

# Early years sector profile 2016/2017<sup>[1]</sup>

**Author:** Pobal - government supporting communities

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an overview of the early years sector in Ireland for the academic year 2016/2017. It outlines the findings and analysis of the data captured through two sources: the Early Years Service Profile survey, completed by 84% of early years services in Ireland in May 2017, and the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP).

The following are the key findings from the report:

### Programme enrolment and childcare services

- Between September 2016 and June 2017, a total of 147,514 children availed of at least one of the three Government programmes (ECCE, CCS(P) and TEC), representing a 41% increase on the past year. This is largely attributed to the expansion of the ECCE programme.
- A total of 4,448 early years services were contracted to offer at least one of the three DCYA programmes. This is a 2% increase on the number of services reported in the previous year.
- As a result of the expansion of the ECCE programme, the number of children availing of ECCE increased by 63%, with a total of 120,601 children availing of the programme during the 2016/2017 academic year. The value of ECCE contracts (€263m in 2016/2017) increased by 48%. This increase is smaller than the growth in the number of children, due to more children being registered in January and April 2017. These registrations have a shorter duration and, therefore, are of lower value compared to the September registrations.
- 45% of services providing ECCE had at least one room with higher capitation levels, 22% more than in the previous year.
- There was a significant growth (63%) in the number of private services offering CCS. Their share in the total number of services offering CCS increased by 12% when compared with 2015/2016 figures.
- There was a 10% decrease in the number of children participating in the TEC programme, however the number of services delivering the programme remained almost the same. The largest decreases in the number of registrations were observed for ASCC (14%) and CETS (13%).
- The service types offered by facilities has also changed, with a smaller proportion of services offering after-school and sessional p.m. care, a decrease of 13% and 9%, respectively, on the previous year.
- The analysis found that the extension of ECCE allowed for a higher proportion of children already attending early years settings to avail of the subsidy rather than leading to a large increase in the overall number of children accessing centre-based care. The number of children availing of one of the three DCYA programmes (ECCE, CCS(P) and TEC) increased by 41%, however, the number of children attending early years services, as estimated based on the Service Profile, grew by only 9% in the year.

### Inclusion and disability

- It is estimated that 2,850 Traveller children attended early years services, 22% more than in the previous year.
- 1,283 services were supported under the Access and Inclusion Model, and supports were provided to 2,486 children.
- More than half of services (57%) reported having at least one child with a disability (as diagnosed by the HSE), an increase of 9% on the previous year. In total there were 6,988 children reported with a diagnosed disability.

### Spaces, capacity and waiting lists

- A total of 186,190 children were estimated as having been enrolled in early years services in 2016/2017. This is an increase of 9% on the previous year. This has primarily been driven by an increase in the number of pre-school age children attending early years services.
- While just under one third of all children attending early years services (32%) are based in community facilities, more than half of children aged 8 years and over (55%) attend community services.
- The number of estimated vacant childcare places fell by 23% from 20,485 to 15,892. This has been accompanied by a similar increase in the number of children on a waiting list (21%). This indicates an overall reduction in the availability of childcare places across the country.
- The average number of children per facility increased from 42 to 44.
- Almost one third of services (31%) plan to increase the number of places in the future. If these plans were realised, it is estimated 19,970 additional childcare places would be created. This would increase the number of places in the sector by 10%.

### Fees

- For the first time in five years, the cost of full-time childcare has increased. The average cost of full-time childcare has increased by just over €7 from €167.03 to €174.16 (4.3%). This is likely to be due to economic factors, such as inflation, increasing rental prices and overhead costs such as insurance.
- In line with previous trends, fees are higher in affluent areas than in deprived areas (€205.56 and €153.32, respectively), higher in urban areas than rural areas (€182.76 and €158.84) and higher in private services than community services (€181.52 and €154.89).

## Staff

- A total of 23,009 staff<sup>1</sup> were reported to be working across 3,707 early years services. Of this number 20,110 work directly with children and 2,899 are ancillary staff, such as catering, maintenance and administration staff. The average number of staff per facility is six.
- When extrapolated to reflect the national total, it is estimated that approximately 27,331 staff work in the early years sector, 23,887 of whom work directly with children.
- The number of staff working with children in the early years sector grew by approx. 600 (3%) in the past 12 months.
- Half of all staff working in the early years sector do so on a part-time basis. Staff in community services (62%) are more likely to be part-time than those in private services (43%).
- 39% of staff working with children have a seasonal contract, an increase of 2% on the previous year.
- One in four staff in community services (24%) is on an employment scheme/other government funded programme, such as Community Employment (CE), Tús or the Community Services Programme (CSP). This represents a 3% decrease on the previous year.
- 98% of staff working with children are female.

## Staff qualifications

- 92% of all staff working with children have a qualification of NFQ Level 5 or above. This represents an increase of 4% on 2015/2016.
- 63% of all staff working with children reported having a qualification of NFQ Level 6 or above. 7% more than in 2015/2016.
- 2% of staff (306) are not qualified to the level required by the childcare regulations which took effect at the end of 2016.

## Staff wages and turnover

- The average wage of staff working with children in the early years sector is €11.93 per hour. Managers have the highest hourly rate of €14.75 and early years assistants earn an average of €10.88 per hour, with many of these staff working part-time or on 38 week contracts.
- Hourly wage rates vary across the country and are dependent on a number of influencing factors. The factors with highest influence on wages include staff position, county, length of time in service, non-contact hours worked and highest qualification.
- When looking specifically at the relationship between service fees and staff wages, there was no correlation between these variables at the facility level.
- In the 12 months prior to May 2017, the annual staff turnover rate in the early years sector was 28.2%. This rate varied significantly at county level.
- Regarding non-contact hours of staff working with children, managers worked the highest number of non-contact hours (10 hours) on average, while early years assistants in non-ECCE settings worked the least - an average of 1 hour 25 minutes per week.

## Child protection

- Over 99% of services have a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) for child protection and a Child Protection and Welfare Policy in place.
- 58% of staff received Children First training in the last three years.
- 59% of services indicated a need for further support and training in areas related to child protection

**Region:** Europe <sup>[2]</sup>

**Tags:** data <sup>[3]</sup>

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