

National Collaborative Forum for the Early Years Care and Education Sector (*The Early Years Forum (EYF)*)

Terms of Reference

Introduction

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone, established a forum for the early years sector where issues of relevance can be discussed among key stakeholders. The Minister chaired the first meeting of the Forum in September 2016 and has played an on-going and active role with the forum.

The forum enables consultation and engagement between the Minister, key Department of Children and Youth Affairs officials, and key representatives of the sector.

Role of the EYF

Terms of reference (TOR) were agreed by the members of the Forum at the first meeting. TORs are as follows:

EYF will

- Provide a forum within which issues of concern to providers can be raised, discussed and, where feasible, resolved;
- Provide a forum for exchange of ideas in relation to early years care and education policy and operational issues, and priority of actions;
- Ensure that the implications of policy proposals being considered by the Department for the early years care and education sector are examined and understood;
- Advise the Department on, and inform future policy development in relation to, the early years care and education sector.
- Assist in effective communication with the wider early years care and education sector; all members of the group will communicate effectively with their constituents on the work and content of NCFEY.

The Terms of Reference will be reviewed in 12 months and expansion considered at that point

Governance

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs will establish the Forum and chair its inaugural meeting to agree its Terms of Reference. Thereafter, meetings will be chaired by Ms Bernie McNally, Assistant Secretary General, although the Minister may attend part of these meetings. Where the Minister is not in attendance, detailed briefing will be provided to the Minister after the meeting.

Proposed membership of EYF

To ensure an interactive forum, with appropriate opportunity for important dialogue and engagement, the membership of the group has been focused on national organisations representing early years providers, and NGOs, Government Departments, Agencies and organisations that assist the DCYA in fulfilling its duties under its Early Years agenda.

Membership is decided by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and has been designed, reflecting the objective stated above, to represent the whole early years sector, including the national early years representative organisations, early years pedagogy representatives and representation of staff in early years services, the policy makers, the inspection authorities and the quality support services. The stakeholders will be represented as follows:

DCYA	Minister Bernie McNally, Additional reps as required
Department of Education and Skills	1 rep
Better Start-The National Quality Support Service	1 rep
The City/County Childcare Committees	2 reps
The National Voluntary Childcare Organisations	
ECI	2 reps
National Children's Network	1 rep
Barnardos	1 rep
Childminding Ireland	1 rep
Nominee St Nich, Steiner and HighScope	1 rep (<i>rotating</i>)
Private Early Education Providers	1 rep
National Forum for Community Childcare Services	1 rep
PLÉ (Pedagogy, Learning and Education Association)	1 rep
Tusla	1 rep
Pobal	1 rep
Gaelscoileanna	1 rep
Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta	1 rep
Association of Childhood Professionals	1 rep
National Parents Council	1 rep (<i>added March 2018</i>)
Children's Rights Alliance	1 rep (<i>added March 2018</i>)

(Any Trade Unions currently or in the future representing the sector will not form part of this group but the Minister will arrange for an alternative formal structure for communication.)

Frequency and Duration of Meetings

It is proposed that the Forum would agree to meet three / four times annually in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, and that each meeting would be of approximately two hours duration. (The first meeting may require additional time.) The Chair may establish sub-committees or action groups and separate TORs will be established where appropriate for these.

Agenda

The agenda for the meetings will be set by the Chair, having consulted via the Secretary of the group with the other members of the Forum in advance of each meeting. Agenda items will where possible have relevance to the majority of members.

Support for meetings of the EYF

The Chair will be supported by a secretariat from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.