

## **Labour Employer Economic Forum (LEEF) Early Years Sub-Group**

**Minutes of Meeting July 5, 2018**

**Department of Children and Youth Affairs, Miesian Plaza, Dublin 2.**

### In attendance:

Dr. Katherine Zappone T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Chair

Patricia King, General Secretary, ICTU

Owen Reidy, Assistant Secretary General, ICTU

Laura Bambrick, Social Policy Officer, ICTU

David Joyce, Equality and Development Officer, ICTU

Dr. Kara McGann, Senior Labour Market Policy Executive, IBEC

Emma Kerins, Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Chambers Ireland

Bernie McNally, Assistant Secretary General, Early Years Division, DCYA

Patricia Ryan, Special Advisor to Minister Zappone, DCYA

Magdalene Hayden, Parliamentary Assistant to Minister Zappone, DCYA

Eugene Waters, Early Years Operations & Communications, DCYA

Kathryn O'Riordan, Early Years Quality, DCYA

Aoife Conduit, Early Years Education Policy Unit. (DES)

Lisa Walsh, Early Years Operations and Communications, DCYA

Apologies: Jeanette Mair, Economic & Policy Research Executive, Construction Industry Federation

1. The group agreed Terms of Reference based on those of LEEF itself.
2. Minister Zappone outlined the Government's recognition of the importance of supporting access to high quality and affordable childcare and in particular its support for boosting the economy by increasing women's access and participation in the workplace via more affordable childcare.

Minister Zappone acknowledged a range of current issues and challenges that need to be overcome in the journey to achieving a world class childcare system. Among those were:

- The challenge of addressing both affordability and quality
  - Pay and conditions of the workforce leading to poorer quality and unacceptable turnover
  - Reform of childminding required to enable subsidisation and quality assurance
  - Paid parental leave and supports in the first year of life
3. ICTU and IBEC recognised a commonality of purpose between them with regards to addressing childcare issues. They raised a number of issues including:

- Facilitating parents to have the choice to stay at home to care for children under one year.
- The fact that Ireland is the most expensive country in the OECD for childcare
- A perceived lack of investment for children aged between one year and three years
- The barrier childcare poses to women seeking to enter / re-enter the workforce
- What is the cost of delivering childcare and is it being met?
- How we can support providers to deliver a good learning environment for children?

They noted that childcare provision is cited as an infrastructure concern for companies investing in Ireland and also features highly (second only to housing) for many employees across all sectors.

A constructive general discussion of the issues above at 2 and 3 took place. It was agreed that the next meeting would take place in October and it would focus on the Independent Review of Costs and DCYA's forthcoming strategy on babies, young children and their families. All sides agreed that the meeting was a positive beginning and welcomed future collaboration.

**Actions for the next meeting:**

DCYA agreed to:- present on 1) present on the Early Years Strategy, 2) provide an update on the Affordable Childcare Scheme and 3) an update on the Independent Review of Costs.