

**New Funding Model for ELC and SAC  
Expert Group Meeting  
Wednesday 24 February 2021  
Webex  
Minutes**

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**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 and Skills)  
Anne-Marie Brooks (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)  
Hazel O'Byrne (Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)  
Gillian Martin (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)  
Andrew Burrows (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)  
Eoin Roche (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)

**Present (for relevant parts of meeting)**

Gillian Paull, Frontier Economics

**Apologies**

Tove Mogstad Slinde

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**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 20 January were adopted. It was agreed that the minutes and agenda would be published.

**Topical Issues**

Gillian Martin provided an overview of developments since the last meeting, including an update on the Workforce Development Plan; the extension of COVID-19 restrictions and related support measures; the results of recent surveys by SIPTU and ECI; the Minister's appearance in the Dáil; and the Virtual Day of Action held by providers and practitioners. Anne-Marie Brooks also provided an update on the pre-JLC process.

**Reflections on individual meetings and update on affordability work**

The Chair provided an update on his meetings with individual Expert Group Members, followed by a discussion of some of the themes that had emerged from those meetings, including the Group's priorities, key issues to address in the final report, potential funding mechanisms, and the level of funding committed to in *First 5*. The framing of the Group's report was also discussed.

**Disadvantage Work Strand**

Hazel O'Byrne introduced a position paper on tackling disadvantage. The Group discussed the approach outlined, which covered universal mechanisms to tackle disadvantage, identifying and supporting services operating in the context of disadvantage, and targeted supports to tackle disadvantage.

The Secretariat will develop the proposal in the position paper further, taking on board the feedback from the Expert Group.

**Working Paper 8**

Gillian Paull from Frontier Economics summarised the first draft of Working Paper 8: Shared Delivery Models for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare.

The Chair asked the Expert Group to revert to the Secretariat with comments/suggestions on the draft by 11 March.

**AOB/Close**

The Chair updated the Group on the report on NCS being prepared by the ESRI and thanked Tim Callan for his involvement in this. Hazel O'Byrne updated the Group on the paper on profit being prepared by Crowe. The Chair noted a more substantial discussion on the affordability work strand would be tabled for the March meeting.

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

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Thursday 25 February 2021  
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Tove Mogstad Slinde  
Edward Melhuish  
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Rory O'Donnell  
Niamh Callaghan (Department of Public Expenditure and Reform)  
Philip Crosby (Department of Education and Skills)  
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Andrew Burrows (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)  
Eoin Roche (Secretariat, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth)

**Present (for relevant parts of meeting)**

Gillian Paull, Frontier Economics  
Nick Fitzgerald, Frontier Economics  
Mark Considine, Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

**Apologies**

Eva Lloyd

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**Quality Work Strand**

Hazel O'Byrne presented an options paper on how the funding model could support better staff pay and conditions in the sector. The Group was given an update on the ongoing pre-Joint Labour Committee process, which could affect how the Group approaches this topic. The Group discussed these options.

The Secretariat will further develop the options following the Expert Group's feedback.

**Consultation and Engagement**

Gillian Paull and Nick Fitzgerald presented Frontier Economics' proposal for Phases 2 & 3 of the stakeholder engagement. The Group outlined its preferences for the format of the Phase 2 sessions

and agreed to consider the approach to Phase 3 at a later meeting. The Secretariat will finalise the process with Frontier.

**Review of the Operating Model**

Hazel O'Byrne provided an update on the Review of the Operating System. The Chair and Secretariat will draft a letter from the Expert Group to the Review's Oversight Group outlining the Group's views on the issues of shared interest, particularly on the question of local and national support structures.

**AOB/Close**

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