



Association of Childhood Professionals
The Professional Body Representing Practitioners in
Early Years and School Age Care & Education

Statement issued by the Association of Childhood Professionals 10th October 2013

Response to the publication of Right From the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy

The Association of Childhood Professionals welcomes the publication of Right from the Start: Report of the Expert Advisory Group on the Early Years Strategy.

This report is a comprehensive statement of all that needs to be achieved, over the next ten years, if we are to ensure that children have the best possible start in life.

The report acknowledges the financial constraints in Ireland at present times but we cannot use this as an excuse to abdicate our responsibility to the children of today. Minister Fitzgerald must lead the way in establishing a cultural shift to get it right from the start and push her colleagues to recognise the importance of investing in the Early Years.

The challenge now faces the Minister to engage in meaningful consultation, with all relevant stakeholders, to prioritise the areas for investment and thus deliver quality services for the children of this country.

This report highlights findings from national and international that indicate “quality early childhood education services for children of all ages rests, above all, on the interactions between children and the adults around them.”

Early Years Professionals are central to the provision of quality care and education for children from 0-6years. This report highlights the need for significant investment in the training of the current workforce to achieve this high quality provision. To capitalise on investment in training it is also necessary to increase the terms and conditions of employment for practitioners to ensure that they remain in the early years profession. Paying experienced graduates as little as €10.50 per hour is not going to support quality development.

Investment is needed in the regulation system to make it fit for purpose and thus ensure children’s safety at all times.

This Government needs to review its activation and workfare policy to ensure that schemes to reduce the numbers of people on the live register are complementary to its policies for increasing quality in the early years. The current Community Childcare Subvention Scheme and the Childcare Education & Training Support Programme are under-funded and are creating sustainability issues in many services.

A further inconsistency in Government policy exists in relation to commercial rates. Services are being charged commercial rates without being able to operate within a business model and are thus unable to meet this bill. This directly impacts on quality and sustainability.

Regulation of child-minders and out-of-school services also needs to be prioritised to ensure that all children benefit from high quality care and education. An estimated 20,000-30,000 children are cared for by paid, non-relative child-minders yet most of these child-minders are exempt from regulation under the Childcare Act 1991.

For further details contact Marian Quinn, Chairperson ACP: 086 198 4431

Association of Childhood Professionals,

info@acpireland.com

www.acpireland.com

www.facebook.com/acpire