



Coiste Cúram Leanaí Chontae Thiobraid Árann Thuaidh

Childcare Strategy for North Tipperary 2007-2010



FOREWORD



As Chair of the North Tipperary County Childcare Committee, I am very pleased to present the committee's Childcare Strategy 2007-2010 for North Tipperary.

This committee was established along with 32 other County and City Childcare Committees throughout the country as part of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000 – 2006. The significance of these committees is in their ability to have a strategic focus for childcare services in meeting the needs of families and communities at a local level.

Another important feature of these committees is in their structures and composition. The North Tipperary County Childcare Committee consists of a wide range of both voluntary and statutory agencies and the ethos of partnership has been strongly valued in the work of the

Committee. Indeed the success of the Committee to date is seen as a result of the combined effort and commitment of a number of agencies and individuals who are strongly dedicated to ensuring that the needs of children, families and communities are met with quality services in North Tipperary.

This Strategy builds on the experience from the previous 2002-2006 Childcare Strategy for North Tipperary during which time considerable progress has been made in terms of promoting quality and in supporting providers to avail of training, information and funding.

Based on this experience and following an extensive consultation process in North Tipperary during 2006, the feedback from parents, agencies, Committee members and staff was brought together in planning the next strategic

phase. A number of independent consultants were also commissioned to undertake an in-depth needs analysis that informed the strategy development process.

The implementation of this strategy will offer many challenges to the Committee over the coming years but I believe that with the expertise, experience and commitment of the Committee and staff, quality childcare in North Tipperary will continue to develop and the children and families will see better choices and more improved services.

I would like to thank the Irish Society for Quality & Safety in Healthcare for facilitating the development of the strategy. I am grateful to all the members and staff of the North Tipperary County Childcare Committee for their input in this document and I look forward to a continuing partnership in delivering the Strategy.

Donal Purcell
Chairperson, North Tipperary County Childcare Committee



Mar Chathaoirleach ar Choiste Cúraim Leanaí Thuaisceart Thiobraid Árann, táim fíor-shásta Straitéis Chúraim Leanaí 2007-2010 an choiste do Thuaisceart Thiobraid Árann a chur in bhur láthair.

Bunaíodh an coiste seo, mar aon le 32 Coiste Cúraim Leanaí Contae agus Cathrach eile ar fud na tíre, mar chuid den Chlár Comhdhéiseanna Cúraim Leanaí (EOCP) 2000 – 2006. Tá na coistí seo suntasach san ábaltacht atá iontu fócas straitéiseach a sholáthar do sheirbhísí cúraim leanaí, chun freastal ar na riachtanais atá ag teaghlaigh agus pobail ag an leibhéal áitiúil.

Gné thábhachtach eile sna coistí seo ná na struchtúir atá acu, chomh maith le comhdhéanamh na gcoistí. Cuimsíonn Coiste Cúraim Leanaí Thuaisceart Thiobraid Árann réimse leathan áisíneachtaí deonacha agus reachtúla agus tá luach mór leagtha ar éiteas na comhpháirtíochta in obair an Choiste. Go deimhin, feictear rath an Choiste go dáta mar thoradh ar chomhiarracht agus tiomantas líon áisíneachtaí atá an-tiomanta do riachtanais leanaí, teaghlaigh agus pobail a shásamh trí sheirbhísí ardchaighdeán i dTuaisceart Thiobraid Árann.

Tógann an Straitéis seo ar thaithí ón Straitéis Chúraim Leanaí 2002-2006 do Thuaisceart Thiobraid Árann a chuaigh roimhe seo, agus rinneadh dul chun cinn suntasach le linn an ama sin i dtéarmaí cáilíochta a chur chun cinn agus tacú le soláthraithe chun leas a bhaint as oiliúint, faisnéis agus maoiniú.

Bunaithe ar an taithí seo agus tar éis próiseas comhairliúcháin leathan i dTuaisceart Thiobraid Árann le linn 2006, rinneadh an t-aiseolas ó thuismitheoirí, áisíneachtaí, baill an Choiste agus lucht foirne a thabhairt le chéile, chun an chéad tréimhse straitéiseach eile a phleanáil. Rinneadh roinnt comhairleoirí neamhspleácha a choimisiúnú chomh maith, chun tabhairt faoi dhian-anailís riachtanas, a threoraigh próiseas forbartha na straitéise.

Cuirfidh forfheidhmiú na straitéise seo mórán dúshlán os comhair an Choiste sna blianta amach romhainn, ach creidim le saineolas, taithí agus tiomantas an Choiste agus na mball foirne, go leanfaidh cúram leanaí ar ardchaighdeán i dTuaisceart Thiobraid Árann ag forbairt, agus feicfidh leanaí agus teaghlaigh roghanna níos fearr agus seirbhísí feabhsaithe rompu.

Ba mhaith liom buíochas a ghabháil le Máire Ní Shúileabháin, Cumann na hÉireann um Cháilíocht agus Sábháilteacht i gCúram Sláinte, as ucht forbairt na straitéise seo a éascú. Táim buíoch do bhaill agus foireann uilig Choiste Cúraim Leanaí Thuaisceart Thiobraid Árann as a gcúnamh leis an doiciméad seo agus táim ag súil le comhpháirtíocht leanúnach i seachadadh na Straitéise seo.



Donal Purcell

Chairperson, North Tipperary County Childcare Committee

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



The North Tipperary County Childcare Committee wishes to acknowledge the parents, providers and agencies in North Tipperary for the generosity of their time and feedback in the development of this strategy.

Special thanks is sent to the school children who submitted such colourful and insightful contributions to the art competition.

Particular recognition is given to the national school principals and teachers who so willingly facilitated parents' surveys and the children's art competition.

The preparation of the strategy has been guided by the Spatial Analysis of North Tipperary by Dr Brendan O'Keeffe, NIRSA NUI Maynooth and by Mary O'Sullivan, the Irish Society for Quality & Safety in Healthcare who was the consultant in the strategic process.

However, the final credit for the strategy must go to the Chairperson, Donal Purcell, the previous Co-ordinator, Margaret Cleary, the individual members and staff of the committee. Their energy, expertise and commitment ensured a successful conclusion to the development of the strategy and has resulted in a widely accepted framework for future childcare policy in North Tipperary.

Aileen Healy, Co-ordinator
North Tipperary Childcare Committee



Artwork throughout this document is from a selection of entries to the Children's Art Competition. The theme was "My Carer".

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MISSION STATEMENT

To lead the promotion and development of a range of childcare options in North Tipperary; to work together with all stakeholders to increase the quality and quantity of childcare places based on identified need.



OBJECTIVE

What the NTCCC will aim to do:

OBJECTIVE 1:

Maintain and build the local capacity to establish and sustain childcare places/ services across all categories of childcare providers/services.

Support, advice and assistance will be provided locally relating to the funding applications of private and community childcare services.
Opportunities for the establishment of community based services will be identified and supported particularly in rural areas.

OBJECTIVE 2:

Promote quality standards and targets for childcare in North Tipperary.

Information will be disseminated to parents and providers on quality standards

The NTCCC will collaborate with providers and agencies on the training needs of providers. An open public forum will be arranged to discuss key aspects on quality/ inspection, safety, minimum standards.

OBJECTIVE 3:

Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues.

In collaboration with other local agencies, the NTCCC will support the establishment of a parent's forum in areas of disadvantage to explore childcare issues and will facilitate research to identify areas at risk of disadvantage and groups at risk of social exclusion.

The NTCCC will consult with agencies and parent groups to identify ways to support and encourage parents to volunteer their time and skills for community childcare.

OBJECTIVE 4:

Enhance and develop co-ordination at all levels.

In reviewing committee membership to ensure active participation and representation from relevant agencies in North Tipperary, the NTCCC will identify the key stakeholders e.g. statutory, voluntary, private, advocacy, client & academic.

An induction pack will be produced for new CCC members and sub-committee members to ensure clear understanding of the NTCCC vision, strategy, roles & responsibilities.

The NTCCC will organise publicity campaign and devise an information strategy to ensure greater understanding by local agencies and local groups of the role of NTCCC in North Tipperary.



OBJECTIVE

What the NTCCC will aim to do:

OBJECTIVE 5:

Establish, develop and maintain a relevant support strategy for childcare providers at local level.

The NTCCC will consult with national provider agencies and other authorities on available resources and gaps in services and will regularly consult with local providers on childcare needs.

Mechanisms will be devised to ensure NTCCC staff are updated on latest developments regarding childcare funding, research and legislation. An information strategy and a training strategy will be developed to complement other information sources and training programmes for providers.

OBJECTIVE 6:

Through the NTCCC role in the NCIP application process, establish a strategic and proactive approach to be taken to childcare development at county level.

The NTCCC will identify areas of most need and encourage those in identified areas to seek support and apply for funding.

The NTCCC will assist applicants to use available resources and research to substantiate applications. Training will be organised for providers on writing funding proposals and a publicity campaign on funding availability, the NCIP application process and requirements will be organised.

OBJECTIVE 7:

Identify and promote initiatives targeted at the development and support of School-Age Childcare in North Tipperary.

Linkages with parents, teachers and boards of management will be enhanced / established and opportunities for the establishment of community based services will be identified and supported particularly in school localities.

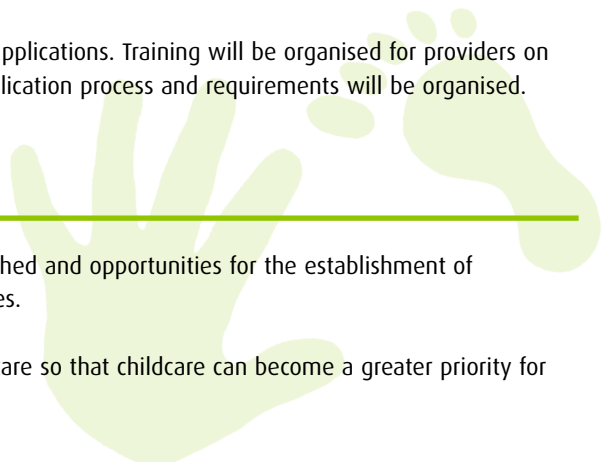
The NTCCC will promote awareness-raising in relation to the needs and benefits of childcare so that childcare can become a greater priority for community leaders or local politicians.

OBJECTIVE 8:

Identify, promote and improve the supply of early childhood care and education services for 3 to 4 year olds.

The NTCCC will organise/promote training events targeting providers who care for 3-4 year olds.

Networking will be supported for providers who care for 3-4 year olds and the establishment and funding of resource sharing/toy & materials library will be explored.





OBJECTIVE

What the NTCCC will aim to do:

OBJECTIVE 9:

Promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders – including the development of voluntary notification with the local HSE.

A public forum will be developed through various media to discuss key aspects of quality standards in a childminding setting and submissions by childminders in all NTCCC newsletters will be promoted.

Training events under the QAP and other training targeting childminders will be delivered and information and advice will continue to be provided to childminders on financial supports, tax exemptions and other relevant childcare issues.

OBJECTIVE 10:

Enhance childcare networks appropriate to the range of childcare providers and workers in the county.

The NTCCC will create a contact database and host an intranet/secure network. A discussion forum for providers will be established and the importance of networking for providers at all training events will be encouraged.

The NTCCC will explore the feasibility of information seminars and a National conference relating to childcare so that providers will also be offered opportunities to network with others outside of North Tipperary.

OBJECTIVE 11:

Identify training needs, developing a relevant strategy in consultation and collaboration with relevant training bodies/agencies.

The NTCCC will undertake regular surveys of providers and will devise a training strategy in response to the training needs analysis. The schedule of regular training events will be arranged through various media and in different areas of North Tipperary.

The NTCCC will undertake a follow-up on training events to evaluate the impact and benefits of the training for providers.

OBJECTIVE 12:

Develop and improve information sharing and learning systems.

The NTCCC will devise a marketing and publicity strategy and schedule regular updates on the work of the NTCCC through various media and in different areas paying particular attention to hard-to-reach groups.

The NTCCC will identify and explore best practice regarding information and learning systems in other CCCs, and in agencies nationally & internationally.

OBJECTIVE 13:

Attract resources from local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives.

The NTCCC will make PR presentations to agencies who are potentially influential with decision makers in order to promote the needs of childcare providers and users in North Tipperary.

The NTCCC staff will seek to become representatives on other committees responsible for decision making e.g. Social Inclusion Board in order to promote the vision of the NTCCC as broadly as possible.



This document is produced as part of the North Tipperary County Childcare Committee's (NTCCC) requirement to develop a four-year Strategic Plan for the North Tipperary area for the period 2007-2010. It is to be a guide for the NTCCC as it moves into a new era of childcare.

This builds on the developments that have occurred both nationally and locally in childcare in recent years together with the progress that has been outlined in North Tipperary as a result of the preceding 2002-2006 NTCCC Strategy.

The 2007-2010 Strategy has been prepared following extensive consultations with key stakeholders in North Tipperary including representatives from statutory, voluntary and community agencies, social partners, childcare providers and parents of pre-school and school-going children. In addition, input from children has been facilitated through submissions of their artwork.

The strategy sought to ensure the client remained at the centre of the process, emphasising the importance of meaningful involvement of service users in conjunction with providers. This is with the recognition that in so doing, services will be better planned to meet the consumers' needs.

In the final stages of the strategy preparation, members of the NTCCC attended a series of workshops to explore each of the strategic themes and to agree targets and initiatives. The workshops ran over a period of a number of weeks and were sub-divided into areas of interest and expertise by the CCC members.

The Irish Society for Quality & Safety in Healthcare (ISQSH) facilitated the strategy development process, incorporating the outcomes from the Review of the 2002-2006 Strategy which was undertaken by the ISQSH (2006) and the findings from the Spatial Analysis prepared by Dr. Brendan O'Keeffe NIRSA/ NUI Maynooth (2006).





In 2005, the Irish Society for Quality & Safety in Healthcare (ISQSH) was contracted by the North Tipperary County Childcare Committee (NTCCC) to undertake a review of the 2002-2006 Childcare Strategy for North Tipperary.

The aim of the review was to evaluate the impact of the EOCP and NTCCC on childcare provision in North Tipperary to date and to identify the needs of childcare staff, parents and providers in relation to the objectives of the EOCP. It was envisaged that such a Review would inform the next planning phase of the NTCCC and the development of its Childcare Strategy post 2006. The following is a summary of the Review report.

Review Summary

While the Review involved a range of methodologies to elicit feedback from childcare providers, parents and other key stakeholders, it also included an audit of the Committee's activities and interviews with project staff and Committee members. Census and childcare data was examined as a means of comparing potential demand for services with data on supply.

In setting the context for childcare provision and the NTCCC Strategy 2002-2006, the Review highlighted the difficulty for agencies like the CCCs to devise childcare strategies and services to meet the needs of children and parents at a time of (a) unparalleled economic growth and (b) when there is a growing demand for higher standards of quality.

The Review cited a number of developments in relation to childcare in Ireland prior to this time that were important in helping pave the way for the CCCs' first strategies. The

Review refers in particular to the 1999 National Childcare Strategy, which underpinned the creation of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme under the National Development Plan (2000-2006). The EOCP, being key to the establishment of the North Tipperary CCC and which had a clear mandate to develop a County Childcare Strategy and support the delivery of services at local level.

Within this context, the Review highlights the significance of the Strategy as providing for the first time for North Tipperary a formal commitment to childcare provision and to the development of quality in services by representatives of the statutory, voluntary, community and private sectors.

The Review reported on the importance of the effective start-up phase of the NTCCC and the overall successful implementation of the strategy. It highlighted this success as being as a result of the determination and expertise of a number of key individuals and agencies, dedicated to ensuring that the needs of children, families and communities were met by quality services in North Tipperary.

The most notable areas of achievement included the following:

- the collating of data for planning purposes and in funding proposals;
- the range of training events and workshops;
- the availability of an information resource for parents, providers and other agencies through newsletters, booklets and website and in particular, materials relating to standards and information regarding quality initiatives in childcare;
- the provision of advice on financial resources and funding

applications;

- the establishment of close linkages with relevant childcare interest groups and agencies, both locally and nationally.

The Review also examined childcare usage and key issues in relation to childcare in North Tipperary. This was informed by feedback through surveys and consultations with parents, providers and other agencies. Overall, parents were more positive than negative in their feedback about the perceived quality in their existing childcare arrangements. Many praised the care provided by a number of individual providers stating that they would not want to change any aspect of the service and that the warmth and responsiveness shown to their children was far more important than the physical environment. The expense of services and the inflexibility of opening hours were cited as the primary reasons for any dissatisfaction expressed.

In terms of feedback from providers, the NTCCC training programmes and the support and advice provided were seen to be of benefit generally. The areas identified as being of priority for providers in order to raise standards related to caring for children with behavioural difficulties, children with special needs, developing policies and procedures, financial management and grant applications.

Other stakeholders who were contacted also highlighted the importance of the childcare training programmes organised by the NTCCC as being of a high standard. They stated that in the absence of the training events, it was unlikely that as many staff would have sought training or qualifications which impacted positively on the quality of services



delivered to children. The training events were also recognised as being valuable opportunities for networking, which is important for staff who experience isolation working in rural areas.

The need to re-focus attention on how community agencies can strengthen parents' involvement in the community was highlighted. This was seen as significant in terms of the start-up and sustainability of services.

At the time the 2002-2006 Strategy was prepared, the lack of full-day childcare services in North Tipperary was highlighted as being a serious concern. Moreover, most of the sessional facilities operated only in the mornings. The Review goes on to illustrate the progress made over the course of the 5-year period in this area. It reported that by the end of 2005, 61 sessional services and 14 full day services were notified to and inspected by the HSE. This compared with 52 sessional and 11 full day services in 1999. Data from the NTCCC database showed a 29% increase in the number of available places in 2005 compared with the number of children attending services in 1999.

While it is difficult to infer that any increases can be directly attributed to the NTCCC, feedback from providers indicates that the support available from NTCCC staff has been extremely valuable particularly in terms of the sustainability of existing services and the start-up of new services.

The Review also showed that while a degree of achievement has been made in increasing levels of childcare provision, the lack of childcare places in a number of areas remains a serious issue. Parents who are generally in need of full-time care for their children would appear to rely extensively on a

limited supply of childminders¹.

The following summarises the key issues identified in the Review for parents, providers, and agencies in terms of future policy developments. While it is recognised that the NTCCC would not have the remit or resources to address all of the issues, it was felt that given its role with its members agencies, it was ideally placed to advocate on behalf of parents, children and providers to influence policy decisions.

Key issues included the following:

- The availability, cost and quality remain a major consideration for parents. It was stressed that the continuation of the NTCCC in promoting provision and quality was important for North Tipperary. The need for more drop-in crèche facilities and after-school programmes were also highlighted.
- Information was viewed as a powerful tool for parents in understanding what is available for their children in North Tipperary and what 'quality' standards they should look for in childcare services. The NTCCC information resource should be more extensively promoted with parents and providers throughout North Tipperary;
- A panel of childminders and of relief staff would address problems for providers who at times of staff absenteeism, holidays, etc. must operate below the appropriate staff/child ratio or who are forced to close. The provider network should be more extensively strengthened in certain areas and the possibility of local networks developing local panels could be further examined;
- The involvement of parents in setting-up and managing services in rural areas was critical to ensuring provision in local areas. Ways to encourage parents to participate in

- community services should be identified and resourced;
- The use of community resources such as parish halls and school facilities should be considered for use for childcare services. Awareness raising on the importance of the availability of childcare for families in rural areas should be organised particularly with community leaders in areas where childcare provision is non-existent. This may to some extent address the needs of socially disadvantaged and geographically-peripheral communities. Support by the NTCCC to these communities will require more intensive and sustained efforts than working with more affluent communities in North Tipperary;
- Childcare services frequently witness a high turnover of staff and with wages at the lower end of the pay scales, services experience difficulties attracting highly trained childcare professionals. Many services, particularly in rural areas, rely on a limited availability of workers and are sometimes forced to recruit untrained personnel. Additional training, on an on-going basis, is required so that all staff in childcare services have minimum/ basic qualifications;
- Childcare opening hours in many areas were cited as inadequate for many parents who travel long distances or whose working hours did not coincide with their childcare service. Reduced or more flexible working hours for parents should be promoted with employers.

Finally, the review concluded that the views of children should be included in future planning and that in line with the National Children's Strategy and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, engaging with children where possible should be fundamental to inform any imminent strategies.

¹ Childcare provision and usage will be dealt in more detail in the next chapter.



This Chapter draws primarily on the findings from the Spatial Analysis report by Dr. Brendan O’Keeffe referred to earlier on and from 2002/2006 Census data.

North Tipperary lies in the Mid West Region and has a total population (2006) of 66,023 persons. This represents an increase of 5,013 persons or 8.2% of the population relative to 2002. Although predominantly a rural county, North Tipperary is urbanising rapidly. The towns of Nenagh (pop. 7,415), Thurles (pop.6,831), Roscrea (pop. 5,911) and Templemore (pop. 2,255) account for 34% of the entire population. Population growth in and around Nenagh has been striking, with the town overtaking Thurles as the largest town in the County (See Map 1 Appendix 1).

Population growth has also been experienced in EDs (See Map 2 Appendix 1 for breakdown of EDs) along the N7 National Primary Route between Nenagh and Limerick City. Here, the towns of Newport and Ballina have experienced population growth rates of 29% and 43% respectively¹. These areas of high population growth exhibit a high demand for childcare, and this demand is likely to continue over the coming decades.

While the overall trend is towards population growth, data illustrates that growth is uneven throughout the North Tipperary and within the rural districts, especially Borrisokane and Thurles, a number of EDs experienced population decline of over 10% over the past decade.

Census data between 2002-2006 shows strong population growth throughout the south-west of North Tipperary, with the highest levels of growth in Ballina, Derrycastle, Birdhill, Killoscully, Kilcomentry and in the environs of Nenagh town. The immediate hinterland of Thurles (within a 10km radius of the town) and the EDs of Twomileborris, Rahelty, Kilrush and Drom also experienced strong population growth.

While some EDs in the northern part of the North Tipperary area (north of Ardconey) have experienced population increases, others have decreased with no major notable variations on the 1996-2002 period. A similar trend can be observed in the centre of the County, with minor increases in the Ballygibbon, Ballymackey and Borrisnoe EDs. Pockets of population decline are also evident in the more rural parts in the east of the County.

Population growth, however, in the entire south-west, with the exception of Abington, Templederry and Foilnahan has accelerated. Population growth around Nenagh has diffused over a larger rural area, covering up to a 15km radius from the town. Rural EDs in the centre of North Tipperary record very modest levels of population growth, while a number of areas in the north, east and south-east continue to experience decline. This decline in population is most prevalent in the north affecting Terryglass, Redwood and rural parts of Aglish.

Age Profile

When the childcare strategy was formulated, projections were made that the overall population of North Tipperary would increase by 2016 and that there would be a decrease in the child cohort 5-19 year olds. In terms of a strategic planning for children’s services, this has implications in terms of anticipated demands for childcare services.

Since that time, data from the 2006 Census has confirmed some of the earlier projections made. The number of children in the 0-14 age group has declined since 1981 mainly reflecting the sharp fall in births from the 1980 peak. Although there was a marginal increase in 2006 by and large, the change reflects a marked decrease in the child population in North Tipperary with 14,102 children compared with 18,037 in 1981. Figures 1a and 1b illustrate the trend since 1981 for the child population for North Tipperary. This compares with National data where trends also show a decrease for each of the census years, with decreases in North Tipperary marginally more significant than elsewhere in the country (see Table 1).

¹ This figure refers to the population of the Roscrea ED for 2006. The exact population figure for the area within Roscrea town boundary is likely to be published in 2007.

² Figures presented here relate to Electoral Divisions, which include the towns and their surrounding townlands.



Figure 1a: Child Population 0-14 Years in North Tipperary 1981-2006

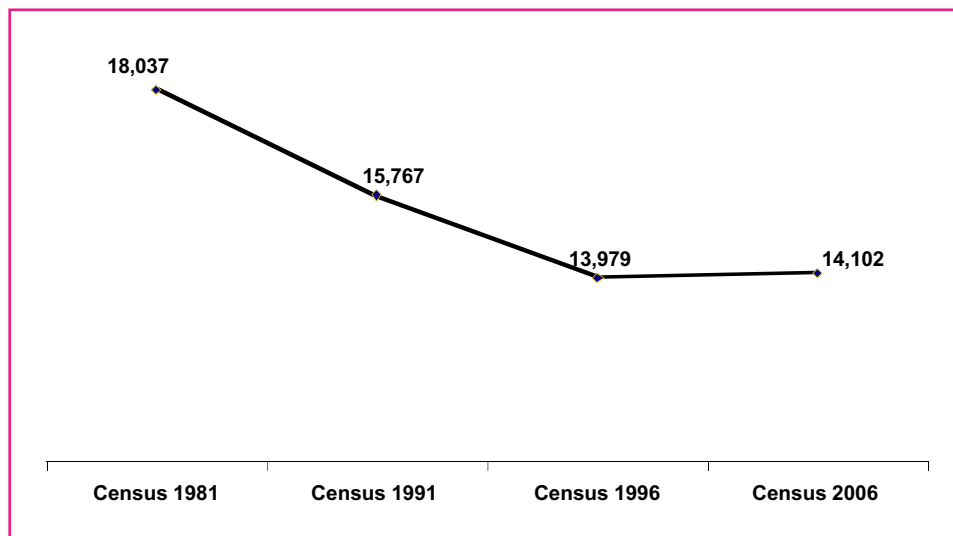


Figure 1b: Child Population 0-14 Years in State 1981-2006

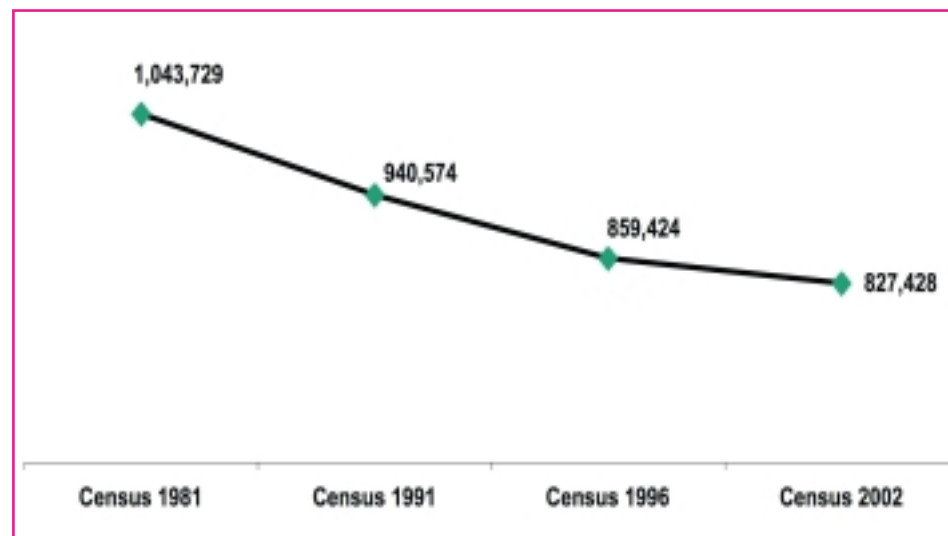


Table 1: % Change on 1981 Population 0-14 Years

Area	1991	1996	2006
North Tipperary	-12.6%	-22.5%	-26.2%
State	-9.9%	-17.7%	-20.7%



Table 2: 2006 Census Population by Age 0-17 Years and by Town /DED Area

DED	0-4 years	5-9 Years	10-14 Years	15-17 Years	As % of All 0-17 Years
North Tipperary	4,707	4,846	4,549	2,667	100%
Thurles & Environs	572	593	571	338	12%
Nenagh & Environs	619	628	535	309	12%
Roscrea	428	441	412	241	9%
Ballina	274	222	171	82	4%
Newport	207	145	132	84	3%
Holycross	87	82	117	81	2%
Templemore	104	140	128	109	2%
Castletown (incl. Portroe)	93	111	108	71	2%
Littleton	88	83	86	72	2%
Borrisoleigh	92	100	82	56	2%
Borrisokane	70	85	86	61	2%
Twomileborris	74	79	78	44	2%
Templetouhy	50	63	68	31	1%
Cloughjordan	57	53	42	37	1%
Latteragh (incl. Toomevara)	33	43	44	27	1%
Birdhill	61	68	37	24	1%
Riverstown (incl. Birr Environs)	41	52	43	27	1%
Kilmore (incl. Silvermines)	54	45	40	24	1%

While there was a 16% decrease in the number of 0-4 year old children in 2006 and a 7% decrease in the 5-9 year olds there was a 21% increase in the 10-14 year olds for the same period. The overall change in data for the 0-14 year olds between 1996 and 2006 was a marginal decrease of .9%.

Child Population by Area

The following provides an overview of changes in the child population between the 1996 and the 2006 census periods and since the Childcare Strategy was devised. Data is categorized according to the larger population settlements.

Table 3 profiles the age cohorts as a percentage breakdown for the total population for each area. Compared with the North Tipperary baseline, it would appear that a number of EDs in particular emerge as having an above average 0-17 population compared with the overall population in their areas: Riverstown, Knigh (includes Puckaun), Littleton, Ballina, Birdhill and Castletown. The overall 0-17 year cohort in Two-Mile-Borris as a percentage of this EDs population (33.1%) is particularly notable compared with the county's figure (25%).



Table 3: % Breakdown of Age Cohorts 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 Years by Area, 2006

DED	0-4 years	5-9 Years	10-14 Years	5-7 years	0-17 Years
North Tipperary	4,707	4,846	4,549	2,667	16,769
% of Total North Tipp Population	7%	7%	7%	5%	25%
% of Total Twomileborris Population	8.90%	9.50%	9.40%	5.36%	33.10%
% of Total Riverstown Population	7.90%	10.00%	8.20%	5.20%	31.20%
% of Total Knigh Population	9.44%	9.59%	7.23%	4.57%	28.40%
% of Total Littleton Population	7.70%	7.30%	7.60%	6.30%	29.00%
% of Total Ballina Population	11.10%	9.00%	7.00%	3.30%	30.40%
% of Total Borrisoleigh Population	7.20%	8.40%	6.90%	4.70%	27.30%
% of Total Castletown Population	9.10%	8.20%	8.00%	5.30%	30.50%
% of Total Roscrea Population	7.20%	7.50%	7.00%	3.70%	25.40%
% of Total Borrisokane Population	6.10%	7.50%	7.40%	4.10%	25.10%
% of Total Birdhill Population	9.10%	10.10%	5.50%	3.23%	28.30%
% of Total Holycross Population	6.10%	5.80%	8.20%	4.60%	24.70%
% of Total Thurles Population	6.40%	6.60%	6.40%	3.80%	23.10%
% of Total Newport Population	9.80%	6.80%	6.20%	3.70%	26.50%
% of Total Templemore Population	4.60%	6.20%	5.70%	3.50%	20.00%
% of Total Nenagh Population	6.70%	6.80%	5.80%	3.40%	22.70%

Regarding the 0-4 year age cohort, Ballina, Newport, Knigh, Castletown and Birdhill EDs show a particularly high proportion of very young children compared to their overall populations. The 5-9 year cohort is notable for the Riverstown and Birdhill EDs and the 10-14 year olds are higher than average in the Two-Mile-Borris ED.





Table 4: % of Family Units Where Youngest Child is 0-4, 5-9, 10-14 Years, 2006

AREA	AGE OF YOUNGEST CHILD			All Units 0-14 yrs
	0-4 years	5-9 Years	10-14 Years	
Nenagh	48%	30%	22%	995
Thurles	45%	30%	25%	969
Roscrea	48%	30%	22%	668
Ballina	56%	28%	16%	348
Newport	56%	24%	20%	280
Templemore	39%	35%	26%	196
Castletown	49%	31%	20%	181
Holycross	43%	26%	32%	148
Borrisoleigh	49%	28%	23%	141
Littleton	46%	26%	28%	120
Borrisokane	42%	32%	26%	126
Drom	54%	24%	22%	125
Youghalarra	44%	27%	30%	108
Twomileborris	47%	34%	20%	116
CloghJordan	48%	32%	20%	94
Birdhill	52%	32%	15%	84





Population Projections

Data in relation to family units also confirms the Ballina and Newport EDs with a disproportionate number of families with young children. Over 56% of family units in these EDs had their youngest member in the 0-4 year cohort compared with the county average at 48% (Table 4).

In terms of lone parent data, there was 23% of all family units with children under 15 years of age headed by a lone parent. While this may initially appear below the national figure of 29%, several EDs showed a significantly higher figure than the national data notably Nenagh (47%), Thurles Urban (42%), Borrisoleigh (41%), Borrisokane (38%) and Roscrea (36%).

For parents in these family situations, the availability of childcare is a critical concern. If North Tipperary is to redress the current imbalance in supports to children and disadvantaged families, addressing the needs of lone parent families with young children needs to be prioritised. Attracting and keeping those with young families living in North Tipperary is essential for its economic competitiveness and for the social well-being of its communities.

Future population trends are influenced by a myriad of factors. These include demographic viability, age-structure of the population, migration / emigration, access to services, infrastructure development, employment levels and economic activities. At a local level, the population of a village or townland may be determined by factors such as the availability of land and the presence or absence of services such as water and sewerage connections. Thus, in presenting population projections at ED level, it is acknowledged that factors particular to North Tipperary, local conditions and policies and practices of agencies and the private sector can play an important role in shaping future population trends.

In examining the projected figures for 0 to 14 year olds in 2011 and 2016, the highest numbers in the EDs currently experiencing high levels of population growth, are notably the towns of Nenagh, Roscrea and Thurles and the commuter belt in the south-west. Projections for 2016 show relative gains over a broader rural hinterland extending outwards from Nenagh, to include areas such as Burgess, Lissenhall, Killeen, Lackamore and Rear.

The projections for 15 to 24 year olds show very similar spatial patterns. The same is true regarding those aged 25 to 34 years of age. Areas with the strongest settlement patterns are more likely to sustain their populations in this age cohort. It is suggested that the villages of Holycross, Twomileborris, Templetoughy and to a lesser extent Borrisoleigh have the potential to increase their populations.

In terms of demographic vitality, the EDs with the highest levels of vitality are Nenagh Town, Birdhill and Ballina. The adjoining EDs, extending from Portroe in the west to Ballymackey to the east and areas to the south of Silvermines also display high levels of demographic vitality. Elsewhere, the ED of Roscrea and rural areas around Thurles have the highest levels. Among the areas included here are Twomileborris, Borrisoleigh and Loughmore.





Rural Typology for North Tipperary

This section presents a rural typology profile of North Tipperary based on the 2002 Census of Population (most recent census for which full ED-level data sets were available at time of print). The typology captures and synthesises a range of socio-economic and demographic variables. Each of these variables is statistically computed to generate the eight component scores, which are ultimately synthesised to generate the summary typology. Thus, in understanding and interpreting the typology, it is essential to take into account each of the eight components. The components, which are thematic, provide the most accurate insights at local level.

In broad spatial terms, the typology and its components show distinct patterns and trends in North Tipperary. In the first instance they reveal the extent to which areas in proximity to N7 and Limerick City are undergoing rapid demographic and economic expansion. Thus, the peri-urban zone around the city continues to expand.

In the second instance a dichotomy emerges between the Nenagh / N7 catchment area and much of the rest of the county outside of Thurles in terms of economic characteristics. In most of rural North Tipperary, agriculture continues to play a strong role in the economy. The component scores for the typology identify a number of localised and area-specific dynamics. These reveal a weak urban network across much of the County, with depopulation a feature of a number of villages and townlands. There is strong evidence of increasing levels of long-distance commuting associated with agricultural decline. This implies a need to place greater emphasis on the spatial dimension

of economic and social planning and development, as well as the need to address issues such as transport, childcare and the quality of the natural environment. The components also point to issues of social exclusion and structural disadvantage, notably in areas that were traditionally identified with prosperous farming activities.

Description of Area Types 1996

The three EDs closest to Limerick, the environs of Nenagh and Thurles, together with Borrisokeane and Borrisoleigh emerge as peri-urban zones. The dominant rural area type in North Tipperary in 1996 was 'strong agricultural,' with some areas such as Kilkeary, Newtown, Ballycommon and Puckaun emerging as 'very strong rural areas.' The largest cluster of structurally weak rural areas was represented by the Silvermines and other upland parts of the County. The areas along the Shannon in the north-west of the County were classified as high amenity and consumption.

As the following analysis shows, the intervening period has produced greater diversity in terms of the rural area types in North Tipperary.





Description of Area Types 2002

Area-Type One: 'Marginal Agricultural Areas'

- characterised by high 'old age and youth' dependency ratios, low connectivity, material disadvantage and high agricultural employment. The largest cluster of marginal agricultural areas is located in the west of North Tipperary, and include Kilbarron, Finnoe and Cloughprior. A number of rural areas to the south of Roscrea also emerge in this category.

Area-Type Two: 'Structurally weak areas of urban-based employment'

- typified by non-professional service employment, high levels of part-time work, high levels of young labour force participation and low connectivity. Examples of such areas in North Tipperary include the immediate hinterland of Templemore, Timoney and

Area-Type Three: 'Strong Agricultural Areas'

The distribution of EDs characterised by high agricultural employment, high male labour force participation and a tendency towards working more than forty hours per week, indicates the continued socio-economic importance of agriculture. Within North Tipperary areas are located around Cloughjordan, but also in parts of the Silvermines. In the latter case, high levels of afforestation, which attract considerable premia, may be contributing to this classification. While these areas may be attracting premia, this does not imply that such resources are retained locally.

Area-Type Four: 'Dynamic areas of urban-based employment'

- typified by high connectivity, high proportions of people in the higher social classes and young populations. These areas tend to be scattered throughout the southern part of North Tipperary and tend not to follow any clear spatial pattern. However, the inclusion of a number of EDs in the south-west is reflective of commuting patterns.

Area-Type Five: 'Peripheral areas of socio-economic disadvantage'

- areas have high levels of non-professional service employment and part-time work, high proportions of people in the lower social classes and low population densities. The four EDs in this area type tend to be in more northern parts of North Tipperary, which have experienced little economic diversification.

Area-Type Six: 'Areas of demographic expansion'

- These areas have recently experienced rapid population growth and residential development, involving significant levels of in-migration of young people. One such ED is located in North Tipperary - Ballygibbon (mainly as a result of its relatively low population base). However, a number of EDs in the Nenagh / N7 corridor are increasingly reflecting the characteristics of this area-type.

Area-Type Seven: 'Peri-urban areas'

- With a similar spatial distribution to the previous area-type this final cluster characterises the immediate environs of a number of smaller urban centres. As might be expected peri-urban areas are concentrated in the hinterlands of Nenagh and Thurles. A notable feature of North Tipperary is that Borrissleigh emerged as a peri-urban ED in 1996, but in 2002 was classified as an area undergoing economic diversification.

Area-Type Eight: 'Areas of Economic Transition / Adjustment'

- Distinguished by a tendency towards working between thirty and forty hours per week, a predominance of non-agricultural employment, significant levels of eight to fifteen kilometre commuting and high female labour force participation, this is the dominant area type in the west of North Tipperary, associated with commuting to and from Limerick. While these areas have experienced economic and demographic growth over the past decade, they exhibit a high level of dependence on Limerick for services.



Comparison of County and National Level Statistics

Table 5 Distribution of EDs & Population Across Area-types in North Tipperary

	No. of EDs	Population (2002)	% of Population
Marginal Agricultural	14	5,516	13.66
Structurally-Weak Areas of Urban-based Employment	5	1,546	3.83
Strong Agricultural Areas	16	9,500	23.53
Dynamic Areas of Urban-based Employment	13	8,089	20.03
Peripheral Areas of Socio-Economic Disadvantage	4	1,389	3.44
Areas of Demographic Expansion	1	268	3.44
Peri-Urban Areas	6	3,375	8.36
Areas of Economic Transition/ Adjustment	16	3,375	8.36
Total Rural EDs	75	40,114	65.74

Table 6: Distribution of EDs & Population Across Area-types for Ireland

	No. of EDs	Population	% of all Eds	% of Total Population
Marginal Agricultural	528	248,894	15.47	6.35
Structurally-Weak Areas of Urban-based Employment	332	199,479	9.72	5.09
Strong Agricultural Areas	334	287,865	9.78	7.35
Dynamic Areas of Urban-based Employment	289	226,032	8.47	5.77
Peripheral Areas of Socio-Economic Disadvantage	264	183,469	7.73	4.68
Areas of Demographic Expansion	331	173,763	9.70	4.44
Peri-Urban Areas	112	83,554	3.28	2.13
Areas of Economic Transition/ Adjustment	563	236,512	16.49	6.04
Total Rural EDs	2753	1,639,568	80.64	41.86
Urban EDs	661	2,277,635	19.36	58.14
Total EDs	3414	3,917,203	100.00	100.00



Composition

As part of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) 2000-2006, the North Tipperary County Childcare Committee (NTCCC) was established in 2001 along with the 32 other County and City Childcare Committees throughout the country. Since that time, significant achievements have been noted (discussed in Chapter 1) and the successes have been attributed to the combined effort, commitment and expertise of the NTCCC project staff, Committee Chair and members.

The current staff composition includes a Co-ordinator, two Development Workers and an Administrator. The NTCCC is an autonomous body in terms of policy and operations. By agreement of a "Specific Purpose Contract" with North Tipperary County Council, the Council facilitates the administration of the County Childcare Committee by employing the county childcare staff, administration of the childcare budget, provision of IT support including development and maintenance of the web-site. The NTCCC, like other County Childcare Committees, include representatives from a variety of statutory, community and voluntary groups including the following:

- Health Service Executive (HSE) West – Mid West Region
- North Tipperary County Council
- North Tipperary Vocational Education Committee
- FÁS
- Department of Social & Family Affairs
- Department of Education & Science
- National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
- Community Childcare Providers Representative
- Private Childcare Providers Representative
- National Voluntary Childcare Organisations

- Local Development Partnerships
- Trade Union Sector
- Farming Community
- Parents.

A number of sub-committees were also established to examine and make recommendations on specific areas of action including training, information, networking, etc. For the 2007-2010 strategy, the following sub-committees were identified to advise, support and work with the NTCCC staff in the identified Objective areas, to ensure the implementation of initiatives in the Strategy and that the management of the organisation is appropriate to its functions. Each Sub-committee will therefore have also specific responsibility for monitoring and reviewing progress of identified initiatives within their Objective Areas and to report to the NTCCC with recommendations for any action plan revisions.

A number of overlaps for the Sub-committees are evident in terms of the Strategy Objective Areas. In such cases, Sub-committees will agree (a) to allocate specific initiatives to an individual Sub-committee depending on the levels of expertise required or (b) to work together with one Sub-committee taking the lead role.

Sub-committees identified for the 2007-2010 Strategy

Sub-committee	Strategy Objective Areas
The Development Sub-committee	1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 13
The Quality & Training Sub-committee	2, 11
The Childminder Sub-committee	5, 9
The Information & Networking Sub-committee	2, 4, 5, 6, 10, 12
The Training Sub-committee	11
The Equality Sub-committee	3
The Project Evaluation Sub-committee	1, 3, 5, 6

In addition to the Strategy Objective Areas, the NTCCC's is committed to ensuring that its most valuable resource is fully appreciated and therefore recognises the importance of establishing the HR Sub-committee. This Sub-committee will advise on the recruitment, promotion, industrial relations, employee relations, training and development of the NTCCC staff.

It is proposed that for the 2007-2010 Strategy, each Sub-committee will have NTCCC members and nominees where appropriate. The Chair of each Sub-committee will be a NTCCC member. Individuals with particular expertise or representatives from agencies may be invited to attend Sub-committee meetings to advise on specific issues as the need arises. A yearly action plan and time schedule will be



produced by each Sub-committee based on the Strategy framework and presented to the NTCCC.

Of key importance to the continued success and development of the NTCCC is the level of linkages and collaboration the NTCCC has with other agencies, including other CCCs and local and national agencies. In addition to the role of the Information and Networking Sub-committee, all Sub-committees will endeavour to actively facilitate collaboration, linkages and inter-agency work with agencies and organisations in promoting the NTCCC work.

Statement of Service: Mission Statement, Vision and Values of the NTCCC

In the course of developing the NTCCC Strategy for 2006-2010, a number of key preparatory stages took place. The development of a revised mission statement, vision statement and set of values was seen as the starting point to help guide how the NTCCC should plan its future and clarify the CCC's direction. Importantly, the development of a clearly defined mission and vision statement was seen as a mechanism to help individuals on the CCC and in the general public to understand how they can better take ownership of and support the CCC.

The preparatory stage of this work was undertaken through a series of workshops involving the NTCCC members. It was also guided by Pobal's Guidance materials on the direction and strategy of the CCCs.

The following are the final statements. They demonstrate a fundamental commitment to promoting quality in services on the one hand and to meeting the needs of parents on the other. As such, the vision is one where parents in North Tipperary would have access to a range of quality childcare options.

Fundamental to these statements is a public expression of the set of values and principles that will underpin the work of the NTCCC and help staff and members of the CCC be consistent in their actions and their communications with each other and with the general public.

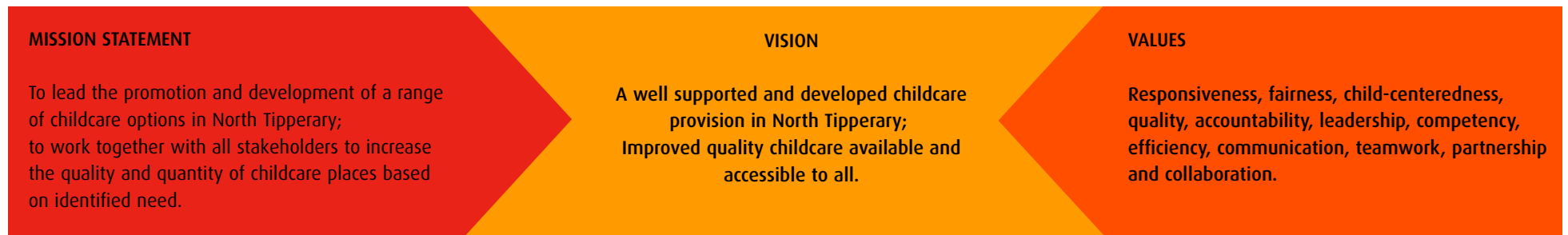
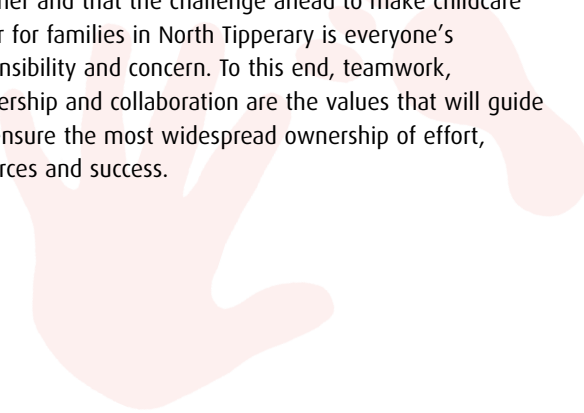
In the first instance, the set of values recognise the importance of being *responsive* to the needs of parents and providers, to ensure that services are *child centred and of a high quality*.

Secondly, the values will ensure that the practice of the NTCCC reflects *competency, efficiency and accountability*, not

only to its funders, but also to its service-users and other stakeholders.

In its pivotal position within the community, the NTCCC recognises that it should be a leader in promoting quality in all childcare services. As such, the importance of *good communication* at all levels is essential to ensure that 'quality' initiatives and 'quality' assurance are conveyed and understood by all stakeholders.

The NTCCC finally highlighted the need for everyone to work together and that the challenge ahead to make childcare better for families in North Tipperary is everyone's responsibility and concern. To this end, teamwork, partnership and collaboration are the values that will guide and ensure the most widespread ownership of effort, resources and success.





This chapter draws on the findings from the Spatial Analysis of Childcare in North Tipperary, the 2002-2006 Strategy Review and the consultation process that was undertaken in the course of the Strategy preparation. The findings confirmed the need for continued investment into childcare in North Tipperary as current service provision is deemed to be below adequate levels. Particular geographical areas were identified as requiring specific investment and/or support for expansion.

The Spatial Analysis and Mapping Exercise showed a strong trend in North Tipperary towards de-suburbanisation, with notable population increases along the Nenagh-Limerick corridor e.g. the towns of Newport and Ballina have experienced population growth rates of 29% and 43% respectively, in Nenagh itself and in the vicinity of Lough Derg. These areas are increasingly characterised as commuter zones, with residents accessing employment in Limerick City, and in the industrial and technology parks in its periphery, and to a lesser extent in Nenagh Town.

The provision of childcare is seen to be essential to enable parents to access the employment opportunities that are available in these urban centres. These areas currently have a high demand for childcare services, and are likely to continue to do so for the foreseeable future, as they have high proportions of their populations in the younger and family-formation age cohorts.

The figures for notified childcare services also suggest that the majority of families are reliant on informal childcare arrangements, normally involving the extended family, neighbours and private childminders operating in their own

homes. These represent significant components of the childcare sector, and they need to be closely involved in training and development actions, on the parts of the NTCCC and other organisations.

At present, the highest levels of childcare provision are in Nenagh and in the parts of North Tipperary that are adjacent to Limerick. Outside of Nenagh most of the services in this area are predominantly 'private sector'. At local/community level the number of childcare places available in the formal sector should be equivalent to at least 40% of the number of 0-4 year olds, and 50% of the 5-14 year olds. As Map 1 (Appendix 2) shows, few than one in ten EDs in North Tipperary have achieved levels of provision in excess of 30%. As this map shows, there are extensive gaps in service provision throughout the area.

Map 2 (Appendix 2) also highlights the need for additional services as a majority of EDs do not have any notified services. In spatial terms, the map points out three clusters that need to be targeted:

- Across the centre of North Tipperary, from Kilcomenty in the West to Timoney in the east;
- In the South, mainly to the west of Thurles;
- In the North of the county.

Full day care services with extended opening hours are particularly important in rural areas, as parents here are more likely to have to commute longer distances. Thus, while gaps are evident throughout rural parts of North Tipperary, a number of small and medium-sized towns emerge as having needs which ought to be prioritised. These include Borrisokane, Silvermines, Borrisoleigh and a

number of villages and village nuclei in the centre and north of the area.

The absence of community-based facilities, which generally operate tiered pricing arrangements and other social inclusion practices may well be putting childcare beyond the financial reach of families on low income in these areas. There is a limited number of community-based childcare facilities in North Tipperary, and several population centres do not have any service. Of the current community-based services, most are small scale operations and provide sessional services only. While sessional services may enable parents to access social networks and avail of local training programmes, they are inadequate in terms of enabling people to access full-time employment.

As Map 1 (Appendix 2) shows, community-based childcare facilities are mainly found in the main towns of Thurles, Nenagh and Roscrea where animation and capacity building work by community partnerships, statutory bodies and by the County Childcare Committee has contributed directly to the establishment of new services. These services tend to have a strong social inclusion focus and operate to serve particular disadvantaged areas and/or target groups. Other community-based childcare facilities are also evident in some villages and have become successful because of strong community associations. The importance of promoting the strengths of local communities with information dissemination, training and capacity-building by the NTCCC will enable other villages to establish and sustain services.

In terms of services that are required for a particular age group, some areas currently have a high level of need for



pre-school childcare and the population projections show that this demand is likely to be maintained into the future. The areas with the highest proportion of 0-2 year olds are dispersed throughout North Tipperary. The strongest clusters are in the Birdhill/ Ballina area, Nenagh and environs, Thurles and environs, Roscrea and environs, the environs of Templemore, rural parts in the east and south of North Tipperary, including Templetohy, Kilcommon, Templederry, Fantan and Borrisoleigh. In the north, EDs with high proportions of 0-2 year olds include Borrisokeane and Cloughjordan.

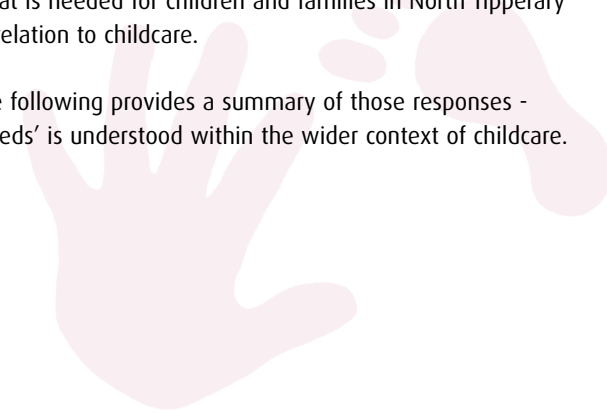
The distribution of 3-4 year olds follows a similar spatial pattern, although the degree of clustering is not as concentrated. In addition to the EDs identified in the previous paragraph, the communities of Killea and Borrisnoe emerge as having a high concentration of 3-4 year olds.

These also provide indication regarding current needs in terms of pre-school childcare, and future needs in terms of school-age childcare.

In terms of services for school-going children e.g. after-school, during holidays etc., Map 3 (Appendix 2) shows the locations for primary schools throughout North Tipperary. This illustrates a network of centres that have the potential to play an enhanced role in making childcare for school-going children available and accessible. The support of school Boards of Management and staff can make a positive contribution to the success of community childcare services and the education sector represents an important strategic partner for the NTCCC. In rural areas, where pupil numbers are low, inter school clusters could be developed to promote co-operation and sharing of resources between schools and communities.

The consultation processes which were part of the Review of the 2002-2006 Strategy and the current Strategy development, also concurred with many of the above findings. As previously mentioned, the consultation process involved all key stakeholders including parents, providers, statutory, community and voluntary agencies, the NTCCC staff and Committee members. Data collection processes covered a range of methods including postal surveys, telephone interviews, focus groups, workshops and a childcare seminar. In the course of this time several hundred contacts were made throughout North Tipperary inviting submissions on what is needed for children and families in North Tipperary in relation to childcare.

The following provides a summary of those responses - 'needs' is understood within the wider context of childcare.





General Needs: Access/Provision/Supply

- Childcare remains a major consideration for many parents. This is in relation to the availability, the cost, the quality and the distances parents and young children have to travel to access services in most rural areas.
- There is an identified need for more community services and drop-in crèche facilities in many areas.
- The need for after-school programmes particularly during the school holidays is highlighted by most groups.

Service Provided /Promoted by The NTCCC

- More should be done to promote the NTCCC's information resource more actively with parents so that they can seek advice or information in relation to childcare or children's activities. For example, newsletters should include submissions from parents.
- There is need for the childcare listing on the website to include an update of 'available places' in each of the services.
- A support group or forum where parents and childminders could come together to exchange views and concerns would be valuable.
- A panel of childminders would facilitate parents, particularly those working shift hours.
- Staff shortages are frequently an issue for many services and recourse to a panel of relief staff should be established.
- More awareness-raising should take place in relation to the needs and benefits of childcare so that the pre-school child can become a greater priority for community leaders or local politicians.
- Ways to support and encourage parents to volunteer their time and skills for community group care should be identified.
- Parents and some providers expressed their reservations about leaving very young children in care outside of the home for extended periods of the day, five days a week. Reduced or more flexible working hours could be promoted as a way of alleviating such concerns.

Providers

- More training is required for particular categories of carers so that all staff should at least have some basic childcare qualifications.
- Childminders should ensure that they seek at least minimum training.
- Opening hours should be extended to accommodate parents who had to travel considerable distances between their workplace and the childcare service.
- The issue of mixing afterschool and pre-school children in the one service without additional facilities in place for the older age group should be given serious consideration.
- The need for services to provide access to outdoor activities for children was identified as a priority.
- The making of a complaint by parents about standards should not result in increased costs or the loss of their child's place.



Issues for the HSE to Consider

- Some parents expressed a need for more frequent Pre-school inspections.
- The childcare listing on the website should be revised to include an update of 'available places' in each of the services.
- The lack of services for marginalised groups in some areas was expressed as a serious concern by a number of agencies, providers and parents.

Issues to be Considered by Government

- The high cost of childcare was raised. For parents with more than two children, the cost prohibited many from returning to work at the end of their maternity leave. Greater financial support to parents is necessary to counteract their difficulties in meeting childcare financial demands e.g. tax relief on childcare expenses.
- Extended maternity leave and payment during parental leave should be ensured for parents who wished to care for their children themselves. Employers should be supported to facilitate parental leave for all staff.
- The need for playgrounds, recreational facilities and outdoor play areas generally for all ages was seen as a priority.
- The use of community resources should be considered for childcare and greater effort should be made to explore the feasibility of providing pre-school facilities at national schools.

Issues for Employers

- Childcare opening hours were inadequate for many parents. More flexible working hours should be introduced and parental leave and term time leave should be facilitated.





To achieve the NTCCC Mission and Vision over the next four years, the NTCCC has developed a framework in order to meet the following objectives as outlined by Pobal:

- Maintain and build the local capacity to establish and sustain childcare places/services across all categories of childcare providers/services.
- Develop and promote quality standards and targets for childcare in North Tipperary.
- Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues.
- Enhance and develop co-ordination at all levels.
- Establish, develop and maintain a relevant support strategy for childcare providers at local level.
- Through the CCC role in the NCIP application process, establish a strategic and proactive approach to be taken to childcare development at county level.
- Identify and promote initiatives targeted at the development and support of School-Age Childcare in North Tipperary.
- Identify, promote and improve the supply of early childhood care and education services for 3 to 4 year olds.
- Promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders – including the development of voluntary notification with the local HSE.
- Enhance childcare networks appropriate to the range of childcare providers and workers in North Tipperary.
- Identify training needs, developing a relevant strategy in consultation and collaboration with relevant training bodies/agencies.
- Develop and improve information sharing and learning systems.

- Attract resources from local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives.

The framework was developed to ensure direction to initiatives, targets and outcomes with identified agencies for linkages and collaboration. The time schedule for each of the initiatives will be devised within the NTCCC's annual action plan.





OBJECTIVE 1: CHILDCARE PLACES/SERVICES

Maintain and build the local capacity to establish and sustain childcare places/ services across all categories of childcare providers/services.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
<p>Appropriate number & type of places/services in Nenagh to meet demand.</p> <p>Appropriate number & type of places in urban centres outside Nenagh e.g. Thurles, Newport, Borrisoleigh, Littleton, Roscrea, Templemore, Borrisokane & Birdhill.</p> <p>Opportunities for the establishment of community based services identified & supported particularly in rural areas e.g. Borrisokane, Silvermines, Borrisoleigh, Templemouhy, Kilcommon, Templederry, Fantan.</p>	<p>Local support, advice & assistance provided with funding applications to private & community services</p> <p>Collaboration with HSE & the County Council Planning Department on the establishment of services.</p>	<p>New services created</p> <p>New places created</p> <p>Existing childcare places maintained</p> <p>More responsive services available particularly with establishment of parent and toddler groups</p>	<p><i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE County Council Local Services e.g. schools, parish hall committees, etc. Community Agencies Community Leaders Katherine Howard Foundation</p>	<p><i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>How:</i> Monthly Review of Notifications Quarterly Audit of Service Database Annual Service Review</p>



OBJECTIVE 2: QUALITY STANDARDS

Promote quality standards and targets for childcare in North Tipperary.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Awareness by all childcare providers of regulations & key quality standards	Information dissemination to parents on quality standards	Greater knowledge & understanding of quality standards amongst all stakeholders	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Quality Sub-committee/ Information Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff /HSE Inspection Teams
Trained /qualified staff in all childcare services	Information dissemination to providers on quality standards	Buy in by providers through their participation in the development of national standards	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE HiQA Provider agencies Local providers VEC /Training Bodies FAS	<i>How:</i> Annual inspections
Development of 'quality & safety' as an ethos in all services with the availability of & use of appropriate policies & procedures by all providers	Collaboration with providers & agencies on training needs analysis	Self-assessment against standards in services		Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity
Development of a culture of customer care and quality assurance & understood by parents, children & other stakeholders	Open public forum to discuss key aspects on quality/ inspection, safety, minimum standards.	Action plans & funding requests based on standards put in place by providers		Annual Parent /Provider Survey
		Minimum core standards met by all services & majority of services seeking to raise levels beyond the minimum standards		6 Monthly Provider Review on policy & procedures
		Reduced numbers of children availing of services of sub-standard/providing unsafe care		Annual Review of Training events
		Greater confidence of parents in services that are caring for their children		



OBJECTIVE 3: DISADVANTAGE & SOCIAL INCLUSION

Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues.

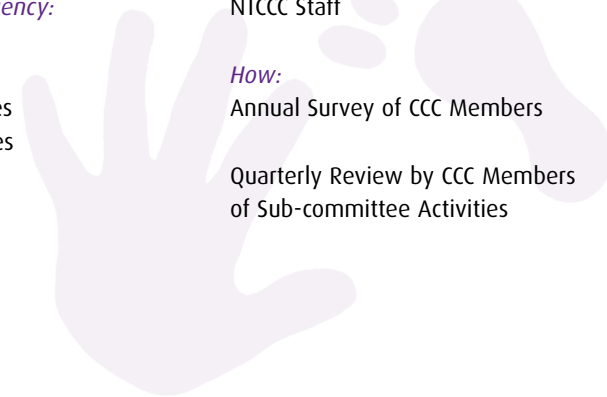
Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
<p>The NTCCC has up to date data on areas of disadvantage & socially excluded groups in relation to childcare</p> <p>Regular meetings /collaboration with other authorities /services in the area are lead by the NTCCC in identifying childcare needs of disadvantaged communities</p> <p>Full representation of parents' views in relation to childcare in areas of disadvantage</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of committees of community childcare services</p>	<p>The NTCCC in collaboration with other local agencies support the establishment of a parent's forum in areas of disadvantage to explore childcare issues</p> <p>Facilitating research into local areas to identify areas at risk of disadvantage, groups at risk of social exclusion & emerging trends</p> <p>Consult with agencies & parent groups to identify ways to support & encourage parents to volunteer their time and skills for community childcare</p> <p>Production of handbook for local childcare committees</p> <p>Attendance by NTCCC at committee meetings on annual basis</p>	<p>Greater partnerships between community services and funding agencies are in place to identify the needs of disadvantaged groups in North Tipperary</p> <p>Enhanced capacity of community groups to provide sustainable services</p> <p>Empowerment/self-help with target groups in relation to childcare to promote active involvement of target groups in service planning & delivery</p> <p>More children from disadvantaged areas or from socially excluded groups having access to & availing of childcare</p> <p>Development & support for parent & toddler groups in conjunction with other community services</p>	<p><i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Members</p> <p><i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE Community groups Voluntary agencies Parents Providers National organisations targeting disadvantage Katherine Howard Foundation</p>	<p><i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Equality Sub-committee/Development Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>How:</i> Annual Agency Survey</p> <p>Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity</p> <p>Annual Parent /Provider Survey</p>



OBJECTIVE 4: CO-ORDINATION

Enhance and develop co-ordination at all levels.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Regular consultations with HSE Pre-school Services, provider agencies, local groups, & providers	Identify the key stakeholders e.g. statutory, voluntary, private, advocacy, client & academic	More effective collaboration with key stakeholders	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Member Agencies	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Networking Sub-committee/ Information Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Revised committee membership to ensure active participation & representation from relevant agencies in North Tipperary	Induction pack for new CCC members & sub-committee members to ensure clear understanding of vision, strategy, roles & responsibilities and customer care policy	More effective use of resources to collaborate & communicate with external agencies e.g. newsletters, emails, etc.	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> Local employers Providers Provider agencies National agencies	<i>How:</i> Annual Survey of CCC Members
Revised policies & procedures guidelines to ensure NTCCC adherence to good corporate governance	Revise terms of reference & time-frames of sub-committees	Established customer care procedures as model of good practice for other services, including complaints & feedback procedures.		Quarterly Review by CCC Members of Sub-committee Activities
Greater understanding by local agencies, other authorities & local groups of the role of NTCCC in North Tipperary	Organise publicity campaign & information strategy on the NTCCC Role			
Active employer linkages established	Mechanisms established for members to promote work of CCC within own agencies & with other relevant bodies			
Development of a customer charter	Explore opportunities for other committees to participate in NTCCC activities			

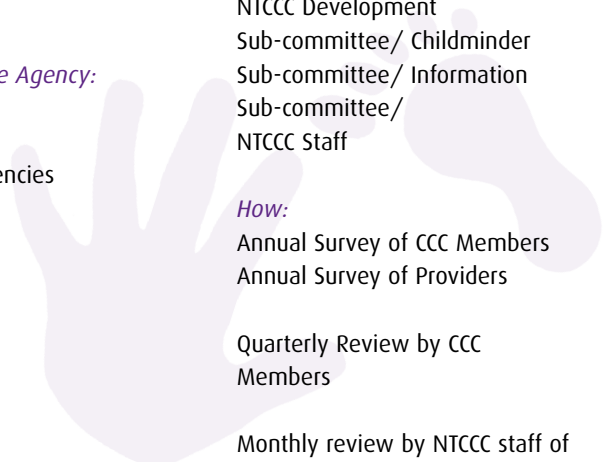




OBJECTIVE 5: SUPPORT FOR CHILDCARE PROVIDERS

Establish, develop and maintain a relevant support strategy for childcare providers at local level.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Identified needs & requirements of providers at local levels by NTCCC	Consult with national provider agencies & other authorities on available resources & gaps in services	Availability of a knowledge centre/contact network & local resource for all providers that complements national provider agencies & other authorities	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ Childminder Sub-committee/ Information Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Providers in North Tipperary aware of the NTCCC services	Consult with local providers on needs		<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE Providers Provider agencies	<i>How:</i> Annual Survey of CCC Members Annual Survey of Providers
Providers are directed by the NTCCC to the HSE at time of set-up as appropriate	Ensure NTCCC staff are updated on latest developments regarding funding, research & legislation			Quarterly Review by CCC Members
All national provider agencies & other local authorities & agencies are aware of the NTCCC services & refer providers as appropriate	Devise information strategy for providers to complement other information sources available			Monthly review by NTCCC staff of actions
	Devise training strategy for providers to complement other training			
Local authorities & agencies collaborate with NTCCC on initiatives that benefit providers	Offer information service which is accessible to all areas of North Tipperary			
	Provide information pack and other relevant materials to providers			
Maintain Networks of providers – throughout the county	Schedule meetings with HSE Pre-school Services to ensure clarity of roles regarding what information is required by providers			

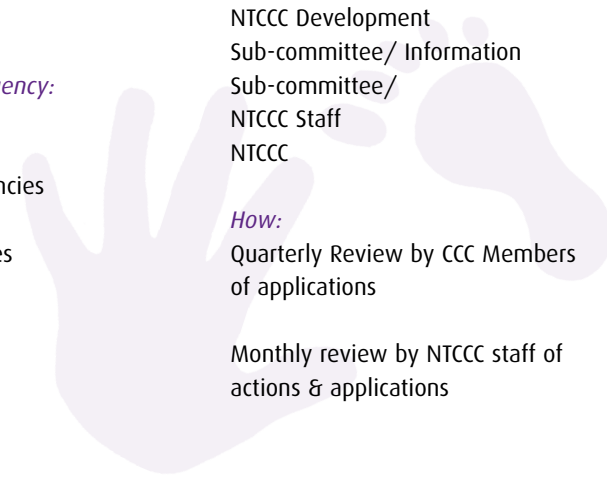




OBJECTIVE 6: NCIP APPLICATION PROCESS

Through the NTCCC role in the NCIP application process, establish a strategic and proactive approach to be taken to childcare development at county level.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Awareness by all childcare providers of funding availability	Identify areas of most need & encourage those in areas to seek support & apply for funding	New services are established, enhanced & maintained through the funding application success	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ Information Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff NTCCC
Successful applications	Assist applicants to use available resources & research to substantiate applications	Providers are made aware of funding application requirements	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> POBAL HSE Community agencies Providers Provider agencies	<i>How:</i> Quarterly Review by CCC Members of applications Monthly review by NTCCC staff of actions & applications
	Organise training on how to write funding proposals & broaden funding base			
	Organise publicity campaign & information strategy on funding availability, the NCIP application process & requirements			
	Explore other potential funding partners for providers			

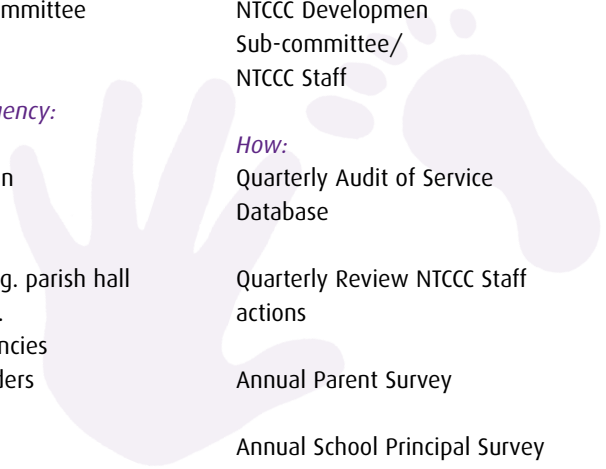




OBJECTIVE 7: SCHOOL-AGE CHILDCARE

Identify and promote initiatives targeted at the development and support of School-Age Childcare in North Tipperary.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Appropriate number & type of places/services available to meet demand.	Local support/assistance provided with funding applications	New services created /new places created for school-going children	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Committee Members	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Establishment of school-age childcare in target areas – Portroe, Birdhill, Newport, Borrisokane, Roscrea, Templemore, Borrisoleigh, Thurles, Holycross.	Linkage with parents, teachers & boards of management enhanced /established	Greater availability of services for children after-school & during holiday periods	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE Dept of Education Schools County Council Local Services e.g. parish hall committees, etc. Community Agencies Community Leaders Parents Fora Providers	<i>How:</i> Quarterly Audit of Service Database
	Feasibility of services explored for children to be transported between school & childcare service (Local Rural Transport Initiative)	Existing afterschool services maintained /enhanced		Quarterly Review NTCCC Staff actions
	Opportunities for the establishment of community based services identified & supported particularly in school localities	Greater awareness by providers of the different needs of pre-school & school-going children		Annual Parent Survey
	Awareness-raising in relation to the needs & benefits of childcare so that childcare can become a greater priority for community leaders or local politicians	Greater awareness by providers of quality standards for afterschool services		Annual School Principal Survey Annual Agency Survey

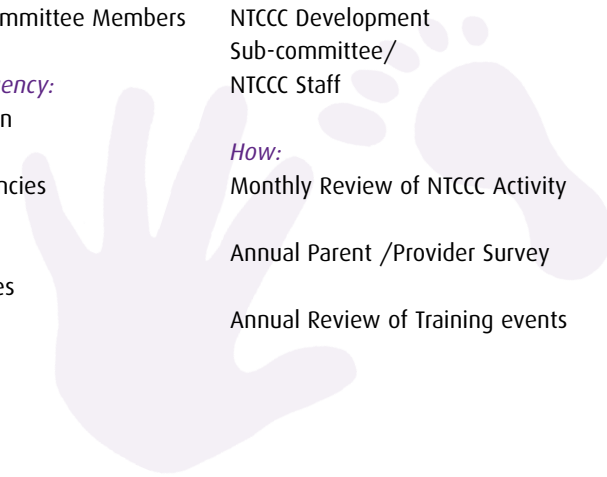




OBJECTIVE 8: SERVICES FOR 3 TO 4 YEAR OLDS

Identify, promote and improve the supply of early childhood care and education services for 3 to 4 year olds.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Specific programmes available in all services caring for 3-4 year olds	Information dissemination/ sharing	Greater knowledge & understanding by providers of the different developmental needs of 3-4 year olds	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Committee Members	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Appropriate developmental equipment & educational aids available in all services caring for 3-4 year olds	Training events targeting providers who care for 3-4 year olds	Greater knowledge & understanding by providers of quality standards required in services for 3-4 year olds	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> Dept of Education HSE Community Agencies Parents Fora Providers Provider Agencies	<i>How:</i> Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity Annual Parent /Provider Survey
Staff trained to provide quality care to 3-4 year olds	Networking supported of providers who care for 3-4 year olds	3-4 year old children avail of care appropriate to their developmental stage		Annual Review of Training events
	The establishment & funding of resource sharing/toy & materials library explored			
	The establishment of a panel of relief staff explored.			

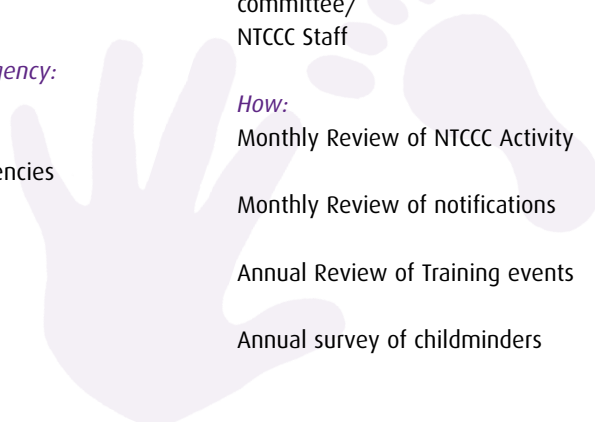




OBJECTIVE 9: CHILDMINDERS

Promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders – including the development of voluntary notification with the local HSE.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
All notifiable childminders notified to the HSE	Parents informed of quality issues in childminding service in order to better monitor services	Childminders aware of & appreciate the benefits of notification	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Committee Members	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Childminder Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Number of voluntary notifications by childminders increased on annual basis	A network of Childminders supported to link with other childminders or parents who work shift/atypical hours	Existing childminding services maintained & quality is enhanced	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> HSE/ CMAO Childminders Childminder Agencies Parents Fora	<i>How:</i> Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity
Increased number of childminders availing of the QAP	Open public forum through various media to discuss key aspects of quality standards in a childminding setting	Greater number of trained childminders available to care for children particularly in areas where there is not the demand to sustain other types of childcare		Monthly Review of notifications
	Inclusion of submission by childminders in all NTCCC newsletters			Annual Review of Training events
	Training events under the QAP and other training targeting childminders delivered			Annual survey of childminders
	Information & advice provided to childminders on financial supports, tax exemptions & other relevant childcare issues			

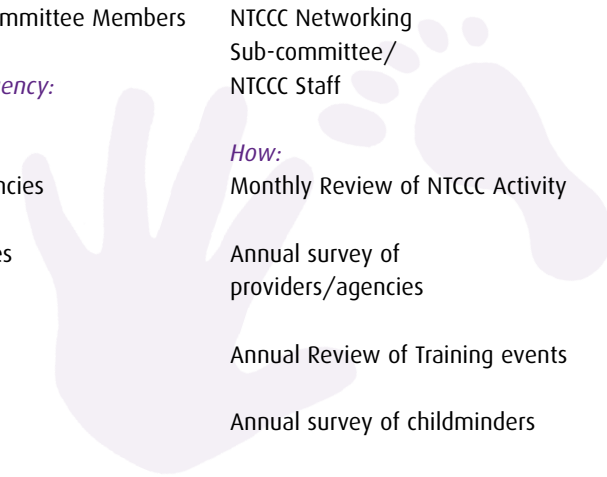




OBJECTIVE 10: CHILDCARE NETWORKS

Enhance childcare networks appropriate to the range of childcare providers and workers in the county.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Identified areas of most needs/isolation	Create contact database	Greater communication and information sharing between service types particularly for those in rural/remote areas	<p><i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Committee Members</p> <p><i>Collaborative Agency:</i> POBAL HSE Community agencies Providers Provider agencies</p>	<p><i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Networking Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>How:</i> Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity</p> <p>Annual survey of providers/agencies</p> <p>Annual Review of Training events</p> <p>Annual survey of childminders</p>
Networks established in target areas based on type of service & in partnership with parents	Host intranet/secure network			
Networks established between childminders & other service providers	Establish discussion forum for providers	Support mechanisms established between services in relation to relief staff		
	Explore feasibility of organising National conference			
	Identify speakers of interest & arrange information seminars			
	Promote networking at training events			

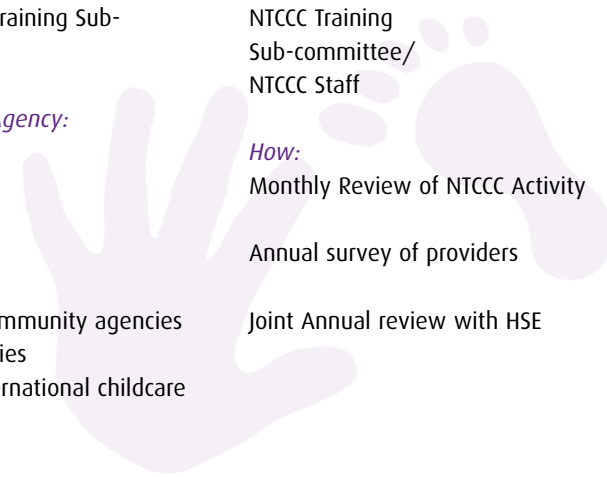




OBJECTIVE II: TRAINING

Identify training needs, developing a relevant strategy in consultation and collaboration with relevant training bodies/agencies.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Identify the needs of providers through training needs analysis	Survey providers	Improved levels of qualifications	<i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Training Sub-Committee	<i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Training Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff
Establish & promote awareness of training regarding professional development, best practice & quality initiatives	Devise training strategy	On-going professional development of providers	<i>Collaborative Agency:</i> POBAL HSE Providers FAS VEC Voluntary & Community agencies Provider agencies National & international childcare agencies	<i>How:</i> Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity Annual survey of providers Joint Annual review with HSE
	Schedule regular training events through various media & in different areas			
	Follow-up on training			
	Identify relevant topics to complement training provided in training institutes			
	Identify relevant topics that are identified as areas of weakness in HSE inspections			

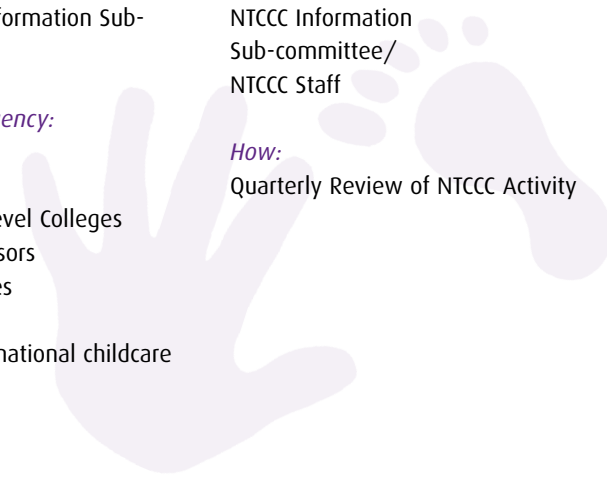




OBJECTIVE 12: INFORMATION SHARING

Develop and improve information sharing and learning systems.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Establish & promote awareness of information resources regarding best practice & quality initiatives, funding resources & other supports for providers	Create contact database	Reduced number of services with poor/low quality practice	<p><i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Information Sub-Committee</p> <p><i>Collaborative Agency:</i> POBAL HSE IS Dept at 3rd Level Colleges IT Business Advisors Provider agencies Parents Fora National & international childcare agencies</p>	<p><i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Information Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>How:</i> Quarterly Review of NTCCC Activity</p>
	Devise a marketing & publicity strategy	Improved standards		
	Schedule regular updates on the work of the NTCCC through various media & in different areas paying particular attention to hard-to-reach groups	Greater awareness by childcare staff of best practice & where to access information		
	Identify & explore best practice regarding information & learning systems in other CCCs, & agencies nationally & internationally	Greater awareness by parents of best practice & where to access information Greater partnership & support between services		





OBJECTIVE 13: ATTRACT RESOURCES

Attract resources from local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives.

Key Targets	Initiatives	Outcomes	Linkages & Collaboration	Monitoring & Review
Enhanced services through greater availability of resources	<p>Training organised on how to write funding proposals & broaden funding base</p> <p>PR Presentations to agencies who could be influential with decision makers</p> <p>NTCCC staff to become representatives on other committees responsible for decision making e.g. Social Inclusion Board</p> <p>Preparedness to take-up on funding availability</p>	<p>Better resourced & more sustainable services</p> <p>Better utilisation of resources</p> <p>Greater choice of services available for parents</p>	<p><i>Lead Agency:</i> NTCCC Staff & Development Sub-Committee</p> <p><i>Collaborative Agency:</i> POBAL HSE Social partners Government Departments & Statutory Agencies Provider agencies Community Agencies National agencies Public Representatives</p>	<p><i>Agency:</i> NTCCC Development Sub-committee/ NTCCC Staff</p> <p><i>How:</i> Monthly Review of NTCCC Activity</p> <p>Annual agency survey</p>



While many of the strategy initiatives will be undertaken by the NTCCC staff, the implementation of a specific number of initiatives, however, will require a different approach. These initiatives will involve a number of agencies in conjunction with the NTCCC staff working together to ensure implementation. For example, in relation to Objective 3 - Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues, the contributions and involvement of community and voluntary agencies from the NTCCC will be essential to ensure optimum effectiveness. This 'co-ordinated approach' will be established through the Sub-committee structure and for example in the case of Objective 3, the Equality Sub-committee will work with the NTCCC staff and will monitor progress on a regular basis.

It should also be noted that while implementation of the initiatives within the strategy framework will be important to the effective delivery of the Strategy, there are some additional initiatives that the NTCCC is committed to that will be paramount to the success of the Strategy. The following have been identified as priorities:

- Adherence to the CCC handbook and to best practice in relation to corporate governance, industrial relations, financial management, administration and customer care;
- The undertaking of annual reviews of outcomes and impacts and the submission of regular performance monitoring, financial returns and progress reports to POBAL;
- The development of a code of behaviour, flexible working arrangements and performance management system for staff;

- Co-operation with the development of new technology in the enhancement of the business environment.

Monitoring & Evaluation

A number of methods to monitor and review the implementation of the Objectives were also identified. Monthly, quarterly and Annual Reports on the progress of these actions will be prepared by NTCCC staff. The NTCCC and/or Sub-committees will meet at least four times a year to review the overall progress of the Strategy. Reports will be presented on whether the initiatives are contributing to achieving the objectives specified in the Strategy. At its meetings, the NTCCC will proof the Strategy against emerging and changing needs and make alterations to actions where appropriate. The NTCCC will produce an Annual Report on its activities.

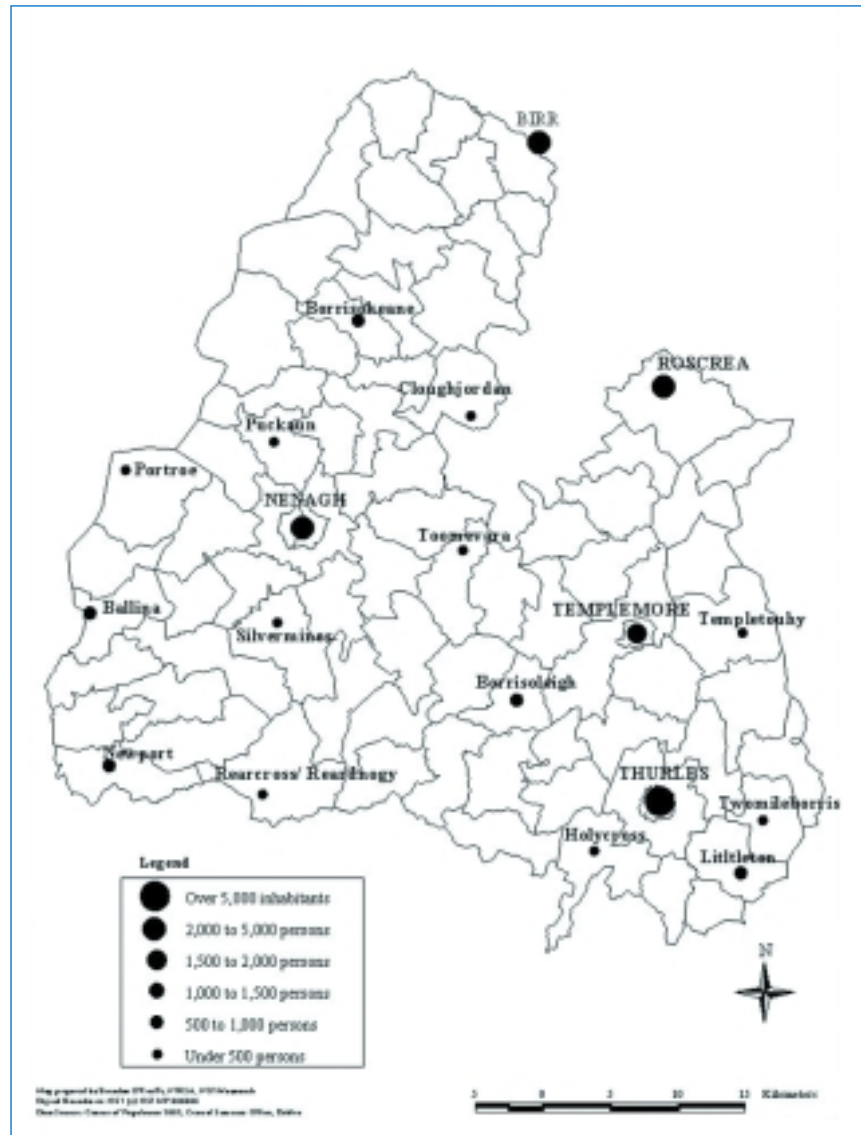
The needs assessment carried out in the development of this Strategy and the Spatial Analysis of North Tipperary will be revised as CSO updates of population are released and more frequently if circumstances warrant same. This analysis will assist the NTCCC in assessing the success of its initiatives and comparisons can be made with the Review carried out in 2006 on the previous strategy.

It is essential for the NTCCC and its stakeholders to know the added value impact of the Strategy. This can best be achieved through independent evaluation prior to the conclusion of the strategy period. This evaluation will include the views of all stakeholders particularly the families, providers and communities of North Tipperary.





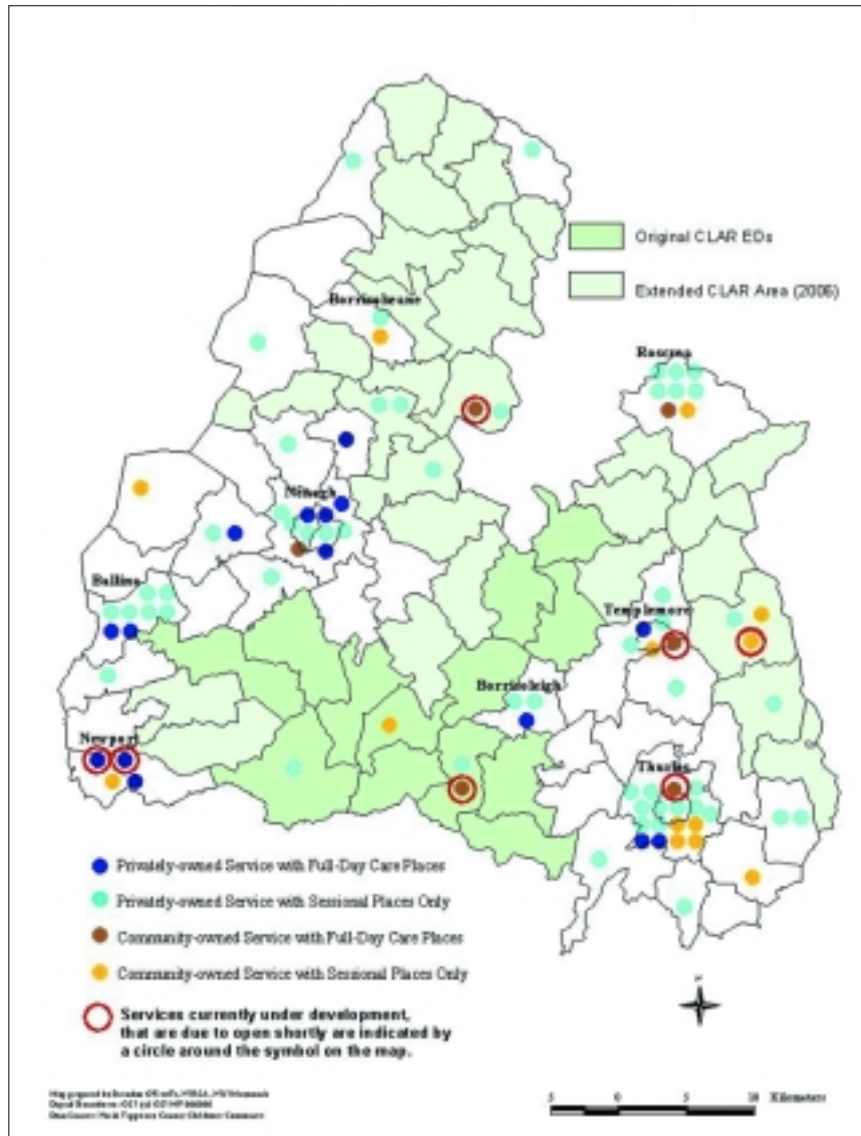
Main Population Centres in North Tipperary





North Tipperary Electoral Divisions





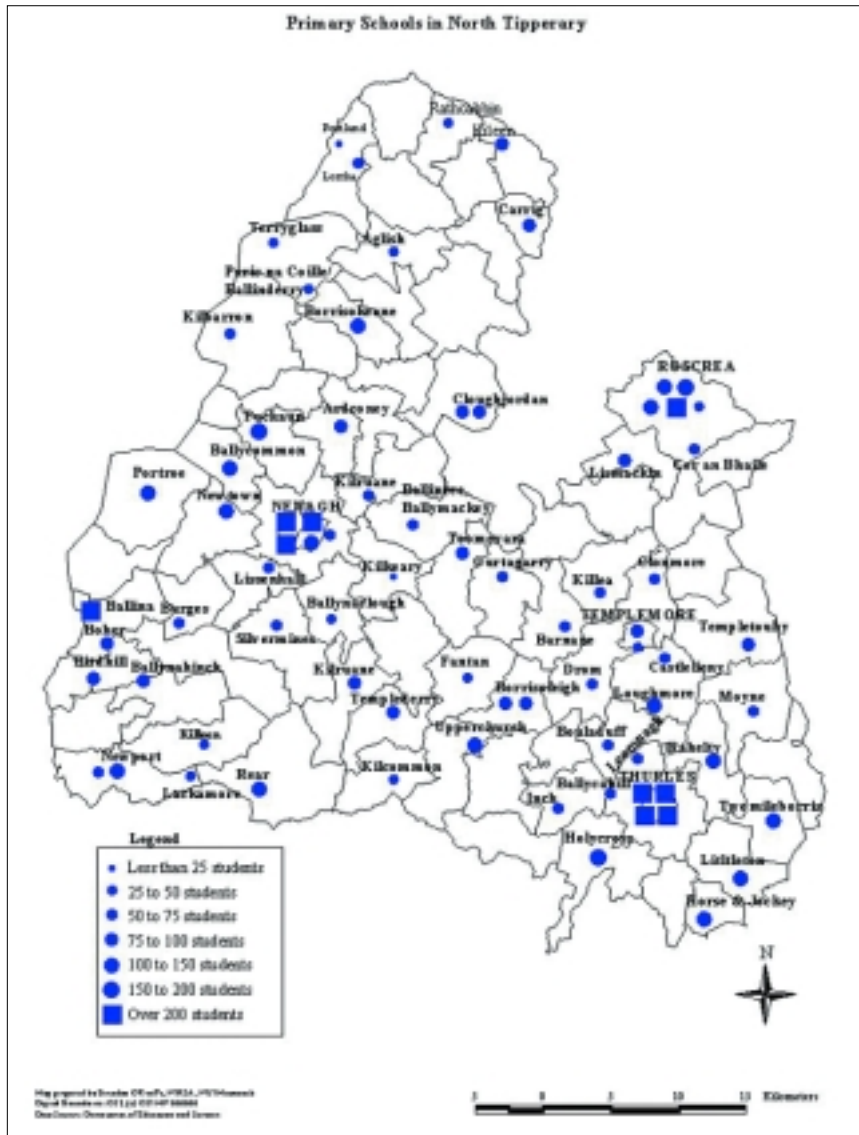
Location of Childcare Services in North Tipperary
Community and Private facilities, sessional and full-day care
(current and pending)





Spatial Distribution of Childcare Provision





Primary Schools in North Tipperary





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Coiste Cúram Leanaí Chontae Thiobraid Árann Thuaidh



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