

The First 5 Implementation Plan Summary



AIM: To ensure babies and children's early years are valued as being critical period that should be enjoyed by them and by parents. To assist family to nurture their babies and young children and to support their development, providing additional support where it is needed. Providing services for children that will contribute to their learning, development, health, and wellbeing. The family is considered throughout the First 5 and across all areas of the strategy.

Goals of First 5:

Goal A): Strong and supportive families and communities.

Goal B): Optimum physical and mental health.

Goal C): Positive play based early learning.

Goal D): An effective early childhood system.

Goal A

- To make parents leave and benefit 9 weeks long in line with the EU directive on Work – Life balance.

- By 2025 when Maternity, Parents leave, and Paternity are combined it will amount to a full 46 weeks. The aim for the above is to promote the idea of breastfeeding.
- Further roll out and development of the Together for Better funding model which saw NCS and Core Funding implemented.
- Nurturing Skills
- The workforce plan for ELC and SAC (2022-2028)
- National Action Plan for Childminding (2021-2028)
- Measure that will tackle child poverty.
- By 2028 all regulated childminder to hold a minimum qualification
- By 2028 all SAC staff to hold a minimum qualification.
- That 50% of the EY workforce will be graduate led.
- By 2028 a doubling of investment in Early Learning and Care and School Aged Childcare (add €485 million investment to be made – this has been exceeded already by 2023 as €1.025 billion has been funded.
- Entitlement to postpone Maternity, paternity, and parental leave in the case of serious illness to be enacted in 2024.
- Rates of pay for Maternity, Paternity and Parental leave to be reviewed in 2025 and again in 2026.
- 2024 as part of the Right to Request flexible and remote working conditions, parents and carers can avail of flexible and remote working.

Goal B

- Healthy eating guidelines 1–5-year-olds published in 2023
- Review and enhance HISS (Healthy Ireland Smart Start) programme to promote the health and welfare of children in ELC settings.
- The tender for an eLearning programme for HISS was developed in 2023 – the eLearning course is to be made available in 2025.
- National Food Standards for ELC developed and piloted in 9 locations.
- Webinar on use of National Food Standards completed by Safefood in June 2023.
- Lunchbox leaflet to educate parents on suitable food choices in ELCs.

- In 2023 - Engage on the development of a Guide to Low Toxicity Plants and a Guide to Toxic Plants, to assist those in ELC Settings to ensure ELC outdoor spaces are child-friendly, by 2024 the development of a child safety checklist and supporting guidance to commence.
- Balance Bike cycling skills to be introduced to preschool and junior and senior infant groups by 2025.
- In 2023 57 Balance Bikes programmes were delivered across DEIS schools with 684 participants, 10 coaches were trained, and a Balance Bike Coaching course was launched.
- By 2024 AIM to be expanded outside of the current 3 ECCE hours.
- ASD specific training and guidance to be introduced.
- By 2025 AIM to be expanded to include 0-3 years.
- In 2024 Training plan to be developed and made available for roll out in 2025 - for ELC SAC staff on managing trauma and behaviour.
- 2025 training supports around Critical Incident planning to be made available.

Goal C

- In 2024 Create wider public knowledge of the First 5 and importance of early learning through the development of a website, regular updates to the public targeting parents specifically, developing a documentary outlining the positive impact for the First 5, and how early learning and care positively impacts the lives of babies and young children.
- In 2024 A film will be developed to highlight the valuable role that Early years Educators play in children's lives.
- By 2025 website to be launched to raise greater awareness of the importance of Early Learning.
- TO facilitate and encourage greater parental involvement in ELC services— a Charter of Bills progressed through the Oireachtas by the Department of Education and Skills.
- Fundings was released to provide for a specific Early Years post in the NPC (National Parents Council)

- By 2024 the Charter Guidelines will be developed to ensure that the voice and participation of children and their parents in the implementation and the development of policies and procedures.
- EPM (Equal Participation Model) strategic plan was published in 2023.
- To encourage the participation and inclusion for both Traveller and Roma families an ethnic identifier was added to ECCE and NCS applications in 2023.
- By 2024 it is hoped that Phase 1 of EPM will be implemented.
- In 2024 The identifier will be used to study the trends and identify where there is lower than average uptake of ECCE and NCS programmes for Traveller and Roma families. These findings will be used to reform the NCS and ECCE programmes.
- In 2024 the rollout of Phase 2 and phase 3 will be developed.
- By 2025 Phase 3 to be designed and complete.
- Independent review of the ECCE report was finalised in 2023.
- In 2024 the Final report of the ECCC review to be published.
- In 2024 a policy to be developed to secure a move to a Statutory Entitlement to ECCE.
- By 2025 this policy response is to be implemented.
- In 2024 at the end of the 3-year period of NCS, a review to take place.
- In 2025 the outcome of this review will be published and policy reforms to be developed where required.
- Fee management recommendation made in the Partnership for Public Good, and the report from the Expert group for a New Funding Model for ELC and SAC will be progressed in 2023 by:
 - Developing a system to process potential breaches of Core Funding Fee management T+C's that are in place.
 - Ensure fees are consolidated into one fee table per partner service.
 - Introducing parent statements to assist with fee management and to offer an overview of the Early Learning and care offered by the partner service.
 - Financial returns to be submitted.

- In 2024 an analysis of the relationship between costs, income, and fees to take place leading to further developments in the fee management system currently in place.
- Research to take place on parents who work atypical hours, to distinguish their ELC and SAC needs. This research will be published in 2024 whereby additional milestones will be announced in future Annual Implementation reports.
- Strategy to forecast supply and demand of ELC and SAC services to be developed by undertaking a National Need Assessment regularly.
- In 2024 a survey will be issued to parents, and existing data will be studied to inform.
- In 2025 a professional will be commissioned to create a database of the information acquired.
- In 2023 a new sustainability fund was introduced. In 2024 a review of this funding will take place which will lead to continued implementation of the recommendations made in 2025.
- National Guidelines for the development of ELC and SAC service to take place leading the section 28 Childcare and Facilities Guidelines for planning authorities to be updated.
- Develop and deliver a strategic investment plan that commenced with the building blocks grant for the delivery of green energy and refurbishments to over 150 services.
- In 2024 an additional Grant Pillar 2 will be rolled out to fund extensions to exiting ELC services to meet the demand of EL services.