents with the process, in some cases bringing parents into the centre to use their computers or supporting completion on the parent’s phone. Settings reported that managers are spending an extensive amount of time managing CHICK numbers following registration. The setting is not notified when CHICK numbers are due to expire, and when parents do not inform the service, the funding can be withdrawn with no prior notice. Parents have to re-apply for a new CHICK number, which can take some time; in the interim, the service is not receiving any funding for the childcare place, resulting in additional financial losses. Managers report that they have had to set calendar reminders for parents for the expiration of their CHICK number and reset email and access passwords when they have been lost or forgotten.

### » Case Study

*Ciara is a single parent with one child who currently attends Happy Feet Community Crèche in Dublin 15. Ciara struggles with literacy and digital literacy skills and does not have access to a computer or email address. Ciara tried unsuccessfully to register her daughter for NCS. She approached the setting and tearfully explained her situation to the manager of the setting. Ciara had found the process to be frustrating and embarrassing, and was unsure of how to access support. She had tried to call the parent helpline but found it difficult to articulate her difficulties over the phone. She was offered a ‘paper’ registration, but this presented the same challenges in terms of her confidence and skills with reading and writing.*

*The manager invited Ciara to come into the service to assist her in setting up an email address on one of their computers. The service helped Ciara to set up an email address and fill in the registration form. They then made time for Ciara to come back to check her emails for the CHICK number to complete registration. This process was lengthy and required the manager to have a laptop available and make time and space to support Ciara over several visits.*

### Sponsor Subsidies

The NCS includes special provisions for ‘vulnerable children and families’ to receive access to early childhood education and care through a sponsored referral. The legislation

that underpins the NCS details the five statutory bodies that can refer a child for a fully funded sponsored place (see Schedule 2 of the Childcare Support Act 2018) (Government of Ireland, 2018a). This means that the parent(s) of a sponsored child will pay no fees to the childcare provider, and there is no income assessment involved.

All ten services report that the eligibility criteria for a sponsored referral are extremely limited, with significant variation in the grounds for making a referral, the hours that may be referred and rates per hour, according to the statutory body or individual making the referral. In some areas, sponsorship can only apply to children experiencing extreme vulnerability, such as those that are involved with Tusla, have a history of ‘neglect’ or parents experiencing addiction. In contrast, in other areas, sponsorship referrals can be made based on behavioural or physical development concerns raised by a PHN. As with the rationale for referral, the sponsorship agencies have no clear policy on the allocation of hours. Some state that children benefit from a maximum of 20 hours, with others approving up to 45 hours’ education and care per week. It appears that the sponsorship agencies do not have clear criteria for what the award should be, so allocation is based on an individual’s awareness of the NCS and professional judgement as to the number of hours they believe the child would benefit from.

Settings report that sponsorship

referrals take a minimum of four weeks to complete, and up to three months before funding is allocated. In some cases, families are told that they are not eligible for sponsorship as they are not ‘case managed’ by the statutory bodies. This has included children experiencing significant childhood trauma, such as homelessness, domestic violence, and parent imprisonment or drug and alcohol abuse. The managers reported that some parents are reluctant to seek a social work referral as they fear it may result in added pressure for their family. Settings also state that many of the families experiencing homelessness are not aware of how they can apply for childcare support. In addition, due to high staff turnover in the agencies, this results in significant delays to sponsorship referrals and funded places. It appears that inconsistent messaging and poor communication between the Pobal, sponsorship agencies and community childcare settings require setting managers and staff to spend significant amounts of time on administration and follow-up on individual referrals with PHNs, social workers and homeless support workers. Four managers reported significant delays in sponsorship referrals that resulted in a lack of provision for children in immediate need. One service waited eight months without funding due to the delays in referral forms being sent to the correct department in the HSE. Services are not funded for the duration of the sponsorship referral application process, and there is no process for backdated payments.

» **Case Study**

Nola is a three-year-old child attending a community-based setting in Dublin 15. She has experienced significant adversity in early childhood due to domestic violence and the imprisonment of a parent. At present, Nola has been temporarily placed with her grandparents under a guardianship agreement.

Nola's grandparents and the setting manager believe that full-day provision would offer high levels of support and assistance to both Nola and her family. It would provide enriched learning and development experiences in a safe and secure environment, with access to highly qualified educators who have recently completed trauma-informed practice training. The service has predictable routines, well-equipped indoor and outdoor learning spaces and a child-centred curriculum approach.

As Nola does not live with either of her parents, the income-based assessment could not be completed, and as the guardianship with her grandparents is temporary, they could not apply on her behalf.

The manager of the setting contacted Nola's social worker to recommend a sponsor referral for full-day care. The social worker was not aware of NCS sponsorship and believed that because Nola was now in the care of her grandparents she was no longer 'at risk of harm or neglect'. The manager had to inform the social worker of the criteria and process for NCS sponsorship, providing a

rationale for why Nola would benefit from access to and participation in ECEC.

The sponsor referral and approval took over two months to complete. In the interim, the setting agreed to take the child for three hours each day, with no funding or fees, which meant the service was operating at a loss throughout.

The settings report that the process of sponsor referrals involves multiple departments, which has resulted in significant delays, in some cases with children missing out on months of provision. The delays result in a lack of provision for children in immediate need. In some cases, childcare settings offer ECEC and family support without funding, therefore operating at a loss.

**Summary**

The examples provided above give insight into the challenges of administering the NCS and the very significant impact this has on children's access to and participation in ECEC, particularly for children who can be considered vulnerable to the effects of poverty and social isolation. While the NCS aims to streamline administration, the systems for sponsorship require early childhood educators to advocate, and in many cases inform other professionals of the need for and benefit of ECEC. The disparities in allocations and referral processes place an undue burden on staff in ECEC, whose effort and energy are best placed working directly with children and their families.



## 3

# Conclusion and Recommendations

Early childhood disadvantage has immediate negative effects on a child's wellbeing and early development and long-term influences on mental health, wellbeing, academic achievement and wider societal participation. Quality early childhood care and education can mitigate the effects and influences of childhood poverty and deprivation.

As part of the First 5 Strategy (Government of Ireland, 2018b), a commitment has been made by the Irish government to improve access to affordable, quality early childhood education that supports children's best interests, particularly for families at risk of social isolation and economic deprivation. More recently, in June 2021, the government committed to upholding the issues addressed in the European Child Guarantee. This aims to prevent social exclusion by guaranteeing the access of children in need to early childhood education and care, education, healthcare, nutrition and housing.

While implementing the National Childcare Scheme is an important step in delivering quality, accessible, affordable childcare, the scheme requires careful poverty-proofing.

This will ensure that children most at risk of poverty, deprivation and social isolation are not doubly disadvantaged by labour activation policies that encourage entry into the labour force. While increased work intensity can potentially reduce child poverty, it is not a panacea. Government policies, implementation strategies and funding mechanisms must recognise and meaningfully respond to the intergenerational nexus of poverty, educational disadvantage, trauma, social exclusion and deprivation experienced by children and families across Ireland.

This study has provided an insight into not-for-profit, community-based childcare provision in Fingal. The findings suggest that the implementation of the NCS has negatively impacted access to and participation in ECEC for some of Fingal's poorest and most vulnerable children. These children are extremely susceptible to the ill effects of material deprivation and family stress and are those most likely to benefit from high-quality early childhood care and education. The changes to eligibility and capitation rates for the NCS, compared with those on the CCS Programme, are likely to result in financial instability of not-for-profit settings. These

services have previously supported children from areas that experience high unemployment, disability and social exclusion, for whom provision under NCS is dramatically reduced. Finally, the study highlights significant and ongoing concerns about the administration of, and access to, sponsored subsidies for children experiencing extreme vulnerability. Despite efforts to streamline this process, children in need are not receiving timely access to adequate levels of ECEC support.

The concerns presented in this report reflect the experiences of not-for-profit, community-based settings in Fingal. More recently, the same concerns have been voiced by educators and advocates for ECEC across Ireland. A cross-departmental working group is recommended at a national level to examine mechanisms to provide targeted, high-quality early childhood education and care for children experiencing and at risk of poverty and deprivation across Ireland. Included in the terms of reference must be the eligibility criteria for identifying children and families at risk, as well as the level of local need for not-for-profit, community-based ECEC provision.

## Local Level Recommendations

Fingal CYPSC has a vision of Fingal as the best county in Ireland in 'which children, young people and their families live, grow up and raise a family, and where the rights of all children and young people are respected, protected and fulfilled; where their voices are heard and where they are supported to realise their maximum potential now and in the future' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2014, p. viii).

This study highlights the enhanced provision and support offered to children and families by not-for-profit early childhood settings in Fingal. FCYPSC recommends targeted funding to support the delivery of high-quality early childhood education and care for children experiencing poverty and social isolation in Fingal. It has the following recommendations:

### Enhanced Childcare Infrastructure in Fingal

Childcare infrastructure is critical to the enhancement of Fingal as a great place to 'live, work, visit and do business'. There is a dearth of purpose-built, accessible childcare facilities across the county. This is particularly salient for not-for-profit, community-based childcare settings operating in areas of deprivation. It is recommended that the Fingal CYPSC work in partnership with Fingal County Council and the Department of Education to support the development of not-for-profit childcare settings in community centres and school sites across Fingal.

### Targeted Supports for Disadvantaged Children

A funding scheme/model is required that allows for the sufficient development of not-for-profit community childcare services that place children at the centre of local level and specific service decision-making, and where funding allows services to maintain sufficient financial stability and flexibility to provide targeted early childhood education and care that is led by children, family and community need.

Children experiencing poverty and social isolation benefit from access to high-quality early childhood care and education. In Fingal, we believe this can be achieved by developing a model of not-for-profit, community-based provision that places children at the centre of decision making.

It is proposed that this model be facilitated by providing targeted funding for childcare places in community-based settings rather

than individual capitation per child. Capitation should be based on the average regional childcare costs for full-day care with a 20% poverty premium applied to account for the enhanced services and supports offered in the settings.

The settings would be required to operate as not-for-profit, community-based services, adopting a shared approach to governance and sustainability in compliance with the Charities Governance Code for Childcare Settings.

Children's eligibility to attend would be based on a shared definition of poverty and social exclusion that includes but is not limited to: family income, housing, health, education and vulnerable groups such as lone-parent families and children from the Traveller and Roma communities.

The not-for-profit community settings should be encouraged to offer full-day ECEC provision (8 am

to 6 pm) for children experiencing poverty and social deprivation. Throughout the day, access to the service will provide children with enriching play and learning experiences, responsive care, peer interaction, nutritionally balanced meals, and opportunities for outdoor play and physical activity. It is recommended that settings consider implementing curriculum approaches and pedagogies developed to enhance the early learning and care experiences of children at risk of educational disadvantage.

Settings should have a skilled, degree-led workforce that is socially valued and appropriately remunerated. It is recommended that not-for-profit, community-based settings across Fingal work collectively to develop shared staff profiles and remuneration targets that consider staff roles and responsibilities, including setting managers, room leaders, support staff, and auxiliary teams.

Community-based settings should not be reliant on government employment programmes such as the Community Employment Scheme. Staff should have access to continuing professional development opportunities relevant to the children and families attending their setting. This could include: trauma-informed practice, positive parenting programmes and child wellbeing and resilience.

Increased investment will support the financial sustainability of the ten existing not-for-profit community services in Fingal. However, in a system that heavily relies on the for-profit sector, there is a risk that increased funding will go towards profit rather than investing in high-quality provision. It is imperative that all of the capitation and allocated funds are spent solely in the children's best interests. A graduate-led workforce designed to deliver high-quality provision for children is the best way to address

the attainment gap through ECEC (Sutton Trust, 2021). Addressing the attainment gap will require a sustained focus, multi-sectoral collaboration and a highly qualified workforce in order to address the individual needs of children and their families and allow equal access and opportunities for children experiencing disadvantage.

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# Additional Information

## Ethical Considerations

In this study, all participants were provided with information explaining the purpose of the study before engaging in the research process. The aims, proposed outcomes and methodology were explained and discussed prior to participants giving informed consent to contribute to the research.

Information elicited from participants and arising from the research was secured safely, on a password-protected computer, which only the researcher had access to. The privacy of participants was upheld throughout and all information shared with the researcher remained confidential; individual contributors were not identified as having taken part in the research. All quotes and personal stories were de-identified and no information that might identify an individual was used in the reporting of the findings.

The survey included a service profile and questionnaire, and the format and content were piloted and reviewed by a manager of a well-established not-for-profit, community-based childcare setting in Dublin City with feedback provided in relation to the usability and clarity of the questions.

# Appendices

## Appendix 1: Examples of Enhanced Provision

### Barnardos Mulhuddart Early Years Service

Church Road, Dublin 15

The service has been in operation for 30 years. It is a referral-based service receiving referrals from across Dublin 15. It offers targeted supports for vulnerable children and families from the local community. The service supports children who are experiencing extreme disadvantage, trauma and child welfare concerns. It offers care for 21 children aged between two years, ten months, and six years old, and a further seven children between two and three years of age who attend the junior programme. It operates on a part-time care basis. It provides 16 hours of ECEC service, whilst additional hours are spent supporting parents in the home to develop skills and strategies to enhance their parenting capacity and the parent-child relationship. It currently has four children who receive AIM Level 7 support. There is a team of four child and family development workers, two programme assistants, and three AIM support workers. The ancillary staff comprises an administration assistant, a bus driver, a cook, and a cleaner.

The service provides a high-quality, evidence-based curriculum. The Tús Maith programme integrates the High Scope curriculum and the REDI (Research-Based Developmentally Informed) programme to maximise developmental outcomes. Children receive breakfast on arrival and a hot meal before they leave the service. Mealtimes provide good nutrition, support healthy physical development, and provide an additional opportunity for children to develop positive social and emotional skills. Hot meals and food parcels were delivered to family homes during COVID lockdowns.

The service is aimed at children with multiple and complex needs and ensures that the environment is adapted to meet the child's individual needs. Many children attending the service have experienced significant trauma within their home environments, impacting their physical, social, emotional, cognitive and behavioural development and wellbeing. These children can present challenging behaviours that can impact their ability to engage with others and experience positive future engagement in education and their future outcomes. Staff also provide parenting support in the home and assist parents in bringing the curriculum's learning into their home. They offer intensive practical family support, the Partnership with Parents parenting programme, crisis management, advocacy and support, family work, providing advocacy and information/advice and facilitating parenting groups such as Circle of Security.

There are currently 28 children attending the Barnardos Early Years Service in Mulhuddart. These are made up of a mixture of referrals from Tusla, PHNs, self-referrals and other local agency referrals. Children are identified for places within the service each year based on their level and complexity of need. Parental capacity is also included in the assessment. Each year Barnardos Early Years Service in Mulhuddart caters for children with some of the highest levels of need in the local community. The purpose of the service is to work intensively with these children and their parents to support a positive transition to and engagement in primary school after leaving the service at five years of age.

Barnardos Mulhuddart Early Years Services is not funded under NCS as the service receives special provision CCSP funding from DCEDIY, which is administered via Pobal and funding from Tusla. Barnardos contributes a significant amount of voluntary funding to cover all outstanding funds required for the effective running of the service. Parents are not charged any cost for their children to attend the service.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Blanchardstown-Tyrrelstown

Small Area ID	267034001
Total Population 2016	1,649
Pop Change (2006-16)	1.98
Pobal HP Index 2016	1.11
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally above average
Age dependency ratio (%)	39.18
Lone parent ratio (%)	40
Prop. primary education only (%)	8
Prop. third level education (%)	32.13
Prop. local authority rented (%)	34.68
Unemployment rate - male (%)	18.21
Unemployment rate - female (%)	33.70

## Ashleigh House Pre-School & Crèche

Coolmine Therapeutic Community, Dublin 15

Ashleigh House was founded in 2008. It is located within a residential service that supports women's rehabilitation in battling addiction. It is the only addiction service in Ireland to offer childcare to women living in the service. Ashleigh House offers full-day care to children from birth to five years, over 52 weeks of the year. Many of the children are referred by hospitals, public health nurses and social workers. Children attending this service live on site with their mothers, and can be in attendance between six and 18 months while the mother completes her treatment programme. The service has a maximum capacity of 17.

Ashleigh House has a team of six early childhood educators, all of whom work directly with the children and their families. The ratios are lower in this service due to the extreme vulnerability of the children they are providing for, as they typically require significantly more support than other children. The service provides ongoing training and development for its staff. It provides high-quality environments for children to develop social, emotional and educational skills through a child-led play-based curriculum. Ashleigh House provides a warm, loving home-from-home experience, in a safe and developmentally appropriate environment.

In addition to high-quality experiences and environments, and responsive caregiving, children have access to developmental checks and a nurse on site. Ashleigh House supports the child and their family and offers additional supports such as parenting programmes and therapeutic supports. The service has highly dedicated and responsive staff who recognise the value of their role in the lives of the children and their families. They strive to provide the best experiences for the children in their care and will set up fundraising events to raise much needed funds for equipment, etc. The childcare workers may also at times attend the service on the weekends if they feel there is a parent who may need additional support outside of the crèche hours.

The majority of funding for the service is administered by the DCEDIY through Pobal, and they receive additional operational funding through the HSE.

### Pobal Deprivation Indicators (2016) by Small Area Blanchardstown-Delwood

Small Area ID	267031003
Total Population 2016	296
Pop Change (2006-16)	0.00
Pobal HP Index 2016	6.44
Pobal HP Description 2016	marginally above average
Age dependency ratio (%)	40.54
Lone parent ratio (%)	11
Prop. primary education only (%)	4
Prop. third level education (%)	53.97
Prop. local authority rented (%)	0.00
Unemployment rate - male (%)	9.21
Unemployment rate - female (%)	4.41

## Profile of a Community Early Years Service in Fingal

*This service has been anonymised to protect the identity of the families attending.*

This profile provides an overview of the complex needs of children attending, the type of provision offered, and the additional challenges many parents face when living in poverty and deprivation. In this service, 36% of families are characterised as single-parent households, and 7% are in relative-based foster care. Being a lone parent or carer can bring additional stress and challenges for people who may already be experiencing difficulties. This is further exacerbated by these children's emotional, developmental, and behavioural needs.

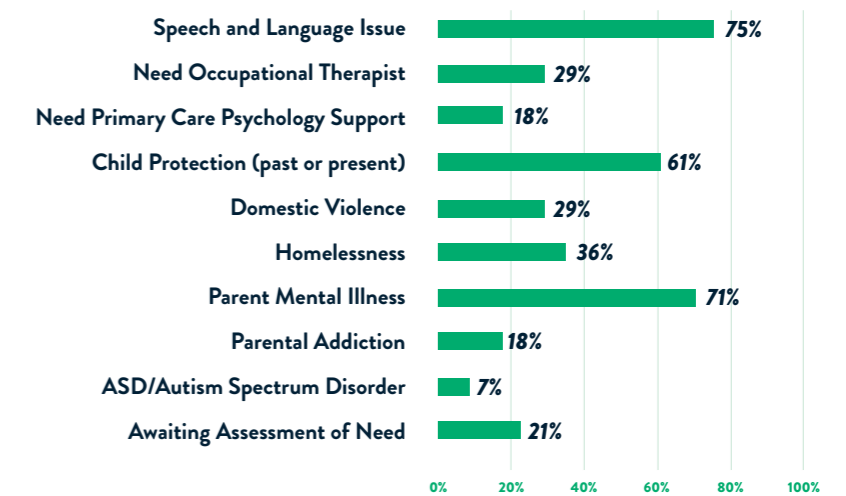
Homelessness affects 36% of the children attending the service. This can be stressful for a parent which can lead to them feeling overwhelmed, creating barriers to accessing services and meeting their children's needs. Staff note that parents/carers can become overwhelmed during periods of high stress, which can impact their day-to-day parenting capacity and their ability to carry out additional heavy administrative tasks such as those required for entry into the NCS.

Early childhood trauma is a lived experience for many of the children who attend the service. The impact of this is often evident in their behaviours, their ability to engage in their curriculum, activities and peer relationships. 61% of families attending the service have had, or currently have child protection involvement due to issues in the home that relate to the children's safety, welfare and development. Domestic violence and parental addiction have affected a large number of children attending the service. Staff note that 18% of parents whose children attend the service have experienced issues with addiction. A further 71% of parents have disclosed information about the challenges they experience relating to their mental health.

The children attending this service present with high levels of needs; 75% of children show signs of speech and language delays, with a further 21% awaiting an Assessment of Need. These children often require additional support in the service to help them engage with the curriculum, regulate their emotions and communicate with their peers and teachers. Many children in the service present with challenging and concerning behaviours, communication challenges and often struggle with emotional regulation. Change and transition periods can prove difficult for many children, especially where there are signs of early childhood trauma. This service provides vital provision for children and supports their ability to transition to primary school.

These children represent some of the most vulnerable in the region. They rely on the early years' community childcare services to support their parents and to meet their needs every day. The additional challenges they face can often create barriers to their ability to engage in these services, however, the staff work closely with the children and their families to minimise these barriers.

### Profile of need for children in the service





Level of service	Band A (with medical card)	Band AJ (with medical card)	Band B	Band D
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One Parent Family Payment</li> <li>Widow's/Widower's Pension Farm Assist/Fish Assist</li> <li>State Pension (Contributory/ Non-contributory)</li> <li>Blind Pension</li> <li>Guardian's Payment(Contributory/ Non-contributory)</li> <li>Illness/Injury Benefit</li> <li>Disability Allowance</li> <li>Carer's Benefit/Allowance</li> <li>Back to Work Enterprise/ Education Allowance</li> <li>Community Employment / Rural Social Scheme</li> <li>Domiciliary Care Allowance</li> <li>Working Family Payment (Formerly known as FIS)</li> <li>Secondary School students</li> <li>Invalidity Pension</li> <li>Disablement Pension</li> <li>TÚS</li> <li>Part-time Job Incentive Scheme Gateway</li> <li>Gateway</li> <li>Partial Capacity benefit</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Job Seekers Benefit/ Allowance*</li> <li>Supplementary Welfare Allowance**</li> <li>Job Seekers Transitional Payment</li> <li>JobPath</li> <li>Short term Enterprise Allowance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Medical Card</li> <li>Parents/ guardians who are in receipt of Social Welfare payments listed under Band A/AJ but have no medical card</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GP Visit Card*** (6yrs+ only)</li> <li>Parents/ guardians who no longer qualify for Band A/AJ this year but who were verified as being on Band A/AJ at the end of the previous school year</li> </ul>
<b>Full-day payment (5 hrs +)</b>	€145	€80	€70	€50
<b>Part-time payment (3:31 – 5:00)</b>	€80	€80	€35	€25
<b>Sessional payment (2:16 – 3:30)</b>	€45	€45	€25	€17
<b>Half-session payment (1:00 – 2:15)</b>	€22.50	€22.50	€12.50	€8.50

Source: Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2019)

	Name of Service	Address	Age Profile	Type of Service	Type of Governance
1	Little Learners Crèche	Dublin 15	2–6 Years	Full-day, Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
2	Blakestown & Mountview NYP	Dublin 15	2–6 Years	Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
3	Anchor Childcare Centre	Dublin 13	0–6 Years	Full-day	Previously funded through CCS
4	Blakestown Community Crèche	Dublin 15	2–6 Years	Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
5	Ladybird Lane Childcare Service	Dublin 15	2–6 Years	Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
6	Balbriggan Community Childcare	Co. Dublin	1–6 Years	Full-day, Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
7	Sophia Nurturing Centre	Donabate, Co. Dublin	0–6 Years	Full-day, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
8	Kidz Zone	Dublin 15	2–5 Years	Full-day, Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
9	Homestart Crèche	Dublin 15	0–6 Years	Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
10	Corduff Childcare Service Ltd	Dublin 15	0–6 Years	Full-day, Part-time, Sessional	Previously funded through CCS
11	Bright Sparks	Donabate, Co. Dublin	3–6 Years	Part-time, Sessional	Not-for-profit sessional
12	Ros-Eo Community Childcare Centre	Rush, Co. Dublin	2–6 Years	Sessional	Not-for-profit sessional
13	Howth Pre-School Playgroup	Howth, Co. Dublin	2–6 Years	Sessional	Not-for-profit sessional
14	Holywell Childcare Ltd	Swords, Co. Dublin	2–6 Years	Sessional	Not-for-profit sessional
15	Barnardos Early Years Service, Mulhuddart	Dublin 15	2–6 Years	Part-time	Charity
16	Ashleigh House Pre-School & Crèche	Dublin 15	0–6 Years	Full-day, Sessional	Charity
17	Buzbies Community Childcare Services	Swords, Co. Dublin	2–6 Years	Sessional	Could not be located on the charities register
18	Sticky Fingers	Skerries, Co. Dublin	1–6 Years	Part-time	Could not be located on the charities register
19	Skerries Community Centre After School Club	Skerries, Co. Dublin			Could not be located on the charities register



## Impact of the National Childcare Scheme on Community-Based Childcare Services in Fingal

### Financial Sustainability

Q1. Name of Service:

Q2. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Our service is financially sustainable (no financial losses or use of contingency funding in 2019)					
Our service is confident that the National Childcare Scheme will provide adequate levels of funding for children attending our service					
Current funding supports from the DCYA adequately cover the costs associated with delivering a high quality early childhood service					
Our service needs to source additional funding to cover basic costs of providing early childhood care and education					
Our service has had to change our levels of provision and/or operating hours in order to remain sustainable					
Our parent fees are almost always paid and up to date					
We are concerned about the withdrawal of CCS funding					
For the financial sustainability of the setting, we are concerned about the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme					

Q3. I am concerned about the financial impact of the National Childcare Scheme because:

### Provision for Children

Q4. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The system for NCS funding (income based assessment and/or sponsorship referral) are appropriate for the children attending our service					
The NCS provides adequate provision for vulnerable children					
The level of provision for children has been impacted negatively since the implementation of the NCS					
The switch from CCS to NCS is likely to result in a reduction in capitation per child					

### Support for Families

Q5. Please comment on the level of provision and capitation for children since the introduction of the NCS:

Q6. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The NCS supports the families in our community and the users of our service					
Parents have access to emails and devices, which allows them to apply for the NCS					
Parents are confident and competent at using the HIVE system to access a CHICK number					
The NCS provides adequate support for vulnerable families					
The NCS has hindered families in terms of overall provision received					

Q7. For a parent with one child who qualifies for NCS, and one or more of their children are still accessing CCS-P, does the level of capitation differ for each? Please give an example:

**Q8. What do you feel are the biggest barriers for parents accessing the NCS?  
(Select more than one where necessary)**

- Limited access to computers / smartphones
- Issues with computer literacy
- Day to day literacy issues
- Difficulties due to public service cards expiring
- Limited time available due to parenting under stress
- Delays in receiving CHICK numbers
- Management of CHICK numbers after expiry

**Collaboration with Outside Agencies (Sponsorship and Referrals)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q9. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The sponsorship referral system can be easily accessed to support vulnerable children and families					
We have experienced significant delays in sponsorship referrals					

Please comment on your experience with the following agencies:

**Q10. Public health nurse referral**

**Q11. Social work referral**

**Q12. Other organisations (i.e. homeless support agencies)**

**Impact of NCS on Management and Staffing** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q13. Please rate how strongly you agree with the following statements:**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
The paperwork associated with the NCS is time consuming and lengthy					
The NCS supports financial planning in our service					
The admin associated with the NCS is ongoing and takes away from other daily tasks					
The implementation of the NCS has had a negative impact on the staff in your service					

**Q14. What effect has the implementation had on the management and staff working in your service?**

**Impact of NCS on Management and Staffing** \_\_\_\_\_

**Q15. Please describe the ideal type of early childhood provision for children living in your community (e.g. full-day-care, curriculum, support from other agencies, family supports):**

## Study of the Impact of the National Childcare Scheme on Community-Based Childcare Settings in Fingal

Year Organisation was Founded (if known):

Please state the number of staff working in your service under the following categories:

	Number of Staff:
Childcare	
Ancillary Staff (NOT working directly with children)	
Employment Scheme/ Government Funded Programme	

Please indicate the number (for all places) for the following by service type – for children of all ages:

Service Type	Service Offered Y/N	Places Currently Occupied	Vacant Places	Waiting List
Full-day Care				
Part-Time Care				
Sessional A.M.				
Sessional P.M.				
School Age Childcare- Afterschool				
Breakfast Club				
Drop-in				

Please indicate numbers for the following – by age range:

Age Range	Service Offered Y/N	Places Currently Occupied	Vacant Places	Waiting List
0-1 Years (1:3)				
1-2 Years (1:5)				
2-3 Years (1:6)				
3-6 Years (1:8)				

Please indicate weekly fees before deductions:

Age Range	Full-day-Care	Part-Time Care	Sessional Care	Not Sure
0-1 Years				
1-2 Years				
2-3 Years				
3-6 Years				

To the best of your knowledge, how many of the following make use of your service:

Type of Families	Number of families
Number of One Parent Families that use your Service	
Number of Children from Traveller Community	
Number of Children from Roma Community	
Number of Children for whom English and Irish is not a First Language	

Please state how many children in your service receive support under AIM Level 7:

Please indicate the number of hours per week that your service operates:

In Term:  Outside Term:

Please indicate the number of weeks per year that your service operates:

Please detail (if any) additional services that you offer:


Additional Services Offered	Yes	No
Provision of Meals Onsite		
Parenting Programmes and Family Support		
Food Hampers		
Therapeutic Supports		
Developmental Checks		
Speech and Language Support		
Other (Please Specify)		

Apart from DCYA funding programmes, do you receive any ongoing additional annual operational funding from any of the following? (This relates to annual dedicated funding, not one-off grants)

Funding Programmes	Yes	No
Tusla		
HSE		
Department of Education		
Charitable Organisations		

## Appendix 7: List of Hyperlinks in the Report

Page	Text with hyperlink	Internet address
4	Fingal Children and Young People's Plan (2019–2021)	<a href="https://www.cypsc.ie/_fileupload/Documents/Resources/Fingal/FCYPSC%20plan%20%2017%2002%202020%20SC%20edit.pdf">https://www.cypsc.ie/_fileupload/Documents/Resources/Fingal/FCYPSC%20plan%20%2017%2002%202020%20SC%20edit.pdf</a>
4	National Childcare Scheme (NCS)	<a href="https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/">https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/</a>
4	Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Programme	<a href="https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-childcare-subvention/">https://www.pobal.ie/programmes/community-childcare-subvention/</a>
8	Poverty Focus 2021 Report	<a href="https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2021-09/2021-04-22-povertyfocusapril2021final.pdf">https://www.socialjustice.ie/system/files/file-uploads/2021-09/2021-04-22-povertyfocusapril2021final.pdf</a>
8	CSO Survey on Income and Living Conditions (SILC) 2019	<a href="https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2019/povertyanddeprivation/">https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-silc/surveyonincomeandlivingconditionssilc2019/povertyanddeprivation/</a>
9	Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Report (2019/2020)	<a href="https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/137583/c80c8d06-3298-48e7-b3c2-08794e5fa5c0.pdf#page=null">https://www.gov.ie/pdf/?file=https://assets.gov.ie/137583/c80c8d06-3298-48e7-b3c2-08794e5fa5c0.pdf#page=null</a>



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People's Services Committee,**  
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Swords,  
Co. Dublin,  
Ireland.