

**New Funding Model for ELC and SAC
Expert Group Meeting
Wednesday 25 November 2020
Skype for Business
Minutes**

Participants

Michael Scanlan (Chair)
Tove Mogstad Slinde
Eva Lloyd
Edward Melhuish
Tim Callan
Rory O'Donnell
Niamh Callaghan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)
Philip Crosby (Department of Education and Skills)
Bernie McNally (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Anne-Marie Brooks (Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Gillian Martin (Secretariat, Department of Children and Youth Affairs)
Laura Brady (Secretariat, Department of Children and Youth Affairs)

Present (for relevant parts of meeting)

Gillian Paull, Frontier Economics
Katharine Lauderdale, Frontier Economics

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Expert Group to the first morning of the meeting.

Minutes from last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the meeting of 28th October were adopted. It was agreed that the minutes and agenda would be published. It was also agreed that some of the meeting documents circulated to the Expert Group are designed to prompt discussion rather than for publication.

Topical Issues

Gillian Martin provided an overview of developments since the last meeting, confirming that the publication of the first suite of research papers was well received and indicating that the First 5 Implementation Report for 2019 was also published. An update on the Workforce Development Plan and the Review of the Operating Model projects was provided, as well as an overview of the impact of COVID-19 related financial supports on the sector.

Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

Anne-Marie Brooks provided an overview of the first phase of stakeholder engagement and consultation, indicating that a draft report will be circulated to the Expert Group in advance of its next meeting. It is envisaged that the report will be published in early 2021.

Anne-Marie Brooks confirmed that the closing webinar on the first phase of stakeholder engagement is scheduled to take place on 16th December and agreed that presentations would be circulated to the Expert Group in advance. The webinar will provide an overview of the key findings from the first phase

of stakeholder engagement, as well as an outline of the next steps in respect of both the Workforce Development Plan and the Funding Model projects.

Some discussion took place on stakeholder engagement in phases 2 and 3. It was agreed that a smaller group of stakeholders would be needed for these phases. Anne-Marie Brooks agreed to draft a proposal for the next phase of engagement for discussion at the next meeting, to include possible membership of the group and methodological approaches.

Quality Work Strand: Working Paper 7, first draft

Katharine Lauderdale, Frontier Economics, provided an overview of the first draft of the paper dealing with ELC and SAC Funding Models which Support Provision Quality. Members of the Expert Group undertook to provide feedback to the secretariat by 3 December.

Affordability Work Strand

The Expert Group discussed affordability issues, including issues raised in a number of papers circulated in advance by the Secretariat. Anne-Marie Brooks agreed to draft and circulate a short note of the discussion to facilitate the continuation of the discussion the following morning.

AOB

The first morning of the meeting of the Expert Group concluded.

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Present (for relevant parts of meeting)

Gillian Paull, Frontier Economics

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Expert Group to the second morning of the meeting.

Affordability Work Strand

The discussion on Affordability was reconvened, having regard to the note prepared by the Secretariat.

The Expert Group agreed that it would be worth exploring whether the ESRI's SWITCH model could be used as a mechanism to develop and test affordability options. Tim Callan agreed to pursue this further with the Chair and secretariat. A meeting with ESRI would be set up to advance this work.

Access and Disadvantage Work Strand

The Expert Group discussed the Access and Disadvantage work strand, prompted by a discussion paper.

It was agreed that further assessment of the impact of existing measures in Ireland with respect to options outlined in Frontier Papers 5 and 6 would be worthwhile. The Secretariat would liaise with Philip Crosby in relation to this. This work strand will be revisited at the next meeting.

Quality Work Strand

The Expert Group discussed pay and working conditions, as well as a range of other quality levers in the terms of reference. Bernie McNally indicated that the WDP Steering Group is considering similar issues and noted the interfaces for the two Groups.

The Expert Group discussed conditionality of funding, differentiating between structural and process quality.

Childminders were also raised as important in any discussion regarding quality.

To advance work on developing and testing options, Anne-Marie Brooks agreed to circulate a note on staffing grants as well as a factsheet on quality indicators (data on pay, working conditions, part time contracts and seasonal workers etc.). The quality work strand would be re-visited at the next meeting.

Scoping Exercise for Working Paper 8

Gillian Paull provided an overview of the scoping exercise produced by Frontier Economics and options for next steps.

The Expert Group agreed that a write up of the results of the research work undertaken to date was the preferred option for next steps. The Expert Group also agreed that the title of the working paper should be changed to reflect that the research is focussed on collaboration relating to administrative functions or shared services rather than collaboration on quality or interagency work, in order to avoid confusion on the purpose or scope of the paper.

Reflections on Next Steps

The Expert Group identified capital funding, profit/surplus in the sector, project plan review, school-age childcare, Workforce Development Plan Steering Group update, optimal service/setting, Phase 2 consultation and engagement, as items of priority to be included on the agenda in December/January. The Chair asked the Expert Group to consider areas requiring further clarification in advance of the next meeting.