

Act now: Re-imagining early childhood education and care in Ireland ^[1]

Author:

Source: INFORM

Format: Article

Publication Date: 1 May 2020


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Excerpted from introduction

The current pandemic has highlighted weaknesses in our social systems in general, and in Early Childhood Education and Care [ECEC] in particular. Closure of early childhood provision has left already overburdened 'key workers' without vital childcare support, and children from the most marginalised groups deprived of fundamentals like a daily nutritious meal, a safe space outside the home and a nurturing early learning environment.

Unlike in the 2008 financial crisis, the current emergency has triggered immediate state intervention to protect critical infrastructure. Beyond the immediate hardship caused by Covid-19, the crisis response offers an opportunity to reconceptualise and reclaim ECEC as a common good and public responsibility. Policy choices can be taken now to ensure both children's rights and wellbeing, and the functioning of society in and beyond the crisis.

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