



Summary of Outputs from Vision, Mission & Values Stakeholder Consultation Sessions Dec 2023-Jan 2024



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1. Introduction

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) launched an extensive listening exercise with the aim of seeking insights and collaboratively designing a programme for a national agency dedicated to early learning and childcare (. The initiative spanned five days and engaged various stakeholder groups, including:

- City and County Childcare Committee (CCC) Managers
- City and County Childcare Committee (CCC) Staff members
- Representatives from Pobal, an organisation administering government-funded programmes, and scheme administrator for early learning and childcare programmes
- City and County Childcare Committees Board members representing diverse interests
- Members of the Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum (ELCSF), which is made up of stakeholder groups representing children, families, providers and staff, academics and other groups with an interest in early learning and childcare, and also includes state bodies and agencies, with a role in supporting evidence-based decision-making and policy-making

This multi-dimensional approach ensured a comprehensive exploration of perspectives and expertise, thereby facilitating the formulation of a vision, mission, and values framework that resonates with the collective wisdom and aspirations of the early learning and childcare sector in Ireland.

2. Methodology

The focus sessions were conducted in December 2023 and January 2024 with the primary objective of gathering insights on what the Vision, Mission, and Values should be for the new state agency for early learning and childcare. This initiative sought to provide an opportunity to elicit the views of key stakeholders on these high-level issues, whilst also identifying areas that worked well and what needed improvement. Stakeholders were notified of the purpose and objectives of the sessions in advance and each session followed the same format and content. This helped ensure consistency and allowed for a wide range of perspectives to be considered from different stakeholders. All sessions were arranged to be conducted face to face however, due to unforeseen circumstances three sessions were held via Webex and timings of the sessions were adjusted accordingly. To facilitate thorough data collection, each group in each session was supported by a designated Department notetaker, thereby ensuring meticulous documentation of insights and discussions in addition to the groups' thoughts and ideas, which were captured on flipcharts and in the 'chat' function where sessions were held online.



3. Findings

Questions posed to guide group conversations, as agreed with stakeholder in advance.

Vision	Mission	Values
We would like you to discuss:	We would like you to discuss:	We would like you to discuss:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The vision of your current organisation and what makes it so fitting for your specific organisation? * 2. What is your organisation deeply passionate about and how does that link to the vision what the new organisation must do to carry that passion on into the future? * 3. What do you believe the new agency should aspire to do? 4. What words do you feel should be included in the new vision? 5. Can you, as a group, propose a new agency vision? 6. What words are most important to be in the new vision? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The mission of your current organisation. Share it with your group and explain how and why it is fitting for your organisation. * 2. Think of the previous missions provided today as examples, what do they all have in common? How do they make you feel? Do you feel they reflect the organisation they are aligned to? * 3. What can this agency strive to do that is better than any other? 4. What characteristics need to be considered in the defining of the new agency mission? Why are these important? 5. Can you, as a group, propose a new agency mission? 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The values that exist within your organisations and how they are lived by everyone who works there? * 2. What do you believe are key behaviours and actions that will be essential for the new agency to allow it to be truly successful? 3. What do you believe are potential behaviours and actions that may be detrimental to the new agency that we should be mindful of? 4. Can you propose any values, and definitions of those values, that you feel should be considered for the new agency. Please also explain why you feel these are important.

*These questions were not included in the ELCSF session as these organisations were not within the scope of the Review of the ELC and SAC Operating Model in Ireland.



3.1 Findings - Day 1 CCC Managers

3.1.1 Vision

During discussions regarding organisational passion and elements to be linked to the new vision, it became evident that the group strongly advocated for maintaining a child and family-centred approach within the new agency. Emphasising the concept of a one-stop-shop and adopting a holistic, comprehensive service model for all emerged as recurring themes. Furthermore, there was a resounding call for the agency to provide world-class quality services accessible to all, promoting inclusivity, accessibility, and equality.

Additional points raised include:

- Promotion of inclusivity, accessibility, and equality
- Adoption of a more integrated approach to service delivery
- Avoidance of a top-down approach, instead fostering an agency that remains in touch with and responsive to on-the-ground realities



Words that the group would like to see used in the vision, based on the number of times they were referenced are:

- Child and family centred
- One Stop Shop approach for the entire sector
- World class quality service

Despite the group's enthusiasm to craft a vision statement, many expressed difficulty due to the perceived lack of consistent terminology to define the sector and also uncertainty as to the remit of the agency. For vision statements proposed by some of the groups see below:

"To nurture and support the optimal development, wellbeing and learning of every child in Ireland."

"Supporting better outcomes for children and families by valuing and respecting early learning and childhood."





3.1.2 Mission

The group deliberated on what the agency should aspire to excel in compared to others. The notion of establishing a one-stop-shop approach within the agency resonated strongly, emphasising its alignment with the organisation's vision and the stakeholders it serves. There was a prevailing sentiment among the group that maintaining the ability to make decisions at the local level should not be compromised. Additionally, it was emphasised that the agency should deliver national policies that can be effectively implemented at the local level. The group reached a consensus that the mission should employ clear language and adhere to a simple model.

When considering the defining characteristics of the new agency's mission, the following words emerged most frequently based on the number of mentions:

- Trust
- Confidence
- Rights-based
- Open and transparent
- Locally delivered

These characteristics highlight the importance of establishing trust and confidence, adhering to a rights-based approach, promoting openness and transparency, and ensuring that services are locally delivered to effectively meet the needs of communities.

Again, the group were asked, following discussion, to define a mission statement for the new agency and outcomes are noted below:

“To lead, co-ordinate and support the development and implementation of national policy delivered locally.”

“To inspire and nurture the optimal development, wellbeing and learning of all the children of Ireland, one child, one family and one community at a time through quality service provision.”

“To reform, develop, lead and co-ordinate ELC national policy to be delivered locally to ensure quality, affordable and accessible services for all children and families.”

“To locally provide responsive professional child and family centred service through the implementation of national policy.”

“Lead co-ordinate and support the development of child-centred national policy that is locally delivered.”



3.1.3 Values

When discussing the values crucial for enabling the delivery of the vision and mission of the new agency, several suggestions were put forth. However, the following values were mentioned multiple times, highlighting their significance:

- Inclusivity: The new agency should actively embrace and celebrate diversity.
- Child-focused: Children should be at the centre of all decision-making processes.
- Local needs: The agency should have the capacity to respond to local needs effectively.
- Trust: Establishing trust between all parties involved is essential.
- Openness: Integrity, trust, and a moral code should be upheld across the entire organisation.

Concerns Raised:

The group highlighted behaviours and actions that could impede the success of the new agency, including:

- Inflexibility
- Top-down approach
- Lack of consultation
- Unilateral decision-making
- Disregard for end-users
- Disjointed and fragmented tasks
- Loss of focus on mission/vision
- Inconsistent messaging
- Lack of responsiveness to needs and diversity of provision
- Removal of local coordination/leadership
- Lack of working relationship between the Department, the new agency and stakeholders
- Inconsistent delivery and resourcing of strategy
- Resistance to change
- Lack of clarity and understanding of roles
- Lack of meaningful collaboration in order to avoid hierarchical structures and silos
- Ineffective communication
- Failure to establish trust as a foundational element



3.2 Findings - Day 2 CCC Staff Members

3.2.1 Vision

Based on the discussions during the session, several key themes emerged regarding what is currently working well in terms of the vision and what should be continued in the new agency:

1. Collaboration and working across different stakeholders: This was identified as crucial and should be maintained.
2. Local-level action by CCC staff: There is a strong belief that CCC staff should continue to have the ability to act at a local level for positive outcomes.
3. Knowledge sharing across staff and stakeholders: This was identified as having a positive impact and should be encouraged.
4. Dealing with misinformation on social media: Professionalism has been effective in combating misinformation.
5. Promotion of quality and excellence: There is a commitment to promoting quality and striving for excellence.
6. Putting people first: This includes colleagues, services, and children/families.
7. Adaptability and responsiveness: The CCC are responsive to the needs of services, especially during critical incidents.
8. Building on local relationships and knowledge: There is a strong passion for maintaining and building upon local relationships and knowledge.



When asked to define a vision statement, key themes included that it should be child-centred, affordable, and provide a high-quality service. The statements can be found below.

“All children and families will have access to high quality, affordable early learning and care so that each child can reach their full potential.”

“To ensure Ireland's children and families have easy access to affordable, high quality early learning and care.”

“Fully funded, skilled, staffed sector where the child comes first/ is at the centre.”

“Child at the centre and acknowledge the fundamental importance of the age group.”

“To excel and enhance a needs led childcare sector in meeting, supporting and nurturing better outcomes for children and families.”

“To provide an agency of excellence for families to enable them to access high-quality, affordable and inclusive early years services throughout Ireland to ensure each child reaches their full potential.”

“Together we provide a high quality, professionally delivered, inclusive and holistic childcare sector.”

“Fostering Excellence and positive outcomes: Our vision is to create a high-quality, professional, inclusive and child-centred agency.”

“Empowering every child with boundless opportunities, the New Agency envisions building a foundation for a vibrant and inclusive future by fostering quality partnerships with stakeholders, ensuring holistic support for the comprehensive development of every young mind”.

“To deliver an integrated agency to support and develop sustainable high quality inclusive child centred care and education for all children and families in their local communities.”

3.2.2 Mission

Throughout our discussions, it became clear that the mission of the new agency should prioritise delivering high-quality services that are easily accessible to all. There was a strong consensus on the importance of adopting a national collaborative approach, where stakeholders work together while recognising the distinct needs of each county. Additionally, the group emphasised the significance of tailoring support, development, and policy implementation to local contexts, considering the diverse demographics and needs within each area. Flexibility and availability at the local level were highlighted as crucial aspects, ensuring that services are adaptable and responsive to community needs. Moreover, the mission statement should reflect the commitment to providing affordable, high-quality services while upholding transparency and accountability throughout all operations.



When considering the defining characteristics of the new agency's mission, the following words emerged most frequently based on the number of mentions:

- High quality
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Collaborative approach



Some of the mission statements proposed by the group are listed below:

“To provide better futures for children and young people and families through the delivery of affordable, accessible and high quality ELC and SAC in partnership with key stakeholders.”

“We will achieve our vision by working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders through the delivery of high quality, innovative and affordable programmes, championing the potential of every child.”

“One child, one family, one community, one agency, one approach, better outcomes, multiple opportunities to deliver.”

“One agency, one approach, better outcomes for every child, family and communities (and providers).”

“To bring the best early years experiences for all children by creating and delivering quality programmes and support.”

“Work together to unite services and supports to ensure that children receive excellent early learning and care services and support delivered in a positive, inclusive and competent manner.”

“Support and work with all providers, parents and stakeholders to deliver professional, high quality, accessible, affordable and child centric childcare and education.”

“Supporting and empowering parents and providers to deliver high quality child led care in an inclusive and affordable way.”

“To deliver a first class ELC/SAC service to all children, all families in all communities.”

“The New Agency will support the development and local implementation of national policy relating to children, families and local communities.”

“Empowering children through collaborative initiatives with all stakeholders, the new agency will collectively strive for comprehensive support, quality provision, and an inclusive environment, ensuring the well-being and development of every child.”

“To integrate supports and services for the Education and Care sector insuring children, families, and communities have access to high quality, inclusive and holistic services and to ensure better outcomes for all stakeholders.”



3.2.3 Values

Respect, integrity and support were values that all groups believe exist within their organisations. In terms of the values that will be essential going forward with the new agency, family and child centred with accessible services for all continues to be seen as important, and that the agency is inclusive, transparent, and accountable for its actions. In regard to what may impede the success of the new agency all the groups highlighted the loss of the local connection and potential lack of responsiveness from a centralised structure and they strongly believe that this must remain when the new agency is formed. Communication was also mentioned here numerous times and particularly the lack of communications on critical incidents. And finally all groups believed that setting clear objectives at the outset was critical to success of the new agency.

There were many words used to describe the values of the agency but the most commonly used were:

- Family and child centred
- Accessible for all
- Inclusive
- Transparent
- Accountable

Concerns Raised:

The group highlighted behaviours and actions that could impede the success of the new agency, including:

- Duplication of work
- Inconsistency
- Lack of accessibility
- Losing the expertise in the existing operating model
- Lack of consultation or taking time to reflect
- Being Impulsive – last minute arrangements or decisions
- Not having a clear path
- Lack of cohesion
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of clear objectives
- Perceived poor financial management or governance
- Over complication of systems e.g. The Hive
- Lack of communication on critical incidents
- Lack of communication or collaboration
- Losing the local link and visibility
- Undermining the strength and knowledge at local level



3.3 Findings - Day 3 Pobal

3.3.1 Vision

During discussions regarding the vision, it was emphasised, much as with previous groups, that the service should be affordable, of high quality, and inclusive, with a strong focus on the child and the family. These points were highlighted as priorities by most groups and should be included in the vision. However other points that were raised during the session were the importance of partnership across the sector with all parties working together collaboratively for the common good, and everyone having a better understanding of the role each stakeholder plays and how they work together to create a one stop shop approach to the service.

Words that the group would like to see used in the vision, based on the number of times they were referenced are:

- Child and family centred
- High quality
- Inclusive
- Affordable



Some of the visions are detailed below:

“Create an inclusive society where all children have equal access to affordable and quality childcare.”

“Improve the lives of children and families.”

“Empower and enable all children as rights holders, to have meaningful lives and to make rich contributions to society.”

“ Create a society for all children to have equal access to high quality childcare and realise their potential – or all children and families will have access to high quality affordable childcare so all children can reach their full potential.”

“Working together to build strong foundations towards brighter futures for all children, young people, families and communities.”

“To enable and empower all children to have meaningful lives to make rich contributions to society.”

3.3.2 Mission

All groups were familiar with the Pobal mission, which aims "to work with Government, partners, and service providers to advance social inclusion and enhance outcomes for all by delivering high-quality program support and grant management services." This mission statement encompasses the "who," "what," and "how," and was deemed a suitable starting point for the new agency's mission.

Throughout discussions, there was a consensus that a consistent approach across the system is necessary, accompanied by unified messaging to establish a cohesive and child-centred framework. Furthermore, there was deliberation on the terminology to be employed, acknowledging the agency's collaborative nature and the importance of inclusive language that encompasses all stakeholders.

When considering the defining characteristics of the new agency's mission, the following words emerged most frequently based on the number of mentions:

- High quality
- Collaborative
- Inclusive
- Consistent



The group were asked to define a mission statement for the new agency and outcomes are noted below:

“One child, one family, one community, one approach with multiple opportunities and better outcomes – or, one agency, one approach to deliver better outcomes for every child, family and community.”

“Working with children, young people, families, communities and those delivering services to provide an integrated trusted system of supports and funding at local, regional and national levels.”

“Agency operates a one-stop service delivering a cohesive and integrated solution.”

3.3.3 Values

Existing values within the organisation include accountability, integrity, collaboration, transparency and inclusive with a child centred approach. Across all groups the values that were considered most important to take across to the new agency were:

- Service excellence
- Accountability
- Collaboration
- Inclusivity
- Transparency

Concerns Raised:

The group highlighted behaviours and actions that could impede the success of the new agency, including:

- Lack of modern technology
- Being disorganised
- Not listening
- Not following through on promises
- Tribalism and working in silos
- Lack of ability to change
- Not fostering shared knowledge
- Gaps in SOPs
- Lack of transparency
- Lack of trust
- Continuing to be reactive rather than proactive



3.4 Findings - Day 4 CCC Board Members

3.4.1 Vision

From the discussions held within the groups, it was evident that board members felt a deep passion for providing a service that is both high-quality and affordable. They emphasised the importance of ensuring that this service remains child-centred, inclusive, and accessible, with the concept of a one-stop-shop receiving favourable reception. Local responsiveness emerged as a vital aspect, with a consensus that the new agency must prioritise openness to local connections, considering it a key aspiration. Additionally, it was suggested that the agency should be responsive to the evolving landscape and strive to become a leader in its field, maintaining clarity regarding its purpose and target beneficiaries.

Discussion arose throughout the session on issues outside the scope of vision, mission and values, relating to wider change management aspects of the agency design and the extent to which the views and inputs of stakeholders would be incorporated into the design process. Nevertheless, there was also a sentiment that this exercise presented an opportunity to be proactive and contribute valuable input to the process.

The groups proposed several points for consideration in a vision statement:

- Clarity: The vision must be clear, elucidating the organisation's purpose and target beneficiaries.
- Support: Prioritise supporting the needs of children, families, and their local communities.
- Equality of Access: Strive for equality of access for all children, acknowledging the existing disparities. Ensure affordability, inclusion, and diversity, recognising that different children have different needs.
- Work-Life Balance: Assist families in achieving a healthy work-life balance.
- One-Stop Shop: Aim for a seamless service provision without gaps.
- Leadership: Aspire for the agency to be a leader in its field, setting the standard for excellence.

Some of the visions are detailed below:

"To constantly aspire to deliver quality, affordable childcare and early years education in a sustainable, innovative and inclusive manner underpinned by excellence and expertise."

3.4.2 Mission

Whilst the groups did not define a specific mission statement, they emphasised several important characteristics for the development of a mission statement. Firstly, they stressed the need for clarity regarding the distinction between the agency's vision and mission statements. Furthermore, they underscored the importance of the mission being child-centred, focusing on well-being, and fostering a nurturing environment that allows children to have a voice—a sentiment supported unanimously by all groups. Additionally, the group agreed that the agency should be responsive and proactive, granting autonomy to the local



level to enable responses based on their specific knowledge and needs. Lastly, the group believed that the agency should strive to provide high-quality, affordable, accessible, and inclusive childcare services.

When considering the defining characteristics of the new agency's mission, the following words emerged most frequently based on the number of mentions:

- Responsive and proactive
- Autonomy for local response
- High quality
- Affordable
- Accessible

The group were asked to define a mission statement for the new agency and outcomes are noted below:

“To maintain and promote uniqueness, individuality, recognition of local partnerships, good communication, respect and acknowledgment of needs.”

3.4.3 Values

The groups identified a number of values such as child-centric, honesty and integrity, empathy and understanding, adaptable and open to change, trust and transparency, accountability and innovation. The values they felt most strongly about and agreed should be in the mission are as follows:

- Child centred
- Equality and inclusion
- Accessible
- Value local knowledge response
- High quality service

Concerns Raised:

The group highlighted behaviours and actions that could impede the success of the new agency, including:

- Lack of appropriate resources
- Lack of equality
- No autonomy to react at a local level
- Lack of clear communication
- Lack of language understood by all
- Lack of governance and transparency



3.5 Findings - Day 5 ELCSF

3.5.1 Vision

During discussions regarding organisational passion and elements to be linked to the new vision, consensus emerged among all groups that the new agency should prioritise providing a high-quality, accessible, affordable, and inclusive service, recognising and accommodating the diverse needs of children. Moreover, it was emphasised that the agency should adopt a child-centred approach, facilitating children in reaching their full potential beyond educational limitations. Additionally, there was a suggestion that the vision should extend beyond early learning and childcare to encompass a broader approach that includes the home and community, with a focus on reaching marginalised groups.

Words that the group would like to see used in the vision, based on the number of times they were referenced are:

- High quality
- Accessible
- Affordable
- Inclusive
- Child centred

All groups felt passionate about the words and themes that should be considered for the vision, and one group formulated a vision statement as follows, which encapsulates the essence of ensuring accessibility, professionalism, and inclusivity within the local community for children and families:

"The state ensures each child and family's right to inclusively participate in responsive, professional, and high-quality services within their local community."

3.5.2 Mission

Across all groups, there was a shared agreement that the mission should prioritise meeting the needs of children, families, educators, and communities, underpinned by a child-centred approach. It was emphasised that the term "childcare" should be replaced with "child" in the mission statement, reflecting a focus on the holistic development of the child. Services were to be made affordable and accessible to parents, ensuring that they could easily avail themselves of the support provided.

Furthermore, there was a common call for an improved inspection and audit process that would be transparent, empathetic, and built on mutual respect, with a clear emphasis on positive outcomes. Establishing strong relationships with key stakeholders was deemed crucial, emphasising the importance of open communication channels and ensuring that everyone remained informed about developments.



Moreover, maintaining local knowledge was highlighted as a priority, with concerns expressed about the potential loss of this knowledge if the agency were overly streamlined.

When considering the defining characteristics of the new agency's mission, the following words emerged most frequently based on the number of mentions:

- Child centred
- Clear communication
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Maintain local knowledge

The group were asked to define a mission statement for the new agency and outcomes are noted below:

“Support each child to reach their full potential.”

“To nurture the wellbeing and potential of each child, family, professional and communities, through collaborative, inclusive, respectful practices within local communities to empower individuals to flourish and grow.”

3.5.3 Values

The group highlighted many values that were important to them such as:

- Diversity, Inclusion and Equity; children with disabilities, Roma/Traveller community
- Trust
- A Children's Rights-based approach- belief that early education is a right
- Integrity: ethical ways of working and transparency
- Accountability
- Collaboration: co-design, valuing views of different groups, children, families, educators, practitioners- meaningful collaboration
- Mutual respect; respect those working at local level
- Upskilling and development
- Striving for continuous improvement
- Empowering children, families, educators and practitioners
- Solutions-focused
- Evidence- informed

However, those that were mentioned by all groups as being most important were:

- Inclusion
- Rights-based
- Integrity and ethical ways of working
- Trust



- Collaboration

Concerns Raised:

The group highlighted behaviours and actions that could impede the success of the new agency, including:

- Perceived notion of a statutory agency that won't empower people
- Lack of transparency
- Inspections being carried out by agency – should be independent
- Lack of meaningful stakeholder engagement
- Lack of collaboration and partnership
- Use of top-down language



4. Summary of Findings

4.1 Vision

It's clear from the themes emerging in the stakeholder sessions that there are several key priorities for the vision of the new agency:

1. **Child-Centred Approach:** The primary focus of the agency must be on the well-being, development, and rights of children. This means that decisions and actions should prioritise what is best for children above all else.
2. **Inclusivity and Equality:** The new agency should actively work towards creating an inclusive environment that ensures equality of access for all children, regardless of their background, abilities, or needs. Recognising and addressing existing disparities is crucial to achieving this goal.
3. **Affordability:** Services provided by the agency should be accessible and affordable for all families and children, regardless of socioeconomic status. Financial barriers should not prevent children from accessing the support and resources they need.
4. **Seamless Service Provision (One-Stop-Shop):** The agency should aim to provide a seamless service experience for families and children, with integrated support across



different areas such as funding, policy, regulation, and inspection. This integrated approach ensures that there are no gaps in service provision and that all aspects of early learning and childcare are addressed comprehensively.

5. **Bottom-Up Approach:** Rather than imposing top-down directives, the agency should maintain a responsive and flexible approach that is grounded in the realities of those working directly with children and families. This ensures that policies and practices are relevant and effective in meeting the needs of the community.
6. **World-Class Quality Service:** The agency should strive to deliver services of the highest quality, meeting or exceeding international standards for early learning and childcare. Continuous improvement and innovation should be central to its operations to ensure that it remains at the forefront of best practice.

Below is a summary of suggested Vision Statements from the sessions:

"To nurture and support the optimal development, wellbeing and learning of every child in Ireland."

"Supporting better outcomes for children and families by valuing and respecting early learning and childhood."

"All children and families will have access to high quality, affordable early learning and care so that each child can reach their full potential."

"To ensure Ireland's children and families have easy access to affordable, high quality early learning and care."

"Fully funded, skilled, staffed sector where the child comes first/ is at the centre."

"Child at the centre and acknowledge the fundamental importance of the age group."

"To excel and enhance a needs led childcare sector in meeting, supporting and nurturing better outcomes for children and families."

"To provide an agency of excellence for families to enable them to access high-quality, affordable and inclusive early years services throughout Ireland to ensure each child reaches their full potential."

"Together we provide a high quality, professionally delivered, inclusive and holistic childcare sector."

"Fostering Excellence and positive outcomes: Our vision is to create a high-quality, professional, inclusive and child-centred agency."



“Empowering every child with boundless opportunities, the New Agency envisions building a foundation for a vibrant and inclusive future by fostering quality partnerships with stakeholders, ensuring holistic support for the comprehensive development of every young mind”.

“To deliver an integrated agency to support and develop sustainable high quality inclusive child centred care and education for all children and families in their local communities.”

“Create an inclusive society where all children have equal access to affordable and quality childcare.”

“Improve the lives of children and families.”

“Empower and enable all children as rights holders, to have meaningful lives and to make rich contributions to society.”

“Working together to build strong foundations towards brighter futures for all children, young people, families and communities.”

“To enable & empower all children to have meaningful lives to make rich contributions to society.”

“Create a society for all children to have equal access to high quality childcare and realise their potential.”

“To constantly aspire to deliver quality, affordable childcare and early years education in a sustainable, innovative and inclusive manner underpinned by excellence and expertise.”

“The state ensures each child and family's right to inclusively participate in responsive, professional, and high-quality services within their local community.”

4.2 Mission

Throughout the sessions, groups encountered challenges in distinguishing between the vision and mission statements, leading to some overlap in priorities. However, a recurring theme emphasised the necessity for the agency to distinctly articulate its vision and mission. The following themes emerged consistently across all sessions, ranked by the frequency of their mention:

1. **Flexibility and Local Availability:** Participants stressed the importance of maintaining flexibility and local availability in service delivery, ensuring responsiveness to community needs. There was a concern that streamlining the agency might compromise this autonomy, particularly for City/County Childcare Committees (CCC), which must retain the ability to tailor responses based on local knowledge and needs.



2. **High-Quality Service Provision:** Stakeholders unanimously underscored the need for the agency to deliver services of the highest quality across all aspects of its operations.
3. **Accessibility and Affordability:** Ensuring easy access to and affordability of services emerged as critical priorities. Participants highlighted the importance of removing barriers to access for all individuals and families.
4. **Child-centred Approach:** Participants advocated for a child-centred approach, suggesting a shift from the term "childcare" to a broader focus on the child's overall well-being and development.
5. **Building Strong Stakeholder Relationships:** Establishing robust relationships with key stakeholders was identified as crucial. This involves maintaining open communication channels to keep all parties informed about agency developments and initiatives.

By acknowledging and addressing these key themes, the agency can effectively align its vision and mission while prioritising the needs of children and communities it serves.

Below is a summary of suggested Mission Statements from the sessions:

"To lead, co-ordinate and support the development and implementation of national policy delivered locally."

"To inspire and nurture the optimal development, wellbeing and learning of all the children of Ireland, one child, one family and one community at a time through quality service provision."

"To reform, develop, lead and co-ordinate ELC national policy to be delivered locally to ensure quality, affordable and accessible services for all children and families."

"To locally provide responsive professional child and family centred service through the implementation of national policy."

"Lead co-ordinate and support the development of child-centred national policy that is locally delivered."

"To provide better futures for children and young people and families through the delivery of affordable, accessible and high quality ELC and SAC in partnership with key stakeholders."

"We will achieve our vision by working collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders through the delivery of high quality, innovative and affordable programmes, championing the potential of every child."

"One child, one family, one community, one agency, one approach, better outcomes, multiple opportunities to deliver."



“One agency, one approach, better outcomes for every child, family and communities (and providers).”

“To bring the best early years experiences for all children by creating and delivering quality programmes and support.”

“Work together to unite services and supports to ensure that children receive excellent early learning and care services and support delivered in a positive, inclusive and competent manner.”

“Support and work with all providers, parents and stakeholders to deliver professional, high quality, accessible, affordable and child centric childcare and education.”

“Supporting and empowering parents and providers to deliver high quality child led care in an inclusive and affordable way.”

“To deliver a first class ELC/SAC service to all children, all families in all communities.”

“The New Agency will support the development and local implementation of national policy relating to children, families and local communities.”

“Empowering children through collaborative initiatives with all stakeholders, the new agency will collectively strive for comprehensive support, quality provision, and an inclusive environment, ensuring the well-being and development of every child.”

“To integrate supports and services for the Education and Care sector insuring children, families, and communities have access to high quality, inclusive and holistic services and to ensure better outcomes for all stakeholders.”

“One child, one family, one community, one approach with multiple opportunities and better outcomes – or, one agency, one approach to deliver better outcomes for every child, family and community.”

“Agency operates a one-stop service delivering a cohesive and integrated solution.”

“Working with children, young people, families, communities and those delivering services to provide an integrated trusted system of supports and funding at local, regional and national levels.”

“To maintain and promote uniqueness, individuality, recognition of local partnerships, good communication, respect and acknowledgment of needs.”

“Support each child to reach their full potential.”

“To nurture the wellbeing and potential of each child, family, professional and communities, through collaborative, inclusive, respectful practices within local communities to empower individuals to flourish and grow.”



4.3 Values

The values expressed by the groups have been ranked based on the frequency of their mention, reflecting their importance:

1. **Inclusivity and Diversity:** The paramount value highlighted by participants is the active embrace and celebration of diversity, emphasising the importance of inclusivity across all aspects of the new agency's operations.
2. **Child-Centeredness:** Placing children at the core of decision-making processes emerged as a fundamental value, ensuring that their well-being and interests guide all actions and initiatives.
3. **Local Responsiveness:** Participants stressed the importance of the agency's capacity to effectively respond to local needs, tailoring services and programs to address specific community requirements. However, it is worth noting that this is not a value, but it was discussed at length during the values session.
4. **Trust:** Establishing trust among all stakeholders was deemed essential, with an emphasis on upholding a moral code of conduct throughout the organisation to foster strong relationships and collaboration.
5. **Transparency:** Transparency emerged as a critical value, emphasising the importance of open communication and honesty in all interactions and decision-making processes.
6. **Accountability:** Holding oneself and others accountable for actions and decisions was identified as crucial for maintaining trust and integrity within the organisation and among stakeholders.
7. **Collaboration:** Encouraging collaboration and partnership among stakeholders and within the organisation was highlighted as a value essential for achieving common goals and maximising impact.
8. **Accessibility of Services:** Ensuring that services are accessible to all individuals and communities, regardless of background or circumstance, was recognised as a fundamental value for promoting equity and inclusion. Whilst this was discussed during all the values section of the session it is not a value however would be linked to Inclusivity and Diversity.

By prioritising these values, the new agency can establish a strong foundation built on principles of inclusivity, child-centeredness, responsiveness, trust, transparency, accountability, collaboration, and accessibility, ensuring its effectiveness and impact in serving diverse communities.



5. Conclusion

Think People would like to extend our thanks to DCEDIY for affording us the opportunity to engage in this project and for the support extended throughout its duration. Our involvement has afforded us profound insights into the multifaceted workings of the various stakeholders, while concurrently aiding the Department in the establishment of a new agency. The collective enthusiasm and active engagement demonstrated by all participants across the sessions have been commendable. Some discussions arose throughout the session on issues outside the scope of vision, mission and values, relating to wider change management aspects of the agency design, the extent to which the views and inputs of stakeholders would be incorporated into the design process, and a perceived lack of clarity in respect of the remit of the agency.

Despite these concerns the overall process was very positive, and it is heartening to witness such passion and dedication from all the stakeholders involved in the roles they play and the service they deliver.