

# **DEVELOPING CHILDCARE IN IRELAND**



**A REVIEW OF PROGRESS TO END 2003  
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE**

**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE  
PROGRAMME  
2000 – 2006**

**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM**



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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Chapter</b>	<b>Page</b>
Foreword by Mr. Michael McDowell, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform	
1. Childcare Provision in Ireland prior to the EOCP 2000 - 2006	1
2. Demand for Childcare among Parents participating in the Labour Force	5
3. EOCP 2000 – 2006 Structures and Administration	11
4. Developing and Supporting Childcare Facilities through the Capital and Staffing Programmes and other Government Initiatives	19
5. EOCP 2000 – 2006 Promoting Quality in Childcare	29
6. Impact of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme	41
7. Progress and Challenges	51
 <b>Appendices</b>	
A. Report by Mr. Michael McDowell, T.D., Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Expert Working Group on Childcare	
B. Grant Approvals to Childcare Facilities to end December 2003	
C. Grant Approvals under Quality Sub-Measure to end December 2003	

**CHAPTER 1**  
**CHILDCARE PROVISION IN IRELAND**  
**PRIOR TO THE**  
**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME 2000 – 2006**

**1.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1.1 Economic and societal changes over the past thirty years have completely altered the role of the Irish woman. It was not until the early 1970s that women in general began to remain in employment following marriage and, even then, most frequently women withdrew from the labour market on the birth of their first child. This reflected a mix of traditional values and the lack of childcare options. Many of those who chose to remain in the labour force found themselves relying upon family members or neighbours to provide childcare.
- 1.1.2 The provision of formal childcare was very limited with few centre based childcare facilities and much of the so-called childcare provision offering only pre-school educational and socialisation opportunities in very small and relatively unstructured settings, usually for the academic year prior to the first year in infant school.
- 1.1.3 In Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s, as more mothers tended to remain in or return to the workforce, the childcare needs of parents continued to be most frequently met by family or neighbours. Indeed, the survey of Childcare undertaken by the Central Statistics Office in 2003<sup>1</sup> shows that this reliance on relatives to provide childcare support still remains in very many families.
- 1.1.4 The potential of the female labour force as an impetus for further economic growth, together with the economic needs of many couples, continued to advance female participation in the labour force at the same time as EU equality legislation expanded opportunities for women. The overall result of these changes was an increasing awareness of the need for childcare services.
- 1.1.5 The result was the establishment in 1997 of an Expert Working Group on Childcare in the context of the Partnership 2000 national agreement. The Expert Working Group was mandated to develop a National Childcare Strategy. The focus of the National Childcare Strategy was on the development of a comprehensive childcare service to meet the needs of parents in employment, education and training. The Expert Working Group published its findings in 1999<sup>2</sup> and these have informed much of the public policy response to childcare in the early years of the new Millennium. In February 2004, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform included a report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Expert Working Group on Childcare in a response to a Parliamentary Question. This report on progress is reproduced in Appendix A.

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<sup>1</sup> CSO (1) : Quarterly National Household Survey : Module on Childcare: July 2003

<sup>2</sup> Ireland (1) : National Childcare Strategy : Report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare : January 1999

- 1.1.6 These recommendations also formed the basis for the structure of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006, details of which are given in Chapter 3.

## **1.2 PILOT CHILDCARE INITIATIVE 1994 – 1996**

- 1.2.1 The Pilot Childcare Initiative was an initiative of the Department of Equality and Law Reform which involved the expenditure of £1.85 million (€2.34 million) on the provision of childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas for the purpose of facilitating participation by socially excluded mothers – or fathers where they had the main responsibility for rearing their children – in employment, development, training or education. Seventy three projects benefited from this pilot initiative, with the creation of about 800 new childcare places and a doubling of the opening hours of the various services which received grant assistance under the Pilot Initiative.

## **1.3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME 1998 - 1999**

- 1.3.1 The provision in 1998 of a total of £11 million of EU coupled with Exchequer match funding (€14 million) in the context of the Mid-Term Review of the Community Support Framework for Ireland 1994 – 1999<sup>3</sup> marked the first significant steps towards the provision of Government incentives to develop childcare services to address the needs of parents in employment, education and training.
- 1.3.2 The first Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 1998 – 1999 (EOCP I) concentrated on a number of small initiatives which had a strong emphasis on the provision of childcare in areas of disadvantage. Support was made available to enable each of the 25 chosen childcare facilities to recruit two senior childcare personnel. The 25 projects provided childcare for 1,528 children.
- 1.3.3 A further element of the Programme made funding available for a number of Employer Demonstration Initiatives on work based childcare but it is probably fair to say that this was less than successful and only a very small number of the projects were either brought to fruition or sustained.

## **1.4 CENSUS OF CHILDCARE PROVISION 1999**

- 1.4.1 A further key element of EOCP I was a census of childcare providers which provided some useful information on the level of centre based childcare provision in Ireland at the time and which formed the baseline study for the 2000 – 2006 Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP II).
- 1.4.2 The Census<sup>4</sup> covered 91 per cent of childcare providers and measured children in childcare settings (but not children being cared for by childminders). It found that

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<sup>3</sup> Ireland (2) ; Department of Finance : unpublished

<sup>4</sup> ADM Ltd. For Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform : Summer 2003

56,803 children aged from under 1 year to over 11 years were being cared for in childcare settings similar to those planned for development in the EOCP.

1.4.3 Some key figures from the Census Summary are given in the following table:

**Table 1.1**  
**National Childcare Census 1999 – 2000**  
**Key findings – numbers of children in Childcare Settings**

Age Group	Community/Private		Urban/Rural		Sessional/Full time	
	Community	Private	Urban	Rural	Sessional	Full time
< 1 yr	866	1,471	1,231	1,106	728	1,609
1 – 3 yrs	4,925	7,590	6,348	6,167	6,172	6,343
3 – 6 yrs	14,554	23,065	13,011	24,608	29,762	7,857
6 - 12 yrs	2,809	1,513	1,491	2,841	2,856	1,476
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>23,164</b>	<b>33,639</b>	<b>22,081</b>	<b>34,722</b>	<b>39,518</b>	<b>17,285</b>

Source : National Childcare Census Report Baseline Data 1999/2000 : Chapter 4

1.4.4 The Census found that only 8.6 per cent of children aged up to twelve years attended centre based childcare. Of these, almost 70 per cent attended a sessional service. Somewhat surprisingly, almost 1,500 children aged over 6 years were reported to be attending a full time day care service - this may be a quirk of the dates of the data collection as it might have been assumed that such children would be in formal educational establishments for much of the day. It is also worth noting that a very significant number of the 3 to 6 year age group attended sessional services – these are likely to be largely attendees at “pre-school” or “early education” settings rather than participants in a “childcare” service.

1.4.5 It is interesting to deduce from the Census that nearly 69 per cent of the “under 1 year old” children who were availing of centre based childcare received full day care while the spread between sessional and full day care evens out in the age group 1 to 3 years. Among the three to six year olds, the mix between sessional and full day care skews to 81 per cent in sessional care. This group is likely to include numbers of children in early education settings and children in childcare outside normal school hours.

1.4.6 A review of the urban/rural split in the use of childcare showed that 9.8 per cent of children up to 12 years in urban settings and 8.1 per cent of children in rural settings attended childcare. A review of tables 4.1.4 and 4.1.5 in the Summary Report showed that there was a similarity in participation levels among 3 to 6 year olds at between 23 and 24 per cent and also among older children at about 1.2 per cent. However, usage of childcare for younger children was much higher in urban than in rural settings, with 6.7 per cent of under 1 year old children in urban areas availing of centre based childcare and only 3.6 per cent of rurally based under 1 year olds using centre based childcare.

1.4.7 The National Childcare Census became the Baseline Study for the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 of which there is more detail in Chapter 3. These data are also amplified and updated in Chapter 6 which looks at the results of the 2003 Survey of grant beneficiaries under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE DEMAND FOR CHILDCARE AMONG PARENTS PARTICIPATING IN THE LABOUR FORCE

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1.1 Given the relatively underdeveloped nature of childcare provision in Ireland at the turn of the century and, in particular, a wide reliance on family day care and on the provision of care by family or neighbours, be they paid or unpaid, it is quite difficult to assess the level of demand for childcare.
- 2.1.2 This task is rendered all the more difficult because quite significant numbers of children are thought to participate in more than one childcare service at a time. For example, a three year old may be cared for on a full day basis by a childminder but may attend a pre-school for developmental and socialisation purposes for a couple of hours each morning. Similarly, a child may attend a childminder in the hours before and after the formal education day and attend primary school from 09.00 to 14.30 each day during school term.
- 2.1.3 The lack of good baseline research on parents needs with regard to childcare makes the determination of demand for childcare a very inexact science. However, a number of publications in recent years give some measure of the need for childcare.

#### 2.2 THE ECONOMICS OF CHILDCARE IN IRELAND (1998)

- 2.2.1 The Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group<sup>5</sup> commissioned research to determine, inter alia, the current and future demand for childcare in Ireland. The research<sup>6</sup> was undertaken jointly by Goodbody Economic Consultants, the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Psychology Department of UCD and the Policy Institute, London.
- 2.2.2 The research focused on the pre-school child and the younger child in primary school only and estimated that the numbers of children aged between 0 and 9 years availing of childcare would increase from 146,000 in 1996 to somewhere between 185,000 and 220,000 in 2011.
- 2.2.3 The research looked at three different hypotheses based upon a mix of the following criteria :
- The increase in labour force participation by women – constant in all three hypotheses at about 60 per cent;
  - The ratio of mothers working part time and full time; and
  - Take up of childcare among mothers at work and remaining in the home.

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<sup>5</sup> Ireland (1) : Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> unpublished

2.2.4 The upper forecast is based on the assumption that the ratio of part time to full time working mothers halved in the intervening period and that the take up of childcare by mothers at home would double. These criteria emphasise the inexactitude of the science of forecasting childcare demand.

2.2.5 The same research then attempts to forecast childcare usage by type and identifies a number of imponderables. It expects that working mothers would favour the continued use of childminders but notes that the continued involvement of childminders within the sector is threatened by the availability of alternative employment opportunities.

### 2.3 QUARTERLY NATIONAL HOUSEHOLD SURVEY MODULE ON CHILDCARE : WINTER 2002

2.3.1 To throw further light on the Childcare Sector, the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) asked the Central Statistics Office to undertake a study of childcare usage as an element of the National Quarterly Household Survey. The study was carried out in the period from September to November 2002 and the findings were published in mid 2003<sup>7</sup>. They give some useful insights into the sector.

2.3.2 The following table shows some of the key findings in relation to the usage by parents of non-parental childcare:

**TABLE 2.1  
USAGE OF NON -PARENTAL CHILDCARE BY PARENTS IN IRELAND 2002**

	Pre-School (b)		Primary School	
	No. of families using childcare service ('000)	% of families using childcare service	No. of families using childcare service ('000)	% of families using childcare service
<b>Unpaid relative</b>	22.8	31.2	31.1	46.1
<b>Paid relative</b>	8.8	12.0	9.5	14.1
<b>Paid carer</b>	21.5	29.4	21.5	31.9
<b>Group setting</b>	19.8	27.1	4.1	6.1
<b>Other</b>	5.4	7.4	2.9	4.3
<b>TOTAL (a)</b>	73.1	107.1	67.5	102.5

Source : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module : published 2003

Note (a) : The totals add to more than 100 per cent, reflecting the usage of a number of different services by parents.

Note (b) : In this study and throughout this section of the report , “Pre-School” is defined as referring to pre-school children.

2.3.3 As the table shows, about 73,000 families with pre-school children avail of non-parental childcare while about 67,500 families of primary school children use non parental childcare to care for their children during normal working hours. Among parents of pre-school children, the reliance on unpaid relatives is still very high at approximately 31 per cent while, for primary school children, the percentage is very high at 46 per cent.

<sup>7</sup> CSO (1) : *ibid.*

2.3.4 Table 2.2 below is derived from the results published by CSO in its Childcare study. It quantifies the numbers of children in childcare on the basis of the survey findings. In total, it would appear that about 140,000 pre-school children and 126,000 primary school children are receiving non-parental childcare in Ireland. Some 90,000 (or about a third of the whole group) are being cared for by unpaid relatives and about a quarter are being cared for by relatives who are receiving payment from the parents. As expected the survey found that paid carers continue to be significant providers of childcare with about 40,000 pre-school and 43,000 primary school children being cared for by a paid carer. The survey found that only about 35,500 pre-school children receive their principal childcare in a group setting while the numbers of primary school children availing of centre based after school care was only 7,000, reflecting the lack of options in this service at present. Among the pre-school group, a further 11,800 received non-parental childcare in “other” settings.

**TABLE 2.2  
NUMBERS OF CHILDREN IN NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE IN IRELAND 2002**

	Pre-School		Primary School	
	No. of children using childcare service ('000)	% of children in childcare service type	No. of children using childcare service ('000)	% of children in childcare service type
<b>Unpaid relative</b>	38.7	27.4	52.8	41.7
<b>Paid relative</b>	14.7	10.4	18.2	14.4
<b>Paid carer</b>	40.9	28.9	43.1	34.1
<b>Group setting</b>	35.5	25.1	7.0	5.5
<b>Other</b>	11.8	8.3	5.4	4.3
<b>TOTAL</b>	141.4	100.0	126.5	100.0

Source : Derived from : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module : publ. 2003

2.3.5 Central to the equalisation of opportunities focus for childcare support is the extent to which women who avail of childcare participate in the labour market. This issue was addressed in the Quarterly National Household Survey which found that most of the mothers (or guardians) who availed of non-parental childcare were in employment. Table 2.3 shows the principal economic status of the mothers/guardians using childcare for both pre-school and after school care.

**TABLE 2.3  
PRINCIPAL ECONOMIC STATUS OF MOTHERS/GUARDIANS AVAILING OF NON-PARENTAL CHILDCARE IN IRELAND 2002**

	Pre-School		Primary School	
	No. of mothers/guardians by economic status ('000)	% of mothers/guardians by economic status	No. of mothers/guardians by economic status ('000)	% of mothers/guardians by economic status
<b>At work</b>	62.5	85.5	62.6	92.9
<b>Unemployed</b>	0.7	1.0	0.3	0.5
<b>Student</b>	1.1	1.5	1.1	1.6
<b>Home duties</b>	8.5	11.6	3.0	4.4
<b>Retired/other</b>	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	73.1	100.0	67.4	100.0

Source : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module : published 2003

2.3.6 Among mothers/guardians at work, the choices for childcare are compared in the following table. The survey found that there were about 125,000 mothers and guardians in employment. It did not differentiate the length of the working day between full and part time employment.

**TABLE 2.4**  
**TYPE OF CHILDCARE AVAILED OF BY MOTHERS/GUARDIANS IN EMPLOYMENT**  
**IN IRELAND 2002**

	Pre-School		Primary School	
	No. of mothers/ guardians availing of childcare type (‘000)	% of mothers/ guardians availing of childcare type	No. of mothers/ guardians availing of childcare type (‘000)	% of mothers/ guardians availing of childcare type
<b>Unpaid relative</b>	20.2	30.0	28.6	44.7
<b>Paid relative</b>	8.5	12.6	9.1	14.2
<b>Paid carer</b>	20.7	30.8	20.5	32.0
<b>Group setting</b>	15.1	22.4	3.7	5.8
<b>Other</b>	2.7	4.0	2.2	3.4
<b>TOTAL</b>	67.2	100.0	64.1	100.0

Source : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module : published 2003

2.3.7 If this table is compared with Table 2.1 above it will be noted that the patterns for usage are quite similar with the exception of the use of group based facilities. Among all families, nearly 28 per cent used group based pre-school childcare facilities, but the percentage of working mothers/guardians using such facilities falls somewhat reflecting a take up of these services by mothers on home duties. Some 3,700 mothers on home duties reported that they avail of centre based childcare for their pre-school children. However, given the broad definition of centre based childcare to include naónraí and pre-school services, it may be that these children are attending facilities which offer pre-school developmental and socialisation opportunities.

2.3.8 About half of the parents in each group identified a preference for an alternative to their present childcare arrangements. The following table summarises the findings:

**TABLE 2.5**  
**ALTERNATIVE TYPE OF CHILDCARE PREFERRED BY FAMILIES IN IRELAND 2002**

	Pre-School		Primary School	
	No. of families by preference (‘000)	% of families by preference	No. of families by preference (‘000)	% of families by preference
<b>Parent/guardian</b>	3.4	10.5	3.3	9.7
<b>Unpaid relative</b>	1.2	3.7	1.8	10.9
<b>Paid relative</b>	1.9	5.9	2.9	8.6
<b>Paid carer</b>	6.8	21.0	7.4	21.8
<b>Group setting</b>	15.8	48.8	4.7	13.9
<b>After school based</b>	-	-	8.3	24.5
<b>Other</b>	3.3	10.2	5.6	16.5
<b>TOTAL</b>	32.4	100.0	33.9	100.0

Source : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module : published 2003

About ten per cent of families showed a preference for having children cared for within their own family setting. Among the pre-school group, there was also a

preference for centre based childcare but nearly half of the families noted that the service was not available to them while a further third cited cost as the reason they could not avail of their preferred choice of centre based care. Among the families with school going children, about a quarter of parents would favour using centre based after school care and most cited lack of availability of the service as the reason they could not use their preferred childcare choice for their children.

2.3.9 The study by the Central Statistics Office also looked at the costs of childcare for families. The following table summarises the key results of this element of the study.

**TABLE 2.6  
AVERAGE WEEKLY COST OF PAID CHILDCARE IN IRELAND 2002**

	Average weekly cost In €	Range of weekly costs in €	
		From (region)	To (region)
<b>Pre-school only</b>	105.36	80.78 (Border)	131.12 (Dublin)
<b>Primary only</b>	75.54	63.03 (West)	91.33 (Dublin)
<b>Both</b>	107.37	84.89 (Mid-West)	129.15 (Mid-East)
<b>TOTAL</b>	97.47	79.42 (Border)	118.96 (Dublin)

Source : CSO Quarterly National Household Survey 2003

The average cost of childcare per family appears to be almost €100, with the average cost of pre-school care at about €106 per week. However, across all service types the range of amounts being paid varied quite significantly with a variation of some €40 per week between the cheaper and more expensive regions being something of a norm.

## 2.4 LABOUR FORCE PARTICIPATION AMONG WOMEN

2.4.1 The Central Statistics Office regularly publishes data on the participation of women in the labour market. The most recent issue<sup>8</sup> of the Quarterly National Household Survey shows a female labour force participation rate of 49.5 per cent. This compares with the male labour force participation rate of 71.1 per cent in the same data series.

2.4.2 As a participation rate, this represents a considerable increase on the 1997 level of 45.8 per cent among women. This relative growth of about 8 per cent masks a growth in absolute terms of almost 31 per cent with an increase from 587,900 women working in 1997 to 770,100 working in the December 03/February 04 quarter.

2.4.3 Also noteworthy is the very significant increase in part time employment among women. In the period 1997 to 2004<sup>9</sup>, the numbers of women in full time employment grew from 405,700 to 530,200, an increase of 30.7 per cent. In the same period the numbers of women working part time grew from 182,100 to 240,000 an increase of 32 per cent. Again it is noteworthy that while 13,000 of the part time female workers deemed themselves to be underemployed in 1997, only 1,900 so deemed themselves in 2002. This appears to show that many women are content to undertake part time rather than full time employment.

<sup>8</sup> CSO (2) : Quarterly National Household Survey : First Quarter 2004 : published June 2004

<sup>9</sup> CSO (3) : Quarterly National Household Survey : Revised series post 2002 Census of Population : published June 2004

- 2.4.4 The latest Quarterly National Household Survey<sup>10</sup>, Spring 2004 also reveals that there are 282,700 couples with children of pre-school and/or school going age where the female partner works while there are 59,000 lone parent family units with children of pre-school and/or school going age where the lone parent works.
- 2.4.5 While all these labour force statistics give a clear indication of the need for childcare to support parents in employment, there is a lack of solid information linking childcare availability to employment participation.

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<sup>10</sup> CSO (2) *ibid.*

## CHAPTER 3

### EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME 2000– 2006 STRUCTURES AND ADMINISTRATION

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

3.1.1 The Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare<sup>11</sup> recommended a multi-faceted approach to the development of childcare to meet the needs of parents in employment, education and training. This included the provision of financial supports towards the development of new services and the enhancement of existing services, the adoption of a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of services and the provision of taxation relief on the costs of childcare<sup>12</sup>. While the provision of demand led supports for the development of childcare is a matter for the Department of Finance, the Equality Division of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) became the Lead Department for the development of the supply of childcare.

3.1.2 The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 (EOCP II) was launched as an element of the National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 (NDP)<sup>13</sup> and is largely funded through the two Regional Operational Programmes<sup>14</sup> for the Border, Midlands and Western Region (BMW) and the Southern and Eastern Region (S&E) respectively. The main objectives of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme are

- To improve the quality of childcare;
- To maintain and increase the number of childcare facilities and places; and
- To introduce a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services.

3.1.3 The Programme originally made available €17.4 million in funding, including €170 million in ERDF/ESF support. This was subsequently augmented by a further allocation of €33.6 million of Exchequer funding from the Programme for Prosperity and Fairness social partnership agreement anti-inflationary package together with transfers of almost €6 million from other Government Departments which accompanied the transfer of responsibilities for school age childcare to the D/JELR from the Departments of Education and Science and the (then) Department of Social, Community and Family Affairs. This brought the total allocation for the development of childcare over the seven year period 2000 – 2006 to €436.7 million.

3.1.4 Funding for the EOCP is channelled through the two Regional Operational Programmes as elements of the Social Inclusion and Childcare Priority or Sub-Programme. Each of the Operational Programmes refers to the lack of childcare as a significant contributor to exclusion from available education, training and employment opportunities. They note that this impacts most severely on women, in particular disadvantaged women and single parent families.

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<sup>11</sup> Ireland (1) : *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> See Appendix 1 for more detail

<sup>13</sup> Ireland (2) : National Development Plan 2000 – 2006 : Stationery Office

<sup>14</sup> Ireland (3) see Regional Assembly websites for full detail of Operational Programmes

3.1.5 The EOCP is structured into two Measures of the Regional Operational Programmes : the Facilities Measure makes capital grant assistance available to create new and enhanced childcare facilities, with significant European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Exchequer support while the Staffing and Quality Sub-Measures make European Social Fund (ESF) and Exchequer supports available to assist with the staffing costs incurred in childcare facilities which support disadvantaged parents in employment, education and training and towards projects which develop and enhance quality awareness in the childcare sector in Ireland.

## 3.2 FUNDING AVAILABLE FOR THE EOCP

3.2.1 The following table shows the funding available by Measure under the EOCP :

**Table 3.1**  
**Funding allocated to each Sub-Measure under EOCP II at end December 2003**

Sub-Measure	Funding €million	Of which EU Support €million
Capital development	140.8	54.7 (ERDF)
Staffing grant assistance	209.9	78.1 (ESF)
Quality Enhancement	71.6	37.3 (ESF)
Programme Administration	14.4	
TOTAL	436.7	170.1

3.2.2 The Mid-Term Review of the NDP brought a further increase in funding provision for childcare in Ireland of about € million of ESF funding while the Mid-Term Review of the BMW Regional OP led the Assembly to transfer about 2.7 million of ERDF funding and €0.9 million of Exchequer match funding to the Childcare measure. This will bring the total funding available to €449.3 million.

3.2.3 The additional ESF funding is being match funded from the existing Exchequer provision. Much of this additional ESF funding will be allocated to support the staffing costs for School Age Childcare while some will be used to facilitate greater co-operation and collaboration between the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs) and the City/County Childcare Committees (C/CCCs).

3.2.4 The Mid Term Evaluation also offered an opportunity to D/JELR to carry out a thorough review of the demand under each Sub-Measure. Capital grant applications have been particularly buoyant and, as this Measure is effectively putting in place the supply of childcare places for the future, it merits particular support.

3.2.5 All of the Reviews of the EOCP have pointed to the success of the Quality Sub-Measure, making particular mention of the C/CCCs. Experience has shown that the original allocation for this Sub-Measure was not adequate to support the full range of activities being undertaken to promote quality childcare. The result of the D/JELR review of the funding needs of the three Measures has led to an increase in capital provision and to the transfer of funds from the staffing sub-measure to the quality sub-measure within the constraints of the existing funding package.

3.2.6 The revised financial profile for the EOCP following the additional funding and the inter-Measure transfers is given in Table 3.2 below:

**Table 3.2**  
**Revised funding allocation to each Sub-Measure following Mid Term Reviews**

Sub-Measure	Funding €million	Of which EU Support €million
Capital development	154.5	57.5 (ERDF)
Staffing grant assistance	193.5	84.8 (ESF)
Quality Enhancement	83.3	39.4 (ESF)
Programme Administration	18.0	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>449.3</b>	<b>181.8</b>

### **3.3 ADMINISTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE EOCP**

3.3.1 The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) has been given lead responsibility by the Government for the development of Childcare to meet the needs of parents in employment, education and training. This links to the Department's role in the promotion of equality and in particular the promotion of equality of opportunity in the work place and the removal of barriers to female participation in the labour market.

3.3.2 The Childcare Directorate within the Equality Division of the Department has responsibility for the field. The Directorate also engages in inter-Departmental policy work in relation to issues relating to the childcare sector such as regulation, which is the responsibility of the Department of Health and Children, early education which is a matter for the Department of Education and Science and to broader issues such as the contribution which childcare can make to social inclusion and to the amelioration of life opportunities.

3.3.3 D/JELR is also Lead Department for the implementation of the Childcare Measures of the Regional Operational Programmes. Accordingly D/JELR oversees all aspects of the implementation of the Childcare Measures and reports on progress to the Regional Monitoring Committees under the two Regional Assemblies.

3.3.4 D/JELR has engaged Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) to manage the day to day operations of the EOCP. This includes the technical appraisal of projects; the making of recommendations for funding, implementation of contracts with grant recipients; payment of grants on behalf of the Programme; financial monitoring; data collection on outcomes against indicators; and the provision of a wide range of developmental supports to the beneficiaries under the Programme, aiming to enhance the capacity of the childcare sector. ADM also offers advice to the D/JELR on the implementation of the Programme and on the broader area of national childcare policy.

3.3.5 Specific targets and indicators were set for each element of the Operational Programmes (OP) which make up the NDP and for each Sub-Measure of the OPs.

Lead Departments are required to report upon progress against those targets and on financial performance on the delivery of each Sub-Measure on a half yearly basis at the Monitoring Committee meetings.

- 3.3.6 Each element of the NDP was reviewed at the Mid-Term (actually in mid-2003) by firms of external consultants who were engaged to give an independent overview of the performance of each Operational Programme and the extent to which it was meeting the targets and the extent to which the Programme was still relevant as an instrument of economic and social development. It was open to the Monitoring Committee for each OP and to the Monitoring Committee for the NDP to review the consultants' reports on progress and to reallocate funding as appropriate, given the performance and the revised priorities, if any.
- 3.3.7 In addition, the Department of Finance has created a semi-independent NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit to carry out reviews of initiatives under the NDP. One such review was carried out on the EOCP in 2002/2003<sup>15</sup>. The recommendations were adopted and implemented by the D/JELR and by the Regional Assemblies where appropriate.

### **3.4 SELECTING PROJECTS FOR SUPPORT**

- 3.4.1 The key criteria against which projects are appraised for funding under the EOCP include:
1. The socio economic and demographic profile of the area;
  2. The quality of the proposal;
  3. The capacity of the Group to implement the project;
  4. The level of integration/co-ordination; and
  5. The costings/value for money
- 3.4.2 Applications under the EOCP are submitted to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and are then sent for technical appraisal to Area Development Management Ltd. (ADM) which undertakes the day to day administration of the EOCP on behalf of the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform.
- 3.4.3 The appraisal process will normally necessitate dialogue between the ADM team and the project management as outstanding issues are clarified. Large scale capital projects (where the grant assistance exceeds €400,000) are submitted to an External Building Specialist, usually an architect, who carries out a very detailed review of the proposal and makes a recommendation with regard to value for money and to the building and design specifications where necessary. This appraisal can lead to recommendations to the project management that designs be modified to maximise the quality of the facility being planned.
- 3.4.4 All appraisals are reviewed by an internal EOCP Management Team within ADM before the ADM recommendations are forwarded to the Programme Appraisal Committee for discussion. The Programme Appraisal Committee (PAC) is chaired by D/JELR and its membership includes ADM, Depts of Education and Science and Health and Children, the two Regional Assemblies and the D/JELR. The PAC

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<sup>15</sup> NDP/CSF Evaluation of Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 : Stationery Office

usually meets on a monthly basis and, following its deliberations, makes recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on the individual funding applications. The PAC may ask for additional information before making its recommendation.

- 3.4.5 Following funding approval, ADM engages again with the project management and puts in place a contract following which a tranche of funding is usually made available to the group and the project may commence. In many capital projects, the group will seek planning permission following receipt of the letter of grant offer and may also wait until that time to seek final tenders for the project. This contributes to the delays in the delivery of projects but is largely unavoidable in circumstances where not for profit community groups are wholly reliant on EU and Exchequer funding to provide the facility.
- 3.4.6 Funding is refused in circumstances where a particular project does not obviously meet with the Programme criteria or does not rate highly enough when compared with other applicants. If a group is not satisfied with a decision or is not satisfied with the amount of funding being made available, the group may submit an appeal to the D/JELR, and may offer additional information in support of its application. ADM will review the project in light of this additional information and may make a new recommendation to the PAC and, through the PAC, to the Minister.
- 3.4.7 In the event that a project to which funding has been committed does not proceed or does not spend all the funding allocated to it, or if it breaches the Programme/NDP/EU rules, the funding or residual funding may be decommitted from the project and will be reallocated to an alternative project.

### **3.5 FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT OF THE EOCP**

- 3.5.1 As a Programme which receives significant EU and Exchequer grant support, the EOCP is subjected to a rigorous financial management and control regime. The annual funding for the Programme is made available through the D/JELR voted moneys. It is transferred to ADM Ltd. to facilitate payments to grant beneficiaries.
- 3.5.2 Grant beneficiaries usually receive a first tranche of funding following the signing of the contract, although the practice is somewhat different for the larger scale capital projects which do not normally receive funding advances.
- 3.5.3 Grant recipients can then apply for further tranches of funding on a quarterly basis or when they can show that the previous funding has been spent in accordance with Programme rules. This process is underpinned by a thorough procedures manual.
- 3.5.4 Having carried out an internal verifications procedure, ADM is required to submit details of actual expenditure incurred to D/JELR on a regular basis. A further verification check is carried out by D/JELR before the required forms are sent to the Regional Assemblies. A further verification is then completed before the draw down procedure can take place. The verification processes under the EOCP are currently being further developed to ensure full compliance with all of the EU and national rules and regulations.

- 3.5.5 The Internal Audit Division in D/JELR carries out systems audits while the ERDF and ESF Financial Control Units are required to complete transaction verification checks, usually looking at 5 per cent of all transactions on a regular basis. Both the EU Commission auditors and the EU Court of Auditors also have a role in overseeing the expenditure being declared.
- 3.5.6 Finally, because the EOCP is funded through the D/JELR Vote, its expenditure is subject to the normal national scrutiny such as the Comptroller and Auditor General and the Public Accounts Committee.

### **3.6 NEW STRUCTURES FOR CHILDCARE – CITY/COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEES**

- 3.6.1 The Expert Working Group on Childcare recommended the establishment of a county based structure for childcare. As a result, City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs) have been established in 33 counties and cities to develop a co-ordinated strategy for childcare provision within their area. Financial support for the CCCs and for the implementation of their Annual Development Plans is being made available from Measure 3 - Quality Improvement of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006. The Annual budget for the CCCs is now approaching €7 million.
- 3.6.2 The remit of the 33 CCCs is to advance childcare service provision within the local areas through:
- Development of a co-ordinated strategy for childcare provision in the area based on analysis of needs and overseeing effective implementation against targets set by the Committee;
  - Development of an information strategy concerning the provision of childcare within the county which also updates and develops the baseline data provided in the National Childcare Census; and
  - Development and support of local countywide networks and initiatives which target all categories of childcare providers.
- 3.6.3 The membership of the CCC is broadly based and intended to be representative of the key stakeholders in the childcare sector in each county. The Committee members give freely of their time to the CCC process. It was recommended that the structures be balanced to include representation from the Statutory sector, the Social Partners, Local Development Partnerships, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations, Parents and Providers of Childcare. The establishment process was facilitated by the health boards.
- 3.6.4 In 2001, each CCC was asked to prepare a five year Strategic Plan for the development of Childcare services to address the specific Childcare needs of its own area. The Strategy set out the framework for the development of childcare based on a shared vision and analysis of the needs within the county. Each Strategy was thoroughly appraised prior to its being approved by the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee.

3.6.5 The County Childcare Strategy is implemented through a series of annual action plans, which are again subject to a thorough appraisal before the applications are approved for funding by the Minister through the Programme Appraisal Committee structure. The CCCs are engaged in a wide range of developmental work aiming to advance the availability of quality childcare within the county. They are encouraged to work closely with the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations to promote quality services and in the local delivery of childcare training. The support of the CCCs is actively sought in developing new services, particularly in circumstances where the CCC presence “on the ground” and the relationships they have established locally is likely to enhance the prospects for advancing uptake of the new support mechanisms.



## CHAPTER 4

### DEVELOPING AND SUPPORTING CHILDCARE FACILITIES THROUGH THE CAPITAL AND STAFFING PROGRAMMES AND OTHER GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

#### 4.1 SUPPORTING CHILDCARE SERVICES

4.1.1 EOCP II operates under two sub-measures to support the development and maintenance of childcare places through the provision of grant assistance for Capital developments and for Staffing support in disadvantaged areas. Details of some of the funding measures operated by the Department are outlined below:

##### Capital grants

- ◆ **Capital Grant Scheme for Community/Not for profit organisations**  
This capital scheme applies to community based/not-for-profit groups or organisations or to a community/not-for-profit consortium of private and community groups, providing support towards the building, renovation, upgrading or equipping of community based childcare facilities. Grant assistance of up to 100 per cent of development costs can be provided.
  
- ◆ **Capital Grant Scheme for Self-employed Childcare Providers.**  
This capital scheme applies to self-employed providers catering for not more than 20 children at any one time, providing support of up to 65 per cent of costs towards the building, renovation, upgrading or equipping of childcare facilities with a maximum available grant of €50,790.
  
- ◆ **Capital Grant Scheme for Private Childcare Providers**  
This capital scheme applies to commercial providers of more than 20 childcare places and provides support towards building, renovation, upgrading or equipping of childcare facilities with a maximum available grant of €50,790.

##### Staffing

- ◆ **Staffing Grant Scheme for Community/Not for profit organisations**  
This scheme applies to a community based/not-for-profit group or organisation or a community/not-for-profit consortium of private and community groups, providing support towards staffing costs for community based childcare in disadvantaged areas. Staffing grant assistance contributes towards the cost of a number of posts of childcare worker within a facility.

Staffing grant assistance is most usually awarded for a period of three years and it was intended that projects receiving staffing support would move towards sustainability at the end of the three year period when this is possible. However given that disadvantage is a key criterion, it is likely that many facilities will require ongoing supports at the end of the initial three year period.

## **4.2 DEVELOPING INFRASTRUCTURE**

- 4.2.1 EOCP II aimed to increase the provision of centre – based childcare places by 30 per cent from its 2000 level by the Mid-Term and aims to achieve growth of 50 per cent by Programme end. This equates with a target of 17,040 new places by end 2003 and with a cumulative increase of 28,400 new places by the end of the Programme.
- 4.2.2 The total capital funding committed to the end of December 2003 amounts to €19.7 million which will create some 19,980 new childcare places (8,700 full time and 11,210 part time) and will also enhance the quality of 14,100 existing places.
- 4.2.3 The provision of staffing grant supports to childcare facilities can also lead to an increase in the numbers of childcare places a service can offer. It is estimated that the current allocation of €6.2 million in staffing grant assistance is creating 7,300 new childcare places and is helping to support 12,100 existing places.
- 4.2.4 Taking these two funding sub-measures together, the allocations made to end 2003 under both the capital and the staffing sub-measures will, when fully drawn down, lead to the creation of about 27,200 new childcare places (10,700 full time and 16,500 part time). This equates with over 96 per cent of the Programme target for new places and while much of the capital funding is already committed, it appears likely that the Programme target will be exceeded when all remaining funding is committed.
- 4.2.5 There are significant lead-in times for many of the capital projects receiving support under the EOCP – usually between two and three years – to facilitate the planning and construction processes. Thus while the Programme targets look realisable on the basis of allocations to date, it is also necessary to look at achievements to date.
- 4.2.6 It will be recalled that the EOCP aimed to increase the supply of centre based childcare places by its Mid-Term. As Table 4.1 below shows, the Mid Term Target for the Programme aimed to establish 4,218 new childcare places in the BMW Region and 12,823 new childcare places in the Southern and Eastern Region. Table 4.1 below summarises the Programme targets, the expected outturns and the actual outturns to end December 2003.
- 4.2.7 The most recent material available relates to end December 2003 which equates with the Mid-Term and shows that 10,460 places (5,550 full time and 4,900 part time) had been created at that stage. The reporting sample was not 100 per cent and where data for the period in question is not available earlier reports are substituted. A comparison of the targets and the actual outcomes shows the particular success of the EOCP in the BMW Region where the number of new childcare places has exceeded the mid term target with the creation of new full time childcare places being particularly buoyant. However it is necessary to sound a word of caution with regard to these statistics because the measurement of full time childcare places is difficult in Ireland where full time facilities are defined in the Child Care Regulations services as providing a service for an unspecified number of hours but in excess of three hours 30 minutes per day.

4.2.8 In the S&E Region, the lead in times are longer and the impact on the ground to date falls slightly short of the Mid-Term target. Commitments under the Programme in the S&E are such that the prospects for the achievement of the end of Programme targets are regarded by the Childcare Directorate as attainable. Within the S&E, the increase at mid term in the numbers of full time places is encouraging and offers increased childcare choices to parents.

**Table 4.1**  
**EOCP II TARGETS FOR NEW AND EXISTING CHILDCARE PLACES**  
**AND**  
**ACTUAL IMPACT OF THE PROGRAMME TO END DECEMBER 2003**

	CHILDCARE PLACES BMW			CHILDCARE PLACES S&E		
	Part Time	Full Time	Total	Part Time	Full Time	Total
<b>TARGETS</b>						
Number of childcare places at start of Programme	10,847	3,213	14,060	28,671	14,072	42,743
Target number of new childcare places at Mid Term (+ 30%)	+3,254	+ 964	+4,218	+8,601	+4,222	+12,823
Target number of new childcare places at End Prog. (+ 50%)	+5,424	+1,607	+7,030	+14,336	+7,036	+21,372
<b>PROGRESS REPORTED ON ACTUAL SPEND</b>						
Actual NEW childcare places to end December 2003 (88% returns)	4,594	2,616	7,210	5,617	5,493	11,110
Existing places currently receiving support under EOCP	5,415	747	6,162	10,130	2,766	12,896

Source : EOCP Programme and material collected and supplied by ADM Ltd

Note : The measurement of F/T places reflects the definition in the Regulations that F/T exceeds 3.5 hours

4.2.9 The Programme is also contributing towards the support of 25,900 existing places (5,400 full time and 20,500 part time).

4.2.10 It will be recalled from paragraph 1.3.4 above that the baseline study showed that Irish childcare facilities were very heavily skewed in favour of sessional childcare facilities with almost 40,000 sessional places and only 17,000 full time places available at the start of EOCP II. The trend under the Programme has been towards the creation of greater numbers of full time places which better help the needs of parents who may be in full time employment or whose working day might require a childcare service which exceeds the three and a half hours maximum care normally available in sessional services.

4.2.11 Accordingly, while EOCP II is performing well in terms of commitments and appears to be on target to achieve its Programme aim of increasing the supply of childcare places by 50 per cent by end 2007, the rate of progress is variable between the two Regions and requires careful monitoring of progress.

4.2.12 While EOCP II is ostensibly achieving significant increases in childcare places, an “in depth” review of those services which have already come on stream show that very many of the places being supported under the EOCP may in fact be more “pre-school” places rather than “childcare” places. The attendance by children at a pre-school service for the year prior to their first attendance at a formal primary school has had a long tradition in Ireland. Many of these pre-school or play group services were previously delivered at neighbourhood level by small scale private providers.

There is still limited Department of Education and Science involvement in the delivery of a structured pre-school service except for primary school based initiatives in a number of very disadvantaged areas and the support of services for young children from the Traveller community.

- 4.2.13 A survey by ADM Ltd. of Programme Beneficiaries<sup>16</sup> at the end of 2002 found that, of 17,800 children availing of the services which responded to the survey, almost 9,500 (or 53 per cent) were children aged 3 to 5 years attending sessional services. By end 2003, the pattern had changed – the number of children included in services benefiting under the EOCP had increased from 17,806 to 28,368 and the pre-schoolers in sessional services, while increasing in absolute numbers to 12,400, had decreased in percentage terms to only 43 per cent.
- 4.2.14 The same survey asked the childcare providers to estimate the percentage of their client children who were also attending another childcare service. Of the 574 respondents, about 80 per cent said that fewer than a quarter of their client children attended another childcare facility. A further 15 per cent of the respondents said that between a quarter and a half of their children attended a further childcare facility. The need to “juggle” different childcare facilities places an additional logistical burden on parents.
- 4.2.15 Further information and analysis of the ADM beneficiary survey 2003 is contained in Chapter 6.
- 4.2.16 To date, the development of school age childcare has not created as much interest locally as have pre-school sessional and full day care services. A special media campaign to create awareness of the availability of funding for school age childcare in 2002 produced very few grant applications.
- 4.2.17 A lack of major interest in school age service provision to date runs contrary to the much publicised need for school age childcare. It may be that community groups were awaiting the outcome of the Working Group on School Age Childcare before submitting applications under EOCP II. The Childcare Directorate chaired a Sub-Group of the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) which has made recommendations for the development of School Age Childcare, the implementation of which is currently under active consideration in the Childcare Directorate. The Working Group recommends, inter alia, the use of school premises and school lands for the development of school age childcare facilities. The implementation of such a recommendation would require discussion with school managing authorities.

### **4.3 PROGRESS TO DATE UNDER THE INFRASTRUCTURE MEASURE**

- 4.3.1 Many of the capital projects being developed under the EOCP are large scale undertakings with budgets approaching or exceeding €1 million. Such projects frequently have long lead in times – often two or more years. Considerable progress has been noted in the expenditure statistics in 2003 and early indications for 2004 show that expenditure in 2004 on capital will be in line with, and may even exceed, the Programme forecast.

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<sup>16</sup> Unpublished

4.3.2 Table 4.2 below shows some key financial information in relation to the implementation of the Capital Measure. The amount of capital funding originally allocated for the development of childcare infrastructure increased from about €120 million to €140 million with the additional supports made available for childcare in 2001. The demand for capital grant assistance has been particularly buoyant and the D/JELR has now arranged for the transfer of funding to the Capital Measure to make a total of €157 million available for this purpose.

**TABLE 4.2**  
**EOCP - CAPITAL MEASURE**  
**COMMITMENTS AND EXPENDITURE TO END DECEMBER 2003**

	<b>BMW</b> €million	<b>S&amp;E</b> €million	<b>TOTAL</b> €million
Total NDP public funding available (a)	34.515	85.890	120.405
- of which ERDF	16.700	38.000	54.700
Total including 2001 funding increase			145.460
<b>Revised public funding post MTR (b)</b>	<b>44.031</b>	<b>113.223</b>	<b>157.254</b>
- of which ERDF	16.700	38.000	54.700
<b>Commitments to date (c)</b>	<b>34.103</b>	<b>85.600</b>	<b>119.703</b>
Forecast public expenditure to date	18.400	52.400	70.800
<b>Actual public expenditure to date</b>	<b>14.247</b>	<b>36.917</b>	<b>51.164</b>
Actual expenditure as % of forecast	77.4%	70.4%	72.2%

(a) As provided in NDP

(b) Includes non-NDP funding and additional transfers of ESF funding

(c) Includes administration costs at 4 per cent

4.3.3 As Table 4.2 shows, commitments under the Capital Measure amounted to almost €20 million at end 2003. Cumulative expenditure by final beneficiaries to end 2003 amounts to €51.164 million or about 72 per cent of the forecast for the period. Expenditure is slightly more buoyant in the BMW than in the S&E Region.

4.3.4 Appendix B contains a list of all projects approved for funding under the Capital Measures (and under the Staffing Sub-Measure). Detail of the name and address of each project is given together with the grant amount and the numbers of childcare places being created, together with the initial numbers of places where appropriate.

#### **4.4 SUPPORTING CHILDCARE IN AREAS OF DISADVANTAGE WITH STAFFING GRANT ASSISTANCE**

4.4.1 Apart from the provision of capital grant assistance towards the development of new childcare facilities and as detailed previously, EOCP II makes a contribution towards the staffing costs of childcare facilities in areas of disadvantage. These three year grants are intended to support a number of childcare places within the childcare setting. The level of grant assistance being provided is tenuously linked to the numbers of childcare places within a facility; the extent to which the service caters for

babies; the level to which the service caters for disadvantage and a range of other criteria.

- 4.4.2 In practice, the resources available to EOCP II do not permit the Programme to meet the full staffing costs of any childcare service and therefore the services frequently receive supports through their health boards in return for which the childcare service will set aside places for health board referrals. Children referred by the health boards may frequently have a child welfare/family support need for childcare rather than a labour market support focus.
- 4.4.3 In addition, all childcare services are encouraged to introduce appropriate fee structures to take account of the differing financial circumstances of their client groups. In practice, there is no uniformity in either the imposition or the levels of fees. This lack of uniformity can result in advantaged families in some areas being able to avail of childcare at quite low costs where a project management team has not introduced appropriate fee structures to take account of economic circumstances while parents in other areas are paying more appropriate fee costs.
- 4.4.4 There is often a lack of public perception that childcare is an expensive service to deliver due to the staff child ratios which can range from 1 adult per three babies under 1 year to 1 adult per 20 children in a structured pre-school setting. Accordingly, if all the additional costs are taken into consideration, it is estimated that the cost of providing day childcare would approach if not exceed €150 per week on average and this is without capital costs.
- 4.4.5 One of the pre-conditions for the receipt of staffing grant assistance under the EOCP is that the persons filling the posts must be submitted for Garda Clearance. This is achieved through a process facilitated by the Childcare Directorate of the D/JELR. All groups which receive a letter of grant offer also receive details and application forms which are completed and sent through the Childcare Directorate to the Garda Síochána for processing. At time of writing, it is understood that the Garda Commissioner is carrying out a review of Garda Clearance procedures.

#### **4.5 PROGRESS TO DATE UNDER THE STAFFING SUB-MEASURE**

- 4.5.1 As was already pointed out, the development of infrastructural projects under the EOCP takes time. This has impacted on the level of expenditure under the Staffing Sub-Measure where newly established facilities were also to receive assistance towards the cost of staffing the facility and the facility has yet to come on stream.
- 4.5.2 Table 4.3 below shows some key financial information in relation to the implementation of the Staffing Sub-Measure. Expenditure to date on the staffing Sub-Measure is somewhat behind target. This is largely due to slower than anticipated lead in times for many of the capital projects being developed under the Programme, resulting in delays in the draw down of the staffing supports required to assist these projects as they move towards sustainability.

**TABLE 4.3**  
**EOCP - STAFFING SUB – MEASURE**  
**COMMITMENTS AND EXPENDITURE TO END DECEMBER 2003**

	<b>BMW</b> <b>€million</b>	<b>S&amp;E</b> <b>€million</b>	<b>TOTAL</b> <b>€million</b>
Total NDP public funding available (a)	50.408	144.089	194.497
- of which ESF	27.050	70.744	97.794
Total including 2001 funding increase			216.85
<b>Revised public funding post MTR (b)</b>	<b>57.514</b>	<b>144.089</b>	<b>201.603</b>
- of which ESF	25.050	59.837	84.887
<b>Commitments to date (c)</b>	<b>30.950</b>	<b>65.294</b>	<b>96.245</b>
Forecast public expenditure to date	28.218	87.950	116.168
<b>Actual public expenditure to date</b>	<b>16.078</b>	<b>34.997</b>	<b>51.075</b>
Actual expenditure as % of forecast	57.0%	40.0%	44.0%

(a) As provided in NDP

(b) Includes non-NDP funding and additional transfers of ESF funding

(c) Includes administration costs at 4 per cent

- 4.5.3 Significant additional Exchequer funding was provided for the Staffing Sub-Measure in early 2001. However, the demand for staffing funding has been slower than anticipated due to the time lag in bringing larger scale capital projects to fruition. As a result the D/JELR has arranged the transfer of some of the existing Exchequer funding to funding to the Capital Measure to facilitate the development of additional childcare places “on the ground” in areas of manifest need.
- 4.5.4 The Mid Term Review process has brought an additional €million in ESF funding to the EOCP and part of this will be allocated to make EU supports available for School Age Childcare – which, until now, had been supported with Exchequer funding only, while another part of the additional funding will be allocated to the Quality Sub-Measure at the Spring 2004 Monitoring Committees.
- 4.5.5 The original financial profile of the ESF funding made available to the EOCP was undertaken at a time when there was little concrete information available about the progress which might be made through the introduction of new structures to oversee the development of quality childcare. The success of Sub-Measure 3 – the Quality Sub-Measure – in bringing about significant improvements in co-ordination among childcare facilities and childcare practitioners with networks, training and a range of other quality enhancing mechanisms has led to the need to make adequate financial provision to support these initiatives until the end of the present Programming period. As a result some ESF funding is also being transferred from the Staffing to the Quality Sub-Measure.
- 4.5.6 While commitments to date (at €6 million to end 2003) on the Staffing Sub-Measure may appear to be rather low, they reflect the fact that grants are usually awarded for a three year period and that many of the original grants covered the period to late 2003/early 2004 and will shortly be due for review. Actual expenditure to date amounts to €51 million. This is behind target at only 44 per cent of the forecast for

the period to end 2003. Expenditure is more buoyant in the BMW Region than in the S&E.

- 4.5.7 Careful monitoring of progress under this Sub-Measure will be essential in 2004 to ensure that the significant contribution from the European Social Fund is drawn down in order to satisfy the “n+2” rule, a breach of which might result in a loss of some ESF funding to Ireland.
- 4.5.8 Appendix B contains a list of all projects approved for funding under the Staffing Sub-Measure (and under the Capital Measure). Detail of the name and address of each project is given together with the grant amount and the numbers of childcare places being created, together with the initial numbers of places where appropriate. Where both capital and staffing grants are made available to the same project, the numbers of childcare places are only counted once.
- 4.5.9 The provision of childcare is also supported in many community based/not for profit childcare centres through the efforts of the Community Employment Scheme and Jobs Initiative, each of which make available numbers of workers who can avail of the opportunity to gain skills in childcare while working with and supporting the qualified staffs in the childcare centres. It is estimated that about 1,800 such posts exist across the country and these posts were ring fenced in late 2002, given their importance to the delivery of childcare particularly in areas of disadvantage where parents availing of services might not be in a position to pay the economic costs of childcare.

#### **4.6 SUPPORTING URBAN AND RURAL REGENERATION**

- 4.6.1 As with other public development programmes, the EOCP is required to foster urban and rural regeneration. CLAR supports rural regeneration while RAPID supports urban regeneration. Table 4.4 overleaf shows total expenditure to date under the Capital Measure and the Staffing Measure and an estimate of expenditure in CLAR and RAPID areas. This includes projects proposed as part of CLAR and RAPID development initiatives as well as projects developed by community groups and private childcare providers (this latter with capital grant assistance only) at the groups’ own initiative.
- 4.6.2 Not unexpectedly, the expenditure in CLAR and RAPID areas varies between the two Regions. Expenditure to date in CLAR areas is estimated at about €12.415 million while expenditure in RAPID areas amounts to just below €31 million. Overall it is estimated that about 42 per cent of expenditure under the Programme to date has taken place in CLAR and RAPID areas. It must be emphasised that the data on expenditure in CLAR and RAPID areas may not be complete.

**TABLE 4.4**  
**EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME 2000 - 2006**  
**ESTIMATED EXPENDITURE IN CLAR AND RAPID AREAS TO END**  
**2003**

	<b>BMW</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>	<b>S&amp;E</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>	<b>TOTAL</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>
Actual Expenditure to date			
Capital	14.247	36.917	51.164
Staffing	16.078	34.997	51.075
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>30.325</b>	<b>71.914</b>	<b>102.239</b>
CLAR Expenditure (capital and staffing)	9.362	3.053	12.415
RAPID Expenditure (capital and staffing)	6.142	24.848	30.990
CLAR + RAPID as % of TOTAL expenditure	51.1%	38.8%	42.4%

#### **4.7 OTHER GOVERNMENT SUPPORTS TO STIMULATE SUPPLY**

4.7.1 In tandem with the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006 which principally focuses on the community based not for profit childcare sector, the Government introduced a range of tax incentives to stimulate the provision of private childcare places. The 1999 Finance Act introduced two provisions relating to childcare; capital allowances for buildings used for certain childcare purposes and exemption as benefit-in-kind for tax purposes of certain childcare facilities provided by employers for their employees. In all circumstances, the premises must meet the provisions of the Child Care Regulations, 1996.

##### **Capital Allowances**

4.7.2 Capital expenditure incurred on or after 2 December 1998 on the construction, extension or refurbishment of a building or part of a building used as childcare facility qualifies. Expenditure on any part of a building in use as (or as part of) a dwelling does not qualify. The allowances may be written off over 7 years at the rate of 15 per cent per annum for the first 6 years and 10 per cent in year seven. There will be a clawback of allowances if the building is sold or ceases to be used as a childcare facility within a period of 10 years.

4.7.3 However there is a limitation on the offset of allowances for passive investors. Where the capital allowances exceed the income from the operation of the childcare facility, the excess may be set off against the other income of the operator. Where the qualifying expenditure is incurred by individuals who are passive investors (i.e. an investor who lets the property to an operator or an individual who is not an active partner in a partnership trade of operating the childcare facility) the maximum excess allowances (over rental income or the trading income involved) which can be set against the individual's other income is restricted in accordance with section 409A Taxes Consolidation Act 1997. This provides that the maximum other income of passive investors in respect of expenditure on certain buildings is restricted to £25,000 (€1,743)

### **Benefit-in-Kind**

- 4.7.4 Certain free or subsidised childcare facilities provided by employers for the benefit of their employees will not be subject to tax under the benefit-in-kind rules. The exemption does not apply if the employer simply pays or subsidises the cost to an employee of an independent crèche or nursery. An employee will not be charged income tax on a benefit-in-kind arising in respect of any expense incurred by an employer in or in connection with the provision of a childcare service in a qualifying premises<sup>17</sup> for a child of a director or employee.

## **4.8 IDA INTRODUCES CHILDCARE INTO ITS BUSINESS PARKS**

- 4.8.1 In 2002, IDA Ireland recognised a demand among its industrial clients for accessible childcare near their business centres. As a result, IDA identified a number of business parks in which it made available a site for the establishment of a childcare facility. Competitions were organised to identify top quality facilities who then purchased the sites and proceeded to establish the childcare facilities in the business parks. A second competition was run in 2003 and a third is currently underway. The first such facilities are now coming on stream.

## **4.9 OTHER EMPLOYER BASED INITIATIVES**

- 4.9.1 The Irish Civil Service has also established a series of not for profit crèches in Dublin and in a number of other locations with large Civil Service offices. The demand for such services is high and the service is available at break even rates to the parents. The Civil Service is currently looking at the extension of its range of facilities to meet the needs of parents who might be transferring to local areas under the decentralisation process.
- 4.9.2 IBEC has also encouraged its members to consider the option of providing in house childcare facilities while some of its members subsidise crèche places locally to meet the needs of employees. IBEC and ICTU are currently working together in the context of a special working group under “Sustaining Progress” to look at the childcare needs of employees.

## **4.10 CHILDCARE PROVISION AND THE PLANNING GUIDELINES**

- 4.10.1 The Minister for the Environment and Local Government introduced a provision into the local authority planning guidelines requiring every developer of a housing estate of more than 75 dwelling units to make provision for a childcare facility.

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<sup>17</sup> Qualifying premises means premises which are either; made available solely by the employer, made available by any other person, made available by the employer jointly with other persons, where the employer is wholly or partly responsible for financing and managing the provision of the childcare service. The Finance Act 2001 amendment section 120A states that in order to make the scheme more attractive for employers the employer may opt **not** to be involved in the management of the childcare facility. In such circumstances the benefit-in-kind exemption will be restricted to cases where the employer provides financial support for items of capital expenditure as opposed to ongoing day to day running costs. Where the employer is involved in the management of the facility the current financing conditions will continue to apply.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME 2000 – 2006 PROMOTING QUALITY IN CHILDCARE**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

- 5.1.1 The Expert Working Group on Childcare 1999 placed considerable emphasis on the quality dimension for childcare in Ireland. Quality is achieved in childcare through the provision, inter alia, of a good physical infrastructure; imaginative materials which meet the different needs of the children in the facility; a warm and caring team of childcare practitioners; a good relationship between parents and the childcare team; sound management policies and practices; awareness of equality and diversity; and a responsiveness to the individual needs of each child. Equally important are appropriate ratios of staff to children, the presence of qualified staff and the contentedness of staff with their working environment and structures.
- 5.1.2 The formal professionalisation of childcare in Ireland is a relatively new and welcome development. For many years, the pre-school sector was delivered by volunteers or by groups of women for whom the delivery of pre-school and childcare services was largely a labour of love. A number of voluntary support organisations emerged and these offered supports to their individual members. At the same time, limited childcare training also emerged although this was, and to an extent still is, organised in quite a piecemeal manner.
- 5.1.3 The Expert Working Group recommended that there was a need for improved structures to support the emerging childcare sector and recommended a number of new structures which were aimed at fostering better co-ordination in the childcare sector. These were adopted by Government and have been reflected in either the work of the Childcare Directorate or the Quality Sub-Measure of EOCP II.
- 5.1.4 To a large extent these new structures have been to the fore in supporting quality awareness initiatives under Sub-Measure 3 of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

#### **5.2 NEW COMMITTEE STRUCTURES FOR CHILDCARE**

- 5.2.1 Two new committee structures were put in place in 2000 to oversee the development of childcare. The first of these was the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee, the second was the Inter-Departmental Childcare Synergies Committee.
- 5.2.2 The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) was established in late 1999 and is chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Membership comprises representatives of the statutory and non-statutory sectors including the Government Departments and Agencies with an involvement in childcare, the Social Partners and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations. The NCCC is tasked as follows:

- To advise in relation to the development of a childcare infrastructure;
- To advise the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in relation to childcare under the National Development Plan;
- To develop a co-ordinated national approach to childcare provision over the life of the EOCP;
- To assist in the initiation and establishment of appropriate structures for the delivery of the Childcare Measure in the National Development Plan;
- To assist in the development of the City/County Childcare Committees; and
- To initiate research into childcare provision at both national and local level.

5.2.3 Much of the work of the NCCC is achieved through sub-groups of the main Committee. Work achieved to date by the Sub-groups includes :

- **Certifying Bodies Sub-Group**  
This Group developed the Model Framework<sup>18</sup> to address qualification, certification and accreditation issues in the childcare sector. This Framework on qualifications in the childcare sector is being submitted for the guidance of the new certification and accreditation processes being established under the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland. The development of a core standard for the occupational role of Childcare Supervisor has been completed and approved by the NCCC and is being used by FETAC and FÁS to develop pilot training modules.
- **Working Group on School Age Childcare .**  
This Working Group has prepared proposals on the further development of school age childcare services on a year round basis. Preliminary discussions on the implementation of its recommendations are ongoing and the policy document will be published at the conclusion of those discussions – likely to be early Autumn 2004.
- **Sub-Group on Voluntary Notification by Childminders**  
A Sub-Group of the NCCC has prepared a set of national guidelines on standards for the voluntary notification of childminders to the health boards.
- **Advisory Group to the NCCC**  
This Group has been established to examine the work of the NCCC with regard to the childcare needs of children with special needs and children of minority ethnic origin and children from the Traveller Community and to proof the work of the sector on issues such as poverty, equality and diversity. The Group is currently finalising two sets of guidelines aimed at childcare practitioners and providers and also for parents to ensure that the needs of such children are taken into account in the development of childcare policy on a national and county level and to stimulate awareness of the needs of these groups of children.

5.2.4 The NCCC also provides a forum through which the participants can raise issues and concerns about aspects of childcare delivery in Ireland and keeps other stakeholders apprised of developments which impact upon the sector. The Committee met

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<sup>18</sup> D/JELR : Quality Childcare and Lifelong Learning : Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in Early Childhood Care and Education Sector : September 2002

approximately six-weekly in 2003 and plans to meet every second month in 2004. These meetings are complemented by activity in the Sub-Groups.

- 5.2.5 Chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, **the Inter-Departmental Synergies Committee** was established to ensure that all the Government Departments and State Agencies with an interest in or funding for Childcare worked strategically together. In 2000, funding for childcare (as defined by the Expert Working Group) was being channelled through three separate Government Departments – D/JELR, D/Education and Science and D/Social, Community and Family Affairs. The co-ordination of this funding activity was the principal focus of the Inter-Departmental Synergies Committee.
- 5.2.6 In early 2001, the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Inclusion decided that all funding for Childcare should transfer to the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform which would also assume responsibility for the co-ordination of childcare activity and the work of the Synergies Group became defunct.. The co-ordinating task of the Inter-Departmental Synergies Committee diminished and a significant part of its role was being replicated in the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee. Accordingly, while the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee continues to meet regularly, the Synergies Committee has not met since mid -2001.
- 5.2.7 At present, the National Children’s Office is facilitating a High Level Inter-Departmental Working Group which is addressing issues of co-ordination on both childcare and early education. This is building on OECD work (as yet unpublished) on early childhood care and education which was commissioned by the Department of Education and Science. The work of this group focuses on the current separation of responsibilities for early childcare and early education and the relative states of development of each element. It brings together the Departments of Justice, Equality and Law Reform; Education and Science; Health and Children; and Social and Family Affairs. It is due to report to the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Children before the end of 2004.

### **5.3 WORK OF THE COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEES IN SUPPORTING QUALITY**

- 5.3.1 The role of the City/County Childcare Committees was outlined previously in Chapter 3. These groups have quickly established themselves as pivotal to the facilitation and often also to the organisation of quality enhancing mechanisms at local level.
- 5.3.2 The City/County Childcare Committees are usually staffed by a Co-ordinator, one or more Development Officers and an Administrator, often part time. Typical activities undertaken by the CCCs in the period to end 2003 include the following:
- Provision of guidance to applicants under the EOCP;
  - Organisation of training workshops for childcare providers, parents and other stakeholders;
  - Development of information media, such as websites, pamphlets, booklets, aimed at childcare providers/practitioners and/or parents;

- Promotion of equality/diversity awareness among childcare practitioners;
  - Facilitation of training for childcare practitioners;
  - Development of training modules for FETAC Level II training;
  - Organisation of seminars and information days for practitioners, parents and other stakeholders;
  - Development of networks for childcare practitioners;
  - Promotion of awareness of childcare as a key infrastructural element through participation of the CCC chairperson on the County Development Board (since early 2003).
- 5.3.3 The D/JELR can also ask the CCCs to undertake particular tasks on behalf of the EOCP or on behalf of the Department. In 2003, they were asked to support grant recipients who had received a letter of grant offer but who were experiencing difficulty in progressing to complete the project, due for example to delays in the planning process, etc.
- 5.3.4 In 2004, the assistance of the CCCs is being sought in the completion of a nation wide survey which will determine the supply of childcare available on the ground. The CCCs are also being asked to implement a Childminders Development Grant Scheme and, later in the year will be asked to liaise with local stakeholders in order to stimulate interest in the development of school age childcare.
- 5.3.5 The role of the CCCs has evolved in a very short time to the point where the CCC now plays the key role at local level which had been envisaged by the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare.
- 5.3.6 The work of the City/County Childcare Committees was commented upon very favourably by grant beneficiaries in their responses to the ADM Annual Survey of Grant Beneficiaries under the EOCP. The questionnaire asked respondents if they knew the contact details of their local County/City Childcare Committee. Of the 897 who answered this question, 854 (95.6 per cent) stated that they did. Among community based providers awareness was at 97.4 per cent (531) compared with 92.8 per cent (323) of self-employed providers.
- 5.3.7 Grant beneficiaries were asked about contacts which they might have had with their City/County Childcare Committees and the quality of those contacts. The results are shown in Tables 5.1 and 5.2 below.

**TABLE 5.1  
CONTACTS WITH AND SUPPORT RECEIVED BY EOCP GRANT BENEFICIARIES  
FROM COUNTY/CITY CHILDCARE COMMITTEES**

	PRIVATE		COMMUNITY		TOTAL	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Preparation of application	107	30.2%	256	46.0%	363	39.9%
Preparation of development plan	66	18.6%	192	34.5%	258	28.4%
Printed Information	204	57.6%	411	74.1%	615	67.6%
Opportunity to join a network	173	48.9%	352	63.4%	525	57.7%
Support with reporting to ADM	66	18.6%	161	29.0%	227	24.9%
Training	159	44.9%	234	60.3%	493	54.2%
Site Visit	111	31.4%	257	46.4%	368	40.4%
Information meeting	213	60.2%	396	71.5%	609	66.9%

- 5.3.8 As Table 5.1 shows the range of services and supports being made available by the City/County Childcare Committees is extensive. Just over two-thirds of respondents received printed information and invitations to information meetings during 2003. Almost 58 per cent of beneficiaries reported that they had been given the opportunity by their City/County Childcare Committee to take part in a childcare network, and over half (54.2 per cent) said that they had received some form of training through their CCC.
- 5.3.9 In relation to the implementation of the EOCP, a substantial proportion of respondents (40.4 per cent) said that they had a site visit from CCC staff, and a similar percentage (39.9 per cent) said that they had received help from the CCC in preparing an application for EOCP funding. This final point is particularly significant given that many beneficiaries of the EOCP would have received their funding prior to the establishment of the CCCs, which suggests that the CCCs have been particularly active in providing this assistance in the relatively short period since they began operating. In all cases, the proportion of community based providers reporting having received that form of contact or support was higher than was the case for private providers.
- 5.3.10 The findings in this section show a significant increase in activity on the part of the CCCs since 2002, reflecting their development and also their commitment to espouse a very active role in the development of childcare to meet local needs. At the end of 2002, only 46.4 per cent said that their CCC had offered them the opportunity to become part of a network (increased to almost 60 per cent by end 2003) and 37 per cent said that they had received training through their local CCC. Only 1.3 per cent at that time said that they had received an invitation to a CCC information meeting (compared with over two-thirds in 2003).
- 5.3.11 Table 5.2 gives a further testament to the success of the CCCs. Grant beneficiaries were asked to rate the quality of the services which they received from the CCCs and as the table shows the outcomes were extremely positive. Those who had received any of the above forms of contact or support from their CCCs were then asked to rate it (on a 5-point scale: Poor, Fair, Good, Very Good, Excellent).

**TABLE 5.2  
RESPONDENTS' RATINGS OF THEIR CONTACT/SUPPORT FROM THE CCC**

	Poor	Fair	Good	V. Good	Excellent	%Good or Above
Preparation of application	8.5%	8.5%	20.8%	29.6%	32.7%	83.1%
Preparation of development plan	8.6%	10.9%	22.2%	29.2%	29.2%	80.6%
Printed Information	3.5%	7.1%	31.7%	34.4%	23.3%	89.4%
Opportunity to join a network	3.1%	8.1%	29.1%	35.2%	24.6%	88.9%
Support with reporting to ADM	12.1%	9.4%	22.3%	30.8%	25.4%	78.5%
Training	4.8%	5.6%	25.7%	35.6%	28.4%	89.7%
Site Visit	8.3%	8.6%	23.5%	32.4%	27.1%	83.0%
Information meeting	3.9%	4.0%	31.4%	37.9%	22.8%	92.1%

5.3.12 More than four out of every five grant beneficiaries were positive in their appraisals of their contacts with the CCCs across each of the services and more than a quarter ranked the services as excellent. Ranking particularly highly were the information initiatives, both in terms of printed materials and information meetings each of which received very positive approval from nine tenths of all respondents. Training was even more successful with only 10 per cent of respondents saying they found the training ranked only fair to poor and 28.4 per cent of respondents ranking the training they received as excellent.

#### **5.4 SUPPORTING QUALITY THROUGH THE NATIONAL VOLUNTARY CHILDCARE ORGANISATIONS**

5.4.1 Seven of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs) have a role to play in the development of quality childcare. This was recognised as a key element for support under EOCP II and as a result about €20 million was set aside to support their activities over the life of the EOCP. The NVCOs which receive funding are :

- Barnardos
- Childminding Ireland
- Forbairt Naíonraí Teo. (formerly An Chomhchoiste Reamhscoilíochta)
- IPPA the Early Childhood Organisation
- Irish Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Association
- National Children's Nurseries Association
- Saint Nicholas Montessori Teachers Association

5.4.2 The NVCOs are largely involved in the promotion of quality services among their members. Each NVCO tends to have a different constituency within the childcare sector and works to enhance quality in that particular constituency. This is achieved through the provision of formal and informal training courses, through the organisation of quality accreditation programmes, through seminars, publicity and a range of other activities.

5.4.3 While the NVCOs received an initial allocation of funding to enable them to develop their range of services as they considered appropriate over the period 2001 – 2003, it was agreed by the NCCC in mid 2003 that the strategic approach which had been successful for the CCCs would be adopted for the continuing funding of the NVCOs. This change in approach recognised an increasing maturity in the sector and particularly in the emergence of appropriate structures to support the sector.

5.4.4 Accordingly, each NVCO which receives funding under the EOCP was asked in mid-2003 to prepare a three year Strategic Plan to cover the period to end 2006 and an Annual Action Plan to implement the first year of the strategy. The Strategic Plans were appraised by the NCCC and funding for the implementation of the 2004 Annual Action Plans was approved by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law reform through the Programme Appraisal Committee. Two of the NVCOs have been asked to reflect further on their Three Year Strategies with a view to strengthening them. However, it was agreed that each was strong enough to merit the provision of funding

to continue and to strengthen existing actions although continuing funding will be conditional on the further development of their Strategies.

5.4.5 The following is an outline of some of the key activities currently being offered by the different NVCOs. While individual organisations differ in the nature of their activities, the range is impressive :

**(a) Support for members/EOCP beneficiaries/Childcare Sector**

- Provision of information to childcare stakeholders regarding best practice, grants, and events via telephone, e-mail, websites and start up packs for childcare providers;
- Collation of information on members' childcare facilities, made available on web pages linked to NVCO websites;
- Publication of magazines and newsletters to keep members and childcare stakeholders apprised of recent developments in the sector;
- Conducting workshops to train members in appropriate and up to date policies and procedures;
- Collation and dissemination of childcare statistics;
- Provision of information and assistance to the C/CCCs;
- Supporting the development of Irish medium childcare.

**(b) Quality Assurance/Promotion and Development of Best Practice**

- Production of books, pamphlets and videos outlining most recent best practice, including Child Health, Integration of Children with Special Needs, and Child Development;
- Development of quality and professionalism through research into best practice and the development of quality assurance programmes;
- Development of support networks and communication mechanisms for childcare trainers;

**(c) Networking/Information**

- Co-ordinating activities to avoid duplication, developing mechanisms for effective communication between the various stakeholders in the sector;
- Promotion and advertising, including newspapers, leaflets and posters;
- Maintenance and updating of websites providing information on the NVCOs, childcare research and related topics;
- Maintenance of libraries containing childcare related literature;

**(d) Professional Development and Training**

- Delivery of childcare training to trainers, childcare providers and parents, including distance learning programmes, public workshops and in-service training courses;
- Delivery of training to private and community providers on staff support and supervision, financial management and staff training/policies and procedures;
- Improving the scope and quality of training courses both local and national and obtaining appropriate accreditation where appropriate;
- Delivery of training to the NVCO's staff and Board members, co-ordinating with other organisations as appropriate;

- Responding to perceived needs for new courses, and development of these courses, obtaining appropriate accreditation where appropriate.

5.4.6 Specific examples of NVCO achievements, which are particularly noteworthy, include the following:

- **Centre of Excellence Award : NCNA**  
This is a self-assessment tool developed by the NCNA, which aims to recognize and reward NCNA member nurseries who provide excellence in their services. The award was launched in 2002, with 16 nurseries achieving the required standard in the first year and 13 in year two. Awards were conferred in 2003 and 2004 respectively. The award demonstrates a commitment to quality and success in implementing and maintaining consistently high standards of excellence. Award recipients to date have included a range of services which also receive support under the EOCP, including a number of facilities which are located in areas of significant disadvantage.
- **The National Children’s Resource Centre (NCRC): Barnardos**  
The NCRC (and its outreach offices within the regional structure) provides information, training, publications, policy and research on anything to do with children and families. A high level of activity has been generated under the EOCP e.g. 104 tailor made training events, 24 training courses, in addition to more than 40 publications of varying levels from newsletters/fact sheets to major publications. The NCRC has proved e a valuable resource for the Childcare sector.

## 5.5 TOWARDS GREATER COLLABORATION IN QUALITY ENHANCEMENT

5.5.1 The Interim Review of the EOCP completed by the NDP/CSF Evaluation Unit recommended greater co-ordination of effort between the NVCOs and the CCCs with a view to avoiding duplication. The NVCOs are already represented on the CCCs and there have been some collaborative actions. To foster collaborative effort, D/JELR, supported by ADM Ltd., organised a seminar in September 2003 to bring the two groups together to begin to explore areas of possible collaboration in greater depth.

5.5.2 Following the appraisal of the 2004 Action Plans by both the NVCOs and the CCCs, it became apparent that there is a risk of duplication of effort in the preparation of publications and other sector wide activities. Steps are being taken through that NCCC to put in place a formal co-ordination process which would encourage collaboration and avoid duplication. It is likely that the preparation of publications and the organisation of seminars of trans-county and trans-organisational impact and interest will be co-ordinated through a new process, to be overseen by the NCCC. A small amount of the additional ESF funding being made available following the Mid-Term Review will offer tangible support to this collaboration.

## **5.6 DEVELOPING CHILDMINDING**

- 5.6.1 Childminding (or family day care) is still the preferred childcare option for many children in Ireland. In some instances, this is provided without charge by family or friends.
- 5.6.2 Small-scale childminders are specifically excluded from the notification process required under the Child Care Act 1991. However, the Childcare Regulations 1996 make provision for the voluntary notification by childminders of their childcare service to their health board. As a result, the Government made funding available in 2001 and thereafter to the health boards to enable them to recruit Childminding Advisory Officers (CMAOs) who would oversee the voluntary notification process. To date, not all health boards have recruited CMAOs and some have established formal linkages between the CMAOs and the County Childcare Committees. Such ad hoc arrangements are not ideal, given that there is no uniform coverage of the country to support childminders who would wish to voluntarily notify their services.
- 5.6.3 It will be recalled that an ad hoc Sub-Group of the NCCC drew up national guidelines for the health boards for the voluntary notification of childminders and the implementation of these guidelines together with the appointment of the remaining CMAOs is under discussion with the Assistant Chief Executives of the health boards at present.
- 5.6.4 The Government made €8.5 million available under the Anti-Inflationary package specifically to enhance the quality of childcare being provided by childminders. This led to the creation of the Childminding Initiative which is being delivered through the County Childcare Committees. The Initiative makes funding available to the CCCs to enable them to organise training, networking and information activities to create an awareness of quality among childminders. A new small grants scheme for childminders has just been launched under the EOCP and this will make a small amount of developmental funding for small scale capital purchases available to childminders who undergo a short series of lectures on quality childminding.

## **5.7 OTHER INITIATIVES RECEIVING SUPPORT UNDER THE QUALITY SUB-MEASURE**

- 5.7.1 A range of innovative projects were also selected for grant support under the Quality Sub-Measure of the EOCP. These include a number of networks of which the most significant are the Border Counties Childcare Network and the Childcare Bureau, training initiatives such as High Scope, developmental work being undertaken by Pavee Point to develop curriculum and resources for multi-cultural quality awareness across the sector and a number of other new approaches. Funding is also provided to ADM Ltd. to enable them to work to develop capacity within the emerging childcare sector. This is done through a range of mechanisms and is regarded as being of key importance in a sector which is still managed to a large extent by local community groups.

## 5.8 PROGRESS TO DATE UNDER THE QUALITY SUB-MEASURE

- 5.8.1 Expenditure to date under the Quality Sub-Measure has been far more buoyant than under either of the two other Sub-Measures of the EOCP. This probably reflects the total commitment of the CCCs to accept the challenges they faced and of the NVCOs to advance the quality message through a wide range of initiatives.
- 5.8.2 As table 5.1 below shows, the total expenditure to date has outpaced the budget provision for the Sub-Measure. Given the undisputed importance of quality in childcare and the valid contributions being made by both the CCCs and the NVCOs together with the valuable lessons being learned from the other innovative actions, the D/JELR has proposed and obtained approval to increase the financial provision for this Sub-Measure to allow these actions to continue until the end of the Programme.
- 5.8.3 The original allocation for the Quality Sub-Measure was made at a time when the capacity of the child care sector to put in place quality enhancement programmes was untested. Similarly the capacity of local interest groups to work together to develop and drive forward the County Childcare Committee Initiative was equally unclear. As a result an amount of about €35 million was set aside for the Quality Sub-Measure.

**TABLE 5.1**  
**EOCP - QUALITY SUB – MEASURE**  
**COMMITMENTS AND EXPENDITURE TO END DECEMBER 2003**

	<b>BMW</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>	<b>S&amp;E</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>	<b>TOTAL</b> <b>€</b> <b>million</b>
Total NDP public funding available (a)	12.519	23.186	35.705
- of which ESF	6.012	11.593	17.605
Total including 2001 funding increase			73.970
<b>Revised public funding post MTR(b)</b>	<b>26.619</b>	<b>60.227</b>	<b>86.846</b>
- of which ESF	12.012	27.500	39.512
<b>Commitments to date (c)</b>	<b>12.517</b>	<b>29.823</b>	<b>42.340</b>
Forecast public expenditure to date	6.397	12.340	18.737
<b>Actual public expenditure to date</b>	<b>9.137</b>	<b>19.602</b>	<b>28.739</b>
Actual expenditure as % of forecast	142.8%	158.9%	153%

(a) As provided in NDP

(b) Includes non-NDP funding and additional transfers of ESF funding

(c) Includes administration costs at 4 per cent and TA at < 1 per cent

- 5.8.4 The success of the Quality Sub-Measure has brought international recognition – with very positive comments from an OECD Expert Review Group in Early Childcare and Education (commissioned by the Minister for Education and Science). As a result, the D/JELR has obtained the approval of the Monitoring Committees to increase the funding for this Sub-Measure to almost €7 million to ensure that the investment in the promotion of quality childcare is maximised during the life of the EOCP.

- 5.8.5 Commitments to date reflect the practice whereby funding under the Quality Sub-Measure is largely committed on an annual basis. Accordingly the ongoing commitments to the NVCOs and the CCCs post 2003 are not reflected in the financial commitment data. As forecast expenditure is linked to NDP funding it does not represent a true measure of financial progress under the Quality Sub-Measure. Actual expenditure by grant recipients now amounts to about €29 million. This represents about 38.8 per cent of the total funding (pre MTR adjustments).
- 5.8.6 Details of all projects which had received grant approval under the Quality Sub-Measure of the EOCP II are given in Appendix C. A number of projects under this Sub-Measure are nationally focused and for logistical reasons, they have been assigned to one or other of the Operational Programmes.

## **5.9 TRAINING IN CHILDCARE**

- 5.9.1 There has been a significant increase in the provision of formal training in childcare for childcare practitioners in recent years. Training and education is now available through courses accredited by both FETAC (NCVA Levels 1, 2 and 3) and HETAC and the universities (taught courses to degree level and Masters and PhD awards by thesis). This has led to an increase in the quality of childcare practitioners and has also opened up new opportunities for advancement to those working in the childcare sector.
- 5.9.2 The development of the Model Framework for Training and Certification<sup>19</sup> by a Sub-Group of the NCCC is considered to have been invaluable in positioning childcare training to feed into the accreditation and certification work of the National Qualifications Authority of Ireland and of FETAC and HETAC. While it is an important element, there are still a number of issues to be addressed fully, such as the accreditation of prior learning and the wide diversity of less formal training pathways previously undertaken.
- 5.9.3 It is probably fair to say that childcare training has developed in something of a piecemeal manner and that there is scope for the further development of training and indeed for the greater co-ordination of effort to avoid duplication and to ensure that training being provided in the many locations is of a uniformly high quality. A number of Universities and Institutes of Technology now offer Higher Education in Early Years Care and Education while vocational training underpinned by FETAC is available in many locations throughout the country, particularly at FETAC (NCVA) Level II. FETAC (NCVA) Level III training is only beginning to emerge.
- 5.9.4 This need for greater co-ordination of effort in the provision of training is likely to be a key focus on the work programme for the NCCC in the near future.

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<sup>19</sup> D/JELR : *ibid.*

## **5.10 OTHER QUALITY ISSUES – NOTIFICATION OF CHILDCARE FACILITIES AND THE INTRODUCTION OF STANDARDS**

- 5.10.1 The Department of Health and Children has recently facilitated work to review the current arrangements for the notification of childcare facilities. It is understood that this will lead to the introduction of revised Regulations later this year.
- 5.10.2 In contrast with the efforts of the childcare sector which has striven over the past decade to promote quality in childcare, albeit in a somewhat piecemeal manner, progress on the development of national standards for the sector has been relatively slow. The work of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, an Agency of the Department of Education and Science (D/Ed&Sc) focused on primary and secondary education in the first instance and has only turned more recently to early education. The establishment of the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (another Agency of the D/Ed&Sc) also took some time although it is now proceeding well with its work programme and has produced an impressive array of studies in a relatively short time. However in neither instance is the key work in relation to early childhood care and education likely to emerge for some time. Thus the childcare sector has found itself in something of a quality limbo and has sought to make its own way out of that state.
- 5.9.3 This had led to a number of different accreditation models which will present something of a challenge when the national frameworks emerge.
- 5.9.4 Progress to date on the development of the National Childcare Strategy and on the development of the Model Framework for Childcare has shown the benefits of collaboration between the stakeholders in the sector. However, the key to the success of each of these exercises was the commitment of the central driving force and if the sector is to continue to advance and develop, it is essential that those charged with the task of driving it forward show the same commitment and tenacity. Both the NCCA and the CECDE have shown an openness to broad consultation and therefore are likely to be very successful in achieving their respective aims and each will play a significant role in developing quality childcare in Ireland.

## CHAPTER 6

### IMPACT OF THE EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES CHILDCARE PROGRAMME

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

6.1.1 At the end of 2002 and again at the end of 2003, ADM Ltd. (which undertakes the day to day administration and monitoring of the EOCP on behalf of the D/JELR) sent a questionnaire to all beneficiaries of capital and staffing (Sub Measure 1 and 2) grants. In 2003, the survey included both grant beneficiaries who had completed their grant draw down and grant beneficiaries who were continuing to draw down their grants. In 2002, the survey only included projects that were actively in receipt of grant assistance – i.e. projects that were still drawing down either a capital grant or a staffing grant and therefore excluded projects which had drawn down their full grant. The projects excluded in 2002 are likely in the main to be private providers who had drawn down their full grant. This gap in survey coverage was addressed in the 2003 survey. The 2003 survey is therefore more complete showing a significant increase across all statistical data as a result.

6.1.2 A total of 1,163 beneficiaries received questionnaires for completion in respect of 2003. Valid responses came from in respect of 915 services representing a response rate of 79 per cent. There was no significant difference in the response rate between the BMW and SAE regions and 352 (38.5 per cent) of the 915 facilities about which information was received were located in the BMW region while 563 (61.5 per cent) were in the SAE region. Of the 915 questionnaires returned, 559 (68.1 per cent) came from community-based facilities, and the remaining 356 (38.9 per cent) came from facilities run by private/self-employed providers.

6.1.3 The 915 facility addresses were geocoded according to their urban/rural location. Table 6.1 below shows the numbers of facilities that fell into each of the seven urban/rural classifications (Urban, Large Town, Suburban, Suburban Large Town, Rural, Small Town, Remote Rural). The table shows that the locations of services receiving support under the EOCP are widely ranged between urban and remote rural areas.

**TABLE 6.1**  
**EOCP - URBAN/RURAL SPREAD OF FACILITIES AND THEIR OWNERSHIP- END 2003**

Urban/Rural Classification	Location		Private		Community	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Urban	120	13.1%				
Large Town	129	14.1%				
Suburban	201	22.0%				
Suburban – Large Town	55	6.0%				
<b>Urban Total</b>	<b>505</b>	<b>55.2%</b>	<b>213</b>	<b>59.8%</b>	<b>292</b>	<b>52.2%</b>
Rural	191	20.9%				
Small Town	58	6.4%				
Remote Rural	161	17.6%				
<b>Rural Total</b>	<b>410</b>	<b>44.8%</b>	<b>143</b>	<b>40.2%</b>	<b>267</b>	<b>47.8%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>915</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>356</b>	<b>39.8%</b>	<b>559</b>	<b>60.2%</b>

6.1.4 Table 6.1 above also compares the ownership of the different facilities and finds that there are more privately owned facilities in urban than in rural areas but that the variation is less than 20 per cent and therefore not hugely significant.

## 6.2 GRANTS AVAILABLE UNDER EOCP

6.2.1 Table 6.2 below shows the types of funding approved for the 2003 respondents to the survey EOCP funding is available for capital costs and as a contribution towards staffing costs. Staffing grants are not available to self-employed providers. The information below summarises the types of funding received by the respondents' services.

**TABLE 6.2**  
**EOCP GRANT BENEFICIARIES – END 2004**  
**TYPES OF FUNDING APPROVED BY BENEFICIARY TYPE (PRIVATE, COMMUNITY BASED)**

	Private		Community Based		Total	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Capital only	352	100.0%	37	6.8%	388	43.4%
Staffing only	-	-	249	46.0%	250	28.0%
Both Capital & Staffing	-	-	255	47.1%	255	28.6%
Total	352	100.0%	541	100.0%	893	100.0%

6.2.2 Almost half of all community based beneficiaries who responded (255; 47.1 per cent) were in receipt of both capital and staffing grants. Only a very small proportion (37; 6.8 per cent) of such beneficiaries had received capital funding only. This suggests a significant dependency rate on Programme supports towards the current costs of administering childcare services among the community based grant beneficiaries.

## 6.3 CHILDCARE SERVICE PROVISION BY RESPONDENTS

6.3.1 Respondents were asked to indicate one or more types of childcare that best described their services. The results, shown in Table 6.3 below are based on 913 responses. By far the largest category of provision was the Preschool/Playgroup category, with 64 per cent of respondents stating that they provide this type of childcare. Next most commonly mentioned were Creche/Nursery (37 per cent) and After School services (33.9 per cent). The number of workplace crèches continues to be very low, at only 2.1 per cent.

**TABLE 6.3**  
**EOCP END 2003 TYPES OF CHILDCARE PROVIDED – BY OWNERSHIP AND LOCATION**

Service Type	Private		Community		Rural		Urban	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Creche/ Nursery	155	43.5%	183	32.9%	101	24.7%	237	47.0%
Montessori	188	52.8%	48	8.6%	88	21.5%	148	29.4%
Playgrp/Pre-school	182	51.1%	402	72.2%	311	76.0%	273	54.2%
Naíonra	7	2.0%	42	7.5%	28	6.8%	21	4.2%
Workplace crèche	2	0.6%	17	3.1%	3	0.7%	16	3.2%
After school group	103	29.0%	206	37.0%	127	31.1%	182	36.1%
Steiner-Waldorf	-	-	9	1.6%	5	1.2%	4	0.8%
HighScope	13	3.7%	60	10.8%	37	9.0%	36	7.1%
Breakfast Club	8	2.2%	24	4.3%	13	3.2%	19	3.8%
Childminding	23	6.5%	18	3.2%	19	4.6%	22	4.4%

6.3.2 Respondents were also asked to indicate the principal type of service provided. In Table 6.4 below, the principal services are detailed and compared with the results found at the end of 2002. In respect of the 2003 survey, 12 of the 915 respondents did not answer this question, and so the results below are based on the 903 responses given. A further 36 respondents stated that there was “no main type” (that their facility had a number of equally weighted service types on offer and that none of these was considered the primary one).

**TABLE 6.4**  
**EOCP END 2003 AND END 2002 MAIN SERVICE TYPE ON OFFER – ALL FACILITIES**

Main Service Type	2003		2002	
	Number	% of Facilities	Number	% of Facilities
Creche/Nursery	251	27.8%	164	27.0%
Montessori	129	14.3%	71	11.7%
Playgroup/Preschool	357	39.5%	260	42.8%
Naionra	44	4.9%	44	7.2%
Workplace crèche	5	0.6%	3	0.5%
After school group	50	5.5%	43	7.1%
Steiner - Waldorf	6	0.7%	6	1.0%
HighScope	10	1.1%	12	2.0%
Breakfast Club	2	0.2%	2	0.3%
Childminding	13	1.4%	2	0.3%
No main type	36	4.0%	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>100.0%</b>	<b>605</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

6.3.3 A comparison of the data for the two years shows that, although there is a very significant increase in the number of respondents, there is little change in the profile of services receiving support under the EOCP. Particularly noteworthy are the absolute increases in the numbers of nursery/crèches and in Montessori and Pre-school services. Taking the Montessori and pre-school facilities together as they offer similarly focused services, just over half of the Programme beneficiaries have a principal focus in the provision of pre-school services. The numbers of naionrai stayed constant over the past year in absolute terms and therefore fell in percentage terms. Although showing an increase in absolute terms, the percentage of services with a principal focus on after school care fell back to only 5.5 per cent of all services. However a comparison between the numbers of actual after school facilities offered by childcare services in 2003 from Table 6.3 above at 309 services compares very favourably with the (unpublished) equivalent data for 2002, at the end of which there were only 196 school age childcare services.

6.3.4 In the context of the EOCP’s principal objective to facilitate parents to avail of employment, training and educational objectives, it is important to examine the proportion of facilities in which full day care is offered as an option to parents. This research shown in table 6.5 overleaf found that overall, 37.4 per cent of facilities offered full day care. This represents an increase on the proportion (30.7 per cent) reporting this category of provision in 2002. A substantial divergence, however, was found between private and community based providers, with exactly half of the former and less than 30 per cent of the latter reporting that full day care is provided. Just over one-third (33.7 per cent) of facilities reported offering a 2-session-per-day service. Full day care was also more widely available in urban settings.

**TABLE 6.5**  
**CATEGORY OF CHILDCARE PROVISION IN RURAL, URBAN AND ALL FACILITIES**

Category of Provision	Urban		Rural		All Facilities	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Full Day Care	216	42.8%	126	30.7%	342	37.4%
Sessional (1 session per day)	211	41.8%	231	56.3%	442	48.4%
Sessional (2 sessions per day)	187	37.0%	121	29.6%	308	33.7%
Afterschool	171	33.9%	115	28.1%	286	31.3%
Drop in	37	7.3%	16	3.9%	53	5.8%
Parent & Toddler	20	4.0%	32	7.8%	52	5.7%

## **6.4 CHILDCARE PLACES AND USAGE**

- 6.4.1 Among respondents, 886 facilities reported that they had a capacity of 30,147 childcare places between them per day (as recorded in accordance with the 1996 Regulations). This figure includes both part time and full time childcare places. The average number of places available per facility was 34, and the figures ranged from 4 childcare places to a single facility that can cater for 222 on any one day. Seventy seven per cent of facilities had 40 places or fewer, and only 5 per cent reported having more than 78 places per day.
- 6.4.2 Of the total reported number of childcare places available, 10,141 (33.6 per cent) were in facilities run by private providers, and the remaining 20,006 (66.4 per cent) were in community based facilities. The average number of places available is significantly lower in private facilities (30) as compared with community based facilities (37), which is also reflected in the fact that half (50.3 per cent) of all private facilities have 20 places or fewer, whereas only 33.3 per cent of community based facilities are in this category.
- 6.4.3 Table 6.6 overleaf shows the numbers of children by age group attending each service type, in 2003, and for comparative purposes in 2002. It will be recalled that the 2002 survey was not as complete in its coverage as the 2003 survey and this impacts on this comparison.
- 6.4.4 Of the total number of children attending all facilities in 2003, (28,368 including drop in services), 9,227 (32.5 per cent) were attending private facilities, and 19,141 (67.5 per cent) were attending community based facilities.
- 6.4.5 As table 6.6 overleaf clearly shows, the sessional service has the highest level of usage by a large margin, with 57 per cent of children availing of sessional services. This actually represents a significant decline compared with the somewhat differently based 2002 findings when 65.5 per cent of children in childcare were in sessional services. This change is matched by a change in the numbers using full day service which is now availed of by 25 per cent of children, compared with 17 per cent a year earlier. Usage of school age childcare has remained constant.

**TABLE 6.6**  
**NUMBERS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING ALL FACILITIES – BY AGE GROUP AND SERVICE TYPE**  
(Figures in brackets are the number of facilities on which the figure above is based.)

Age Group	Full Day Care <sup>20</sup>		Sessional		After school		Total	
	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002	2003	2002
Babies (up to 1 year)	802 (189)	363 (97)	396 (100)	215 (54)	N/A	N/A	1,198	578
Toddlers (1 and 2 yrs)	2,558 (269)	1,137 (153)	1,897 (242)	1,255 (141)	N/A	24 (2)	4,455	2,416
Preschoolers (3 to 5 yrs)	3,472 (293)	1,423 (162)	12,407 (698)	9,491 (490)	361 (52)	171 (29)	16,240	11,085
After school (6 to 9 yrs)	259 (36)	50 (13)	807 (75)	343 (21)	3,064 (223)	1,773 (155)	4,130	2,166
After school (10 to 14 yrs)	20 (11)	8 (1)	268 (25)	92 (7)	1,379 (117)	1,048 (87)	1,667	1,148
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,111</b>	<b>2,981</b>	<b>15,775</b>	<b>11,396</b>	<b>4,804</b>	<b>3,016</b>	<b>27,690</b>	<b>17,393</b>
<b>Percentage attending by service type</b>	<b>25.7%</b>	<b>17.1%</b>	<b>57.0%</b>	<b>65.5%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

6.4.6 Table 6.7 below explores the age profile of children using childcare. It finds that the pre-school group of 3 to 5 year olds dominates with almost 58.6 per cent of participants in childcare. The numbers of babies and toddlers attending, while increasing, is very low when it is considered that there are about 60,000 children per year of age in each age cohort. It may be that such children are still largely cared for by childminders (family day care) and by family or neighbours.

**TABLE 6.7**  
**NUMBERS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING ALL FACILITIES – BY AGE GROUP AND SERVICE TYPE**  
(Figures in brackets are the number of facilities on which the figure above is based.)

Age Group	Total (number)		As % of total children attending	
	2003	2002	2003	2002
Babies (up to 1 year)	1,198	578	4.3%	3.2%
Toddlers (1 and 2 yrs)	4,455	2,416	16.1%	13.5%
Preschoolers (3 to 5 yrs)	16,240	11,085	58.6%	61.9%
After school (6 to 9 yrs)	4,130	2,166	14.9%	12.1%
After school (10 to 14 yrs)	1,667	1,148	6.0%	6.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>27,690</b>	<b>17,393</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

6.4.7 The numbers of children availing of centre based school age childcare appears to have increased in absolute terms while there has also been a small increase in the relative percentage of children availing of this service.

6.4.8 Table 6.8 summarises the findings in this section and shows the comparisons between urban and rural and private and community based facilities when it comes to numbers attending different types of service and average numbers attending per facility. The predominance of community based facilities when it comes to offering school age

<sup>20</sup> It is assumed that where there are figures for full day care for school aged children, that this applies to full day care out of school term time as the survey date falls in the Christmas vacation.

childcare is very evident, as is the greater concentration of full day care in urban areas compared to rural areas.

**TABLE 6.8**  
**NUMBERS ATTENDING BY CATEGORY OF SERVICE 2003 –**  
**PRIVATE, COMMUNITY, URBAN, RURAL AND ALL FACILITIES**

	<b>Full Day Care</b>	<b>Sessional</b>	<b>Drop in</b>	<b>After school</b>	<b>Total</b>
Private	3,794	4,768	75	590	9,227
Community Based	3,317	11,007	603	4,214	19,141
Urban	5,035	8,773	530	3,329	17,667
Rural	2,076	7,002	148	1,475	10,701
<b>Total (all facilities)</b>	<b>7,111</b>	<b>15,775</b>	<b>678</b>	<b>4,804</b>	<b>28,368</b>

## **6.5 WAITING LISTS**

6.5.1 In order to gauge the extent to which the demand for childcare is being met by the funded facilities, respondents were asked to state whether or not their facilities were “currently full”, i.e. full at the end of 2003. Just over half (51.5 per cent) of all facilities were reported to be completely full at the end of 2003. There was no significant difference between private and community based facilities in their responses to this question. Urban facilities, however, were more likely to report being full to capacity (55.8 per cent) than their rural counterparts (46.1 per cent).

6.5.2 Respondents were then asked to state whether or not their facility had a waiting list in operation. Although they are a useful pointer to demand for childcare services, it should always be remembered that waiting lists are an imperfect measure for latent demand. Almost two-thirds of all facilities (64.7 per cent) reported that they did have a waiting list for childcare places, and community based facilities were significantly more likely (68.4 per cent) to have a waiting list in operation than were private facilities (59 per cent). Given the greater numbers of urban facilities reporting that they were full, it is unsurprising that they were also more likely than rural facilities to have waiting lists (70 per cent, compared with 58.2 per cent).

## **6.6 STAFF WORKING IN EOCP SUPPORTED CHILDCARE SERVICES**

6.6.1 The Survey sought details of the numbers of staff working (directly with children) in each facility both prior to the receipt of funding and at end December 2003. On the basis of the 900 responses, some of which have not yet fully drawn down their full grant, there had been a 74.6 per cent increase (from 2,775 to 4,895) in the number of paid (i.e. excluding volunteers) staff working with children in these facilities. Full time<sup>21</sup> staff increased in number from 863 prior to receiving EOCP funding to 2081 at the end of 2003, representing a 141.4 per cent rise. Part time<sup>22</sup> staff had almost

<sup>21</sup> For the purposes of the questionnaire, full-time staff were defined as those working for more than 20 hours per week.

<sup>22</sup> For the purposes of the questionnaire, part-time staff were defined as those working for more less than or equal to 20 hours per week.

doubled in number (from 865 to 1688, an increase of 95.1 per cent). These data are shown in Table 6.9 below.

**TABLE 6.9**  
**NUMBERS OF STAFF BEFORE AND SINCE RECEIPT OF FUNDING – ALL FACILITIES**

Staff Category	Before Funding			Currently (i.e. end 2003)			% Change
	Females	Males	Total	Females	Males	Total	
Full time staff	840	23	863	2033	48	2081	+141.4%
Part time staff	841	24	865	1627	61	1688	+95.1%
CE Participants	900	26	926	854	20	874	-4.5%
JI Participants	103	9	112	111	3	114	+1.8%
Social Economy	7	2	9	132	6	138	+1433.3%
Volunteers	324	35	359	544	85	629	+75.2%
<b>Total (excl. volunteers)</b>	<b>2,691</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>2,775</b>	<b>4,757</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>4,895</b>	<b>+76.4%</b>

6.6.2 Respondents reported a slight decrease (of 4.5 per cent) in the number of Community Employment participants working directly with children in their facilities since receipt of funding. The number of Jobs Initiative participants had remained relatively stable, increasing by only 1.8 per cent. The biggest change relates to the number of Social Economy participants, but this dramatic increase is due to the fact that the Social Economy programme has only begun in recent years (and so the increase is from a very low baseline figure of 9 workers in the facilities concerned).

6.6.3 The number of paid male staff increased by 64.3 per cent from 84 men prior to funding to 138 at the time of completion of the questionnaire but this represents only 3 per cent of the total number of paid staff. The percentage reported for the end of 2003 was in fact slightly lower at 2.8 per cent (138 of the total 4,895).

## **6.7 LABOUR MARKET STATUS OF PARENTS**

6.7.1 The principal aim of the EOCP 2000-2006 is to facilitate parents to participate in employment, training and education through the provision of quality childcare supports. As part of the Annual Beneficiary Questionnaire, respondents were asked to give details (to the best of their knowledge) on the number of mothers and fathers who were participating in training (full time or part time), education (full time or part time), employment (full time or part time), Community Employment (CE) or Jobs Initiative (JI) schemes, or who were unemployed or working in the home. About 12 per cent of respondents did not provide this information and many others only provided information on the mother's economic status. However, the information that was made available gives an acceptable indication of the labour market status of the parents. The principal findings are given in table 6.10 overleaf.

**TABLE 6.10  
LABOUR MARKET STATUS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING ALL FACILITIES**

Labour Market Activity	Male		Female		TOTAL	
	No.	As % of Total	No.	As % of Total	No.	As % of Total
Part time training	309	2.0%	1,278	5.9%	1,587	4.2%
Full time training	118	0.8%	502	2.3%	620	1.6%
Part time education	141	0.9%	1,332	6.2%	1,473	3.9%
Full time education	160	1.0%	765	3.4%	925	2.4%
Part time employment	993	6.5%	4,558	20.3%	5,551	14.7%
Full time employment	11,393	74.7%	6,270	27.9%	17,663	46.7%
Community Employment Sch	321	2.1%	858	3.8%	1,179	3.1%
Jobs Initiative Scheme	47	0.3%	95	0.4%	142	0.4%
Social Economy	14	0.1%	59	0.2%	73	0.2%
Unemployed	1,373	9.0%	1,666	7.4%	3,039	8.0%
Working in the home	374	2.4%	5,104	22.7%	5,478	14.5%
<b>Total engaged in employment/ training/education</b>	<b>13,496</b>	<b>88.5%</b>	<b>15,717</b>	<b>69.9%</b>	<b>29,213</b>	<b>77.3%</b>

6.7.2 The table clearly shows that just 70 per cent of the mothers of children included in these responses are in employment, education and training and are benefiting from childcare in accordance with the aims of the Programme. However, only 48 per cent are in employment, and, of these mothers in employment, 60 per cent are in full time work while the remainder are in part time employment.

**TABLE 6.11  
LABOUR MARKET STATUS OF PARENTS OF CHILDREN ATTENDING PRIVATE AND  
COMMUNITY BASED FACILITIES**

Labour Market Activity	Privately Owned Facilities			Community Based Facilities		
	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total	No. of Males	No. of Females	Total
Part time training	109	159	268	200	1,119	1,319
Full time training	45	78	123	73	424	497
Part time education	16	115	131	125	1,217	1,342
Full time education	45	133	178	115	632	747
Part time employment	159	1,372	1,531	834	3,186	4,020
Full time employment	5,018	2,927	7,945	6,375	3,343	9,718
Community Employment Sch	104	96	200	217	762	979
Jobs Initiative Scheme	5	12	17	42	83	125
Social Economy	4	6	10	10	53	63
Unemployed	75	199	274	1,298	1,467	2,763
Working in the home	115	1,503	1,618	259	3,975	4,034
<b>Total engaged in employment/ training/education</b>	<b>5,505</b>	<b>4,898</b>	<b>10,403</b>	<b>7,991</b>	<b>10,819</b>	<b>18,810</b>
<b>Percent engaged in training/ education/employment</b>	<b>96.7%</b>	<b>74.2%</b>	<b>84.7%</b>	<b>84.1%</b>	<b>66.6%</b>	<b>73.8%</b>

6.7.3 Table 6.11 above contrasts the usage by parents of privately owned and community based facilities. The table shows that mothers in training and education are much

more likely to avail of a community based childcare facility. Mothers availing of privately owned services are also more likely to be actively engaged in employment, education and training, while, among those who work outside the home and use privately owned childcare, more than two thirds are in full employment. This contrasts with a split of nearly 50/50 among mothers working full or part time and availing of community based childcare.

## **6.8 USE OF OTHER CHILDCARE SERVICES**

- 6.8.1 A large majority of providers (80.4 per cent) reported that fewer than 25 per cent of the children attending their facilities were also making use of another childcare service elsewhere. A further 14.9 per cent (131) reported the proportion to be between 25 per cent and 50 per cent. Only 4.7 per cent in total were of the view that more than half of the children were making use of other services. The difference between private and community based providers in their responses to this question were not noteworthy. The findings are almost identical to those in 2002.

## **6.9 USE OF CHILDCARE FACILITIES BY CHILDREN FROM ETHNIC MINORITIES INCLUDING TRAVELLERS**

- 6.9.1 A total of 391 facilities (or 42.7 per cent of the total) reported that they had at least one child attending who is a member of an ethnic minority excluding children of the Traveller community. Community based facilities were found to be somewhat more likely to report attendance by members of this group than were private facilities. Of the total number, 260 were community based facilities (representing 46.5 per cent of the total number of such facilities) and 131 were private facilities (representing 36.8 per cent of their total). The total number of children from ethnic minorities attending these facilities was 1,740.
- 6.9.2 In a separate question, respondents were asked if the children attending their facility included any members of the Travelling Community. A total of 144 (or 15.7 per cent of the total of 915) replied that there is at least one member of the Travelling Community among the children attending. Of the 144, 12 were private providers and 132 were community based. In total, respondents reported that 903 members of the Travelling Community were attending all facilities. Only 2.1 per cent (19) of this number were in attendance at private facilities, with the remaining 97.9 per cent (884) attending community based facilities.

## **6.10 CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL REQUIREMENTS**

- 6.10.1 The questionnaire asked providers to give information on the number (if any) of children attending their facility who have physical, intellectual/learning, sensory or other disabilities. The findings are summarised in Table 6.12 overleaf.

**TABLE 6.12**  
**NUMBER OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES ATTENDING CHILDCARE FACILITIES**

Type of Disability	No. of facilities	No. attending private facilities	No. attending community facilities	Total no. attending all facilities
Physical	137	49	124	173
Intellectual/ Learning	354	178	724	902
Sensory	133	60	188	248
Other	47	20	159	179
<b>Total</b>	<b>671</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>1,195</b>	<b>1,502</b>

6.10.2 As the table shows, the survey respondents noted that 1,502 children in their facilities had a disability, be it physical, intellectual, sensory or other. A higher number of children with such disabilities appear to attend community based childcare rather than privately owned childcare according to the survey findings.

## **6.11 KNOWLEDGE OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE EOCP**

6.11.1 The final question on the 2003 Annual Beneficiary Questionnaire asked respondents for their understanding of the objectives of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme.

6.11.2 Some 93 per cent of providers responded to this question and all percentages and totals are relative to this figure. This is a significant response rate and indicates that the vast majority of providers feel that they have some knowledge of the EOCP objectives. Respondents were free to indicate as many objectives as they wished.

6.11.3 A large majority of those who responded (71.4 per cent) reported at their understanding of the main objective of the EOCP is to improve the quality of childcare in Ireland. Next most frequently mentioned was that creating more childcare places is the main objective of the Programme (51.2 per cent). A similar proportion of respondents (50 per cent) reported that facilitating parents in training, employment etc. was their understanding of the function of the EOCP. Almost a third of providers (31.5 per cent) stated that their understanding of the EOCP objectives is to provide equal childcare services and make childcare accessible to all children. Only 15.6 per cent (or 133) of providers reported providing grant aid was their key understanding of the EOCP objectives.

## CHAPTER 7

### PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

#### 7.1 PROGRESS

- 7.1.1 The previous chapters have outlined the progress which has been made in developing childcare to help address the childcare needs of the parents of Ireland with a special emphasis on parents who might be economically active or who may be preparing to rejoin the labour force through training or employment.
- 7.1.2 In terms of commitment on the part of the Government and the European Union, the provision of over €440 million in funding over a seven year period has given the impetus for unprecedented growth, not merely in physical infrastructure but also in developing an awareness of the importance of quality childcare and, moving beyond awareness, to the creation of quality childcare facilities and quality enhanced childcare places where facilities had been developed previously.
- 7.1.3 However, despite this level of funding, there is still a need to address service gaps to ensure that no parent finds a difficulty in accessing childcare within a reasonable distance from either home or place of employment or training.
- 7.1.4 The focus on childcare linked to economic activity has been criticised on occasion but this criticism comes from a lack of understanding that the EU supports require the Programme to be linked to the social policy aspirations of the EU which focus, inter alia, on employment as a key to social development.
- 7.1.5 Overall the level of commitments under all Measures/Sub-Measures of the EOCP is acceptable. However, the difficulties being experienced by some groups in moving from grant offer to project completion are giving cause for some concern. The ADM team and the CCC teams work to help the groups to surmount these difficulties. The relationship between the Capital Measure and Staffing Sub-Measure is also important and as a result progress under the Staffing Sub-Measure is particularly crucial. A further factor here is the “n+2” requirement whereby all the annual funding commitments must be brought to fruition within two years. This is particularly critical for the Staffing and Quality Sub-Measures of the EOCP which are funded using the only ESF funding being made available to the Regional OPs.

#### 7.2 CHALLENGES

- 7.2.1 Despite the investment and successes of the EOCP, the challenges facing childcare and childcare development in Ireland are still numerous. The European Union set targets at the Barcelona Summit which requires Member States to put in place specific ratios of childcare places by end 2010. These targets differentiate between the younger child, in respect of whom there should be one place for every three children by 2010, and those requiring early education. Early education places must be provided for 90 per cent of children aged between three years and the statutory school going age (six years old in Ireland.)

- 7.2.2 State intervention in the provision of early education in Ireland is still quite limited. Infant education in primary schools is open to and frequently accessed by children who have attained their fourth birthday by 1 September. However State provision of pre-school education for children of 3 to 4 is confined to a school based initiative in a small number of disadvantaged school and to a special initiative for Traveller children. The voluntary or commercial pre-school sector offers services to the remainder of the population but neither the availability of places nor the take up come anywhere near the EU target.
- 7.2.3 There are also childcare needs for family intervention. Again, these fall outside the remit of the EOCP – although a number of community based projects developed with EOCP funding offer places to the health boards specifically to support this goal. This is another sector which requires further development.
- 7.2.4 Although outside the direct remit of the D/JELR, the cost of childcare is a matter for concern. However, there is evidence to suggest that some community groups which have developed childcare facilities under the EOCP have a reluctance to charge realistic fees for the services they are offering. This is an emotive issue and all groups will be required to put realistic fee structures in place when they receive continuation funding under the Staffing Sub-Measure. Such fee structures can take cognisance of the different economic circumstances of the client families.
- 7.2.5 A further issue which may be reviewed at that stage is the level of service provision in order to ensure that the services which receive staffing funding actually do offer services which meet the needs of parents. Services which are open for a limited number of weeks in the year are less likely to facilitate parents in employment and may require the parent to have to avail of a number of different childcare providers.
- 7.2.6 The provision of school age childcare has also been highlighted as an important deficit in current childcare provision and need to expand it has been emphasised frequently. While many of the large scale capital projects offer an integrated service to include care after school, there is still scope for a further targeted effort to determine whether school premises and school property might be made available for this purpose.
- 7.2.7 In the chapter on quality above, reference has been made to the lack of co-ordination of effort in relation to the provision of childcare training. It has already been pointed out that training has developed in something of a piecemeal manner. Training is a crucial element for the attainment of quality childcare and is also a key to a contented and fulfilled work force. Accordingly it merits special attention in the latter stages of EOCP II through the work of the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee in the first instance.

### **7.3 CONCLUSIONS**

- 7.3.1 This final chapter merely touches on a small number of the key issues which face the Childcare Directorate and the Equality Division of the D/JELR in the coming years. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee also has a role as the forum for

highlighting and addressing challenges. Without doubt the task of developing childcare to meet the diverse needs of the Irish population will continue to occupy all for quite a long time more.

**Childcare Directorate  
Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform  
June 2004**



## **APPENDIX A**

### **REPORT BY MR. MICHAEL MCDOWELL, TD, MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY & LAW REFORM ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE EXPERT WORKING GROUP ON CHILDCARE<sup>23</sup>**

**February 2004**

“...The National Childcare Strategy was drawn up by an Expert Working Group on Childcare chaired by my Department in the context of Partnership 2000.

“Key amongst these recommendations was the designation of my Department as the lead Department with respect to the development of childcare to meet the needs of parents in employment, education and training. These recommendations formed the basis of the €436.7 million Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 which is aiming, inter alia, to increase by 50 per cent the supply of centre based childcare places by Programme end. The Programme also has a focus on many of the quality issues which were identified in the Childcare Strategy and aims to ensure that there is a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services throughout the country.

“To date, my Department has allocated over €249.2 million in funding under the EOCP. Of this, €209.5 million has been allocated in capital funding for community based/not for profit and private childcare facilities and staffing funding for community based /not for profit groups, with €42.7 million allocated to Quality Improvement measures, including funding for the thirty three City/County Childcare Committees and seven of the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations. This funding allocated to date will lead to the creation of 27,200 new Childcare places, leading to the expectation that the original target of 28,300 new places will be exceeded. Much of the uncommitted funding will be required towards the ongoing costs of existing projects and for allocation towards capital and staffing projects which best meet the Programme criteria in terms of value for money and service need.

“Staffing grant assistance is available under the EOCP to help with the staffing costs in community based/not for profit childcare facilities which support disadvantaged families where the parents can avail of employment, training and education.

“The EOCP continues to support valuable work to enhance the quality of childcare available throughout Ireland. Both the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and the City and County Childcare Committees have drawn up strategic plans, closely linked to the aims of the EOCP, which enhance awareness among childcare practitioners through training, networking and an array of other initiatives. Special provision is made for childminders who will shortly be able to avail of small capital grant assistance linked to participation in a Childminding Quality Awareness Programme.

“A number of the other recommendations fall within the remit of my Department. All groups in receipt of staffing funding under the EOCP are required to provide details of their childcare staff to my Department for the purpose of garda clearance. A Working Group has been established by the Garda Commissioner to examine the issue of garda clearance and is expected to report in the near future.

“My Department established the National Childcare Coordinating Committee (NCCC) with a remit to oversee the development of an integrated childcare infrastructure throughout the country; address specific policy issues and, through its various sub-groups, develop and inform national strategic

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<sup>23</sup> Response to Parliamentary Question 3 February 2004

actions in the sector, such as training and certification, diversity and multiculturalism. To date the NCCC has developed a Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector which will inform training and accreditation for the sector, has developed national guidelines for the notification of childminders, has developed a new policy document on school age childcare which I hope to launch later this year and is currently developing two series of guidelines for multiculturalism and inclusion in childcare aimed at childcare practitioners and at parents.

“A number of other Departments have responsibility for the implementation of some of the recommendations of the National Childcare Strategy. The introduction of the national minimum wage has ensured that childcare practitioners receive a better standard of pay than heretofore while the increased provision of accreditation and certification will lead to the development of a more attractive sector offering real employment opportunities with the prospect of career progression. FAS has been very proactive in the delivery of training for the sector as have the NVCOS.

“A review of the Childcare (Pre School Services) Regulations 1996 is currently at an advanced stage at the Department of Health and Children which has also recently introduced a system of voluntary notification for childminders.

“The Minister for Education and Science is currently developing standards for early childhood care and education and guidelines for a curriculum for the sector through the work of a number of Agencies operating under his Department. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government introduced new planning guidelines in relation to the provision of childcare facilities in new developments.

“The Expert Working Group made a series of recommendations in relation to the so called demand side of childcare. Government policy in the area of child support aims to provide assistance which will offer real choice to parents and which will benefit all children. In that context it has been decided that, as a matter of policy, Child Benefit will be the main fiscal instrument through which support will be provided to parents with dependent children. Child Benefit provides assistance to all parents in whatever caring choices are most appropriate for them and their children. In addition, unlike tax relief, it provides support to parents irrespective of their income status.

“In line with this policy approach, the Government commenced a major initiative to substantially increase the rates of Child Benefit. In 2001 the rate for the first and second child was increased by almost €2 per month and by €8 per month for the third and subsequent children. This represented an increase of over 50% on the rates prevailing in 2000. Similar monetary increases were provided in 2002. Further increases were implemented in 2003 and in Budget 2004 the Minister for Finance, Mr Charlie McCreevy TD announced additional increases of €6 and €8 per month respectively in 2004 which are around double the projected inflation rate for next year. All of this means that, since 1997, the Child Benefit rates have increased by over 230% compared to a projected increase of inflation of only 28% over the period 1997 to 2004.

“With regard to the tax measures in the area of childcare, it should be noted that the provision of certain free or subsidised childcare facilities by employers is exempt from a benefit-in-kind charge on employees benefiting from the facilities. The benefit-in-kind exemption applies if the employer provides the facilities “in-house” or in a premises made available by the employer in another location. The exemption also applies if an employer provides childcare facilities jointly with others, for example with other employers, or with a voluntary body. In such circumstances, the employer must be wholly or partly responsible for financing and managing the childcare facility.

“The employer may opt not to be involved in the management of the childcare service. In such circumstances, the benefit-in-kind exemption will be restricted to cases where the employer provides financial support for items of capital expenditure and equipment but not other costs incurred by the

employer. This provision was introduced to make the scheme more attractive to employers who did not want the job of managing the facility.

“In, addition, capital allowances are available for capital expenditure incurred on or after 2 December 1998, on the construction, extension and refurbishment of a building or part of a building which is used for the purpose of providing a pre-school service or a pre-school service and a day care or other service to cater for children other than pre-school children. The allowances are also available for expenditure incurred on the conversion of an existing building or part of a building for use as a childcare facility. The premises must not include any part of a building in use as, or as part of a dwelling. The allowance is at a rate of 15% per annum for the first 6 years and 10% in year 7. Accelerated capital allowances (100%) are available in respect of expenditure incurred on or after 1 December 1999. Property developers are excluded from claiming the accelerated allowances. This accelerated allowance is available to both owners of the childcare facilities and also to investors who wish to invest by way of leasing arrangements. Where the qualifying expenditure is incurred by an individual investor, or group of such investors (subject to certain conditions), and the premises is leased to the operator of the childcare facility, any excess of capital allowances can be off set against the investor’s other income subject to an annual €31,750 limit. No such limit applies in the case of expenditure incurred by owner operators or corporate investors.

“These reliefs are available to all employers, regardless of size, once the appropriate conditions are satisfied.

“Finally, it should be noted that childcare services are generally exempt from VAT, so no VAT should be chargeable on fees levied by crèches.

“Progress on the implementation of the National Childcare Strategy to date has resulted in a very fast growing sector with a dynamic which, on the one hand, helps to meet the childcare needs of the parents of Ireland while, on the other hand, ensures that the children receive quality childcare.”