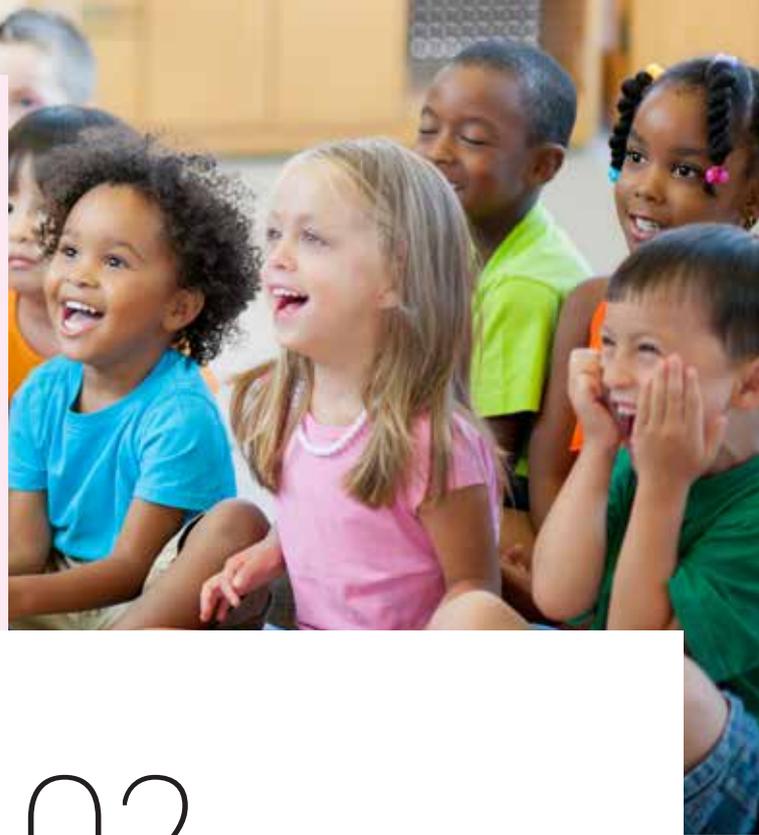




COMMUNITY PLATFORM
CHALLENGING POVERTY & INEQUALITY

Principles for delivering a high quality, inclusive and accessible Public Childcare Model

The Community Platform is a network of 32 national networks and organisations in the community and voluntary sector working to address poverty, social exclusion and inequality. Childcare is a concern for all members. We advocate for a just recovery and progressive change to the state's role in the provision of childcare especially as a result of the lessons learnt during the Covid-19 pandemic. The response by the Government to the crisis clearly shows the important role of the state in providing key public services and in ensuring universal access. The Community Platform's values of Community, Participation and Decency form the basis of our principles for childcare.



Principles

01

Child centred:

Putting children and their needs at the centre of policy and practice.

02

State responsibility:

State responsibility for delivering a publicly funded, not-for-profit childcare model.

03

Investment:

State investment in childcare must be based on international best practice.

04

Quality, inclusion and accessibility:

Putting quality, inclusion and accessibility at the heart of the model to ensure universal access to childcare which meets the needs of all children.

05

Equality:

ensuring better outcomes for children and families, especially for those on low incomes, those from minority and diverse communities and those experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

06

Decent working conditions:

Provide decent pay and working conditions for staff.

Why are these principles essential?

Childcare is a key public service and if properly designed and delivered has the potential to contribute to the elimination of child poverty and disadvantage. Childcare can improve life chances for all children, advance equality for women while also supporting greater participation in the labour market.



The most effective and efficient way to tackle persistent gender inequalities in care is sustained investment in public services and social infrastructure, including early year's education and care. This would give long term benefits for women, children, families, workers and society.

We support the Government's commitment to a new national social contract outlined in *The Programme for Government, A Shared Future*, which states that:

'The ambition of this Government is to provide each citizen with accessible and affordable childcare, as well as a living wage.....' (p.74)

First 5, *A Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families 2019-2028*, presents the Government's vision:

'to further improve affordability, accessibility and quality.'

Why we need a public model?

Decent public services benefit everyone and care is essential to the common good. There was strong support (96.7% of citizens voted) for a public model from the citizens assembly on gender equality.

"Ireland should over the next decade move to a publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of quality, affordable early years and out of hours childcare."





The Community Platform believes that Ireland's current childcare model is unsustainable and cannot deliver quality outcomes for children, parents and workers.

The state's over-dependence on the private market presents significant barriers for already disadvantaged groups. Recent research found that almost 60% of lone parents could not afford to access childcare services. Ireland is the worst performing country in the EU with regard to affordability for lone parents (SVP, 2019).

Ireland has one of the most poorly funded childcare systems in Europe. It spends less than 0.3% of national income on childcare, well below the EU average of 0.7% and the UNICEF recommended figure of 1%.

Childcare remains the single most significant barrier to women's equal participation in all aspects of society, but particularly employment, education and training and public life.

Countries with public provision tend to have childcare services that are more affordable, accessible, and of higher quality than countries with private service provision. However, 99% of 3-5 year-olds in Ireland are in subsidised private settings compared to an EU average of 27%.¹

Those working in the childcare sector are predominantly women and are among the lowest paid workers in the economy. Six out of ten childcare workers (60%) earn less than the Living Wage.²

94% of Early Years Educators have difficulty or great difficulty making ends meet.³ Better pay and conditions can only come through an increase in public resources.⁴

1: See Oireachtas note on Public provision of early childhood education, June 2020.

2: Pobal, Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report 2018/2019

3: SIPTU, Early Years Professionals Survey 2019

4: TASC, Cherishing All Equally: The Care Economy. FEPS and TASC 2020

We call for:



A public model of affordable, accessible and quality childcare

- Increase investment in childcare to 1% of national income over the next decade, in line with UNICEF recommendations.
- Develop a model that ensures affordable fees for families.
- Resource national afterschool care, supports for childminding and the Childcare Ireland Agency.

An end to the market driven model of childcare provision

- Prioritise investment in the public system and move away from extensive reliance on the private and informal market.
- Engage with all relevant stakeholders, including community childcare providers, in the design and implementation of childcare provision.
- Make childcare provision accessible to all children regardless of income or employment status of parents.

Decent pay and working conditions for the workforce

- Work towards professional salary scales for childcare workers.
- Introduce a Living Wage for all childcare staff as a matter of urgency.
- Support and invest in Continuous Professional Development for all childcare workers.



The Community Platform

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The Community Platform members are

- Age Action Ireland
- All Together in Dignity (ATD) Ireland
- Community Action Network
- Community Work Ireland
- Cairde
- Debt and Development Coalition
- European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN) Ireland
- Family Resource Centre National Forum
- Focus Ireland
- Immigrant Council of Ireland
- Independent Living Movement Ireland
- Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
- Irish Penal Reform Trust
- Irish Refugee Council
- Irish Rural Link
- Irish Traveller Movement
- Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
- National Adult Literacy Agency
- National Collective of Community-based Women's Networks
- National Traveller Women's Forum
- National Women's Council of Ireland
- One Family
- Pavee Point
- Rape Crisis Network Ireland
- Safe Ireland
- Sign Language Interpreting Service
- Simon Communities of Ireland
- TASC
- Threshold
- Treoir
- Vincentian Partnership for Justice
- Women's Aid