



Longford County Childcare Committee (LCCC) End of Year Report 2015

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Introduction

CCC's have been at the centre of all state developments and initiatives aimed at supporting the early years sector from their inception. In addition to supporting the administration of all Government funding programmes for childcare, City and County Childcare Committees act as the local 'one stop shop' for early childhood services, childminders and parents looking for support with quality development, HR, governance, financial sustainability and continuing professional development. Collectively, City and County Childcare Committees have a national reach into all 4,300 early childhood services across Ireland.

Longford County Childcare Committee (LCCC) brings together representatives of statutory, social partner and voluntary agencies and groups with a remit for and/or an interest in childcare provision. The key function of the Committee is to oversee and ensure that childcare in the county is developed in a strategic and coordinated manner. LCCC aim continues to be to produce an environment that values all children, by guiding the on-going development of an infrastructure of high quality child-centred care that supports the holistic development of children in a family and community context. LCCC has developed strong interagency links and aims to further strengthen these relationships within the context of its current implementation plan. LCCC believes in the importance of consultation in ensuring that its work is accurately addressing the needs that exist within the community. This has been evident to date during 2015 with LCCC collaborating both nationally and locally.

This report provides an overview of the work which LCCC carried out in 2015 highlighting achievements and changes over the course of the year. The 2015 Local Implementation Plan (LIP) supported and delivered on the five core objectives of the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP). Each element was devised and implemented with considerations from the sector and local need ensuring value for money. LCCC achieved all planned objectives and additional work that was presented during the year.

As 2016 approaches, we await the impact of a number of changes for the sector in County Longford. This includes items announced in Budget 16 such as the extended Free Preschool Year and Supporting Access to Early Childhood Care and Education (ECE) Programme for Children with a Disability, along with the Túsla re-registration process and full implementation of the Department of Education and Skills education focussed inspections.

Structures and operations

Graph 1: LCCC Structure



Longford County Childcare Committee Ltd (LCCC), is part of the National Initiative 'Better Start' established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) in 2014 to bring an integrated national approach to developing quality in Early Years Education and Care (ECEC) for children aged from birth to six years in Ireland. LCCC ensures that it is working towards local implementation of the National Framework for Children and Young people 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures' 2014-2020 and the DCYA National Strategy. LCCC liaises with relevant external stakeholders both nationally and regionally and feeds into the local community development committee and the children and young people's services committee.

LCCC's Mission Statement

'To facilitate childcare providers to develop quality childcare services which respond and cater for the childcare needs of local parents and their children and meets the objectives of the National Childcare Investment Programme and to continue to support and work with childcare providers, parents and other key stakeholders'.

LCCC is driven by the Manager and the management committee. The management committee has six directors and one non-director due to work restriction. The membership is comprised of nominated representatives from the statutory sector, the Voluntary and Community sectors both local and national, Partnership Company, childcare providers and parents, see table 1, which enables the voice of local stakeholders to be heard by LCCC. LCCC continued to address vacancies within the management committee during 2015 and has been successful in filling a few key vacancies. The management committee has adopted the governance code and is currently working towards compliance with it.

Board Approach to be taken to deliver listed components

The Board of LCCC has ultimate responsibility for the delivery of agreed actions as outlined in the local implementation plan. The board of LCCC is responsible for guiding the implementing of the strategy; the board is also responsible for delegating authority to the Manager. Actions are reviewed on an on-going basis by the board of LCCC through the Coordinator's reports which includes a full update on actions. This report is presented at monthly board meetings by the Coordinator.

The Board of LCCC meet 10 times per year. The directors are elected at the AGM by the members. The directors are responsible for:

- Adhering to the rules of the company as set out in the companies Memorandum and Articles of Association
- Delegating responsibilities to the Coordinator and/or any Sub Committees
- Collective responsibility in the implementation of its yearly plan

LCCC holds its AGM in September annually.

Table 1 Membership of LCCC:

Committee Member	Officer role on committee	Representative organisation
Louise Lovett	Chairperson	Longford Women's Link Rep
Stephanie Igoe	Vice Chairperson	Public participation Network Rep
Carol Shaw	Secretary	Private Providers Rep
Frank Horne	Treasurer	Longford County Council
Breege Campbell		Community Childcare Provider Rep
Mae Sexton		Longford Community Resources Ltd
Áine Bohan		Department Social Protection
vacant		Longford/Westmeath ETB
vacant		Longford Chamber of Commerce
Vacant		Farming Pillar
Vacant		National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCO's)
Vacant		Trade Union
Vacant		Tusla

The current staff team represents a wealth of experience in relation to early years care and education, child development, social inclusion, project management, local and community development. The staff team in LCCC consists of: 1 x Coordinator, 1 x Administrator (part time), 2 x Childcare Development Officers (1 x full time and 1 x 2.5 days per week).

All staffs within the LCCC team are supported in their work and personal development through a number of actions which include:

- 1-1 support and supervision meetings
- Regular team meetings

LCCC recruited during 2015 for a part time Childcare Development Officer which did impinging on current staff workloads. However, due to flexibility within the team, work was prioritised to ensure all core work was achieved and the LIP 2015 was completed successfully. LCCC budget was adjusted to reflect the change in staff over this period which LCCC submitted to Pobal.

LCCC Implementation Plan 2015 has five core objectives which feed into the objectives of NCIP

Core Objective 1 –To develop comprehensive childcare supports, infrastructure and services where the holistic well-being of children and families are fundamental

Core Objective 2 –To enhance quality childcare education and care and school-age provision

Core Objective 3 – To consolidate investment in the sector in order to support the continuing development of stable, integrated and sustainable infrastructure

Core Objective 4 –Through on-going professional development, to build on the capacity of the ECCE sector to enhance and develop quality services for children and their families

Core Objective 5 –To ensure effective and transparent collaboration, communication and consultation, and optimum use of resources by all stakeholders in early childhood care and education

During 2015 LCCC proactively engaged with the DCYA, Pobal, local agencies and local childcare services to implement the Early Childhood Care and Education programme (ECCE), Community Childcare Subvention (CCS), Training and Employment Childcare Programme (TEC), Childminding Initiative and Parent and Toddler Initiative.

The NCIP capital grant programme was welcomed by LCCC. Overall the availability of this funding was met very positively by community childcare providers and seen as a positive development by LCCC, however, private childcare services within Co Longford were very disappointed that they could only avail of strand 4 in the grant initiative. Pobal reported a low level in the quality of applications submitted nationally the timeframe

There has been additional rounds of the Learner Fund during 2015, LCCC has continued to support DCYA/Pobal in the administration of the fund. LCCC has completed an audit of training with childcare services to ascertain qualification levels within the county. The uptake in Longford has been minimal which is due to several factors such as the affordable availability of Level 5/6 training within the county. The need for assistance with Level 6/7 training is evident in the county and is something that LCCC would advocate the extension to cover these qualifications if any additional learner fund was to become available in 2016.

The Childcare Development team provided on-site visits to childcare services to support them to meet their requirements under Regulation 5 of the Preschool Regulations (2006), informal engagement with Síolta and the implementation of Aistear within their practice. On-site visits also enable the Childcare Development team to consult with providers on varying issues or needs they may have and to inform future planning of LCCC. Longford has not been assigned a Síolta Co-ordinator therefore the Childcare Development team are working to ensure that all services are fully aware of the importance of the quality programmes and that they are working towards implementation within their service. However, it is evident from these support visits that Síolta and Aistear is only at awareness level within the majority of services rather than full implementation. Therefore, the need for a dedicated Síolta/Aistear mentor is essential for County Longford. Analysis of Inspection

reports from the Early Years Inspection team throughout the year highlights trends in relation to non-compliance to guide support and development work. Continued consultation with the Tusla Early Years Inspection team has added to the validity of support to services. This engagement supported the work of the childcare providers, LCCC and the Tusla Early Years Inspection team. Communication between the Tusla Early Years Inspection team and LCCC staff also supports imparting of relevant knowledge to childcare providers in relation to inspections. LCCC continues records supports given to services to effectively analysis the work of LCCC.

The importance of childcare to the local economy, as a career option, and as a means of targeting social exclusion continues to be emphasised by LCCC. During 2015 LCCC supported the dissemination of information regarding relevant training opportunities and the Learner Fund. LCCC provides an information and resource library for use by early years practitioners and students. LCCC also supports potential applicants in obtaining employment within the sector through advice and referral to relevant agencies. LCCC has continued to support childcare services in HR issues through participation on interview panels and by providing relevant recruitment templates. Continued professional development (CPD) linked to Aistear and Síolta is promoted as fundamental requirements for those employed in the sector and not as optional extras. During support visits in 2015 and through local knowledge it has become evident that CPD in the areas of policies and procedures, curriculum planning, environments and sustainability are needed by childcare services. LCCC has launched a CPD programme for 2016 with 32 participants representing 11 services signed up. LCCC completed a census at the beginning of 2015 and looks at relevant regional and national data to inform their work and to inform policy developments both locally and nationally.

LCCC through its Communication Strategy ensures that all developments within childcare are known and the services of LCCC are available to all stakeholders. Mechanisms for communication include the LCCC website, facebook and twitter page as valuable social media forums, publications, reports, media features /advertisements, mail outs and annual events. An effective use of Microsoft outlook and LCCC's own Record of Services (ROS) has greatly enhanced organisation, planning and reporting mechanisms during 2015. It was felt that a more robust system of recording is needed to meet the demands of reporting and data gathering therefore during 2015 LCCC has installed sendmode web based database. It is envisaged that LCCC will see the benefit of this investment for mid year reporting in 2016. The ability of LCCC to have local data and statistics readily available or to gather as and when needed is one of the benefits to a local structure.

LCCC participates on local, county wide and national structures as required under the National Action Plan for Social Inclusion 2007-2016, Better Outcomes Brighter Futures - the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014-2020, the Better Start Initiative and LCCC's Implementation Plan. Local engagement with Longford County Council has been through board representation and working with relevant officers to progress or enhance actions. Representation at the Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) ensures local co-ordination of childcare issues and facilitates new initiatives that

respond to social inclusion and childcare issues and which maximise resources. LCCC are the Chair of the Early Years Subgroup of the CYPSC. Local service level agreements and Steering Committee participation allows on-going collaboration with agencies such as the HSE, Tusla, ETB, DSP, County/Town Councils, Gardaí and the Local Development Company.

Achievements

Maintaining proactive collaboration between the Túsla Early Years inspection team and Longford County Childcare Committee remained a significant achievement. Continuation of both formal and informal links between the two agencies has ensured consistency for childcare providers regarding information, supports pertaining to inspections and follow up inspections. It is envisaged that this informal contact will help alleviate problems before they arise within a childcare setting and that it will be positive for all going forward to ensure that Co Longford childcare services are quality services.

From LCCC census a need to focus on enhancing outdoor play during 2015 was evident. LCCC developed an outdoor podcast and supporting practitioner's handbook. Two services enhanced their outdoor space as part of the work with 58 practitioners attending the outdoor workshop and resource launch. This work has been shared nationally with CCC's and other stakeholders such as the Quality Support Service, ECI etc. It is hoped that this piece of work will inspire our practitioners to embrace the outdoors, ensuring that their outdoor space is an extension of their indoor environment and giving children the opportunities to benefit from outdoor play.

At the end of 2015 LCCC launched its CPD Programme for 2016 'Leaders in Quality'. This will comprise of 8 monthly workshops with onsite mentoring to improve practice. 32 participants from 11 services are taking part in this programme which is just under a third of all Longford services. This shows the commitment by practitioners and service providers to continually strive to create high quality environments and practices for the children of County Longford.

Challenges

Due to cuts implemented through the allocation framework, LCCC are still working on a reduced staffing level in 2015 which hinders both office administration and support provision. Along with the reduced manpower, the increased level of administration work needed to support PIP by providing relevant information to the sector, processing requests, chasing up backup information, payments and overall administration work required for the smooth running, is diminishing the availability of childcare development hours available to childcare services. It is becoming evident that the increased administration workload for Childcare Development Officers is impinging on quality improvement support to childcare services which will ultimately result in poorer quality services. With investment in the sector arising from Budget 16 it was disappointing that there was no major investment in the CCC's.

An ongoing challenge over the past number of years is the operation of commercial rates on childcare services within Co. Longford. Although legislation, Valuation Act 2015, progressed exemption not for profit services from commercial rates, Private Providers are still all rateable unless running an ECCE only service, these providers have restrictions to their business through adhering to the Preschool Regulations therefore it is hard for them to

implement a business model. The sector as a whole needs to be examined however, it is still hard to see a resolution until there is consistency throughout the country.

Sustainability of community childcare services during 2015 has been a significant challenge. Issues which have been highlighted to LCCC such as CE staffing, commercial rates, ability of parents to pay fees etc all have a knock on effect on sustainability. LCCC supported three full day-care and one part time community childcare services and two private providers with sustainability issues during this period. Community services particularly those in areas of significant socio-economic deprivation are in need of additional investment to that of the capitation provided by the government programmes as generating additional funding through parental fees and fundraising is challenging. The capacity of both managers and committee members in community services needs to be supported. The governance structure of community services need to be reviewed with the view to an alternative structure at local level.

The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. In addition it helps long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. CE is a unique programme that integrates employment interventions and training for the jobseeker as well as supporting the provision of community services, the most relevant of which in this instance is childcare.

The objective of the programme is:

- to ensure that all Community Employment schemes with childcare places will operate under the ECCE Framework and use the Síolta standards as a developmental tool.
- to provide CE participants on childcare placements who work directly with children with quality work experience, training, a clear progression path and qualifications in the childcare sector; and
- to ensure that the three year placement period for CE participants is both enjoyable and productive

The CE programme performs a vital role within the community childcare sector which is not for profit and run by voluntary boards of management. CE programme provides much needed supports to these services which to enable them to provide a quality childcare provision. As outlined under sustainability of community childcare services a huge challenge which will become more evident in 2016 is the reliance of community childcare services on CE staff. DCYA have confirmed that unqualified CE staff will be supernumerary with effect from December 31st 2016. Currently there are 80 CE childcare places allocated to 11 Community Crèches in Longford. Depending on the turnover and training cycle, this directive will have varying impacts on the sustainability of these crèches. In response to the Directive, the Lead Sponsor plans to prepare a gaps analysis with a view to determining the level of impact and the remedial actions required.

LCCC's initial analysis of the service responses indicated that 10 out of 13 community services are reliant on CE staff within their ratios. Again depending on the turnover and training cycle, some Community services may not be viable without the inclusion of CE staff within their staff: child ratios. This could result in reduced capacity in some community services which would mean that we will not be protecting some of the most vulnerable children and young people from poverty and social exclusion through removal of access to good quality early education and afterschool care.

Report on Implementation Plan

By Standard Programmatic Activity

The administration of the childcare programmes funded by the Department of Childcare and Youth Affairs are part of the core work of Longford County Childcare Committee. LCCC have continued to ensure information regarding all the government programmes are known by parents and childcare providers in Co. Longford. Information has been disseminated through local media and through LCCC website and facebook/twitter page as well as queries received in the LCCC office. 'An easy guide to the national childcare funding programmes' was disseminated countywide through public offices.

Fee policy process through PIP was an onerous task during 2015 and prohibited Childcare Development Officers in their quality support work with services. At end of the December 2015, 625 children in Co Longford were registered for the ECCE programme, 451 were registered for the CCS programme and 160 were registered for TEC (10 ASCC; 69 CEC; 81 CETS). All top up's have been processed by LCCC.

Support for providers in relation to the programmes varies with some requiring minimal support; however, other services can require fairly intensive and sustained support including onsite visits to ensure compliance with the programmes. Information regarding compliance from Pobal was circulated by LCCC to all childcare services and regular support was given to those services with non-compliance issues. LCCC have supported three services flagged by Pobal in relation to concerns regarding the services' latest Financial Impact Return (FIR).

While, LCCC recognise the high participation rates in funded programmes, it is acknowledged that there are families and children within Longford who are not accessing the programmes as readily as others. LCCC has made efforts throughout 2015 to increase participation rates through dissemination of information packs to PHN's, Social Workers and Citizens Information Centre.

Information in relation to government programmes

Table 2: Participation in funding schemes*

Participation in funding schemes	No. of services
CCS (Community Childcare Subvention)	13
ECCE (Early Childhood Care Education)	34
CETS (Childcare Education Training Scheme)	24

*Data provided by DCYA December 2015

LCCC work to sustain early childhood care and education services throughout the county will also supporting the development of new provision in areas of need.

Table 3: Early Childhood Services 2015

Community	Private	Naíonraí	Parent & Toddler Groups	Voluntary Notified Childminders
14	20	0	13	16

During 2015 LCCC had one private sessional provider close in Longford town and one new childminding service open in Granard town.

Table 4: Potential New Early Childhood Services 2016

Community	Private	Naíonraí	Parent & Toddler Groups	Voluntary Notified Childminders
1	2	1	17	0

Support work has commenced in 2015 with four potential services aiming to open for September 2016. One positive development is the establishment of a naíonraí which will support parental choose further and support the Gaelscoil in Longford town.

By Breakdown of Actions

Objective 1

LCCC continued to support both new and existing parent and toddler groups during 2015. 13 existing parent and toddler groups received information and relevant updates. 5 Parent and Toddler Grants applications were processed. LCCC are currently supporting the Traveller Healthcare Project and a community project in Longford Town, along with two rural communities in relation to setting up a new Parent and Toddler group which will continue into 2016.

Child Protection & Welfare Basic Level Training was delivered by LCCC trained staff member in the first quarter of 2015. This staff member left the organisation and for the remainder of 2015 Westmeath CCC staff member provided the training for LCCC to enable reaching of national targets. This arrangement with Westmeath CCC will continue in 2016 and LCCC will avail of the next child protection train the trainer in early 2017. 69 participants in total have completed this training. The target set for Co. Longford in 2015 was 40 which LCCC has surpassed. The demand locally from childcare practitioners, CE participants and childminders is vast therefore LCCC is now holding a waiting list for child protection training to be discussed with the National Office. LCCC staff attended training on the Child Protection Policy workshop in the autumn and have included delivery of these workshops locally in the training schedule for 2016.

LCCC completed an online annual census with Longford providers to ascertain a factual picture of provision within the county and to support planning throughout the year and into 2016, while also highlighting trends in the county. There was a 91% response rate to the census, meaning 32 out of 35 services replied. On analysis the following information was ascertained:

- 68% of services have all their room leaders qualified to FETAC level 6 or higher
- 45% of services still have some staff that do not hold a FETAC level 5 qualification
- 76% of services have a child/children attending with additional needs
- Speech and Language and Autism are the two most common additional needs
- 38 children with additional needs are in mainstream early years services
- 73% of services get no additional help/fund (SNA) to support children with additional needs in their service
- 22.5% of services have children from the traveller community attending their service
- 100 children from the traveller community are attending early years services
- 70% of services hold information/open days for parents

In addition, it is evident that 5 services (3 community and 2 private providers) will struggle to meet minimum qualification requirements in 2016. These services were then targeted during the general awareness raising campaign in relation to the Learner Fund. The census also highlighted that 6 services (4 community and 2 private providers) were facing sustainability concerns during this year. LCCC supported these services, however, unfortunately one private provider opted to close their service.

LCCC developed and published in house a leaflet detailing the services offered by LCCC. This leaflet give the public an understanding of the work of LCCC and the supports which it offers to current or potential childcare providers, staff and childminders, parents and parent and toddler groups. These leaflets have been included in our information packs which are disseminated in Citizens Information Offices, through PHN's and Duty Social workers. During 2015 approximately 200 leaflets have been disseminated to the public. LCCC have installed an information fingerpost sign on the main road to direct clients to the office to ensure accessibility.

LCCC held two information workshops for services on the rollout of PIP. The purpose of these workshops were mainly to allow them the confidence to use this new system with the support of CCC staff on hand. It also allowed LCCC to identify with providers the challenges they see and to forward that information on to the communication sub group and PIP online support.

Objective 2

LCCC facilitated a variety of support meetings to increase the compliance with the Preschool regulations and implementation of national frameworks. LCCC analysed the Preschool Inspection reports for the county which highlighted that 62% of services had one or more non-compliance with highest non-compliances in Regulation 27 (34%), Regulation 14 (23%), Regulation 9 (23%) and Regulation 8 (23%). At the end of 2015, there have been 81 one to one support meetings with services, this includes both visits to services and one to one office appointments. The main topics of support were: Structures/Policy & Procedures, Quality Improvements, PIP, Funding Programmes and compliance.

All service specific support is logged under one of the following support headings/sub headings:

Early Childhood Service - ECS which covers:

- ECS- Structures/Policy & Procedures
- ECS- Changes to practice
- ECS- Professional image profile of the service
- ECS- Quality improvements to the environment

Educators/Practitioners- EP which covers:

- EP- Skills, knowledge, understanding gained
- EP- Professional Practice
- EP-Attitudes, motivation, self-image as an Educator
- EP- Job satisfaction

Children – C which covers:

- C- Developments/skill or knowledge as per framework used
- C-Positive attitudes and learning dispositions
- C-School readiness (where appropriate)

Schemes – S which covers:

- S- ECCE
- S- TEC
- S- CCS

Parents – P which covers:

- P- Service-home links /communication/relationships
- P- Awareness of benefits of early childhood education
- P-Changes to attitudes/practices at home

Committees- CE which covers:

- CE-HR
- CE-Governance code

Table 5: Breakdown of support

Support heading	Percentage % of overall support
Early Childhood Service	39
Educators/Practitioners	6
Children	0
Schemes	31
Parents	1
Committees	23

Table 6: Breakdown type of support given

Type of support	Private Providers	Community Providers	Percentage % of overall support given
Email	130	141	43
Phone	110	191	47
Visit	29	32	10

From the tables above it is evident that the majority of support given to childcare providers is in relation to: structures/Policy & Procedures, changes to practice, professional image profile of the service and quality improvements to the environment. Support to services is provided in a variety of manners with the most popular means via email. Figures in both tables do not include general information provision or notifications. In 2015 LCCC Childcare Development team have worked intensely with 11 childcare services which has had a positive impact on 627 children within the county.

Engagement of childminders with LCCC was actively promoted during 2015. LCCC continued the promotion of the process of voluntary notification and high quality home based childcare. LCCC disseminated information regarding the Childminding Development Grants (CMDG). 3 CMDG applications were received and approved. LCCC have contributed to the

CCI research report regarding Childminding. LCCC has supported one new voluntary notified childminder to open in 2015.

LCCC have facilitated the engagement of 4 services with the Quality Support Service element of the Better Start initiative. Three services are currently active with the Quality Support Service and communication between CCC Childcare Development team and the Early Years Specialist is evident. However, one service has completed their 6 months mentoring finishing without using full allocation of hours. On discussion with the service, they choose not to use all the hours as they did not find the support from the Quality Support Service conducive. This service is awaiting their final report from the Quality Support Service and has found the closing off process challenging. LCCC is still awaiting a debriefing in relation to this service. This was a service that LCCC had a good working relationship with and now have to try to salvage that relationship. It is imperative that communication between the CCC Childcare Development team and the Early Years Specialists are consistent and on an ongoing basis. This will enable a smooth transition for childcare services into and out of the Quality Support Services. If there is not consistency then an us and them approach to quality supports emerges which will not be beneficial to services and/or children.

Objective 3

There is both a community managers and private provider's network in the county. Each network can bring any issues to LCCC both to ascertain support from the Childcare Development team and/or to committee level to progress the issue at either county or national level.

A significant focus of the work of LCCC during 2015 has been to support the sustainability of quality childcare through building capacity of childcare providers. LCCC developed in house a 'Guide for Childcare Managers' with the assistance of two childcare managers which supports aspects of HR, financial management, business planning, regulations etc. This booklet was disseminated to all childcare providers in the county and was made available for use by other CCCs. 3 new childcare managers were given this resource as part of their induction process. It is hoped that this booklet will be useful to the national collaborative project in 2016 regarding developing an information resource for service providers 'Governance and Management of Early Years Services'. Key to sustainability within the community sector is good governance therefore LCCC organised governance training. 33% of community service boards attended the training and found it beneficial however LCCC find it hard to engage boards as some community providers are reluctant to share board information.

CCI undertook a baseline analysis in collaboration with local services and in association with all CCC's to establish the key factors effecting sustainable sector infrastructure locally. 877 services participated in analysis with 70% of respondents stating that sustainability was an issue for their service provision and 39% of respondents did not know whether their service

would still be open in 2018. Key themes emerging were lack of resources to support necessary administration of various service programmes and developments. Voluntary Committees under pressure to take on an un-resourced 'quasi' management function in services as oppose to governance and financial oversight. Further 'in depth' analysis is required to explore themes emerging such as local feasibility of current national funding models for service provision, strategic provision of where services are operating: displacement, impact of unregulated childcare options, the reported lack of resource necessary to support administration work part of the various funding programmes, regulations, systems and the role of voluntary committees in providing management resources in particular the role in governing and overseeing service provision.

Objective 4

Having opportunities to explore and learn outdoors is a key part of preschool and should not be seen as an optional extra. There are a whole list of benefits to outdoor play and learning which are in addition to those children gain indoors such as contact with weather and freedom of movement. Therefore, the outdoor area should be seen as an extension of the indoor environment. LCCC developed an outdoor resource – A podcast on enhancing the outdoor environment with an accompanying practitioner handbook. LCCC showcased four local services working with two services intensely to improve on the quality of their outdoor environment. This work was showcased at a training event to all services in the county and also disseminated electronically nationally and through social media.

LCCC supported Roscommon CCC with their CDP seminar which was a practical application of the NCCA SíoltaAistear practice guide. LCCC presented at this seminar along with NCCA. Report accompanied the Mid-Year Report.

Ensuring continuity of experience for children is managed through how practitioners and parents deal with transitions. LCCC used the transition model developed by the Tús Nua project to support services and parents with a child's transition from home to preschool. LCCC also supported transitions to national school through the distribution of LCCC's 'Preparing for Primary' booklet (78 copies) to three national schools in the county at their request for this year's intake of children. Updating and reprinting of this booklet is something LCCC will need to consider for 2016.

Early family supports enhance the voice of the family, increasing their participation and significantly altering the balance of power in their favour (LCCC, 2014). LCCC continues to support the rollout of the Triple P Parenting Programme within Co Longford through referrals and dissemination of information.

Information was disseminated to all childcare services advising of the new qualification requirements for September 2015. Learner Fund administration continues with additional Learner Fund round in 2015. LCCC received 19 applications over the 3 rounds of Learner Fund with 14 of those deemed eligible for funding. Administration work for the Learner Fund will continue into 2016 with LCCC supporting Learner Fund 4 announced at the end of

2015, this round is the first of a series of measures to support expansion of the free pre-school programme. Grandfathering information was disseminated to all providers. 1 applicant for grandfathering was processed through LCCC. The "Career in Childcare" leaflet was revised and made available to the general public. This leaflet will support both existing practitioners and potential practitioners to access local training information.

Objective 5

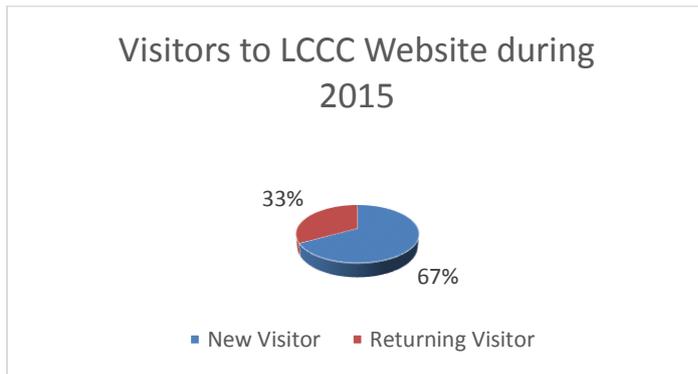
To inform key stakeholders of issues affecting the sector within county Longford, LCCC make submissions to Local Economic Community Plan, Local Community Development Committee and Local Development Strategy. LCCC along with Longford County Council drafted a case study for the DCYA for additional investment into a specific community service in an area of disadvantage, comparable nationally to Moyross and South hill, Limerick and Cranmore, Sligo (who receive additional funding) and is a feeder Preschool/Afterschool to DEIS schools.

LCCC has worked hard during 2015 to secure effective collaboration at both National and local level. We consider there to be three main areas of collaboration that are ongoing and sustained throughout the year. The first area is the Longford/Westmeath Children and Young People's Services Committee (CYPSC) which LCCC are an integral part of and who are chairing the Early Years sub group of the CYPSC. Staffs from LCCC participate on two sub-groups the Early Years sub group (EC) and Midlands Area Parenting Partnership (EC). Participation on these sub-groups enhances awareness of core issues and provides an opportunity to ensure effective uses of resources locally. The second area of collaboration which heavily influences our work is ongoing collaborative work with national/regional statutory/non-statutory agencies. We consider ourselves to have effective links with those agencies represented on our board. Staffs participate on the county play day group (BG). Collaboration between LCCC and the county council is significant to ensure awareness of local issues and needs arising. Finally, collaboration with our CCC counterparts is a hugely important piece of work. In 2015 we have been involved in and supported the local roll out of a number of national collaborative actions. Attendance at both national management meetings and Childcare Committee Ireland (CCI) meetings during 2015 has cemented this national collaborative working. CCI the national network for CCCs has remained active and met on nine occasions to date during 2015. The purpose of these meetings was to focus on supporting a coordinated approach to the delivery of actions on behalf of DCYA, consultation as well as continued professional development programmes for staff teams. The national network has provided all CCCs with the opportunity to discuss key issues of concerns, review collaborative actions and progress along with input in to key agenda items which the national representative group will raise on its behalf at Department Meetings. Representation was made to Pobal and DCYA on a variety of issues. LCCC is CCI's Rep on the National Early Years Inspectorate Consultative Forum which has met twice at the end of 2015.

To raise awareness of the sector and the services of LCCC, along with any changes in the sector, information provision is essential. Information to parents and stakeholders was delivered through one newspaper article regarding Early Years supports in Co. Longford,

press release to local media outlets and one radio appearance regarding the impact of budget 16 in relation to childcare. Four e-newsletters were developed and disseminated to childcare providers, childminders, parent and toddler groups and other relevant agencies. During 2015 there have been eleven website updates. Google Analytics is used to track usage of LCCC website. To date there were 2,694 visits was made to LCCC website with 37% been repeat visits.

Graph 2: Visitors to LCCC Website Jan-December 2015



Longford County Childcare Committee has reached 1259 likes on our facebook page and 143 followers on twitter. It is evident that social media is a proactive means to get information into the sector particularly to childcare staff.

Conclusion

LCCC are pleased with the delivery of its 2015 Local Implementation Plan (LIP 2015). We are extremely happy with the level of support and collaboration not only from local board representation, other CCC's but those working with children and families in our county.

There are two local issues that have raised concern during 2015 the level of sustainability issues arising in the community sector particularly from services in areas of greater socio-economic deprivation and the reliance of all community services on CE workers within their adult/child ratio. These items are critical to the national picture to ensure sustainability of the community sector; therefore, LCCC will ensure they are proactively highlighting these over the coming months.

It has become evident through local support visits and analysis of local data that implementation of the national frameworks Síolta and Aistear on the ground in some instances are minimal. LCCC hopes that quality work will be a prime focus within 2016 to support services through training and mentoring and that administration of government programmes will not deter from that focus.

LCCC continues to welcome the new challenges within our workload which have presented themselves during 2015 and are very confident of the continued delivery of a quality service to all childcare providers in County Longford in 2016.