

Childcare For All Conference 2019 Briefing Paper

Childcare Policy Development in Northern Ireland: Exploring Drivers and Addressing Barriers

Introduction	2
About the Childcare For All campaign	2
About the Conference	3
Panel overview	4
Discussion themes	5
Early years development	5
Gender inequality	8
Sectoral development	11
Improving children's outcomes	13
Academic presentations	16
Participant reflections	18
Childcare for children with additional needs	18
What is meant by 'childcare for all'	18
Affordability of childcare	19
Flexibility of provision	19
Learning from other jurisdictions	19
Sustainability of childcare settings and support for childcare workers	19
Gender inequality	20
Range of stakeholders	20
Importance of childcare as an issue	21
Appendix 1: Panellists' presentations	22
Appendix 2: Childcare For All Charter	74
Appendix 3: Childcare research resources	75

Introduction

This briefing paper provides a detailed overview of the Childcare For All conference held in Belfast on Monday 11 March 2019. This conference was organised with the aim of bringing together the full range of available research and policy analysis to inform the development of childcare policy in Northern Ireland. The purpose of this paper is to present the information that was shared and discussed on the day to ensure the evidence base to shape future childcare policy is captured. We hope that it can serve as a practical tool for policy makers to inform their own research and practice.

As the conference was a participative event encouraging dialogue from attendees, we have also included in this paper a summary of the reflections from conference participants. This shares their views on what the priority issues are that need to be addressed and includes suggestions of actions that should be taken by policy makers.

The Childcare For All campaign will use this paper in our engagements with political representatives, public servants and all those who represent parents, children and childcare providers as we seek to work together for a childcare system that meets everyone's needs.

About the Childcare For All campaign

The [Childcare For All campaign](#) was launched in 2018. It calls for universally affordable, accessible, quality childcare provision that meets the needs of children, families, childcare staff and providers in Northern Ireland. The campaign is made up of a growing number of civic society organisations who bring together a range of knowledge and experience from across sectors including women's organisations, children's charities, umbrella bodies and trades unions. The campaign provides the opportunity for these groups to speak with one collective voice.

One year on, the campaign continues to push for progress. We have developed a Childcare For All Charter (Appendix 2) setting out a vision for a childcare system that can work for parents, the childcare sector and employers. We have organised a number of events to bring together stakeholders including parents and childcare providers, along with elected representatives, policy-makers and others with an interest in the issue. Our events have included:

- Campaign launch at Stormont (1 May 2018): provided an overview of the campaign and highlighted key areas for action, securing support from political representatives.
- Family Fun Day (17 November 2018): this gave families an opportunity to meet and discuss their experience of accessing childcare, putting their views directly to a range of political representatives.

- Policy Conference (11 March 2019): brought stakeholders together to hear research and evidence from those working in and on the childcare sector in Northern Ireland.

As a coalition we continue to work collectively on this campaign, engaging with policy-makers to ensure childcare policy is on the political agenda and that childcare provision and delivery can work for all – families, childcare providers, employers and society as a whole. We have also worked hard to mobilise public support for universal childcare, providing a platform for parents to tell their stories and outline what support they think is needed. Despite having launched during a period of political instability in Northern Ireland, Childcare For All has successfully kick started a visible campaign for action on childcare that has brought together years of work by various organisations and ensured that childcare is firmly on the agenda of politicians and policy makers.

About the Conference

On Monday 11 March 2019, the Childcare For All Campaign convened a policy conference ‘Childcare Policy Development in NI: Exploring Drivers and Addressing Barriers’ in Riddel Hall, Belfast. The conference was sponsored by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland and the Administrative Data Research Centre for Northern Ireland (ADRC-NI). ADRC-NI also co-organised and co-hosted the conference. Equality Commissioner Eileen Chan-Hu delivered the opening address acknowledging the importance of the conference and how fundamental it is to have a childcare system that can work for all in society.

The conference brought together stakeholders from different sectors, with varying perspectives and experiences, who have been working on the issue of childcare. There were more than ninety participants from a range of roles in the childcare sector, from government departments including education, health and finance and from diverse organisations who are concerned with child poverty, disability and gender equality. Participants heard from academics and from a range of panellists from different sectors who presented a comprehensive evidence base on childcare policy and outlined key issues facing the childcare system. They highlighted policy drivers across sectors and identified current barriers in the context of limited reform to childcare policy in Northern Ireland. The conference was a positive opportunity to frame solutions, establishing and using a robust evidence base of research, and mapping out opportunities for improvement that exist within the current policy framework.

A [short film](#) was also launched at the conference sharing the voices of the parents who are at the heart of the Childcare For All Campaign. It contains the powerful everyday stories of parents discussing the difficulties they face in accessing affordable childcare in Northern Ireland.

Panel overview

The Childcare For All coalition members identified four key areas which underpin childcare policy and practice in Northern Ireland. These established the themes for four panels during the conference. Within each panel, three to four experts with experience in the sector were invited to speak. Panel presentations and papers can be found in Appendix 1.

Each panel featured experts who work in various roles that are relevant to childcare policy and provision. The diverse nature of the panellists highlights the extent to which childcare is a cross-cutting issue. Each expert presented contemporary evidence and research from their own work which provided participants with the opportunity for stimulating and engaging discussions.

Panels	Experts
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Early years development <p><i>Themes: Quality of childcare, childcare for children with additional needs, improving educational outcomes.</i></p> <p><i>Chaired by Aoife Hamilton</i></p>	<p>Fiona Cole, <i>Mencap</i></p> <p>Noel McAllister, <i>Early Years – the organisation for children and young people</i></p> <p>Trása Canavan, <i>Barnardos NI</i></p> <p>Alan Herron, <i>PlayBoard NI</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Gender inequality <p><i>Themes: Increasing maternal employment, childcare provision in the women's sector, valuing unpaid childcare in families.</i></p> <p><i>Chaired by Kellie Turtle</i></p>	<p>Roisin Mallon, <i>Equality Commission</i></p> <p>Siobhán Harding, <i>Women's Support Network</i></p> <p>Eleanor Jordan, <i>Windsor Women's Centre</i></p> <p>Dr Corina Miller, <i>ADRC-NI</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Sectoral development <p><i>Themes: Developing the childcare workforce, sustainability of childcare providers.</i></p> <p><i>Chaired by Clare Moore</i></p>	<p>Fiona Clendinning, <i>Northern Ireland Childminding Association</i></p> <p>Neil Hutcheson, <i>Federation of Small Businesses</i></p> <p>Dr Roisin McCooey, <i>Belfast Childcare Partnership</i></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Improving children's outcomes <p><i>Themes: Child and family poverty, impact of welfare reform, cost and availability of childcare in Northern Ireland.</i></p> <p><i>Chaired by Kellie Turtle</i></p>	<p>Goretti Horgan, <i>Ulster University</i></p> <p>Anne Moore, <i>Save the Children NI</i></p> <p>Aoife Hamilton, <i>Employers For Childcare</i></p>

Discussion themes

Early years development

The early years development panel focused on the benefits of early intervention, childcare for children with additional needs, and on linking childcare and early education to help improve strategic direction and provision.

Early years strategies in England, Scotland and Wales are inclusive of childcare services. There is a wealth of literature and research that inextricably links childcare and early education, particularly Heckman's cost-benefit analysis of state provided childcare which concluded that there is a 7% to 10% per year return on investment in early years education.¹ This was based on children's increased school and career achievement and reduced costs in the health and criminal justice systems. Much of this investment is required before school, and even before pre-school. Childcare is key to this investment yet is often overlooked as a tool in giving children and young people the best start in life.

Participants suggested that a greater integration of childcare and education strategies and policies in Northern Ireland could be more effective in helping to support early years development. At present, childcare and early education are largely seen as two separate policies with the Department of Education guidance stipulating that funded pre-school places are not to be regarded as childcare.²

Panellists and participants agreed the most crucial years for learning and development are from birth to the age of six. The benefits of providing good quality childcare during these years are substantial and include improvements in cognitive skills such as language development, reasoning and concentration. This was also outlined in *'Learning to Learn: A framework for Early Years Education and Learning'*³ which advocated for greater collaboration and integration for early years support, and included in the Draft Programme for Government⁴ Outcome 14: 'We give our children and young people the best start in life'. Participants welcome the inclusion of the provision of high-quality pre-school education under this outcome to enable children to fulfil their potential.

Trása Canavan (Barnardo's NI) highlighted how childcare plays a key role in child development. Childcare providers play a crucial role during these formative, developmental years of 0-3. Good

¹ http://jenni.uchicago.edu/papers/Heckman_Moon_etal_2010_NBER_wp16180.pdf

² <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk>

³ 'Learning to Learn: A Framework for Early Years Education and Learning' (Department of Education, 2013) <https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/de/a-framework-for-ey-education-and-learning-2013.pdf>

⁴ Draft Programme for Government (Northern Ireland Executive, 2016) <https://www.northernireland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/consultations/newnigov/draft-pfg-framework-2016-21.pdf>

quality, well-informed and affordable childcare can shape the social, emotional and cognitive development of children, with Barnardo's NI advocating the Five to Thrive approach, which identifies five building blocks to develop a child's healthy brain.

This may be particularly the case where children are living in deprivation. Melhuish's overview of international research in this area concludes that the benefits of intellectual, social and behavioural development through good quality pre-school education and childcare are more substantial for disadvantaged children.⁵ Long term benefits include improved educational attainment, less risk of juvenile arrests, lower rates of substance misuse, better adult employment and enhanced earning prospects. Good pre-school care is also proven to develop a child's sociability, peer-relationships and independence.

Similar sentiments were highlighted by Alan Herron (PlayBoard NI) who discussed findings from the "*State of the School Age Childcare Sector*"⁶ carried out by PlayBoard in 2017. The research found that childcare which is supported through early education, care and development can result in better outcomes for children and society. Alan noted there is strong evidence to suggest that further investment in School Age Childcare is necessary to benefit parents, families and their children. This can also play a role in supporting the labour market and economy.

Alan noted that importance of introducing a Childcare Strategy that is aligned with a funded Workforce Strategy. These would support the development of the workforce, and provide greater recognition and value to childcare as a profession to recruit and retain more people in the sector, particularly men. To date, Northern Ireland does not have either strategy.

Noel McAllister (Early Years – the organisation for children and young people) gave an overview of childcare policies, strategies and the legislative frameworks across the UK and Ireland noting that, outside of Northern Ireland, the provision of childcare is underpinned by legislation. He provided evidence on the role of high quality education and childcare for children aged 0-12 and their families making reference to the findings from the Early Years report '*Workforce Development Sector Survey 2017*'⁷ highlighting issues and challenges such as in the fields of recruitment, inclusion and training. While there is broad support for the need to invest early to achieve greater returns, Noel emphasised that in order to achieve improved outcomes for young children, there needs to be

⁵ <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/Edward%20Melhuish%20-%20The%20Impact%20of%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20and%20Care%20on%20Improved%20Wellbeing.pdf>

⁶ State of the School Age Childcare Sector (2017): <https://www.playboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/State-Of-The-School-Age-Childcare-Sector-Survey-2017.pdf>

⁷ Workforce Development Sector Survey 2017 <http://www.early-years.org/misc-docs/WORKFORCE-DEVELOPMENT-SURVEY-2017-REPORT.pdf>

robust investment in programmes that work, and his presentation sets out a number of recommendations from Early Years based on their research within the sector.

Fiona Cole (Mencap NI) provided detailed insight and information on challenges for children with additional needs in accessing high quality and inclusive childcare services. According to Government statistics⁸, in Northern Ireland there are 5,000 children aged 0-7 years old with a learning disability. Amongst Mencap's strategic priorities is to ensure that children with additional needs have the best start in life. Fiona's presentation highlighted that children who have a learning disability are more likely to have Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE). Further, research has found that parents who have a child with additional needs face several barriers to accessing childcare. Fiona identified some reasons for this, including a lack of strategic direction, a lack of specialist equipment and inflexible provision. It was acknowledged that parents feel more confident accessing formal childcare when they feel their child's needs are understood and are being met.

To overcome such barriers and improve children's outcomes, Mencap have developed an Early Intervention Framework underpinned by three themes – supporting the child, supporting the family and influencing system change. Fiona also highlighted Mencap's recommendations for wider policy and practice, these include:

- Equal access to high quality, inclusive early intervention services.
- A Northern Ireland Childcare Strategy that addresses the specific needs of children with additional needs.
- Increased availability of local, high quality and affordable childcare.
- Greater information for parents about different types of local childcare available for children with additional needs.

⁸ Approximate figures calculated by Mencap using learning disability prevalence rates from Public Health England (2016) and population data from the Office for National Statistics (2017)

Gender inequality

This panel highlighted how the ability to access and afford childcare impacts on women and how it can be a key component in increasing maternal employment. Panellists discussed childcare provision in the women's sector, and also provided insight on how best to support and value those who provide unpaid childcare.

Roisin Mallon (Equality Commission for Northern Ireland) discussed how an inability to access affordable childcare can be a barrier to accessing, progressing in and remaining in employment, particularly for women. She noted that women in Northern Ireland experience lower employment rates and higher economic inactivity rates compared to Great Britain.

Roisin explained how equality of access to childcare for some specific groups of parents is very limited including rural families, parents of children who have additional needs, minority ethnic families, lone parents and those on low incomes. Making reference to the Equality Commission research report entitled "*Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women*"⁹ Roisin identified a lack of affordable and appropriate childcare provision in Northern Ireland. This report correlated the inability to access affordable childcare to a negative impact on women's participation in public and political life, education, and sport. The report recommended introducing a Childcare Strategy with agreed objectives, cross-departmental commitments and actions to deliver tangible outcomes.

The Commission continues to raise the impact of childcare on people's lives at the highest of levels. Roisin, along with several other individuals who attended and presented at the conference, provided evidence to the United Nations Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in Geneva during its formal examination of the UK Government.

Fittingly, the concluding observations¹⁰ were published on the same day as the conference. The CEDAW Committee welcomed the measures taken to expand childcare entitlements for working parents in England, Scotland and Wales. However, they are concerned that childcare costs remain 'excessive', particularly in Northern Ireland, and that this constitutes an obstacle for women in

⁹ Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women (2013):
<https://www.equalityni.org/ECNI/media/ECNI/Publications/Delivering%20Equality/MaximisingChildcareMainReport2013.pdf>

¹⁰ Concluding observations on the eighth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (2019):
https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolNo=CEDAW/C/GBR/CO/8&Lang=En

particular to enter and progress in the workplace. The Committee recommends that the UK Government:

Ensure the availability of affordable and accessible childcare facilities and/or arrangements throughout the State party, in particular in Northern Ireland.

The Commission continues to highlight this issue and work with stakeholders across the wider women's sector and government departments to address the barriers childcare presents to employment for parents.

Siobhán Harding (Women's Support Network) presented her research on behalf of the Women's Regional Consortium which explored the perspectives and experiences of women living and working in disadvantaged and rural areas in Northern Ireland, examining in particular the impact of welfare reform policies¹¹. The research found that a combination of high childcare costs and poor financial gains from working can combine to explain why many low-income mothers do not enter or remain in work. Some parents reported leaving work due to the cost of childcare and others discussed the fact that high childcare costs meant that they felt they did not work for a 'purpose' as most of their wages went on childcare.

Access to childcare is a particular problem for marginalised and vulnerable women especially from disadvantaged and rural areas. For many, the prospect of increased economic participation can depend on the availability of childcare. Siobhán outlined the role of the Women's Centres Childcare Fund in providing fully subsidised childcare places for many of these women over the last 8 years. She highlighted the fact that this resource was intended to be an emergency fund to tackle the acute barriers faced by women in disadvantaged areas in the absence of a wider childcare strategy but has been rolling over ever since as no further progress on childcare policy has been made.

The impact of Universal Credit (UC) was also identified as an issue for families because it is paid monthly in arrears when childcare normally has to be paid up front to childcare providers. Many low-income families cannot afford to make these large payments up front. Siobhán summarised the feedback the women's sector gave to the consultation on the childcare strategy outlining some of the concerns that women's organisations still have. These include a concern at the lack of investment proposed to underpin the childcare strategy, the absence of any gendered approach to job creation and the lack of connectedness to community based education for women. She

¹¹ Impact of Ongoing Austerity: Women's Perspectives (2019)
<http://www.womensregionalconsortiumni.org.uk/sites/default/files/Impact%20of%20Ongoing%20Austerity%20Women%27s%20Perspectives.pdf>

concluded by recommending any progress on childcare provision recognises the need for low cost/ no cost childcare provision for marginalised and vulnerable women in disadvantaged and rural areas.

Eleanor Jordan talked about her experience as the manager of Windsor Women's Centre, an organisation she co-founded in 1990. Eleanor's key message is that when working to address the needs of women in marginalised or disadvantaged communities, childcare is central to everything else. Women's centres work in a holistic way with every woman using their services and this includes mental health support, training and education, holistic therapies, welfare advice and advocacy, health and well-being support and relationship building. For women to be able to access any of these services it is essential that they can be provided with childcare. Women's centres like Windsor provide free crèche places to women undertaking other activities in the centre as well as having established social economy childcare facilities that allow women to get back into training and employment by providing quality, affordable childcare places. This model should serve as an example of how essential funded childcare is to addressing the barriers women face to full equality. Despite the success of the childcare provision in tackling gender inequality, Eleanor described the endless fight for funding that women's centres face such as the Women's Centres Childcare Fund, which Siobhán had outlined. The lack of concrete commitment to funding this childcare provision in women's centres means that committed, professional childcare workers have to be put on protective notice every year and it brings huge uncertainty to parents who have no guarantee that childcare places will be available in the long term.

Dr Corina Miller, keynote speaker for the conference, also sat on this panel following her presentation 'Mothers in Northern Ireland: Who is economically active?' She highlighted the importance of addressing inequality, and posed a challenge to policy makers – if you think that it will be expensive to deliver and achieve equality, the alternative - perpetuating inequality, is worse. Referencing economic literature, it was identified that having a child is a "premium" for a father in terms of career and pay, while in similar terms this marks a "punishment" for women. Corina reflected that a high quality childcare infrastructure is driven not only by state regulation, but also by women being able to have a choice. She commented on the recognition of women's education as having a positive impact on child development, and extended this discussion to make the connection that in giving women the choice to be directly involved in the labour market, and hence society, there is a positive improvement in outcomes for childcare provision alongside other economic and societal outcomes. Corina advocated for childcare provision to be treated as education, and not targeted to specific groups. She questioned why, given the established importance of good quality childcare provision in positive childcare development, childcare provisions is not treated in the same way as education provision.

Sectoral development

This panel focused on developing a sustainable childcare workforce. It identified some key challenges facing the sector and discussed solutions on how to overcome these.

Fiona Clendinning discussed key findings from the *State of the Sector*¹² carried out by the Northern Ireland Childminding Association (NICMA) in 2017. Fiona provided an overview of the profile of childminders, the services they provide, qualifications and training they undertake as well as recommendations for the workforce. The childcare workforce is changing and, in recent years, there has been a decrease in the number of childminders in Northern Ireland. The research also found that nearly half of respondents to the State of the Sector research had considered giving up childminding at some stage with some respondents linking this to factors such as increasing requirements following the introduction of the Minimum Standards¹³.

Issues around recruitment and retention were discussed. Fiona noted that only 1% of childminders in the sector are male and very few are from different ethnic minority backgrounds. It was also highlighted that some childminders may only do this for a set period of time, for example, some parents may become childminders when their own children are young and need childcare. This may have an impact on the number of childminders joining or leaving the workforce.

Another concern highlighted by Fiona is the number of unregistered childminders who continue to operate illegally. Not only has this the potential to put children at risk but NICMA believe it makes it harder for registered childminders to be sustainable when they are faced within this unfair competition.

To ensure sustainability in the childminding sector, Fiona outlined several recommendations including a Childcare Strategy that recognises the role of the childcare workforce to ensure long term positive outcomes, and greater funding for providers to undertake formal training.

The challenge of maintaining a sustainable business in the childcare sector was discussed by Neil Hutcheson from the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in Northern Ireland¹⁴. The FSB has awarded the issue of childcare 'Special Interest Group' status. Neil expressed the FSB's commitment to examining the cost and accessibility of childcare in Northern Ireland to determine what role small businesses play in the childcare industry and to identify how they can make improvements. Neil

¹² State of the Sector Report (2017) <https://nicma.org/News-Events/News/NICMA-State-of-the-Sector-Report.aspx>

¹³ Childminding and Day Care for childcare under age 12 – Minimum Standards (2012) <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/early-years-standards-full-version.pdf>

¹⁴ The FSB has over 6,000 members in Northern Ireland, including a number in the childcare industry.

noted how the childcare sector is facing a difficult situation as it is characterised by high staffing levels, operating costs and staff wages. Staff training costs and business rates can also have a significant financial impact on providers and can leave some struggling to maintain a viable business.

To help alleviate financial pressure there is potential to learn from other parts of the UK, as a rates relief system has been put in place by both the Scottish and Welsh government. The FSB in England is calling for a new 100% business rates relief scheme for childcare providers there, reflecting the mounting cost pressures on the sector. This may be something to explore further in Northern Ireland. Neil also suggested a key step in ensuring sustainability for providers is to understand how much it costs to deliver a childcare place. Broadly, the FSB NI is considering:

- Childcare policy impact upon parental employment and entrepreneurship
- Employment within the childcare sector
- Sustainability of current policies in the context of rising costs
- NI Statutory intervention and comparisons
- Statutory engagement and the use of policy indicators as a way to form policy itself
- Factors affecting SMEs and their employees in relation to childcare.

Dr Roisin McCooey from the Belfast Childcare Partnerships¹⁵ discussed the importance of developing a sustainable childcare sector. Speaking about the work of the Childcare Partnerships, Roisin detailed the success of Sure Start and Brightstart Projects across Northern Ireland in supporting families. Alongside this, she highlighted that a key source of information is the Family Support NI¹⁶ website which signposts parents to a wide range of family support services and registered childcare in Northern Ireland and has recently been updated and refreshed.

Roisin provided figures on early years registered provision in Northern Ireland, as well as information on the Childcare Partnership regional training programme. This presentation also explored key findings from the Workforce Matters report. Up to date statistics are published annually on the Department of Health website: www.health-ni.gov.uk/articles/childrens-day-care.

Following the Conference, in June 2019, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) launched a policy paper - [Childcare in Northern Ireland: Care, Cost and Gender Equality](#) - which, amongst other issues, documents the current childcare workforce as characterised by low pay and little or no career progression, and predominantly female. The paper calls for improvements in support for childcare provision and the quality of childcare jobs.

¹⁵ <http://childcarepartnerships.hscni.net/>

¹⁶ <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/>

Improving children's outcomes

This panel discussed a range of issues and solutions for improving children's outcomes. There was a strong focus on the affordability of childcare and the impact of welfare reform on families.

Aoife Hamilton (Employers For Childcare) presented research from the ninth annual *Northern Ireland Childcare Survey*¹⁷ carried out by Employers For Childcare. Aoife stressed the importance of collecting this data as it provides insight into the experiences of parents and childcare providers in Northern Ireland. In 2018, the research found that for two thirds of families the childcare bill is their largest or second largest monthly outgoing. After housing, the childcare bill continues to exceed groceries, heating, transport and other household costs. This can have a significant financial impact on families. For some, the lack of disposable income means they are unable to put money into savings or into pensions for the future. In other cases, families have had to use overdrafts and credit cards which can also reduce their long term financial stability.

At the same time, many childcare providers report they are either making a loss or are just breaking even. They are experiencing an increase in their annual expenditure whilst seeking to limit any increases in fees.

Aoife noted that by not investing adequately in childcare, the Government is not only impacting on the ability of families to access the support they need to get into and stay in work, they are putting children's life chances at risk. The findings demonstrate how our current childcare infrastructure is not being supported to meet the needs of parents, childcare providers or employers. Aoife also stressed the importance of understanding what the cost is if we do not invest in securing the childcare infrastructure we need – that is affordable and accessible for parents, whilst sustainable for childcare providers to deliver.

Anne Moore from Save the Children in Northern Ireland outlined how early years are critical to a child's development and outcomes for later life. Recent research suggests that, at just 3 years old, children growing up in poverty are already nearly 1.5 years behind their more affluent peers when it comes to early language development¹⁸. This is highlighted in Save the Children's analysis of levels of child poverty in Northern Ireland which show that the biggest proportion of children in low income

¹⁷Northern Ireland Childcare Survey 2018: <https://www.employersforchildcare.org/report/northern-ireland-childcare-cost-survey-2018/>

¹⁸ 'A Bright Start: Improving childcare for disadvantaged families through Universal Credit (2018) <https://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/core/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/CSJJ6068-Childcare-Report-181127.pdf>

households live in families where the youngest child is under 5¹⁹. This, coupled with the fact that child poverty is set to increase, led Anne to conclude that it has never been more urgent to redouble efforts to tackle the impact of poverty on children's early learning outcomes and reiterate the importance of access to high quality and affordable childcare in supporting child development.

The research report examines the link between early learning outcomes and poverty in Northern Ireland and outlines how the association between learning outcomes and disadvantage can be prevented. Save the Children in Northern Ireland are therefore calling for

1. A world-class early education and childcare system for all children.
2. Better support for parents to engage in their children's early learning-at home and in school.
3. A co-ordinated approach to supporting children's early learning in communities.
4. Better data to improve our understanding of the early learning gap.

Anne also noted that while the rationale for social security cuts is to make work pay, the largest proportion of children in poverty are living in families where at least one parent is in work. The impact of Universal Credit was a theme that ran throughout discussions during the conference and were a key focus of this panel.

Goretti Horgan (Ulster University) discussed the introduction of Universal Credit in Northern Ireland and highlighted the difficulties for families when it comes to childcare costs. Universal Credit contains a childcare element, where parents may be eligible to claim up to 85% of their childcare costs, providing them with additional financial support. However, this is paid in arrears which means parents must pay their childcare upfront, provide receipts and then wait to be reimbursed. Goretti and Anne noted how this places a burden on parents and can act as a significant barrier to work.

Goretti referred to a report by the Work and Pensions Select Committee²⁰ which highlighted several issues with the current design of the childcare element, recognising the difficulties parents face to get into work. Households on Universal Credit may already be in a precarious financial position, which managing upfront childcare costs could exacerbate.

Goretti highlighted the particular impact that welfare reform and cuts to benefits are having on women in particular, as primary carers and as secondary earners. Cuts to child related payments for third and subsequent children (the two child cap) are unfair to children, and are likely to have a

¹⁹ Tackling the poverty related gap in early childhood learning in Northern Ireland (2017)
<https://www.savethechildren.org.uk/content/dam/global/reports/education-and-child-protection/tackling-poverty-related-gap-ni.pdf>

²⁰Universal Credit: Childcare (Department for Work and Pensions, 2019)
<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/1771/177102.htm>

greater impact in Northern Ireland where there tend to be more larger families than in other parts of the UK. She also argued that the way in which Universal Credit is being implemented increases the risk of financial abuse for women in controlling relationships and, due to the delay in receiving a first payment, increases the likelihood of families getting into debt or arrears in their rent, having to visit foodbanks, or turning to family and friends for financial support. Importantly, the broader context is that alongside these cuts, the government has failed to invest in greater support for Northern Ireland's childcare infrastructure.

Academic presentations

Three academics from Ulster University and Queens University Belfast presented their research related to childcare in Northern Ireland.

Academics	Presentations
Dr Corina Miller Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland	Mothers in Northern Ireland: Who is economically active?
Professor Ann Marie Gray Ulster University	Economic drivers and participation
Dr Sirin Sung Queens University Belfast	Experiences of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) women in accessing childcare

Dr Corina Miller is from the Administrative Data Research Centre Northern Ireland (ADRC-NI) and was the keynote speaker for the conference. Corina presented findings from a research study on maternal employment in Northern Ireland. Using 2011 Northern Ireland Census data, Corina explored household characteristics and labour market conditions to identify the correlation between economic inactivity and having children.

In Northern Ireland, the gap between men's and women's participation in paid work is the highest in the UK. At UK level, the main reason given by women for not participating in paid work is "looking after family/home" (40%). The research found that similarly, in Northern Ireland, two in five economically inactive women are not working because they are looking after home and family. While this may be a choice for some, it is important to understand what factors are at play as these have the potential to exacerbate inequalities. The findings reinforce that many women who leave the workforce to care for their children find it extremely difficult to get back into work once their children are older. Lone mothers' prospects of returning to paid work are also lower. Corina's research finds that support from grandparents increases the mother's labour force participation. For many women who leave employment to look after their children for a few years, it is extremely difficult to get back to work once their children are in primary school.

Corina identified how childcare affordability and accessibility can present barriers to mothers accessing the workforce. For those in the workforce, their employment status is conditioned by and consistent with the household needs, such as working hours, childcare arrangements and caring responsibilities.

The research findings show the extent to which having a child can impact on a mother's ability both to access and to participate in the workforce. However, having a child has no impact on the labour market activity of fathers.

Professor Ann Marie Gray outlined the economic drivers underpinning access to childcare and women's participation in the labour market. Ann Marie emphasised how childcare cannot be examined without looking at gender and gender inequality. She also noted that the neglect of social infrastructure projects reflects gender bias in economic thinking which is potentially derived from outdated gender division of labour.

Dr Sirin Sung's research explored experiences of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) women in accessing childcare in Northern Ireland. Sirin emphasised that this group is largely unheard and, while the proportion of births to Northern Ireland mothers born outside the UK has increased, little research has been carried out on understanding BME women's experiences of balancing work and motherhood.

This research, which was primarily qualitative in its methodology using focus groups with BME mothers and policy makers/practitioners, found that BME mothers face a range of difficulties in accessing formal childcare. Many research participants were unaware of financial schemes available to help with childcare costs. This presents a challenging environment for BME women, and is often coupled with an inability to access family support. There are also cultural factors at play, with childcare continuing to be seen as 'women's work' within certain communities.

To encourage more equal distribution of care between mothers and fathers, Sirin noted that it is worthwhile to look at Nordic countries which offer longer periods of paid parental leave, compared with the UK. Sirin discussed the implementation of the father-specific leave, such as the 'daddy quota' in Sweden. This policy reserves a part of parental leave period for fathers. If the fathers do not use the quota, the family loses the weeks reserved for them. Research shows that men have responded to the introduction and expansion of the quota by taking more parental leave. On top of this is an extensive subsidised childcare system.

All academics acknowledged the lack of public spending on childcare, visualised in the OECD statistics presented by Sirin, and noted that childcare affordability remains a persistent barrier to parents participating in the workforce.

Participant reflections

All participants at the conference were invited to provide their views on the key issues explored on the day and their recommendations for policy makers. Some clear themes emerged, documented below.

Childcare for children with additional needs

Delegates reflected on the importance of quality, accessible childcare in supporting better outcomes for children with additional needs, particularly those with learning disabilities. Several comments pointed to a need for more specialist early years provision for these children, but also to a need for enhanced support within the school system. It was recommended that specific policies should be targeted to support children with additional needs, and that this should be a strand within a new Childcare Strategy.

Practical suggestions included the Childcare for All group meeting with the individual Trusts to promote and progress services for children with additional needs, and ensuring that there is training in place for playgroups, crèches, childminders and day nurseries to assist them in meeting the needs of these children. Some delegates recommended that settings could have a 'designated worker' for children with a disability.

What is meant by 'childcare for all'

Many delegates commented on the importance of 'childcare for all' with references including to childcare that is accessible regardless of:

- Race
- Religion
- Background
- Financial position or employment of parents
- Family make up (lone parent households, same sex couples, kinship carers, number of children in the family)
- Whether in a rural or urban location
- Whether a child has complex or additional needs.

"Why not universal childcare free for all like the NHS."

"Childcare being open for all or at least a fixed cap on cost for all regardless of means, will have a positive impact on economic development."

Affordability of childcare

A recurring theme was the affordability or 'cost' of childcare. Some delegates suggested placing a 'cap' on childcare costs, while others pointed to the importance of looking at how the system is structured in order to ensure affordability. While some comments were more general, others made specific suggestions such as funding free places, or extending the current pre-school education programme to last for two years rather than one year. For some delegates they referred to personal experience as well as professional:

"As a parent with me and my husband both working full time, we are using 1 full wage to pay for our fantastic childcare. It's our choice but it is for our children's best interests and development and it is peace of mind for us."

Flexibility of provision

As well as affordability, flexibility of childcare to meet the needs of families, was an emergent theme. In particular, delegates noted that parents who are working in shift patterns such as medical or health staff or factory workers, should be catered for. This can be a particular issue for lone parents who work unsociable or irregular hours, weekends or early mornings.

Learning from other jurisdictions

Delegates pointed to developments in other jurisdictions and reflected that Northern Ireland is being 'left behind' in comparison with other parts of the UK and the Republic of Ireland, with specific reference made to the 30 hours funded childcare policy. Others looked further afield and suggested looking at models such as 'use it or lose it' paternity leave in Nordic countries, or conducting an economic analysis of the impact of publicly funded childcare, such as in Scandinavia, on the economy.

"NI should be equal to UK and all receive 30 hours free childcare per week."

"We are currently sitting well behind other regions in the UK and the gap is widening in the context of no executive."

Sustainability of childcare settings and support for childcare workers

Reflections from delegates highlighted the importance of ensuring the sustainability of childcare settings, investing in the childcare sector, and valuing the childcare workforce. Specific issues raised included pay, qualifications and training, conditions, and career progression for members of the

workforce. It was suggested that addressing these issues could support recruitment into the sector and work towards achieving a workforce that is more reflective of the make-up of society, including in terms of gender balance and ethnicity.

Several delegates noted that a focus on the cost of accessing a childcare place can obscure the cost of delivering a childcare place, with a perception that increasing fees are generating increasing profit for providers. It was suggested that work should be undertaken to identify the costs to providers, so that these can be addressed. One suggestion was to reduce overheads for settings by exempting them from rates payments, such as in Scotland and Wales.

“The high cost of childcare is portrayed in the media as ‘profit making’ for the private sector, this is not the case. Many day cares are worried about their futures.”

Gender inequality

Comments from delegates reflected the need for a social infrastructure that supports equality in terms of economic development, addressing gender inequality and the gender pay gap. Access to affordable childcare was identified as playing a key role in this, offering parents – particularly mothers – the opportunity to get into, stay in, and progress in the workforce. At the same time, where women do choose to care for their children, there was a suggestion that the value of this should be recognised and should not attract the label of ‘economic inactivity’.

“Women should have a genuine choice whether to work or stay at home.”

“New category to record domestic labour/caring that is not ‘economically inactive’.”

Range of stakeholders

Delegates identified a wide range of stakeholders who need to be engaged in delivering a childcare infrastructure that works for all, including employers, elected representatives, Government and Departments, the media as well as wider families including grandparents and children.

“Employers need to be more supportive of when child is sick and no childcare is available.”

“Raise awareness about the childcare issue in NI – to the public, the media, and politicians to bring about change and change attitudes.”

“Incentives for grandparents near retirement to play larger role.”

“The children’s voice and perspective needs to be priority.”

Importance of childcare as an issue

Finally, there was a clear consensus that childcare needs to be recognised as a critical part of our infrastructure in Northern Ireland, attracting significant investment and reflected in a wide range of governmental strategies including the Programme for Government, Child Poverty Strategy and any economic strategy.

“Childcare needs to be seen as an essential service and provided for as such.”

“Should not be seen as an add on – affects the life chances of children, women, families and communities.”

“NI has a real opportunity to take on important issues which are cross-cutting and become leaders in the UK.”

“Childcare in disadvantaged communities vitally important to improve life chances- if you don’t do this it will actually cost more!”

Appendix 1: Panellists' presentations

Panel 1 Early Years Development: Paper 1



Childcare for All Conference: 11 March 2019

Barnardo's NI– Early Years Development

Barnardo's NI is the largest children's charity in Northern Ireland. We work with approximately 10,000 children, young people and families, across more than 50 different services and programmes, and in over 200 schools. We provide a wide range of services including working with children affected by trauma or adversity, as well as supporting children in or leaving care, promoting good mental health and wellbeing amongst children and young people, and providing family support and early intervention. We believe that every child deserves the best possible start in life, and our service provision reflects that philosophy.

Barnardo's NI joined the Childcare for All campaign as we believe that **good quality, child-centred, affordable and accessible childcare** plays a key role in the early development of a child. The ages of 0-3 years are a crucial time for cognitive, emotional and social development and warm, responsive caregivers are central to an infant's sense of safety. This relationship with the caregiver helps the child develop strong attachment, which in turn supports good infant mental health.

In terms of **cognitive development**, infancy represents the fastest growth in brain development for humans: one million brain connections are formed every second in the first year of life. These connections are developed and strengthened through repetition, and form the building blocks for development. A child's brain doubles in size in the first year of life; if a child were to grow at the same rate in height, they would be 4ft tall by the age of one.

We can see a child's **emotional development** through expressions such as tantrums and strong emotional outbursts – these are a totally normal stage of a child's development. When a child is developing, quality interactions are integral to promoting secure attachment, which in turn acts as a 'buffer' when a child experiences a stressful situation and encourages the development of resilience.

Finally, when we look at **social development**, we know that children are born ready to socialise. Babies love people-watching, listening to adults talk, and being held. The quality of the relationship with their caregiver is more important than the material circumstances they are born into. Activities such as reading, nursery rhymes, visits and play can have a positive effect on an infant's social development.

In our early years services, we put this theory into practice using the **Five to Thrive** approach, which identifies five building blocks for a healthy brain. Five to Thrive, developed by KCA Training²¹, is based on attachment theory research and neuroscience, and identifies five key everyday activities that promote good infant mental health and secure attachment. These building blocks are designed to be used in sequence, and each builds on the one before. A brief summary of the Five to Thrive building blocks:

RESPOND:

Crying is how a baby communicates and is not always a negative expression. Being responded to feeds a baby's brain, while responding to caregivers exercises their brain. Copying the expressions of others helps a baby understand their own feelings, and responding to a baby in the same way every time helps develop strong brain connections. Babies are naturally curious and caregivers can help them safely explore the world – help them see things around them, and pass them (safe) objects they are interested in.

CUDDLE:

Cuddling a baby helps to develop patterns in a baby's brain, which in turn promotes the development of secure attachment – when a baby feels safe with safe people. At this age, a baby can't have too much contact. A baby's body responds to the adult's; babies will mimic the breathing and heart rate of their caregiver, so if you are breathing heavily and your heart is beating fast, a baby's body will copy this. When they begin to get older, infants may not want as many cuddles, however they still need reassuring contact.

RELAX:

Babies need adults to help them relax until they are able to self-regulate. It is important to factor in wind-down time after play by turning down lights and music, to help them learn how to calm down. Over-tired and over-stimulated babies will need particular help to wind down.

PLAY:

Play refers to playful interaction rather than toys, and play is an important form of non-verbal communication. Playing is a positive experience and helps babies learn, think, plan, and develop social skills. Caregivers should try to spend time outside each day with infants to learn about the world around them; this also helps develop their vision. It is important to encourage creative play and pretending games.

TALK:

Language development by 2 years old is the single most reliable indicator of success later in life. In positive learning environments, children hear 45 million words by 4 years old; in poorer learning environments, this is reduced to 13 million words. Reading is a great way to talk to a baby and caregivers can also narrate their daily activity. Simple rhymes and rhythms, like Twinkle Twinkle Little Star, are great for holding a baby's attention.

Barnardo's uses the Five to Thrive approach in many of its services, including **ABC PiP** (Attachment, Bonding & Communication Parent Infant Partnership). This is a strategic partnership between Barnardo's NI and the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust focusing on promoting good infant mental health. Barnardo's have also produced a booklet – **Promoting**

²¹ https://kca.training/?info=five_to_thrive

Good Infant Mental Health (Information for Parents) – which looks at how to develop emotional wellbeing in 0-3s and promote good infant mental health.

Childcare providers play a crucial role during these formative, developmental years of 0-3 years. Childcare professionals also play a key role in ensuring consistent messages for parents and in delivering a consistent approach for children. Good quality, well-informed and affordable childcare will shape the social, emotional and cognitive development of our children. We have a responsibility to get it right for all children in order to give all children the best start in life.

Further reading from Barnardo's Northern Ireland:

- Barnardo's NI (2018) [*Promoting Good Infant Mental Health: supporting emotional wellbeing for 0-3 year olds*](#)
- Barnardo's NI (2018) [*Connections: Parenting Infants in a Digital World*](#)
- Barnardo's NI (2018) [*Executive Summary - Connections: Parenting Infants in a Digital World*](#)
- Barnardo's NI (2014) [*Believe in Childcare? An investigation into the childcare needs of ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland*](#)

The above publications are available at www.barnardos.org.uk or from the Barnardo's NI Policy Team.

For further information, please contact:

Trása Canavan

Policy & Research Officer

Barnardo's NI

trasa.canavan@barnardos.org.uk

Panel 1 Early Years Development: Paper 3

Childcare Policy Development in NI Conference 11 March 2019



Republic of Ireland	Scotland	England	Wales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Children and Youth Affairs Early Years Division within DCYA Policy and funding supports for Early Learning and Care Services and School Age Care Services Increased investment over successive budgets (117% in 4 budgets) Extension of ECCE pre-school to 2 years Access and Inclusion model introduced CPD infrastructure being developed DCYA commissioned focus on childminders Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF) Inter-Departmental Group on Future Investment in Childcare Commitments within Programme for a Partnership Government and the National Development Plan First 5 – Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-28 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Children and Young People Early Learning and Childcare policy responsibility with Children and Families Directorate ELC commitments within Programme for Government 'Blueprint for 2020: the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland' 600 hrs to 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare for all 3 and 4 yr olds, and eligible 2 yr olds, by 2020 Scottish Gov multi-year commitment to provide local authorities additional funding for expansion of funded early learning and childcare and capital for buildings and equipment Funding follows the child Commitment to investing in and improving quality and skills in the workforce Public media childcare recruitment campaign 100% rate relief for day nurseries Work towards all workers in funded ELC being paid Scottish Living Wage from August 2020 Commitments for additional graduates Funding for children with additional needs to access ELC entitlement Various external stakeholder groups on strategic high quality ELC Working with Care Inspectorate and SCMA to focus on childminders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secretary of State for Education Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Children and Families DfE Early Years statistics team DfE strategy 2015-2020: World-class education and care Extended funded places re: disadvantaged 2yrs Early Years National funding formula (EYNFF) Extension of funded provision from 15 to 30 hours for working parents of 3-4 yr olds Focus on developing the workforce – 'Early Years Workforce Strategy' Support for local authorities to deliver high performing children's services £100m early years capital fund DfE single departmental plan includes children's services, early years and well-being within main delivery areas DfE social mobility plan focuses on early years as 1 of 5 core ambitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minister for Health and Social Services Deputy Minister for Health and Social Services Early Years one of the cross cutting priorities in Prosperity for All – National Strategy Commitment (Welsh PFG) to 30 hrs (20 on top of existing 10) of funded ECEC for working parents of 3 & 4 yr olds, for up to 48 wks of yr by 2020 10 Year Childcare, Play and Early Years Workforce Plan Early Years Outcomes Framework to ensure coordination, programmes and policies are making a difference and support planning and evaluation 100% rates relief for day nurseries £60m investment to support growth and sustainability of sector across Wales and high-quality jobs in sector, including half on Welsh-medium provision

‘Workforce Matters’

Workforce Matters Across Early Childhood and School Age Care Provision



Key areas – ECD relevant

Staff profiles:

- Results showcase the need for a diverse workforce with a variety of specific needs supported.
- Also in themselves highlight the significant economic importance of the sectors reflected in terms of employment and training opportunities.

Provision:

- Considerable range of provision across Health and Social Care Trust areas and operating in a variety of premises and services.
- Importance highlighted of focusing on the specific needs of rural provision and urban.
- Need for overarching strategic approach to expressly meet the needs and requirements of all childcare and early education providers across voluntary, independent, private and statutory sectors.

Key areas – ECD relevant

Recruitment or retention issues:

- All of the studies highlight difficulties faced in terms of recruitment, retention or continuing employment.

Inclusion:

- Considerable range and diversity of children provided for in terms of ethnicity, disability and additional needs.
- Emphasis on the essential importance of the need for inclusive high quality provision.
- Re-enforcement of the the need for a diverse workforce.

Key areas – ECD relevant

Training and qualifications:

- Clear barriers of cost, availability and accessibility in relation to qualifications, training and professional development.
- Wide and diverse spread of qualifications in the sector.
- (Qualitative) - academic versus competency based training and upskilling.
- Emphasis on need for effective strategic approaches to this area.

Quality Improvement:

- Focus of the organisations and sectors represented on need for high quality provision is clearly evident.
- Notable picture in terms of interest in Quality Assurance and Quality Support Programmes.

Sector specific issues:

- The studies outlined a range of sector specific issues.

Key recommendations – ECD relevant

1. An, appropriately resourced and supported, training, qualifications and continuous professional development strategy for the entire workforce across the sectors (addressing recruitment, retention and progression)



Key recommendations – ECD relevant

2. The release and implementation of a robustly resourced and monitored overarching strategy for Northern Ireland for early childhood and School Age Childcare.
3. Ensuring greater diversity and recruitment of suitably qualified and experienced individuals in the respective workforces
4. An enhanced focus on the quality agenda and quality accreditation and support.

Key recommendations – ECD relevant

5. A significant and serious long term investment in early childhood and school age care services, including much needed capital investment which secures the essential infrastructure for services to be provided.



Key recommendations – ECD relevant

6. Culturally appropriate and inclusive provision must be available for all children

7. A common, cross-departmental and agency approach to funding, inspection, and registration

8. Effective communication of information to parents, carers and other stakeholders

Links to individual studies and reports

Links to individual studies and reports

'Irish-Medium Early Years State of the Sector' report

Altram

https://www.altham.org/sites/default/files/AltramExecutiveSummary_FINAL_Su%C3%ADomh.pdf

'State of the School Age Childcare Sector' report

PlayBoard NI

http://www.playboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/PlayBoardNISOSSurvey_Final2017.pdf

'The State of the Childminding Sector' report

NICMA – the childminding organisation

<https://nicma.org/NICMA/media/NICMA-Documents/News%20and%20Events/NICMA-State-of-the-Childminding-Sector-2017-Executive-Summary.pdf>

'Workforce Development Sector Survey 2017'

Early Years – the organisation for young children

<http://www.early-years.org/misc-docs/WORKFORCE-DEVELOPMENT-SURVEY-2017-REPORT.pdf>

'Workforce Matters Across Early Childhood and School Age Care Provision '

<http://www.early-years.org/policy/state-of-sector.php>

Early Years, Care, Education and Play Employers' Forum

A unified voice on the early years, school age and play workforce related issues



Belfast City Council Academies

Childminding, Childcare and Playwork Employment Academies

Belfast City Council

Text Size: A A Accessibility: Cookies: Contact us

Home Council News Jobs Events Leisure Tourism and venues Bets and gaming Community Planning and environment Business A-Z

Business

City for business
City for enterprise
City for start-ups
City for growth
City for investment
City for employment and skills

Belfast Employment Academies

Training and a guaranteed job interview to help you get a job.

Belfast Employment Academies provide specialist training to help you get a job or become your own boss. We're working with a range of employers from across Belfast to fill around 200 posts. To be eligible you must be a Belfast City Council resident and currently out of work or working fewer than 16 hours per week.

Employment academies currently open

The following employment academies are currently open:

- Social Care Employment Academy**
Training designed in partnership with key employers and the regulatory body H&S Social Care Council (HSCC) for a range of roles such as care assistants, care workers, domiciliary care workers and support workers. Everyone who completes the training is guaranteed a job interview with a care provider.
- Childminding Self-employment Academy**
Training to help you become a registered childminder and become your own boss in your home. This includes safeguarding, health and safety and first aid training. Following the initial training, you will also receive ongoing support from a childminding mentor.
- Transport Employment Academy**
Accredited and industry-recognised training including driving licences for specific industries including: long distance, public service vehicle licences and coach licences. Everyone who completes the training is guaranteed a job interview with a transport employer.
- Hospitality Employment Academy**
Accredited training for a range of jobs such as waiting and bar staff, hotel housekeeping and portering, and a range of other roles. Everyone who completes the training is guaranteed a job interview with employers within the hospitality sector in Belfast.
- Childcare Employment Academy**
Job opportunities to help people who do not have qualifications or experience normally needed to get a job in childcare. Everyone who gains a place is guaranteed a job interview with a childcare provider. Participants also get jobs.

Contact us

Economic Development

Email: earlyyears@belfastcc.gov.uk

020 9677 8452

Place and Franchise Department
9-21 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8DE

Related links

Current Belfast City Council vacancies

early years
the government's early years strategy

Early Years Conferences in 2019

Early Years International Professional Practice Conference 2019

'Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the UNCRC'

Friday 31 May 2019 - Ulster University, Magee Campus

Early Years Leadership and Governance Conference 2019

Friday 22 November 2019 - La Mon Hotel, Belfast

Further information:

Early Years website

<http://www.early-years.org/conference2019/index.php>

Joanna Gray – Events Manager

E: joannag@early-years.org

Noel McAllister – Policy Officer

E: noelm@early-years.org



Creating Brighter Futures Childcare for Children with a Learning Disability



Fiona Cole
Mencap NI, Policy and Campaigns



Early Intervention - Priority for Mencap



- Children with a learning disability have the best start in life
- More children with a learning disability aged 0-7 have better health & development, improved cognitive skills, and stronger social & inter-personal skills



Mencap NI Early Intervention Framework		
Theme 1. Supporting the child	Theme 2. Supporting the family	Theme 3. Influencing systems change
Interventions/activities	Interventions/activities	Interventions/activities
Programmes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early development support • Early education and reading skills Summer schemes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Including early development support 	Parent and family support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One-to-one • Group-based • Service / home-based • Workshops • Courses (including online) • Peer-to-peer support • Advice and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research projects • Programme evaluation • Mapping local systems and services • Identifying policy and legislative barriers to accessing support; and campaigning for change
Outcomes	Outcomes	Outcomes
Children aged 0-7 will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meet more of their developmental milestones • Have opportunities to grow and develop through play in an inclusive environment 	Families of children with a learning disability will: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the emotional and practical skills to best support their child • Be supported to promote their child's development and their family well-being • Be better connected and understand how to access services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy and legislation recognises and supports families with young children with a learning disability • Services will be evidence-informed and of higher quality • Parents will have increased information and clarity on how and where to access services

Children with a learning disability are more likely to:



- Have **A**dverse **C**hildhood **E**xperiences
- Experience abuse
(Children with a disability = 3 times more likely)
- Grow up in poverty
- Grow up in care
(2.5% of children have a LD & 10% of LAC)
- Be excluded from school
(Children with SEN = 7 times more likely)
- Have poor educational attainment and be unemployed
- Be bullied in school and experience social isolation & loneliness

Poor health outcomes for children with LD



- **Mental ill-health**
 - 1 in 7 children with diagnosable mental health condition has a LD
- **Poor physical health**
 - 30% - 70% increased risk of obesity at 5, 7, 11 years
 - Average shorter life expectancy of 16 years
 - 4 times more likely to die an avoidable death



Quality childcare is also vital for children with a learning disability



- Care for children while parents are working
- Beneficial for children's development
 - Educational
 - Cognitive
 - Behavioural
 - Social



Barriers to childcare for parents of children with a learning disability



- Lack of strategic direction

- Lack of provision

Parents need to feel confident that placements meet their child's needs



- Too expensive
- Lack of specialist equipment
- Inflexible provision



Improving childcare for children with LD Recommendations

- Equal access to high quality, inclusive early intervention services, and the specialist support they need to boost their development.
- A NI Childcare Strategy addressing the specific needs of children with a LD:
 - Increased availability of local, high quality, flexible and affordable childcare.
 - Detailed information for parents about the different types of local childcare available for disabled children - and how to access it.
 - Professional development that includes training to equip staff with the necessary skills and competencies to care for children with a LD.
- Childcare professionals should be paid a wage that reflects their skills and responsibility, and be valued for the vital work they do.



Further information



Thank you!

**For more information,
contact:**



Fiona Cole

Fiona.cole@mencap.org.uk



Panel 2 Gender Inequality: Paper 1

Childcare Conference 11 March 2019:

ECNI Presentation: Summary points

The importance of addressing issues relating to childcare provision in NI cannot be understated.

Barriers associated with childcare impact on equality groups, particularly women. Further, whilst it can be a key barrier in terms of accessing, progressing and remaining in employment, it is not just a barrier in the area of employment, in that they can for example, these barriers impact on women's ability to participate in public and political life and peacebuilding; impact on women's ability to access education and life-long learning, including further and higher education and vocational training. Childcare costs have also been found to be a barrier to women participating in sport.

The Equality Commission's recent Statements on Key Inequalities in employment and participation in public life set out in detail the nature and extent of how barriers associated with childcare impact on how women access, progress within and remain in employment, as well as its impact on women's ability to participate in public and political life and peacebuilding.

The Equality Commission research in 2013 entitled *"Childcare: Maximising the Economic Participation of Women"* identified the lack of affordable and appropriate childcare provision and recommended the implementation of a Childcare Strategy. Unfortunately these findings remain as relevant today as they were six years ago.

Northern Ireland continues to have one of the lowest levels of childcare available within the UK, despite an increase in childcare places being made available over the last decade. The cost of childcare in Northern Ireland remains high. It was reported last year that the average cost of a full-time childcare place per week equates to 37% of the average household income in Northern Ireland. The cost of childcare directly impacts on people's ability to work and the number of hours they can commit to.

We know that women experience a lower employment rate and a higher economic inactivity rate when they have dependents. Female employment rates and economic inactivity rates are lower here than in GB. About a third of working age women in NI are economically inactive. One in three women cite family or home commitments as the reason they are unavailable for work - the comparable figure for men is approximately one in twenty.

The Commission has identified five main areas for potential reform and continue to highlight the need for these including: the need for a childcare strategy, the supply of suitable childcare, equality of access to childcare, addressing barriers to employment and attitudes to childcare and mother's employment.

One clear recommendation from ECNI research (2013) was the need to develop and implement an effective full childcare strategy that has sets out a centralised strategic direction and leadership with agreed objectives and cross departmental commitments and action to deliver on tangible outcomes. It has to adequately resourced and underpinned by a robust monitoring and review mechanism.

A consultation on the draft Childcare Strategy was carried out in November 2015 but there have been no further developments since that time. An effective Childcare Strategy is essential to creating a thriving and successful future but it will require considerable investment in the first instance – but the tangible outcomes will be beneficial to our economy and wider society.

The childcare that is available is often inflexible, with rigid limited hours which are not suitable for parents who start work early, who work evenings or weekends and providers often close around holiday times including bank and public holidays –childcare is also very expensive. According to Employers for Childcare (2018) in almost a third (30%) of households, the childcare bill is more than the mortgage or rent that is an expensive burden for any young family.

Equality of access to childcare for some specific groups of parents is very limited – those who find accessing childcare difficult include: rural families, parents of disabled children, those with more than two children, Traveller, migrant and minority ethnic families plus single parent and those on low income.

Childcare can and does create a barrier to employment for many but this needs to be tackled strategically by government departments as part of a programme of employment and employability support. It should include welfare and family policies and subsidies and statutory flexible work arrangements.

Equally childcare issues related to employment should not be looked at in isolation. For example, employers have a part to play in ensuring they accommodation the needs of working parents. There must also be an onus on employers across Northern Ireland to be more accepting and innovative when it comes to accommodating parents needs for flexibility and understanding in the workplace.

The Commission's Statement on Key Inequalities in Employment (2018) has highlighted that *the low costs of childcare, or even free childcare, are not sufficient if mothers cannot adjust their working hours in a way that allows them to carry out their caring responsibilities'.*

There is also a need to change attitudes and tackle gender stereotypes including in education, employment and the media concerning women, parenting and childcare roles in society in general and in the workplace, including the childcare workforce.

Commission research on childcare (2013) found that attitudes towards the role of the mother as the primary caregiver prevail in Northern Ireland and may lead to the higher rates of economic inactivity experienced by women.

To achieve these reforms we need commitment by Government and departments to actively tackle the issues identified - this work could further be used to develop a gender pay strategy and action plan for Northern Ireland.

The Commission continues to raise the impact of childcare on people's lives at the highest of levels. We raised the impact of childcare on women's lives in our submission to the United Nations CEDAW Committee in Geneva during its formal examination of the UK Government. We will continue to highlight this issue where appropriate and work with stakeholders across the wider women's sector and in government departments to address the barriers to employment caused by childcare and caring responsibilities.

Panel 2 Gender Inequality: Paper 2

Gender Inequality & Childcare

Siobhán Harding

Women's Support Network as part of the Women's Regional Consortium

Childcare is a cross-cutting issue

- Gender equality runs through all our work
- Childcare is central and runs through all gender equality themes from poverty to employment
- WSN is the policy lead for the Women's Regional Consortium – childcare features heavily in our policy work
- We are not alone in recognising the importance of childcare


Gender Inequality & Childcare

- Women ascribed the role of unpaid primary caregiver/domestic labourer
- Impacts on wellbeing and life prospects, constrains economic participation and reduces financial independence
- At same time increases likelihood of reliance on state benefits or partner income – greater risk of gender poverty
- Inadequate childcare makes this worse (including integrated childcare and community education)
- Access to childcare is a particular problem for economic participation of marginalised and vulnerable women




Childcare & Austerity

- Introduction of welfare reform risks more pronounced impacts on poverty – given the gender impact – more on women's poverty
- Relationship between austerity and diminishing childcare affordability widely accepted
- Austerity losses may mean that mothers become unconvinced that work is economically viable once childcare costs are factored in



Childcare & Government Policy

- Childcare cuts across many Govt strategies/programmes
- Draft Childcare Strategy
- Others include Child Poverty Strategy, anti-poverty strategy, Gender Equality Strategy and the Programme for Government
- Childcare meets/aligns to a number of programme/strategy outcomes and goals



Childcare Strategy

- Aims at improving gender equality by helping to stimulate women's economic participation through supporting low cost childcare at community level
- Profound concern is absence of budgetary commitment to underpin the Strategy to support low cost/no cost childcare
- Austerity constraints on households ability to pay for childcare particularly in disadvantaged areas



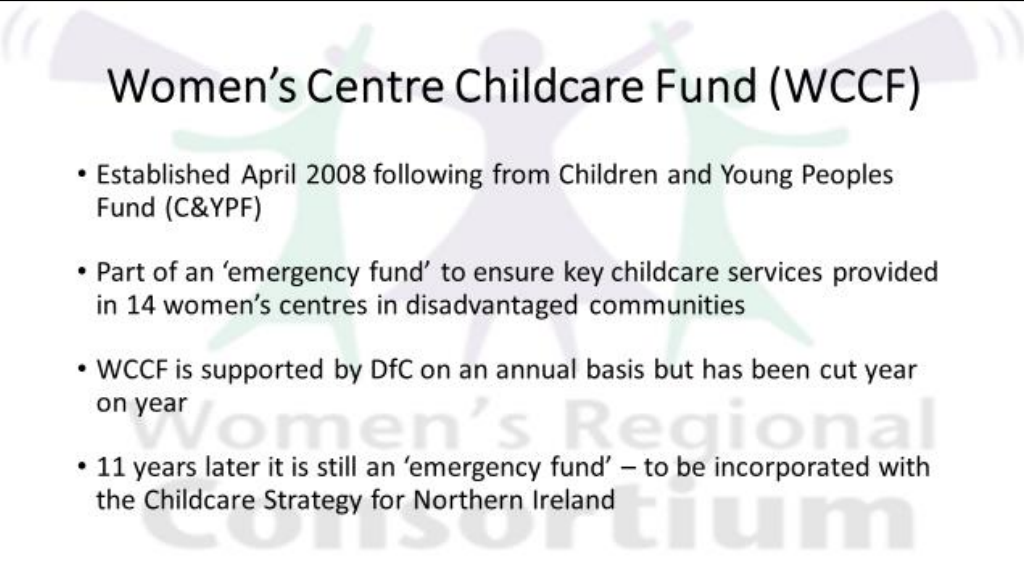
Childcare Strategy

- Impact on provider income and sustainability – government expectation that all projects under the Strategy will progress towards full sustainability
- Proposals are to advance the government's anti-poverty agenda by enabling mothers to join the workforce – needs to be accompanied by gendered job creation
- Prospect of enhanced economic participation can depend on the integrated availability of appropriate childcare and access to education/training opportunities at community level



Childcare Provision in the Women's Sector

- Childcare is provided through 14 women's centres and some more established women's groups
- Provision varies from short sessions to full day-care and from free places to full fee-paying for those that have social economy businesses
- Cocktail of funding enables them to offer free childcare places to mothers who are availing of other services
- Cocktail of funding may include Pathways, SureStart, Children in Need, Comic Relief, etc but for the women's centres a key element of their funding is through the Women's Centres Childcare Fund – WCCF



Women's Centre Childcare Fund (WCCF)

- Established April 2008 following from Children and Young Peoples Fund (C&YPF)
- Part of an 'emergency fund' to ensure key childcare services provided in 14 women's centres in disadvantaged communities
- WCCF is supported by DfC on an annual basis but has been cut year on year
- 11 years later it is still an 'emergency fund' – to be incorporated with the Childcare Strategy for Northern Ireland

Women's Centre Childcare Fund (WCCF)


- It enables women's centres to provide 100% supported childcare places for the most disadvantaged children in our communities
- Parents on certain benefits or in part-time work working less than 16 hours per week or engaged in certain development/training or have progressed into employment following a period of unemployment
- Women's centres ability to provide childcare for disadvantaged children, supported through the WCCF, is core to their continued community development in disadvantaged areas

WCCF Evaluation

- DSD Evaluation completed in June 2015
- Evaluation very positive – need, impact, value for money
- Evaluation states that the Childcare Strategy provides an opportunity to take it forward
- However Childcare Strategy mentions WCCF only once and suggests only a 'wish' for the funding to continue: *"we wish to see this funding and the childcare services it makes possible continue"*

WCCF Evaluation

- Enables the most excluded in disadvantaged communities to access support and engage in community development activities
- The evaluation recommends:
"WCCF to become an established fund, taken forward on a planned, multi-year basis to provide for a planned longer term response to the need for childcare provision for low income families and deprived backgrounds."



Need for WCCF

- Sustaining funding for childcare services in community based women's centres is vital in tackling poverty, child poverty and deprivation
- WCCF is consistent with DfC aims - reducing child poverty, providing opportunities for parents to better themselves and contributing to their communities thereby tackling disadvantage
- We strongly advocate that the WCCF be made a permanent fund under DfC

Panel 3 Sectoral Development: Paper 1

Fiona Clendinning

Childminding Development Officer
NICMA - The Childminding Association

fiona.cleddinning@nicma.org

© NICMA 2019



2017 NICMA's State Of The Sector Report

www.nicma.org/News-Events/News/NICMA-State-of-the-Sector-Report

© NICMA 2019



1. Males and ethnic minorities are under represented in the sector
2. Sustainability:
 - The majority of respondents have been trying to fill their vacancies for less than three months
 - Nearly half of the childminders had considered giving up childminding
 - 37% of respondents feel their business is secure
 - Unregistered childminding
3. 33% of respondents stated they would be interested in becoming a member of a NICMA Support Group
4. 40% of respondents are interested in attending training



© NICMA 2019

Recommendations

- ✓ Raise awareness of Registered Childminding as a career and as a childcare choice
- ✓ Further research on what would support sustainability
- ✓ Highlight the issue of Unregistered Childminding
- ✓ Develop peer support models
- ✓ Training



© NICMA 2019

For more information

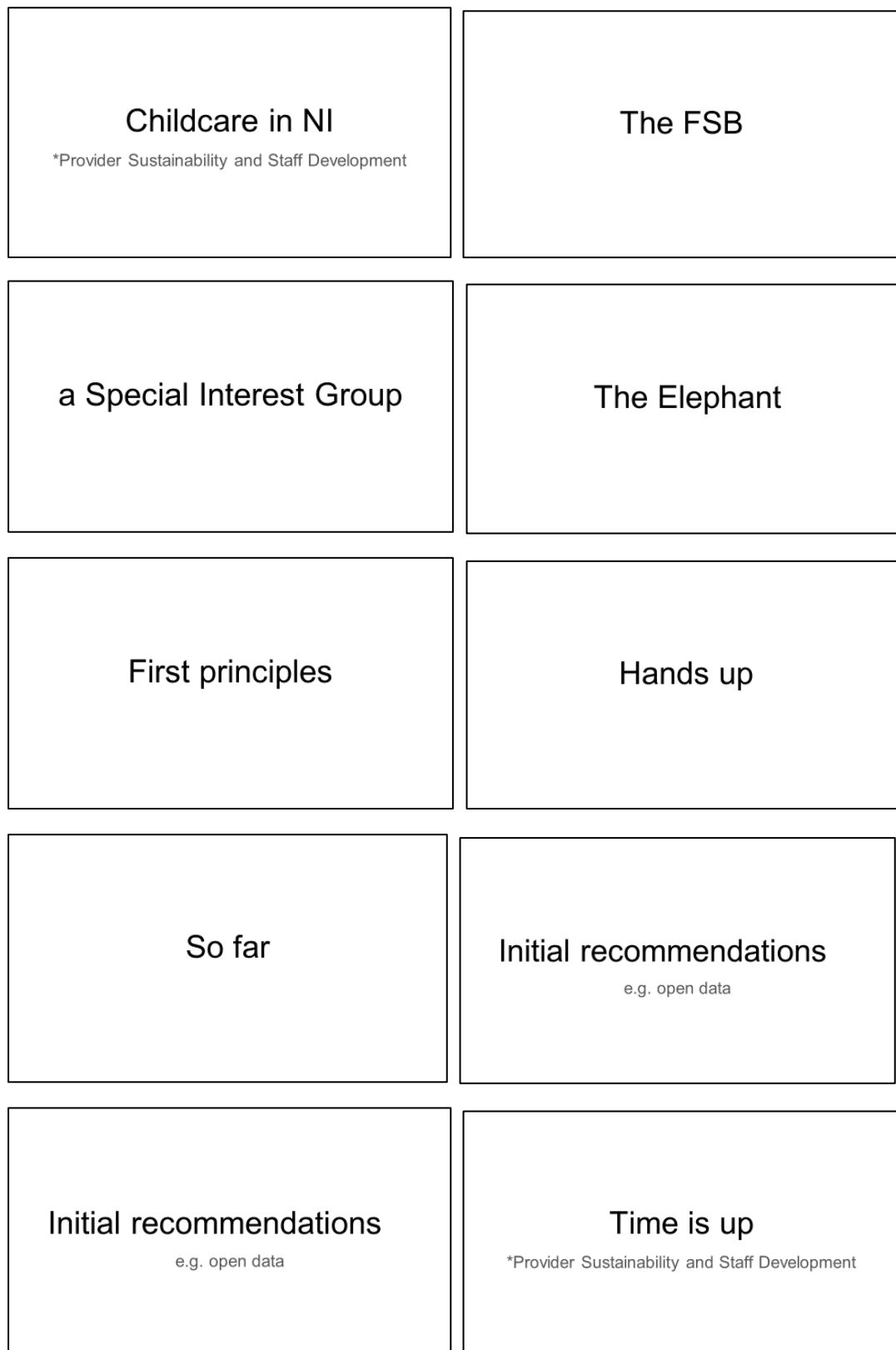
- www.nicma.org
- info@nicma.org
- Social media
- Local Development and Engagement Officers (contact information available on website)



© NICMA 2019

Panel 3 Sectoral Development: Paper 2

This is available at rebrand.ly/FsbChildcare where the FSB will also publish a 'roadmap'

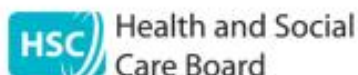


Panel 3 Sectoral Development: Paper 3

Developing the Childcare Workforce



Dr Roisin McCooey



Childcare Partnerships offer information and support to childcare providers, parents and employers.

We support parents to access quality childcare through our online childcare search facility:

- Family Support NI <http://www.familysupportni.gov.uk/Section/Childcare/138>
- Guide to choosing a quality childcare service and by providing information on reducing childcare costs <http://childcarepartnerships.hscni.net/>

We offer a range of support locally to childcare providers including:

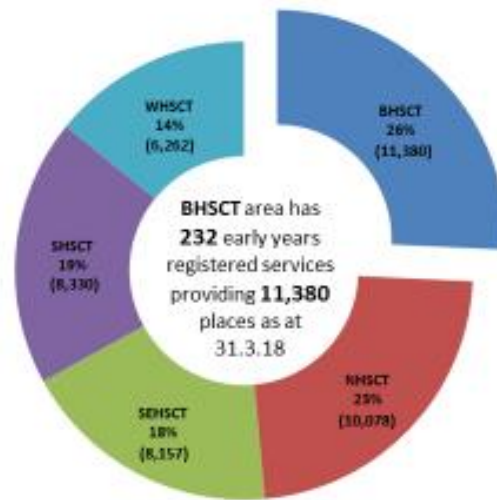
- Support the continuous development of a skilled workforce
- Quality improvements in the environments in which childcare is provided
- Small Grants: including children with additional needs, Small refurbishments
- Capital investment
- Commissioner : Sure Start, Delivering Social Change through Childcare: Brightstart
- Advice and support on a range of issues

Northern Ireland – Early Years Registered Provision



Early Years Registered Services:

- Day Nursery
- Out of School within Day Nursery
- Crèche
- Playgroup
- Stand-Alone Out of School

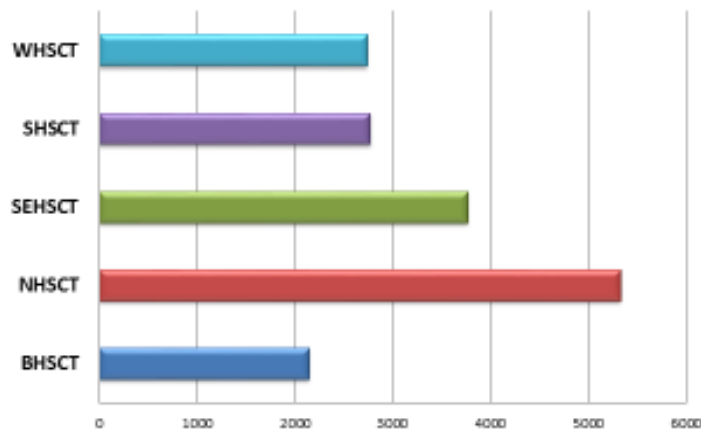


Northern Ireland – Registered Childminder Provision



3093 registered childminders/approved home childcarers providing **16,761** places in NI as at 31.3.18

Number of Registered Childminder Places as at 31 March 2018



BHST	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT
2146	5332	3768	2774	2741

Childcare Partnership Regional Training Programme 2017-18

251 training courses	3,931 childcare workers trained
	82% of available places were used
184 mandatory courses	2,897 childcare workers attended mandatory training
	82% of available places were used
67 CPD training courses/events delivered	1,034 childcare workers attended CPD training
	82% of available places were used

Issues for consideration: CPD days, cover for staff, innovative ways to deliver training, networking and relationship building across statutory, private and voluntary sectors

Key Findings Workforce Matters Report

- Staff profile – numbers, age range,, length of service gender, ethnic origin
- Type of provision
- Recruitment and retention issues
- Inclusion – Number children number staff from BME & disability
- Qualifications and training
- Quality Improvement
- Sector specific issues



The decisions we take about
caring for our children are
integrally connected to our
vision for the kind of society
we wish to build



Panel 4 Improving Children's Outcomes: Paper 1

**Employers
For Childcare**

Working For Parents

**Affordability and accessibility of
childcare in Northern Ireland:
experiences of parents and providers**

Aoife Hamilton
Employers For Childcare



employersforchildcare.org  

**Employers
For Childcare**

Working For Parents

About the research

- Online survey: self-select to participate
- Data collection May to July 2018
- 2200+ responses from parents and childcare providers
- Full report and key findings available online

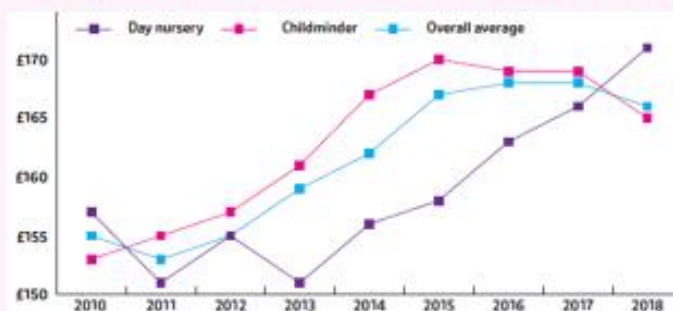
employersforchildcare.org  



Cost of a childcare place in Northern Ireland

employersforchildcare.org  

Cost of a full-time childcare place in Northern Ireland



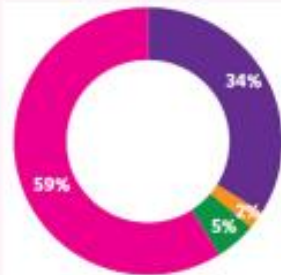
	2018	2017	Change
Day nursery	£171	£166	+5
Childminder	£165	£169	-4
Full-time overall	£166	£168	-2

employersforchildcare.org  

Variation in childcare costs



How are families using and paying for childcare?



- Formal childcare only
- I/my partner look after the children
- Informal childcare only
- Mix of formal/informal childcare

41 hours

Average hours of
childcare used
per week

Overall
families spend,
on average,

£133

per week on
childcare

Range of spend

£0
per week

£500+
per week

employersforchildcare.org



Variation in spend and usage



employersforchildcare.org



Case studies

Alex and Michael both work full-time and have four children aged from two to eight. One child is registered disabled. They use **80 hours** of formal childcare each week at a **cost of £415**. They do not have access to informal childcare. The family reports spending between **41% and 50%** of their overall household income on childcare each month.



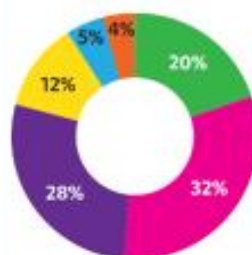
"We have older parents who don't live locally and no family support available and we work full-time in inflexible workplaces with no family friendly conditions so have to depend on formal childcare / day nurseries for childcare."

Elaine is a single parent with one four year old son and works full-time. She uses a combination of formal and informal childcare. Combining a day nursery, holiday schemes and grandparents, she spends **£150** per week on average.

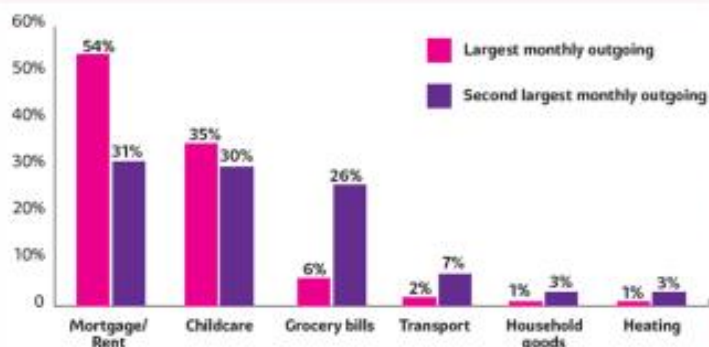


"As I work outside of normal working hours I rely on family for weekend and evening care."

Childcare bill compared to household income



Childcare bill compared to other household bills



"I have to carefully manage the household budget to make sure I have enough to meet the childcare cost."

"It costs more than my mortgage, but we have no other choice but to put our child into childcare whilst we work."

employersforchildcare.org  

Using means other than income to pay for childcare



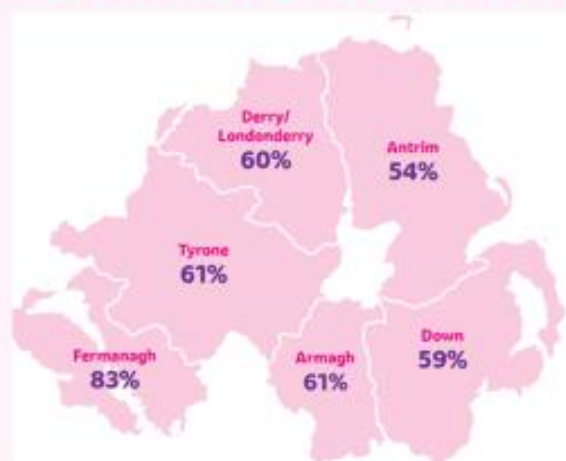
"My childcare costs were alot higher in the past before informal childcare kicked in. We are still trying to pay this off through loans as a result of using credit cards to survive".

employersforchildcare.org  



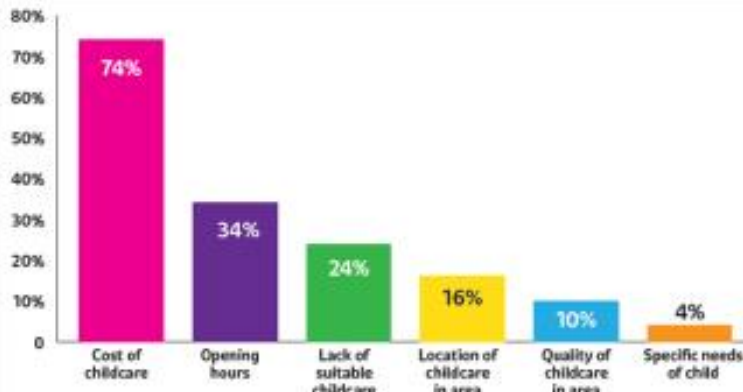
employersforchildcare.org  

Parents who believe there is a lack of provision



employersforchildcare.org  

Why are families not accessing the childcare they require?



"Very few people work the typical Monday to Friday week - childcare has yet to catch up on this. It puts stress on parents. And any out of hours care is prohibitively expensive."

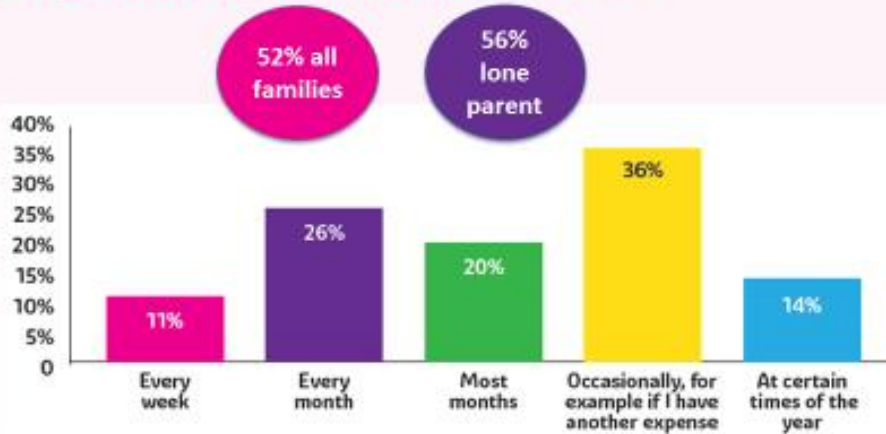
"As I work as a nurse this requires shift work. I really struggle with childcare. This would be the main stress in my life getting childcare sorted."

employersforchildcare.org  



employersforchildcare.org  

Impact on financial well-being: cutting back or going without to meet childcare costs



employers**for**childcare.org



Impact on financial well-being

"Myself and my husband had to do without, I could just afford to feed our children. I got into arrears with my rent because I sacrificed it to pay for childcare. My husband has no savings at all because we used it to pay for childcare during the nine-week summer break here."

"The cost of childcare has a massive impact on our family. Our childcare costs £500 a month more than our mortgage does. We pay £19,200 a year on childcare. We regularly need to put basic living expenses, food/petrol on a credit card. We never reach the end of a month with money in our account, it is permanently in an overdraft."

employers**for**childcare.org



Work and career progression

	Overall	Increased hours	Decreased hours	Changed pattern of work
Cost of childcare	46%	42%	64%	57%
Change in nature of job	35%	43%	20%	35%
Financial reasons	33%	39%	27%	34%
Ability to access suitable childcare	19%	17%	28%	31%
Personal preference	18%	15%	28%	21%
Family reasons eg other caring responsibilities	11%	8%	17%	14%
Location of childcare	7%	7%	9%	14%

"Very depressing paying so much on childcare but also need to keep my career opportunity open."

"I would be better off staying at home with my children however I wish to set them a good example about working hard and pursuing a career."

employersforchildcare.org

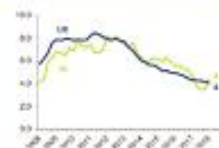


June - August 2018

Unemployment – 4.3%

Economic inactivity – 27.5%

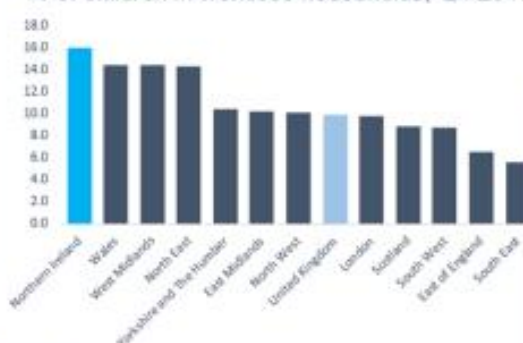
Employment – 68.2%



Tark Magill @MarkMagill1982 · 21h

he proportion of children in Northern Ireland who live in workless households is the highest amongst UK regions.

% of children in workless households, Q4 2018



Source: ONS

Invest Northern Ireland
29,522 followers
2h

Fact of the week | Unemployment in NI is lower than the UK, RCI and the EU.
Source: NISRA - Northern Ireland Labour Market Report (Feb 2019)

Northern Ireland
Unemployment
Rate



Family well-being

Parents choose to limit family size or wait to have another child



Parents experience stress associated with financial worries



Parents and families do not spend the amount of time they would like together



"It is stressful. It strains relationships. It moves focus away from the children and family."

"Childcare and the costs associated are one of the main worries and stresses in our family life."

employersforchildcare.org



Quality of care

"Really high standard of care - I couldn't fault either of my providers and my children are genuinely happy and well cared for. The quality of care helps me be happy about having to go out to work every day."



"The staff and people who run them are excellent at their job and provide an invaluable service for working parents."

employersforchildcare.org





Conclusions

employersforchildcare.org  

Conclusions

Two broad conclusions emerge from this year's research:

1. Quality childcare must be properly valued by Government and recognised for the role it plays both in promoting child development and enabling parents to access work.
2. Quality childcare must be affordable and accessible for parents whilst being sustainable for childcare providers to deliver.

employersforchildcare.org  



employersforchildcare.org  

**Employers
For Childcare**

Working **For** Parents

Thank you

Aoife Hamilton, Policy and Information Manager

T: 028 9267 8200

E: Aoife.Hamilton@employersforchildcare.org

W: employersforchildcare.org

employersforchildcare.org  

Dr Sirin Sung

Experiences of BME (Black and Minority Ethnic) women in accessing childcare



BME Women in Northern Ireland

- NISRA (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency) publishes a gender-related statistics annually - 'Women in Northern Ireland'.
- However, a few statistics related to migrant women in Northern Ireland (Hinds 2011).
- The number of international migrants coming to live in NI - has increased since 2001.
- The proportion of births to NI mothers born outside the UK - has risen from 5.3% in 1997 to 13% in 2017 (NISRA 2017).
- BUT, little has been done on BME mothers' lived experiences of balancing work and motherhood in NI.

BME Women Balancing work and Motherhood

- This research project was originally focusing on – BME women balancing work and family.
- BUT motherhood and childcare found to be the most important issue for the participants.
- Migrant women often renegotiate cultural boundaries in relation to gender norms and practices (Cooke 2007; Lim 2017).
- The traditional gender ideology prevails, particularly regarding childcare issues.
- BME mothers (in paid employment) in NI may experience - an intensification of those expectations – in the absence of a family support network.

Research Methods

- Qualitative research
- Focus groups: BME women living in Belfast Metropolitan Area.
- 3 focus groups with BME Women in Paid Work (age group: 25-55).
- 1 group with policy makers and practitioners – 4 in Total.
- Carried out in 2018 (September – November).
- Funded by Queen's University Belfast, Faculty Research Initiative Funding (FRIF).

Characteristics of Participants: Focus Groups

Focus Groups	Characteristics of Participants	No. of Participants
Group 1	BME Women Eastern European/ Chinese/ Indian/ Pakistani	8
Group 2	BME Women Eastern/Southern European/ Chinese/Indian/Pakistani	9
Group 3	BME Women Eastern European/Filipinos	3
Group 4	Policy Makers and Practitioners	6
Total		26

BME women's Experiences in accessing childcare: Preliminary Findings

- Accessible and affordable
 - Language Barrier: limit their awareness of/access to available services (Kernaghan 2014).
 - Cost of childcare: Expensive
- **Lack of Family support:** Participants had to
 - Work reduced hours (e.g. part-time).
 - Quit the job for a few years.
 - Find support from friends – e.g. Indian community.
- Lack of awareness and information:
 - Differences between Eastern/Southern European and Chinese participants.

BME women's Experiences in accessing childcare: Preliminary Findings

- **Lack of Family Support:** the most challenging issue for the BME women.

"I have a daughter, she is in primary school...there are so many holidays or training, or the child is sick... and you don't have ad-hoc childcare that you can phone and get somebody, so you need to take your annual leave..... and even your anniversary you bring your child". (Focus Group 1)

- **The cost of childcare:**

"It's a big cost and sometimes it is far away (27-45mins) away from home. If you earn more... it's still sometimes not worth it."

"..we don't have the money to send them to the nursery." (Focus Group 2)

BME women's Experiences in accessing childcare: Preliminary Findings

- **Awareness/Accessibility of services and policy:**

"It's a discrimination against people who work different hours" (Focus Group 1)

"I was not aware of certain policies...locals, my colleagues knew about this" (Focus Group 2)

- **Childcare as Gendered activity:** Traditional culture from their home countries. (Motherhood and gender ideology)

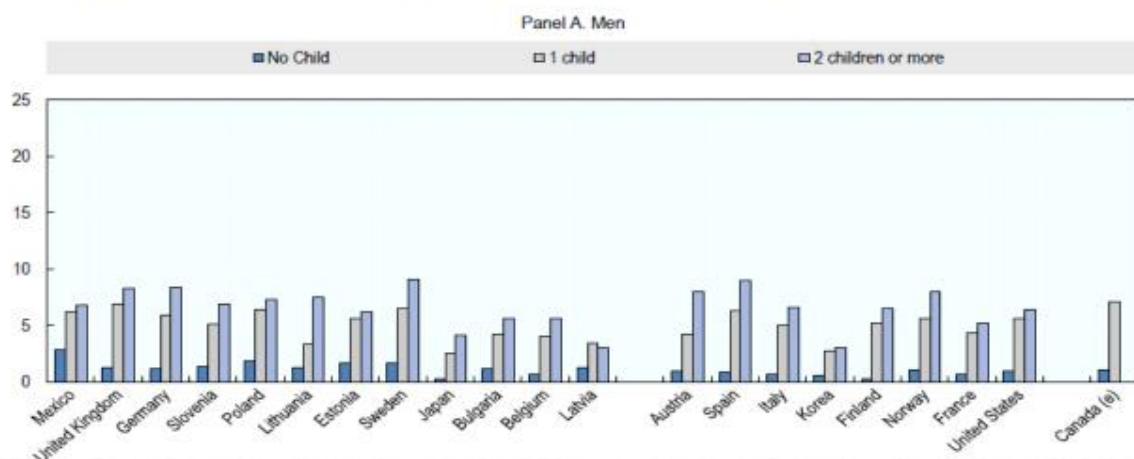
"It's women's work. I'd never ask my husband to do it" (Focus Group 1).

"Women take more responsibility for sure...I want to and women are told to do so by culture and society." (Focus Group 2)

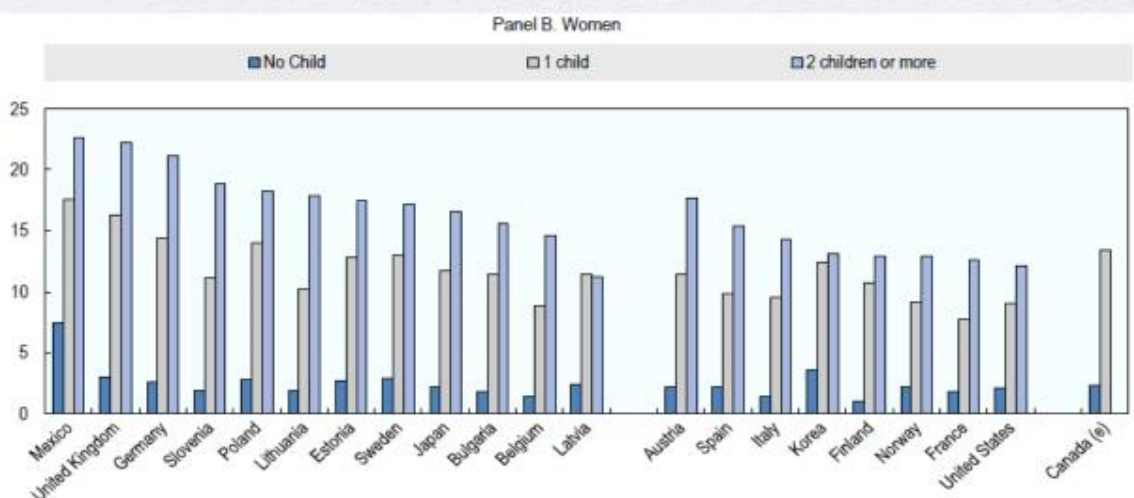
- A Few women said – their Husbands shared childcare equally. (Focus Group 3)

Percentage of time dedicated to care work by number of children under school age, 1999-2010 - **Men** (OECD 2016)

Proportion (%) of time with care declared as primary (and secondary) activity^a, 25-44-year-olds^a



Percentage of time dedicated to care work - **Women** (OECD 2016)

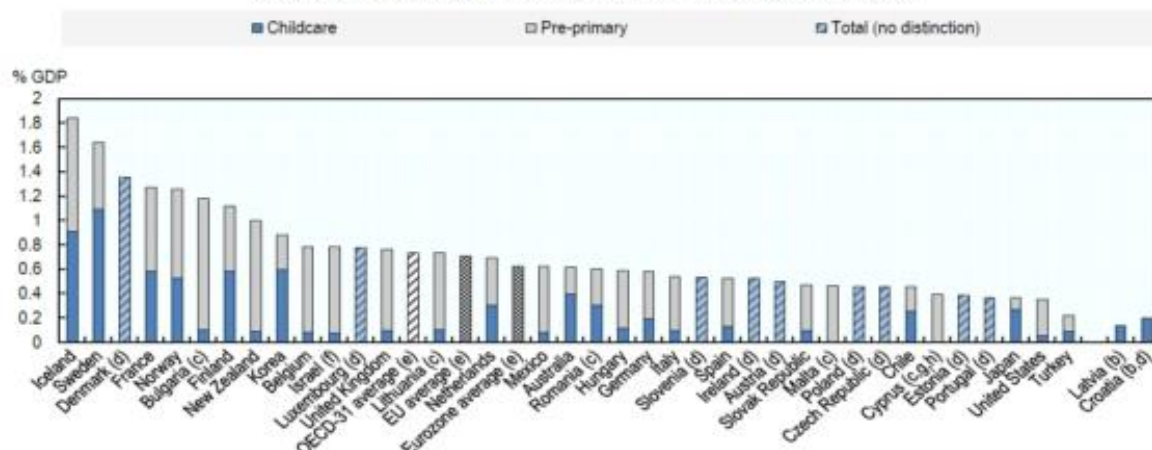


Improvement for childcare policies: BME women's views

- Flexible opening time for childcare
- Out of school hours
- Good quality and affordable childcare:
 - participants who had low-paid jobs were particularly concerned. (children: 0-3 year old)
- Childcare facilities within their workplaces.
- Maternity Leave/Pay:
 - Shorter period of leave: Participants worked for Small-sized companies/shops.
 - Some were unaware of maternity pay.

Public spending on early childhood education and care (OECD 2016)

Chart PF3.1.A. Public spending on early childhood education and care
Public expenditure on childcare and pre-primary education and total public expenditure on early childhood education and care, as a % of GDP, 2013 and latest available*



Conclusion

- Accessing childcare can be more difficult for BME women.
- The challenges are greater for BME women in paid work – combining paid and unpaid care work.
- Childcare as gendered activity is common in most countries (OECD 2016).
- BUT for BME women the traditional idea of gendered division of labour was more notable.

Conclusion Continued...

- **Childcare policy in the UK/NI should be developed further:**
 - Acknowledging the diversity of ethnicity among parents.
 - Encouraging men's involvement in childcare – e.g. father-specific leave, such as 'daddy quota' in Sweden.
 - A good quality and affordable childcare – for children aged between 0-3 in particular.
 - Extended free childcare hours.
- **Future research – In-depth interviews with BME women in paid work.**

References

- Cooke, F. (2007) 'Husband's Career First: Regenerating Career and Family Commitment among Migrant Chinese Academic Couples in Britain', *Work, Employment and Society*, 21(1):47-65.
- Hinds, B. (2011) *The Northern Ireland Economy: Women on the Edge?* Belfast: Women's Resource and Development Agency.
- Kernaghan, D. (2014) *Believe in Childcare: Ethnic minority communities in Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Barnardo's.
- Lim, H. (2017) 'Chinese and Korean Mothers in England: Motherhood, Gender and Employment', *Families, Relationships and Societies*, 6(3):375-92.
- Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (2017), *Long-term International Migration Statistics for Northern Ireland*, Belfast: NISRA.
- OECD (2016) *Public spending on early childhood education and care*, Paris: OECD Publishing.
- OECD (2016) *Time use for work, care and other day-to-day activities*, Paris: OECD Publishing.

Universal, child-centred childcare that meets the needs of children, families, childcare workers and providers and benefits society.

We want to see a Childcare system that is affordable, accessible, flexible, high quality, and which supports children's education and development. Childcare should be available to, and suitable for, children of all ages, those with a disability, and

those living in a rural location. Childcare provision should enable parents to access and stay in paid work or education and training. We want to see the value of childcare work recognised with decent pay and terms and conditions.

CHILDCARE FOR ALL



Childcare Charter

The Childcare for All Campaign calls on the Northern Ireland Executive to commit to achieving the following outcomes:

Children

- All children have access to high quality childcare that meets their educational and developmental needs in a safe, nurturing environment supporting them to achieve their full potential.
- No child is living in poverty as a result of a parent's inability to access or stay in paid work or due to the high cost of childcare.

Providers

- All types of childcare provider are enabled to deliver high quality, sustainable, accessible childcare across a range of settings through strategic investment by Government.
- The childcare workforce is valued and supported through investment in skills development, workplace progression, and decent pay and terms and conditions.

Parents

- All parents are able to access, stay in and progress in paid work, or education and training facilitated by affordable, accessible and flexible childcare.
- All parents are supported to undertake the amount of paid work that suits the needs of their family with adequate financial support to live free from poverty.

Society

- Significant reduction in the gender pay gap and social inequality through ensuring that no-one's employment options are constrained by lack of access to affordable, flexible childcare.
- Economic growth is stimulated through employers having access to a wider pool of skilled, experienced potential employees for recruitment.

The Childcare Charter was developed by:



Appendix 3: Childcare research resources

The WRDA website contains an e-Library with a section dedicated to relevant research, consultation responses and resources on childcare.

The e-Library is available here: wrda.net/resources/e-library/childcare/

This will be updated regularly as new research is published so please check back regularly.