

North Tipperary County Childcare Committee Information Gathering Exercise

**Prepared by DH Research & Training Ltd
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**North Tipperary county Childcare Committee
Friar Court
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Executive Summary

Current Childcare Levels – implications for North Tipperary County Childcare Strategy

- Feedback from the consultations with childcare services provided an interesting insight into the current availability of childcare in North Tipperary, namely that from a group of seventeen service providers with a combined capacity of 318 places the current number of service users is 281. This raises the question of the sustainability of some smaller rural based services and the need for strategic planning to ensure that the most appropriate services are in place to meet documented needs within specific geographic areas.
- Borrisokane and Thurles emerge in the research as particular blackspot areas in terms of availability of childcare services. In both cases the major deficit identified was for full day care. However as can be seen from the previous data, some smaller rural based services are currently underused. This again raises the question of the need for strategic planning, good pr, and back up support in particular for new and emerging services. The need for full day care in Thurles has already been well documented by Thurles Childcare Group and is dealt with later in the report.
- Three in ten children access some form of childcare in North Tipperary which is an improvement on the one in ten quoted in the original research carried out in preparation of the North Tipperary Childcare Strategy. The majority of children currently using services are in the private sessional sector. To this extent there is currently an imbalance in the range of childcare services available. There is also an imbalance in terms of geographic location.
- Two out of every ten parents surveyed use childminders. While it is somewhat unhelpful to use the one term childminder to cover a range of situations from occasional, part time, to full time by family members, neighbours and friends, or contracted individuals, it is nevertheless clear that childminding is the childcare of choice in North Tipperary. This presents a challenge to North Tipperary County Childcare Committee to ensure that support and training is provided to childminders and information on same is available to parents.

Aims Of This Research

1. To carry out a comprehensive needs analysis in relation to childcare in North Tipperary as per the specific information deficits identified by North Tipperary County Childcare Committee.
2. To provide comprehensive base-line data on existing childcare provision.
3. To identify possible resources within the county to respond to specific needs profiled.

Specific Objectives

1. To collate and analyse the information (quantitative and qualitative) available from the range of existing local information sources.
2. To identify in consultation with the designated working group mechanisms for information gathering with all key stakeholders about current and future needs for childcare provision and services in North Tipperary, using a combination of:
 - Telephone interviews
 - Focus group and issue based groups interviews
 - One to one interviews
3. To analyse the information gathered from primary and secondary sources
4. To document draft and final reports

Methodology

Confidential survey of fifty four Service Providers.

Consultation with twenty five childcare practitioners through facilitation of three network meetings.

Confidential survey of forty parents who are current users of notified services in North Tipperary.

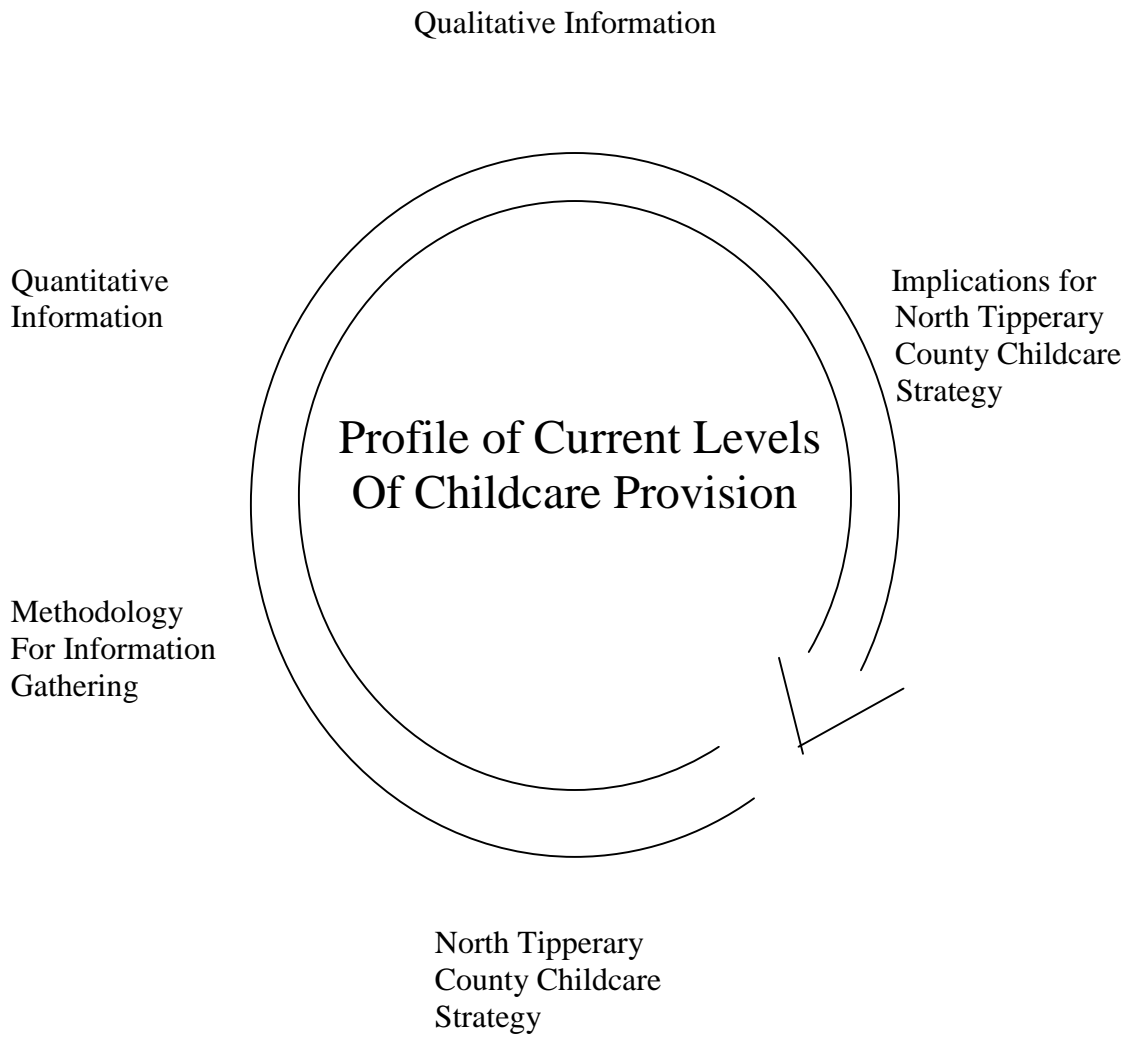
Individual consultations with four members of management committees of childcare services in North Tipperary.

Household survey of four hundred and eighteen households with a total of eight hundred and seventy children between the ages of 0 and 12.

As part of the Household Survey –

- (1) contact was made with forty nine families who use childminders.
- (2) contact was made with eleven single parent families.

Presentation of key findings to members of the Board of management as a planning session for developing a workplan for 2003



Childcare Provision in North Tipperary

According to the county Childcare Census of 1999, there were 56 childcare facilities in North Tipperary. 48 of these services were sessional, and 8 provided a full-day childcare service. Approximately 1,074 children were estimated at that time to be using these facilities which incorporate crèche, playgroup/preschool, afterschool/homework clubs, and parent and toddler sessions. Childcare participation rates were poor overall with only 1 child in 10 attending childcare facilities. Childcare provision was identified as particularly poor for children under one year and for children in the after-school age groups.

As detailed in the following pages a new childcare census for North Tipperary carried out as part of this research, the overall profile of childcare service provision has not changed significantly. Of significance is the finding that the gaps and pressure points identified in the preparation of the Childcare Strategy remain current.

Research carried out in preparation of the North Tipperary County Childcare Strategy estimated that there will be 1,414 more children aged 0-6 living in North Tipperary in 2016 than in 1996 due to normal population increases alone. The projected population figures indicate that over 15,200 children aged 0-14 will be in the childcare age range in 2016. In addition, increased female participation rates in the work force indicates that the demand for labour-force generated childcare could be as high as 5,000 places in 2016.

This trend towards population increase is borne out in the census 2002 figures, which indicate an increase of 5.3% in North Tipperary since 1996.

Population Data

Census Data Table For North Tipperary 2002¹

District	1996	2002			Change in population 1996-2002	
	Persons	Persons	Males	Females	Actual	Percentage
Nenagh Urban Area	5,645	6,115	2,982	3,133	470	8.3
Templemore Urban Area	2,115	2,152	1,102	1,050	37	1.7
Thurles Urban Area	6,603	6,874	3,246	3,628	271	4.1
Borrisokane Rural Area	7,029	7,062	3,632	3,430	33	0.5
Nenagh Rural Area	15,789	17,198	8,826	8,372	1,409	8.9
Roscrea No. 1 Rural Area	7,474	7,764	3,902	3,862	290	3.9
Thurles Rural Area	13,366	13,903	7,215	6,688	537	4.0
Tipperary North	58,021	61,068	30,905	30,163	3,047	5.3

As part of this information gathering exercise Childcare Service Providers were invited to participate in a childcare census update.

¹ Breakdown of figures into age cohorts is not yet available from Central Statistics office

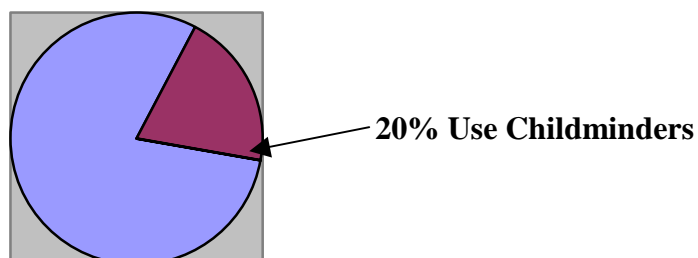
Table represents the services currently available

Area	Population 1996	No. of Childcare Services	No. of Sessional places	No. of Full Day Care places	No. of After school places	No. of drop in places	No of notified Childminding places	Total
Thurles	6,603	12	153	12	10	15		190
Nenagh	5,645	15	123	175	44	15	6	363
Roscrea	4,170	6	89	51				140
Templemore	2,115	4	60	15				75
Borrisokane	850	4	18	30	5		6	59
Newport	873	1	26					26
Ballina	598	4	53	7	2	7		69
Borrisoleigh	564	1	10					10
Littleton	544	1	15					15
Holycross	447	1	20					20
Portroe	441	1	18					18
Silvermines	202	0						
Toomevara	362	1	20					20
Puckane	235	0						
Templetouhy	293	1	14					14
Two Mile Borris	325	1	24					24
Cloughjordan	442	1	10					10
Birr Environ /Offaly	838	1		17	3			20
Birdhill	< 200	1	16					16
Ballycahill	< 200	0						
Rearcross	< 200	0						
Templederry	< 200	1	20					20

TOTAL NO OF PLACES - 1,109

Key Findings From Household Survey of 418 Households with 870 children 0-12 years

Use Of Childminders



Commentary:

- i. The term childminder refers to those who look after children either in their own or the child's own home. The service is normally offered all the year round for the full working day or for different periods during the day.
- ii. Payment rates are negotiated individually and vary in North Tipperary from nominal sums for family members to something below the national average for childminding as detailed in a later section.
- iii. There is a tension within the feedback from all of those consulted as part of this research between the identification of childminding as the childcare of choice, and difficulties with regard to availability, ability to pay and in a minority of responses quality of service.

Children Using Childcare Services

Table 1

Ex Parents & Schools	0-1	2	3-5	6-14	TOTAL
Non attendance	80%	45%	47%	88%	73%
Sessional/morning	6%	9%	24%	12%	16%
Full day	10%	21%	13%	0%	8%

Table 2

Childcare Service Usage 0-1 years		
	Morning	Full Day
Parents	64%	80%
Paid Childminder	8%	5%
Unpaid Childminder	20%	11%
Sessional Facility/Other	8%	4%

Table 3

Childcare Service Usage 2 years		
	Morning	Full Day
Parents	40%	45%
Paid Childminder	31%	33%
Unpaid Childminder	14%	9%
Sessional Facility/Other	13%	10%

Table 4

Childcare Service Usage 3-5 years		
	Morning	Full Day²
Parents	7%	35%
Paid Childminder	17%	27%
Unpaid Childminder	4%	6%
Sessional Facility/Other	24%	13%
School	47%	17%

Table 5

Childcare Service Usage 6-12 years		
	Morning	Full Day
Parents	0%	(Afternoons) 68%
Paid Childminder	0%	12%
Unpaid Childminder	0%	8%
Sessional Facility/Other	0%	1%
School	99%	0%

² Full day includes both full day and afternoon and evening

Accessing Childcare Services in a Rural Area – the Travel Implication – Children 5-12 years by Distance Travelled to School (Long Term)³

Table 1

MILES	DATE	TOTAL	DATE	TOTAL
0 miles	1981	57,364	1996	35,270
1 miles	1981	224,983	1996	190,791
2 miles	1981	78,196	1996	72,191
3 miles	1981	52,074	1996	47,066
4 miles	1981	20,929	1996	18,584
5-9 miles	1981	24,078	1996	23,288
10-14 miles	1981	3,601	1996	4,320
15 ml & over	1981	1,458	1996	2,144
Not Stated	1981	92,327	1996	75,879
Total Children	1981	555,010	1996	469,541

Table 2

Information provided through consultations with parents, childcare service users, and the household survey of 418 households gave the following information.

Average Distance Travelled

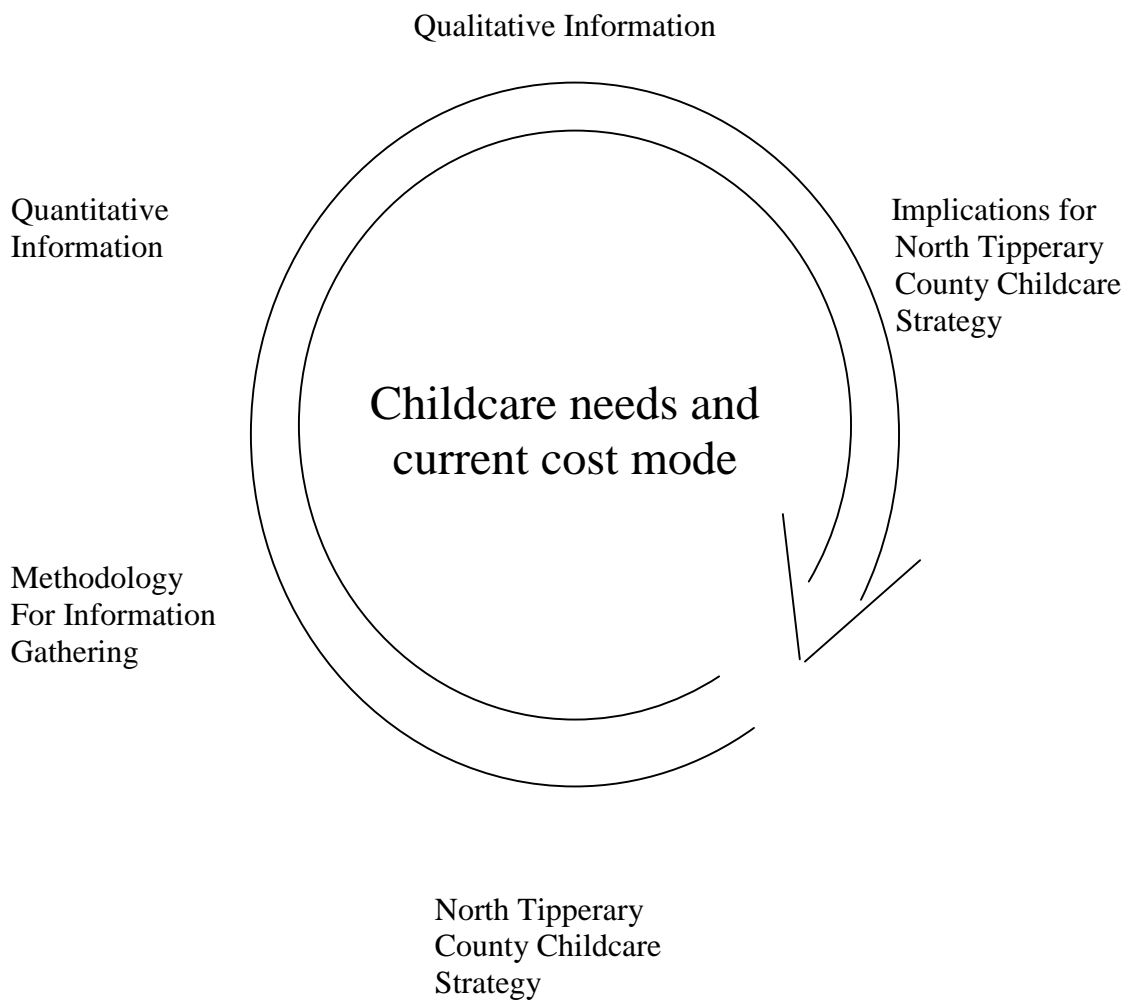
Less than 1 mile	-	23%
2-3 miles	-	15%
4-5 miles	-	32%
5-7 miles	-	22%
7-10 miles	-	6%
over 10 miles	-	2%

Key Findings

- (1) One example of car pooling was highlighted by a research participant.
- (2) One special needs project provides transport.

³ Central Statistics office

- (3) For those who use services there appears to be a general acceptance of a certain level of inconvenience in terms of travel. What is more difficult to gauge is the extent to which the necessity for travel is a factor preventing current non service users from accessing childcare services in North Tipperary.
- (4) In areas of special need the issue of travel and perhaps the lack of suitable transport becomes more significant.
- (5) A substantial amount of current childcare provision in North Tipperary is within the private sector where the ability to address any transport deficits is minimal as this sector, and particularly the private sessional providers currently experience themselves as overburdened with expectations that they should meet the needs of rural communities without additional resources.



Childcare Needs Identified

(1) **Household Survey** (418 house, 870 children)

The following are the key childcare needs prioritised by research participants

Afterschool - 36%

Full Day - 11%

Childminding - 19%

(2) **Current Service Users/Parents**

The following are the key childcare needs prioritised within the current service users / parents survey

Afterschool – 11%

Full Day – 5%

Childminding – 14%

(3) **Service Providers** – Awareness Of Needs for services other than those currently provided within the particular service

Afterschool – 14%

Full Day – 13%

Childminding – 19%

Current Cost Mode

Providers	Local Average In North Tipperary	National Average	National Recommended
Childminders	€16 per day	€25 per day	€160 per week
Crèche	€19 per day	€28 per day	
Sessional	€7 per day	€9 per day	

Percentage of Household Income spent on Childcare –

An average 27% of disposable household income is spent on childcare provision.

Lone Parents spend an average of 41% disposable income on childcare provision.

It is of note that disposable income in North Tipperary is less than the national average. The figures for 1988/1989 show that the national average disposable was £17,016 and in North Tipperary it was £15,647.

Current Cost Mode/Disposable Income Spent

Case Study One

- 1) Childminder average €25 a day
Crèche €28 a day
€506 disposable income (two earners) = 25% per child

Case Study Two

- 2) (One Worker)
€300 disposable income
childminder 5 x 25 = 125 = 41% of income per child

Case Study Three

- 3) Non Earner
A non-earner does not have adequate disposable income to access childcare provision except within a community setting.

Case Study Four

- 4) Family Member
9% of those interviewed as part of the household survey have childminding services from within the family at no cost.
All others using family members paid the locally accepted average rate.

Household Expenditure – Household Budget Survey 1994-1995

Item 412 Childcare including babysitting

Rural Areas

<u>Urban Areas</u>	<u>Farm Households</u>	<u>Other Households</u>	
1.78	.39	1.41	
Total 328.28	298.07	278.53	311.75
All Rural £1.15		State £1.55	

Note: - This expenditure is not from disposable income but is inclusive of all expenditure.

Recommended Pay-Scales for Early Years Workers

Recommended Pay-scales are available from

- Border Counties Childcare Network (www.bccn.ie)
- Barnardos 'Supporting Quality –guidelines for best practice in early childhood services'

Childminding

Case Study: Farm Relief Service Childcare Services

This project has initiated a panel of childminders in South Tipperary to provide quality childcare provision in rural areas.

The project advertises widely and frequently. Once a childminder or prospective childminder makes contact they are sent information leaflets. If they wish to register they are then interviewed/references checked and they need to get medical and Garda clearance.

There are currently sixty childminders on the books but not all have been placed. There is a very low take up from rural areas. This may be because people are not aware that childminders are potentially available in all areas, (an awareness that the advertising may have concentrated too much on more populated areas).

Childminders who participate are invited to sign a code of practise. Childminding Ireland is developing a code of practise for childminders, which is due for release early in the New Year.

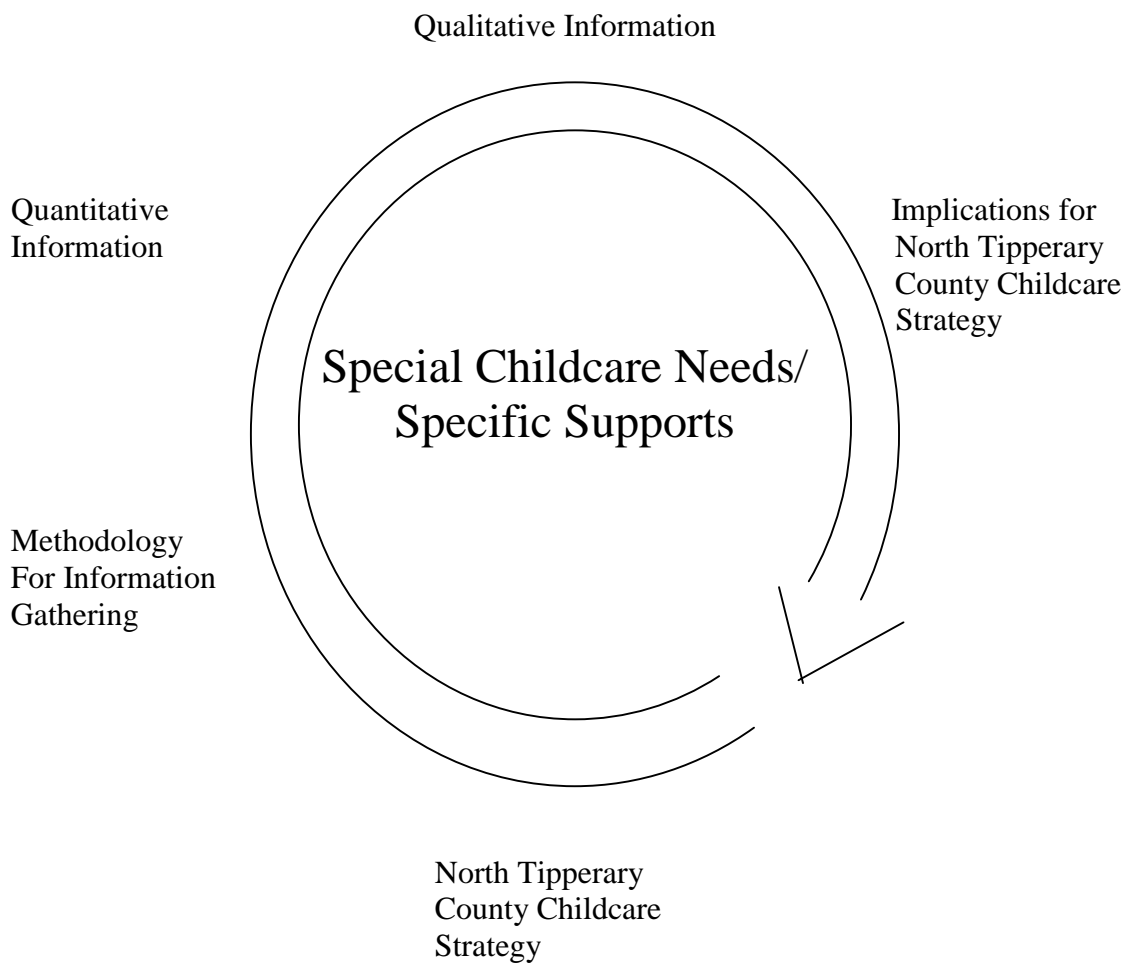
Case Study: Wexford

- Four networks have been established to provide informal support throughout the area.
- Training has been provided in First Aid to childminders who have come forward.
- A database of childminders has been developed. This is not given out to parents who make enquiries about the availability of childminders. Instead the contact details of parents looking for childminders is passed on to the childminders working in that area.
- Fear of tax implications among childminders has meant that financial matters are not addressed by the network, rather the emphasis is on building up trust.

Case Study: Midlands

- The approach here has focused on a colourful poster/add campaign.

- Once a childminder makes contact information leaflet and booklet is then sent out.
- The Childminder Advisory Officer follows up the initial contact by meeting with the childminder on a one to one in her own home. The focus is on breaking down barriers and building trust.
- This area has developed an optional code of practice for members.
- Free places are offered on training courses (cost applies to other childcare service providers who participate)
- There is a newsletter for members
- Members receive a free Firepack.



LONE PARENTS AND CHILDCARE

THE CASE FOR ACTION⁴

This briefing paper represents an overview of recent childcare policy work undertaken by One Parent Exchange and Network. The Network has informed this area of work through submissions to and representation on Partnership 2000 and the Expert Working Group on Childcare as well as a seminar for members in Tralee in November 1997. As always childcare remains an integral part of the policy work of OPEN.

All parents need good quality affordable childcare if they want to go to work, to improve their skills through studying or training, to get respite from full-time care – or even to go out and have fun.

Most children are looked after by a partner, a relative or a friend while their parents are out. At least 45% of working mothers with dependent children in our nearest neighbour Britain use this kind of informal childcare – only 23% use formal paid childcare. Informal care can be used by parents who have to work at weekends and evenings or on shifts. It is usually free or very low cost.

Lone parents have particular problems in finding childcare. They do not have a partner to turn to. With the break-up of the family, many of them have lost contact with the networks of friends and relations who might have offered informal childcare. Without free or low-cost childcare, lone parents face:

- Difficulty in taking up employment - 77% of lone parents in the UK say that childcare problems prevent them leaving Social Security Support compared with 15% of couples.
- Barriers to studying or training.
- Limited opportunities to take part in community activities, leaving them and their children socially isolated.
- Poverty for families and children, as borne out by Eurostat figures.

The provision of childcare in Ireland broadly falls into the following categories:

- Community pre-school playgroups
- Health Board funded nurseries
- Home based playgroups
- Home based childminders
- Private Nurseries
- Early Start Programme

⁴ OPEN Network

WORK⁵

Table 2

Labour Force Participation Rates (%)

Categories	1990	1993	1997
Married women without children	29.79	35.48	41.73
Married women with children	23.64	30.67	38.28
Female Lone Parents	19.27	24.61	32.14

Resourcing & Sustaining Childcare Provision⁶

Who Pays?

The argument for specific resources to support better childcare provision has many facets. Some are related to the development and social needs of children, others to support for families where a lone parent or both parents are in paid work, or wish to access education or training to enhance their skills, take up community work or leisure activities.

The cost of full-time care within a crèche has been estimated at £60-70 per week. Many home-based childminders charge upwards of £40-£50 per week. Charges at community based playgroups vary but are pre-dominantly for part-time care and start at £8.00-£10.00 per week for sessional/half day care. Those who are parenting alone must find these costs themselves.

If at work, lone parents can earn £115.38 per week and still receive their social welfare payment, both payments are taxable. From his/her net income a lone parent then pays the household bills as well as other child-related costs including childcare. For lone parents who earn over £12,000 per year, there is no social welfare payment.

Some lone parents who are not working choose to place their children in a community playgroup setting for any number of reasons including:

- Caring for other children and/or adults in the home,
- To aid their child's social and educational development
- To attend hospital and other appointments
- To get a well-earned and regular breather from full-time, **i.e. 24 hours per day**, parenting.

Labour Force Surveys 1990, 1993,1997, Central Statistics Office

⁶ OPEN position paper

All unemployed parents can apply to their health board to receive help with the costs of playgroup attendance locally. The payment is usually between £6-£8 per week and is paid directly to the playgroup organiser.

It is a fact that most community-based projects do not have the resources to employ the staff they need. They are set in disadvantaged areas, finances are tight and the only way of providing childcare is to tap into state run schemes, indeed in many such areas the Community Employment Programme is used to fund childcare staffing provision. The one-year duration of schemes hampers both the provision of childcare and the sustainable employment prospects of staff in the affected areas.⁷

One Parent Families National Facts & Figures

One Parent Family Payment

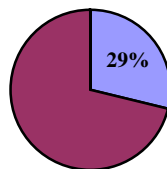
The One-Parent Family Payment rate in 2001 for a non-earning lone parent with one dependant child was €127.86 (£100.70). In Budget 2002 the payment was raised marginally to €138.10 (£108.76).

By mid-2001, 75,272 lone parents depended on this inadequate payment as a consistent source of income.

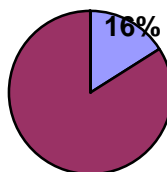
62.1% of all recipients of the One-Parent Family Payment Family have 1 child.

In 1999, 97.3% (68,454) recipients of the One-Parent Family Payment were women.

Poverty



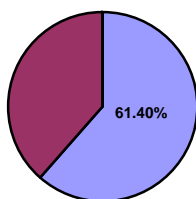
Over 29% of all lone parent households are at risk of living in poverty.



16% of all children living below the 50% poverty line are part of a one-parent family.

⁷ Funding from JELR now provides a longer period of funding for staff costs

Employment



The ILO (International Labour Organisation) survey shows that the labour force participation rate of one parent with children of any age in 1997 was 38.6%; therefore, 61.4% of lone parents are unemployed.

LONE PARENTS IN NORTH TIPPERARY⁸

SUM OF NO. OF RECS OFFICE NAME	PEN TYPE							Grand Total
	10	11	13	18	19	79	80	
A.I.B., BORRISOKANE	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
A.I.B., PEARSE ST., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
A.I.B., TEMPLEMORE	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
A.I.B., THURLES	1	0	2	0	0	6	1	10
AGLISH P. O., ROSCREA	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
ARDCRONEY P. O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
B.O.I., NENAGH, CO. TIPP.	0	0	0	0	0	6	0	6
B.O.I., TEMPLEMORE, CO. TIPP.	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
B.O.I., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
BALLINGARRY P.O., ROSCREA	0	0	4	0	1	2	0	7
BALLINGARRY P.O., THURLES	6	1	5	0	1	9	0	22
BALLINURE P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
BALLYCAHILL P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
BALLYNONTY P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	1	3	0	4
BORRISOKANE P.O., CO. TIPP.	3	0	3	0	2	13	1	22
BORRISOLEIGH P.O., THURLES	3	0	1	0	2	9	0	15
CARRIGAHORIG P.O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	3	1	5
CASTLEINEY P.O., TEMPLEMORE	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	2
CLONAKENNY P.O., ROSCREA	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
COOLBAWN P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
CROSSPATRICK P.O., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
CURREENEY P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
DOLLA P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
DOVEA P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1

⁸ Dept Social and Family Affairs, November 2002

DROMBANE P.O., THURLES	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
DUNDRUM P.O., TIPPERARY	1	0	3	0	2	11	0	17
EMLY P.O., TIPPERARY	2	0	2	1	3	6	0	14
GORTNAHOE P.O., THURLES	1	0	2	1	0	9	0	13
HOLYCROSS P.O., THURLES	0	0	1	0	0	6	0	7
KILLENAULE P.O., THURLES	9	1	6	0	0	18	1	35
KNOCK P.O., BIRR, ROSCREA	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
LITTLETON P.O., THURLES	3	0	4	0	1	9	0	17
LOUGHMORE P.O., TEMPLEMORE	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	4
MOYNE P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
MULLINAHONE P.O., THURLES	1	4	3	0	1	13	0	22
NENAGH P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	32	4	29	1	16	151	3	236
NEW BIRMINGHAM P.O., THURLES	0	0	0	1	0	6	0	7
NEWTOWN P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
PORTROE P.O., NENAGH	1	0	1	0	0	5	1	8
PUCKANE P.O., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
RATHCABBIN P.O., ROSCREA	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	6
ROSCREA P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	13	1	15	1	5	87	2	124
SILVERMINES P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
TEMPLEDERRY P.O., NENAGH	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
TEMPLEMORE P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	9	1	12	0	3	44	1	70
TEMPLETOUHY P.O., THURLES	2	0	1	0	0	5	1	9
THE COMMONS P.O., THURLES	1	0	2	0	0	8	0	11
THURLES P.O., CO. TIPPERARY	51	7	42	0	18	222	1	341
TOOMEVARA P.O., NENAGH	0	0	0	0	0	9	0	9
TOUR P.O., NEWPORT	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
T.S.B., 11/13 PEARSE ST., NENAGH	1	0	0	0	0	2	0	3
TWO MILE BORRIS P.O., THURLES	1	0	7	0	0	6	2	16
UPPER CHURCH P.O., THURLES	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	2
GRAND TOTAL	150	20	151	6	57	702	16	1102

PEN TYPES

- 10** = **Deserted Wives Benefit**
11 = **Deserted Wives Allowance**
13 = **Lone Parents (unmarried)**
18 = **Lone Parents (widowed)**
19 = **Lone Parents (separated)**
79 = **One Parent Family Payment 1**
80 = **One Parent Family Payment 2**

Feedback from research participants

Barnardos

Lone Parents and their children are supported in the Barnardo Project in Thurles through group, individual and family work. The crèche provision facilitates child development work and provides space for parents to engage in project services. This provision is limited however because of lack of space and daycare staff. The service users are prohibited from engaging in ongoing training and education because of lack of childcare provision in the area. The project has just secured funding from the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform for the provision of a full and sessional day care service.

Service Providers Survey

7% of current service users were identified as Lone Parents.

Parents Survey

One Lone Parent interviewed is currently spending 45% of disposable income on childcare for two children – exclusive of travel and lunches which cost extra.

Household Survey

Eleven Lone Parents were interviewed as part of the general household survey and the following are the key findings –

- Two use sessional childcare
- Three use childminders – one a relation and all three use part time/after school care
- Two are working as childminders.

Key Findings On Special Needs

- Back up services required include speech and language, psychological service, occupational and physical therapies.
- There is a need to provide educational package for mainstream services if they are to provided places for children with special needs

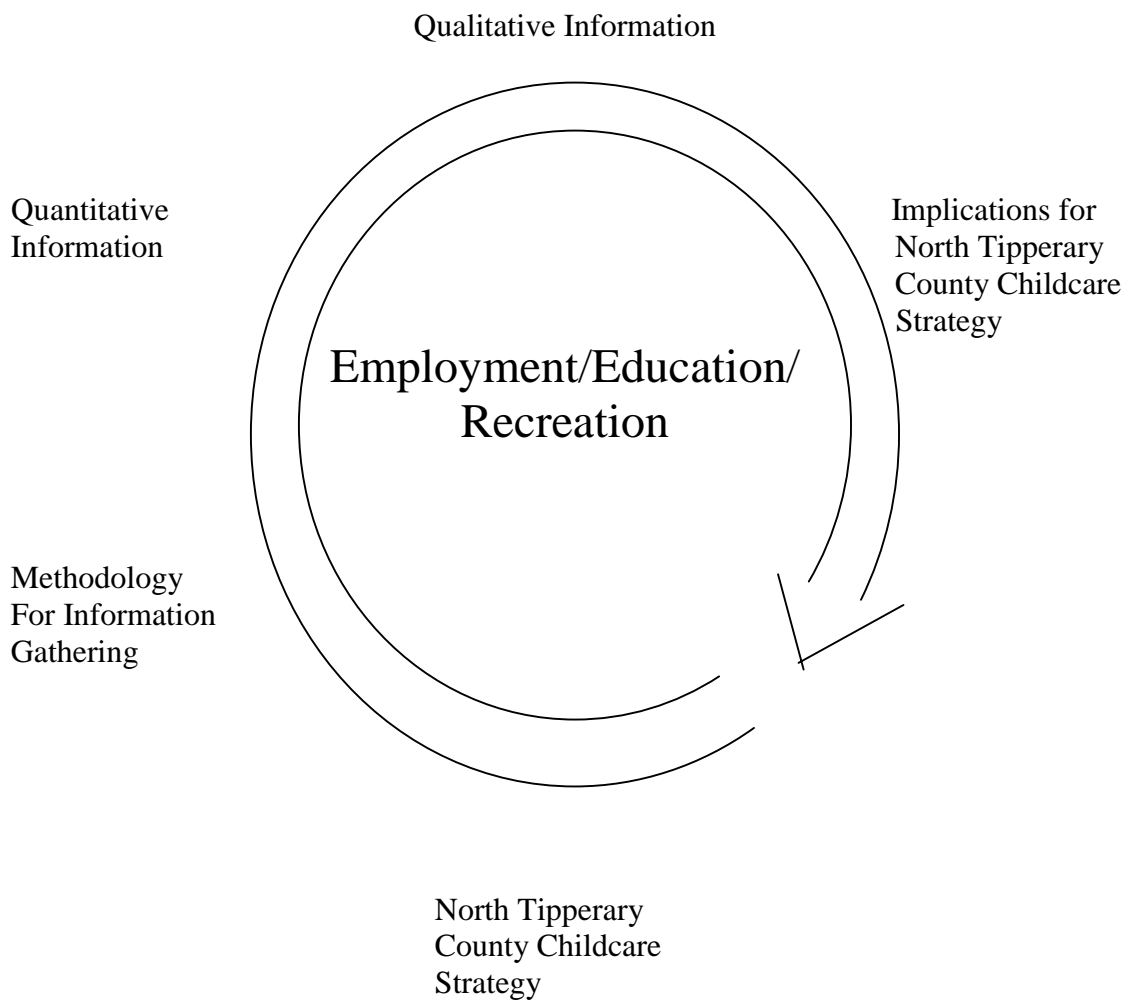
Feedback from Survey of Service Providers.

- 1) There is an urgent need for major improvements in speech therapy services.
- 2) These children require lots of social interaction with other verbal children. They are treated like all others (in our service) but require more observation to identify illness and behaviour problems.
- 3) Staff need extra training course. Children with special needs are very insecure and nervous and require a lot of patience and understanding.

- 4) Children with special needs can become frustrated leading to behavioural problems.
- 5) No one has ever asked me to take a child with special needs – I would have no problem if asked.
- 6) I take one special child per group My service has been recommended by speech therapists and the Mid Western Health board to benefit from integration before national school.
- 7) Recently any child with special needs has had a carer with them provided by Mid Western Health Board.
- 8) Physically my premises is not wheelchair accessible.
- 9) We provide three places for special needs
- 10) There is a need for special needs assistant courses.
- 11) Childminding service is needed for children with special needs.
- 12) There is a need for more back up services from psychologists and speech therapists “you are working very much on your own”.

Mid-Western Health Board

- More funding is required for special assistants
- No profile / data base is currently kept of children with special needs who have requested access to a childcare service
- More funding is required for back up supports/therapists
- Appropriate resource materials are needed to ensure quality experience for the child.



Employment

It was agreed that instead of surveying employers which had been part of the original research brief, this section should instead focus on researching current policy and model of practise in the area of family friendly work practises. The following then presents the stated policies of National Women's Council, IBEC, ICTU, Programme for Prosperity and Fairness, as well as some case studies outlining models of best practise.

National Women's Council⁹

“We believe that the term family-friendly should be interpreted in the broadest possible way to incorporate the creation of a healthy work-life balance. In the current economic boom one of the greatest dangers is an increasing tendency for workers to *live to work* rather than *work to live*.”¹⁰

The NWCI welcomes very much Family-Friendly Workplace Day, particularly for women, who according to the recent Ark Life, AIB's Life and Pensions national survey, continue to do most of the housework regardless of their employment status. That survey revealed that women working full-time in the home spend an average of 81 hours per week on childcare and domestic duties and women who work outside of the home still spend an average of 62 hours on household tasks. ‘Family-Friendly Workplace Day is targeted at employers and employees’ ...The reorganisation of responsibilities around family and home duties is fundamental to the creation of a genuinely family-friendly society’.

IBEC Statement

The development of appropriate measures to assist in reconciling work and family life are important to underpinning economic, social and equality objectives. The emergence of a tightening labour market and the increased emphasis on human resources as a key competitive element serve to underpin the importance of developing innovative ways of maximising the available labour supply. IBEC believes that family-friendly policies, if designed and managed correctly, can serve a dual purpose of contribution to the needs of the business as well as meeting the needs of employees with family responsibilities.

The key challenge in developing family-friendly policies relevant to the level of the enterprise is to find ways of developing approaches that reflect the reality of the workplace. Identifying different options that have the potential to meet the many diverse needs of different employers and their employees is particularly important. In order to be successful, family-friendly measures should contribute to the twin objectives of supporting the effective and efficient operation of the firm and should enhance the opportunity to reconcile work and family life. IBEC believes that if such

⁹ National Women's Council press release taken from NWC website

¹⁰ quote from Chairperson Ms Healy

objectives are delivered, and are seen to be delivered, there will be more widespread implementation of such measures.

ICTU Statement

The Irish Congress of Trade unions fully supports the aims and objectives of the Framework Agreement on Family Friendly Policies in the Workplace. Congress will work with IBEC and the Public Service Employers to support unions, Employers and Employees to balance work and family life in their own workplaces.

The world of work is a changing place with a variety of new and different pressures, not least of which is the need to balance work and family life. The growing numbers of women in the workforce means that more women and men are now striving to meet their job requirements while also caring for their children, elderly parents and other members of the family.

Work is an essential factor of human life from the perspective of quality of life and social integration. Work places that respect and recognise the diverse needs of workers, including their family responsibilities, will gain from the diversity of talents and skills that they will attract and retain within their workforce.

While all of the data shows that it is women that carry out the vast majority of caring duties, men too want to have time with their families and family friendly workplace arrangements can and do address the needs of both men and women. The workplace cannot solve all of these matters, however Congress believes that workplace arrangements that help to balance work and family life can contribute enormously to easing the pressures on working parents and other employees.

Balancing work and family life is a worthwhile goal of value for society, for the economy, for employers and for employees. There is no single solution and the advantage of the Framework Agreement's approach is that it recognises the dynamic and difference that exists in each workplace due to the make up of the workforce; the nature of the business and the requirements of the customer.

The Framework Agreement encourages management, unions and employees to come together to find out what the needs of the employees and the company are and then to identify how they can, in their particular enterprise, meet these needs to the mutual benefit of both company and employee. What is appropriate for one organisation may not work in another. The aim here is not to prescribe or even recommend one form of family friendly workplace arrangement over another.

Rather we are recommending that employers, unions and employees come together to see which family friendly work arrangements work for them.

Programme For Prosperity and Fairness

Framework 1 Annex IV

National Framework for the Development of Family-Friendly Policies at the Level of the Enterprise

1. Introduction

The objective of this Agreement is to support and facilitate the development of family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise. The achievement of this objective will be supported by the **National Framework for Family Friendly Policies** to be established within the context of this Agreement. The National Framework will focus on supporting and facilitating family-friendly policies through the development of a package of practical measures that can be applied at the level of the enterprise.

2. Context

The development of appropriate measures to assist in reconciling work and family life is important to underpinning economic, social and equality objectives. At a policy level the 1999 EU Employment Guidelines have detailed the importance of designing, implementing and promoting family-friendly policies. Similarly, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) has indicated a need for striking a balance between work and family responsibilities. As articulated in Section 4.3, the development of an accessible, affordable, quality childcare infrastructure is critical to supporting the reconciliation of work and family life. This Agreement considers, however, that there are a range of other measures that can contribute to the reconciliation of work and family life.

The emergence of a tightening labour market and the increased emphasis on human resources as a key competitive element serve to underpin the importance of developing innovative ways of maximising the available labour supply. Similarly, the importance of facilitating equality of opportunity for men and women in the workplace also underscores the desirability of developing policies that can assist parents in reconciling work and family life. Family-Friendly policies can serve a dual purpose of contributing to the needs of the business as well as meeting the needs of employees with family responsibilities.

The challenge in developing family-friendly policies relevant to the level of the enterprise is to find ways of developing identifying different options that have the potential to meet the many diverse needs of different employers and employees is especially problematic. In order to be effective, such options must meet the following objectives:

- a. enhance the opportunity to reconcile work and family life.**
- b. and contribute to the effective and efficient operation of the enterprise.**

3. Family-Friendly Policies

Appropriately designed Family-Friendly Policies can bring benefits to both employees and employers. For employers,

- **the retention of skilled and experienced staff**
- **reduced absenteeism**
- **improved productivity**
- **a more highly motivated workforce and**
- **an enhanced corporate image**

From the perspective of the employee the benefits can include:

- **an opportunity to better balance their working and family lives**
- **greater equality of opportunity between men and women and**
- **a fairer sharing of family responsibilities between men and women**

This National Framework does not attempt to impose any singly measure or model of non statutory family-friendly policy or practice. Both ICTU and employers (IBEC and Public Sector Employers) are committed to the development of family-friendly workplaces and will encourage and support the development of such workplaces in every practical way. There are many examples of family-friendly work practices and policies to choose from, depending on the needs of both employees and employers. The following are examples of family friendly practices that are appropriate for discussion at enterprise level by agreement between employers and unions:

- Job-sharing
- Work sharing
- Part time work
- Flexitime
- Flexi-place/Teleworking
- Term-time working

Within the provisions of existing legislation, the following issues are also appropriate for discussion at local level:

1. Maternity leave
2. Adoptive leave
3. Parental leave
4. Force Majeure leave

4. National Framework for Family-Friendly Policies

The government and the Social Partners agree that a National Framework for Family-Friendly Policies should be established to support family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise. The purpose of this National Framework will be to identify actions to be undertaken by the Social Partners at national level, which support the development of family-friendly policies in the workplace. The focus of this activity will be to support and guide the voluntary development and implementation of

family-friendly policies at the level of the enterprise in accordance with the objectives detailed in paragraph 2 above.

5. Key Activities

IBEC, Public Sector employers and ICTU agree to undertake the following actions within the National Framework:

- Promote the implementation of family-friendly policies in accordance with the objectives detailed in paragraph 2 above.
- Identify relevant options for enterprise-level family-friendly policies and practices.
- Assess the impact of such policies and practises with regard to the objectives outlined in 2.
- Review the outcome of the ME Family-Friendly Project undertaken by the Department of justice, Equality and Law Reform and propose relevant action to develop family-friendly practices.
- Develop practical guidelines at national level to assist in the implementation of family-friendly policies and practices at enterprise level.
- Develop a Code of Practice, within the context of the existing legislative framework, on the manner in which statutory Parental and Force Majeure Leave can be taken.
- Identify any potential barriers and impediments to the provision of family-friendly policies that meet the needs of working parents and identify possible solutions to such difficulties. In this connection, management, unions and employees could, jointly and on a co-operative basis at enterprise level, examine ways of overcoming any such barriers that may exist: consultations with local childcare groups/providers.
- Disseminate information on appropriate and relevant national and international experience with regard to the operation of family-friendly policies in the workplace.
- Identify best practice and disseminate it to employers and trade unions.
- Monitors and report on developments in respect to family-friendly policies, and
- Provide training to management, union, employer and workplace representatives on the identified relevant family-friendly options and on best practice methods of implementation.

6. Support Structures for Implementation

A National Framework Committee will be established charged with the task of implementing this agreement. The committee will be comprised of representatives of IBEC, Public Sector employers and ICTU. The Committee will be supported by a secretariat provided by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and additional support, where appropriate, will be provided by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. The activities of the National Framework for Family-Friendly Policies above will be supported by a specific budget to be provided within the Human Resources Development Operational Programme.

7. Monitoring and Review Mechanisms

The National Framework committee will monitor and review progress on an annual basis.

www.familyfriendly.ie

While the research is the concern of Family Friendly work arrangements and work life balance is increasing rapidly, both in range and volume, there is scope for a much more comprehensive treatment of the issue, particularly in the Irish Context.

There is a limited amount of published material, which provides employer organisations with information and advice on the practical aspects of implementing and managing Family Friendly and work life balance arrangements in their enterprises. The need now is for research in to and dissemination of guidelines on how employers can identify the feasibility of such arrangements, how they can select the most effective initiatives to implement and how they can introduce the best methods of monitoring and evaluating the operation of the arrangements.

Case Study

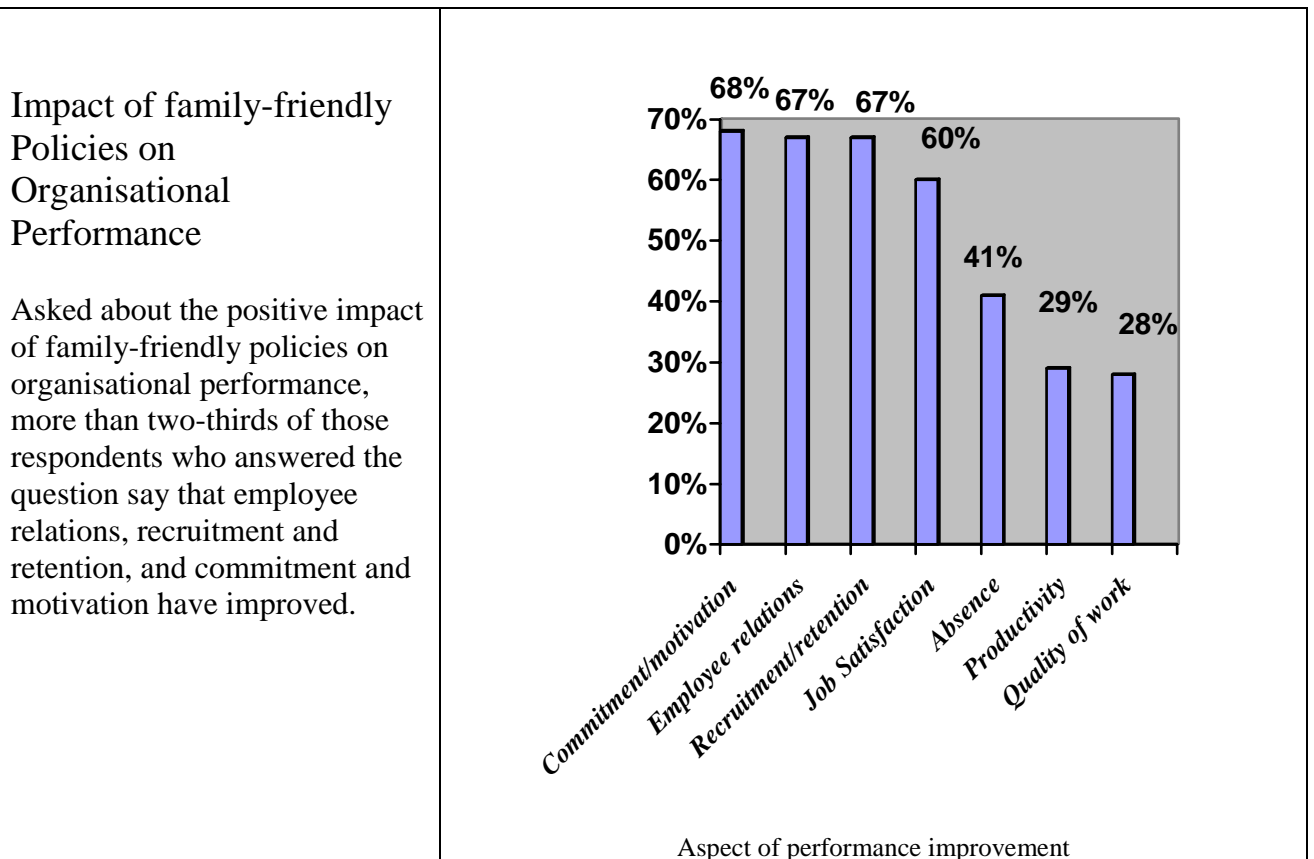
While the limited research available indicates that, in general employers have found that Family Friendly work arrangements produce business benefits there is comparatively little research into the specific gains obtained. Recent research in UK has provided some case studies supporting the case for the arrangements but there is a lack of similar material in Ireland.

Employers, employees and trade unions that are unconvinced about the benefits of Family Friendly work arrangements should be provided with examples of the specific benefits, including these business benefits. In addition there is a case for providing information on the reservations, downsides and resistance, factors to Family Friendly work arrangements to enable employers to weigh the pros and cons of the issue in a more considered manner.

There is also scope for research into the needs of specific employee groups such as lone parents.

IBEC has been aware of increasing numbers of employers considering measures to assist families – and women in particular – with their childcare needs as a means of facilitating employment opportunities. However, for many employers the area of childcare represents uncharted waters with some being discouraged by the lack of support available to them. The provision of childcare is not just about providing places but also about high standards and quality in service delivery.

A recent IRS survey in the UK details the family-friendly practices of 83 private and public sector employers.¹¹ The survey examines a wide range of strategies from flexible working arrangements to subsidised childcare provision. A quick glance at the chart below clearly demonstrates that family-friendly practices have very positive benefits in the key areas of performance.



¹¹ Quality Childcare in the Workplace, a step by step guide for Employers , Barnardos 2000, page 5

Quality Childcare in the Workplace – Barnardos, 2000

Child-Friendly Measures in the Workplace¹²

A decision about whether to implement a child-friendly measure should take into account the following factors:

- A careful assessment of employees' needs and preferences
- Employers' goals and resources
- The supply and demand for childcare services which already exist in the community
- The importance of providing a quality solution

Assessment of need

A good needs assessment will find out:

- What childcare needs employees have
- Which groups of employees have most needs
- What impact these needs have on work
- What childcare arrangements are currently in place
- Which types of childcare would address needs most effectively

The most popular method of collecting data is the employee survey. A survey will give the most accurate and complete information from which to make a decision. Consultation groups are an alternative method of surveying staff. Small companies often find this method more cost effective. Whatever method is chosen, many employers find that the use of a childcare advisor or consultant at the needs assessment stage increases the chances of obtaining an accurate picture of need.

Employers' goals and resources

An organisation's goals may be a strong basis for introducing a child-friendly measure. Is the company seeking to increase productivity? Has absenteeism and staff turnover been a problem? Is staff morale low? Is the company trying to encourage women to return to work? One possible solution to such problems may be to address childcare needs.

In addition, the type of measure introduced will depend on what resources are available to the employer. An employer's decision to introduce subsidised childcare, establish a workplace facility or contract a service from the community will depend on the resources of the company.

Supply and demand

The availability and affordability of childcare in the community will also influence what assistance is needed from the employer. By making existing services more accessible to employees, an employer can indirectly address the needs of employees.

¹² Quality Childcare in the Workplace, Barnardos, 2000

If there were an adequate supply of care in the community, it would be duplicative and not cost effective to create more supply.

Employers have a number of options with regard to supporting full day care services for their employees.

Measure 1: Daycare

1. Workplace Crèches

Under this system the employer sets up and operates a crèche in or in close proximity to the workplace. Workplace crèches are a visible sign of a family-friendly employer and can contribute significantly to an enhanced corporate image. The establishment of such a service requires considerable capital investment by the employer. The employer either passes the running costs to employees by charging appropriate fees or shares the cost by subsidisation. Some companies provide the premises and finance the start-up costs and contract the day-to-day operation to an independent operator. A workplace crèche has many advantages for employees: only one journey is required en route to work; time is saved in travelling; parents can be close to their children; and facilities may be provided for nursing mothers. However, a workplace crèche may not be accessible to employed working in a multi-site company and some employed may prefer to use a facility closer to home.

2. Consortium Crèches

This is where a number of employers from the same geographic area share the costs and benefits of establishing operating a childcare facility. This option is more suitable for the small employer. Each participating employer is allocated a number of places. This system may involve complicated negotiations among employers. The establishment of clear management structures and areas of responsibility is essential for the smooth running of such a service.

3. Private Services

Under this system a company block books places in a private service for their employees. Fees may or may not be subsidised, depending on the policies and resources of the employer. The main advantage of this system is that the employer avoids the capital and running costs associated with a workplace crèche. Some employers, in return for this facility, support the private provider by way of sponsorship or donation.

SPOTLIGHT ON TRINITY TOTS AND INTEL

A partnership committee was established with representatives from INTEL and Trinity Tots to explore the childcare needs of staff. Following a survey of staff, it was decided that Trinity Tots would establish a stand-alone independent facility close to INTEL. Trinity Tots, Leixlip was established in 1998. INTEL employees use 40% of childcare places. The crèches is purpose built and is situated less than a kilometre from INTEL. It offers opening hours to suit the employees who work various shift patterns. It is open from 7a.m.-7p.m., Monday to Friday. It caters for sixty children and the service includes afterschool care. The crèche is managed and operated solely by Trinity Tots. Whilst INTEL are not directly involved in its management, on-going consultation takes place with regard to the childcare needs of their staff. The facility is self-financing and childcare places are not subsidised.

Step-by-Step

- A childcare committee is established with representatives from the employer, employees and a childcare advisor.
- A needs assessment is conducted.
- Based on the results of the needs assessment, a financial feasibility study is carried out. In addition to capital and running costs, consideration is given to what employees are willing to pay, as determined from the needs assessment.
- The childcare committee undertakes the task of site/building identification. Consideration is given to planning permission requirements.
- A brief is prepared for the architect. Particular attention is given to the requirements under the pre-school regulations. A childcare advisor and/or the Health Board Pre-School Officer is heavily involved in this process.
- The architect, in consultation with the committee, prepares design and building plans.
- The childcare committee invites tenders and a building contractor is selected.
- Building/renovation work takes place.
- The childcare committee works on operational details and devises policies and procedures for the service. Areas such as allocation of places, numbers and age range of children, child/staff ratios, insurance, health and safety policies and procedures, and record keeping are addressed.
- The childcare committee manages the recruitment of qualified and experienced staff. The manager/operator is recruited in advance of other staff and is invaluable in choosing remaining staff and fitting-out the facility.
- Building/renovation is completed.
- Premises id decorated, equipped and furnished.
- Remaining staff are recruited.
- The health board is notified and the premises is inspected by the Pre-School Officer and the facility is approved.
- Enrolment takes place.
- The facility is open for business.

Measure 2: Childminders Networks

This measure involved establishing and supporting a network of individual childminders who, in return, provide a family day-care service to employees. The network provides training, equipment lending and general support to the childminders through an investment from the employer. This option can be very attractive to employers, as networks are less expensive to start up than on-site childcare facilities. Also, childminding is one of the most common forms of childcare used by working parents.

Step-by-Step

- Following a needs assessment a steering committee consisting of representations from employees and management is established to implement this measure.
- An appropriate advisor is appointed to provide professional advice. Childminding Ireland represents and trains those involved in family day-care.
- Contact is made with the health Board Pre-School Officer for assistance.
- After extensive consultation, decisions are made with regard to the co-ordination and on-going operation of the network.
- Decisions are made about numbers of childminders involved and employee eligibility criteria for the scheme. Specific groups may be targeted.
- A full cost analysis is completed. Costs may include staff time, training, professional consultation and equipment.
- Childminders are recruited and trained.
- The employer, through the network, provides on-going support and continuously monitors the scheme.

Employers should note that under the new pre-school regulations, a large number of childminders are not required to notify the health board. Therefore extra attention should be given to quality and the need for professional advice when selecting childminders for the network.

Measure 3: Childcare Voucher

Under the childcare voucher system an allowance is paid by the employer to help employees with the cost of childcare. Childcare vouchers are a flexible and cost-effective way for employers to contribute towards their employees' childcare costs. They are given by employers to their employees and are then used as part of full payment for childcare. Childcare vouchers allow the parents to choose the most appropriate care for their children's needs. The employer is free to determine exactly who will receive childcare vouchers at what value. Therefore the cost of the scheme can be planned and controlled from the outset. Up to now childcare vouchers have not been used to any extent in Ireland but are the most popular form of childcare assistance provided by UK employers, helping to motivate staff and acting as an aid to recruit and retain staff in an increasingly competitive employment environment.

Step-by-Step

- Employer decides eligibility criteria for the allowance. Specific groups may be targeted.
- Employer sets the level of the allowance.
- The full cost of the scheme to the employer is determined.
- The employer produces vouchers personalised with company logos, etc.
- The employer produces an information pack for the employees and childcare providers. The pack explains how the scheme works, the benefits, and information about choosing quality childcare. A childcare specialist may be contracted to assist with this task.
- Vouchers are issued to employees.
- Employees provide chosen provider with documentation (from information pack) which includes an application to participate in scheme.
- Agreement is reached between the employer and provider.
- Vouchers are presented by employees to provider.
- Provider presents vouchers to employer at agreed intervals.
- Employer reimburses the provider.

There are many advantages to childcare vouchers. They are totally flexible – the employer can choose who is eligible, the value of the voucher and the cost of the scheme. Vouchers can only be spent on their intended purpose, unlike cash, which can be abused. It is worth noting that the Benefit In Kind exemption only applies to childcare provided by the employer. (See Money Matters, page 17).

Holiday Playschemes/Summer Camps

Parents often face a childcare crisis during the summer holidays. It is not uncommon to hear of parents who, having made a decision to return to work, are forced to give up during the holiday period, to care for their children. Employers too experience the impact of this situation. Many complain of higher absenteeism and lower production levels during these times.

In this country a wide range of “Summer Camps” are organised by sports and leisure clubs, church groups, youth organisations and schools. These are generally designed to provide leisure and cultural opportunities for young people. However, in most cases they are not designed to meet the needs of working parents with a late start time and an early finish time. The establishment of a holiday playscheme may be an attractive option for employers.

Step-by-Step

- Employer established a committee consisting of employer and employee representation.
- A needs assessment is carried out.
- A fact finding exercise is completed to establish what is happening in the area with regard to holiday playschemes.
- Employer decides whether to contract a local community group to provide the scheme or to set up the scheme independently.
- A financial projection is carried out. Costs will include rental, staff, training, equipment, materials, professional advice and insurance.

- Committee seeks suitable premises. Space, accessibility, health and safety and availability of facilities are considered.
- Decisions are made regarding the operation of the service – number of children, age groups, fees payable, opening hours, staffing, size of groups and duration of sessions.
- To ensure the safety and well-being of the children, a child protection policy and code of practice is developed. A childcare advisor is consulted to ensure that a quality service is provided.
- Staff is recruited. Youth organisations with experience are sought to assist with the recruitment process.
- An induction and short training programme is developed for staff. Again professional assistance is sought.
- A programme of activity is devised.
- Enrolment takes place and the playscheme is launched.

Measure 4: Afterschool

After School Care

After school care is often provided by a full day-care service. This involved the added consideration of school collection and transport. The employer should also take into consideration that the development of programmes for older children can be challenging, and expert advice should be sought. If an employer wishes to establish an independent service for employees, the steps outlines for holiday playschemes should be followed. After school care is generally provided Monday – Friday afternoons. However, if weekend work is a feature of your organisation this measure could be extended to weekends.

Measure 5: Information and Referral

Information and referral is a service provided by the employer, whether contracted or on-site that offers information, advice and referral to parents regarding childcare needs. This may simply include the provision of information on providers in their area or it may include a broad range of information on childcare and parenting. Some employers extend the service to include parenting workshops and telephone advice lines.

It is worth noting that under the Child Care Act 1991, health boards are obliged to make available information on pre-school services in its area. However, because implementation of the pre-school regulations is a relatively recent development, information provision remains ad hoc and underdeveloped. However in the UK, where county councils are charged with a similar responsibility, a network of childcare information centres has been established. These are either provided directly by the county councils or alternatively they are contracted to independent information providers. Many employers in the UK have developed very positive relationships with these services in order to support their employees.

The provision of information and referral services is an attractive option for employers who are not in a position to provide a more direct childcare service but want to support their employees. Many companies include this service within their

human resources department. Some larger companies employ a childcare co-ordinator to co-ordinate this function.

SPOTLIGHT ON BP AMOCO

In April 1999 BP Amoco, one of the world's top oil companies, won the Opportunity 2000 "communicating ownership" award for its parental, advisory and networking service (PANS). Maternity and childcare information, support and advice is given to staff via:

Publications (including fact sheets)

Information on all types of care from 0-14 years. Parents are helped to plan and select childcare and are given information on existing facilities in their area of choice.

Keeping-in-touch-scheme

For all BP Amoco employees on maternity leave or career break who wish to receive publications, newsletters or other in-house literature and information.

Maternity Co-ordinator

Advice and support on all aspects of maternity rights.

Newsletter

Published three times a year, it covers new developments, with topical articles on childcare.

Parenting courses

Available in-house for parents of children 3-12 years.

Parents' network meetings

Regular in-house working lunches at various BP Amoco sites, where parents meet and share information and listen to guest speakers on a wide range of topics.

Workshops

One-day workshops on issues such as maternity leave, returning to work, balancing work and family life. These are held on an "as needed" basis.

Helpline

Provides information and advice on all aspects of childcare.

Leading by Example: The Employer Demonstration Initiative¹³

The eight pilot projects that participated in this initiative were all employer-led. They demonstrate a variety of approaches to childcare provision from direct provision of day-care in the workplace to partnership arrangements with local childcare providers. The projects are at varying stages of development but all have the common aim of increasing the number of childcare places available to employees.

¹³ Quality Childcare in the Workplace, Barnardos, 2000, page 14

Childcare Community Business Limited, Ballyfermot, Dublin

Childcare Community Business opened its doors to the first customers in January 2000. It aims to encourage opportunities for local people to return to work by providing full day-care and after school care. The centre now caters for 22 children.

Our Lady's Hospital for Sick Children, Crumlin, Dublin

Our Lady's Hospital strives to encourage equality of opportunity for all staff by promoting a work environment that is family-friendly. A number of measures have been introduced including flexitime, part-time work and job sharing. The opening of the new purpose built "Kiddies Kingdom Crèche" in August 1999 is another means of enabling employees balance the demands of work and their personal lives. Situated in the grounds of the hospital the crèche now caters for 34 children and employs 7 full-time staff.

Midland Health Board/Mountmellick Development Association

The project aims to develop a childcare facility including a crèche, toddlers group, playschool and out-of-school care. It proposes to cater for children aged 3 months to 13 years. A feasibility study has been carried out and a project officer has been appointed to co-ordinate the project. Her role is to prepare a brief for the architects, to ensure the facility is compliant with legislation, to prepare a business plan, to design operational policies and to recruit staff. The facility will be situated on Mountmellick development association lands.

Galway City Partnership/Nortell

A full day-care facility became available to the employees of Nortell at the beginning of 2000. The facility is managed under a new management structure consisting of Galway City Partnership and an employee forum. The Partnership owns the premises. The ultimate aim is that by 2002 the employee forum will set up a company and will purchase the premises from the Partnership.

Fujisawa Ireland Limited/South Kerry Partnership Limited

Fujisawa was interested in exploring the possibility of building a childcare facility following a request from the Fujisawa Employer Forum. Other local companies also expressed an interest in this initiative. A formal project management group was established to explore the possibility of establishing a high quality childcare facility to meet the needs of employees. The group consisted of representatives from the employers, the employees, the Southern Health Board and the Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association. Fujisawa sponsored a consultant engineer to research, draw up a design plan, and identify suitable sites. A financial feasibility study was also commissioned. The outcome of the feasibility study caused a shift in the direction of the project. It is hoped that the project will proceed but on a scaled down level than what was initially planned.

Esat Digifone

The purpose of this project is to provide a childcare service for employees of Esat Digifone via Trinity Tots (an established childcare provider). Trinity Tots purchased the building and a suitable contractual relationship was established between the two parties. Planning permission was refused. Esat Digifone is considering their options and it is hoped that the project will proceed.

Aer Rianta

Building on the company's well-established crèche facility, the aim of this project was to expand to offer after school and holiday care for children aged 4 – 12 years. A site in close proximity to the airport was identified but planning permission was refused. An alternative site is currently being sought.

Benefits of Employer Sponsored Care

- 1) Recruitment and Retention
- 2) Turnover
- 3) Absenteeism
- 4) Employee Job Satisfaction and Performance

Case Study – Irish Civil Service Initiative

- One crèche is open in Mount Street – Kids Inc
- One crèche is planned for Marlborough Street
- Others are in an earlier stage of planning in Ennis, Sligo and Athlone
- It has taken longer than anticipated to develop these initiatives

<h2>Education and Centres of Public Resort</h2>
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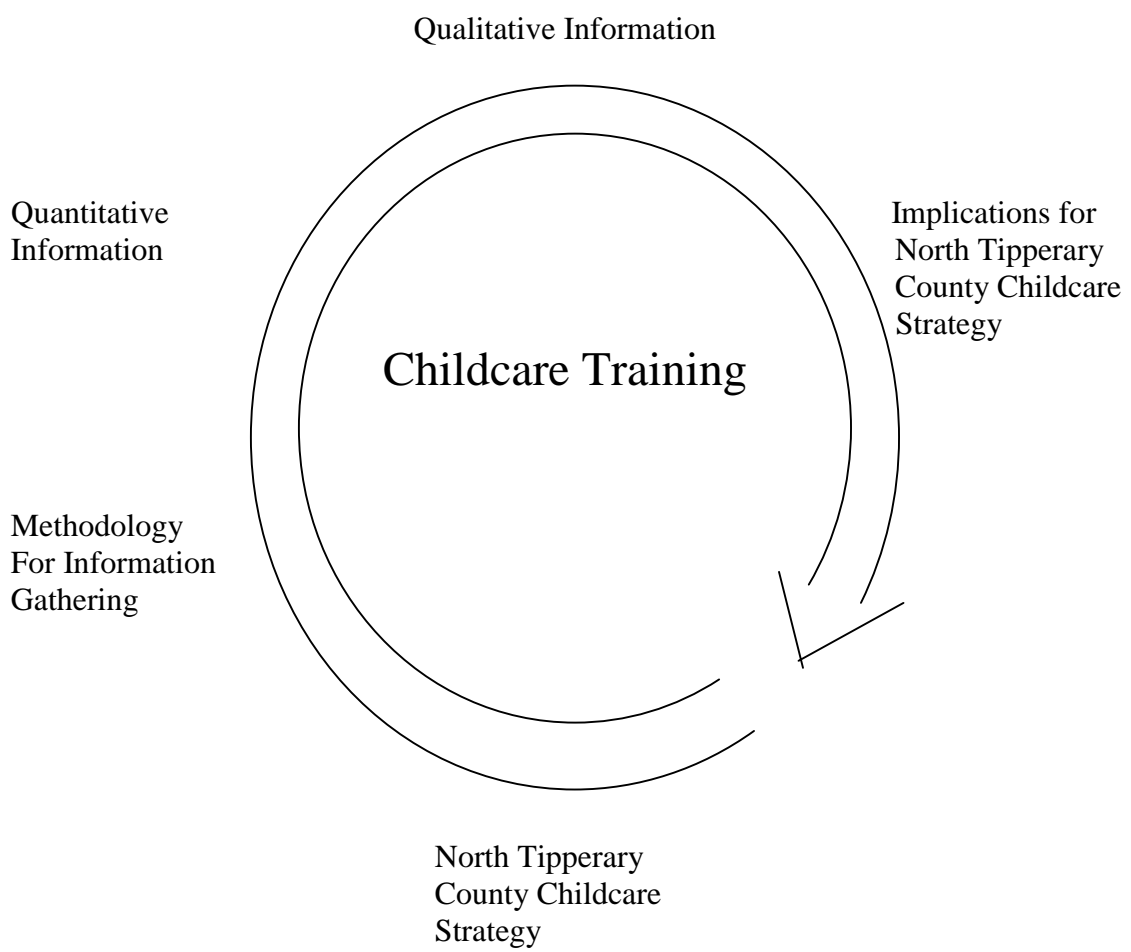
Tipperary Institute/With Thurles Childcare Forum

- Model of community childcare provision with some availability for the Institute is being developed
- Tipperary Institute has expressed some concerns re. the sustainability of the model based on current funding available for childcare provision from FAS and EOCP

- The concern is to ensure quality, community provision in particular for those on low income
- The design brief for the architect will be available in the New Year
- The Board of Tipperary Institute has given approval for site development
- Tipperary Institute is committed to developing this project for which it will provide some funding

Local Authorities

While there are at least one new centre of public resort being developed in North Tipperary, namely the Thurles Civic Centre there are no immediate plans to incorporate childcare facilities as part of these developments. However there is an openness among the planners involved, to work closely with North Tipperary County Childcare Committee in incorporating childcare facilities in future public development.

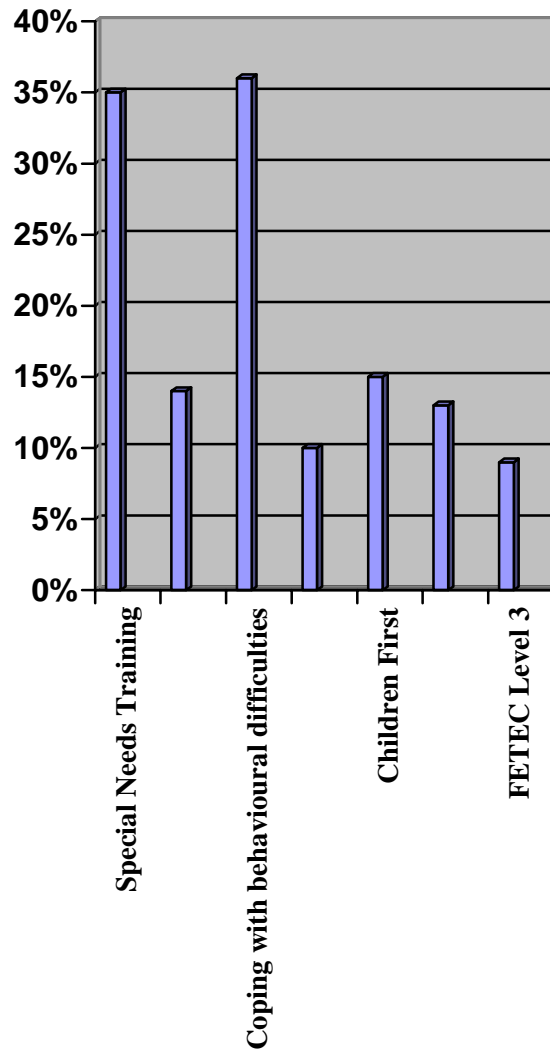


Profile of Childcare Training Currently provided in North Tipperary

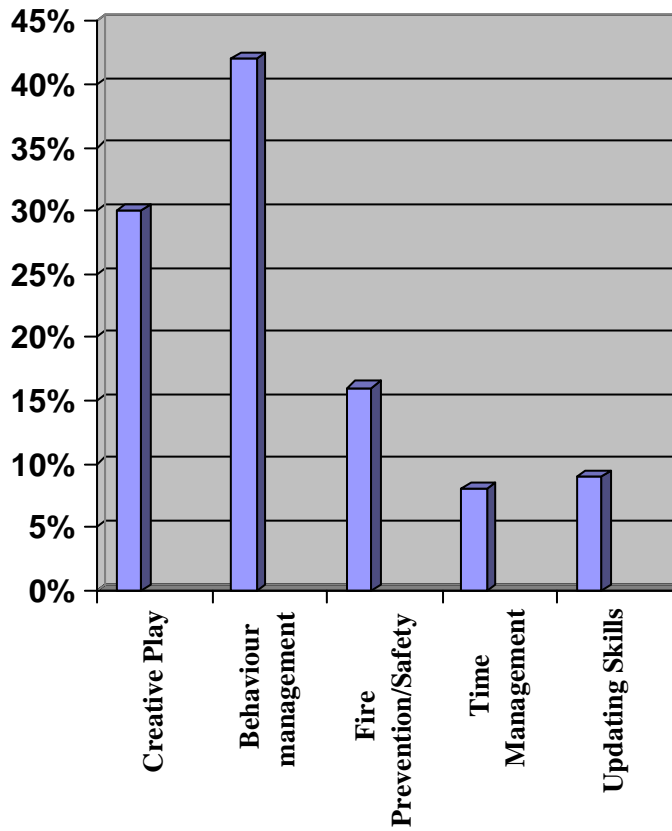
Educational Establishment	Current/Recent Courses	Future Plans
1. Gairmscoil Mhuire, Thurles	FETAC Level 1 ¹⁴ FETAC Level 2 Pilot FETAC Level 3	
2. Teach an Leinn,	FETAC Level 2 (Communication & Work experience modules)	
3. St. Mary's' Secondary School, Nenagh	PLC Course (8 full time participants)	
4. Vocational School, Nenagh	IPPA Evening Course	
5. Vocational School Templemore		Childcare Course Planned for 2003
6. Nenagh Community Network	FETAC Level 2 First Aid	First Aid Child Development
7. Roscrea 2000	FETAC Level 1 FETAC Level 2 First Aid Occupational First Aid Steps Programme	FETAC Level 2 "Managing Challenging Behaviour" one day workshops in January
8. BAND		Special Needs Course in February
9. St. Joseph's' College, Newport	FETAC Level 2 Special Needs Assistant	FETAC Level 2 Full, Part-time and evening Certificate in Special Needs in February
10. St. Sheelin's College	BTEI Foundation Course (2 hours a week)	May progress to Level 1 & Level 2 as demand increases
11. Colaiste Pobal Roscrea	Classroom Assistant as part of Adult Education Courses (evening/part-time)	May provide childcare courses as demand increases

12. Tipperary Institute	As requested	PLC Sector is growing and more courses will be developed in response to demand
13. School of Practical Childcare		
14. North Tipperary VEC		

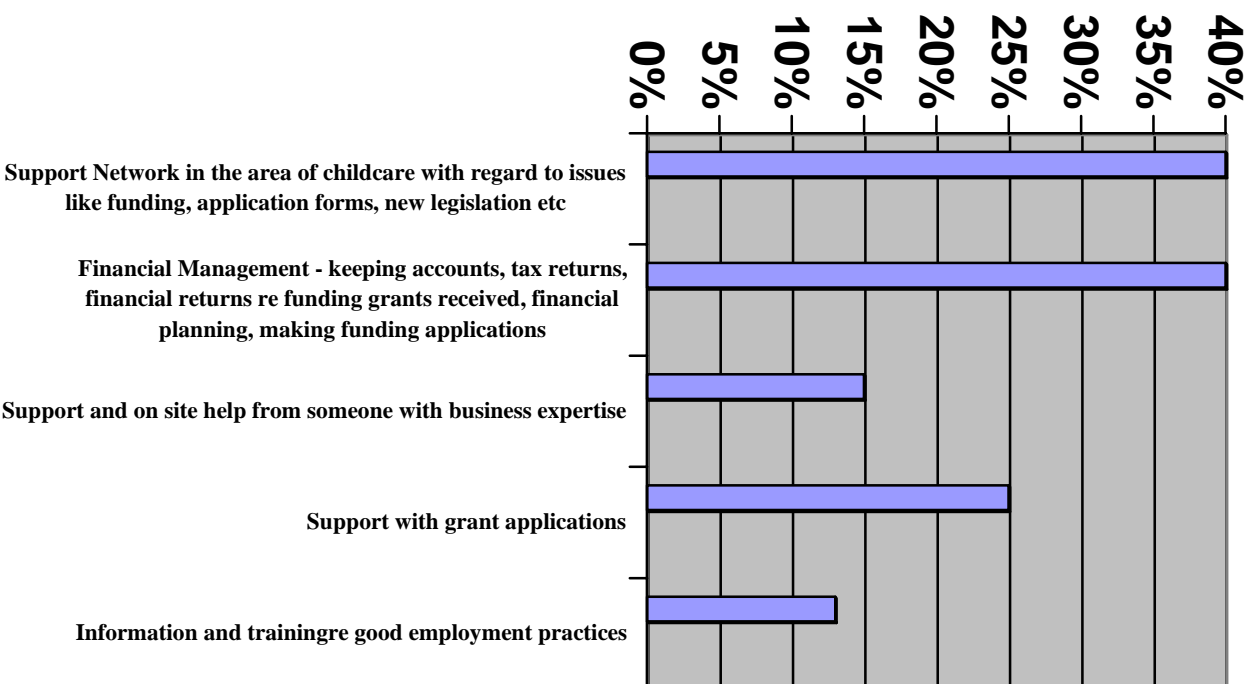
Courses Required by Childcare Workers in north Tipperary – Feedback from Consultation



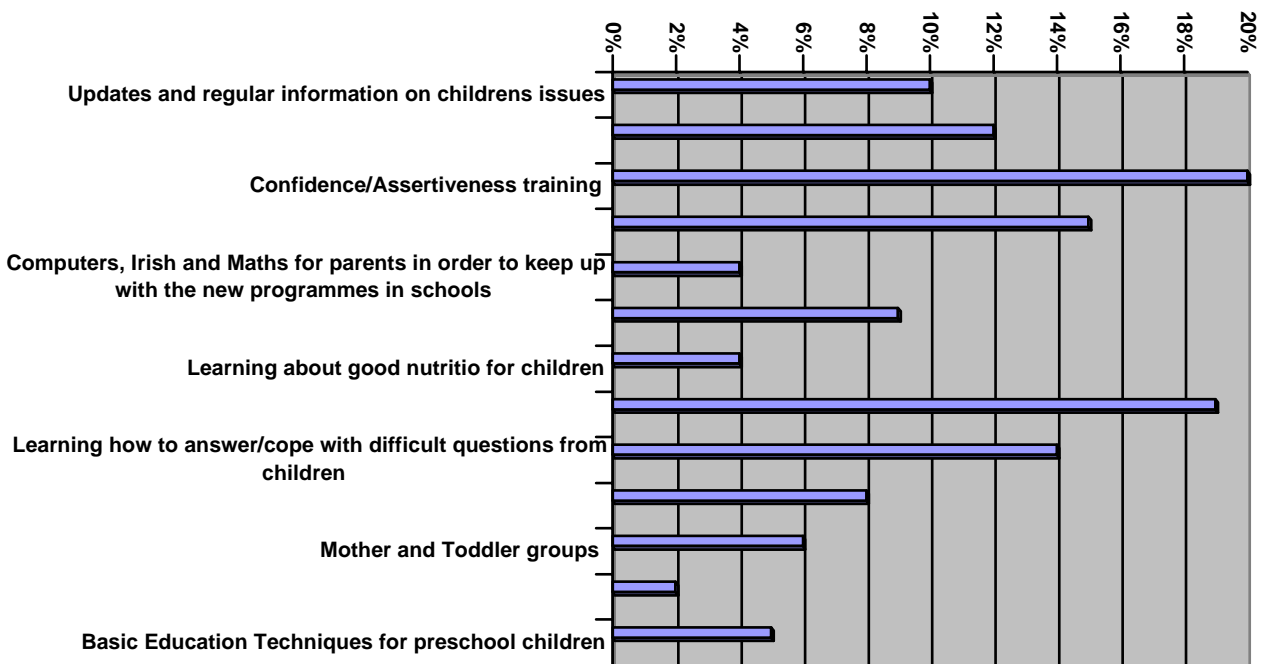
Workshops/Ongoing Supports required by Childcare Workers in North Tipperary



Management Skills Training/Supports Required by Childcare Service Providers in North Tipperary – Feedback From Consultations



Specific Skills Training For Parents – Feedback From Consultation Process



Quotes from Research Participants

“It would make managers of childcare services more secure and confident if it was decided exactly what qualifications are required for each area in childcare (preschool, crèche, after-school)... there are so many courses available, but little clarity with regard to what is appropriate”.

In the area of special needs “There is a need for more back up services from psychologists and speech therapists... we are working very much on our own without appropriate back up services/supports”.

“There is a need to educate parents and to get them interested in their child’s experience of pre-school activities”.

APPENDICES

Groups / Agencies contacted as part of this research

North Tipperary Community Services

Barnardos

Border Counties Network

Childminders Ireland

Midlands Childminding Advisory Officers

Early Years Childcare Project, Kilkenny

Kilkenny County Childcare Committee

Waterford County Childcare Committee

Wexford County Childcare Committee

National Women's Council

North Tipperary County Enterprise Board

Department of Food and Agriculture

Department Children and Health - Childcare Policy Division

Central Statistics Office

Irish Rural Link

National Parents Council

Mid Western Health Board

Dept of Trade and Employment

Dept of Finance – Equality Unit

National Children's Nursery Association

School of Practical Childcare

IBEC – Director of Information, Social Policy Division

National Parents Council

Childcare Department, Mid Western Health Board

Regional Childcare Development Services, Mid Western Health Board

Tipperary Institute

Tipperary North County Council

Nenagh Town Council

Thurles Town Council

North Tipperary VEC

Forfas

Resources

Web Resources

The Childcare Directory	www.thechildcaresdirectory.ie
Bright Horizons Family Solutions Ireland Ltd	www.brighthorizons.com
Childminders Ireland	
Barnardos	www.barnardoe.ie
National Women's Council of Ireland	www.nwci.ie

Printed Resources

- 1) Quality Childcare in the Workplace.
A step by step guide for employers Barnardos 2000
- 2) Alana – Newsletter of the Centre For Early Childhood Development and Education.
- 3) Border Counties Network – Guidelines for successful networking (brochure)
- 4) A business guide to the childcare sector AIB/IBEC 2001
- 5) Identifying members childcare needs, Irish Congress of Trade Union 2002
- 6) Family – Friendly/Work –Life Balance IBEC