

2017

# Early Years Services in County Longford: An Overview

Longford  
County Childcare  
Committee



## Contents

Introduction .....	3
Acronyms and abbreviations .....	4
Overview of Longford County Childcare Committee .....	6
Profile of services.....	7
Childcare services.....	7
Government Schemes/DCYA Programmes.....	9
ECCE Scheme (Early Childcare Care and Education).....	9
TEC scheme (Training and Employment Childcare) .....	9
CCS (Community Childcare Subvention Programme) & CCSP (Community Childcare Subvention Plus Programme).....	9
Early Childhood Services .....	10
Staff.....	12
Qualifications .....	12
Wages.....	13
Child Protection Training .....	14
Child Protection Policy .....	15
HACCP .....	15
Curriculum.....	16
Fees .....	16
Services Offered & Capacity.....	17
Full Day Care Services .....	17
Part Time Services.....	17
ECCE Services .....	17
Partnership with Parents .....	18
Open Days .....	18
Parent/Teacher Meetings .....	18
DCYA Programmes .....	18
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion .....	19
Additional Needs.....	19
Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).....	20
Leadership for Inclusion Training (LINC) .....	21
Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Training (EDI).....	21
Inspections .....	21

Túsla Inspection .....	22
Pobal Inspection.....	23
<b>DES Inspection</b> .....	24
Support and Supervision of Staff .....	25
CCC Supports.....	26
Conclusion.....	27
Disclaimer.....	29

## Introduction

This census report summarises the results of an Early Years' Service online survey conducted by Longford County Childcare Committee (LCCC), carried out from the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017 until 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. Longford County plays host to 34 Túsla Registered Services ranging in services offered from Full Time Day Care (FDC), Part Time Care (PT), Sessional Services (S) and Afterschool Services (AS). Additionally, Longford County has 3 Voluntary Notified Childminders (CM), 8 Parent and Toddler Groups (PT), one Naíonraí and one drop-in service. 35% of services are Community, while 65% are Private.

All 34 Túsla registered services were invited to take part in this census over a 7 week period. In 2017 we welcomed a 91% return rate. This is slightly lower than the return rate of 2016 which was 94% but a significant figure nonetheless that enables us to draw some conclusions on Early Years in the county, along with providing an overview of the potential challenges facing services in the coming year. While we welcome a response rate of 91% it must be highlighted that not all services responded to all questions and so in some cases the response rate is much lower than that of other questions. This made analysing some of the responses, namely around staffing, wages, fees and capacity, somewhat challenging.

Conversely however questions around training, inspections, qualifications, child protection, curriculum, partnership with parents, government programmes, HR and supports required from LCCC resulted in 100% engagement.

To ensure clarity of information it will be noted in each section what the overall response rate to the question was. Where appropriate reference will also be made to Pobals Early Years Sector Profile 2015-2016 to assist in drawing conclusions where information gleaned from the census was incomplete.

LCCC has questioned the value of publishing this research as not all sections were responded to in their entirety. However we acknowledge that most data received is very valuable and it would be disingenuous not to share this information with providers when so many have taken time from their busy schedule to engage with us. We have however decided to rename the research from *Longford County Childcare Census Report* to *Early Years Services in County Longford: An Overview*.

The information collated through this research is essential for the future planning of Early Years and Afterschool provision in Co. Longford. Additionally, the information garnered from this research will feed into a bigger picture of Early Years and Afterschool provision on a national level.

We would like to offer our sincere thanks to all services in Co. Longford who took the time to engage in this research. The information received will enable LCCC to gain a meaningful understanding of a wide variety of issues pertaining to the sector and so plan our supports accordingly.

## Acronyms and abbreviations

**FDC-** Full Day Care refers to an Early Years' Service which offers a structured day care service for children for more than 5 hours per day. Crèches/Nurseries/childcare settings/childcare facilities are Early Years services offering full and part-time day care service for babies, toddlers, and young children. The words crèche, nursery and childcare setting are often used interchangeably. Full day care services may also offer Part Time Care, Sessional Services and After School Services under the umbrella of Full Day Care.

**PT-** Part-time day care offers care for more than 3.5 hours and less than 5 hours

**S-** Sessional service/preschool is an early year's service which offers a planned programme of activities to young children for less than 3.5 hours per day. It includes playgroups, playschools, pre-schools and Naíonraí (Irish language medium pre-schools). Some sessional services may identify by the curriculum offered, whether it be Montessori, Steiner, High Scope or otherwise. These are also categorised as sessional services.

**AS** - Afterschool Care offers care to school aged children after primary school hours. An afterschool service often provides assistance with homework, indoor/outdoor activities, along with offering a hot meal/snack. Afterschool care can be provided in full day care services, childminders and stand-alone afterschool services.

**CM** – A Childminder refers to a person who cares for children either in his/her own home or in the children's own home. A Notified Childminder has informed the local Túsła office of his/her work. Childminders who care for more than 3 pre-school children with the exception of those who mind multiple birth children or siblings are required by law to notify Túsła. Other childminders can voluntarily notify themselves to their local City/County Childcare Committee.

**Curriculum** - refers to all the experiences, formal and informal, planned and unplanned in the indoor and outdoor environment, which contribute to children's learning and development.

**Aistear** is the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework in Ireland.

**Síolta** is the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education in Ireland.

**Early Years/Early Childhood** refers to a period that extends from 0-6 years.

**Auxiliary staff**- are staff not directly working with children, but are, however, working in an Early Years' Service.

**CE Programme** - The Community Employment (CE) Programme is designed to help people who are long-term unemployed to get back to work by offering part-time and temporary placements in jobs based within local communities. Participants can take up other part-time work during their placement. After the placement, participants are encouraged to seek permanent part-time and full-time jobs elsewhere based on the experience and new skills they have gained while in a Community Employment Scheme. The Community Employment Programme is administered by the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

Community Employment sponsors - the voluntary organisations or public bodies that manage CE schemes - plan and manage CE placements. They sponsor local or community projects that meet an identified community need.

Since 2013 there is a CE Childcare Training and Development Programme for CE participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare. It is a 3-year programme of formal learning and work experience leading to a NFQ Level 5 qualification in early childhood care and education. These participants may be referred to as CE staff within this document.

**AIM**- the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Its goal is to empower service providers to deliver an inclusive preschool experience, ensuring that every child can fully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality Early Years Care and Education.

**QDS** – The Quality Development Service is a national initiative established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to bring an integrated national approach to developing quality in Early Years Education and Care for children aged from birth to six years in Ireland. It coordinates and extends the wide-ranging choice of supports and services already provided through City and County Childcare Committees and Voluntary Childcare Organisations.

**LINC**- is Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years Settings. LINC is a higher education blended-learning programme designed to facilitate Early Years Educators' educators to promote the inclusion of children with additional needs. Programme graduates will carry out the role of Inclusion Coordinator.

**DCYA**-Department of Children and Youth Affairs. This Department brings together a number of key areas of policy and provision for children, young people and families. It is tasked with driving forward a range of commitments outlined in the 2011 Programme for Government, as well as leading an ambitious reform agenda for children and family services. (DCYA, 2017)

**POBAL** - provides a range of services to and on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in the area of early education and childcare.

## Overview of Longford County Childcare Committee

Longford County Childcare Committee (LCCC) is one of 30 County Childcare Committees established throughout Ireland since 2001, funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

The organisation acts as the local agent for DCYA in the implementation of childcare programmes, and capital funding programmes, offering a wide range of services to support the provision of quality affordable accessible Early Years Services in Co. Longford, including extensive advice, guidance and expertise to Early Years and School Aged Childcare Services, parents, statutory and non-statutory bodies, and interagency working groups.

Longford CCC operates as a point of contact locally for service providers and other bodies, both statutory and non-statutory, working with families and children in the 0–14 years' age group. This role has been built upon years of experience, expertise and knowledge relative to all childcare services within the County, including a detailed understanding of and school aged childcare programmes, facilities, staff qualifications, accessibility and suitability of childcare settings.

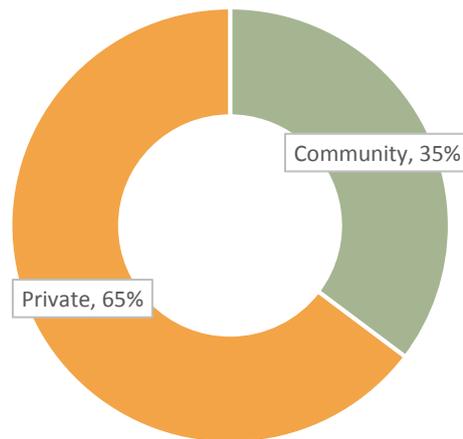


### Structure of Longford County Childcare Committee

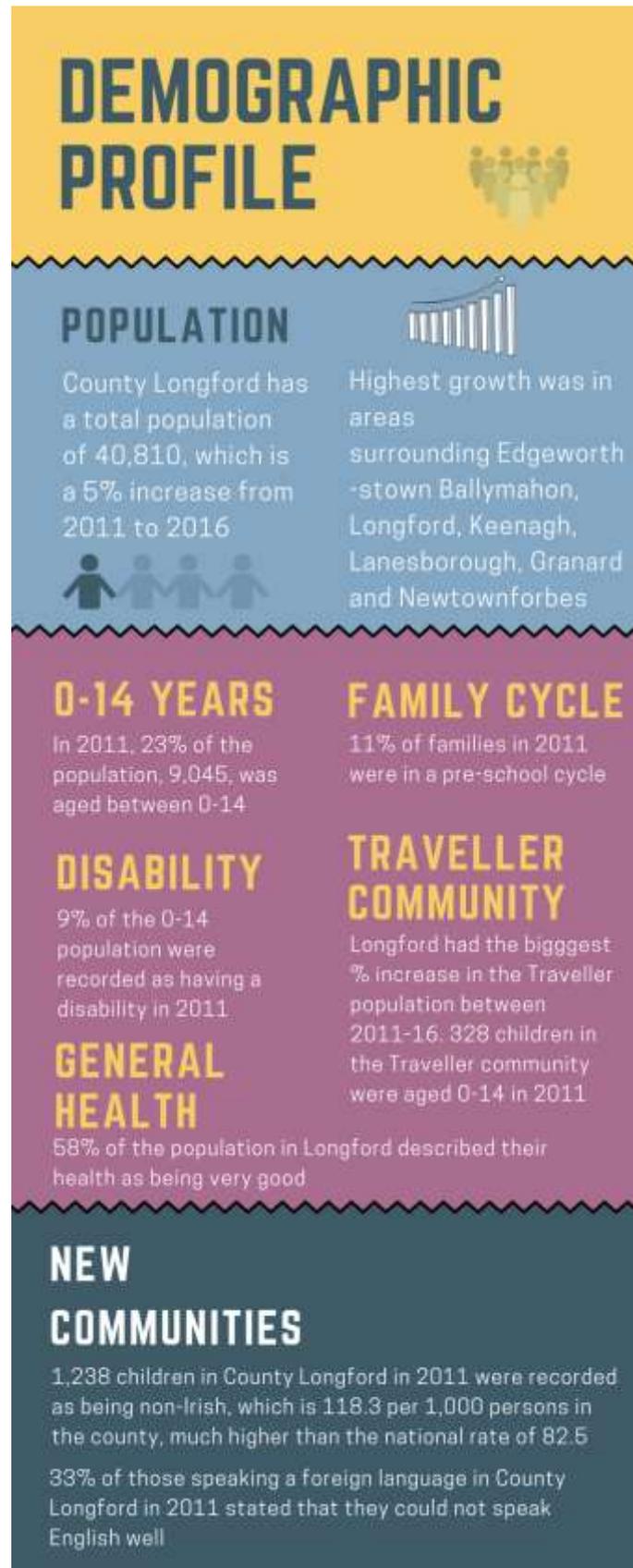
## Profile of services

### Childcare services

Of the 34 childcare services, 12 are community-based services and 22 are privately owned in addition to 3 ~~15~~ notified childminders and 6 ~~8~~ parent & toddler groups.



This is in contrast to the national figures of 73% private and 27% community, as stated in Pobal's Early Years Sector Profile, 2016.



All data provided in this infographic regarding number of services, children staff, etc., have been extrapolated from information provided by Longford CCC and, where stated, sourced from Pobal's Early Years Sector Profile, 2016.

## Government Schemes/DCYA Programmes

There are a number of government schemes currently available to families requiring assistance with childcare costs. These currently include:

ECCE Scheme (Early Childcare Care and Education) - known as The Free Pre-school Year is a universal programme. This scheme allows each child within a specific age range to access 2 free pre-school years before starting primary school, i.e. 3 hours a day, 5 days a week and 38 weeks a year.

TEC scheme (Training and Employment Childcare) - is a government scheme to support parents returning to work, by providing subsidised childcare places. There are 3 schemes under TEC:

1. CETS (Childcare Education and Training Support Programme) CETS provides subsidised childcare for parents on ETB and Solas courses, it is administered on behalf of Department of Education.
2. ASCC (Afterschool Childcare Programme) ASCC is administered on behalf of The Department of Social Protection and provides afterschool care to children of parents on DSP employment programmes (not including community employment).
3. CEC (Community Employment Childcare programme). CEC is administered also on behalf of the Department of Social Protection and provides childcare for children of parents who are participating on Community Employment schemes.

CCS (Community Childcare Subvention Programme) & CCSP (Community Childcare Subvention Plus Programme) schemes are for community and private services to provide quality childcare to parents at a reduced rate. It enables these services to reduce fees for parents in receipt of certain social welfare payments, family income supplement, and holders of medical cards and GP visit cards.

## Early Childhood Services

There are a total of 34 Early Years Services in Co. Longford, 35 % are Community Services, whilst 65% of these are Private Services.

Figure 1.1 below gives an overview of all the Early Years Services in the county, both private and community, with name of service listed, address and the services they offer. Their full details, contact name, telephone number, email address and DCYA programmes offered are listed on our website [www.longfordchildcare.ie](http://www.longfordchildcare.ie).

Service Name	Address	Service Offered
<b>Catkins Nursery Longford Women's Link</b>	Longford Women's Link, Ardnacassa Avenue, Longford	FDC/S/PT
<b>Club Ardagh Ltd.</b>	Ardagh, Longford	S/PT/AS
<b>Dromard Child Care Comm. Group Ltd</b>	Legga, Moyne, Co Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Drumlish Community Childcare Ltd (Whizzkids)</b>	58 Mill Race Park, Mill Road, Drumlish, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT
<b>Granard Community Childcare Facility</b>	The Hill, Granard, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT
<b>Lanesboro/Ballyleague Community Childcare</b>	The Green, Lanesboro, Co. Longford	S/PT/AS
<b>Naoi Rath Re</b>	Smithfield Crescent, Legan, Co. Longford	S/PT
<b>Springlawn Community Childcare Ltd</b>	60, Springlawn, Longford	S/AS
<b>St. Mary's Childcare Campus Ltd</b>	Granard Road, Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Sticky Fingers / Kenagh Co-op</b>	Kenagh, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Tir na nÓg Pre-school</b>	St. Michaels Road, Longford	S/AS
<b>Tumblin Tots</b>	Mostrim Road, Ballymahon, Co. Longford.	FDC/S/PT

<b>ABC Childcare</b>	Kilnashee T5, Drumlish, Co. Longford	FDC/S/AS
<b>Bluebells Montessori Nursery School</b>	2 Park Close, Longford, Co. Longford	S
<b>Bright Beginnings</b>	23 Sycamore Close, Clonbalt Woods, Co. Longford	FDC/S/AS
<b>Cairde Beag</b>	Carrowbeg, Newtowncashel, Co Longford	S/CM
<b>Child's Play</b>	Clonlee, Killoe, Co. Longford	S/CM/AS
<b>Dun Darrach Day Nursery</b>	16 Dun Darrach, Dublin Road, Longford	FDC/S/AS
<b>Head Start Pre-School</b>	Carraroe off Rathcline Road, Lanesboro, Co. Longford	S
<b>Kids Paradise Montessori</b>	9 The Rocks, Stonepark, Longford Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Lámh Beag</b>	Granard GFC, Higginstown, Granard, Co Longford	FDC/S
<b>Laugh and Learn Pre-school/Montessori</b>	Morine, Moydow, Co Longford	S
<b>Little Angels</b>	Battery Road, Longford	FDC/S/AS
<b>Little Rascals</b>	3 The Dolmans, Aughnacliffe, Co. Longford	S
<b>Longford Montessori Centre</b>	Clonbalt, Longford	S
<b>Minard Day Nursery</b>	Minard, Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Playdays</b>	Annaville, Carragh, Granard, Co Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Scallywags Crèche and Montessori</b>	Silver Birches, Stonepark, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Stars Academy</b>	Newtownforbes, Longford	S/PT/AS
<b>Step by Step</b>	Bundoon, Killoe, Co Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS
<b>Teach Leanbh</b>	Soran Ballinalee, Co. Longford	FDC/S/PT/AS

<b>Ballymahon Montessori School</b>	Drinan Ballymahon, Co. Longford		FDC/S/PT
<b>Trinity Tots</b>	Deanscurragh, Ballinalee Road, Co. Longford		S/PT
<b>Winnie The Pooh-Montessori School</b>	2 Ballincurry, Longford, Co. Longford		S

Figure 1.1 Early Years Services in Co. Longford

### Staff

Response Rate: 26/31

According to responses received there are a total of 190 Early Years Educators employed in the Early Years Sector in Longford. with 50% working full time, 41% working part time, 4% are full time auxiliary, and 5% are part time auxiliary, with a further 70 CE workers. The results for 2016 were 221 staff in the sector, with a total of 41 CE workers. This sees a decrease of 14% of staff directly employed in the sector since 2016 but with an increase of 70% of those employed on Community employment schemes.

### Qualifications

Response Rate: 31/31

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 states the minimum requirement to work in the Early Years sector, is minimum QQI Level 5 in ECCE (or equivalent). To offer an ECCE service however all room leaders must hold QQI Level 6. Respondents indicated that 90% of all Room Leaders, regardless of whether they are employed in the ECCE Room or not, hold QQI Level 6.

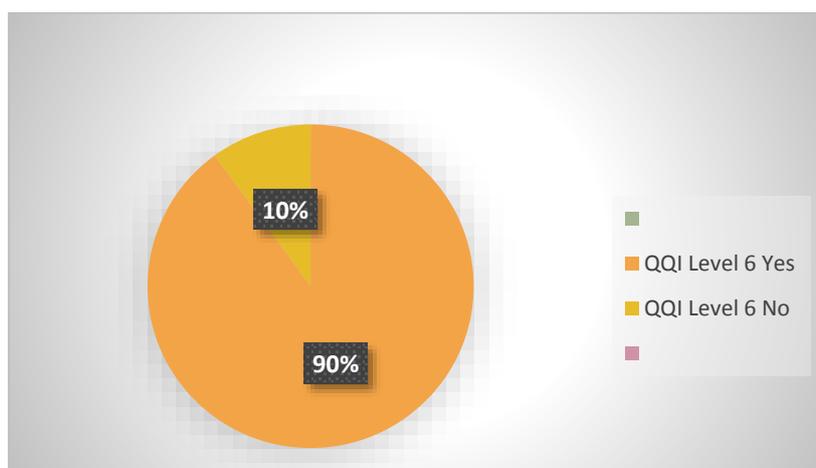


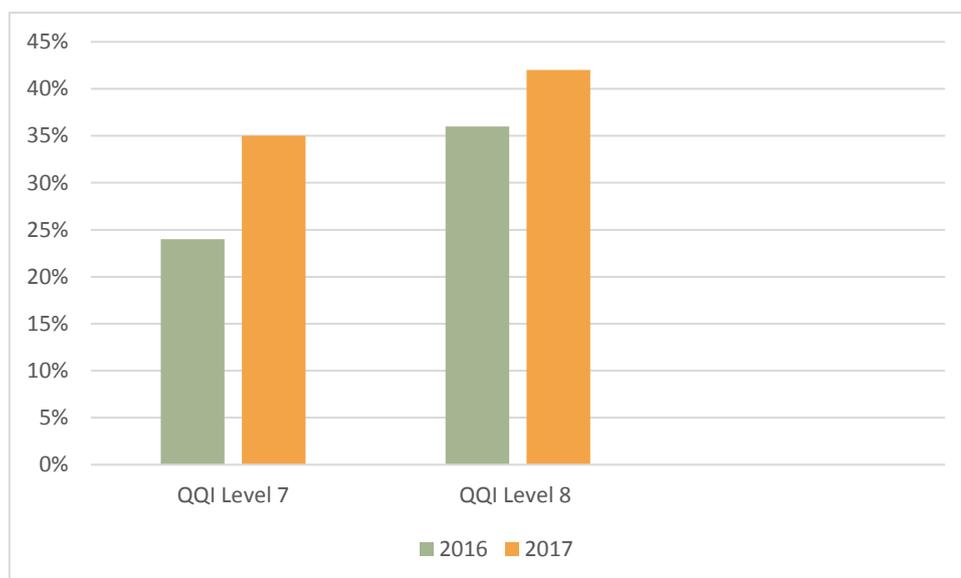
Figure 1.2 Room Leaders Qualification to QQI Level 6

Furthermore, services were probed as to staff members with higher levels of qualification. 35% of services said they employed at least one staff member qualified QQI Level 7 i.e. Ordinary Bachelor's Degree.

This is further broken down to 29% of services employing one member of staff with level 7, 6% of employing two members of staff with a similar level of qualification.

In comparison to the Census 2016, 24% said they had at least one member of staff with QQI Level 7. In 2017 the overall percentage increase of staff employed in Early Years services working directly with children rose by 11%.

Moreover, 42% of respondents stated they had a member of staff with QQI Level 8 i.e. Honour Level Bachelor's Degree. 26% indicated they employed 1 staff member, while the other 16% said they hired 2 staff members. Here we see a 6% increase in the number of staff qualified to QQI Level 8.



*Figure 1.3 – QQI Level 7 & 8 Qualifications*

## Wages

Response Rate: 20/31

Respondents were requested to indicate the hourly rate of pay for their staff. This question was further broken down into categories: QQI Level 5, QQI Level 6, QQI Level 7, QQI Level 8/9.

11 services opted not to answer this question. The following rates of pay were indicated:

Rates of Pay 2017		
Level of Qualification	Minimum Payable	Maximum Payable
QQI Level 5	€9.25	€12
QQI Level 6	€9.25	€15
QQI Level 7 & 8	€10	€20

*Figure 1.4 Rates of Pay 2017*

Of interesting note was the comparison between private and community services. Community services tended to offer €10 per hour as starting rate of pay and this ranged to a maximum rate of €20 per hour. A comparison table from 2016 is available below.

Rates of Pay 2016		
Level of Qualification	Minimum Payable	Maximum Payable
QQI Level 5	€9.15	€12
QQI Level 6	€9.50	€15
QQI Level 7 & 8	€10	€16

*Figure 1.5 Rates of Pay 2016*

## Child Protection Training

Response Rate: 31/31

The Children First National Guidelines are available to assist people in identifying and reporting child abuse. They are designed to encourage people to report concerns and suspicions of child abuse to Talsa, The Child and Family Agency or to An Garda Síochána. Children First calls on all professionals who work with children in sports, community and voluntary organisations, and the wider community of relatives, friends and neighbours to be aware of what steps to take if they have a child protection and welfare concern. (Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children)

Services were asked to indicate who their Designated Liaison Officer within the service was and how recently Child Protection Training was undertaken. Each service gave their Designated Liaison Officers name appointed in the service. It was found that the DLPs received most up to date training.

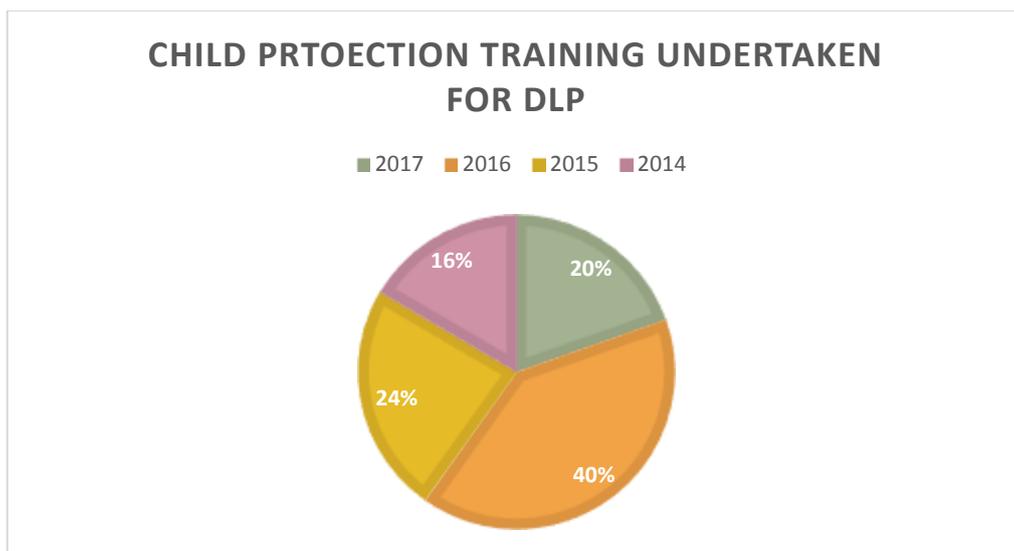


Figure 1.6 Child Protection Training

### Child Protection Policy

Response Rate: 31/31

A key element of effective child safeguarding is the development and implementation of a robust Child Protection and Welfare Policy. The purpose of this guide is to support Early Years services to develop, implement and review their Child Protection and Welfare Policy. Services were asked to outline how they communicated their child protection policy with parents. 10% specified through a noticeboard, 77% said through their parents’ handbook, while 13% said other. Those that gave ‘other’ as their answer, explained they shared it through their open evening, through their policies and procedures, speaking to parents on enrolment and one to one discussions.

### HACCP

Response Rate: 31/31

A food safety management system based on the principles of HACCP will enable hazards to be identified and controlled before they threaten the safety of food served to young children. Staff are required to train every 5 years. Levels of training are as follows:

HACCP Training	
2017	3
2016	7
2015	8
2014	0
2013	3

Figure 1.7 Haacp Training Received

## Curriculum

Response Rate: 31/31

Services were asked to indicate the type of curriculum offered within their Early Years' Service.

54% stated they were Montessori, 72% said they were play based, 2 services indicated they offered Highscope, one service said they were Reggio Emilia inspired. Furthermore 3 services specified they were engaged with Aistear. Note the total percentage is over 100%, however some services, picked more than one option of curriculum.

There is a considerable change of direction in curriculum offered since 2016 where 26% stated they offered Montessori, 45% indicated they engaged in a play based curriculum, 1% offered Highscope, 3% engaged an emergent curriculum and 26% answered other.

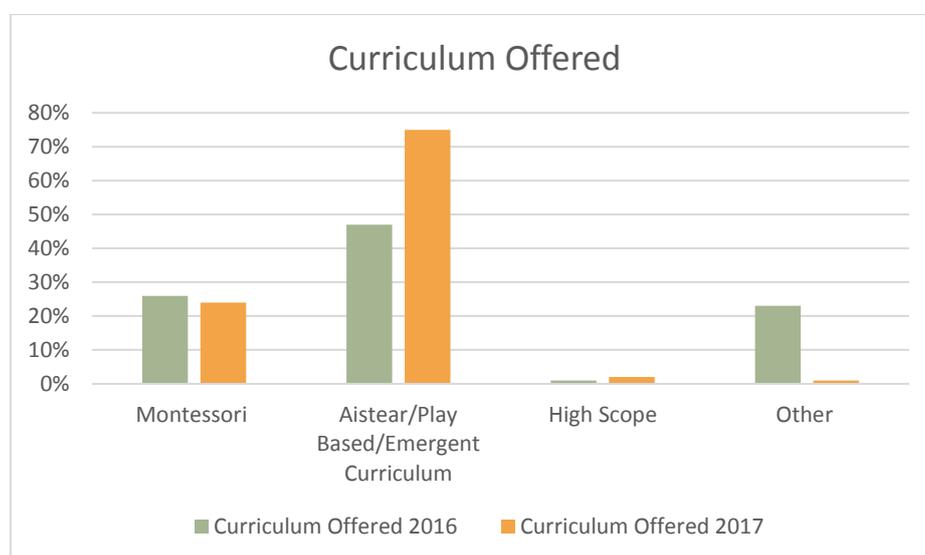


Figure 1.8 Curriculum Offered

## Fees

Response Rate: 26/31

Weekly fees for services offered were probed. The online census asked Early Childhood Services to detail their weekly cost for Full Day Care, Sessional / Naíonra and School Aged Childcare places. The range of data is based on the lowest and highest figures recorded, while the average is calculated from the number of returned figures.

Fees for 2017 ranged from €130 to €165 compared to 2016 which showed a range of €135 to €160. 6 services didn't complete this question and it may explain this. The table 1.4 below, gives figures for part time day care, and sessional for this year and last.

Fees (per week)	2017 Range	2017 Average	2016 Range	2016 Average
FDC	€130-€165	€ 151.47	€135-€160	€ 141.25
PT	€35-€125	€ 81.60	€50-€125	€ 87.85
S	€21.50-€75	€ 63.02	€50-€75	€ 66.48

Figure 1.9 – Fees

## Services Offered & Capacity

### Full Day Care Services

Response Rate: 15/31

Full Day Care Services were asked to assess the level of capacity of their service. Disappointingly, 16 services opted not to answer this question. Of the respondents, 46% indicated they have availability within their service while 54% stated they did not. Of those who do not have available capacity at the moment 88% operate a waiting list. According to responses received the following outlines the breakdown of children currently enrolled in FDC.

Children Enrolled	Numbers
Full Time Children	117
Part Time Children	163
After School Children	175

Figure 1.9 – Children Enrolled

The total number of children on a waiting list to access a full day childcare place in Longford stands at 45+.

### Part Time Services

Response Rate: 15/31

Over 160 children in Longford are currently availing of PT care. When assessing the level of availability in PT care it is difficult to ascertain as once again, 16 services opted not to answer this question. However of the respondents, it has indicated that 60% have part time availability while 40% do not.

### ECCE Services

Response Rate: 31/31

There are currently 39 ECCE sessions available throughout Co. Longford with a combination of morning and afternoon sessions available. Morning sessions do, however, appear to be more popular with a total of 31 sessions available in the morning and the remainder, 8

sessions offered in the afternoon. According to figures accessed on the Pobal CRM – Longford currently has 1074 children availing of ECCE services.

All respondents answered this question with 48% indicating availability in ECCE while 52% indicated they are full to capacity. Conversely however, 95% of respondents currently operate a waiting list for ECCE.

## Partnership with Parents

Response Rate: 31/31

Aistear and Síolta highlight the important role parents and families play in children's lives. Strong partnerships support all families but are especially helpful for parents in situations that may make it difficult for them to participate in their children's learning and development as much as they would like. (Practice Guide, 2017)

## Open Days

Response Rate: 31/31

Open days are a good opportunity to introduce parents to Early Years Care and Education in a particular service and to understand where their child will be spending time away from the family home. From LCCCs interaction with parents, anecdotally, we have noted a desire from parents for services to offer this. With this in mind services were asked if they held an open day 81% responded with a yes, this is in comparison to 2016, where only 54% said yes.

## Parent/Teacher Meetings

Response Rate: 31/31

Parent-teacher meetings are a great opportunity to communicate with each child's parent around important issues such as development. However, they are also a great way to discuss any troubles or questions the parent may have regarding their child.

Again services, were asked if they held parent/teacher meetings. 52% indicated they did and the remainder indicated they didn't. For those that answered yes 47% indicated they held meetings twice each year while the remaining 53% carried them on once in the year.

## DCYA Programmes

Response Rate: 31/31

As stated in the introduction, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs offers a number of childcare subvention programmes to assist parents with their childcare costs. These are known within the childcare sector as ECCE, TEC and CCS/CCSP.

Total amounts of children engaged in these schemes currently stands at 1,530. Comparitively, the total for 2016 was 1379. The graph below, outlines the rise from ECCE one year, to the

next. This can be explained with the introduction of the second free preschool year in 2016. We also see a decrease in the number of children availing of CCS. It is possible that the introduction of the second ECCE year may also be accountable in this instance.

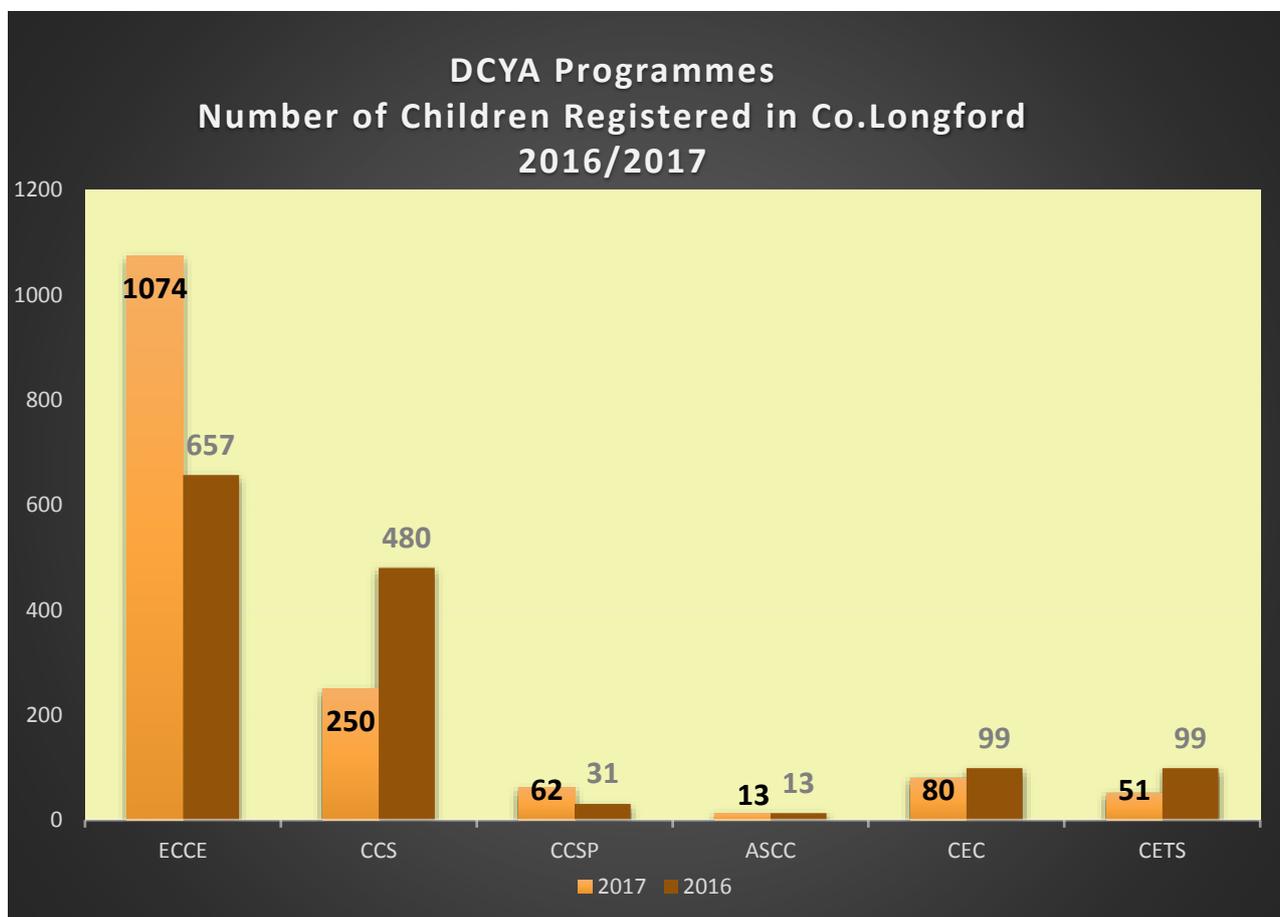


Figure 1.9 DCYA programmes

## Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

### Additional Needs

Response Rate: 31/31

The Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a model of supports designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme. Its goal is to empower service providers to deliver an inclusive pre-school experience, ensuring that every eligible child can fully participate in the ECCE programme and reap the benefits of quality Early Years Care and Education care and education.

This prompted some research on the levels and indeed types of disability and special educational needs within the county. 74% of respondents indicated that they had children with additional needs attending their service. When asked to outline the types of needs practitioners were faced with they were given a number of options including:

Physical Disability	18%
---------------------	-----

Language	44%
Hearing	12%
Other	26%

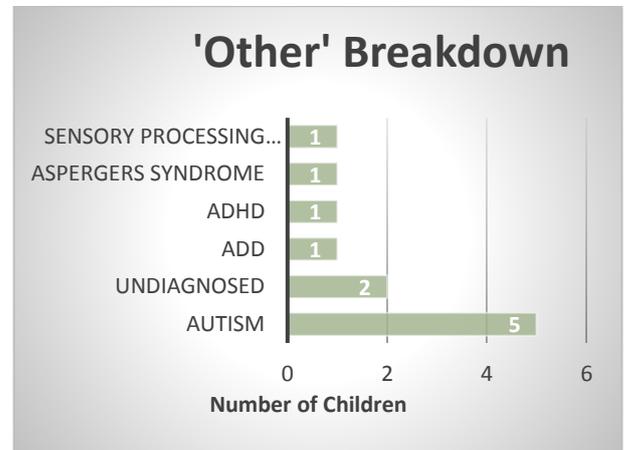
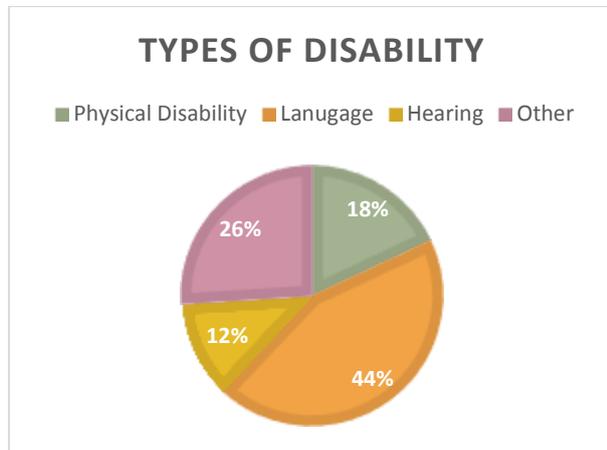


Figure 1.11 Additional Needs

### Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

Response Rate: 31/31

AIM was introduced in June 2016, to help services deliver an inclusive preschool experience. 35% of services said they had applied for support for children with addition needs under the AIM programme. Of those respondents, 36% said they applied for Level 4 Supports, 9% applied for Level 5 Supports, whilst a sizable 45% indicated they needed and applied for Level 7 supports. Furthermore the wait time encountered for approval of these supports was probed. Worryingly services experienced a wide range of waiting times as is illustrated in the graph below.

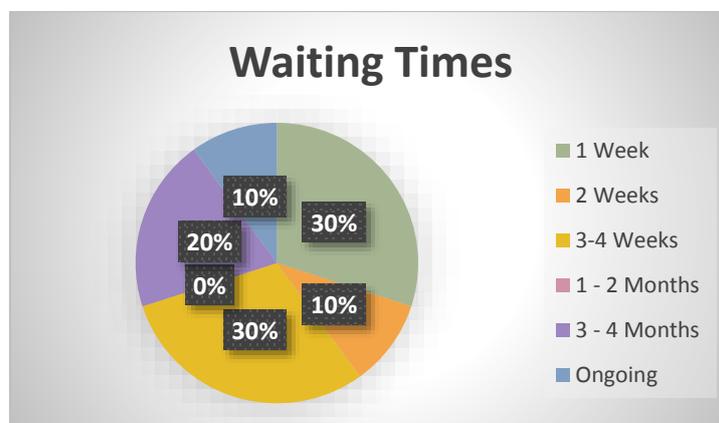


Figure 1.12 Waiting Time for Aim Supports

## Leadership for Inclusion Training (LINC)

Response Rate: 31/31

As noted in the introduction, LINC is Leadership for Inclusion in Early Years settings. It is a higher education blended-learning programme designed to facilitate Early Years educators to promote the inclusion of children with additional needs. Programme graduates will carry out the role of Inclusion Coordinator.

Of those surveyed, 35% of services said a member of their staff applied for a place on the LINC programme. Of those that applied, 5 services were unsuccessful in gaining entry onto the LINC programme.

## Diversity, Equality & Inclusion Training (EDI)

Response Rate: 31/31

This is a 15 hour CPD programme for practitioners that centres on the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education. It explores a wide variety of challenges facing early childhood services that can inhibit or prevent services operating in a fully inclusive manner. Challenges such as prejudice, real representation of all children in an early childhood service, strategies to promote inclusive practice and how to draw up an Inclusion policy for your early childhood service are all explored. The programme uses the strength based Anti-Bias approach throughout.

55% of respondents to this research indicated that at least one member of their team, had completed Longford CCC training in EDI. A total of 37 educators had completed their training by the end of May 2017. There has been 2 training sessions of Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter, the month of Jan/Feb and month Mar/Apr, with two more scheduled for July and Sept.

The creation of an inclusion policy is included in this training. 94% of respondents, regardless of having completed EDI training, indicated they had an inclusion policy in place currently.

## Inspections

Response Rate: 31/31

Early Years Services are subject to a variety of different inspections from a variety of state bodies. Túsla - The Child and Family Agency is responsible for inspecting pre-schools, play groups, day nursery, crèches, day-care and similar services which cater for children aged 0-6 years.

Pobal Inspections involve a series of standardised on-site checks aimed at ensuring adherence with certain programme rules set out by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).

Department of Education and Skills Early Years Education focused Inspections are designed to evaluate key aspects of education provision in the educational setting inspected and to promote improvement in that setting.

### Túsla Inspection

Response Rate: 31/31

Services were asked to outline their most recent Túsla inspection date.

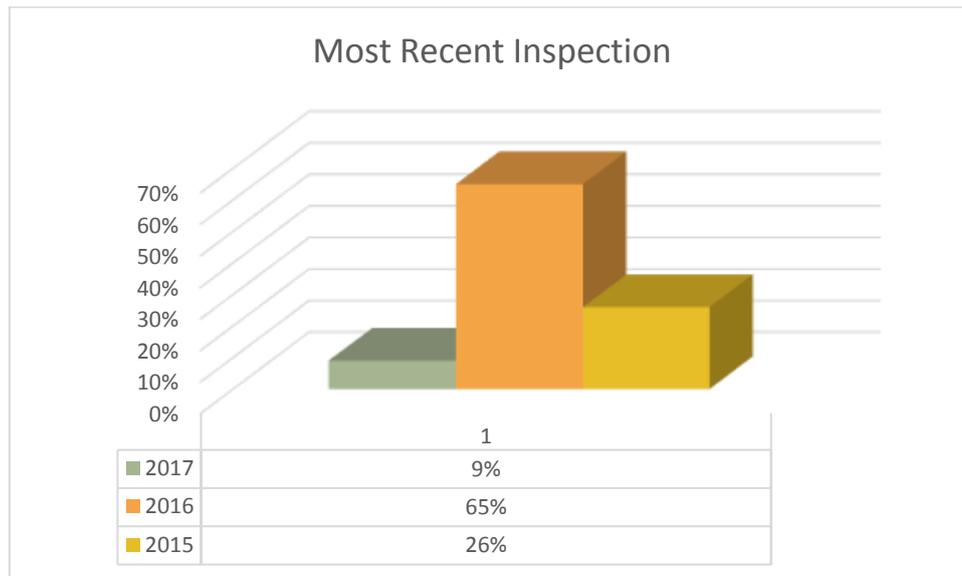


Figure 1.13 Most Recent Túsla Inspection

All services in Longford have been inspected in the last 2 years. Services were then, further probed as to their levels of compliance. Figure 4.1 indicates that 61% were fully compliant.

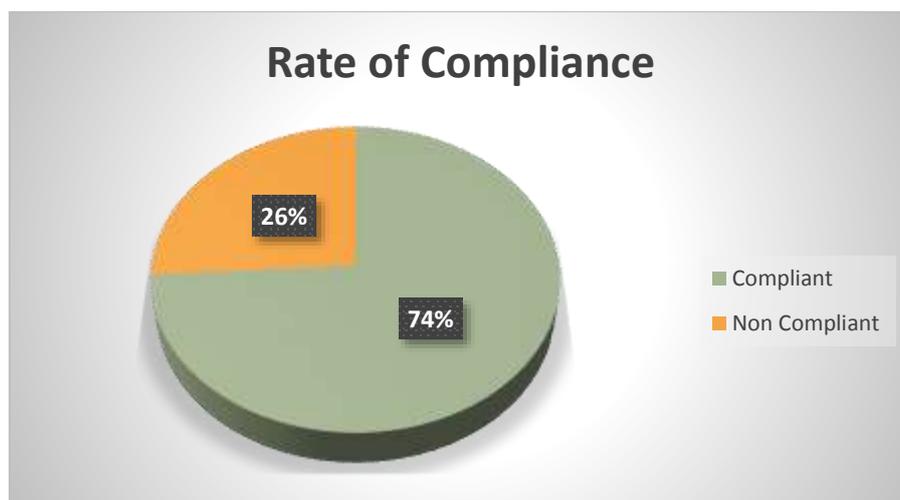


Figure 1.14 Levels of Túsla Inspection Compliance

Areas of non-compliance were probed. As the Túsła regulations were updated in 2016, it is necessary to outline non-compliance issues in two categories.

	PRE 2016 Regulations	2016 Regulations
<b>Regulation 5 Health, Welfare &amp; Development of the Child</b>	2 services	
<b>Regulation 8 Management &amp; Staffing</b>	2 services	
<b>Regulation 27 Safety Measures</b>	4 services	
<b>Regulation 28 Facilities for Rest &amp; Play</b>	1 service	
<b>Regulation 9 Management &amp; Recruitment</b>		2 services
<b>Regulation 16 Record in relation to preschool service</b>		3 services
<b>Regulation 19 Health, Welfare &amp; Development of Child</b>		1 service
<b>Regulation 23 Safeguarding Health, Safety and Welfare of Child</b>		3 services
<b>Regulation 25 First Aid</b>		1 service
<b>Regulation 26 Fire Safety Measures</b>		1 service

Figure 1.15 Areas of non-compliance Túsła Inspections

Some comments in relation to Túsła inspections included:



### Pobal Inspection

Response Rate: 31/31

In a similar fashion, recent Pobal inspections were explored.

In 2017, 32% of services had been inspected. 2016 saw an inspection rate of 45% with 2015 indicating 13% of services were inspected and finally 2014 had an inspection rate of 10%.

These services were then asked to indicate compliance levels with results highlighted below.

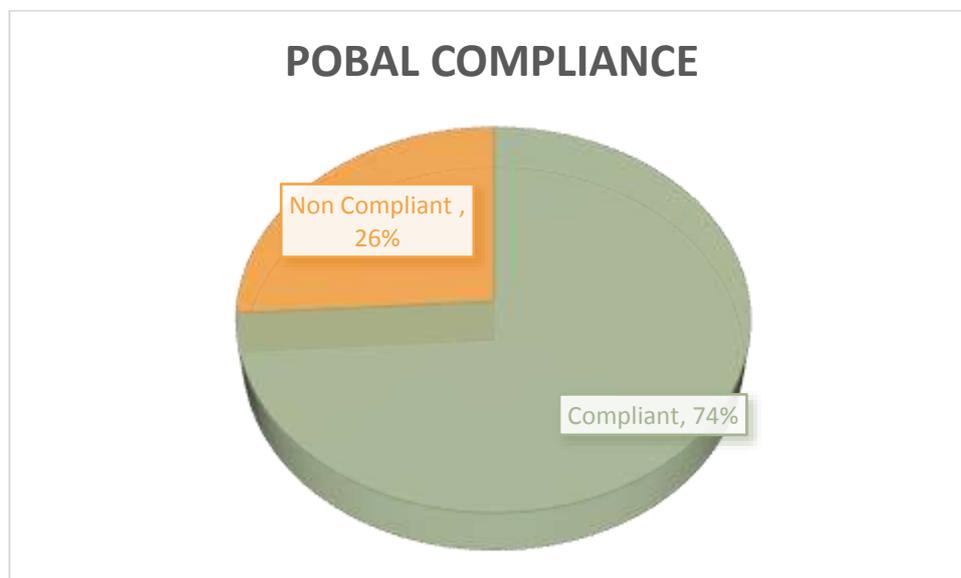


Figure 1.16 Pobal Compliance

Areas of non-compliance were shown to be primarily in attendance patterns of children and incomplete or missing paper work.

Some comments from providers in relation to Pobal Compliance visits included:



### DES Inspection

Response Rate: 31/31

The final inspection that was explored with respondents was the DES Education focused Inspections.

A total of 6 respondents have received their DES inspection at the time of research. Of the 6 that received their inspections, one service was inspected in 2017, 3 in 2016 and 1 in 2015, one service didn't respond to question. DES inspections are divided into 4 categories of inspection:

1. The quality of the context to support children's learning and development
2. The quality of the processes to support children's learning and development
3. The quality of children's learning experiences and achievements
4. The quality of management and leadership for learning

The report presents the main findings of the inspection under each of the four areas above and, as relevant, the actions advised. No singular overall rating on the quality of education provision in the setting is provided but each are rated independently with grades of: excellent, very good, good, fair and poor.

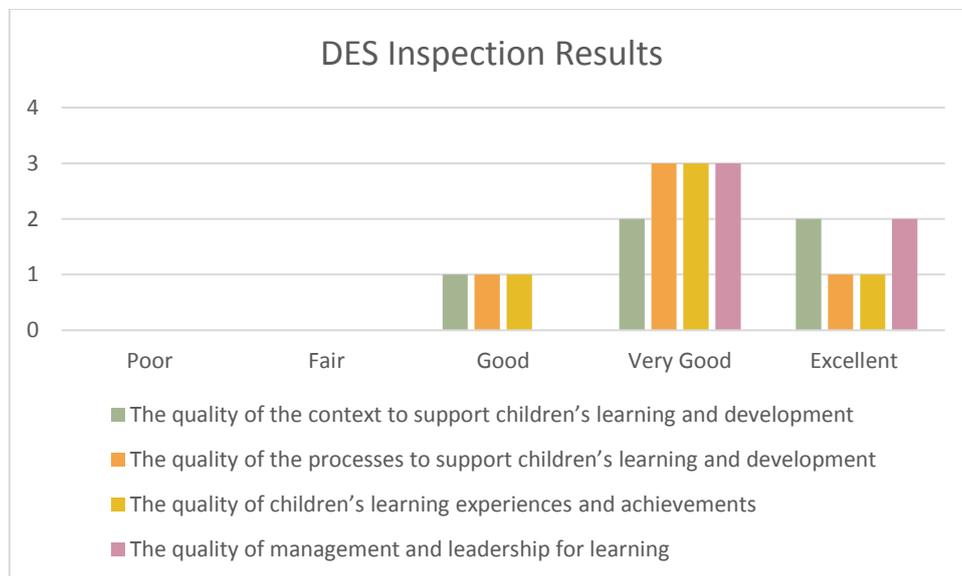


Figure 1.17 DES Inspection Results

Some comments from the DES Inspections included:



## Support and Supervision of Staff

Response Rate: 31/31

As part of the 2016 Childcare Regulations all managers must hold regular support and supervision meetings with staff.

Services were asked if they hold formal support and supervision meetings with staff. 87% replied yes, whilst 13% said no. For those who did engage in Support and Supervision with staff, they were asked to indicate the frequency of it within the past six months.



Figure 1.18 Support and Supervision of Staff

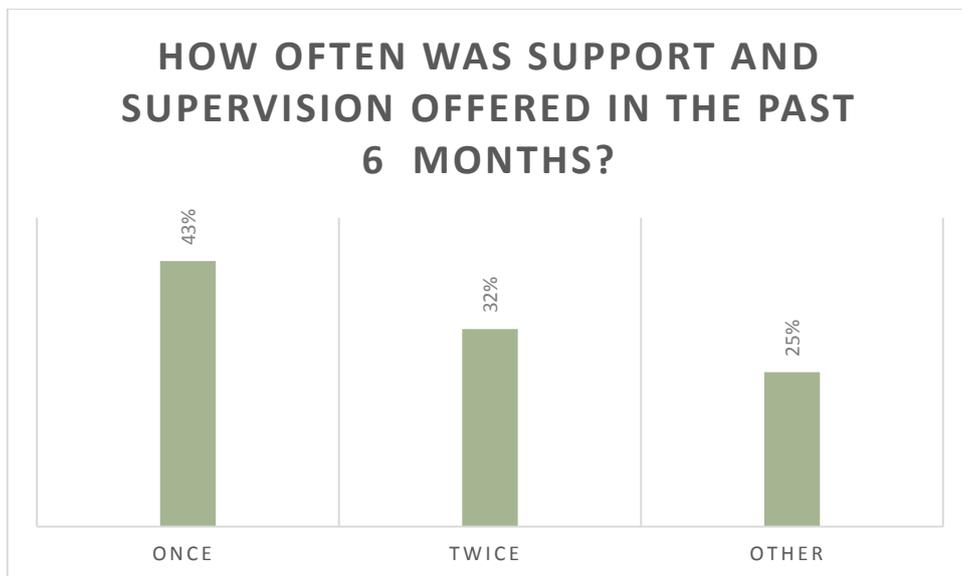


Figure 1.19 Frequency of Support and Supervision

## CCC Supports

Response Rate: 31/31

One of the primary aims of Longford County Childcare Committee is to support Early Years Services, managers and practitioners. This aim motivated the question as to what further supports were required of us. The categories provided were HR, Sustainability, Pobal, Quality, Túsla Inspection, DES Inspection, Policies and Procedures and other.

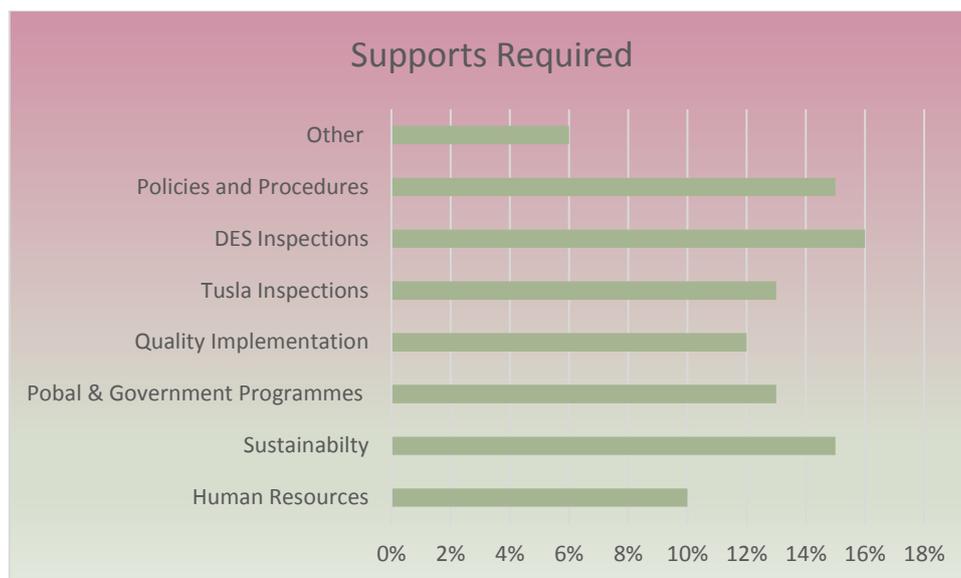


Figure 1.20 Supports Required

## Conclusion

LCCC welcomes this research and thank Early Years Services for being so open in their responses. We recognise the time pressures places on managers and staff in all Early Years Services, however the support work of LCCC would not be possible without the interaction and engagement of services.

LCCC must question the method of undertaking this research and assess if it's the best way of data collection for Longford early years providers. The report sees a 100% response rate to questions probing training, inspections, qualifications, child protection, curriculum, partnership with parents, government programmes, HR and supports required from LCCC while a much lower response is recorded for questions around staffing, wages, fees and capacity.

LCCC must reflect on how these questions receiving a lower response rate were framed and the purpose of their inclusion in the first instance. Finally we must question why practitioners chose not to answer. Feedback from practitioners will be required on this and this will impact on similar research that may be conducted into the future.

For now however, we must work within the parameters of the collected information. The analysed data collected has raised a number of points for consideration by LCCC and as is the case in much research, raises as many questions as it answers.

There are a number of findings of note within the document particularly that of staffing levels. 2017 sees a decrease of 14% of staff directly employed in the sector since 2016 but an increase of 70% of those employed on Community Employment schemes. Since 1<sup>st</sup> January 2017, unqualified CE workers cannot be included in adult child ratios which has left many services in Longford with difficulties in their staffing levels. Qualified CE workers can however

be included in ratios. There is a possibility that many Community Services now have qualified CE staff within their staff team in order to adhere to Túsła Regulations which could account for the dramatic increase in CE employees.

This research found an increase in play based learning within Early Years Services in Co. Longford from 2016 to 2017. LCCC sees a number of possible reasons for this. In 2016 LCCC introduced the Longford Leaders in Quality Programme (LLiQ). This programme is an eight month CPD programme which is based on the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide (ASPG). At the centre of the ASPG is play based learning. Additionally LCCC has been in the enviable position of engaging in a pilot of the National Aistear Siolta Initiative. This is a 5 month programme of workshops based on the Curriculum Pillar of the ASPG and is accompanied by 4 hours of one to one mentoring by a trained mentor. At the centre of this training is the benefits of play based learning. 5 services in Longford have participated in this pilot which may also have some bearing on the increase in play based learning.

Rates of remuneration payable to Early Years staff was also of note. While rates of pay have remained stable for practitioners qualified to QQI Levels 5 & 6, these appears to have been a slight increase in remuneration for practitioners who are qualified at QQI Levels 7 & 8. This raises the question as to how providers have facilitated this wage increase and indeed what motivated the increase. It is possible that the slight increase in ECCE Higher level of capitation from €73 to €75 per child for impacted on providers' ability to increase wages for higher qualified staff. Early Childhood Ireland commissioned a piece of research in 2016 called 'Doing the Sums – The Real Cost of Providing Childcare' which highlighted an issue with retention of highly qualified staff on a 38 week funding model. It is also feasible therefore that providers have been left with little alternative to increase wages in order to retain staff. This is an issue that needs further research before any final conclusions have been reached.

An interesting trend was noted around fees charged within the county. There appeared to be an increase in fees charged for Full Time children while there was a decrease noted in part time and sessional fees. Again further research is needed in this area to arrive at any concrete conclusions. It may be possible however that these figures are not representative of the norm as disappointingly 16 services i.e. 48.5% of respondents opted not to engage with this question. Nonetheless, the average fee charged in Co. Longford is €151.47 which is well below the national average of €175.57.

The capacity of services was probed and indicated that 48% of services were full to capacity. However, Pobal's Early Years Sector Profile recorded that the availability of childcare places (vacancies) as a percentage of numbers enrolled for age cohort 3 years+ to 4½ years (37-54 months) in Longford was 3%. This was compared to 10% nationally and recorded Longford as one of two counties with the lowest availability in the State. This indicated that Longford may be approaching a childcare capacity crisis within the county.

Another statistic of note was the number of Early Years facilities now offering 'open days' to parents. This has increased dramatically from 54% in 2016 to 81% in 2017. Again LCCC questioned this increase and suggests that the LLiQ and the NSAI has had a positive impact on how services communicate and collaborate with parents.

AIM is a new initiative available to Early Years providers and parents. Providers have indicated different levels of satisfaction with this service with significant discrepancies in waiting times and access to the service. Further research is required to ascertain the reasons for this.

As noted above, one of the primary aims of LCCC is to support Early Years services, managers and practitioners. Supports highlighted included HR, Sustainability, Pobal Compliance, Quality Implementation, Túsla Inspections, DES Inspections and Policies and Procedures. The findings of the research were in line with what our own recording system of supports offered include.

As a team and a committee we have learned a lot from this piece of research. We have reflected on what we need this piece of research for and how we can improve and develop it in the future. With this in mind we will implement some changes in the questions we ask, the responses we seek and how we disseminate the research for data collection. We look forward to working and developing this piece of local research and we will seek meaningful input from a wide variety of practitioners and stakeholders at this time.

All findings in this piece of research, particularly those around supports required of LCCC will directly impact on our planning for 2018. It is important to note however that this is merely one aspect of our consultation with stakeholders. Further consultation will take place with all relevant stakeholders within the county throughout the year.

## Disclaimer

Longford County Childcare Committee has endeavoured to ensure the information contained in this Census report is correct. The information provided in this is as a result of the analysis of Longford CCC's annual Census. The answers were provided by childcare services in Co. Longford and Longford CCC has made every attempt to ensure the comments and figures are presented in an accurate manner. Longford County Childcare Committee has compiled this report as a result of the analysis of its 2017 Census.