



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Annual Implementation Report 2019







Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland



Annual Implementation Report 2019

CONTENTS



Forewords

Taoiseach's Foreword	7
Minister's Foreword	8
Chairperson of the BOBF Advisory Council Foreword	9

Background to First 5

Overview of First 5	12
First 5 Big Steps	15
The Story of Early Childhood	17
A Vision for Early Childhood	21
First 5 at a Glance	22

First 5 implementation in 2019 and progress on 2019 milestones

Introduction	24
Overall progress in 2019 and on 2019 milestones	25
Progress made towards the First 5 targets	26

Progress across the First 5 goals, objectives and building blocks

Goal A Strong and supportive families and communities	29
Goal B Optimum physical and mental health	37
Goal C Positive play-based early learning	46
Goal D An effective early childhood system	54



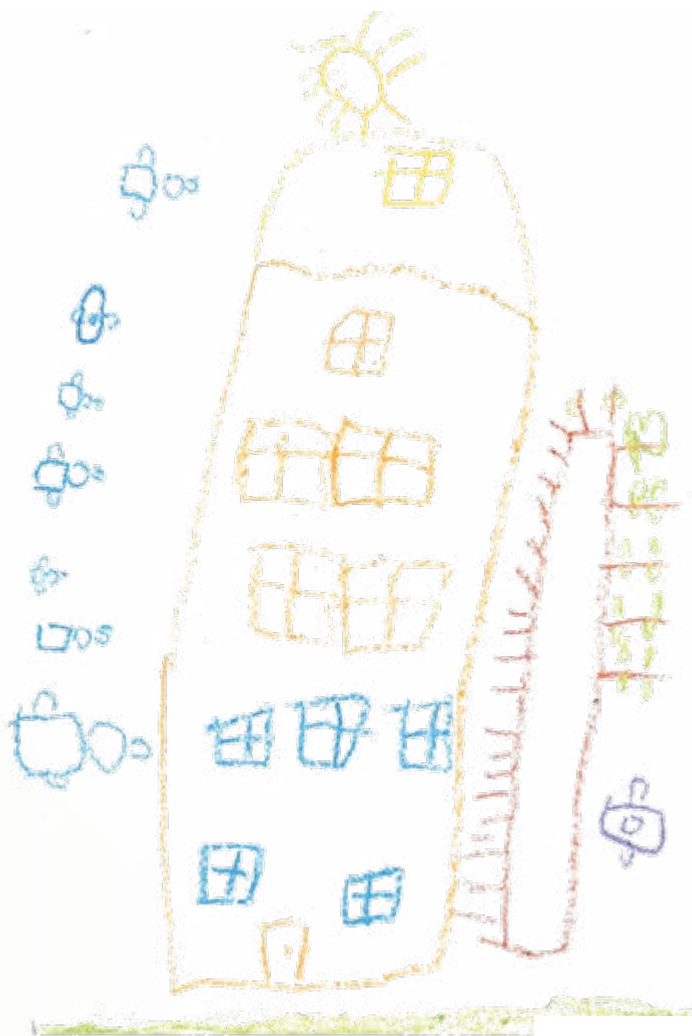
Progress on 2019 milestones

Goal A Strong and supportive families and communities	66
Goal B Optimum physical and mental health	84
Goal C Positive play-based early learning	119
Goal D An effective early childhood system	147

Appendix

Terms of Reference for First 5 Inter-Departmental Group (IDG)	201
---	-----

End notes



Erin, age 5



FOREWORDS



TAOISEACH'S FOREWORD

I welcome the publication of the First 5 Annual Implementation Report 2019 which highlights significant achievements in realising the Government's vision for early childhood.

The first five years is a pivotal period in a child's life and is hugely important for the development of learning skills as well as social and emotional abilities. The Programme for Government recognises this. It demonstrates our commitment to implementing the First 5 Strategy by strengthening early intervention and supporting families by expanding services that have strong outcomes for children and their families.

Almost all milestones in the initial implementation plan have been met through the work of individuals, Government Departments and Agencies who are working collaboratively to give children the best start in life.

I welcome the key achievements including a new entitlement to paid parents leave and extended entitlements to unpaid parents leave; a range of new measures to promote healthier childhoods; progress on key reforms to the early learning and care system; foundational work to streamline and improve parenting supports across Government and new measures to tackle early childhood poverty.

Delivering on this commitment is more important now than ever, given the challenges that the Covid-19 Pandemic has presented for young children and their families. I understand the concerns of parents and the difficulties many families are facing at this time. I want to assure you that the Government has a particular eye on the impacts restrictions can have on children, young people and their families and we will continue to work as hard as we can to support all families through this difficult time.

I look forward to continuing to work with colleagues across Government to progress the implementation of the First 5 Strategy to achieve the best possible outcomes for children in Ireland.



Micheál Martin TD
AN TAOISEACH

MINISTER'S FOREWORD

I am pleased to publish the first annual implementation report for First 5, our ten-year, whole-of-Government strategy for babies, young children and their families.

I am grateful to the Government Departments, State Agencies, the Community and Voluntary Sector and others who have shown considerable commitment to implementation of this Strategy and who engaged so comprehensively with the reporting process in providing timely and detailed updates.

Further thanks is extended to the First 5 implementation structures; in particular the First 5 Inter-Departmental Group and the Better Outcomes Brighter Futures Consortium and Advisory Council who have supported and championed this ambitious plan for early childhood from the outset.

Our implementation structures and the approach to monitoring and reporting has been invaluable in ensuring success in implementation and in illustrating the positive work that is taking place right across Government and society to ensure children get the best possible start in life.

This First 5 Annual Implementation Report shows that we made considerable progress in 2019 to ensure that children:

- have healthy childhoods that start in the prenatal period,
- have time together with parents, especially in the first year, in nurturing and playful home environments, where material needs are met;
- have high-quality early learning experiences; and
- are supported with the transition to and through early learning and care onwards to primary school.

The Programme for Government reaffirmed a commitment to full implementation of First 5 and places children and families at the heart of our work. We are continuing to make good progress. Through this Strategy and the Programme for Government, we will transform services and supports for children and their families so that children can reach their full potential.



Roderic O'Gorman TD

MINISTER FOR CHILDREN, EQUALITY, DISABILITY, INTEGRATION AND YOUTH

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOBF ADVISORY COUNCIL FOREWORD

First 5 represents the single most important policy initiative for young children in a generation and its implementation will lay the foundations for better outcomes for all children. First 5 is ambitious for the development of services for children and families and covers all aspects of a child's development. The production of this detailed Implementation Report represents a key step in tracking and measuring the delivery of milestones under the Strategy. It also demonstrates a commitment to accountability and transparency and is a model for other strategies.

The fact that this Implementation Report is cross-departmental in scope is also significant and helps to ensure that early years' commitments do not become siloed. The Council also recognises the fact that despite the pressures from COVID-19, the Government still managed to produce an Implementation Report albeit at a slightly later date.

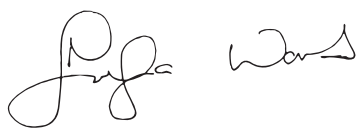
Without sufficient resourcing, Strategies can suffer from an implementation gap. It is notable then that Government established a First 5 Implementation Office and finalised associated plans in 2019. When it comes to specific commitments in First 5, it is notable that the Government delivered upon extended entitlements to paid and unpaid leave. The Government also established a new Parenting Support Policy Unit that will be responsible for developing a national model of parenting support services. In terms of nutrition, the Council welcomes the publication of Health Eating Guidelines for 1-5 year olds and that progress is underway to develop Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Settings. It is also notable that funding was secured to pilot a meals programme in Early Learning and Care settings and a hot meals programme in schools in Budget 2020.

Within the health-related commitments, the Council notes the ongoing roll out of www.mychild.ie, the development of breastfeeding supports, the development of two mental health eLearning modules and the development of HSE Baby-Friendly Standards.

Going forward, the Council would welcome more progress on the development of a dedicated child health workforce. In 2019, a Steering Group was established by the Department of Health and it is critical that this work is prioritised. This was a new commitment under First 5 and the success of the Strategy will hinge on the development of this service.

When it comes to early learning commitments, the Council welcomes the range of initiatives that were commenced in 2019. For example, a National Childminding Co-ordinator and a team of regional Childminding Development Officers were appointed to support the implementation of the Childminding Action Plan. Work also commenced on the Workforce Development Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare and on the development of a Funding Model. Both initiatives will lay the foundations for the development of a new national programme for early learning and care services at a time when COVID-19 has highlighted the need to develop a more sustainable public model of provision. Given the inextricable link between staff qualifications and quality, the Council looks forward to the publication of the interim report of the Workforce Development Plan Steering Group. It is also worth mentioning that the Council is particularly interested in, and will closely monitor Government plans to establish a new early years' agency, Childcare Ireland, that is earmarked for the end of 2021.

Early learning and care has a special role in addressing poverty and ensuring that every child gets to reach their full potential. The Council has a key focus on the First 5 commitment to develop an early learning and care model for disadvantaged children. This work is being progressed by the Expert Group who has been tasked with developing a new funding model for the sector. The Council recommends prioritising this commitment given the upcoming launch of the EU Child Guarantee which is aimed at ensuring that every child in Europe at risk of poverty or social exclusion has access to a range of social services including free Early Childhood Education and Care.



Tanya Ward

CHAIRPERSON OF THE BOBF ADVISORY COUNCIL

BACKGROUND TO FIRST 5



OVERVIEW OF FIRST 5

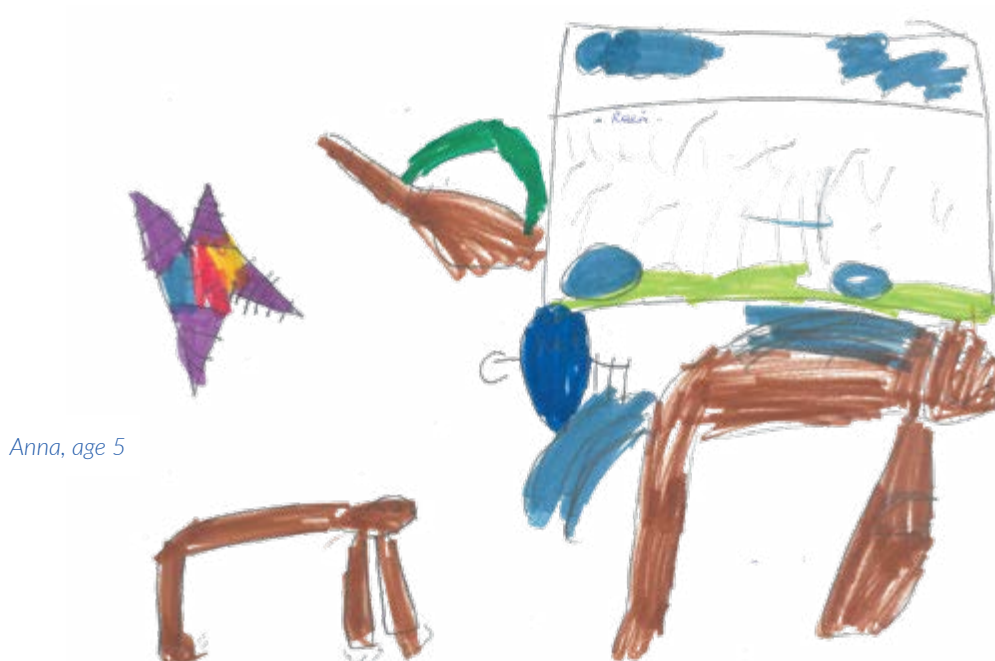
Vision, Goals, Principles and Framework for Action

Vision

All babies' and young children's early years will be valued as a critical and distinct period which should be enjoyed. Families will be assisted and enabled to nurture babies and young children and support their development, with additional support for those who need it. Those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing. Community contexts will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential.

Goals

- Goal A: Strong and supportive families and communities
- Goal B: Optimum physical and mental health
- Goal C: Positive play-based early learning
- Goal D: An effective early childhood system



Anna, age 5

Principles

The principles which underpin First 5 are drawn from Right from the Start.

- Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
- Relationships and interactions with significant others, and the environments in which they take place, play a central role in the quality of children's experiences in early childhood.
- Services and supports to children and their families should be of a high quality, affordable and accessible to all, while recognising that some children and families will need additional support.
- The provision of quality services requires everyone working with children and families to communicate and cooperate with one another and with children and families in an atmosphere of mutual respect and common purpose/partnership.
- Society must value and support parents, guardians, families and everyone who promotes the wellbeing, learning and development of young children.
- Government policies pertaining to children should be informed by evidence, by international standards of best practice and by children's rights.



Alanna, age 5

Framework for action

The four Goals will be delivered through nine interlocking Objectives (under Goals A, B and C) and five Building Blocks (under Goal D). Under each Objective and Building Block, Strategic Actions are set out. This is the framework for action for the duration of First 5 and forms the basis to monitor implementation. Over 150 actions to be progressed over the first three years have been identified. By and large, these actions represent additionality and will complement existing work.

As a living Strategy with a built-in review after three years, it is expected that new specific actions for delivery in the medium- to long-term will be added as implementation progresses. Implementation will include a First 5 Trials programme and a First 5 Research and Evaluation programme.

The First 5 Trials programme will explore innovative initiatives to test effectiveness in an Irish context, and determine suitability for nationwide implementation.

The First 5 Research and Evaluation programme will support these trials, and deepen understanding of the lives of young children and their families and the services and supports that will make the most difference to them.



Ethan, age 4

FIRST 5 BIG STEPS

1 Access to a broader range of options for parents to balance working and caring

In order to ensure children can spend more time with their parents, especially in the first year, First 5 sets out plans to deliver extended entitlements to paid and unpaid leave for both fathers and mothers. This will be accompanied by a range of measures to develop greater family-friendly flexible working arrangements.

2 A new model of parenting support

First 5 will streamline and improve existing parenting supports provided across a range of Government Departments and State Agencies. Accessible, high-quality information and guidance will be made available for parents to promote healthy behaviours, facilitate positive play-based early learning and create the conditions to form and maintain strong parent-child relationships. A continuum of parenting services – ranging from universal to targeted – including high-quality parenting programmes, will also be made available. A new Parenting Unit has been established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (now Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth) to lead this important work.

3 New developments in child health

A key action is the development of a dedicated child health workforce, focussed initially in areas of high population density and disadvantage. The Strategy also sets out new measures to promote positive health behaviours and the mental health of babies, young children and their families, and to enhance the National Healthy Childhood Programme. The delivery of these measures are being led by the Healthy Ireland Office in the Department of Health in partnership with other key Government Departments and State Agencies.

4 Reform of the Early Learning and Care (ELC) system

First 5 builds on the very significant developments in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) over recent years and seeks to further improve affordability, accessibility and quality. Measures include: introduction and ongoing enhancements to the National Childcare Scheme, moving progressively towards a graduate-led professional ELC workforce, the extension of regulations and supports to all paid childminders and SAC services, and the introduction of a new funding model for ELC and SAC. Under this model, employers will be supported to provide more favourable working conditions that will attract and retain staff. These reforms will be underpinned by a strengthened governance structure at a national and local level.

5 A package of measures to tackle early childhood poverty

First 5 identifies new measures that will address poverty in early childhood. These include expanded access to free and subsidised ELC, extension to the Warmth and Wellbeing and Warmer Homes Schemes, Community Cooking Programmes and the introduction of a meals programme to some ELC settings. In addition, the introduction of a DEIS-type model for ELC settings will create further opportunities to narrow the gap for disadvantaged children.



Ciara, age 4

THE STORY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD

Vision

All babies' and young children's early years will be valued as a critical and distinct period which should be enjoyed. Families will be assisted and enabled to nurture babies and young children and support their development, with additional support for those who need it. Those providing services for babies, young children and their families will be equipped to contribute to their learning, development, health and wellbeing. Community contexts will help babies and young children make the most of their early years and fulfil their potential.

In the opening pages of the First 5 Strategy, an optimum vision for early childhood is sketched out. First 5 aims to make this vision a reality.

The vision is based on the most important chapters in young children's lives: good health in early childhood that starts in pregnancy, time with parents in a nurturing and playful home environment where material needs are met, high-quality play-based Early Learning and Care experiences, positive transitions to primary school, and a supportive, inclusive, wider community context.

A well-functioning early childhood system ensures maximum support in all of these areas for babies and young children.

The First 5 Strategy sets out how to develop a system of integrated, cross-sectoral and high-quality supports and services – an effective early childhood system¹– that will help all babies and young children in Ireland to have positive early experiences. The Strategy explains why this system should be developed, what it should look like, and most importantly, the necessary actions.

The family is considered throughout First 5 across all areas given its critical role in supporting positive experiences for young children.

The early years journey is exciting and important. Let's make sure that this is a great story for all children.



A healthy childhood starting from pregnancy

Learning starts before birth. What happens before conception and during pregnancy impacts child development^{2,3}. Early health checks can identify problems before they develop. The right type of services at the right time can make all the difference^{4,5}.

An effective early childhood system will support parents to prepare well for pregnancy, access good quality antenatal care, make healthy choices during pregnancy and have positive birth experiences. This means making available high-quality information resources, and enhancing health services, including additional contacts with expectant mothers, to ensure excellent maternity care⁶.



In a child's early months and years, an effective early childhood system will support parents to form strong attachments, maintain positive mental health, make healthy choices, and will provide child health reviews, vaccinations and screening on a universal basis. Children with additional needs will be identified as early as possible, and receive appropriate support^{7,8}.

Time together with parents especially in the first year in a nurturing and playful home environment where children's material needs are met

The parent-child relationship, inter-parental relationships, and the home environment⁹ are the foundations of early childhood development¹⁰. The phase before a child's third birthday is particularly important for the growing brain. Breastmilk is the gold standard of infant nutrition¹¹. Babies benefit most from individual attention from a loving and responsive caregiver, enabling them to form strong bonds. Throughout and after these vital months, nurturing family relationships^{12,13}, along with play and discovery, are at the heart of a child's development¹⁴.

Parents' employment circumstances – whether they work outside the home or not, where they work, when they work and how much they earn – have huge implications for children¹⁵, not least because of the value young children and parents alike place on time spent together as a family¹⁶.

An effective early childhood system will enable children to be cared for at home by fathers and mothers during their first year through more generous parental leave entitlements. It will support mothers to begin, and continue, breastfeeding and equip parents to understand and support child development, nutrition and safety and promote early learning and play. More intensive interventions will support vulnerable families to overcome short- or long-term challenges¹⁷.



An effective early childhood system will give parents choices about balancing working and caring. That means access to family-friendly arrangements that support work-life balance, and ensuring that income from work is sufficient to support a family, supplementing it where necessary so that all families have adequate resources and children's material needs are met. It also means making Early Learning and Care, of different types, affordable and of high quality so that participation in employment, whether full time or part time, is a viable option for parents, in the confidence that their children are being well cared for¹⁸.

High-quality play-based Early Learning and Care (ELC) experiences

Many young children spend much of their day being cared for by those other than their parents. Non-parental care can be provided by a combination of wider family members and home- or centre-based ELC. The individuals involved in providing learning and care are the key determinant of quality and, for children to thrive, the carers must be equipped to foster the types of relationships and create environments that characterise positive experiences. High-quality ELC is particularly valuable for children who have challenges at home.

An effective early childhood system will ensure that those caring for young children are equipped to support early childhood development. In the case of care by family, friends and neighbours, this means making information, resources and supports more widely available in the local community. In more formal, paid-for provision, this means an appropriately qualified and valued workforce, a consistently implemented curriculum framework and adherence to quality standards and regulations¹⁹, particularly for publicly subsidised ELC.



Positive transitions to primary school

The move to primary education is a major transition in young children's lives. A smooth transition can ensure a positive start to school for children. Important factors are the age at which a child starts school, the structure of the learning environment and the supports provided by parents, ELC practitioners and teachers²⁰.

An effective early childhood system will support the transition to school by enabling greater communication between ELC settings, primary schools and parents, particularly for children with additional needs; supporting more play-based, child-centred learning in the early years of primary school; equipping primary schools to accommodate young children through smaller class sizes, more time and space to play, and interactive teaching styles²¹.



Supportive community contexts

The community in which babies, young children and their families live is the backdrop for development throughout the early years and shapes daily experiences²².

An effective early childhood system will ensure that communities are inclusive, with places to play and learn, opportunities for parents and young children to meet, and comprehensive supports and services that foster early development and respond to additional needs, proactively engaging all children and parents²³.

This means community public space designed with babies and young children in mind, support for parent and toddler groups and other places for young families to meet, along with integrated services where the workforce within and across health, Early Learning and Care, primary education and family support services share a common language and work together²⁴.



Katelyn, age 3

A VISION for EARLY CHILDHOOD

A HEALTHY CHILDHOOD STARTING FROM PREGNANCY



NURTURING AND PLAYFUL HOME ENVIRONMENT WHERE MATERIAL NEEDS ARE MET



HIGH-QUALITY PLAY-BASED EARLY LEARNING AND CARE EXPERIENCES



SUPPORTIVE



COMMUNITIES



POSITIVE TRANSITIONS TO PRIMARY SCHOOL



TIME TOGETHER WITH PARENTS, ESPECIALLY IN THE FIRST YEAR



First 5 AT A GLANCE

Goals

A

Strong and supportive families and communities

Objectives

1. Balance working and caring

2. Information, services and supports for parents

3. Practical and material resources

Strategic Actions

1.1 Parental care for children particularly during the first year

1.2 Family-friendly flexible working

2.1 Information and resources for parents

2.2 Tiered model of parenting support

3.1 Measures to address family income and early childhood poverty

3.2 Suitable accommodation for families with children

3.3 Child-friendly communities

4. Positive health behaviours

5. High-quality health services

6. Positive mental health

4.1 Positive health behaviours in families

4.2 Health behaviour supports in child-serving settings and communities

4.3 Child safety and injury prevention

5.1 Develop National Healthy Childhood Programme

5.2 Therapeutic and medical care for babies and children

6.1 Early identification of mental health issues

6.2 Access to mental health supports

7. Positive home learning environment

8. Affordable, high-quality Early Learning and Care

9. Supported transitions

7.1 Playful home learning environments

7.2 Parental engagement in children's early learning

7.3 Participation in out-of-home learning

8.1 Affordable high-quality ELC

8.2 Availability of subsidised high-quality ELC

8.3 ELC that promotes participation, social inclusion and diversity

9.1 Information exchange to support transitions

9.2 Continuity between ELC and primary settings

9.3 Supports to sustain learning during transitions

C

Positive play-based early learning

D

An effective early childhood system

1

Building Block 1: Leadership, governance, collaboration

Strategic Actions

- 1.A Implementation and governance
- 1.B Early childhood system leadership
- 1.C Collaborative projects

2

Building Block 2: Regulation, inspection, quality assurance

Strategic Actions

- 2.A Develop, enhance, implement standards
- 2.B Reform regulation and inspection

3

Building Block 3: Skilled and sustainable workforce

Strategic Actions

- 3.A Identify and address staff requirements
- 3.B Improve initial training and CPD for all early childhood staff
- 3.C Professionalise ELC; support employers to attract and retain high-quality workforce

4

Building Block 4: Research, data, monitoring and evaluation

Strategic Actions

- 4.A Support early childhood research
- 4.B Develop administrative and outcomes data
- 4.C Robust monitoring

5

Building Block 5: Strategic investment

Strategic Actions

- 5.A Public funding
- 5.B Strategic investment
- 5.C Tracking progress

FIRST 5 IMPLEMENTATION IN 2019 AND PROGRESS ON 2019 MILESTONES



INTRODUCTION

First 5, the ten-year whole-of-government, whole-of-society strategy for babies, young children and their families was published in November 2018 fulfilling a key action in Better Outcomes Brighter Futures (BOBF): the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People (2014–2020).

First 5 focuses on the period of early childhood, from the antenatal period to age five, and takes a joined-up, cross-government approach to supporting babies, young children and their families during these critical early years.

The Strategy identifies more than 150 initial actions across Government Departments and State Agencies which will be substantially progressed in the initial implementation phase from 2019 to 2021.

The First 5 Implementation Plan, published in May 2019, covers this first phase of implementation. It identifies key milestones for each action across 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as the key output for the action by 2021. For 2019, 305 milestones were identified.

This First 5 Annual Implementation Report reviews progress made in 2019 and on these 2019 milestones.

The Report focuses on key achievements overall and describes progress across the First 5 targets, goals, strategic objectives and building blocks. A detailed progress update on each individual milestone is also presented.

As the publication of the First 5 Annual Implementation Report was published in May 2019, the first year of implementation was not a full calendar year.



Leon, Age 4

OVERALL PROGRESS IN 2019 AND ON 2019 MILESTONES

Overall, 209 of all 305 milestones for 2019 were met by end 2019 – a completion rate of 69%.

Owing to COVID-19, the publication of this Report was delayed. This delay provided an opportunity to update the progress being made on 2019 milestones. This demonstrated clear and continued commitment to implementation throughout 2020.

By end 2020, it is envisaged that 90% of all 2019 milestone will be met. This level of progress is similar across all of the four goals of First 5 (see below).

	2019 milestones	Completed 2019	Completed Q2 2020	Due for completion Q4 2020	Will not be completed in 2020	Completion rate end 2019	Completion rate end 2020
Goal A	45	31	3	8	3	69%	93%
Goal B	94	63	5	17	9	67%	90%
Goal C	63	41	1	15	6	65%	90%
Goal D	103	74	1	17	11	72%	89%
First 5	305	209	10	57	29	69%	90%

For accountability purposes, 2019 milestones which are not implemented will be retained and monitored for implementation during 2020 as part of the Annual Implementation Report 2020. Monitoring implementation from 2020 will also take account of recent changes to the ownership of key milestones owing to the transfer of functions and alteration of titles to Government Departments since the formation of the new Government.

For this current publication, the Government Departments and ownership of key milestones across these Departments in 2019 is reported.

PROGRESS MADE TOWARDS THE FIRST 5 TARGETS

First 5 includes three targets. Progress made on these targets in 2019 are set out below:

TARGET 1 Paid parent's leave

By 2028, parents will be supported to look after their babies at home for the whole of their first year through a combination of paid family leave schemes. By 2021, parents will each have an individual entitlement to seven weeks of paid parent's leave, which can be taken during their child's earliest years, to potentially allow children to benefit from an additional 14 weeks parental care in their first year.

Progress: In 2019, the Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 gave parents an individual entitlement to two weeks of paid parent's leave. This individual entitlement was extended further in Budget 2021 (i.e. an additional individual entitlement of three weeks of paid parent's leave).



Holly, age 4



TARGET 2

A graduate-led early learning and care workforce

By 2028, all regulated childminders will hold a minimum qualification, all regulated school-age childcare staff will hold a minimum qualification; and a graduate-led early learning and care workforce, with at least 50% of staff working directly with children in centre-based early learning and care settings and coordinators supporting the work of childminders, will hold an appropriate degree-level qualification (with an initial target of 30% reached by 2021).

Progress: In 2019, 25% of staff working directly with children in centre-based early learning and care settings held an appropriate degree-level qualification, an increase of 3% since 2018 (i.e. 22%)

NOTE: decisions on qualification requirements for childminding and for school-age childcare will be made by the end of 2020 in the context of development of the Workforce Development Plan.



TARGET 3

A doubling of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare

By 2028, the level of public investment in early learning and care and school-age childcare will be at least doubled (i.e. an additional €485m in public investment).

Progress: In Budget 2019, an additional €89.6m was allocated to early learning and care and school-age childcare – representing more than 18% of the public investment target. Further progress was made in Budget 2020 (i.e. an additional allocation of €63.5m or a cumulative 31% of the public investment target).

PROGRESS ACROSS THE FIRST 5 GOALS, OBJECTIVES AND BUILDING BLOCKS



GOAL A STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Objective 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Objective 2

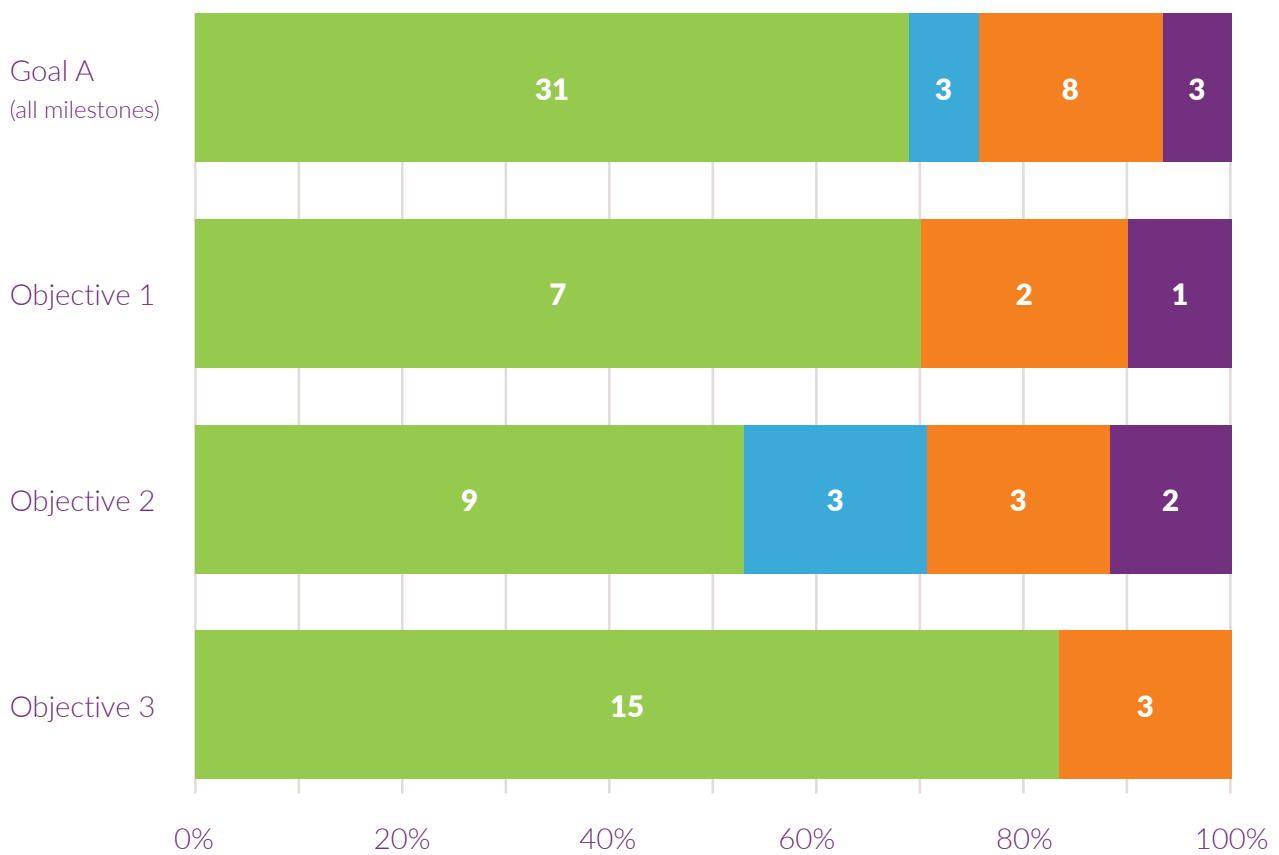
Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Objective 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.



GOAL A 2019 MILESTONES



- Completed 2019
- Completed Q2 2020
- Due for completion Q4 2020
- Will not be completed in 2020

OBJECTIVE 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development to best suit their family circumstances.

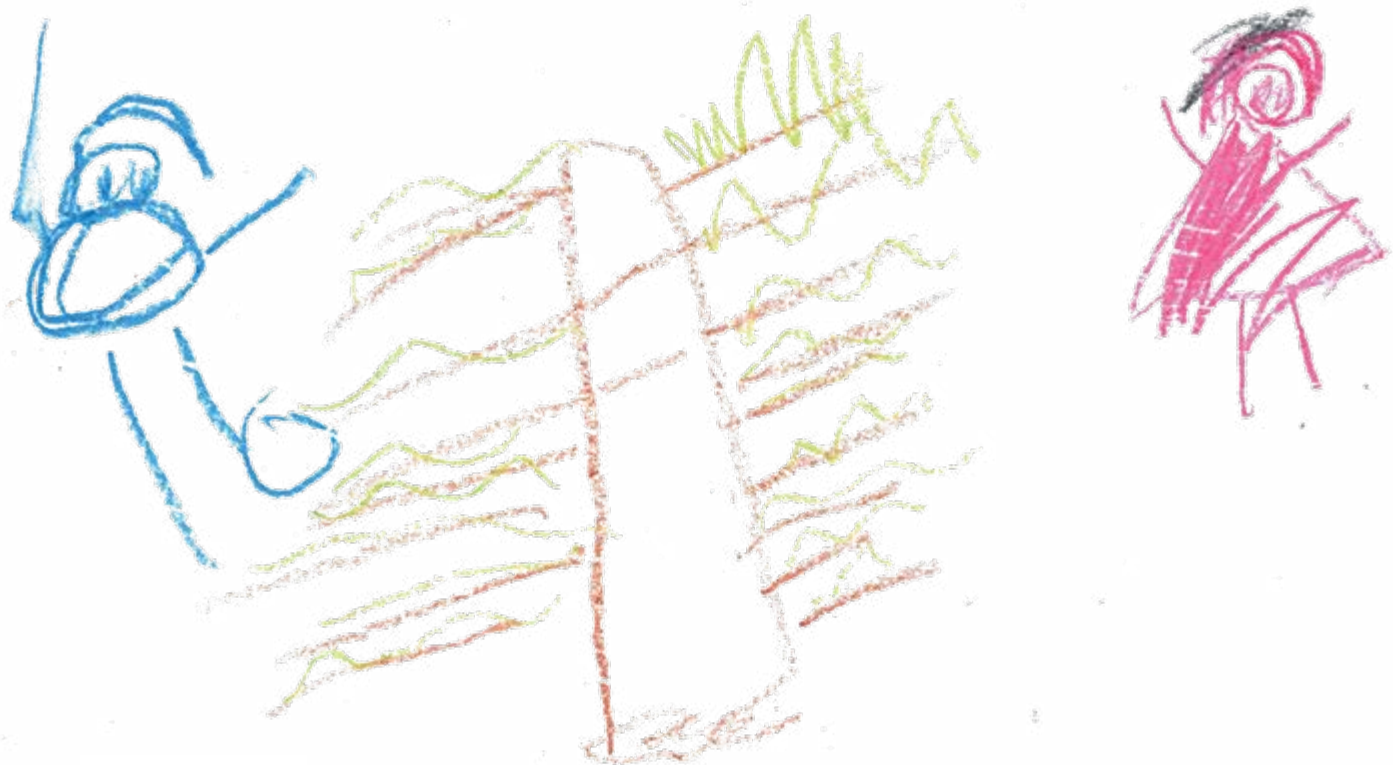
Extended entitlements to paid and unpaid leave for both fathers and mothers were introduced in 2019. The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 gives parents a new statutory entitlement to paid parent's leave, that is, two weeks paid leave per parent for the parents of a child born or adopted on or after 1 November 2019. This is available to employed and self-employed parents and can be taken during the first year of a child's life. Parents who qualify for this leave and with the required number of social insurance contributions receive Parent's Benefit of €245 per week. It is estimated that 60,000 parents will receive the benefit each year, at a projected cost of €32 million.

The phased introduction of an additional eight weeks unpaid parental leave commenced in 2019, and rose from 18 to 22 working weeks in September 2019. This is provided for in the Parental Leave (Amendment) Act 2019, which also changes the maximum age of the child whose parent is entitled to unpaid parental leave from eight to 12 years.

The Department of Justice and Equality reviewed the relevant provisions of the Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act 2004 with a view to an extension to the current entitlement to paid breastfeeding/lactation breaks or paid reduction in working hours for breastfeeding mothers in the workforce from 26 to 104 weeks (2 years) after the baby's birth. The Heads of provisions extending the period in which employees would be entitled to the breastfeeding breaks or paid reduction in working hours were approved by Government in 2019 and work has begun on drafting these provisions for inclusion within an early appropriate Bill. The extension as proposed would facilitate working mothers to breastfeed until their children are two years old in line with recommendations from the HSE, UNICEF and the WHO.

Efforts to enable greater access to family-friendly flexible working were also advanced. These initiatives are a partnership between the Departments of Justice and Equality, Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Children and Youth Affairs and Employment Affairs and Social Protection. The Department of Justice and Equality is the lead on the flexible working consultation and the development of guidelines and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation is leading on developing remote working guidelines. The Flexible Working Consultation was launched in December 2019 to seek views from employers, employees, trades unions and the wider public on the types of flexible working arrangements currently in place and the changes that they wish to see. As the results of the survey have been overtaken by the rise in homeworking due to COVID-19 social distancing measures, consideration is being given to undertaking a follow-up survey. The results of the survey will contribute to the development of guidelines on flexible working.

There were delays to plans to undertake initial scoping on a system to recognise family-friendly employers.



Niamh, age 5

OBJECTIVE 2

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs established a new Parenting Support Policy Unit at the end of 2018 to co-ordinate policy direction and activity relating to parenting support. In 2019, the Unit initiated collaboration and engagement with a wide range of Government Departments, State Agencies and organisations, raising awareness of the role of the Unit and gaining an understanding of development, funding and provision of parenting support services.

Work undertaken in 2019 to advance the First 5 parenting support commitments included securing agreement on the approach to developing a national model of parenting support services, and the development and commencement of an implementation plan for each action. Rapid reviews of effective mechanisms of information delivery to parents and international approaches to parenting support policy were commissioned to inform the development of an information platform for parents and the development of a national model of parenting support services.



Parenting Support Workshop - Cross Government and Agency Workshop.

In addition to this, the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme successfully transitioned to Tusla, with new guidance for the Programme developed to support its future development as part of the wider Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Programme.

While work on the baby boxes and book bag pilot initiatives was delayed, background papers on these initiatives were prepared in 2019. The Oversight Group will be established before the end of 2020 to progress this pilot. An initial task of this Group will be to finalise the scope of this project and agree a detailed project plan. Key initial considerations will include the identification of the pilot geographic area, agreement on the optimal timing for (pre- or post- natal), and channel of, distribution of the baby box and the likely contents. A researcher will be appointed to oversee focus groups and/or consultations with new and expectant parents to inform the identification of items for inclusion. Following this initial scoping phase, which should conclude by end Q1 2021, the Oversight Group will oversee a competitive procurement process to appoint suitable tenderers to a) develop and distribute the baby boxes and book bags and b) undertake a full evaluation of the pilot.



OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Several measures both targeted or means tested (e.g. Working Family Payment) and universal (e.g. child benefit, free Under 6s GP care, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme) are already in place to support family income and address childhood poverty. First 5 commits to build on existing measures. Specific progress under objective 3 and on 2019 milestones are set out below:

A review of the Home Carer Tax Credit and an increase in the value of the Home Carer Tax Credit by €100 in Budget 2020.

Roll out of the Warmer Homes Scheme 2019 – with the original budget allocation increased from €24m to €39.8m and commencement of the consultation on energy efficiency in the rental sector. Owing to a number of issues, including Brexit and GDPR, there were some delays to the pilot of the Warmth and Well-Being Scheme.

Over 28,000 households were supported with their housing needs in 2019 across all Rebuilding Ireland Social Housing Delivery Programmes, 103% of the annual target for 2019, including the delivery of more than 10,000 social homes. In addition, by the end of 2019, 32 family hubs were operating nationally with over 720 units of family accommodation and the implementation of National Quality Standards Framework for the provision of homeless services commenced in July 2019.

Also in July, an Expert Group reported on the delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation, which included over 30 recommendations.

Standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process were finalised, which attach high priority to the emotional and welfare needs of children and families. This includes both the physical environs and opportunities for family life which is positive for child development.



Zoe Reading in Clocha Rince Library.

Measures to extend structured library support to babies and young children were agreed by the national Right to Read Steering Group and two new library projects (Kevin Street and Athy) are providing suitable and inviting spaces for babies, young children and their families (with five other libraries currently under construction in North Clondalkin, Portlaoise, Edgeworthstown, Ennis and Wicklow). Funding of €800k was also allocated by the Department of Community and Rural Development to provide sensory facilities and resources in public libraries. This will benefit many children who require this service.



Robyn, age 5

GOAL B OPTIMUM PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

Objective 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Objective 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

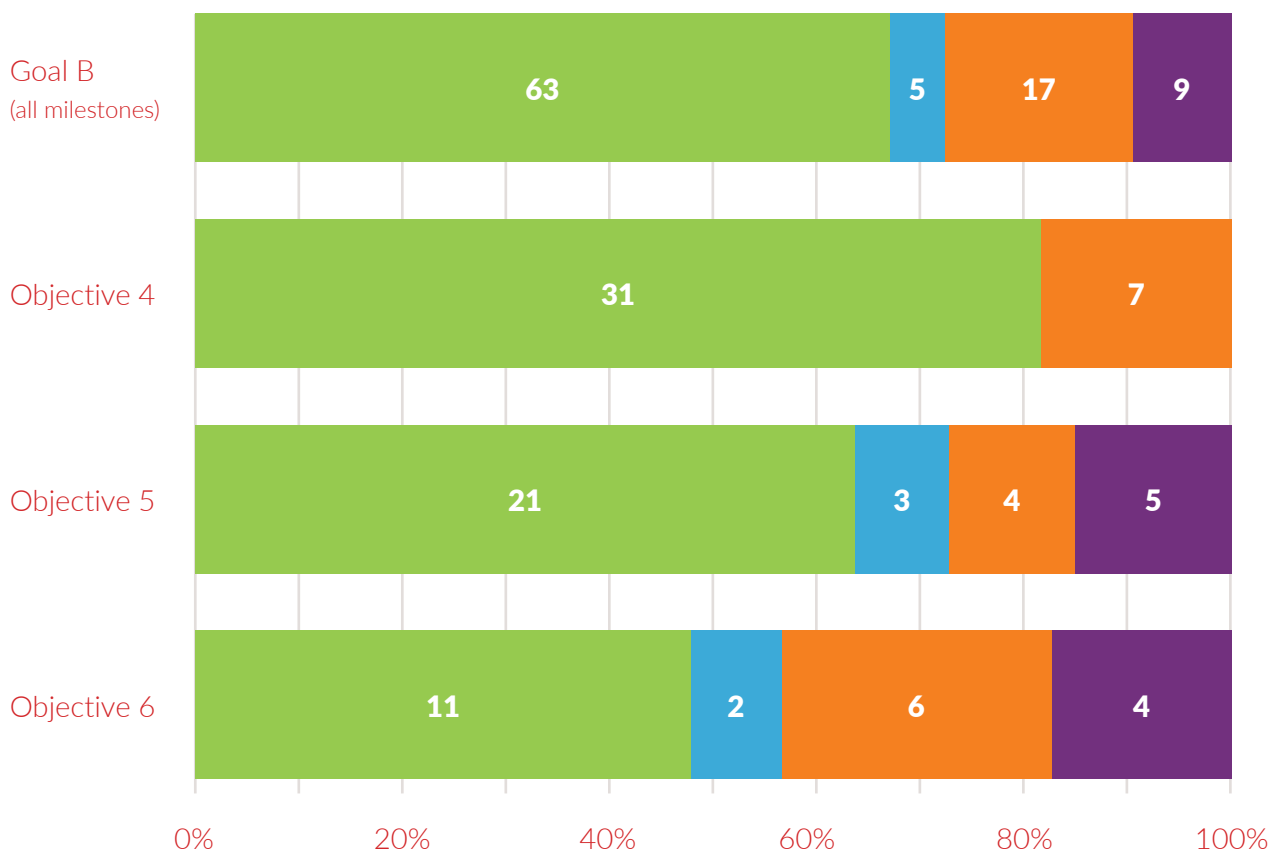
Objective 6

Babies, young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.



Zoe, Age 5

GOAL B 2019 MILESTONES



- Completed 2019
- Completed Q2 2020
- Due for completion Q4 2020
- Will not be completed in 2020

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Significant progress was made on the 2019 commitments to promote positive health behaviours. Some key achievements include:

- Ongoing development and roll out of www.mychild.ie.
- Development of an extensive range of breastfeeding supports, including training programmes, parent booklets 'Breastfeeding Good Start in Life', a National Infant Feeding Policy, appointment of new lactation consultants.
- Development and consultation on draft HSE Baby-Friendly Standards.
- Preparation of Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-4 year olds (which were published in 2020) with progress underway to develop Nutrition Standards for Early Learning and Care Settings.
- Review and updating of the Healthy Food Made Easy Programme.
- Publication of Smile agus Sláinte, the National Oral Health Policy, under which a universal dental health package for children under six is being introduced.
- Publication and initial implementation of the National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan which identified babies and young children as a priority group.
- Publication of national guidelines on 'Nutrition during Pregnancy' which included guidelines on folic acid supplementation.
- Continuation of the START campaign, with a particular focus on treat foods and physical activity for young children.
- Development and piloting of the Healthy Ireland Smart Start (HISS) Programme for children under 3.

First 5 commits to rolling out a First 5 Trials programme. This programme will explore innovative initiatives, test their effectiveness in specific contexts, and determine suitability for nationwide implementation.

In 2019 as part of this programme, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, in partnership with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, the National Dairy Council, the Inspectorates in Tusla and the Department of Education and Skills and the Childcare Committees developed a bespoke model of the School Milk Scheme for Early Learning and Care settings taking the specific needs of children and settings into account. A total of 12 Early Learning and Care settings in Kilkenny and Carlow were selected in 2019 to participate in a 2020 three-week pilot. Educational resources for the pilot were also developed. These resources emphasise the benefits of dairy as part of a bone and tooth friendly diet and lifestyle.

Funding was also secured to pilot a meals programme in Early Learning and Care settings and a hot meals programme in schools in Budget 2020. In addition, Cycling Ireland piloted the introduction of cycling skills to early learning and care and junior/senior infant age groups.



Ursula O'Dwyer, Dept. of Health and Chair of the first-ever National Healthy Eating Guidelines for one to Four Year Olds pictured at the launch of the Guidelines in October 2020 with from (left to right): Frank Feighan TD, Minister of State for Public Health and Wellbeing, Roderic O'Gorman TD, Minister for Children and Stephen Donnelly TD, Minister for Health. Pic. Robbie Reynolds.

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based, integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

In 2019, a range of supports were developed and introduced to increase uptake of vaccinations in early childhood (i.e. establishment of a Vaccine Alliance, pilot of targeted emails to parents of all babies just before Primary Childhood Immunisations (PCI) were due and increased social media activity around PCI) and during pregnancy (i.e. a pilot of targeted emails to pregnant women over flu vaccine season and development of materials for midwives and GPs to promote vaccines for pregnant women).

A range of new eLearning programmes were also developed and rolled out under the National Healthy Childhood Programme (see figure below).

1. **Supporting Breastfeeding**
2. **Breastfeeding challenges**
3. **Child Safety Inside and Outside the Home**
4. **Child Safety in the farm, in the clinic and community**
5. **Newborn Bloodspot Screening**
6. **Growth Monitoring**
7. **Nutrition - Recognising and managing allergies in the community**
8. **Nutrition - Preconception & pregnancy**
9. **Nutrition - Formula feeding**
10. **Nutrition - introducing family foods**
11. **Nutrition - feeding related challenges in 0 – 12 - month babies**
12. **Nutrition - Toddler Feeding**
13. **Nutrition - Healthy Weight For Children**
14. **Undertaking the Primary Visit (72 hour) Child Health Assessment**
15. **Undertaking the 3 month Child Health Assessment**
16. **Undertaking the 9-11 month Child Health Assessment**
17. **Undertaking the 21-24 / 46 – 48 month Child Health Assessment**



The implementation of the National Maternity Strategy continued in 2019 and included recruitment of additional healthcare professionals; ongoing development of maternity networks and the development of serious incident management forums for maternity services. Work to implement the National Maternity Strategy will continue over its lifespan (end 2026).

The Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre (OPDUCC) at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown commenced the delivery of services in 2019. The opening is an important development in the plan for children's services. It has already resulted in net benefits to young patients and their families by bringing fast, convenient, quality care closer to their homes. Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Connolly Hospital in Blanchardstown is staffed by specialist paediatric staff including nurses, doctors, health and social care professionals. Recruitment is ongoing for additional specialist staff. Since opening to early February 2020, 4,304 children have presented to the Urgent Care Centre at Connolly Hospital. Patients do not require an appointment and can present with or without a GP referral letter. Of these 4,304 patients, almost half (2,127) were five years of age or less. 95% of children were discharged home after their visit to the urgent care centre, with only a small number of children transferred for further investigation and treatment to the children's hospitals.

The new outpatients' clinics include three specialities; General paediatrics, Trauma Orthopaedics (fracture clinics) and Child Sexual Abuse Assessment and Therapy Unit. Between July 2019 and early February 2020, there have been 1,853 Consultant led outpatients attendances.



Children in one of the new Outpatients' Clinics in Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown.



Patient activity in the Urgent Care Centre at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown.

Good progress was made on the reconfiguration of services for children with disabilities. Key achievements included the completion of recruitment process for remaining managers for Disability Network Teams, the appointment of 100 new therapy posts and a new Standard Operating Procedure for Assessment of Needs.

The review of the Maternity and Infant Care Scheme was delayed in 2019. Owing to COVID-19 and the on-going redeployment of National Infant and Women Health Programme (NIWHP) team members to national COVID-19 work streams, this work could not progress in 2020.



Roisin, age 5

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies, young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Infant mental health messages were included in a public information campaign as part of the overall www.mychild.ie communications campaign in 2019. Infant mental health messages were also included in new resources developed for public health nurses and community medical doctors.



From left to right: Dr Stephanie O’Keeffe, HSE National Director, Strategic Planning and Transformation; Paul Reid, HSE Chief Executive; Sorcha Nic Mhathúna and baby son Fiach (1 month) and Carmel Brennan, Programme Manager, National Healthy Childhood Programme, HSE. They are pictured at the launch of the HSE’s mychild.ie website and the My Pregnancy and My Child books for parents in July 2019. The HSE partnered with Atlantic Philanthropies, the Katharine Howard Foundation (KHF) and the Centre for Effective Services (CES), through the Nurture Programme and National Healthy Childhood Programme, to develop mychild.ie and the My Pregnancy and My Child books.

As part of the commitment to roll out the standardised screening tool for social-emotional development – Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) – to all young children at the two-year developmental check, a Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) - accredited Train the Trainer Course was developed and delivered with over 1,300 HSE Primary Care staff completing the NMBI-accredited eLearning programme.

Two infant mental health eLearning modules were developed and are due to be launched by end 2020. The first module aims to enable health care staff to support parents and caregivers in creating a secure relationship with their infant and toddler to promote overall health and wellbeing across their lifespan. The second module aims to introduce health care staff to the different infant mental health strategies they can use to support the parent-infant relationship.

In 2019, HSE Mental Health Services launched the Revised Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) Operational Guidelines followed by awareness raising sessions and wide dissemination.

Implementation of the National Model of Care for Specialist Perinatal mental health was advanced through recruitment of hub teams.

HSE Mental Health, working in collaboration with the National Ambulance Service, established the YourMentalHealth Information Line in November 2019. HSE Mental Health is currently working in collaboration with partners to develop a 24/7 text-based active listening service, and to pilot other e-mental health related digital solutions including counselling online, internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, and telepsychiatry.

The Department of Health progressed the development of Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone, the successor to 'A Vision for Change'. This has since been published.

The Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills had initial discussions in 2019 on a costed National Educational Psychological Service model for Early Learning and Care. Further scoping discussions will take place in 2020/2021 alongside the development of an interim protocol for critical incident supports.



Abbie, age 5

GOAL C POSITIVE PLAY-BASED EARLY LEARNING

Objective 7

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning, starting from birth.

Objective 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

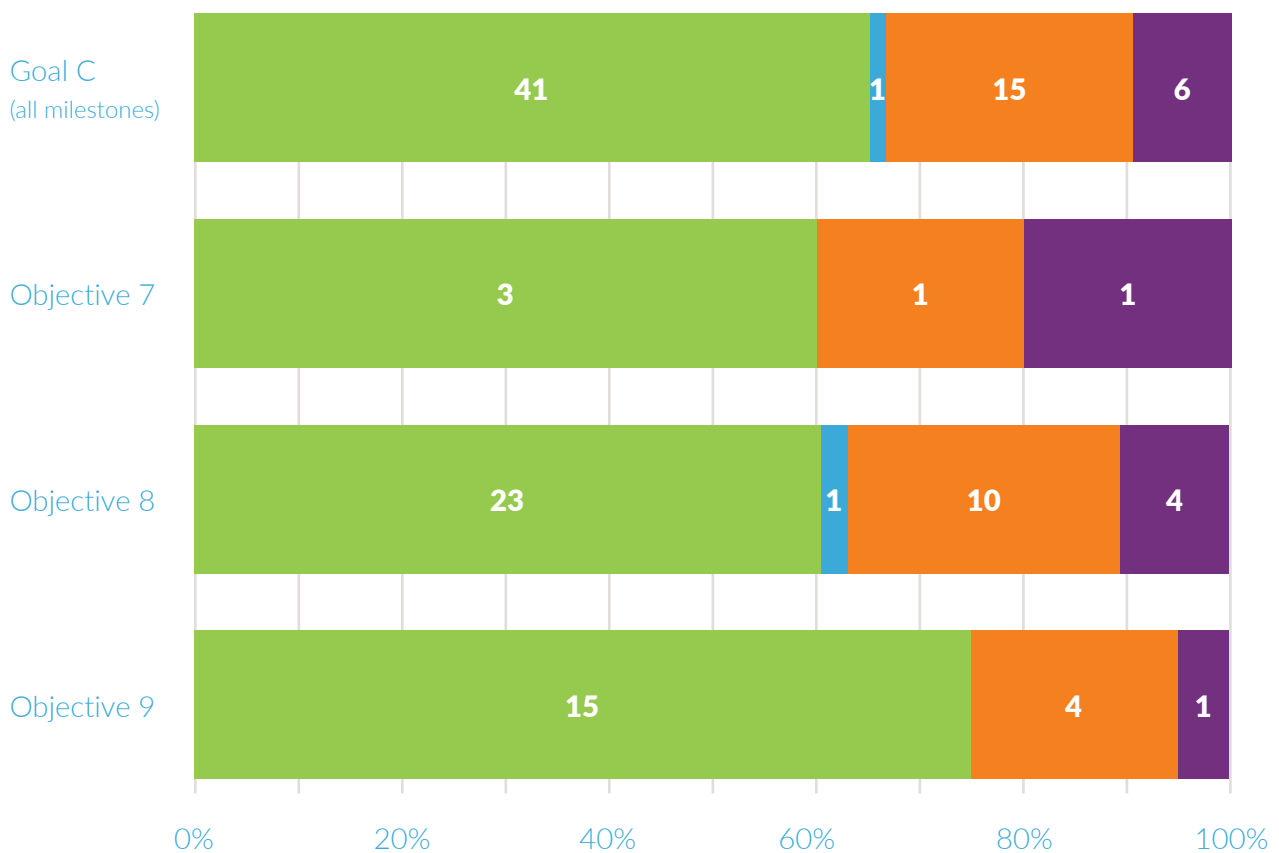
Objective 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary schooling.



Faye, age 3

GOAL C 2019 MILESTONES



- Completed 2019
- Completed Q2 2020
- Due for completion Q4 2020
- Will not be completed in 2020

OBJECTIVE 7

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning starting from birth.

In addition to work progressed under Objective 2 (i.e. model of parenting support services and baby boxes and book bags pilot initiatives), other measures were advanced to support parents to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning, to encourage greater parental involvement in early learning and to take steps that will encourage positive enrolment and participation in early learning and care.

€250,000 was allocated across 414 successful applications for the Parent and Toddler Grant Initiative.

In preparation for the launch of the National Childcare Scheme, a comprehensive and multifaceted information campaign was carried out in 2019 to ensure parents were aware of the supports available under the National Childcare Scheme. A large scale advertising campaign using digital, radio, outdoor and video was used in tandem with widespread distribution of information materials to providers, Government Offices and libraries. A further 200 information sessions, workshops and public engagement stands were arranged locally nationwide. This included hard to reach groups and Parent and Toddler Groups.

An interactive fee calculator was developed and launched to ensure parents were aware of what they should expect to pay for early learning and care and school-age childcare in their area.

An analysis of the Pupil Online Database was completed in 2019 to better understand uptake of the ECCE programme and preliminary work on the requirements and specification for the evaluation of the ECCE Programme was undertaken.

The Education Welfare (Amendment) Bill was brought through the Seanad legislative process and is now awaiting progress through the Dáil.

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

The National Childcare Scheme opened for online applications in November 2019 (with enhancements to this Scheme announced as part of Budget 2020). Sponsorship arrangements under this Scheme were also put in place for children and families with specific vulnerabilities. By end 2019, a total of 3,646 providers had signed up for the Scheme and 15,000 applications had been successfully submitted relating to over 20,000 children.



Children playing and having fun at the launch of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in March 2019.

The Access and Inclusion Model or AIM - the model of supports for children with disabilities to access and meaningfully participate in the ECCE programme - provided more than 8,000 targeted supports to 5,560 children across 2,397 settings in the 2018/19 programme year. In addition to this, nursing support and healthcare assistance for children with complex healthcare needs was piloted under AIM in mainstream early learning and care settings; a new Continuing Professional Development course - Sensory Processing ELearning (SPEL) was launched with more than 400 practitioners completing the course by end 2019. A further 877 pre-school practitioners graduated from the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) higher education programme, which trains Inclusion Coordinators in ELC settings.

The In-Early Learning and Care and In-School Therapy Demonstration Project, led by the Department of Education and Skills, in collaboration with the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Health moved into a second full year as a pilot in September 2019. The project is a pilot in a defined regional area, with 75 early learning and care settings taking part.

The Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings were published in June 2019. The guidelines are an important step in making all early learning and care settings accessible to all children. This publication offers guidance on the refurbishment, renovation and building of centres for Early Learning and Care in Ireland.



Picture from the Universal Design Guidelines for ELC Settings.

The Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Capital Programme 2019 provided €6m for the creation of 1,321 new 0-3 places; 3,123 new school-age childcare places; and 31 essential maintenance and repair projects.

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School-Age Services) Regulations 2018 came into force in February 2019 allowing school-age childcare services to register with Tusla and thereafter take part in the National Childcare Scheme. A public consultation on draft quality guidelines and comprehensive regulations was also completed.

A draft Childminding Action Plan which set out short, medium, and long-term measures for the regulation and support of childminders on a phased basis over the next decade, was published in August 2019 for the purposes of public consultation. An extensive consultation took place in Q4 of 2019. A report was commissioned to consider the findings of the consultation process. This report was completed in December 2019. A National Childminding Co-ordinator and a team of regional Childminding Development Officers were appointed to support the implementation of the Action Plan.

Work also commenced on the development of a DEIS-type model for early learning and care and school-age childcare, which will create further opportunities to narrow the gap for disadvantaged children. This work is being progressed by the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for the sector (see Building Block 5). In addition, a range of measures were introduced to ensure that children in Gaeltacht areas have access to Irish-medium early learning and care provision.



Maria, age 4

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onward to primary school.

Progress on a new national model of transitions supports was delayed in 2019, however, considerable progress was made across elements on this future model of transitions supports (below). Moreover, a transitions campaign – Let's Get Ready – was launched in 2020 to support children's return to early learning and care and school following COVID-19 closures. Resources developed as part of this hugely successful campaign will inform the future model.

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) continued work on the redevelopment and review of the primary curriculum in 2019 and preliminary work was progressed by the Early Years Inspectorate in the Department of Education and Skills to trial the use of the Early Years Education Inspection Model, with a focus on transitions, in the Early Start units of primary schools.

Work also continued during 2019 on the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS) programme aimed at addressing the educational needs of children from disadvantaged communities. This included refining the DEIS identification model, the School Excellence Fund and the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for DEIS. Circular 0016/2019 was also issued by the Department of Education and Skills which emphasised the role of the Home School Liaison Coordinator in supporting transitions between early learning and care and the formal school environment and the Educational Welfare Services (EWS) under the Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) supported the development of an early years transition programme 'Ambition for Transitions'.

The National Parents Council pre-school to primary school transition sessions reached over 500 parents in 2019 on a national scale, doubling attendance for 2018.

In February 2019, Government approved the trialling of a new School Inclusion Model for the 2019/20 school year. The pilot, which commenced in 75 schools in September 2019, comprises:

- the establishment of a pilot of a new service model for children with special educational and additional care needs which involves 75 participating schools in the Community Healthcare Organisation area (CHO 7) for the 2019/20 school year;
- the establishment, on a pilot basis, of an National Council for Special Education (NCSE) Regional Support Team in the Community Healthcare Organisation area (CHO 7) where the pilot is taking place, to include specialists in relevant disciplines (speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, behaviour practitioners), in order to inform teacher CPD and best practice in schools in that area;
- the development of a National Training Programme for SNAs and a pilot roll-out;
- the provision of a nursing service for children with complex medical needs in schools to complement existing HSE-supported nursing provision; and
- the trialling in the NCSE of a new functional operating model in order to better reflect the establishment of the NCSE Support Service and regional teams, and to more fully integrate supports for the piloting of the new model.



Alex, age 4

GOAL D AN EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM

Building Block 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Building Block 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Building Block 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Building Block 4

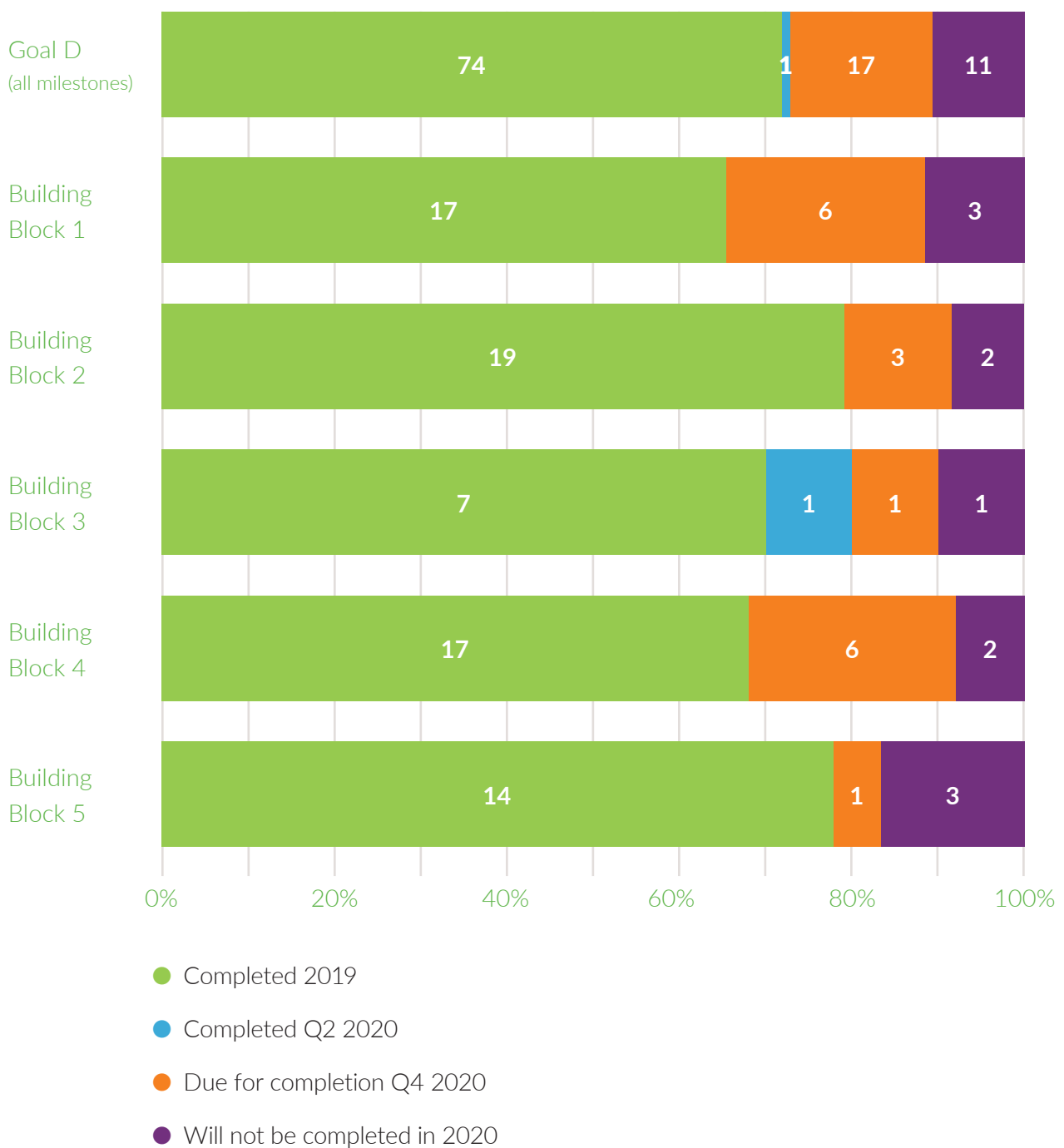
A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Building Block 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.



GOAL D 2019 MILESTONES



BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement, aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Following on from the launch of First 5 in November 2018, the First 5 Implementation Plan was published in May 2019. This covers the first phase of First 5 implementation and identifies key milestones for each action across 2019, 2020 and 2021 as well as the key output for the action by 2021.

During 2019, some of the essential building blocks for successful implementation of First 5 were also put in place. A First 5 Implementation Office was established and a Communications Plan and a Research and Evaluation Plan for the strategy were developed. A First 5 Inter-Department Group was also convened (see Appendix for the Terms of Reference) and met on two occasions.

The First 5 Implementation Office engaged with the BOBF implementation structures through membership of the BOBF Consortium and presentations to the BOBF Advisory Council.

Wider progress was made on 2019 commitments to strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system. In addition to the establishment of the Parenting Support Policy Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, a joint Memorandum of Understanding was agreed between Departments of Children and Youth Affairs and Education and Skills to align and coordinate the policy, practice and implementation work that relates to early learning and care. A number of Department of Children and Youth Affairs appointments were made to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Board and Early Childhood Primary Board and Council and initial planning for the review of the operating system for early learning and care and school-age childcare was progressed with further work underway.

While work on collaboratives was delayed in 2019, progress was made on this in 2020.

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

The National Standards for Antenatal Education in Ireland were published in March 2020. A training programme for antenatal educators was also developed and will be delivered in 2020.

There was also some progress on the commitment to develop guidance and support for Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to enhance and consolidate the delivery of the FRC programme

Oversight of the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate continued in 2019 through major challenges, including media and Oireachtas scrutiny of alleged regulatory compliance breaches by services and the re-registration of pre-school services. Following an RTÉ Investigates broadcast, the Minister began a process to give additional powers to Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate.

During 2019, Tusla's Early Years' Inspectorate undertook 2,308 inspections of early years services, and removed four services from the register of early years services due to persistent non-compliance with Regulations. A further six services are currently appealing their notice of removal from the register. De-registrations and prosecutions are evidence of Tusla's robust approach in taking action where it finds evidence of non-compliance.

A pilot of Quality Regulatory Framework (QRF) based inspections was undertaken in early 2019. Following the successful pilot, Tusla commenced roll out of QRF-based inspections in late 2019 and will continue to introduce this format into inspections in 2020. Tusla has developed a QRF eLearning programme, which will be available to all providers and their staff on the Tusla website from 2020.

In 2019, the DES Inspectorate continued to carry out education-focused inspections of ECCE services on behalf of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. In line with a commitment in First 5, preparatory work took place in 2019 on the extension of education-focused inspections to provision for children of all ages (0-6) in early learning and care settings.

In 2019, the Operations and Systems Alignment Group (OSAG), that brings together agencies that inspect and monitor early learning and care settings progressed work on the development of a self-evaluation framework for early learning and care settings to replace the existing Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP). This will allow providers to assess their own performance along the quality spectrum, from compliance to excellence.

New criteria and guidelines for level 7 and 8 courses in early learning and care were published in April 2019. A review of Level 5 and 6 qualifications was also undertaken. The Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) was jointly instituted in Q2 2020 by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on a non-statutory basis to review Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care Sector.

In 2019, a revised mentoring model was developed and a National Síolta Aistear (NSA) Implementation Office established to centralise and manage the delivery of the initiative. The NSA Implementation Office oversees the work of more than 80 Síolta Aistear mentors across a range of organisations who provide training and mentoring supports to early learning and care practitioners.

The new nationally approved CPD Programme, “Aistear and Play” was rolled out in 2019, with approximately 120 early learning and care settings accessing the training.



Rebecca, age 3

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Significant progress was made in 2019 across the entire early childhood workforce. Key highlights include the establishment of a Steering Group by the Department of Health to commence work on a dedicated child health workforce - one of the major commitments in First 5. The dedicated child health workforce will focus initially in areas of high population density and disadvantage. A Workforce Implementation Plan 2019-2020 was developed by Tusla and a Social Work Education Group was convened by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in January 2019 to explore the supply of social work graduates.

A Steering Group was established in May 2019 to begin work on a Workforce Development Plan for the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Sector. The Plan will aim to raise the profile of careers in the sector, including through the establishment of role profiles, career pathways, qualifications requirements and associated policy mechanisms along with leadership development opportunities. The Plan will also look at how a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce can be attained in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan involves close collaboration between the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the Department of Education and Skills. In order to ensure a strong consultation process, a Stakeholder Group comprising representatives from across the sector was formed to work in conjunction with the Steering Group. Both groups met a number of times in 2019, and supported planning for an extensive consultation with the workforce.

Through the Learner Fund 2019, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs awarded 481 bursary awards to graduates of degree programmes on the Department's list of recognised qualifications. As part of the wider initiative to support quality in childminding, the Learner Fund was expanded to support registered childminders who achieved regulatory requirements for qualifications. Take-up of childminding bursaries is expected to increase over time. The Learner Fund 2019 also continued to support CPD initiatives including Hanen and Lámh training (as part of AIM). Funding was made available to support the rollout of First Aid Response (FAR) training accredited by the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (PHECC) which is due to become a regulatory requirement in 2021.

The Better Start Quality Development Service (a Department of Children and Youth Affairs initiative hosted by Pobal) continued to deliver a mentoring programme for early learning and care settings. In 2019, Better Start's quality development role was extended through the introduction of the Aistear and Play CPD programme, delivered by Better Start early years specialists and coordinated by the new Learning and Development Unit within Better Start.

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

First 5 recognises the centrality of research and data to the early childhood system. A strong national infrastructure for research and data, including longitudinal measurement, improves understanding of what leads to good outcomes for children and how families can be supported. In addition to the First 5 Research and Evaluation Plan referred to earlier, significant progress was made in 2019 on specific commitments under Building Block 4.

In 2019, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs managed and progressed 'Growing Up in Ireland: The National Longitudinal Study of Children' (GUI). Significant achievements in 2019 included the extension of the current contract for GUI with the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) until the end of 2022 and securing Government agreement on providing a long-term sustainable future for GUI through the transfer of GUI to the Central Statistics Office (CSO) from 2023. A tripartite governance structure with representation from the Department, the CSO and the ESRI was established to plan this transfer. As part of this planning, consideration is being given to a design brief for the next phase and the value of a new birth cohort.

What Works was launched in July 2019 with a website and the online Outcomes for Children Data and Information Hub. What Works is an initiative led by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs, with funding from Dormant Accounts, to support a move towards evidence informed prevention and early intervention services for children, young people and their families.

In November 2019, the Minister launched CYPSC Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019–2024 which sets out a platform for the further development and vision for Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSC) over the next five years.

Statistical Spotlight #3, The Reconciliation of Work and Family Life was published in December 2019 and is available from www.gov.ie and work progressed to develop more detailed data about the nature and uptake of family leaves and flexible working arrangements.

In 2019, the OECD sought countries to participate in the Quality Beyond Regulation (QBR) project, which seeks to understand policies that can enhance process quality, especially workforce development policies. In tandem, the European Commission (EC) offered support to countries that undertake a full OECD Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Policy Review. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs in partnership with the Department of Education and Skills agreed to participate.

Administrative data systems were also developed or enhanced. The Maternal and Newborn Clinical Management System (MN-CMS) Gynaecology Electronic Health Record was rolled out in four live sites in 2019 on target. Approval from Digital Government Oversight Unit (DGOU) was achieved for work on the National Immunisation Information System. Further enhancements were made to the National Childcare Information System, with delayed 2019 milestones expected to be completed by end 2020.

Work on some data projects, including the identification of supplementary indicators was delayed but remain First 5 commitments.



Aimee, age 5

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Funding secured in Budget 2020 provided for a range of measures that will have a positive impact on child poverty. These included an increase in Working Family Payment thresholds, an increase in earnings disregard for working lone parents receiving One-Parent Family Payment or Jobseeker's Transition Payment, funding for a pilot hot meals programme in school and a pilot meals programme in ELC settings. Budget 2020 also allocated a further €94m for Tusla, childcare and youth services and a 3.4% increase in the allocation for the Department of Education and Skills.

There was €63.5m of additional investment for ELC and SAC in Budget 2020. This added to the Budget 2019 allocation (i.e. €89.6m) significantly contributes to the First 5 investment target and the pledge to at least double investment in ELC and SAC by 2028. Additional investment in Budget 2020 supported the implementation of the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), including the increase in the minimum and maximum NCS hours from September 2020 (from 20 to 25 and 40 to 45 hours respectively) and a range of other measures.

An Expert Group to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC was established in September 2019. The Expert Group's inaugural meeting took place in October 2019. The Expert Group is independently chaired and is composed of both national and international experts, as well as policy experts from the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, Education and Skills and Public Expenditure and Reform.

The Expert Group is tasked with examining the current model of funding, its effectiveness in delivering high quality, affordable, and accessible ELC and SAC in a sustainable sector, and considering how additional resourcing can be delivered for the sector to achieve these objectives, drawing on international practice in this area.

A Research Partner, Frontier Economics, was appointed in late 2019 to produce a number of working papers to support the work of the Expert Group.

It is envisaged that work on the new funding model will run to 2021 and the Group's recommendations will be submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and ultimately the Government. The documentation relating to each Expert Group meeting is available at the project's website: www.first5fundingmodel.gov.ie

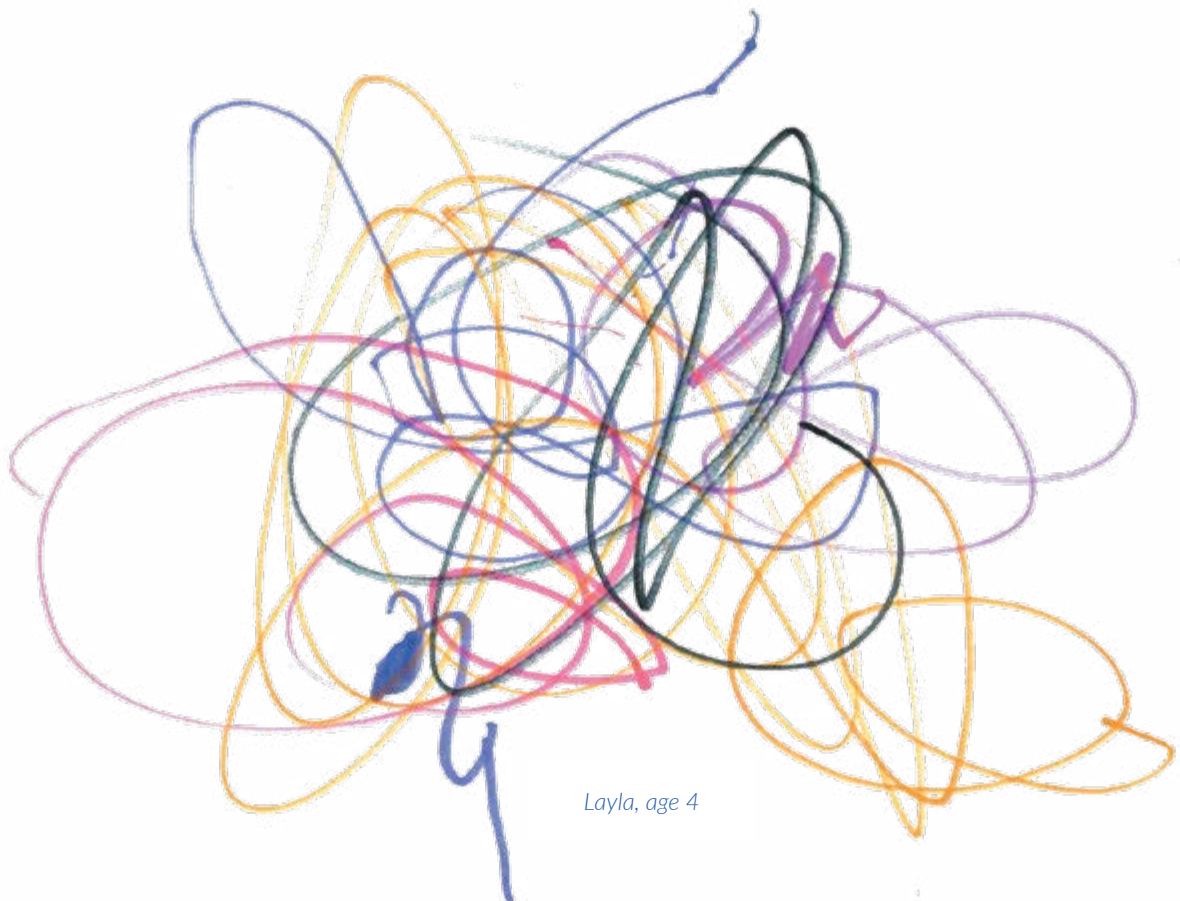


Members of the First 5 Funding Model Expert group pictured in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs with former Minister Katherine Zappone, Assistant Secretary Bernie McNally and Dr. Anne-Marie Brooks.

Through capital investment, Phase A construction works for the new Children's hospital were completed, with Phase B construction works commencing. The Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre (OPDUCC) at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown was completed and commenced the delivery of services in July 2019. Under the Primary Care Construction Programme, there were 129 centres in operation at end 2019 with a further 18 scheduled to open later in 2020.



The new Children's Outpatient Care Centre at Connolly Hospital, Blanchardstown.



Layla, age 4

PROGRESS ON 2019 MILESTONES



GOAL A STRONG AND SUPPORTIVE FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES



GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.1 Facilitate mothers and fathers to care for their child at home during their first year.	A.1.1.1. A new paid Parental Leave scheme available to both parents will be established and operational by 2019. Following its establishment, the new Parental Leave scheme will aim to build incrementally over the course of the Strategy so that by 2028 parents in Ireland will be supported to look after their babies at home for the whole of their first year through a combination of paid family leave schemes. By 2021 parents will each have an individual entitlement to seven weeks of paid parental leave, which can be taken during their child's earliest years, to potentially allow children to benefit from an additional 14 weeks parental care in their first year. Over the remaining years of the Strategy, as resources allow, the paid Parental Leave scheme will be further extended. Once the new scheme is established, consideration will be given to reviewing Maternity and Paternity Leave/Benefit schemes, particularly in respect of rates of payment and eligibility requirements. Further efforts to promote uptake of leave entitlements may also be required.	Joint Leads: DJE and DEASP	Legislation to be progressed and enacted to allow the scheme to commence.	X				The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 has been enacted and commenced.
	DEASP to design, implement and operate a corresponding scheme to allow parents to take paid parental leave.		X				The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 gives parents a new statutory entitlement to parent's leave, that is, two weeks paid leave per parent for the parents of a child born or adopted on or after 1 November 2019. This is available to employed and self-employed parents with the required number of social insurance contributions and can be taken during the first year of a child's life. Parents who qualify for this leave receive Parent's Benefit of €245 per week. It is estimated that 60,000 parents will receive the benefit each year, at a projected cost of €32 million.	
	Introduction of individual entitlement to two weeks of paid parental leave (up to a potential four weeks in total per child).		X				The Parent's Leave and Benefit Act 2019 gives parents a new statutory entitlement to parent's leave, that is, two weeks paid leave per parent for the parents of a child born or adopted on or after 1 November 2019. This is available to employed and self-employed parents with the required number of social insurance contributions and can be taken during the first year of a child's life. Parents who qualify for this leave receive Parent's Benefit of €245 per week. It is estimated that 60,000 parents will receive the benefit each year, at a projected cost of €32 million. The European Union Work-life Balance Directive entered into European law on 1 August 2019 and must be transposed into Member States' national law by 23 August 2022. Following transposition, Ireland will have introduced an individual entitlement of seven weeks of paid parental leave per parent by 2022, increasing to nine weeks per parent by 2024. Once this commitment is met, Ireland will be providing paid family leave to cover up to 44 weeks during the first year of a child's life.	

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
1.2 Enhance access to family-friendly flexible working.	A.1.2.1. Undertake a review of the relevant provisions of the 2004 Maternity Protection (Amendment) Act on the issue of extending current entitlement to paid breastfeeding/lactation breaks or paid reduction in working hours for breastfeeding mothers in the workforce from 26 to 104 weeks after the baby's birth to facilitate the combination of breastfeeding and working in line with the WHO recommendation to continue breastfeeding, in combination with suitably nutritious and safe complementary foods, until children are two years old.	Lead: DJE	Development of proposals for required legislative measures to introduce this provision through the Parental Leave and Benefit Bill.	X				The Heads of provisions extending the period in which employees would be entitled to breastfeeding breaks or a paid reduction in working hours, from 26 to 104 weeks, have been approved by Government and work begun on drafting of these provisions for inclusion within an appropriate Bill.
			Review of existing provisions to be considered in the context of pre-legislative scrutiny for the Bill.			X		Progress depends on inclusion of this provision in the legislative programme of Government.
	A.1.2.2. Extend provision for unpaid parental leave from 18 to 26 weeks and amend the upper age limit of the child for which leave can be taken from 8 to 12 allowing for greater flexibility for parents.	Lead: DJE	Current entitlement to unpaid parental leave extended from 18 to 22 weeks and age of child for which leave can be taken increased from 8 to 12.	X				The phased introduction of an additional 8 weeks unpaid parental leave was announced in 2019. Unpaid parental leave increased from 18 to 22 working weeks in September 2019. This is provided for in the Parental Leave (Amendment) Act 2019, which also changes the maximum age of the child whose parent is entitled to unpaid parental leave from 8 to 12 years.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.2 Enhance access to family-friendly flexible working.	A.1.2.3. Undertake a review existing statutory and non-statutory policies and research on their effectiveness in supporting family-friendly and flexible working for parents with young children. On the basis of findings of review and research, develop guidance and tools to facilitate employers to offer more family-friendly working options, so that over the course of the Strategy employment legislation, culture and practice enables parents to balance working with caring, while also promoting gender equality.	Lead: DJE Partners: DBEI, DCYA, DEASP	Develop policy approach on work-life balance that includes an examination of good practice in other EU Member States.			X		This will be carried out in the context of the review of submissions received as part of the public consultation process.
			Undertake the preparatory work for a national consultation on the extension of flexible working options for all employees.	X				The Flexible Working Consultation was launched on 11 December 2019 to seek views from employers, employees, trades unions and the wider public on the types of flexible working arrangements currently in place and the changes that they wish to see.
			Preparation initiated for transposition of provisions in forthcoming EU Directive on Work Life Balance (WLB) including in respect of parents' entitlement to request flexible working arrangements.	X				Preparatory work initiated by DJE and DEASP. This work will continue during 2020.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1

Parents will be assisted to balance working and caring to contribute to optimum child development and to best suit their family circumstances.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
1.2 Enhance access to family-friendly flexible working.	A.1.2.4. Building on the innovative Athena Swan model in the higher education sector and experience from other countries, develop a system to recognise family-friendly employers, in line with preliminary work underway to consider the feasibility and benefits of an “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mark” for business.	Lead: DJE Partner: DBEI	Initial scoping of potential project, in tandem with developments on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mark underway.				X	Action 118 of National Strategy for Women and Girls (consider the feasibility and benefits of an “Equality, Diversity and Inclusion mark” for business) is unlikely to be completed in 2020.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 2

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
2.1 Lead collaboration across Government Departments and State Agencies to develop, design and disseminate information resources to support parenting.	A.2.1.1. Consolidate, streamline and strengthen parenting information resources into a single, coherent platform, to ensure consistent, high-quality and accessible information and develop user-friendly, attractive, high-quality information resources across multiple platforms, building on the suite of existing resources.	Lead: DCYA Partners: All relevant Government Departments and Agencies	State-funded parenting information resources identified.	X				State-funded parenting information resources identified and documented.
			Engagement with providers and parents commenced.	X				The Parenting Support Policy Unit has met and collaborated with a wide range of stakeholders.
			Background papers prepared.	X				An options paper for the online platform has been drafted.
	A.2.1.2. Lead a national public information campaign on positive parenting. The online and offline campaign should include practical messages and suggestions for parents and signposting to available information resources and services.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Government Information Service	Schedule of campaigns agreed (see action C.7.1.1.)			X		A schedule of campaigns will be agreed alongside campaign objectives and scope in Q4 2020.
			Phase 1 background papers prepared.	X				Summary papers of research on parents and parenting in Ireland have been completed.
			Phase 1 evidence reviews completed.		X			A rapid review on effective mechanisms of information delivery to parents was completed in Q2 2020.
			Communications workshop held.	X				A communications workshop was held with stakeholder Departments and Agencies.
			Campaign objectives and scope agreed.			X		Campaign objectives and scope will be prioritised in Q4 2020.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 2

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.1 Lead collaboration across Government Departments and State Agencies to develop, design and disseminate information resources to support parenting.	A.2.1.3. Pilot the development and implementation of Baby Boxes and Book Bags initiatives to support parenting with a focus on parent-baby bonding, information on baby development and early learning and promotion of baby safety.	Lead: DCYA Partners: To be determined on establishment of Oversight Group	Establish Oversight Group.			X		Background papers on the baby boxes and book bags commenced in 2019. The Oversight Group will be established in 2020 to progress this pilot. An initial task of this Group will be to finalise the scope of this project and agree a detailed project plan. Key initial considerations will include the identification of the pilot geographic area, agreement on the optimal timing for (pre- or post- natal), and channel of, distribution of the baby box and the likely contents. A researcher will be appointed to oversee focus groups and/or consultations with new and expectant parents to inform the identification of items for inclusion. Following this initial scoping phase, which should conclude by end Q1 2021, the Oversight Group will oversee a competitive procurement process to appoint suitable tenderers to a) develop and distribute the baby boxes and b) undertake a full evaluation of the pilot.
			Identify partner to lead on pilot.				X	

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 2

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.2 Develop a tiered model of parenting services built on a foundation of universal provision, with extra support available for parents in line with their level of need on a progressive basis.	A.2.2.1. Develop a national model of parenting services, from universal to targeted provision, covering key stages of child development, taking account of parents and children in a range of contexts and parenting relationships. Universal parenting services under the model will be based on two key foundations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The further development of the HSE's National Healthy Childhood Programme in providing services for parents and babies (antenatal to age three), and The development of ELC services as a delivery mechanism to provide supports for parents. This will be planned and resourced through a reformed funding model and piloted. Over and above this, and building on the current PHN home visitation programme, an approach to home visiting services, across a continuum of need, will be agreed, having regard to Irish evidence on the implementation of prevention and early intervention initiatives.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Tusla, HSE and voluntary sector	Study on parents' perspective and support needs commissioned.		X			The tender process for the first phase of the study was completed in Q2 2020.
			Background papers prepared, including review of existing parenting supports.	X				An online survey of parents was completed. A paper setting out the background and proposed approach to developing a national model of parenting services has been submitted to the DCYA Management Board.
			Evidence reviews completed.		X			A rapid review of international parenting support policy and practice was completed in Q2 2020.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 2

Parents will benefit from high-quality, evidence-based information and services on various aspects of parenting to support child development and positive family relationships along a continuum of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.					Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed		
2.2 Develop a tiered model of parenting services built on a foundation of universal provision, with extra support available for parents in line with their level of need on a progressive basis.	A.2.2.2. Sustain the Tusla Prevention Partnership and Family Support programme through continued investment.	Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA	Prevention, Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) Operational Plan agreed.				X	The PPFS Operational Plan and overall programme may be subject to change, aligned to the Tusla structural change programme. As a result of this, the operational plan will not be signed off at this time. However, the 2020 Business Plan outputs for PPFS and its overall programme plan for 2020 reflect the objectives and intent of the draft operational plan and it is anticipated that this will be the case in 2021 unless the structural change programme results in significant operational adjustments across the Agency.	
			Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme integrated into PPFS.	X				The ABC Programme transitioned to Tusla oversight in September 2018. The new programme is situated under and managed in the PPFS Programme but remains a distinct project with a ring-fenced budget for the 12 ABC sites.	
	A.2.2.3. Continue to implement the Tusla Transformation Programme targeted at achieving better outcomes for vulnerable children and families. In the development of policies and practice, Tusla will have cognisance of this Strategy, the work streams relevant to child protection and welfare, and the particular vulnerabilities of the age groups covered by the Strategy.	Lead: Tusla	Continue to implement Signs of Safety.	X				Progress is continuing with 3 years of the 5 year programme implemented.	
			Child Protection training identifies the particular vulnerabilities of babies and young children.	X				Practice intensive learning events have identified the particular vulnerabilities of babies and young children.	

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.1 Building on the existing infrastructure of supports, review and develop initiatives to maximise the incomes of families with young children, with a particular focus on children at risk of poverty.</p>	<p>A.3.1.1. Undertake research and analysis of the Home Carer Tax Credit scheme, in line with the Tax Expenditure Guidelines. This will include an examination of the beneficiaries of the scheme and an assessment of the extent that it is effective at supporting working families who take care of young children at home.</p>	<p>Lead: DoF</p>	<p>Carry out review of the Home Carer Credit, in line with the Tax Expenditure Guidelines.</p>	X				<p>This report was published as part of Budget 2020 in October 2019.</p>

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.1 Building on the existing infrastructure of supports, review and develop initiatives to maximise the incomes of families with young children, with a particular focus on children at risk of poverty.	A.3.1.2. Commence and progress a review of the effectiveness and accessibility of arrangements for recovery of maintenance payments by non-resident parents, including an examination of arrangements in other jurisdictions to ascertain the possibilities for making the maintenance recovery process easier for parents, improving the outcomes for children and reducing as far as possible the need for court proceedings for maintenance recovery. Review to be commenced within two years of the publication of the Strategy.	Lead: DJE	Scoping of review process.	X				The Minister for Employment Affairs and Social Protection submitted a Memorandum for Government on 14 January 2020 asking the Government to note that a Child Maintenance Review Group will be established to prepare a report by the end of 2020 on certain issues regarding child maintenance, including an examination of whether there is a case for the establishment of a child maintenance agency in Ireland. The Minister for Justice and Equality supported the establishment of the proposed Review Group and has provided a nominee to sit on the Review Group on behalf of the DJE.
			Preliminary engagement with relevant Government Departments and State Agencies.	X				

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.1 Building on the existing infrastructure of supports, review and develop initiatives to maximise the incomes of families with young children, with a particular focus on children at risk of poverty.	A.3.1.3. Develop schemes to address energy poverty; continue to target young children with respiratory conditions in consideration of the extension, evaluation and possible mainstreaming of the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme to explore ways to make the benefits of the Warmer Homes Scheme available to more families of young children who are in or at risk of energy poverty, including in the rental sector.	Lead: DCCAE	Scheme to address energy poverty funded with €34m.	X				The initial Warmer Homes Scheme budget allocation for 2019 was €24 million. However, following a mid-year capital review the budget was increased to €39.8 million for 2019. The Warmth and Wellbeing Pilot Scheme had a budget of €8.7 million for 2019.
			Initial results of the Warmth and Wellbeing pilot to be used to inform future rollout of the scheme, and to help determine whether there are benefits for younger children.			X		The research element of the scheme, which is being undertaken by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM), has experienced significant delays, including implications of GDPR and Brexit on the mechanisms for sharing data with the researchers. The most recent delay being due to the COVID-19 emergency, which resulted in HSE staff being temporarily redeployed from the scheme and researchers in LSHTM being without access to their secure network. Every effort is being made to progress the research, however, with restrictions now easing, an interim report is expected to be received by Q4 2020.
			Consultation on policy to address energy efficiency in the rental sector to be published, responses analysed and a draft policy recommendation made to the Minister.			X		Consultation paper launched on 6 December 2019. Consultation submissions analysed and summarised. Preparation of the draft report on the findings for the Expert Advisory Group is nearing completion. The Advisory Group is expected to review the findings and decide on next steps in Q3 of 2020.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.1 Building on the existing infrastructure of supports, review and develop initiatives to maximise the incomes of families with young children, with a particular focus on children at risk of poverty.</p>	<p>A.3.1.3. Develop schemes to address energy poverty; continue to target young children with respiratory conditions in consideration of the extension, evaluation and possible mainstreaming of the Warmth and Wellbeing scheme to explore ways to make the benefits of the Warmer Homes Scheme available to more families of young children who are in or at risk of energy poverty, including in the rental sector.</p>	<p>Lead: DCCAE</p>	<p>Final National Energy and Climate Plan submitted to the European Commission, detailing measures to address energy poverty in Ireland.</p>	X				<p>The National Energy and Climate Plan was submitted to the European Commission on 4 August 2020.</p>

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.2 Support the development of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of babies, young children and their families.	A.3.2.1. In line with the policies outlined in Rebuilding Ireland, the Government's Action Plan on Housing and Homelessness, implement a range of actions to ensure an increased supply of social, affordable and private homes so that children and their families are provided with suitable accommodation.	Lead: DHPLG	27,000 social housing solutions to be delivered.	X				Over 28,000 households were supported with their housing needs in 2019 across all Rebuilding Ireland Social Housing Delivery Programmes, 103% of the annual target for 2019, including the delivery of more than 10,000 social homes.
	A.3.2.2. Provide increased accommodation facilities appropriate for families experiencing homelessness and ensure that the appropriate supports are provided to these families to support them being re-homed in suitable homes within the shortest possible timeframe and having regard to their individual requirements and circumstances.	Lead: DHPLG	Deliver additional family hubs in Dublin and other main urban centres.	X				This work is ongoing. At the end of 2019, there were 32 hubs operational nationally, offering 720 units of family accommodation in urban areas. Further facilities will become operational during the course of 2020, details of which will become available as projects are finalised by housing authorities.
			Commencement of phased implementation on the NQSF for the provision of homeless services to commence.	X				The Implementation of the National Standards Quality Framework (NQSF), which is being undertaken on a nationwide basis over a 12-month period commenced on 1 July 2019. The DHPLG and the Dublin Region Homeless Executive are supporting local authorities in the implementation phase, including through the provision of training.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.2 Support the development of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of babies, young children and their families.	A.3.2.3. Following consultation process, publish standards for accommodation offered to people in the protection process to ensure that the delivery of services and supports for people living in this type of accommodation, including babies, young children and their parents, is of high quality, appropriate, safe and effective.	Lead: DJE	Standards finalised.	X				Standards were agreed and published. High priority was given during discussions to the emotional and welfare needs of children and families. This included both the physical environs and opportunities for family life which is positive for child development.
			Continue to rollout the independent living model as part of a nationwide procurement programme.	X				The Standards have been disseminated widely and contents considered in the tendering for new properties.
			Formation of an implementation working group.			X		Co-ordination of the implementation of an independent inspection process is ongoing. The policy on how the new inspection process will operate has yet to be finalised. As such, the determination of who will undertake the inspection process has yet to be fully decided and a working group to progress the International Protection Accommodation Service (IPAS) inspection process has yet to be established. This can for the most part be attributed to the burden placed on IPAS by the COVID-19 emergency response.
			Public procurement exercise for the provision of accommodation and ancillary services to persons in the protection process, by way of independent living model initiated.	X				All competitions are either ongoing or complete and will likely be in contract by the end of the year. Regional competitions for the following regions complete – South East, Midlands, Mid East. Regions in progress – Mid West, South West, West, Dublin, Borders. All successful bidders must comply with the independent living model with residents able to cook for themselves and designated living rooms for families.

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.2 Support the development of suitable accommodation to meet the needs of babies, young children and their families.	A.3.2.4. Make specific recommendations on access to appropriate accommodation for Traveller families with babies and young children, having regard to the work of the recently established Expert Group who have been tasked with examining and making recommendations on Traveller accommodation policy, strategy and implementation, including reviewing the Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act 1998 and all other legislation that impacts on the provision and delivery of accommodation for Travellers.	Lead: DHPLG	Submission of the report of the Expert Group established to examine the delivery of Traveller-specific accommodation.	X				<p>The Traveller Accommodation Expert Review report was submitted to the Minister in July 2019. The report contains 32 recommendations across the four topics considered, Delivery Reflecting Need, Planning, Capacity and Resources, and Governance. They range from changes to procedure or policy to fundamental changes to legislation particularly in the area of planning.</p> <p>Due to the number of stakeholders, the inputs required and the wide ranging impacts of most of the recommendations, the DHPLG is setting up a Programme of Projects to progress agreed recommendations.</p>

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.3 Ensure that the design and development of physical and social infrastructure takes account of the needs and rights of young babies, young children and their families so that communities where children are born and grow up support positive early development.	A.3.3.1. Develop guidelines on planning and developing child-friendly communities for local authorities. The guidelines will focus on building sustainable communities that ensure that children have safe environments to play, explore and learn. These will include recommendations on amenity space, appropriate scale, walking and cycling routes, and public spaces including play spaces and natural environments.	Lead: DHPLG Partner: DCYA	Review of existing guidelines completed by DHPLG, in conjunction with DCYA.	X				A review of existing guidelines completed by DHPLG, in conjunction with the DCYA.
	A.3.3.2 Conduct a mapping exercise of current play policy, practice and provision with a focus on early childhood and on the basis of findings make recommendations for future actions.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestone for 2019.					

GOAL A

Strong and supportive families and communities

OBJECTIVE 3

Families and communities will be supported to provide children with the necessary material and practical resources to encourage positive development in the early years.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.3 Ensure that the design and development of physical and social infrastructure takes account of the needs and rights of young babies, young children and their families so that communities where children are born and grow up support positive early development.	A.3.3.3. Invest in libraries as community hubs, across the country, with a particular focus on young children and their parents (parent and baby groups, materials for parents, development of children's sections), in line with implementation of the new library strategy.	Lead: DRCD Partners: DCYA, Local Authorities, Libraries Development, LGMA	Explore extending structured library literacy and reading development support services to babies and young children under the Right to Read programme.	X				Measures to extend structured library support to babies and young children have been agreed by the national Right to Read Steering Group. Implementation has been delayed by COVID-19 but, working with the DCYA registered early learning and care facilities, first steps will take place across local authorities' library services in Q4 2020, which will include the mapping of libraries to early learning and care settings.
			Library projects funded under the Library Capital Investment Programme, the Rural Regeneration and Development Fund, and the Urban Regeneration and Development Fund are in line with the national public library strategy and Public Library Standards and Benchmarks including providing suitable and inviting spaces for babies, young children and their families.	X				This is an ongoing process. However, two completed library projects (Kevin Street and Athy) include suitable and inviting spaces for babies, young children and their families and a third, North Clondalkin, will open in Q4 2020. In addition, the DRCD approved nearly €800k funding which will result in the provision of much-needed sensory facilities and resources in public libraries before the end of this year. This will benefit many children who require this service.

GOAL B OPTIMUM PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH



GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.1. Continue progress towards the breastfeeding target rate set out in the National Breastfeeding Action Plan (i.e. annual 2% increase in breastfeeding duration rates over the period 2016-2021). To meet this target: a) Continue to support mothers to breastfeed through the PHN service, b) implement standardised breastfeeding policies and c) Provide clinical specialist posts in both primary care and maternity hospitals as per the key actions of the National Breastfeeding Action Plan. Extensions to this target will be considered at the end-of-year-three review of First 5 in 2021.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	a) Blended learning breastfeeding training programme developed.	X				The eLearning component of the training programme is available on HSElanD. 1,570 have completed Module 1 and 1,463 have completed Module 2. The skills-based training is currently being developed.
			Online and print resources available to mothers and PHNs.	X				The 'Breastfeeding Good Start in Life' booklet was updated and reprinted. Breastfeeding.ie was migrated on to the mychild.ie platform and the content is continually updated.
			b) Infant feeding policies for maternity hospitals/ units and primary care teams developed and implemented.	X				HSE National Infant Feeding Policy agreed. Policy and accompanying poster for Maternity and Neonatal Services designed and distributed to maternity services. HSE National Infant Feeding Policy for Primary Care Teams and Community Healthcare Organisations (CHO's) updated and circulated.
			HSE policy and guide for staff on the Code of Marketing for Breastmilk substitutes available.			X		Policy drafted and consultation process completed; presented to the HSE Joint National Council Policies and Procedures Subgroup; a guide for working within the code and the policy developed for HSE staff; -implementation plan drafted.
			Baby Friendly Initiative standards completed.	X				Draft HSE Baby friendly standards developed and consultation completed with HSE, voluntary, community and international stakeholders. National Infant feeding audit completed with 18/19 hospitals/units.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.1. Continue progress towards the breastfeeding target rate set out in the National Breastfeeding Action Plan (i.e. annual 2% increase in breastfeeding duration rates over the period 2016-2021). To meet this target: a) Continue to support mothers to breastfeed through the PHN service, b) implement standardised breastfeeding policies and c) Provide clinical specialist posts in both primary care and maternity hospitals as per the key actions of the National Breastfeeding Action Plan. Extensions to this target will be considered at the end-of-year-three review of First 5 in 2021.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Breastfeeding policy for staff working in the public health service developed.			X		The policy has cleared all the required internal and HR consultation processes. Implementation plan in draft.
			c) Review of current provision of clinical specialist posts completed.	X				Review completed by the National Breastfeeding Implementation Group.
			Submission made for additional posts through the estimates process and funding dependent.	X				Three new lactation consultant posts are being funded in 2020 through the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP).

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.2. Enhance weaning support to parents through the National Healthy Childhood Programme.	Lead: DoH Partner: HSE	Evidence-based information on weaning available to all parents across different platforms.	X				Available through mychild.ie and the My Child: 0 to 2 years book that is given to all parents through the Public Health Nurse (PHN) service.
	B.4.1.3. Provide access to comprehensive family planning and reproductive healthcare services, including information and advice for people considering pregnancy (e.g. smoking cessation) and carry out a national information campaign to promote the importance of pre-conception health.	Lead: DoH Partner: HSE	Continued implementation of the National Maternity Strategy, as set out in the associated implementation plan.			X		While implementation of the Strategy is ongoing, some actions have been delayed. Consequently, and as recommended by HIQA in its report on the monitoring programme against the National Standards for Safer Better Maternity Care earlier this year, it is necessary to revisit the original Implementation Plan, with a view to assessing the status of implementation overall and providing up-to-date timelines for the implementation of the recommendations. This work is being progressed by the NWIHP.
			Draft guidelines for the identification, diagnosis and treatment of tobacco addiction released for consultation.			X		These guidelines were launched for consultation in October 2020.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.4. Develop mechanisms to improve folic acid intake among all women of reproductive ages.	Lead: DoH Partner: HSE	Publish Folic Acid supplementation report.			X		Action delayed by COVID-19 but Report expected to be published in 2020.
			Disseminate College of Obstetrics and Gynaecology Guidelines.	X				The Royal College of Physicians in Ireland (RCPI)/HSE launched national guidelines on Nutrition during Pregnancy which included agreed folic acid supplementation guidelines.
			Continue Safefood awareness campaigns.	X				Safefood awareness campaigns on digital media continue to promote supplement use.
	B.4.1.5. Develop and maintain comprehensive, accessible information for parents on all aspects of their child's health and wellbeing through a new parenting and child health and wellbeing website supported by social media.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Communications plan to promote www.mychild.ie implemented.	X				Communication plan to promote my child resources completed in 2019. This included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the design and print of promotion packages for key stakeholders media interviews with Ireland AM, Pat Kenny on Newstalk, newspaper articles and social media posts distribution of promotional packs to GPs and health centres.
			New content developed and launched on the website.	X				The content of the mychild.ie website is being continually updated.

GOAL B

OBJECTIVE 4

Optimum physical and mental health

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.6. Develop, publish and disseminate guidelines on health behaviours for babies and young children, including: a) Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-5-year-olds b) Guidelines for Physical Activity for Early Childhood and Guidelines on Sedentary Behaviour, including Guidelines on Screen Time for Early Childhood c) Guidelines on Oral Health, including Dentists' Visits and Toothpaste Use in Early Childhood.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE Partner: Safefood	Healthy Eating: Continue to deliver START campaign to support parents to implement healthy lifestyles in families including healthy eating messaging.	X				The START campaign is an ongoing media campaign and the 2019 focus was on treat foods.
			Develop new Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-5 Year Olds.			X		Guidelines and resources were launched on 1 October 2020.
			Physical Activity: Continue to develop and deliver START campaign to support parents to implement healthy lifestyles in families incorporating physical activity, sedentary behaviour and screen-time messaging.	X				The START campaign message for physical activity aims for 3 hours activity per day for under-5s, broken up into little chunks. START is an ongoing campaign and the focus for 2020 is on reducing screen time.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.6. Develop, publish and disseminate guidelines on health behaviours for babies and young children, including:	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE Partner: Safefood	Oral Health: Launch of Smile agus Sláinte – National Oral Health Policy	X				Smile agus Sláinte – National Oral Health Policy was launched in April 2019.
	a) Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-5-year-olds		Outline of information campaign developed to signpost the availability of preventative packages	X				A series of newspaper articles, TV programmes and radio interviews were undertaken through 2019 and early 2020. 3 stakeholder days were undertaken end 2019 and reported on 2020, to discuss the implementation amongst professionals. Workshops with HSE, two Dental Schools and Dental Council undertaken end 2019 and early 2020. Information days and Q and As for Dental Students took place in early 2020. There will be further reengagement and information campaigns on launch of the packages.
	b) Guidelines for Physical Activity for Early Childhood and Guidelines on Sedentary Behaviour, including Guidelines on Screen Time for Early Childhood c) Guidelines on Oral Health, including Dentists' Visits and Toothpaste Use in Early Childhood.		Baseline assessment commenced of fluoride toothpaste use/ guideline compliance in young children.	X				The Fluoride and Caring for Children's Teeth study is being published which assessed baseline use of toothpaste in children under 6 years of age. Guideline compliance was shown to be poor where 80% of children less than 2 years of age commenced use of fluoride toothpaste in contradiction to guidance.

GOAL B

OBJECTIVE 4

Optimum physical and mental health

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.1 Promote and support positive health behaviours among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families.	B.4.1.7. Develop a national skin cancer prevention plan with babies and young children identified as a priority group.	Lead: DoH Partners: National Cancer Control Programme, Stakeholder Implementation Group	Launch Skin Cancer Prevention Plan.	X				The Skin Cancer Prevention Plan was launched on 27 May 2019. An Implementation Group has been established along with sub-groups for Outdoor Workers, Children, Communications, and Research. The Implementation Group has linked with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and Better Start in the context of developing resources for Aistear and Síolta.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.2 Integrate health behaviour supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.4.2.1. Review and enhance the delivery of Healthy Ireland Smart Start (HISS) Programme, working with ELC settings to support the development of child health and wellbeing, through phased expansion of this Programme to all ELC settings and extension of this Programme to children under three.	Lead: HSE Partners: National Childhood Network (NCN), DoH, DCYA	Continued rollout of the existing HISS Programme to ELC settings.	X				A work plan for delivery and further development of the programme in 2020 was agreed with NCN.
			Commence review of the HISS Programme.	X				A Request for Tender process for this review was published and contract awarded. Work commenced on the review in Q1 2020.
	B.4.2.2. Extend the Community Based Nutrition and Cooking Programmes.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Revised model for delivery of Community Cooking Programmes by HSE developed.	X				In 2020, each CHO will develop a CHO level plan to outline and increase the scale and sustainability of Healthy Food Made Easy (community cooking programme) The Healthy Food Made Easy Programme resources have been reviewed and are being updated in 2020. A training model has been approved and workshops to support implementation have been agreed.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.2 Integrate health behaviour supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.4.2.3. Introduce measures to address food poverty, specifically: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot a meals programme in ELC Settings. Pilot a new hot meals programme for DEIS primary schools. 	Meals in ELC Lead: DCYA Partners: DoH, HSE, Tusla, CCCs Hot meals in schools Joint Leads: DEASP and DES	Meals in ELC Budget submission made to secure funding for 20/21 programme year.	X				€160,000 was allocated in Budget 2020 to progress the pilot meals programme in ELC.
			Hot meals in schools Pilot will commence from September 2019 (36 primary schools for 7,200). Budget of €2.5m provided for 2019/20.	X				The hot meals in schools initiative was piloted in up to 36 schools (serving over 6,600 children) from September 2019.
	B.4.2.4. Pilot the extension of the School Milk Scheme strand of the EU School Scheme to early childhood care and education settings, developing a bespoke model for the scheme taking the specific needs of children in such settings into account. Further to evaluation of the pilot and subject to available resources, consider the scaling up of this scheme to a larger number of settings.	Lead: DAFM Partners: DCYA, DES, DoH, National Dairy Council, Tusla, CCCs	Establish Expert Working Group with stakeholder organisations.	X				Working group was established in 2019.
			Selection of ELC Service Providers.	X				ELC service providers were selected in Q4 2019.
			Development of educational resources appropriate to ELC.	X				Educational resources appropriate to ELC were developed in 2019 and finalised in Q1 2020 for print.
			Bespoke pilot model defined.	X				Bespoke pilot model was defined in 2019.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 4

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.2 Integrate health behaviour supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.4.2.4. Pilot the extension of the School Milk Scheme strand of the EU School Scheme to early childhood care and education settings, developing a bespoke model for the scheme taking the specific needs of children in such settings into account. Further to evaluation of the pilot and subject to available resources, consider the scaling up of this scheme to a larger number of settings.	Lead: DAFM Partners: DCYA, DES, DoH, National Dairy Council, Tusla, CCCs	Pilot programme costings and budget agreed.	X				Pilot programme costings and budget agreed in 2019. Final costings will be confirmed following completion of the pilot.
	B.4.2.5. Develop and publish National Food Standards for ELC Settings, including a toolkit for implementation.	Lead: DoH Partners: HSE, DCYA, Tusla	Commence development of Nutrition Standards for ELCs (pending publication of Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-5-year-olds).			X		Development of Nutrition Standards will follow on from the publication of Healthy Eating Guidelines for 1-5-year-olds (see action B.4.1.6).

GOAL B

OBJECTIVE 4

Optimum physical and mental health

Parents, families and communities will be supported to engage in and promote positive health behaviours among babies and young children, starting from the pre-conception period.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.3 Promote child safety and prevent unintentional injuries to babies and children.	B.4.3.1. a) Ensure full implementation of the updated Child Safety Programme, and b) Building on this Programme, ensure child safety messages are integrated into all ELC (and school-age childcare) settings and the wider community.	Lead: HSE Partners: DoH, DCYA, Tusla	a) HSE Child Safety Programme updated.	X				A new child safety manual was designed and distributed to all PHNs providing the child health programme.
			b) New resources available to parents and professionals.	X				Distributed to parents by PHN.
				c) The HSE will work with DCYA and Tusla to develop the key messages to promote child safety in all ELC/SAC settings.	X			
	B.4.3.2. Develop and implement a comprehensive child injury prevention plan.	Lead: DoH	No Key Milestone for 2019.					
	B.4.3.3. In the context of the Road Safety Strategy 2013–2020 and, building on the development of the Cycle Right training standard, pilot the trainer bike programme to introduce cycling skills to pre-school and junior/senior infant age groups.	Lead: Cycling Ireland	Pilot of trainer bike programme underway.	X				

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.1. Review the content and scope of Maternity and Infant Care Scheme, standardise the six-week post-natal check-up for the mother and the six-week check of the baby (as part of the Newborn Clinical Examination) and consider extending coverage of this Scheme to include a pre-conception consultation and beyond six-week post-natal check-up of the mother.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Terms of Reference developed and Review Group established.				X	NWIHP has not been a position to progress this project during the course of 2020 due to COVID-19 and the ongoing redeployment of NWIHP team members to national COVID-19 work streams.
			Project team in place and scoping of implementation plan commenced for the six-week baby check.				X	NWIHP has not been a position to progress this project during the course of 2020 due to COVID-19 and the ongoing redeployment of NWIHP team members to national COVID-19 work streams.
			Implementation plan agreed.				X	NWIHP has not been a position to progress this project during the course of 2020 due to COVID-19 and the ongoing redeployment of NWIHP team members to national COVID-19 work streams.
	B.5.1.2. As resources allow, make the antenatal visit by the Public Health Nurse more widely available to expectant mothers in line with need.	Lead: HSE	No Key Milestones in 2019.					

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.3. Increase the use of antenatal care in the first trimester, particularly among vulnerable groups.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	No Key Milestones in 2019.					
	B.5.1.4. Increase uptake of vaccinations during pregnancy by promoting the influenza vaccine during pregnancy, raising awareness of the importance of the pertussis vaccine during pregnancy and exploring mechanisms to effect administration of the vaccine.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	<p>HSE: Influenza vaccine – pilot of targeted emails to pregnant women over flu vaccine season.</p> <p>HSE: Develop materials for midwives and GPs to promote vaccines for pregnant women.</p>	X				<p>Started in 2019 and continuing in 2020.</p> <p>Materials being developed from December 2019 and for completion and distribution by end Q2 2020.</p>

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.5. Enhance the schedule of immunisations provided under the Primary Childhood Immunisation Programme (PCIP) in accordance with international best practice and recommendations from the National Immunisation Advisory Committee and continue progress towards the national target of 95% uptake in the PCIP, achieving greater consistency in uptake across the country.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	HSE: Pilot targeted emails to parents of all babies just before due all appointments in PCI.	X				Targeted emails sent to mothers when babies are 11 and 16 months. Started December 2019 and will continue in 2020.
			HSE: Increased social media activity around PCI.		X			Social media posts have been developed for use throughout 2020.
			HSE: Introductory eLearning for immunisation nurses developed to improve confidence in promoting vaccines.		X			The Immunisation Foundation Programme was launched in Q2 2020.
			DoH: Review international evidence, with a view towards identifying the most appropriate interventions which might be applied in Ireland to maintain and increase uptake.	X				The HPV vaccine for boys and MenACWY vaccine for boys and girls were introduced. A Vaccine Alliance was established to (i) promote vaccination across the life-course, with a particular focus on the childhood immunisation programme; and (ii) strive to increase the uptake rate of vaccines, particularly those included in the childhood immunisation programme.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.6. Measure the uptake of the Free GP visit card to under 6s including a review of uptake of the Periodic Assessments at two and five and implement actions to increase uptake if required.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Confirm HSE Senior Leadership Team lead for overall governance of GP return.					Governance arrangements in relation to the under 6's activity being considered in context of review of the contract. Not possible to establish time line in relation to the milestones.
			Scope and design information and analytic systems to respond to GP returns including under 6s.					
			Scoping and design of data analysis and display solution, in line with available resources.					

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones	
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed		
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.7. Continue progress to ensure the timing and content of the screening and surveillance programme are consistent with the evidence base and standardised across the country.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Evidence base for child health screening and surveillance reviewed and programme updated.	X				A number of projects are in place to achieve this milestone: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A Child Health Assessment Manual for PHNs was developed and provided to each child health PHN in Q1 2020. 2. A new standardised integrated child health record for all CHO areas, which will be used by PHNs and community medical doctors. The implementation of the new record was delayed due to COVID-19. Implementation commenced in Q3 and continues in Q4 2020. 3. 4 new eLearning modules were developed and delivered. 4. A planned 1-day face-to-face training programme was redeveloped due to COVID-19. The Clinical Skills Review training now consist of an online aspect and a 2-hour face to face session. This programme is currently in delivery (in line with COVID-19 restrictions). 	
	B.5.1.8. Ensure the full implementation nationally of the revised model of screening for congenital dysplasia of the hip.	Lead: DoH Partner: HSE	Develop an action plan for the implementation of the revised model for screening DDH, funding dependent.				X	Additional funding is required to ensure the ongoing training of relevant clinical staff, the provision of additional resources to support the treatment pathway and the quality assurance of the programme.	
				Targeted ultrasound programme for high-risk infants in place.	X				A targeted ultrasound screening programme was developed and implemented by the Neonatology Clinical Programme, in partnership with the National Healthy Childhood Programme.
				Guidance in non-surgical treatment for DDH developed.			X		The baseline survey for this project has been completed. The finalisation of the project has been delayed considerably due to re-deployment of public health staff to COVID-19 public health teams.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.9. Introduce a universal dental health package for children under six, supported by a screening/surveillance programme to target key ages and vulnerable groups.	Lead: DoH	Launch of Smile agus Slainte – National Oral Health Policy.	X				Smile agus Sláinte – National Oral Health Policy was launched in April 2019.
			Costed proposal developed for estimates process on the introduction of preventative oral healthcare packages for children under six.	X				Implementation Plan completed. Costed estimates for preventive packages submitted for 2020 – and money assigned (not drawn down for 2020 due to COVID-19). Resubmitted for 2021. The development for supporting Clinical Guidelines for the packages for children and use of restorative materials has commenced.
			Discussions initiated with key partner agencies including potential contractors on the introduction of preventative oral healthcare packages for children under six.	X				3 stakeholder days with key stakeholders including dental professionals undertaken late 2019 and reports submitted in early 2020. Clinical guideline development will involve stakeholders including contractors in discussions on the appropriate guidance – this process has commenced. Discussions with HSE and DSP - the two key agencies commenced 2019 and 2020.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.	B.5.1.10. Ensure the mainstreaming and ongoing evaluation of the quality improvement initiatives commenced under the Nurture Programme – Infant Health and Wellbeing.	Lead: HSE	Up-to-date information sources available to all parents.	X				The following new eLearning programmes have been developed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Supporting Breastfeeding 2. Breastfeeding challenges 3. Child Safety Inside and Outside the Home 4. Child Safety the farm, in the clinic and community 5. Newborn Bloodspot Screening 6. Growth Monitoring 7. Nutrition - Recognising and managing allergies in the community 8. Nutrition - Preconception & pregnancy 9. Nutrition - Formula feeding 10. Nutrition - introducing family foods 11. Nutrition - feeding related challenges in 0 – 12-month babies 12. Nutrition - Toddler Feeding 13. Nutrition - Healthy Weight For Children 14. Undertaking the Primary Visit (72 hour) Child Health Assessment 15. Undertaking the 3 month Child Health Assessment 16. Undertaking the 9-11 month Child Health Assessment 17. Undertaking the 21-24 / 46 – 48 month Child Health Assessment
			Blended learning training and standardised resources in place for all child health service providers.	X				
			Background papers on sustainability developed.	X				
The Nurture Programme was recognised by the 2020 HSE Excellence Awards as the Category Winner in the Improving Child Health category.								

GOAL B

OBJECTIVE 5

Optimum physical and mental health

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>5.1 Resource and support the implementation, expansion and enhancement of the National Healthy Childhood Programme to ensure it better addresses the needs of babies, young children and their families, enabled by the development of a dedicated child health workforce.</p>	<p>B.5.1.11. Review the school health service/ programme and revise it in line with best evidence and practice.</p>	<p>Lead: HSE Partner: DoH</p>	<p>No Key Milestones for 2019.</p>					

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.2 Make therapeutic and medical provision available to babies, young children on a consistent, equitable and timely basis.	B.5.2.1. Commence the implementation of Model of Care for Paediatric Healthcare Services with initial focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expansion in consultant paediatrician numbers, with a definite focus on general paediatrics, emergency paediatrics and community child health. Expanded roles for advanced nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists and health and social care professionals. Developing the regional acute paediatric units to provide an appropriate range of regional services. 	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Finalisation of HSE implementation plan and associated governance arrangements for the Paediatric Model of Care.			X		Delayed but due end Q4 2020. A high-level approach to planning for the implementation of the Model of Care for Paediatric Health Services including consideration of the service enhancements required in preparation for the opening of the National Children's Hospital (NCH) in 2023 is currently in development. The approach will include preparation of service specifications that will be used to inform service delivery and prioritisation of submissions for the annual Service Plan.
			Commencement of the implementation of the Paediatric Model of Care through recruitment of additional medical, nursing and health and social care professionals (HSCP) paediatric staff in Cork University Hospital, University Hospital Galway and University Hospital Limerick (UHL), in line with the Paediatric Model of Care.	X				Based on number of posts approved across the three hospitals involved: Cork University Hospital, University Hospital Galway and University Hospital Limerick. HSPC: 15 Medical:10 Nursing:11

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.2 Make therapeutic and medical provision available to babies, young children on a consistent, equitable and timely basis.	B.5.2.2. Continue to support the reconfiguration of services for children with disabilities in line with the Progressing Disability Services for Children and Young People programme.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Completion of recruitment process for remaining managers for Disability Network Teams.	X				The recruitment process was largely completed in 2019. All but a very small number of appointments were made. Outstanding appointments necessitated re-advertisement of post.
			Appointment of the above.	X				
	Reconfiguration of remaining Teams.			X		This is a gradual process which will happen during 2020, with different teams reconfiguring at different times during the year.		
	B.5.2.3. Reduce children's waiting lists for primary care and early intervention, including waiting times.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Phased introduction of 100 new therapy posts.	X				100 new posts are in place and they will contribute, along with the other actions, to a gradual reduction in waiting lists during 2020 and subsequent years.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.2 Make therapeutic and medical provision available to babies, young children on a consistent, equitable and timely basis.	B.5.2.4. Continue to develop access to supports for children with a disability/developmental delays through child-serving settings (e.g. AIM, In-Pre-School and School Therapy Demonstration Project, provision of nursing supports in ELC settings and schools for children with complex needs).	Lead: DCYA Partners: Members of the Cross Sectoral Implementation Group for AIM	Oversee third year of LINC higher education programme. Plan for future provision of training and support for INCOs (beyond fourth year of LINC).	X				In 2019, there was 912 registrations on the LINC higher education programme 2019/20. In addition, 877 pre-school practitioners graduated from the Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) higher education programme 2018/19 and an RfT for future provision of training and support for INCO's was issued.
			Develop and commence rollout of Communications Strategy for AIM.			X		A Communications Strategy and Communications Guidelines for AIM have been prepared. Rollout to commence in 2020 with a new AIM website being developed.
			Develop AIM training supports including rollout of online Sensory Processing training.	X				The Sensory Processing ELearning (SPEL) was rolled out in 2019. More than 400 practitioners completed the course in 2019.
			Develop support model for pre-school children with complex medical needs and commence implementation.				X	A trial model was developed and commenced in September 2019. Completion of the trial was delayed as a result of COVID-19. A review is planned for Q2 2021 prior to decision on further implementation.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 5

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, evidence-based integrated primary, preventative and specialist healthcare services.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.2 Make therapeutic and medical provision available to babies, young children on a consistent, equitable and timely basis.	B.5.2.5. Improve the Assessment of Need (AON) process in order to ensure timely access to appropriate services.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Agreement and implementation of new Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for AON.	X				New SOP for Assessment of Need was implemented nationally on 15 January 2020.
	B.5.2.6. Progress the establishment of the new children's hospital to provide specialist tertiary and quaternary services for children from all over Ireland.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Recruitment of the relevant staff for the new Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly.	X				Connolly is staffed to meet the current hours of opening in both the Outpatient Clinics and the Urgent Care Centre. Recruitment is ongoing and opening hours in Children's Health Ireland (CHI) at Connolly will increase as more Consultants in specific specialities are recruited. Talks are ongoing with a view to increasing hours in Q3 2020.
			Open the Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at Connolly in 2019.	X				Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at CHI Connolly opened on 31 July 2019.
			Commencement of the expansion of the consultant-delivered workforce for the new children's hospital with recruitment of service priority consultant posts.	X				There are recruitment challenges nationally and internationally in certain specialities such as Paediatric Radiology and Emergency Medicine. CHI acknowledges these challenges and recruitment is actively ongoing.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.1 Improve the early identification of mental health problems among babies, young children and families.	B.6.1.1. Provide information and guidance on promoting and supporting positive mental health among pregnant women, babies, young children and families and carry out a public information campaign to raise awareness of the importance of promoting social-emotional development, positive mental health and reducing the impact of early childhood trauma in babies and young children.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Public information campaign developed.	X				Infant mental health messages included in public information campaign undertaken from July to December 2019 as part of the overall mychild communications campaign.
			Standardised information for healthcare professionals developed.	X				Infant mental health messages included in new resources developed for public health nurses and community medical doctors. Blended learning programme in development.
	B.6.1.2. Enhance efforts to promote positive mental health among pregnant women, babies, young children and their families in all resources and service contacts by extending the Making Every Contact Count: A Health Behaviour Change Framework and Implementation Plan for Health Professionals in the Irish Health Service to include mental health.	Lead: HSE	Continue to implement the MECC implementation plan for 2017-2020.	X				Work to support the implementation of Making Every Contact Count (MECC) across the system is progressing. Enhanced content for the face-to-face workshops delivered in maternity settings has been developed for delivery in 2020. A briefing for MECC trainers on this enhanced maternity specific content will be completed in Q1 2020 to support consistency and standardised delivery. Maternity sites prioritised as implementation sites for MECC in 2020 work plan. Work to explore the development of additional content to include mental health has not yet begun and will commence in Q4 2020 subject to capacity.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.1 Improve the early identification of mental health problems among babies, young children and families.	B.6.1.3. Improve diagnosis and services for women with pregnancy-related mental health problems.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Implementation of the HSE's National MOC for SPMHS will improve diagnosis for women with pregnancy-related MH problems. Specific training for midwives and primary care staff in identifying and being aware of referral pathways for SPMHS.			X		<p>Main priority in 2019 was to establish the 6 Hub sites and provide an MH Midwife in all 19 hub and spoke sites*.</p> <p>National Training took place for hub/ spoke/liaison teams in May and two further National Training days were held with national and international experts.</p> <p>The SPMHS App was developed for healthcare staff and launched in December 2019 – currently used by over 600 MDT healthcare staff incl. GPs.</p> <p>Patient facing leaflets were acquired from RCPsych and adapted for use in Ireland with an expert group including Perinatal Psychiatrists. Currently published on the SPMHS app pmh.healthcarestaff.app.</p> <p>Continued 2/12 National Oversight Implementation Group meetings.</p> <p>Continued establishment of perinatal specific peer groups nationally.</p> <p>Further develop links between Hub and Spoke sites including links with liaison teams by end of Q4 2020.</p> <p>(*Only two members of the MDT staff were in place in Galway as at Feb 2020 so there may be some issues with the full development of the Hub site in Galway).</p>
	B.6.1.4. Extend post-natal depression screening by PHNs for all mothers, using a standardised evidence-based approach.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	No Key Milestones for 2019.					

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.1 Improve the early identification of mental health problems among babies, young children and families.	B.6.1.5. Roll out the standardised screening tool for social-emotional development – Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) – to all young children at the two-year developmental check.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Implementation plan for introduction of ASQ-3 developmental screening to 21-24-month child health contact developed.	X				<p>The Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ-3™) is a parent-completed tool that reliably identifies children from one month to 5½ years with developmental delays. The ASQ-3™ provides a measure and record of a child's development at a point in time and serial ASQs can monitor the child's progress.</p> <p>A Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI)-accredited Train the Trainer Course was developed and delivered.</p> <p>Over 1,300 HSE Primary Care staff have completed the NMBI-accredited eLearning programme.</p> <p>Licences for the use of ASQ-3™ are available to all public health nurses.</p>
			Training programme developed and delivered.	X				
	B.6.1.6. Support access to continuous professional development in Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health to those who work with babies, young children and their families in line with the development of the Children's Workforce Initiative (see action D.3.B.5.).	Lead: HSE	Infant mental health blended learning training programme developed.	X				

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.1. Implement the National Model of Care for Specialist Perinatal mental health with continued resourcing.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Complete recruitment of six hub teams. Collection of activity data in place. Joint planning of the recommended National Mother and Baby Unit (MBU) with CHO6 MHS, St Vincent's University Hospital and HSE Estates commenced.			X		<p>Consultant Perinatal Psychiatrists are in place in all 6 hub Sites. A data set is being collected from each Hub site and from MH Midwives in Spoke sites.</p> <p>An MBU business case has been developed and agreed between the HSE Perinatal Service, CHO6 and Estates. A 10 Bedded unit is being proposed for SVUH Campus on Nutley Lane. Meetings to progress this further with SVUH have been delayed due to COVID-19.</p> <p>*83% of the full SPMHS Hub teams have now been recruited, 6 Snr OTs, one Snr Psychologist and some GUH MDT staff have been delayed due to a management decision on Time Related Savings for CHOs.</p>

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.2. Ensure priority is given to the needs of babies, young children and their families in the Refreshed Vision for Change and the forthcoming national mental health promotion plan.	Lead: DoH	Develop and publish refreshed Vision for Change mental health policy.		X			Sharing the Vision: A Mental Health Policy for Everyone, the successor to 'A Vision for Change' was published in Q2 2020.
	B.6.2.3. Develop and cost proposals to extend National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) to ELC.	Lead: DES Partners: NEPS, DCYA	DCYA and DES to explore scope of potential model for NEPS in ELC.				X	DCYA and DES had initial discussions in 2019 on a costed NEPS model for Early Learning and Care. Further scoping discussions will take place in 2020/2021.
			Identify agreed protocol for interim critical incident support.				X	A Working Group has been established to develop a critical incident protocol for early learning and care settings.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.4. Improve the capacity of community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and implement the revised operational guidelines.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Progress CAMHS-related priorities agreed under the HSE Service Plan 2019 e.g. enhanced Community CAMHS Team capacity; 7-Day Service; Out-of-Hours Service; Day Hospital Care; Eating Disorder care; Early Intervention supports. CAMHS Advocacy Model.			X		<p>There are currently 71 CAMHS teams nationally.</p> <p>HSE Mental Health, working in collaboration with the National Ambulance Service, established the YourMentalHealth Information Line in November 2019. HSE Mental Health is currently working in collaboration with partners to develop a 24/7 text-based active listening service, and to pilot other e-mental health related digital solutions including counselling online, internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, and telepsychiatry.</p> <p>All three Dublin paediatric hospitals and Galway and Cork University Hospitals provide a comprehensive liaison psychiatry service. There are plans for an additional 10 CAMHS forensic beds in the new forensic hospital. The new Children's Hospital due to open in 2023 will also have an additional 20 beds.</p> <p>The National Clinical Programme for the Assessment and Management of Patients presenting to the Emergency Department following self-harm is currently being extended to include the three paediatric hospitals in Dublin.</p> <p>Specialist Eating Disorder services for young people have further developed during 2019 through the National Clinical Programme for Eating Disorder and through the development of specialist eating disorder treatment.</p> <p>In 2018 the HSE contract Youth Advocacy Services (YAP) after a tender process to provide an independent Advocacy service. To date there has been 136 consultations with young people and families and 89 group consultations. The HSE has commissioned an evaluation of the CAMHS pilot service. Based on the evaluation findings the national steering group will make recommendations for the expansion of the advocacy service nationally during 2020.</p>

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.4. Improve the capacity of community Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and implement the revised operational guidelines.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Finalise HSE Revised Operational Guidelines for CAMHS.	X				HSE Mental Health Services launched the Revised CAMHS Operational Guideline in September 2019. Awareness raising sessions have taken place in all CHOs and the document has been disseminated to all teams. The document is available on the HSE Website, and associated templates are also online. The relevant link is https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/camhs/operational-guideline/ .

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.5. Improve access to parental mental health services (including counselling and psychological services) that treat maternal depression, anxiety disorders and substance abuse and identify and address any gaps in mental health services for very young children.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Pilot HSE Mental Health tele-psychiatry and tele-counselling services.	X				HSE Mental Health, working in collaboration with the National Ambulance Service, established the YourMentalHealth Information Line in November 2019. HSE Mental Health is currently working in collaboration with partners to develop a 24/7 text-based active listening service, and to pilot other e-mental health related digital solutions including counselling online, internet-based cognitive behavioural therapy, and telepsychiatry.
	B.6.2.6. Ensure that access to mental health supports for expectant and new mothers will be improved to ensure appropriate care can be provided in a timely fashion in line with the National Maternity Strategy.	Lead: DoH Partner: HSE	Mental Health (MH) midwives recruited and training provided for all 13 spoke hospitals and six hub sites. Mental Health midwives providing services in line with MOC and data collected in line with service provision.			X		11 of the 13 Spoke sites now have a MH Midwife in post. A competition is currently underway to fill the remaining two sites, (KUH and MRH Portlaoise). Three additional midwives are required for the larger hub sites (those with over 7,000 births per year). It is hoped that these will be funded in 2021.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.7. Provide additional support for parents of babies who receive a diagnosis of disability in the perinatal period and those who experience a traumatic birth or bereavement.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Funding provided to the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) to further develop bereavement counselling.	X				In 2019, the NOSP developed two new bereavement programmes.
			Bereavement implementation process complete.	X				Implementation programme completed April 2019- further development programme funded from June 2019- December 2020.
			Post bereavement implementation steering group in place.	X				National Oversight Group convened and had first meeting in September 2019. Work of this Group is ongoing.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.8. Continue to roll out and invest in the Clinical Programmes in eating disorders, self-harm and early intervention in psychosis (EIP).	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	a) Three eating disorder specialist teams recruited and in clinical operation.				X	Recruitment was incomplete at end of December 2019 due to resource constraints. Likely due to COVID-19 that milestone may not be met in 2020.
	a) Eating Disorders National Clinical Programme.					X	Clinical nurse specialist posts could not be filled from the existing panel and recruitment will require bespoke campaigns as soon as resources allow. Likely due to COVID-19 that milestone may not be met in 2020.	
	b) Assessment and management of self-harm presentation to emergency department following self-harm National Clinical Programme.							
	c) Early Intervention in Psychosis National Clinical Programme.			X				One team was operational at the end of Dec 2019 in Cork. Other two teams due on stream by end of Q2 2020.
	d) ADHD in Adults National Clinical Programme.							
	e) Dual Diagnosis		d) Model of Care approved by College of Psychiatrists of Ireland and three demonstration sites established.			X		The majority of this Milestone will be achieved by end of 2020. 1-2019 – MOC approved by the College of Psychiatrists of Ireland and Clinical Design and Innovation in the HSE. 2-.Establishment of all three demonstration sites is funding dependent and it is possible that sites will not be established in 2020.

GOAL B

Optimum physical and mental health

OBJECTIVE 6

Babies and young children and their parents enjoy positive mental health.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
6.2 Improve access to mental health supports and services for babies, young children and families, with a particular focus on initiatives that integrate mental health supports and services into child-serving settings and the wider community.	B.6.2.8. Continue to roll out and invest in the Clinical Programmes in eating disorders, self-harm and early intervention in psychosis (EIP). a) Eating Disorders National Clinical Programme. b) Assessment and management of self-harm presentation to emergency department following self-harm National Clinical Programme. c) Early Intervention in Psychosis National Clinical Programme. d) ADHD in Adults National Clinical Programme. e) Dual Diagnosis	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	e) Model of Care completed by working group and approved by College of Psychiatrists of Ireland. Two demonstration sites established.			X		Formal launch of the ADHD in Adults MOC planned for December 2020. A number of training days have taken place with international experts from UKAAN with the ADHD teams in place and senior registrars. These were: 1. Assessment and Diagnosis of ADHD in Adults 2. Pharmacological Treatment of ADHD in Adults with the third Psychosocial Interventions for Adults with ADHD planned for February 2021. Development of an ADHD in Adults App which would be patient facing is also now progressing.

GOAL C POSITIVE PLAY-BASED EARLY LEARNING



GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 7

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children’s early learning, starting from birth.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
7.1 Support parents and families to provide a stimulating home learning environment for babies and young children, with a particular focus on promoting play.	C.7.1.1. Carry out a national information campaign to build awareness of the important role that parents and families can play in supporting children’s early learning with advice and information to empower parents and families in creating playful learning environments. Under this campaign, a bedtime reading campaign will be carried out. This will be supported by child- friendly events at local libraries to encourage an interest in learning from an early age, and to provide inspiration and access to age-appropriate reading material.	Lead: DCYA	Schedule of campaigns agreed.					See update on Action A.2.1.2.
			Phase 1 background papers prepared.					
			Phase 1 evidence reviews completed.					
			Communications workshop held.					
			Campaign objectives and scope agreed.					
	C.7.1.2. Provide parents and families with resources to support children’s playful early learning commencing with a Baby Box and Book Bag Pilot Initiative through the First 5 Trials Programme.	Lead: DCYA Partners: To be determined on establishment of oversight group	Establish Oversight Group.					See update on Action A.2.1.3.
			Identify partner to lead on pilot.					

GOAL C

OBJECTIVE 7

Positive play-based early learning

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children’s early learning, starting from birth.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
7.1 Support parents and families to provide a stimulating home learning environment for babies and young children, with a particular focus on promoting play.	C.7.1.3. Building on existing initiatives, including the Parent and Toddler Grant Initiative, develop further supports to family, including grandparents, friends and neighbours who provide informal care.	Lead: DCYA	Administer Parent and Toddler Grant in 2019.	X				€250,000 was allocated under the Parent and Toddler Grant in 2019 with 414 applications approved for funding nationally.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 7

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children’s early learning, starting from birth.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
7.2 Facilitate and encourage greater parental involvement and engagement in early learning in ELC settings and primary schools.	C.7.2.1. Develop guidance and information for parents and families on ELC (and school-age childcare), including information on ELC (and school-age childcare) options and entitlements and guidance on key indicators of high-quality provision. Over time, explore the potential to develop a real-time finder of regulated ELC (and school-age childcare places) with links to inspection reports and other relevant information.	Lead: DCYA	Information on ELC (and school-age childcare) entitlements available on National Childcare Scheme website.	X				<p>The National Childcare Scheme website www.ncs.gov.ie was launched on 11 March 2019. The website features a range of information resources including, general information leaflets, detailed booklets and Frequently Asked Questions.</p> <p>This launch was followed by a dedicated National Childcare Scheme helpline in April 2019 and a major information campaign in September and October 2019.</p>

GOAL C

OBJECTIVE 7

Positive play-based early learning

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children’s early learning, starting from birth.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
7.2 Facilitate and encourage greater parental involvement and engagement in early learning in ELC settings and primary schools.	<p>C.7.2.2. Support greater parental involvement and engagement in children’s early learning in ELC settings and primary schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop advice, guidance and training for ELC settings and primary schools to build effective working relationships with all parents, families and communities. Support ELC settings or primary schools to create opportunities to encourage and strengthen involvement of parents such as parent-practitioner meetings, parental advisory boards, home-ELC liaison officers, designated staff with responsibility for supporting parents, including initiatives in collaboration with the National Parents Council (Pre-Primary and Primary). 	<p>Joint Leads: DCYA and DES</p> <p>Partners: To be identified</p>	<p>Linking with developments on transitions (see Objective 9), establish a working group to explore mechanisms for meaningful engagement with parents.</p>					See update on Objective 9.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 7

Parents, families and communities are supported to provide a nurturing and stimulating environment for children's early learning, starting from birth.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
7.3 Take steps to ensure positive enrolment and participation patterns in ELC settings and primary schools at the earliest opportunity.	C.7.3.1. Carry out a detailed assessment of the universal pre-school programme to identify groups of children with lower-than-average enrolment and participation rates and take steps to raise enrolment and participation among these groups.	Lead: DCYA	Undertake analysis of Pupil Online Database to better understand uptake of the universal pre-school programme.	X				Analysis of the Pupil Online Database was completed in 2019.
			Build detailed assessment into universal pre-school programme evaluation design.			X		The Request for Tenders to undertake an evaluation of the ECCE Programme will be published end 2020.
	C.7.3.2. Extend the statutory powers of the Educational Welfare Service to all children under six years of age enrolled in a recognised school in line with legislative developments.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla	Progress on the Education Welfare (Amendment) Bill is subject to the legislative priorities of the Houses of the Oireachtas.				X	This is a Private Members Bill brought through the Seanad legislative process and is now awaiting progress through the Dáil.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.1 Make high-quality ELC (and school-age childcare) for babies and young children more affordable.	C.8.1.1. Provide continued funding and support for two full years of the universal pre-school programme. Undertake a review of the programme and, subject to findings, consider the need to make changes. Over the lifetime of the strategy, introduce a universal legal entitlement to pre-school.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Pobal	Initiate research and policy work to inform legal entitlement to pre-school.			X		Initial work to scope a legal entitlement to the ECCE programme will commence in 2020.
	C.8.1.2. Introduce the National Childcare Scheme to publicly subsidise the cost of high-quality regulated ELC (and school-age childcare) to families and, over time, and as resources allow, progressively increase the number of families eligible for targeted subsidies and ensure subsidy rates are grounded in a robust funding formula that is based on the cost of delivering high-quality ELC (and school-age childcare). Undertake an end-of-year-three evaluation of National Childcare Scheme and, subject to evaluation findings, consider the need to make changes to the Scheme utilising and expanding the quality levers within the Scheme in order to drive continuous quality improvement.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Pobal, DEASP, Office of the Revenue Commissioners	Introduce the scheme, open to applications from parents and begin making subsidy payments under the scheme.	X				The National Childcare Scheme opened for applications in November 2019. In addition, as part Budget 2020, additional funding was secured to increase the maximum enhanced hours for the Scheme from 40 hours per week to 45 hours and the maximum standard hours for the Scheme from 15 per week to 20 hours. The increased hours were introduced from September 2020.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
8.1 Make high-quality ELC (and school-age childcare) for babies and young children more affordable.	C.8.1.3. As part of the reform of the funding model, develop an appropriate mechanism to control fees charged to parents in return for increased State investment in affordability and quality.	Lead: DCYA Partner: To be determined on establishment of Expert Group	Working paper on possible mechanisms to control fees charged to parents initiated.	X				The preparation of a working paper - Potential mechanisms to control fees charged to parents – was commissioned at end 2019. This paper is being prepared by Frontier Economics in the role of Research Partnership to provide research support to the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC. This working paper will be published end 2020.
	C.8.1.4. Promote and support the registration of paid, non-relative childminders currently eligible to register with Tusla in preparation for the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme.	Lead: DCYA Partners: CCCs	Appoint a National Childminding Coordinator and a team of six regional Childminding Development Officers to work within City/ County Childcare Committees, to provide a range of supports for childminders to register with Tusla.	X				A National Childminding Coordinator, located within the DCYA, and 6 Childminding Development Officers, located within City and County Childcare Committees were appointed in 2019.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.1. Extend regulation to all other paid, non-relative childminders (and to school-age childcare) on a phased basis. This will make National Childcare Scheme subsidies available to more parents who use childminding services.	Lead: DCYA Partners: To be specified in the Childminding Action Plan	Publish and commence implementation of a ten-year Childminding Action Plan, setting out a phased approach to bringing childminders into mainstream ELC and SAC provision, including through regulation.			X		A draft Childminding Action Plan was published for public consultation in 2019. An extensive consultation took place in Quarter 4 2019. A report was commissioned to consider the findings of the consultation process. This report was completed in December 2019 and the conclusions from the report will guide the development of a Childminding Action Plan for approval from Government.
			Appoint a National Childminding Coordinator to lead the initial implementation of the Childminding Action Plan.	X				A National Childminding Coordinator was appointed in 2019.
			Introduce initial regulations for school-age childcare, and carry out public consultation on comprehensive regulations.	X				The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School-Age Services) Regulations 2018 came into force in February 2019, allowing school-age childcare services to register with Tusla and thereafter take part in the National Childcare Scheme. The DCYA carried out a public consultation on draft quality guidelines and comprehensive regulations during 2019. The consultation report will be published in 2020.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.2. Undertake research on the ELC (and school-age childcare) needs of parents who work atypical hours or live in rural communities and develop recommendations for future action.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	C.8.2.3. Strengthen capacity to accurately forecast supply and demand for ELC (and school-age childcare) by undertaking a regular national need assessment.	Lead: DCYA Partners: DES, Pobal, CSO, ESRI	Establish relationship with DES Forward Planning Unit to develop data capacity.	X				DCYA has engaged with Forward Planning Unit.
			Enhance data gathered through existing sources including Annual Sector Profile Survey and SWITCH modelling.	X				A consultation process on the Annual Early Years Sector Profile was undertaken in 2019. There was also ongoing engagement on the SWITCH Steering Group in 2019, including an exploration of the potential of SWITCH for the ongoing work to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.4. Continue to administer a sustainability fund that ensures provision in the most deprived areas does not fail as a result of higher levels of need and/or temporary fluctuations in occupancy and consider longer-term mechanisms as part of the new funding model.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Pobal	Working group on the sustainability implications of National Childcare Scheme.	X				The Working Group has been established and work is ongoing; it is expected that the relevant outputs should be completed by Q4 2020.
			Deliver a number of Sustainability Funding strands including supports in preparation for the National Childcare Scheme and funding in response to CCS Overclaims issue.	X				The funding strand in response to the CCS Overclaims issue is in place and support under this strand has been provided to a number of eligible services. It is the intention that NCS will replace all the targeted schemes (e.g. CCSP). However, for the 2019-2020 programme year they ran in tandem and CCSP Saver's Scheme is now in place from programme year 2020, thereby providing additional time for this work. As a result, work is ongoing on compiling an evidence base to inform and underpin supports that may be required due to the phasing out of the targeted schemes now that NCS is in place.
			Finalise and deliver Sustainability Toolkit.	X				The Sustainability Toolkit (Fee Calculation Workbook, Staff Ratio Calculator and Cashflow Template) are in place and are in use as an integral part of the Case Management Process. It is proposed that these could be moved from Excel to another more stable platform, this work will be completed Q4 2020.
			Agree and finalise policy approach to Special services.		X			Responsibility for the Special services transferred to Early Year Finance, Governance and Reform in Q2 2020; although no changes will occur to how they are managed before the programme year 2020/2021 ends. The Specials will be brought into Case Management, with the details of how they will be funded beyond that to be finalised by end of Q2 2021.
			Deliver North East Inner City (NEIC) response.			X		The pilot has been concluded. It is expected that a report will be produced by the end of Q4 2020.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.5. Update the National Planning Guidelines for the development of ELC (and school-age childcare) settings.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DHPLG	DCYA to complete initial review of existing guidelines and propose changes for discussions with DHPLG. Discussion completed and redrafted guidelines ready for wider consultation by year end.				X	Progress was made in 2019 in relation to redrafting the National Planning Guidelines. Discussions with DHPLG on the revised Guidelines are ongoing.

GOAL C

OBJECTIVE 8

Positive play-based early learning

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.</p>	<p>C.8.2.6. Develop and publish a strategic capital investment plan to deliver the large-scale capital investment under Project 2040 with the aim of ensuring that the demand for high-quality ELC (and school-age child care) places meets supply. This plan will include pilot projects under the First 5 Trials Programme that focus on innovative practice (e.g. outdoor ELC provision).</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA Partner: Pobal</p>	<p>Production of a first draft report to determine learning from previous large-scale capital schemes, examine available evidence on capacity and quality needs and assess the impact of forthcoming policy changes.</p>				X	<p>Estimated completion date now Q1 2021 due to competing priorities.</p>
	<p>C.8.2.7. Use of schools and existing community facilities that have suitable environments for high-quality child-centred school-age childcare should be maximised where demand exists and where it can be facilitated by the school patron/trustees. Consider how increased use of school buildings could be facilitated, taking into account the issues raised to date, and continue to engage with property owners and school authorities to facilitate increased use of school buildings where feasible.</p>	<p>Lead: DES</p>	<p>Conduct a survey of a representative sample of schools on the use of school buildings to facilitate after-school care/ clubs, the results of which will be used to inform a review of the Guidelines on the use of School Buildings outside of School Hours.</p>			X		<p>Estimated completion date now Q4 2020 due to competing priorities.</p>

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.8. Introduce measures to ensure that children in Gaeltacht areas have access to Irish-medium ELC provision.	Lead: DCHG Partners: Údarás na Gaeltachta, Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (NUIG), Muintereas Teo	Allocation of €355,000 provided in 2018/2019 by the DCHG to Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta (CNNG) for the provision of additional services in the Gaeltacht under the Language Planning Process.	X				Appropriate funding has been provided to CNNG to achieve this goal.
			Recruitment of two additional Development Officers.	X				CNNG have employed the additional staff to provide the necessary support for the additional services the organisation has undertaken.
			Accept eight additional services under the auspices of CNNG.	X				CNNG have exceeded the targeted number of services and there are several other services that have expressed an interest to join CNNG.
			Provide support/ advice to 15 services operating through English regarding using Irish in their services.	X				CNNG are providing Irish Language support to over 30 services that operate in the Gaeltacht through the English language. The organisation reports that It has been very successful to date and that they are now providing the support to the services through email, zoom and developing materials for online support.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
8.2 Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.	C.8.2.8. Introduce measures to ensure that children in Gaeltacht areas have access to Irish-medium ELC provision.	Lead: DCHG Partners: Údarás na Gaeltachta, Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (NUIG), Muintereas Teo	Communicate and raise awareness with 2,500 parents regarding the services that are available through Irish.	X				This year CNNG are communicating with parents via zoom, telephone calls and e-mail to keep them informed of any developments.
			Develop a connection between 20 pre-school services and 40 primary schools while also highlighting best practice.	X				CNNG is central to the development of “Mo Scéal” which provides valuable information to primary schools regarding children moving from the Naíonra to junior infants.
			Provide support for employees in the ELC sector in the Gaeltacht in relation to training and professional development to ensure capacity building and skills development requirements are met. Skills and capacity training: target 20 employees.			X		Údarás na Gaeltachta will support essential training development courses throughout the year and will have same done by Q4 of 2020. 19 individuals have been supported to date.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>8.2</p> <p>Maintain and extend the supply of high-quality publicly subsidised ELC (and school-age childcare) to best serve the developmental needs of babies and young children, ensuring that it also reflects the needs and preferences of parents and families.</p>	<p>C.8.2.8.</p> <p>Introduce measures to ensure that children in Gaeltacht areas have access to Irish-medium ELC provision.</p>	<p>Lead: DCHG</p> <p>Partners: Údarás na Gaeltachta, Acadamh na hOllscolaíochta Gaeilge (NUIG), Muinntereas Teo</p>	<p>Explore the possibilities regarding the provision of ELC courses at FETAC Level 5 to 8 of the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) through the medium of Irish.</p>	X				<p>The BA in Early Education (In English) programme offered in NUI Galway is being redesigned in accordance with the professional award criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector in Ireland, with the accent to develop an Irish version of this phase at the same time. Dr Dorothy Ní Uigín has now been appointed to the Board of the BA Programme (English version), which will facilitate this collaboration. It is predicted that the English and Irish version will be offered by NUIG consecutively in 2021.</p>

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.3 Ensure that ELC provision promotes participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity through the integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs.	C.8.3.1. Ensure that future capital investment facilitates the participation of all children in ELC and promotes settings that are inclusive and accessible to all children, families and practitioners, informed by Universal Design Guidelines.	Lead: DCYA Partners: DHPLG, National Disability Authority, Early Childhood Ireland, Trinity Haus	Launch the Universal Design Guidelines for ELC Settings.	X				Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care settings were launched in Q2 2019.
			Promote the Universal Design Guidelines to ELC and Building Sector.			X		Dormant Accounts Funding has been awarded for a 3-year programme to support the use of the Guidelines, to commence in 2020.
			Share publication with Local Authority Planning Departments.	X				The Guidelines have been disseminated widely.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
8.3 Ensure that ELC provision promotes participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity through the integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs.	C.8.3.2. Continue to roll out AIM to ensure the full inclusion of children with a disability in settings delivering the universal pre-school programme. Undertake an end-of-year-three evaluation of AIM and, subject to evaluation findings and other relevant developments, consider enhancements to, and/or extension of, AIM to, for example, all ELC services, all school-age childcare services and/or to children with additional needs other than a disability. As part of this evaluation, consideration will be given to other supports that exist for children with a disability in ELC and the scope to consolidate and streamline these under AIM, or to align eligibility and access routes as well as practice and training.	Lead: DCYA Partners: DoH, DES, HSE, and other partners to be determined following the AIM Evaluation	Commission end-of-year-three evaluation of AIM.			X		The contract to undertake the end-of-year three evaluation of AIM was awarded in September 2020.
			Agree approach with DoH/HSE/DES to alignment of eligibility rules and access routes for mainstream and specialist pre-schools and examine potential provision of training supports to specialist services.				X	This work has commenced with an initial mapping of both mainstream and specialist pre-school services to be completed by the DCYA, DoH/HSE & DES in 2020/2021.
			Agreement reached with DoH/HSE in relation to the future of HSE-funded supports in mainstream pre-schools.				X	To be reviewed in 2020/2021 in the context of the mapping of mainstream and specialist pre-school services being undertaken.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
8.3 Ensure that ELC provision promotes participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity through the integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs.	C.8.3.3. Oversee and evaluate the In-School and ELC Therapy Support Demonstration Project, and, subject to the findings of the evaluation and any other relevant developments, consider the model for national rollout (as resources allow).	Joint Leads: DES and DCYA Partners: DoH, NCSE, HSE and other partners to be determined	Complete one year of operational work by therapists in the Demonstration Project.	X				The first year of the Demonstration Project was completed in June 2019.
			Evaluation report finalised.			X		This report will be published in Q4 2020.
			Examine scope for project extension to a second year, depending on evaluation findings, in the context of the DES pilot of reform of the Special Needs Assistant (SNA) scheme.	X				The Demonstration Project moved into a second full year as a pilot in September 2019.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>8.3 Ensure that ELC provision promotes participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity through the integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs.</p>	<p>C.8.3.4. Introduce mechanisms through the National Childcare Scheme (with periodic reviews, including a review of relevant Scheme data, and with periodic stakeholder consultation), to ensure that children with specific vulnerabilities – including children in homeless families and children in direct provision – have access to high-quality ELC (and school-age childcare).</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA</p> <p>Partners: Pobal, DES, DJE, HSE, Tusla, Local Authorities</p>	<p>Sponsorship arrangements in place (with six-monthly review) to support ELC and school-age childcare under the National Childcare Scheme for children and families with specific vulnerabilities.</p>	X				<p>The Childcare Support Act 2018 specifies 5 statutory bodies with which the Minister may make agreements in relation to referral procedures for free or additional ELC and SAC. Signed agreements are in place with all sponsor bodies. The five statutory bodies – and the purposes of the agreements – are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minister for Education and Skills - for teen parents who are still in education or training; • Minister for Justice and Equality - for refugees and asylum seekers, to enable parents' participation in education, integration and other relevant supports; • Child and Family Agency - to promote the welfare of children, either where there is a child protection concern, or as a form of early intervention or family support; • HSE - to support child development for children who are below the age for participation in ECCE and where there is an identified need for childcare as a developmental support for the child; • Local authorities – to support homeless families or families transitioning out of homelessness.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 8

Babies and young children have access to safe, high-quality, developmentally-appropriate, integrated ELC (and school-age childcare), which reflects diversity of need.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
8.3 Ensure that ELC provision promotes participation, strengthens social inclusion and embraces diversity through the integration of additional supports and services for children and families with additional needs.	C.8.3.5. Develop mechanisms to provide additional supports to ELC services where there are high proportions of children who are at risk of poverty to mitigate the impacts of early disadvantage. Specifically, informed by the DEIS model, develop a programme for the delivery of ELC in the context of concentrated disadvantage.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Pobal, DES and others to be determined on establishment of working group	Working group to oversee development of initiative appointed.	X				This action will now be led by the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC.
			Methodology developed for assessing levels of concentrated disadvantage in ELC/ SAC settings.			X		The preparation of a working paper - Potential methods to identify children and/or ELC and SAC services in need of additional supports – was commissioned at end 2019. This paper is being prepared by Frontier Economics in the role of Research Partnership to provide research support to the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC. This working paper will be published end 2020.
	C.8.3.6. Develop mechanisms to provide Irish-language supports to ELC provision where there are high proportions of children who are learning through the medium of Irish.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Monitoring Group for the ELC Actions under the five-year Action Plan for the Irish Language	Appointment of two coordinator posts to lead on implementation of the actions in the five-year Irish Language Action Plan.			X		Approval and funding for the two Irish language Early Learning and Care posts has been secured for 2020 and will be progressed accordingly. Expressions of Interest for the Irish Medium Support Coordinator post are expected to be sought in Q4 2020, with recruitment following as soon as possible thereafter. This process was necessarily delayed due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consultation and engagement with relevant stakeholders will form a necessary part of this process. Once recruited, the Irish Medium Support Coordinator will guide recruitment for the Early Years Specialist post. This second post is expected to be filled in 2021.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.1 Introduce measures to exchange information, involve children and parents and develop strong partnerships between ELC settings and primary schools to support transitions.	C.9.1.1. Provide information and guidance to parents, families, childminders and communities on the role they can play in supporting transitions (with tailored advice and information for vulnerable groups), including guidance for parents making decisions around school starting age.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partners: NCCA and others to be determined on establishment of working group	Establish and agree terms of reference for IDG to develop policy model for transition actions in First 5 and parental engagement in ELC more widely (see action on parental involvement above).			X		The IDG to progress this work will be convened by end 2020.
	C.9.1.2. Roll out transition activities (including joint CPD) between ELC settings and primary schools, and introduce NCCA's reporting templates and associated support material. Building on that work, develop a national approach to support the transitions experienced by children as they move into and through ELC settings.							
9.2 Increase continuity in curriculum and pedagogy across ELC settings and the early years of primary school.	C.9.2.1. Provide clarification for ELC settings and primary schools on the appropriate dispositions, skills and knowledge for children as they make the transition into primary school.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partners: NCCA and others to be determined on establishment of working group	Establish and agree terms of reference for IDG to develop policy model for transition actions in First 5 and parental engagement in ELC more widely (see action on parental involvement above).			X		The IDG to progress this work will be convened by end 2020.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.2 Increase continuity in curriculum and pedagogy across ELC settings and the early years of primary school.	C.9.2.2. Align the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum for the early years of primary school with Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, to facilitate progression in children's early learning as they move from ELC settings to primary school.	Lead: DES	Research report and webinar on curriculum alignment published.	X				The Research Report: Curriculum Alignment and Progression between Early Childhood Education and Care and Primary school and webinar is available on the NCCA website.
			Schools' Forum involving ELC and primary schools helping to shape a redeveloped primary curriculum.	X				This work is ongoing.
			Internal Working Group on curriculum alignment established.	X				This work is ongoing.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.2 Increase continuity in curriculum and pedagogy across ELC settings and the early years of primary school.	C.9.2.2. Align the redeveloped Primary School Curriculum for the early years of primary school with Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, to facilitate progression in children's early learning as they move from ELC settings to primary school.	Lead: DES	Draft Primary Curriculum Framework developed drawing on research, Forum deliberations and stakeholder feedback.			X		Draft Primary Curriculum Framework finalised in January 2020 and published Q1 2020 with consultation process to follow until Q3 2020.
			Draft framework published for consultation.			X		Published in Q1 2020 with consultation process to follow until Q3 2020.
			Primary Language Curriculum/ Curaclam Teanga na Bunscoile informed by the principles and pedagogies of Aistear published.	X				Published in September 2019.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.2 Increase continuity in curriculum and pedagogy across ELC settings and the early years of primary school.	C.9.2.3. Develop consistency in the evaluation of curriculum and pedagogy between ELC settings and the early years of primary school, with due consideration for the structural differences in the two contexts. Specifically revise arrangements for the inspection of the early years of primary school as redevelopment of the Primary School Curriculum enhances the relationship with Aistear.	Lead: DES	Project plan for the review of inspection processes, including plans for consultation with relevant education partners.	X				The DES Inspectorate is working with NCCA on the review of the Primary Curriculum and will consider the implications for the review of inspection models in parallel.
			Draft proposals for “transitions” model of inspection for use in consultation.	X				A trial of the use of the Early Years Education Inspection Model, with a focus on transitions, in the Early Start units of primary schools was interrupted by the closure of schools in March 2020. This activity will be continued in 2021 as a part of the wider development of a transitions focused inspection model.
	C.9.2.4. Having regard to resource implications, explore over time appropriate class sizes in the early years of primary school as a redeveloped Primary School Curriculum is aligned with Aistear.	Lead: DES	Keep under review.	X				This is being kept under review as part of the policy assessment of class sizes and teacher allocations – cannot be considered until the framework has been finalised.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.3 Ensure the necessary supports are in place to sustain learning for all children as they transition from ELC settings to primary school.	C.9.3.1. Provide continued funding and support to implement and enhance DEIS.	Lead: DES	Develop guidelines for DEIS schools to support successful transitions at all stages of the education spectrum to facilitate an integrated model of access.	X				<p>Circular 0016/2019, which issued in February 2019, on the role of the HSCL Co-ordinator, has emphasised the importance of the HSCL role in all transitions in to school including from ELC. HSCLs now support transitions from pre-school to primary school.</p> <p>Tusla Education Support Service (TESS) Education Welfare Service (EWS) supported the development of an early years transition programme 'Ambition for Transitions'.</p>
			Develop a monitoring and evaluation framework.			X		Work commenced at the end of 2019 on the development of a Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the DEIS Programme.
			Launch Schools Excellence Fund Tranche 3.	X				Tranche 3 launched on 31 May 2019 – closing date for applications was 31 October 2019, confirmation of successful applicants Q1 2020.
			Enhanced engagement between ELC settings and DEIS schools aided by Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) Coordinators.	X				TESS EWS supported the development of an early years transition programme 'Ambition for Transitions' in 2019.

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
9.3 Ensure the necessary supports are in place to sustain learning for all children as they transition from ELC settings to primary school.	C.9.3.1. Provide continued funding and support to implement and enhance DEIS.	Lead: DES	HSCL Coordinator role to be restated to reference role in supporting transitions between ELC and the formal school environment.	X				<p>Circular (0016/2019) on the role of the HSCL Co-ordinator has emphasised the importance of HSCL role in all transitions in to school from ELC, through the school system.</p> <p>Successful transitions is a key outcome for HSCL and evidence based transition programmes have been shared with HSCL coordinators at CPD workshops.</p> <p>HSCL's now support transitions from pre-school to primary school.</p>
	C.9.3.2. Develop proposals to implement the recommendations of the Comprehensive Review of the SNA Scheme.	Lead: DES	Proposals approved by Government.	X				In February 2019, Government approved the trialling of a new School Inclusion Model for the 2019/20 school year.
			Trial of new School Inclusion Model commenced in 2019/20 school year.	X				

GOAL C

Positive play-based early learning

OBJECTIVE 9

Children will be supported in their transitions to (and through) ELC settings and onwards to primary school.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
9.3 Ensure the necessary supports are in place to sustain learning for all children as they transition from ELC settings to primary school.	C.9.3.3. Ensure AIM and the In-School and ELC Therapy Support Demonstration Model bring a focus to positive transitions from ELC to primary school. This will require early and strong collaboration between ELC and primary school support services (e.g. Better Start Quality Development Services, National Council for Special Education).	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partners: National Council for Special Education (NCSE), National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), Parents Council (NPC)	AIM Transition Planning in collaboration with NCSE and NCCA (Mo Scéal).				X	Initial scoping has progressed. It is envisaged a protocol for AIM transition planning will be established in 2021. This work will also be embedded in the wider national model of transitions supports (see objective 9).
			Information sessions for parents on transition to primary school by NPC with support from Better Start and NCSE.	X				The NPC pre-school to primary school transition sessions reached over 500 parents in 2019 on a national scale, doubling attendance for 2018.
			Establish and agree terms of reference for Interdepartmental Group (IDG) to develop policy model for transitions actions in First 5.					See update on Objective 9.
	C.9.3.4. Increased investment in children's education will be supported by the Programme for Government and Action Plan for Education commitment to raise capitation rates at primary and post-primary level as resources allow.	Lead: DES	Investment in education supported as part of annual estimates process.	X				The 2020 gross expenditure allocation for the DES is over €11.1 billion*, €367 million (3.4%) above the Department's 2019 allocation in the Revised Estimates Volume. This additional investment included €14m for increases to school capitation rates in Budget 2019 and 2020. * This excludes one-off expenditure of €57m provided for extra paydays in 2020.

GOAL D AN EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEM



GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.A Put in place effective implementation and governance structures and public engagement mechanisms for First 5.	D.1.A.1. As a constituent strategy of BOBF, the implementation of First 5 will be overseen by BOBF Implementation Structures to allow for a comprehensive and connected approach to addressing key issues which impact on the lives of babies, young children and their families. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services, chaired by An Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of First 5. New nominations to BOBF Implementation Structures (i.e. Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group, Advisory Council) will be sought to ensure the necessary focus on babies, young children and their families. These Implementation Structures involve widespread multilateral engagement from across Government Departments, State Agencies and others. The Implementation Structures are described in further detail in the section on Implementation and Oversight. A First 5 Implementation Team will be established in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to spearhead the coordination and monitoring of implementation of First 5, liaising with the BOBF Implementation Team.	Lead: DCYA Partners: BOBF Implementation Structures and all key Government Departments and Agencies	First 5 Implementation Office established.	X				The First 5 Implementation Office was established in 2019.
			New nominations to BOBF Advisory Council and Sponsors Group proposed.	X				A senior official from the First 5 implementation team joined the Children and Young People's Policy Consortium and the DCYA's cross sectoral priority was updated to implementation of the First 5 Strategy. The Minister approved five nominations to the Council in the areas of homelessness, rights and equality, the arts, child welfare and LGBTI+. This expanded the knowledge and expertise of representatives on the Council.
			BOBF Advisory Council Terms of Reference and Work Plan agreed, including in respect of role in overseeing First 5 and promoting related thematic areas of focus.	X				The primary role of the Advisory Council is to advise the Minister on matters relating to children, young people and their families and support the implementation of BOBF and its five constituent strategies including First 5. The Council identified a number of issues to progress in their 2019 work plan including but not limited to child poverty, rights and equality, education, homelessness and engagement on the constituent strategies.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.A Put in place effective implementation and governance structures and public engagement mechanisms for First 5.	D.1.A.1. As a constituent strategy of BOBF, the implementation of First 5 will be overseen by BOBF Implementation Structures to allow for a comprehensive and connected approach to addressing key issues which impact on the lives of babies, young children and their families. The Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services, chaired by An Taoiseach, will oversee the implementation of First 5. New nominations to BOBF Implementation Structures (i.e. Children and Young People's Policy Consortium, Sponsors Group, Advisory Council) will be sought to ensure the necessary focus on babies, young children and their families. These Implementation Structures involve widespread multilateral engagement from across Government Departments, State Agencies and others. The Implementation Structures are described in further detail in the section on Implementation and Oversight. A First 5 Implementation Team will be established in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to spearhead the coordination and monitoring of implementation of First 5, liaising with the BOBF Implementation Team.	Lead: DCYA Partners: BOBF Implementation Structures and all key Government Departments and Agencies	Paper on engagement with BOBF Implementation Structures agreed by DCYA management board and relevant structures to establish frequency and nature of engagement.	X				The DCYA produced a paper on the process for engagement with the BOBF implementation structures for the constituent strategies. The paper outlined that the DCYA Units who have responsibility for the BOBF constituent strategies should regularly engage and consult with the BOBF structures including the Consortium and Advisory Council during the design, development, finalisation, implementation and review and evaluation phases during the lifetime of the constituent strategy. This paper will ensure open and frequent communications to the Consortium and specifically the Advisory Council. This process of engagement has occurred and is ongoing.
			BOBF Implementation Structures used to tackle implementation challenges that may arise.	X				The Consortium and particularly the Advisory Council have played a key role in identifying challenges in implementation of strategies and tackling issues. The Advisory Council advises the Minister on emerging issues and makes recommendations. The Consortium identifies the issues and use the forum to use cross Departmental collaboration to progress the issue. The issue of Child Poverty was progressed in this manner in 2019 amongst other issues relating to disadvantage and social exclusion.
			First 5 Implementation Team engaging effectively with BOBF Implementation Structures.	X				The First 5 Implementation Team engaged with the BOBF Implementation Structures in finalising the First 5 Implementation Report in 2019 and provided regular updates at meetings of BOBF Implementation Structures, including the Consortium and Advisory Council.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.A Put in place effective implementation and governance structures and public engagement mechanisms for First 5.	D.1.A.2. The First 5 Implementation Team will ensure that within six months of the date of publication of this Strategy, a detailed three-year implementation plan is developed with a timetable for delivery, including the assignment of responsibility for actions.	Lead: DCYA	Implementation Plan agreed and published.	X				The First 5 Implementation Plan was published in May 2019.
	D.1.A.3. The First 5 Implementation Team will prepare an annual report on the implementation of the Strategy.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.1.A.4. The First 5 Implementation Team will carry out a three-year review of the Strategy with a view to developing a further implementation plan for the following three years.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones for 2019.					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.A Put in place effective implementation and governance structures and public engagement mechanisms for First 5.	D.1.A.5. Support the meaningful participation of young children and parents of young children in the development of policy, programmes and practice that concern them, including seldom heard groups. This will involve the development and use of appropriate methodologies and mechanisms for consulting and engaging with young children and parents of young children, the development and delivery of child participation training programmes for those working with children and the publication of guidance on children's participation.	Lead: DCYA and Hub na nÓg Partners: Relevant early years sectoral partners	Progress on development and piloting of a national framework for children and young people's participation with a view to publication by year end.			X		A national framework for children and young people's participation has been developed in collaboration with Professor Laura Lundy and piloting of commenced in Q2. It is envisaged that the framework will be published at the end of Q4 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.A Put in place effective implementation and governance structures and public engagement mechanisms for First 5.	D.1.A.7. Implement a communications plan that will ensure the importance of early childhood development and learning is well understood and how actions and projects in First 5 can contribute to improving babies' and young children's experiences.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Government Departments and Agencies involved in First 5	First 5 Communications Framework established.	X				The DCYA-wide contract for media buying was awarded in June 2019.
			Communications plan developed and published.			X		A First 5 Communications Plan is drafted and will be published by end 2020.
1.B Strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system at a national and local level.	D.1.B.1. Strengthen leadership and cross-sectoral action for parenting supports by establishing a dedicated Parenting Support Policy Unit in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.	Lead: DCYA	Unit established in November 2018.	X				The Parenting Support Policy Unit was established in November 2018.
			Unit head appointed January 2019.	X				The Head of the Parenting Support Policy Unit was appointed in January 2019.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
<p>1.B Strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system at a national and local level.</p>	<p>D.1.B.2. Building on the development of the 2017 Whole-of- Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty, monitor and track progress on the achievement of the child poverty target through BOBF Implementation Structures under the joint leadership of the Departments of Employment and Social Protection, and Children and Youth Affairs.</p>	<p>Joint Leads: DEASP and DCYA</p>	<p>Social Inclusion: a new integrated strategy 2019–2025 published.</p>	X				<p>The Roadmap for Social Inclusion, 2020-2025: Ambition, Goals, Commitments was approved by Cabinet on 9 January 2020 and published on 14 January 2020. The Roadmap includes a commitment to continue to report on progress against the Child Poverty target and set a new child poverty target for the period to the end of 2025. This is one of a number of commitments specifically aimed at supporting families and children.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.B Strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system at a national and local level.	D.1.B.3. Build on work of established working group led by the Department of Justice and Equality, with representatives from the Departments of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, Employment Affairs and Social Protection, and Children and Youth Affairs to progress proposals on family leave and family-friendly working.	Lead: DJE Partners: DEASP, DBEI, DCYA	DJE-chaired Working Group reconvened and reconstituted with membership from DBEI, DEASP, DCYA and other representatives as necessary, Terms of Reference agreed.			X		This action will be reviewed pending the outcome of the public consultation process (see update on A.1.2.3).
	D.1.B.4. Strengthen leadership and cross-sectoral action for child health through the new Healthy Ireland Office to be established in the Department of Health, and through expanding and enhancing the HSE National Healthy Childhood Programme as a policy priority programme.	Joint Leads: DoH and HSE	Progress Business Case for Healthy Ireland Office in line with Sláintecare Action Plan 2019.			X		Work on progressing this milestone began in 2019 and will continue as a priority action in 2020.
	D.1.B.5. Identify and scope the issue of food poverty as a cross-sectoral priority under BOBF, and in alignment with overall Healthy Ireland implementation, led by the Department of Health.	Lead: DoH Partners: DCYA, BOBF Advisory Council	Establish a Joint Working Group on Food Poverty. Scope and agree work programme.				X	An exploratory stakeholder group was convened to consider how to progress actions in this area in advance of establishing the Joint Working Group. Further action will not progress in 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.B Strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system at a national and local level.	D.1.B.6. Establish formal mechanisms to align and coordinate the policy, practice and implementation work of the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, and Education and Skills, in respect of ELC, commencing with a joint Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Implement MOU – hold high-level meetings as provided for in MOU to discuss and progress critical areas of cooperation and other arising issues.	X				An MOU between the two Departments was signed, and high-level meetings held, in addition to regular ongoing engagement on areas of mutual interest. Active cooperation and joint activity continue on a range of topics, including interagency work to support children’s transitions from pre-school to primary school.
	D.1.B.7. Strengthen existing relationships between the Departments of Children and Youth Affairs, and Education and Skills, through the establishment of a high-level Inter-Departmental Group to develop policy proposals and to commission research in relation to key cross-cutting issues affecting early learning of babies and young children (e.g. school starting age; transitions; impact of pre-school on primary school provision).	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Proposals to be developed and implemented as agreed through high-level engagement set out in MOU.	X				
	D.1.B.8. Support an increased role for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in ELC curriculum development through changes to the NCCA governance structures.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partner: NCCA	Appointment of Minister of CYA nominee to new NCCA Council. Appointment of DCYA official to Early Childhood and Primary Board of the Council.	X X				

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.B Strengthen leadership and governance across the early childhood system at a national and local level.	D.1.B.9. Review the operating system for ELC (and school-age childcare), at national and local level, to develop more consolidated and streamlined planning, funding, administration and quality support. As part of this review, consider a range of possible options including a dedicated Statutory Agency, the use of existing State Agencies or the establishment of an executive arm of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.	Lead: DCYA	Initial planning and development of the structures to initiate the review.	X				Background paper submitted to the DCYA Management Board. Memorandum for Government approved. Independent experts identified and stakeholder briefings undertaken.
			Approval of approach, establishment of oversight group and identification of external resources.			X		The Request for Tender to undertake the Review was published in October 2020. DPER sanction provided for resources for Oversight Group. First meeting took place October 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 1

Committed leadership, strong governance and positive collaboration and engagement aligned around a shared vision for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
1.C Progress collaborative initiatives and integrated service development and delivery to support babies, young children and their families.	D.1.C.1. Explore the potential for joined-up and integrated service development and delivery for babies, young children and their families, through ELC settings as a natural hub for collaborative work with families.	Lead: DCYA	Gather data on additional services offered in the context of ELC provision.	X				Data on additional services offered in the context of ELC provision were gathered through the Annual Early Years Sector Profile in March 2019.
	D.1.C.2. Pilot the development of Family and Early Childhood Centres that bring together a range of services to support parents and children in the early stages of development.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.1.C.3. Pilot the development of models of local collaboratives to better address governance and sustainability in ELC, in partnership with community and private ELC (and school-age childcare) providers.	Lead: DCYA	Paper on different models of ELC collaboratives initiated.			X		This action will now be led by the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC.
		Funding secured in estimates process to pilot in 2020.				X		

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.1. Develop and publish a set of quality standards for publicly funded parenting supports and services.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Tusla, HSE and voluntary sector	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.2.A.2. Develop guidance and support for Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to enhance and consolidate the delivery of the FRC programme.	Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA	Strengthening of National Commissioning and PPFs relationship with National FRC representative body to encourage further development of early evidence-based parenting supports and early childhood preventive services in all FRCs.	X				This is an ongoing process with FRC's and continued discussion with Family Resource Centre National Forum.
			Provision of generic guidance and support in the area of policies and overall governance through voluntary support agencies to all FRCs.	X				This is ongoing through Tusla's interaction with the Family Resource Centre National Forum.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.2. Develop guidance and support for Family Resource Centres (FRCs) to enhance and consolidate the delivery of the FRC programme.	Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA	National Commissioning Unit and Local PPFS will move to joint Service Agreement reviews to encourage FRC service delivery to align to local needs including early childhood supports and prevention services.	X				Ongoing awaiting approval from National Operational Management Team.
			Reviewing FRC programme oversight structures with PPFS management. Make proposals for enhanced oversight and supports to assist with service alignment to meet needs of early childhood.	X				Paper prepared for implementing this awaiting approval from National Operational Management Team.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.3. Review current assessment and screening tools for babies, young children and families, particularly those with additional support needs, to facilitate collaborative working across health and social care professionals and effective referral pathways. Ensure that these are consistently implemented nationally.	Lead: DCYA Partners: All relevant Government Departments and State Agencies	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.2.A.4. Develop a standardised, accredited curriculum framework for antenatal education for parents.	Lead: HSE	Antenatal Education Standards finalised. Local implementation of standards commenced via maternity and community services. Antenatal Educators Programme developed and initial rollout commenced.		X			The National Standards for Antenatal Education in Ireland were published in March 2020. Training programme for antenatal educators has been developed and will be delivered in 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.5. Develop and implement quality standards for school-age childcare.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla	Public consultation on quality standards and comprehensive regulations for school-age childcare. Commencement of work on drafting and alignment of comprehensive regulations and quality standards.	X		X		<p>The DCYA carried out a public consultation on draft quality guidelines and comprehensive regulations during 2019. The consultation report was published in September 2020.</p> <p>National Quality Guidelines were published in September 2020. Planning for comprehensive regulations has commenced, with advisory group on school-age childcare to be established in Q4 2020.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.6. Through the National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI), develop and implement a national plan for the phased, supported and simultaneous implementation of Síolta, the National Quality Framework, and Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, in all ELC settings for babies and young children, including making the application of these frameworks a contractual requirement of DCYA funding schemes and give consideration to, over time, making adherence to the frameworks a statutory requirement. Over the lifetime of First 5, review Aistear and Síolta.	Joint Leads: DES and DCYA Partners Better Start, NCCA	Implement the recommendations of the Review of the delivery model for NSAI published in 2018.	X				The delivery model for NSAI has been reviewed and a number of training and mentoring offers are supported through this model.
			Establish NSAI Implementation Office in Better Start.	X				The NSAI office is operational within Better Start. Structures are in place to support this work through collaboration with the DES, DCYA, NCCA and Better Start.
			Implement 2019 work programme approved by National Steering Group.	X				The 2019 work plan was implemented including foundational work on Síolta and Aistear, commencement of Aistear and Play training, and Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) implementation.
			Initiate review of Aistear, including publication of scoping document.				X	As a result of COVID-19 delays, the commencement of the review of Aistear has been deferred until 2021.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.A Develop, enhance and implement national standards for early childhood supports and services.	D.2.A.7. Through Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) and Child and Family Services Networks (CFSNs), and linked to the development of the Children's Workforce Initiative, pilot the development of "No Wrong Door" policy in services for babies, young children and their families to ensure that anyone seeking assistance and services is appropriately supported by the relevant professionals in their community. The development of a revised blueprint for CYPSC and Child and Family Support Networks will support the development of this initiative.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla	Publication of Blueprint for the Development of CYPSC will outline enhanced integration between CYPSCs and CFSNs.	X				CYPSC Shared Vision, Next Steps 2019 – 2024, the successor to the Blueprint, was launched by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in November 2019. An action in Shared Vision Next Steps commits Tusla and the DCYA to work together to formalise the CFSN and CYPSC relationship at a strategic level to support the embedding of all Government led prevention and early intervention initiatives.
			Piloting the Integrated Services Delivery Framework in the North East Inner City Initiative to give effect to the "No Wrong Door" concept.			X		Subgroup 6 as part of the North East Inner City (NEIC) Initiative have been working closely with the Early Years Division in the DCYA and Dublin City Childcare Committee (DCCC) to address issues in the ELC and SAC sector relating to service provision, waiting lists and governance and oversight of services. Due to an increase in homeless accommodation in the NEIC, there is an added strain on services with long waiting lists for children accessing ELC and SAC services. The DCYA is working with DCCC to try and alleviate some of these issues. This will require coordination and cooperation from all ELC and SAC services in the NEIC which will result in a more integrated way of working and further alignment of services. This process is already in progress but will take time to complete a needs assessment of the area and consult with stakeholders to put forward possible solutions.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>2.B Progressively reform the ELC (and school-age childcare) regulatory and inspection systems and strengthen quality assurance, with a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation.</p>	<p>D.2.B.1. Over the lifetime of First 5, conduct a review of the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and accompanying Quality and Regulatory Framework based on evidence of what best contributes to the quality of children's experience. Particular areas for consideration will include minimum regulatory qualification levels, indoor and outdoor space requirements, adult-child ratios and group size. Incremental changes to qualification requirements will also be examined as part of the Workforce Developmental Plan (see Building Block 3). The scope of the Regulations will also be considered for different settings, in particular, home-based settings, to ensure proportionate regulation.</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla</p>	<p>Pilot implementation of the Quality and Regulatory Framework as basis for inspections under the Early Years Services Regulations 2016.</p>	X				<p>A pilot of Quality Regulatory Framework (QRF) based inspections was undertaken in early 2019. Following the successful pilot, Tusla commenced roll out of QRF-based inspections in late 2019 and will continue to introduce this format into inspections in 2020.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.B Progressively reform the ELC (and school-age childcare) regulatory and inspection systems and strengthen quality assurance, with a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation.	D.2.B.2. Introduce regulations for School-Age Childcare and extend regulation to all paid, non-relative childminders. An Action Plan for Childminding will set out a plan for moving progressively towards wider regulation and support for childminders over the lifetime of the Strategy building on the 2018 Working Group report.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla	Introduction of initial (registration) school-age childcare regulations.	X				The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School-Age Services) Regulations 2018 came into force in February 2019, allowing school-age childcare services to register with Tusla and thereafter take part in the National Childcare Scheme.
			Public consultation on comprehensive regulations and standards for school-age childcare.	X				The DCYA carried out a public consultation on draft quality guidelines and comprehensive regulations during 2019. The consultation report will be published in 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.B Progressively reform the ELC (and school-age childcare) regulatory and inspection systems and strengthen quality assurance, with a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation.	D.2.B.3. Consider options for reforms to the registration and inspection of ELC, including childminders (and school-age childcare), to ensure a proportionate inspection regime and a more integrated approach to ELC. First steps include widening the qualification requirements for Tusla early years inspectors and piloting the extension of education-focused inspections to children under three.	Lead: DCYA Partners: DES (Inspectorate), Tusla	First cohort of Tusla early years inspectors with wider qualification requirements to commence work.	X				Recruitment of new inspectors by Tusla now draws from a wider range of backgrounds, including early learning and care. First cohort with wider qualifications now in place.
			Literature reviews and consultation on education inspections of ELC for children aged 0–6 (including children under three).	X				Literature reviews and initial consultation completed. Drafting of inspection framework undertaken in 2020, preparatory to consultation on the draft framework.
			Collaboration between Tusla Early Years Inspectorate and DES Inspectorate in relation to inspection of ELC settings to enhance coordination and shared learning.	X				Collaboration is ongoing. Coordination is regularly reviewed and strengthened through the Operations and Systems Alignment Group (OSAG). An annual joint conference of the two inspectorates took place in 2019.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.B Progressively reform the ELC (and school-age childcare) regulatory and inspection systems and strengthen quality assurance, with a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation.	D.2.B.4. Develop and use appropriate methods to take account of the views of children and parents in the inspection of ELC and school-age childcare.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partner: Tusla	Tusla to undertake research and develop a model to gain views of parents in the inspection of ELC settings.	X				Tusla has undertaken research and is developing a model to gain the view of parents in the inspection of ELC settings.
			DES to research how best to collect parental views on the effectiveness of individual schools and pre-schools in education inspections. DES to examine methods of collecting information from children in education inspections.	X				The Inspectorate in DES has developed a range of resources to support the engagement of learners and parents in their full range of inspection activity including ELC settings. These materials are currently in trial and due to be implemented in Q1 2021.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 2

A robust regulation, inspection and quality assurance regime to enforce and raise standards.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
2.B Progressively reform the ELC (and school-age childcare) regulatory and inspection systems and strengthen quality assurance, with a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation.	D.2.B.5. Develop a revised self-evaluation framework for ELC to replace the existing Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) so that providers can assess their own performance along the quality spectrum, from compliance to excellence.	Joint Leads: DES and DCYA Partners: Better Start, Tusla	Scoping work to be carried out by DES Inspectorate and Síolta Development Officer, in collaboration with other relevant bodies (including Tusla), to develop a self-evaluation framework for settings and explore a web-based support for settings to use the framework.				X	Initial scoping work was carried out by DES and Tusla inspectorates in 2019. The DCYA will convene a working group to progress during 2020/2021.
	D.2.B.6. Align the national quality improvement infrastructure around the Better Start Quality Development Service which operates nationally. Include a regional structure and increase support to the sector through an enhanced specialist service that provides intensive coaching, training and advice to improve professional practice.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partners: Better Start, NCCA, CCCs, national voluntary childcare organisations	Enhance the oversight of Better Start, including commencing a review of the Better Start delivery model.	X				Quarterly oversight meetings are now in place between Better Start and the DCYA. A reporting template is under review. A contract to undertake an evaluation of Better Start was awarded in September 2020.
			Integrate the delivery of the new Aistear and Play CPD programme within Better Start's model of delivering mentoring and training.	X				Aistear and Play CPD is now integrated into the Better Start CPD offer.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.A Identify and put in place the staff requirements to deliver early childhood supports and services.	D.3.A.1. In line with the principles set out in Sláintecare, develop a dedicated child health workforce adopting a population-based approach focussed initially in areas of high population density and disadvantage, recognising that this will require additional resources.	Lead: DoH Partners: DCYA and other Departments and Agencies to be determined on establishment of steering group.	Establish a steering group and commence scoping the process which leads to the development of a model of practice to underpin a dedicated child health workforce, (subject to resources being made available).	X				The Steering Group was established in December 2019. Meetings were held on 21 January and 4 March 2020 and a draft submission to Management Board and Preliminary Scoping Document was prepared. Work on the Group was suspended due to COVID-19 but it is planned to have both documents finalised in Q 4 2020.
	D.3.A.2. Develop the Tusla multi-annual strategic workforce plan, focussing on innovative approaches to recruiting and retaining social workers and family support practitioners. Include a pilot scheme of funded bursaries for Traveller and Roma students to become Tusla social workers or social care workers.	Lead: Tusla	Development of Tusla multi-annual strategic workforce plan.	X				Workforce Implementation Plan 2019–2020 developed and implementation developed through 7 Portfolios of work: Recruitment, Supply, Retention, Capability, Organisation Design, Workforce Planning Processes and Governance, to capture the main actions and deliverables for this plan with key focus in 2019 was on recruitment and retention. Building on work carried out in 2019 the focus in 2020 will be on the establishment of a clear accountable Pay & Numbers profile for each service which in turn will aid more timely management of workforce resource issues.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.A Identify and put in place the staff requirements to deliver early childhood supports and services.</p>	<p>D.3.A.3. Introduce a range of measures so that, by 2028:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> all regulated childminders will hold a minimum qualification (level to be determined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs by end 2019 in follow-up to the Expert Group Report). An appropriate period of time will be provided to meet this requirement; all regulated school-age childcare staff will hold a minimum qualification (level to be determined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs by end 2019). An appropriate period of time will be provided to meet this requirement; and a graduate-led ELC workforce, with at least 50% of staff (i.e. all room leaders, assistant manager and managers) working directly with children in centre-based ELC settings and coordinators supporting the work of childminders, will hold an appropriate degree-level qualification (with an initial target of 30% reached by 2021). 	<p>Joint Leads: DCYA and DES</p>	<p>See overarching milestones for the Workforce Plan (action D.3.A.4).</p>					<p>See update on Action D.3.A.4.</p> <p>NOTE: decisions on training/qualification requirements for childminding and for school-age childcare to be made by the end of 2020 in the context of development of the Workforce Development Plan phase 1 report.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
<p>3.A Identify and put in place the staff requirements to deliver early childhood supports and services.</p>	<p>D.3.A.4. Informed by the predictive model developed by the Expert Group on Future Skills Needs for the ELC workforce, develop a Workforce Development Plan to ensure the appropriate number of ELC and school-age childcare staff at all levels in the sector. The Workforce Development Plan will support the achievement of the above targets. The Workforce Development Plan will also set out plans to raise the profile of careers in ELC (and school-age childcare), establish a career framework and leadership development opportunities and will work towards building a more gender-balanced and diverse workforce. Consideration will also be given to broader ELC and school-age childcare workforce, including those in inspection, mentoring and training roles and support for those who facilitate practice placements.</p>	<p>Joint Leads: DCYA and DES</p> <p>Partners: To be determined in preparation of the Workforce Development Plan</p>	<p>Finalise the Terms of Reference of the Workforce Plan, and initiate Phase 1 of development of the plan. Phase 1 will involve development of a vision for the future workforce, guided by First 5. This will result in the identification of key goals and objectives for Phase 2.</p>	X				<p>Terms of Reference for the Workforce Development Plan Steering Group were published in May 2019. The inaugural meeting of the Steering Group took place in May 2019.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.B Improve access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles.	D.3.B.1. Publish agreed criteria and guidelines for further and higher education ELC (and school-age childcare) qualifications including access and entry requirements; knowledge and content of programmes and the incorporation of supervised professional practice. These standards and guidelines will support the implementation of the Workforce Development Plan by helping to create a shared agenda, common practice and understandings of quality (ensuring that practice frameworks are reflected in training), clarifying the roles and responsibilities of training institutions.	Joint Leads: DES and DCYA Partners: QQI, further and higher education institutions	Publish Criteria and Guidelines and implementation actions.	X				Professional Award Criteria and Guidelines for Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the ELC Sector in Ireland were published in April 2019.
			Establish Independent Qualifications Advisory Board to review higher education (Level 7 and 8) qualifications in ELC in line with the Criteria and Guidelines.					See update on Action D.C.3.1.
			QQI to publish professional award descriptors for FET awards in ELC for consultation for finalisation by end 2019.	X				QQI conducted a five-month consultation on new awards standards for ELC. As part of this process, an event was held to explain the new standards and their implications for potential programme developers, programme coordinators, quality assurance staff and others involved in ELC. This consultation closed on 30 September 2019. The Professional Award-Type Descriptors at NFQ Levels 5-8: Annotated for QQI (ELC) Awards were published in November 2019.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.B Improve access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles.</p>	<p>D.3.B.2. Introduce a redeveloped national subsidised fund for further and higher ELC (and school-age childcare) education to support the implementation of the Workforce Development Plan.</p>	<p>Joint Leads: DCYA and DES</p>	<p>See overarching milestones for the Workforce Plan.</p>					<p>See update on Action D.3.A.4.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
3.B Improve access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles.	D.3.B.3. Develop a national programme of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities for the ELC (and school-age childcare) workforce to be delivered through Better Start Quality Development Service. Over time, this will develop links with the national structure for CPD of primary school teachers. Opportunities for joint delivery of CPD programmes where appropriate will be considered.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES Partners: Better Start, other partners to be determined during development of a national plan for CPD	Expand pilot funding mechanism for CPD participation through providing payments to services whose staff take part in Aistear and Play CPD.	X				Alstear and Play was included within CPD payment pilot in 2019. 341 ELC practitioners participated in this training in 2019.
			Carry out research on the efficiency and effectiveness of the pilot funding mechanism for CPD participation.	X				Research on the pilot funding mechanism has been completed, and findings are being considered.
			Review structure and resourcing (including IT requirements) of the Learning and Development Unit in Better Start.				X	A review of the Learning and Development Unit in Better Start and its requirements will be undertaken in the context of the evaluation of Better Start and the development of the Workforce Development Plan.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.B Improve access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles.</p>	<p>D.3.B.4. Review graduate training options and requirements for all professionals working with babies, young children and their families to ensure that appropriate specialist training is available, including training that is specific to early childhood and to ensure all those working with babies and young children are supported to undertake regular CPD.</p>	<p>Joint Leads: All relevant Government Departments</p>	<p>No Key Milestones for 2019.</p>					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>3.B Improve access to high-quality initial training and Continuous Professional Development opportunities to ensure the staff involved in delivering early childhood supports and services are fully prepared for the demands of their professional roles.</p>	<p>D.3.B.5. Develop and Early Childhood Workforce Initiative. This Initiative will include health and social care workforce, including ELC staff and primary school teachers, among others. Aligning with developments in the Quality and Capacity Building Initiative and the Nurture/National Healthy Childhood Programme, the Early Childhood Workforce Initiative will develop opportunities for all professionals working with babies, young children and their families to learn together and develop working collaborative approaches. The initiative will progress joint pre-service training and in-service learning modules on key issues of relevance across the early childhood workforce including child development, bonding and attachment, play, working with parents, working collaboratively, family violence and addressing disadvantage. The Early Childhood Workforce Initiative will also develop control f to acknowledge and recognise effective collaborative learning and working (e.g. Team Around the Child initiatives such as Meitheal and AIM).</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA</p> <p>Partners: All relevant Government Departments and State Agencies</p>	<p>No Key Milestones for 2019.</p>					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
3.C Develop mechanisms to raise the professional status of the ELC and SAC workforce and support employers to offer more favourable working conditions to attract and retain staff.	D.3.C.1. Develop proposals for a structure to review and oversee compliance with new standards and guidelines for further and higher ELC and SAC education programmes and create a register of the ELC (and school-age childcare) workforce. This structure would, over time, move towards a professional standards body to promote and regulate the ELC (and school-age childcare) profession.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Independent Qualifications Advisory Board to be established to implement new criteria and guidelines for higher education awards in ELC.		X			The Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) was jointly instituted in Q2 2020 by the Minister for Education and Skills and the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs on a non-statutory basis to review Initial Professional Education (Level 7 and Level 8) Degree Programmes for the Early Learning and Care (ELC) Sector.
	D.C.3.2. Having regard to the Workforce Development Plan and alongside the introduction of a new funding model for ELC (and school-age childcare), examine the possibility of introducing further quality levers (e.g. extending the use of higher capitation payments) within the framework provided by the ACS so that appropriate incentives can be made available to attract and retain staff, in particular graduates, working with children of all ages.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Focused policy assessment of higher capitation payments to be published.			X		The Focused policy assessment of higher capitation payments was published in Q3 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 3

An appropriately skilled and sustainable professional workforce that is supported and valued and reflects the diversity of babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
<p>3.C Develop mechanisms to raise the professional status of the ELC and SAC workforce and support employers to offer more favourable working conditions to attract and retain staff.</p>	<p>D.3.C.3. Undertake a review of the types of favourable working conditions that could be supported to attract and retain staff working in ELC (and school-age childcare) settings as a key input to the development of a new funding model (described later). As part of this review, the optimal time for observation, reflection, planning, teamwork and cooperation with parents will be explored.</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA</p>	<p>Working paper on working conditions in ELC and SAC initiated.</p>	X				<p>The preparation of a working paper - Review of Working Conditions for ELC and SAC Staff – was commissioned at end 2019. This paper is being prepared by Frontier Economics in the role of Research Partnership to provide research support to the Expert Group convened to develop a new funding model for ELC and SAC. This working paper is due for publication in Q4 2020.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.A Continue to fund and support the use of research on the lives of babies and young children.	D.4.A.1. Support the continuation and use of Growing Up in Ireland (GUI) and, in consultation with key stakeholders, explore the potential value of establishing a new birth cohort.	Lead: DCYA Partners: CSO, ESRI	Three-year extension to the current GUI contract agreed with the contractor.	X				A formal agreement to extend Phase 2 of GUI for three additional years (2020-2022) was signed by the DCYA and ESRI on 14 November 2019.
			Planning for GUI from 2023 progressed led by a tripartite planning group with representation from DCYA, the CSO and the ESRI.	X				The agreement signed by the DCYA and the ESRI on 14 November 2019 makes provision for the transfer of the GUI survey to the CSO from 2023.
			As part of this planning, consideration will be given to a design brief for the next phase and the value of a new birth cohort.	X				Planning work has commenced and is ongoing.
			GUI Pathfinder Project commenced that will link GUI data with administrative data held in the CSO's ADC.	X				A copy of the report, 'Scoping review of literature: Best international practices in linking administrative and longitudinal study data', by Dr Sinead Hanafin is due for publication in 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
4.A Continue to fund and support the use of research on the lives of babies and young children.	D.4.A.2. Implement the What Works Initiative to support the mainstreaming of prevention and early intervention approaches across services to children.	Lead: DCYA	What Works Initiative online platform and resources developed, including evidence and data hubs.	X				The What Works Initiative online platform and resources were launched in June 2019 by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs.
			What Works Learning Framework and projects delivered.	X				What Works learning and development opportunities have been delivered up to Q2 2020. Disruption due to COVID-19 has led to the deferral of cancellation of a number of activities. This includes the cancellation of part of a programme of nationwide action learning sets, and a re-prioritisation of work in partnership with the University of Limerick. Under this partnership, it is expected that a number of executive leadership programmes will be delivered from Q3 2020 – Q2 2021, and work will continue to improve on-line learning resources on the What Works website. Later this year, the DCYA plans to host a series of webinars exploring the topic of the state's role in prevention and early intervention, with support from What Works.
			What Works funding measures to support networking and innovation delivered.	X				Innovation Funding completion projects finalised. Network Support Funding measure completed.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.A Continue to fund and support the use of research on the lives of babies and young children.	D.4.A.3. Establish a First 5 research observatory to collect, organise, manage and make accessible research on babies, young children and their families across all domains of their lives.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.4.A.4. Develop a First 5 research and evaluation programme to support strategy implementation and build evidence around innovative and integrated service delivery.	Lead: DCYA	First 5 Research and Evaluation Plan developed and published.			X		A First 5 Research and Evaluation Plan is drafted and will be published by end 2020.
			First 5 Research and Evaluation Framework established.				X	The Request for Tenders was published in October 2020. It is envisaged that the Framework will be in place in early 2021.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.1. Develop and roll out administrative data systems across child health, welfare and protection, and ELC services, including the Maternal and Newborn Clinical Management System (MN-CMS) across all maternity hospital/units on a phased basis. Over time and as resources allow, extend MN-CMS to community services. This will contribute to the delivery of optimal services to mothers and babies post-natally.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Progress planning in relation to the rollout of Phase 2 of the implementation of the MN-CMS across additional maternity hospitals/units.	X				The MN-CMS Gynaecology Electronic Health Record (EHR) project aimed to rollout to the four live sites in 2019 and achieved that target having gone live in NMH, CUMH, UHK and the Rotunda. Work continues in 2020.
	D.4.B.2. National Immunisation Information System (NIIS) (Phase 1) and a National Child Health Information System (Phase 2) to support the delivery and integration of child health services across community, primary care and hospital services. Over time, these systems should be accessible by parents. These information systems will also facilitate documentation and analysis of outcomes data.	Lead: HSE Partner: DoH	Phase 1 – Achieve Digital Government Oversight Unit (DGOU) agreement to gather requirements and price for NIIS.	X				DGOU agreement to gather requirement received in 2019 and work now starting on this project.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
<p>4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.</p>	<p>D.4.B.3. National Childcare Information System (NCCIS) in Tusla child welfare and protection services. Over time and as resources allow, enhance NCCIS to capture data on the full breadth of Tusla's work.</p>	<p>Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA</p>	<p>The Tusla Portal (Tusla's "Digital Front Door") was launched in 2018 to allow reporters, partners, professionals and members of the public to engage with Tusla via a secure online portal. The Portal will be further enhanced in 2019 to support the following services:</p>	X				<p>Tusla Portal is in place and contributing significantly to improving the efficient working of Tusla services. The Portal has over 20,000 users and Tusla has now received over 50,000 referrals/submissions online, previously these submissions were received as posted paper forms.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.3. National Childcare Information System (NCCIS) in Tusla child welfare and protection services. Over time and as resources allow, enhance NCCIS to capture data on the full breadth of Tusla's work.	Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA	Early Year Services Registration, School-Age Services Registration, Child minder Registration; Commissioning Services supporting funding applications and service plan submissions from child and family service partners; the reporting of Retrospective Abuse Allegations; the integration with school attendance systems to support primary and secondary schools submitting Absence Returns.	X				All the services listed are now available on the Tusla Portal.
			The reporting of Education Welfare Referrals.			X		This initiative was rescheduled for December 2020 and will see the Tusla Portal being further enhanced to allow schools to submit Education Welfare Referrals online. Tusla typically receives approximately 6,000 education welfare reports a year from schools on paper forms.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.3. National Childcare Information System (NCCIS) in Tusla child welfare and protection services. Over time and as resources allow, enhance NCCIS to capture data on the full breadth of Tusla's work.	Lead: Tusla Partner: DCYA	Further extend the NCCIS programme to improve the current system and to deliver case management solutions for Retrospective Abuse Allegations and for Residential Care Services.			X		<p>NCCIS improvement upgrade was completed. NCCIS Signs of Safety alignment was completed July 2020. Server infrastructure upgrade was completed end of August 2020.</p> <p>Case Management for Residential Care is in progress. This programme of work is scheduled to continue into 2021.</p> <p>Case Management for Retrospective Abuse Allegations is in progress. Delivery date was rescheduled to 2021 as the revised implementation date for the new policy is now March 2021.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.4. An ELC Online Database to facilitate planning and development of ELC services, building on experience in developing the Primary Pupil Online Database (POD). Having regard to appropriate data protection and data sharing arrangements, this will facilitate the monitoring of children's progress as they transition from ELC through to the primary education system and onwards to post primary and beyond.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Pobal	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.4.B.5. Further develop the Outcomes for Children National Data Hub to ensure inclusion of relevant outcome indicators and its use in the design and delivery of services for children, young people and their families.	Lead: DCYA Partner: Tusla	Promote the use of the data hub to relevant Agency stakeholders and identify new indicator sets, as well as maintain and administer the budget for this project.	X				This is an ongoing project past 2019. Launched with "What Works" in June 2019. New Indicators were agreed by Data Working Group in November 2019 and will be included on the hub in 2020. Project funded by the DCYA, total budget drawn down by Tusla by end of December 2019.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.6. Consider, in conjunction with the relevant Government Departments, options to develop and publish more detailed current data about nature and uptake of paid and unpaid maternity, paternity and parental leave and flexible working arrangements including through analysis of Eurostat Labour Force Survey data, CSO general household surveys and other approaches.	Lead: DCYA	Pursue options to analyse data collected by CSO on a once-off basis in 2018 on care and work life balance.	X				Statistical Spotlight #3, The Reconciliation of Work and Family Life was published in December 2019 and is available from www.gov.ie .
			Publish results.	X				
			Business Case submitted to CSO/ National Statistics Board for inclusion of questions on a regular basis in one of their household surveys.	X				Business case has been submitted and subject of ongoing discussions with CSO.
			Explore possibilities of examining data on payments during maternity leave through data linkage.	X				

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.7. Work with key Government Departments to assess what data relating to babies and young children is collected and in what format. Depending on the outcome, consideration will be given to the establishment of a technical group, under the BOBF Implementation Structures, tasked with making recommendations for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the harmonisation and alignment of data collected (for example, recording children's date of birth rather than age or age band) to allow for more effective analysis and comparison; the use of appropriate markers, including disability and ethnicity markers, where relevant, and the promotion of data sharing in line with the Civil Service Renewal Plan, which seeks improvements in how data is collected, managed and shared. 	Lead: DCYA	Key Departments contacted.			X		This action will be progressed in 2020; contact will be made with DPER in the context of the commitment to develop a Government data catalogue.
			Catalogue created of what data is collected.			X		

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
4.B Develop and enhance administrative data systems on babies, young children and their families to assess quality and support the delivery of integrated supports and services.	D.4.B.8. Develop rigorous approaches to capturing outcomes data of babies and young children at key development stages across child health and early learning systems. In particular, explore the potential for anonymised data from existing standardised tools to be used for analysis, e.g. Ages and Stages Questionnaire administered by Public Health Nurses at two-year check.	Lead: DCYA Partners: All relevant Government Departments	No Key Milestones for 2019.					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 4

A strong national infrastructure for research and data that is used to inform policy and practice alongside an ongoing programme of monitoring and evaluation.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.C Put in place robust systems of monitoring and evaluation across Government.	D.4.C.1. With reference to the existing age-relevant indicators in the BOBF indicator set and the associated development of a regular reporting framework, a set of indicators for early childhood will be compiled and reported on. The possible addition of supplementary indicators relevant to First 5 will be considered.	Lead: DCYA	Publication of updated values for the BOBF indicator set, including the publication of disaggregated values for the indicators.			X		Work started in 2019, some BOBF indicators available in the DCYA database, which is hosted on the CSO's Statbank database. Work is ongoing to ensure the full BOBF indicator set is available and up to date.
			Identification of supplementary indicators.				X	Work delayed due to a temporary change in staffing circumstances.
	D.4.C.2. Building on and updating previous work, progress and development of a methodological approach to support and inform any wider Government response to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child concluding observations recommending that the Irish state "...include children's rights impact assessments in the framework for integrated social impact assessments to ensure that fiscal and budgetary decisions are compliant with obligations under the Convention."	Lead: DCYA Partner: DPER	No Key Milestones for 2019.					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
4.C Put in place robust systems of monitoring and evaluation across Government.	D.4.C.3. Building on the EU Quality Framework for ECEC, develop a national monitoring and evaluation framework for ELC, including identification of a set of agreed indicators on the quantity, quality and targeting of provision, and regular publication of a national monitoring report.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Explore potential to align focus of OECD Quality Beyond Regulations country report for Ireland with EU Quality Framework for ECEC (see action D.4.C.4).	X				OECD Quality Beyond Regulations Country Background Report for Ireland has been compiled by Frontier Economics in accordance with OECD Guidelines for Country Background Reports for the Policy Review: Quality Beyond Regulations in ECEC.
	D.4.C.4. Develop measurement tools to assess quality of early childhood services commencing with a tool to measure and monitor the quality of practice in ELC settings. A national baseline study using the tool will be carried out, with a view to repeat quality reviews at regular intervals to assess progress in raising quality standards.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Scope development of a tool for measuring and monitoring the quality of practice, in the context of a development of self-evaluation framework.				X	This will be considered in the context of development of a self-evaluation framework.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
4.C Put in place robust systems of monitoring and evaluation across Government.	D.4.C.4. Develop measurement tools to assess quality of early childhood services commencing with a tool to measure and monitor the quality of practice in ELC settings. A national baseline study using the tool will be carried out, with a view to repeat quality reviews at regular intervals to assess progress in raising quality standards.	Joint Leads: DCYA and DES	Agree funding and arrangements for participation in OECD Quality Beyond Regulation (QBR) Project focusing on policies to enhance process quality, especially workforce development policies. In agreeing participation, explore the potential to align the scope with the EU Quality Framework for ECEC (see action D.4.C.3).	X				In 2019, the OECD sought countries to participate in the QBR project, which seeks to understand policies that can enhance process quality, especially workforce development policies. In tandem, the European Commission (EC) offered support to countries that undertake a full OECD ECEC Policy Review. The DCYA in partnership with the DES agreed to participate.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
<p>5.A Increase public funding in services and supports for babies, young children and their families.</p>	<p>D.5.A.1. Increase public investment in high-quality ELC (and school-age childcare) for all babies and young children to raise the quality and address the affordability of provision for families, particularly families on low income. By 2028 the level of public investment in ELC (and school-age childcare) will be at least doubled.</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA</p>	<p>Successful estimates campaign based on high-quality data and evidence on the need for additional investment in ELC.</p>	X				<p>In Budget 2019, an additional €89.6m was allocated to early learning and care and school-age childcare – representing more than 18% of the public investment target. Further progress was made in Budget 2020 (i.e. an additional allocation of €63.5m or a cumulative 31% of the public investment target). The 2020 allocation for ELC and SAC was €638m.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.A Increase public funding in services and supports for babies, young children and their families.	D.5.A.2. Deliver capital investment through the National Development Plan to develop the early childhood systems infrastructure, including ELC and school-age childcare provision, the new Children's Hospital and Urgent Care/ OPD Units, the National Maternity Hospital and the Primary Care Centre Construction Programme.	Lead: DoH	New Children's Hospital: Completion of Phase A construction works (substructure works on the main site).	X				Phase A construction works were completed in 2019.
			New Children's Hospital: Phase B works (7-storey above ground works) on site construction commenced.	X				Phase B works were instructed in early 2019. Construction work on the new children's hospital is progressing well. Across the 12-acre site the excavation, piling, and the structural frame to the underground basement for campus wide facilities management, energy centre, and the one thousand space underground carpark are complete.
			New Children's Hospital: Practical completion of the Connolly OPD Urgent Care Centre building in spring 2019.	X				Paediatric Outpatient and Urgent Care Centre at CHI Connolly opened 31 July 2019.
			The National Maternity Hospital: Decant works on pharmacy block and car park will be completed.			X		Update on this project shows that these works are expected to be completed by Q4 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.A Increase public funding in services and supports for babies, young children and their families.	D.5.A.2. Deliver capital investment through the National Development Plan to develop the early childhood systems infrastructure, including ELC and school-age childcare provision, the new Children's Hospital and Urgent Care/ OPD Units, the National Maternity Hospital and the Primary Care Centre Construction Programme.	Lead: DoH	Primary Care Centre Construction Programme: At the end of 2018, 127 Primary Care Centres are in operation with another 17 scheduled to open in 2019. 14 of these Primary Care Centres which opened recently were delivered by means of the HSE's first Public Private Partnership procurement process.			X		As per Q4 2019 Quarterly Updates the position at the end of 2019 was 129 centres were in operation with a further 18 scheduled to open later in 2020.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.B Develop more strategic approaches to funding supports for babies, young children and their families to deliver improved services.	D.5.B.1. In the context of a new model of parenting supports, adopt quality standards to underpin public funding of parenting supports in order to put in place a more strategic, consistent and sustainable basis for this work with a transparent framework for allocating resources.	Lead: DCYA Partners: Tusla, HSE and voluntary sector	No Key Milestones for 2019.					
	D.5.B.2. In the context of the Whole-of-Government Approach to Tackling Child Poverty, continue to work to determine the optimal design of child and family income supports to maximise their effectiveness and efficiency in reducing child poverty, while improving employment incentives. Continue also to develop multi-dimensional approaches to tackling child poverty, to complement child and family income support policies.	Lead: DEASP	The fourth annual review of BOBF, for the period April 2017 to end of 2018, is to be completed. This will allow us to judge progress towards the adoption of a whole-of-government approach to tackling child poverty.	X				Budget 2020 introduced a number of measures, which will have a direct and positive impact on child poverty. These include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working Family Payment thresholds increase by €10 per week for families with 1, 2 or 3 children. Some 55,000 families are expected to benefit, at a cost of €19 million from January 2020. Earnings disregard for working lone parents receiving One-Parent Family Payment or Jobseeker's Transition Payment to increase by €15 to €165 per week from January 2020 - 16,900 families to benefit. €3 increase from €37 to €40 per week for children aged 12 and a €2 increase from €34 to €36 per week for children up to age 12 in all weekly payments. Hot School Meals scheme - to be extended for up to 35,000 additional school children.

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.B Develop more strategic approaches to funding supports for babies, young children and their families to deliver improved services.	D.5.B.3. Develop and introduce a new funding model for ELC (and school-age childcare) that will support improved quality of provision without compromising sustainability for providers or affordability for parents.	Lead: DCYA	Expert Group appointed.	X				<p>An Expert Group to develop a new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) was established in September 2019. The Expert Group's inaugural meeting took place in October 2019. The Expert Group is independently chaired and is composed of both national and international experts, as well as policy experts from the DCYA, DES and DPER.</p> <p>Frontier Economics was appointed in late 2019 and is producing a number of working papers to support the work of the Expert Group.</p> <p>A programme of nationwide consultation and engagement to hear the views of parents, staff, providers and the wider sectoral organisations is also planned to inform this work.</p> <p>It is envisaged that the development of a new funding model will run to 2021 and the Group's recommendations will be submitted to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and ultimately the Government. The documentation relating to each Expert Group meeting is available at the project's website: www.first5fundingmodel.gov.ie.</p>
			Detailed project plan agreed.	X				
			Research partnership established.	X				
			First phase working papers progressed.	X				
			Approach(es) to wider stakeholder engagement (e.g. consultative forum, public consultation, etc.) agreed.	X				
D.5.B.4. Further develop the compliance framework and financial guidelines to underpin public funding in ELC and SAC, with an agreed mechanism to withdraw funding from settings that do not meet contractual requirements (quality or otherwise).	Lead: DCYA	Ongoing work on implementing the compliance framework having regard to the rules of the DCYA funding programmes, particularly focussing on financial matters.	X				All contracts for the DCYA funding programmes (NCS, ECCE, TEC and CCSP) have been updated for programme year 2020/2021 to include the recommendations from an independent consultants report on financial guidelines, these have regard to the funding rules with a particular focus on appropriate implementation of DPER Circular 13/14 as it pertains to these funding programmes.	

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
<p>5.B Develop more strategic approaches to funding supports for babies, young children and their families to deliver improved services.</p>	<p>D.5.B.4. Further develop the compliance framework and financial guidelines to underpin public funding in ELC and SAC, with an agreed mechanism to withdraw funding from settings that do not meet contractual requirements (quality or otherwise).</p>	<p>Lead: DCYA</p>	<p>Focus on National Childcare Scheme governance arrangements - financial guidelines to issue.</p>			X		<p>The report from an independent consultant on the governance arrangements for the NCS provided some training materials to support financial guidelines for the sector. The DCYA is working in collaboration with Pobal to roll these out as part of suite of training to support the sector, delivery Q4 2020.</p>

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
5.C Develop appropriate mechanisms to accurately track progress in public investment in early childhood.	D.5.C.1. Building on previous work in this area, develop indicators to accurately identify public investment in early childhood across key spending areas and to establish the baseline against which progress can be tracked. In addition to tracking total amount of public spending in early childhood, develop and monitor additional financial and non-financial indicators (with appropriate international comparators) to track progress in the development of effective early childhood systems, e.g. proportion of (average) household income spent on ELC (and school-age childcare), child poverty targets, take-up rates of entitlements such as parental leave, rates of pay in ELC.	Lead: DCYA	No Key Milestones in 2019..					

GOAL D

An effective early childhood system

BUILDING BLOCK 5

Additional public funding that is strategically invested to achieve the best outcomes for babies, young children and their families.

Strategic Action	Action	Lead and Partner(s)	Key Milestone 2019	Progress 2019 Milestones.				Narrative on progress for 2019 Milestones
				Complete	Complete Q2 2020	Due Q4 2020	Delayed	
5.C Develop appropriate mechanisms to accurately track progress in public investment in early childhood.	D.5.C.2. Continue to undertake Social Impact Assessments of investment in early childhood, commencing with a review of the social impact of recent changes to funding for ELC and school-age childcare.	Joint Leads: All relevant Government Departments	Papers published periodically as part of the Social Impact Assessment Series, guided by the Irish Government Economic and Evaluation Service Social Impact Assessment Framework.	X				A Social impact assessment of Targeted Childcare Programmes was published under the Social Impact Assessment Series.

APPENDIX TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR FIRST 5 INTER-DEPARTMENTAL GROUP (IDG)

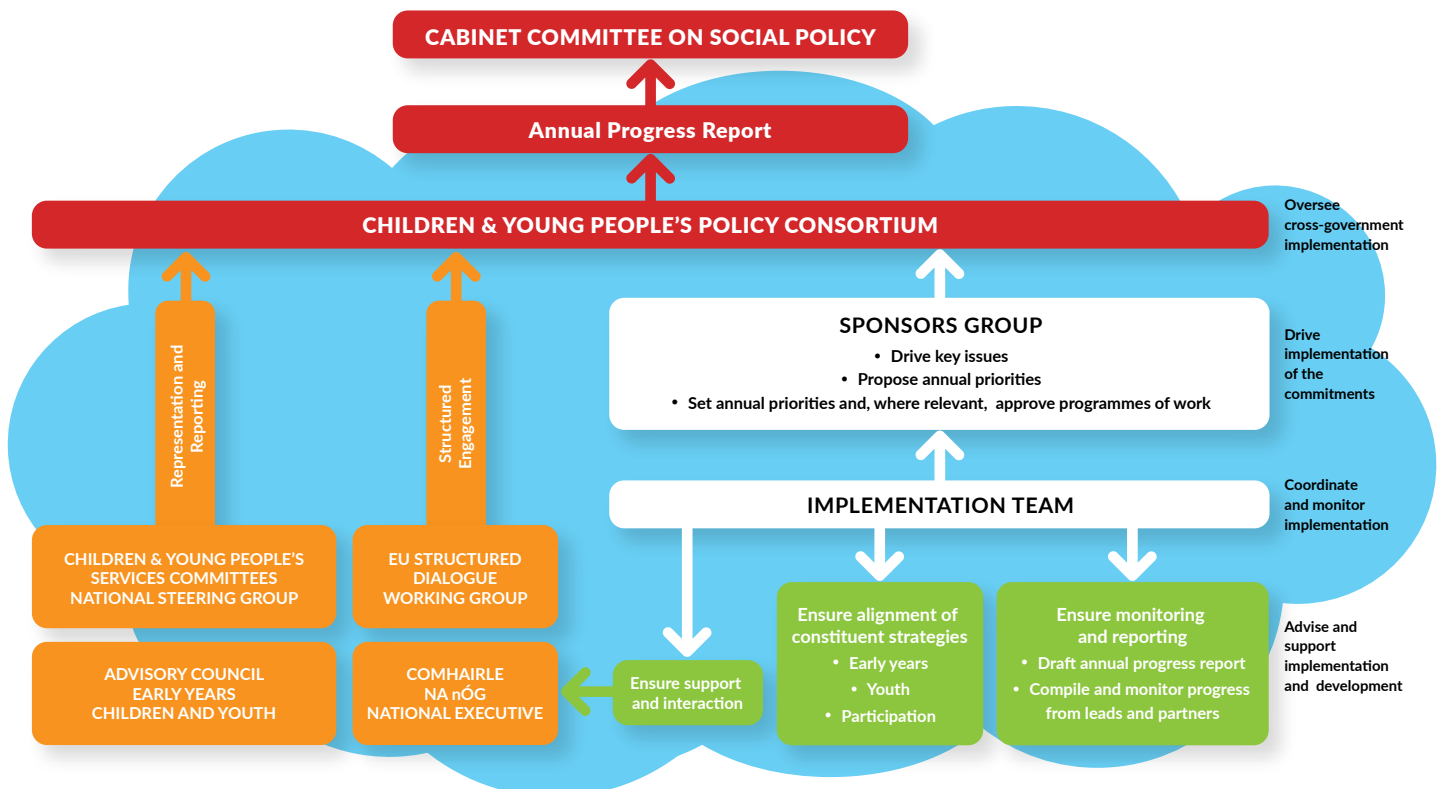


Background

First 5, the Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families was published in November 2018 followed by a detailed three-year implementation plan in May 2019. This work was overseen by an Inter-Departmental Group chaired by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

First 5 is a ten-year strategy that focuses on the period from the antenatal period to age 5, but it is a constituent strategy of the wider Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures (BOBF), National Policy Framework for Children and Young People Aged 0-25. The implementation structures for First 5 are therefore located within BOBF's overall implementation framework. These structures bring together stakeholders across Government Departments, State Agencies, and the community and voluntary sectors.

Better Outcomes, Brighter Futures Implementation Structures



In addition to the BOBF implementation structures, a First 5 Implementation Office has been established in the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to spearhead monitoring and reporting of First 5 and ensure the necessary infrastructure is in place to support implementation (e.g. First 5 Research and Evaluation Plan, First 5 Communications Strategy and First 5 Indicators). The purpose, role and membership of the First 5 Inter-Departmental Group has also been extended.

Purpose

The purpose of the First 5 Inter-Departmental Group is to:

- Develop awareness and ownership of First 5 within and across Government Departments, State Agencies and among other key stakeholders.
- Support and report on the implementation of First 5 within and across Government Departments, State Agencies and among other key stakeholders.
- Provide guidance and advice to the First 5 Implementation Office on:
 - approaches to monitoring and reporting (e.g. First 5 Annual Report, First 5 Indicators),
 - the infrastructure to be put in place to support implementation (i.e. First 5 Research and Evaluation Plan, First 5 Communications Strategy and Annual Plan) and
 - strategic, policy, legislative and operational issues of relevance to First 5 and its implementation.
- Provide a forum to raise implementation issues and to develop solutions to implementation challenges arising, if any.

Role of members

Members of the First 5 Inter-Department Group will:

- Act as the contact point between the First 5 Implementation Office and their Department/ Agency.
- Support and promote First 5 and the implementation of First 5 actions assigned to their Department/Agency, liaising with relevant partners, where necessary, to work towards the achievement of annual milestones.
- Facilitate meetings with other officials in their Department/Agency as necessary.

- Co-ordinate and review material on First 5 Implementation related to their Department/Agency, liaising with relevant partners, where necessary (e.g. report of progress on a bi-annual basis and input into the development of the First 5 Annual Report).
- Provide guidance and advice to the First 5 Implementation Office on First 5 related matters.

Membership

The First 5 Inter-Departmental Group will be led by a Chairperson appointed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The remainder of the Group will be comprised as follows:

- Department of Children and Youth Affairs representatives
- Department of Education and Skills representative
- Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection representative
- Department of Justice and Equality representative
- Department of Health representative
- Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government representative
- Department of Public Expenditure and Reform representative
- Department of Rural and Community Development representative
- Health Service Executive representative
- Tusla, the Child and Family Agency representative

The Department of An Taoiseach will also be included in circulation of papers of the Inter-Departmental Group.

Secretariat

The First 5 Implementation Office will provide secretariat support to the First 5 Inter-Departmental Group.

Schedule of Meetings

The First 5 Inter-Departmental Group will meet 2 times per year in the normal course. Additional meetings may be tabled by the Chairperson as and when the need arises.

END NOTES



End Notes

1. The *First 5* Vision of an effective early childhood system is underpinned by theory and evidence of what works. The systemic approach is informed by the work of ZERO TO THREE, a global organisation focused on child development. ZERO TO THREE brings together researchers and clinicians from diverse disciplines, providing resources for parents, professionals and policy-makers. The body of work emphasises the need for a comprehensive and coordinated approach, with policies and programmes promoting good health, strong families and positive early learning experiences. Resources and information are available at: <https://www.zerotothree.org/>
2. Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*. London: HM Government.
3. Phillips, D.A., & Shonkoff, J.P. (Eds.) (2000) *From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Washington: National Academies Press.
4. World Health Organization (WHO) (2003) *Pregnancy, Childbirth, Postpartum, and Newborn Care: A Guide for Essential Practice*. Geneva: WHO.
5. National Scientific Council on the Developing Child (2007) *The Science of Early Childhood Development*. Available at: <http://www.developingchild.net>
6. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2013) *Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy*. Dublin: Government Publications.
7. Hall, D.M.B. & Elliman, D. (2006) *Health for all Children (revised 4th edition)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
8. Denyer, S. (2005) *Best Health for Children Revisited – Report from the National Core Child Health Programme Review Group to the Health Service Executive*. Dublin: Health Service Executive (HSE).
9. Epsing-Andersen, G. (1998) *Equal Opportunities in an Increasingly Hostile World*. Trois Lectures II. Lecture Series. Available at: http://dcpis.upf.edu/~gosta-epsing-andersen/materials/equal_oportunities.pdf.
10. Davies, C. & Ward, H. (2012) *Safeguarding Children Across Services: Message from Research*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
11. Jackson, K.M. & Nazar, A.M. (2006) Breastfeeding, the Immune Response, and Long-Term Health, *Journal of the American Osteopathic Association*, Vol. 106, pp. 203-207.
12. Munro, E. (2011) *The Munro Review of Child Protection: Final Report. A Child-Centred System*. London: Department for Education.
13. Allen, G. (2011) *Early Intervention: The Next Steps*. London: HM Government.
14. Frost, J.L., Wortham, S.C., & Reifel, R.S. (2001) *Play and Child Development*. Prentice Hall: Merrill.
15. Ruhm, C.J. (2004). Parental Employment and Child Cognitive Development. *Journal of Human Resources*, 39(1), pp. 155–192.
16. Merriman, B., Greene, S., Doyle, E. & McDaid, R. (2013) *Report on the Qualitative Study of Infants and Their Parents at Wave 1 (Nine Months)*. *Growing Up in Ireland: National Longitudinal Study of Children*. Dublin: The Stationery Office.
17. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2013) *Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy*. Dublin: Government Publications.
18. Russell, H., McGinnity, F., Fahey, É. & Kenny, O. (2018) *Maternal Employment and the Cost of Childcare in Ireland*. Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI).
19. Urban, M., Vandenbroeck, M., Lazzari, A., Peeters, J., & van Laere, K. (2011) *Competence Requirements in Early Childhood Education and Care (CoRe)*. A Study for the European Commission Directorate-General for Education and Culture. London & Ghent: University of East London, University of Ghent.
20. O’Kane, M. (2016) *Transition from Pre-School to Primary School. Research Report No. 19*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).
21. Ibid.
22. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2006) *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paris: OECD.
23. French, G. (2007) *Children’s Early Learning and Development: A Background Paper*. Dublin: National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA).
24. Department of Children and Youth Affairs (2013) *Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy*. Dublin: Government Publications.



Rialtas na hÉireann
Government of Ireland