



# Enhancing Quality in Family Day Care



## Ireland (Republic)

### Introduction

This fact sheet describes the key aspects of Ireland's Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) system, mainly in relation to family day care.

**NOTE: Ireland uses the terms 'childminding', not 'family day care'. The 'childminder' is the professional in family day care workforce.**

### Children's lives

- 367,360 children under six years old in Ireland, 31% of people under 18 years (Census 2022).
- 97% of eligible children participate in the universal two-year free ECCE Programme (preschool) and 27% of children under age three in ECEC group-based centres.

### ECEC services

- Centre-based ECEC settings are privately owned and managed - 26% community non-profit and 74% for-profit. Childminders work alone and are self-employed.
- 4,065 registered group care centres. 58 registered childminders, as most legally exempt.

### Policy

- Centralised policy and funding in ECEC, with a system split between Department of Children and Department of Education, although primarily funded by Department of Children.
- Milestone publication in April 2021 of Ireland's first national plan for family day care, the *National Action Plan for Childminding 2021- 2028* (NAPC).
- Initial NAPC implementation includes removal of childminding registration exemption; development of specific regulations and inspection framework and foundation training; new Regional Childminding Development Officers supporting locally. The following phase includes the introduction of staffed local childminding networks.

### Workforce & professional development

- Recruitment and retention are major issues in ECEC centres. National staff turnover rate is 19%. There are no data on the recruitment and retention of childminders as so few are registered but there is concern that reforms may close existing provision.
- All educators/childminders in registered services must hold a minimum of a relevant European Qualifications Framework level 4/Irish National Qualifications Framework level 5 qualification. Over time, childminders will be required to meet this qualification, but it will be less onerous.

### Challenges

- Keeping political/policy focus on funding quality for children as well as affordability for parents.
- Workforce recruitment and retention, in both homes and centres.
- Bringing a market-led system to being regarded as a public good that is publically funded.
- Identifying childminders operating services in their own homes and encouraging them into a formal ECEC system.