

**New Funding Model for ELC and SAC
Expert Group Meeting
Wednesday 16 December 2020
Webex
Minutes**

Participants

Michael Scanlan (Chair)
Eva Lloyd
Edward Melhuish
Tim Callan
Rory O'Donnell
Niamh Callaghan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)
Philip Crosby (Department of Education)
Bernie McNally (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)
Anne-Marie Brooks (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)
Gillian Martin (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)
Andrew Burrows (Secretariat, Department, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)

Apologies

Tove Mogstad Slinde

Present (for relevant parts of meeting)

Toby Wolfe (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)

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 25 November were adopted. It was agreed that the minutes and agenda would be published. Working Paper 6 is ready for final proofreading and publication in early 2021.

Topical Issues

Gillian Martin provided an overview of topical issues. The following points were noted. The Review of the Operating System is underway, an extension to paid parents leave has been announced as have details of capital funding 2021 to assist the sector to meet fire safety requirements. Also noted was the commencement of a pre-Joint Labour Committee process.

Project Plan and Stakeholder Engagement

Anne-Marie Brooks provided an overview of Phase 1 of the stakeholder engagement and consultation. Members were reminded of the closing webinar taking place that evening with over 1,000 people registered to attend. Draft reports of the consultation and engagement activities had been circulated to the Expert Group. It is envisaged that a report will be published in early 2021, bringing together the outputs from this Phase.

Anne-Marie Brooks also presented a proposed plan for future stakeholder engagement, to take place in 2021. This can be used to test proposals and give feedback to the Expert Group. The Minister has created a new engagement structure between the Department and stakeholders. It was proposed that the

stakeholder engagement participants for the funding model be drawn from this group. There will be a standing invitation for members of the Expert Group to attend future stakeholder engagement sessions. The Expert Group agreed with the proposed approach.

The Expert Group considered and agreed an updated project plan, subject to further discussion between the Chair and the secretariat. It was agreed that the Chair would continue to seek inputs and assistance from individual Members on particular topics as required.

The Secretariat and Chair will draft a list of priority issues for the Expert Group based on issues previously identified and those identified in the consultation.

Quality Work Strand

The Expert Group discussed the relationship between their work and that of the Workforce Development Plan Steering Group. They agreed to a joint meeting between representatives of the two groups. The Chair and Secretariat will seek Expert Group members to attend this meeting in January.

There was a discussion of possible means of enhancing quality through the funding model – both through pay/conditions of staff and through other measures.

School-Age Childcare

A paper had been circulated on School-Age Childcare. The Expert Group noted that many providers offer both ELC and SAC, but that there are some differences in requirements between the two. The Expert Group discussed SAC under the headings of affordability, access and quality.

AOB

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

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Present (for relevant parts of meeting)

Oonagh Fleming (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)

Welcome

The Chair welcomed the Expert Group to the second morning of the meeting. There was a discussion of multi-functional 'children's centres' which operate in the UK and bring a range of child-related services into a single centre. The Secretariat will prepare a short overview on how such centres have operated in other countries.

Future Capital

Oonagh Fleming gave a presentation on historic capital schemes and future plans for capital investment under the National Development Plan. There was a discussion of the success of previous schemes, lessons that can be learned from them, and options for delivery structures that would make best use of future capital funding.

Affordability Work Strand

Anne-Marie Brooks provided an update on the liaison with ESRI on the use of the SWITCH model to assess affordability measures. ESRI will work with the Department to provide answers to specific questions. Data from the ERSI will be available before the next meeting of the Expert Group. The Chair and Secretariat will work with the relevant members of the Group to identify the further questions.

The Group discussed the upcoming one-year review of the NCS, elements of which interact with their work. The Secretariat will circulate the proposed scope of the review and research required for further consideration.

The Expert Group discussed potential affordability measures, including progressive universalism, NCS Sponsorship, subsidy levels and eligibility criteria. The Group noted the importance of considering access and quality when designing affordability measures. The Secretariat agreed to source scenarios or case studies on how NCS impacts particular family types.

Access and Disadvantage Work Strand

The discussion on this was postponed to a future meeting.

Developing a competent sector

The Chair had circulated a note under this item, which considered the systems and supports that the State could put in place as part of and in conjunction with a new funding model. The Expert Group discussed the ways in which local agents can support services, through shared services and other interventions.

AOB

The Chair updated the Group on relevant staffing changes in the Department.

ENDS