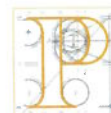


Validation Checklist

Lodgement Number : LDG-086409-26
Case Number: ACP-324056-26
Customer: Fingewater Homes Ltd
Lodgement Date: 04/02/2026 16:14:00
Validation Officer:
PA Name: Cork City Council
PA Reg Ref: 2544140
Case Type: Appeal - LRD
Lodgement Type: Appeal - LRD



An
Coimisiún
Pleanála

10/2/26

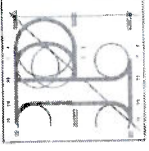
Validation Checklist	Value
Confirm Classification	Confirmed - Correct
Confirm PA Case Link	Confirmed-Correct
Confirm ABP Case Link	Confirmed-Correct
Fee/Payment	Valid – Correct
Name and Address available	Yes
Agent Name and Address available (if engaged)	Yes
Subject Matter available	Yes
Grounds	Yes
Sufficient Fee Received	Yes
Received On time	Yes
3rd Party Acknowledgement	Yes
Eligible to make lodgement	Yes
Completeness Check of Documentation	Yes
Valid Lodgement Channel	Yes

~~LRD01~~ LRD02

LRD07 TO ISSUE

LRD FILE

Lodgement Cover Sheet - LDG-086409-26



An Bord Pleanála

Details

Lodgement Date	04/02/2026
Customer	Bridgewater Homes Ltd
Lodgement Channel	In Person
Lodgement by Agent	No
Agent Name	
Correspondence Primarily Sent to	
Registered Post Reference	

Lodgement ID	LDG-086409-26
Map ID	
Created By	Scott Moss
Physical Items included	No
Generate Acknowledgement Letter	
Customer Ref. No.	
PA Reg Ref	

Categorisation

Lodgement Type	Appeal
Section	Processing

PA Name	Cork City Council
Case Type (3rd Level Category)	

Fee and Payments

Specified Body	No
Oral Hearing	No
Fee Calculation Method	System
Currency	Euro
Fee Paid	3000.00
Refund Amount	

Observation/Objection Allowed?	
Payment	PMT-068562-26
Related Payment Details Record	PD-068391-26

Appeal

DD = 022766-26.
 ACP = 324056-26.

B

P.A. Ref: 254414

DD: 29/1/26

LD: 23/2/26

Appeals Type

PA Case Details Manual	
PA Case Number	
PA Decision	
PA Decision Date	
Lodgement Deadline	
Development Description	
Development Address	

Catherine Flynn

From: Plansub <plansub@corkcity.ie>
Sent: Thursday 5 February 2026 16:30
To: Catherine Flynn; PlanningInfo
Subject: RE: CORK CITY COUNCIL 2544140

Caution: This is an **External Email** and may have malicious content. Please take care when clicking links or opening attachments. When in doubt, contact the ICT Helpdesk.

Hi Catherine,

Hope all is well.

- 1- 29/01/2026
- 2- Permission for the following Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) located at Waterfall Road, Ardarostig (townland), Bishopstown, Cork comprising the construction of 246 no. residential units and a creche located to the east of and connected to the Waterfall Heights residential development which was permitted by An Coimisiún Pleanála under Ref. No. 310274 and is currently under construction. The proposed LRD comprises 143 no. dwelling houses (comprising a mix of 2, 3, and 4 bed semi-detached and townhouse/ terraced units) and 103 no. duplex/apartment units (comprising 25 no. 1, 2 and 3 bed duplex/apartment units and 78 no. 1 and 2 bed apartments in 3 no. Blocks ranging in height from 4 to 5 storeys with basement/undercroft parking), a 747 sqm creche and all associated ancillary development works including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, drainage (including the re-routing of an existing wayleave), landscaping, amenity and open space/play areas, footpaths and cycle lanes, boundary treatments, bicycle and car parking, bin and bike storage, public lighting and all other ancillary development. There are vehicular, cycle and pedestrian connections to the Waterfall Heights residential development (including two vehicular connection points connecting on to the Waterfall Road via the Waterfall Heights development); a pedestrian/cycle connection to the north (onto an existing footpath/cycle way); and provision for future vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access points to the adjoining lands to the south and east of the proposed development. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been submitted to the planning authority with the application. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report will be available for inspection or purchase at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy during office hours at the offices of the Local Authority. The application may be inspected online at the following website set up by the applicant: www.waterfallmanorlrd.ie
- 3- Bridgewater Homes Ltd. - c/o Cailin McNamee, McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants, 6 Joyce House Barrack Square, Ballincoolig Cork
- 4- Yes – Portal ID: 2025157
- 5- No
- 6- LRD

Thanks

Kind Regards

[Eoghan Fahy]
Clerical Officer | Planning Development

+353 21 492 4594

Eoghan_Fahy@corkcity.ie

Planning & Integrated Development, Cork City Council, City Hall, Anglesea Street, Cork City T12 T99

From: Catherine Flynn <c.flynn@pleanala.ie>
Sent: 05 February 2026 14:42
To: PlanningInfo <planninginfo@corkcoco.ie>
Cc: Plansub <plansub@corkcity.ie>
Subject: CORK CITY COUNCIL 2544140

[EXTERNAL EMAIL] This email originated from outside Cork City Council. Do not follow guidance, click links or attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

A Chara,

The Commission has received a appeal for planning reference number 2544140
This appeal was received by the Commission 4th February 2026.

In order for the Commission to validate this appeal, can you please confirm the following:

1. Your date of decision was
2. Full Development Description.
3. Applicants name and address and/if Agents name and address?
4. If an EIAR was submitted with the planning application at any stage?
5. If an NIS was submitted with this planning application at any stage?
6. If this planning application is for an LRD (Large Residential Development) or if it is for Normal Planning Application.

Kind Regards,

Catherine Flynn

Catherine Flynn
Executive Officer
Processing Section
An Coimisiún Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902
Teil: 01-873-7143
Facs: 01-8722684

Má fhaigheann tú an ríomhphost seo lasmuigh de na gnáthuaireanta oibre, ní bheidh mé ag súil le freagra ná gníomh lasmuigh de d'uaireanta oibre féin.

If you receive this email outside of normal working hours, I do not expect a response or action outside of your own working hours

Catherine Flynn

From: Catherine Flynn
Sent: Thursday 5 February 2026 15:10
To: Plansub
Cc: Cathy Carleton
Subject: FW: CORK CITY COUNCIL 2544140

From: Catherine Flynn
Sent: Thursday, February 5, 2026 2:42 PM
To: PlanningInfo <planninginfo@corkcoco.ie>
Cc: Plansub*plansub@corkcity.ie*
Subject: CORK CITY COUNCIL 2544140

A Chara,

The Commission has received a appeal for planning reference number 2544140
This appeal was received by the Commission 4th February 2026.

In order for the Commission to validate this appeal, can you please confirm the following:

1. Your date of decision was
2. Full Development Description.
3. Applicants name and address and/if Agents name and address?
4. If an EIAR was submitted with the planning application at any stage?
5. If an NIS was submitted with this planning application at any stage?
6. If this planning application is for an LRD (Large Residential Development) or if it is for Normal Planning Application.

Kind Regards,

Catherine Flynn

The Secretary
An Coimisiun Pleanála
64 Marlborough Street
Dublin 1
D01 V902

AN COIMISIÚN PLEANÁLA
LDG- 086409-26
ACP- _____
04 FEB 2026
Fee: € 3000 Type: CHA
Time: 15:48 By: Hand *SM*

4th February 2026

Re: Cork City Council Ref. 25/44140
First Party Appeal against a conditions attached to Cork City Council's decision to grant permission for a Large Scale Residential Development comprising 246 no. residential units and a creche at Waterfall Road, Ardarostig (townland), Bishopstown, Cork.

Dear Sir/Madam,

We act on behalf of Bridgewater Homes Ltd. with an address at Unit 2, South Douglas Road, Cork (T12 HFE0), and wish to appeal condition no.s 8, 10, 21, 30(b) and 38 attached to Cork City Council's grant of permission for a Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) located at Waterfall Road, Ardarostig (townland), Bishopstown, Cork comprising the construction of 246 no. residential units¹ and a creche located to the east of and connected to the Waterfall Heights² residential development.

This appeal is accompanied by the appropriate fee of €3,000.

We request that this appeal to An Coimisiun Pleanála (ACP) is considered under section 139 of the 2000 Planning and Development Act (as amended) and restricted to the consideration of condition no.s 8, 10, 21, 30(b) and 38 only.

1. Grounds of Appeal

The grounds of this appeal against condition no.s 8, 10, 21, 30(b) and 38 are summarised as follows:

- **Remove condition no. 8** which requires the crèche to be constructed and "*fully operational*" prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds. It is submitted that condition no. 8, is unreasonable, unnecessary and contrary to the Development Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007).

¹ The LRD comprises 143 no. dwelling houses (comprising a mix of 2, 3, and 4 bed semi-detached and townhouse/ terraced units) and 103 no. duplex/apartment units (comprising 25 no. 1, 2 and 3 bed duplex/apartment units and 78 no. 1 and 2 bed apartments in 3 no. Blocks ranging in height from 4 to 5 storeys with basement/undercroft parking), a 747 sqm creche and all associated ancillary development works including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, drainage (including the re-routing of an existing wayleave), landscaping, amenity and open space/play areas, footpaths and cycle lanes, boundary treatments, bicycle and car parking, bin and bike storage, public lighting and all other ancillary development. There are vehicular, cycle and pedestrian connections to the Waterfall Heights residential development (including two vehicular connection points connecting on to the Waterfall Road via the Waterfall Heights development); a pedestrian/cycle connection to the north (onto an existing footpath/cycle way); and provision for future vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access points to the adjoining lands to the south and east of the proposed development. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) was submitted with the LRD application.

² The Waterfall Heights development permitted by ACP Ref. No. 310274, is currently under construction.

- **Remove condition no. 10** which seeks to provide an active travel route through an unfinished estate/active development site. This requirement is unsafe and not in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- **Remove condition no. 21** which seeks that landscaping is "*fully implemented*" before any of the units are made available for occupation. This runs entirely against the phased delivery of the LRD.
- **Remove condition no. 30(b)** which requires the excavation of all foundations, pile caps, walls, floors etc to be supervised by an archaeologist. This is excessive, onerous and not consistent with standard archaeological conditions.
- **Modify Condition 38**, so that the working hours are extended to 0700-1900 hours, Mondays to Fridays.

Each of the above grounds are outlined in greater detail below.

1.1 Condition no. 8 - Childcare Facility

1.1.1 Condition no. 8 is not in accordance with the Development Management Guidelines

Condition no. 8 requires the childcare facility to be constructed and "***fully operational***" prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds. The full wording of the condition is as follows:

"The childcare facility shall be constructed and operational prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds within the subject site, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, in consultation with Cork City Childcare."

The reason cited for Condition no. 8 is as follows:

"In order to ensure the provision of essential childcare services."

It is submitted that condition no. 8 is ultra vires and imposes a wholly unreasonable and impossible requirement on the developer to have the creche built and "***fully operational*** prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds".

Section 34(4) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended – "the PDA") provides that certain conditions may be imposed in connection with the granting of a planning permission. It states:

"4) Conditions under subsection (1) may, without prejudice to the generality of that subsection, include all or any of the following—

*(b) conditions for requiring the carrying out of works (including the provision of facilities) which the planning authority considers **are required for the purposes of the development authorised by the permission**; (emphasis added)*

(h) conditions for determining the sequence and timing in which and the time at which works shall be carried out."

Section 7.3 of the **Development Management Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2007)** ("the 2007 Guidelines") sets out the basic criteria for planning conditions:

"Certain basic criteria have often been suggested as a guide to deciding whether to impose a condition. These include whether the condition is: Necessary; Relevant to planning; Relevant to the development to be permitted; Enforceable; Precise; and Reasonable."

It is submitted that condition no. 8 of the Council's decision fails a number of the criteria set out under Section 7.3 of the Guidelines in that it is unreasonable and unnecessary.

1.1.2 Condition No. 8 is Not Reasonable

Paragraph 7.3.5 of the 2007 Guidelines provides guidance on what is reasonable in relation to planning conditions. It states:

A condition may be so unreasonable that it would be in danger of rejection by the Courts. For example, it would normally be lawful to impose a continuing restriction on the hours during which an industrial or other use can be carried out, if the use of the premises outside these hours would seriously injure the amenities of property in the vicinity, but it would be unreasonable to restrict the hours of operation to such an extent as to effectively nullify the permission. Again, it may be unreasonable to make a permission subject to a condition which has the effect of deferring the development for a very long period, by requiring, for example, that the permitted development should not be carried out until a sewerage scheme for the area - which may only be at the preliminary design stage - has been completed. If the development is genuinely premature, the application ought to be refused. A condition that requires a developer to carry out additional works may be reasonable but the provisions of section 34(4)(m) of the Planning Act may come into play in some cases where such a condition is attached. Section 34(4)(m) of the Act allows for planning authorities to impose conditions to require a developer to carry out additional works, such as the provision of roads, traffic calming measures, open spaces, car parks, sewers, watermains or drains, facilities for the collection or storage of recyclable materials and other public facilities in excess of the immediate needs of the proposed development, subject to the local authority paying for the cost of the additional works and taking them in charge or otherwise entering into an agreement with the applicant with respect to the provision of those public facilities. If such a condition is attached the planning authority will be liable for the costs of the services over and above the requirements of the development.

*In other cases, a useful test of reasonableness may be to consider whether a proposed condition can be complied with by the developer without encroachment on land that he or she does not control, **or without otherwise obtaining the consent of some other party whose interests may not coincide with his/hers.***

Where planning permissions are conditioned so that childcare facilities must be constructed/occupied before residential units may be constructed or occupied, very often, the developer is being left with the option of subsidising the construction costs and delivering the property to a third party at a loss or not being in a position to continue the residential development until the creche is operational. This cannot be considered reasonable on any basis and imposing a condition requiring it to be delivered before residential units are occupied, effectively nullifies the permission for the housing.

Requiring the childcare facility to be operational at any time but, in particular, before any residential unit (of 2 or more beds) is occupied, goes a step further and is even **more unreasonable**. It requires the consent and cooperation of a third party (creche operator) whose interests may not coincide with the interests of the developer.

The condition therefore directly fails the "reasonable" test set out at paragraph 7.3.5 of the 2007 Guidelines.

The creche will be operated by an external operator and therefore the opening/operating of the creche is completely outside of the developer's control. This very same issue arose as part of a number of recent LRD appeals, including appeal ref. 319654-24 and appeal Ref. LH28.322434 for LRDs in Middleton and Glanmire respectively.

Under appeal ref. 319654-24 Condition 7(a) of the local authority's decision required that "the creche facility shall be constructed and operational as part of phase 1." Under appeal ref. LH28.322434, condition no. 8 of the local authority's decision required "the creche to be constructed and fully operational prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling."

In both appeals, ACP agreed that it was unreasonable to expect a creche to be 'operational' and revised the wording of the conditions to state that the creche would be constructed and made available for use only.

ACP's approach was based on the following assessment as outlined in paragraph's 8.4.3-4 of the Inspector's report under 319654-24 where it was stated that:

"The key issue is the use of the word 'operational'. The applicant considers that it is unreasonable to have the creche operational as part of Phase 1 as this would be operated by an external operator, not the developer. The applicant has no objection to a condition that the creche be constructed and made available for an operator. I agree with the applicant that it is unduly onerous for it to be a requirement of the condition that the creche be operational as part of Phase 1."

Similarly under appeal ref. LH28.322434, the Inspector's report (paragraphs 8.8.3-5) stated that:

*"I would concur that requiring the creche to be operational prior to occupation of the residential units **would not be necessary or reasonable** in this instance, noting that the provision of the creche is designed primarily to accommodate the demand of the proposed development rather than to accommodate existing childcare demand. It would also require the applicant to enter into an agreement with a third party whose interests may not align with that of the development, and this places an unreasonable requirement on the developer"* (emphasis added).

In the case of both appeals cited above, ACP included a condition which stated that the development "shall incorporate the completion of the childcare unit, to **an operational standard**, prior to the completion of the development."

The Childcare Facilities, Guidelines for Planning Authorities (June 2001) ("the 2001 Regulations") also do not require or even suggest that a permission for residential development be conditioned so that the provision of childcare facilities is front-ended.

This is because it is simply not viable and the proper planning and sustainable development of an area must have regard to the viability of a residential scheme. The Government has accepted the viability and funding challenges faced by residential developers in Ireland and have designated housing delivery as a top Government priority. This cannot be undermined by unreasonable conditions in relation to the delivery of creches.

Generally any profit margin achieved by a developer comes in the later stages of a development and therefore funding of the construction of childcare facilities at an early stage of residential developments without a willing creche purchaser/operator is no longer achievable.

It is also well publicised that childcare facilities and early childhood providers are also facing very significant viability challenges as well as staffing shortages. The attached Report of the Federation of Early Childhood Providers provides some detailed information on those challenges.

The difficulties faced by the childcare sector means that, not only are developers struggling in many areas to find persons willing to operate a childcare facility but, indeed that childcare facilities, in many areas, cannot be constructed at a price which operators are willing to pay.

Until the viability issues associated with both sectors are resolved, any condition requiring the construction/operation of childcare facilities in such an early phase of any large scale residential development effectively undermines the permission for those residential units.

In view of the fact that housing delivery is a top priority for the long-term sustainability of our economy and indeed our society, it is irrational and contrary to all principles of sustainable development to impose conditions which effectively undermine the delivery of residential units.

1.1.3 Condition no. 8 is unnecessary and ultra vires

The creche permitted under Cork City Council Ref. 25/44140 is already included as part of Phase 1 of the development and will be delivered as part of the phased and orderly delivery of the LRD. There is no need to go beyond this and require the creche to be either constructed or operational for the purpose of the development authorised by the permission *before* any unit (of 2 or more beds) in that development is occupied. The condition falls foul of Section 34(4)(b), is totally unnecessary and is in fact ultra vires.

1.2 Condition no. 10 - Active Travel Route

Condition no. 10 requires an active travel route which was previously permitted under An Bord Pleanála (ABP) Ref. No. 310274 (as part of the adjoining Waterfall Heights residential scheme), to be completed and operational/usable prior to the commencement of development. The full wording of the condition is as follows:

"The active travel route permitted under ABP Ref No. 310274, shall be completed and operational/usable by members of the public prior to the commencement of development on the remainder of the site."

As can be seen from the Phasing Plan by Deady Gahan Architects (Dwg Ref. 23161/P/011 – see Figure 1 below) the active travel route permitted under ABP Ref. No. 310274 is included in Phase 1 of our clients LRD and not only runs through Phase 1 of our clients LRD, it also runs through part of the adjoining development permitted under ABP Ref No. 310274, which has yet to be completed and won't be completed until Q2 2027.

It is totally unsafe and unnecessary to seek that this section of active travel route be completed and operational/usable by members of the public "*prior to the commencement of development*" of our clients LRD. This would involve constructing, completing and opening a section of active travel route through an active building site, where there is no passive surveillance.

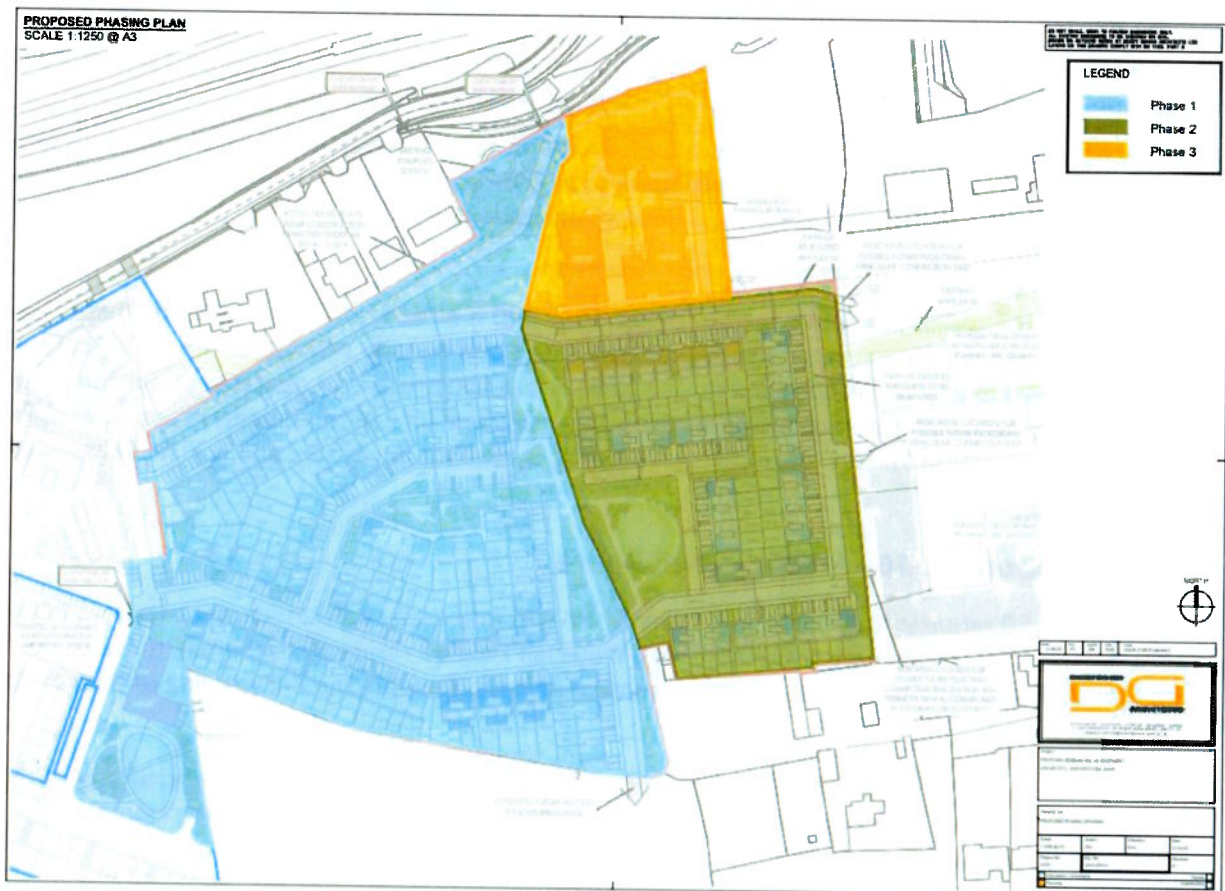


Figure 1: Phasing Plan by Deady Gahan Architects (Dwg Ref. 23161/P/011)

The active travel route running along the northern portion of our clients LRD, is included and will be delivered as part of Phase 1, when it will form a safe and integral part of a residential scheme with proper passive surveillance by the adjoining residential units.

We do not believe that there is any reason or need to complete an active travel route and make it operational/usable by members of the public prior to the commencement of development. To do so would be unsafe and not in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area. It is requested therefore that ACP would **omit condition no. 10**.

1.3 Condition no. 21 - Landscaping Scheme

Condition no. 21 requires landscaping to be fully implemented before **any** of the units are made available for occupation. The full wording of the condition is as follows:

"This landscaping scheme shall be implemented fully before any of the units are made available for occupation and shall be maintained as public open space by the developer until taken in charge by the management company. Any plant materials that die or are removed within 3 years of planting shall be replaced in the first planting season thereafter."

It is submitted that it is completely unreasonable that the landscaping scheme in the permitted scheme has to be implemented "**fully**" before any of the units are made available for occupation. This would involve completing landscaping and open space/amenity areas in residential areas that are under construction.

It would also displace the construction compound for the scheme, which is located on one of the landscaping/amenity areas – this is a common approach by developers when completing residential schemes (especially LRD's) and allows developments to be carried out in a safe and orderly manner.

The provision of landscaping/amenity areas can only be delivered in accordance and in tandem with the phased delivery of the LRD as outlined in the Phasing Plan by Deady Gahan Architects (Dwg Ref. 23161/P/011 – see Figure 1).

Imposing a condition which requires the landscaping scheme to be "**implemented fully**" before any residential units are made available for occupation is not feasible and entirely unreasonable and it is requested that ACP **omit condition no. 21** .

1.4 Condition no. 30(b) - Archaeology

Condition no. 30(b) requires the excavation of all foundations, pile caps, walls and floors etc to be supervised by an archaeologist. The full wording of the condition is as follows:

"The excavation of all foundations, pile caps, walls and floors below present ground level shall be supervised by the archaeologist."

Condition 30(b) goes way beyond the standard condition(s) on archaeology which would normally involve the developer engaging a suitably qualified archaeologist to monitor topsoil stripping, and groundworks and for the archaeologist appointed to consult with the Local Authority's Archaeologist prior to the commencement of development.

Requiring an archaeologist to supervise the excavation of "*all foundations, pile caps, walls and floors*" of every building on-site goes well beyond the normal archaeological monitoring condition(s) and we would ask ACP to **omit condition no. 30(b)**.

1.5 Condition no. 38 – Working Hours

Condition no. 38 restricts working hours to 0800-1800 hours on Mondays to Fridays and 0800-1600 hours on Saturdays. The full wording of the condition is as follows:

"Working hours during site clearance and construction shall be restricted to 0800-1800 hours on Mondays to Fridays and to 0800-1600 hours on Saturdays. Activities outside these hours shall require the prior approval of the Planning Authority."

Restricting working hours to 08:00 to 18:00 (Mondays to Fridays) is unnecessary and will only prolong the overall duration of construction works and delay the delivery of much needed housing in this part of the City.

As part of the planning application material submitted to the City Council, a comprehensive Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) was submitted to the Planning Authority. Section 5.0 of the CEMP dealt with 'Working Hours' and proposed that the standard construction working hours of 7am to

7pm Monday to Friday and 7am to 4pm on Saturdays would apply. Any works proposed outside of this would be agreed in advance with the Local Authority.

There is no reason why the developer should not be able to start construction working hours from 7am. This is standard practice on the majority of construction sites and allows site/construction and delivery traffic to avoid competing with peak hour traffic, especially between 8am and 9am.

The working hours included in condition 38 of the City Council's decision is also inconsistent with the normal construction hours imposed on larger residential schemes, including the following permitted schemes:

- ABP ref. 316101 - 205 no. student accommodation bedspaces at Rossa Avenue, Bishopstown, Cork, where condition no. 16 stated that site development and building works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays, and 0800 to 1400 hours on Saturdays.
- ABP ref. 316101 - 753 no. residential units in Ballyvolane, Cork where condition no. 27 stated that works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Saturdays.
- ABP ref. 317290 - 125 residential units at Ballinacurra, Midleton, Cork where condition no. 18 stated that works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays.
- ABP ref. 318403 - 270 no. residential units at Castleredmond, Midleton, Co. Cork where condition no. 22 stated that works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays.
- ABP ref. 320996 - 166 dwellings at the Ballyhooley Road, Cork where condition no. 20 stated that works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays.
- ABP ref. 28.322434 - 550 no. residential dwellings, 1 creche and 3 commercial units at Dunkettle, Glanmire, Cork where condition no. 19 stated that works shall be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays.

As can be seen from the decisions outlined above, it is standard practice for construction to be carried out between the hours of 0700 to 1900 Mondays to Fridays. It should also be noted that all of the examples cited above were in built up residential areas - by comparison the Ardarostig site is on the southern environs of Bishopstown adjoining the South Link and commercial areas.

There is no valid reason therefore to restrict the working hours to 0800-1800 hours on Mondays to Fridays and we would ask ACP to **modify Condition 38 as follows:**

"Working hours during site clearance and construction shall be restricted to ~~0800-1800~~ 0700-1900 hours on Mondays to Fridays and to 0700-1600 hours on Saturdays. Activities outside these hours shall require the prior approval of the Planning Authority."

2. Conclusion

We would ask ACP to make the following amendments to the City Council's decision:

- **Remove condition no. 8** which requires the crèche to be constructed and fully operational prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds. It is submitted that this condition is wholly unreasonable, unnecessary and ultra vires.
- **Omit condition no. 10** which seeks the delivery and completion of an active travel route through unfinished sections of this (25/44140) LRD and the adjoining residential scheme permitted under ABP Ref. No. 310274 site. To do so would be totally unsafe and not in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
- **Omit condition no. 21** which requires the landscaping scheme to be "*implemented fully*" before any residential units are made available for occupation – this condition is not feasible and entirely unreasonable.
- **Omit condition no. 30(b)** requiring an archaeologist to supervise the excavation of "*all foundations, pile caps, walls and floors*" – this goes well beyond the normal archaeological monitoring condition(s).
- **Modify Condition 38** to allow working hours to be between 0700-1900 hours on Mondays to Fridays and to 0700-1600 hours on Saturdays.

We request that this appeal is considered under section 139 of the 2000 Planning and Development Act (as amended) and restricted to the consideration of condition no.s 8, 10, 21, 30(b) and 38 only.

Please do not hesitate to contact the undersigned if you require any further information.

Yours sincerely,



Tom Halley
McCutcheon Halley

- Encl. 1) Cheque for the appropriate fee of €3,000.
2) Copy of Cork City Council Decision under 25/44140.
3) Report of the Federation of Early Childhood Providers.



COMHAIRLE CATHRACH CHORCAÍ - CORK CITY COUNCIL

**PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT ACT 2000
NOTIFICATION OF DECISION TO GRANT**

Permission

SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS UNDER SECTION 34 OF THE ACT OF 2000

To: Bridgewater Homes Ltd.

Ref No.: 25/44140 Application Received:
05/09/2025

c/o Cailin McNamee
McCutcheon Halley Planning Consultants
6 Joyce House Barrack Square
Ballincoolig Cork

In pursuance of the powers conferred upon them by the above mentioned Acts, Cork City Council have by order dated **29/01/2026** decided to GRANT Permission for the development of land, namely: Permission for the following Large-Scale Residential Development (LRD) located at Waterfall Road, Ardarostig (townland), Bishopstown, Cork comprising the construction of 246 no. residential units and a creche located to the east of and connected to the Waterfall Heights residential development which was permitted by An Coimisiún Pleanála under Ref. No. 310274 and is currently under construction. The proposed LRD comprises 143 no. dwelling houses (comprising a mix of 2, 3, and 4 bed semi-detached and townhouse/ terraced units) and 103 no. duplex/apartment units (comprising 25 no. 1, 2 and 3 bed duplex/apartment units and 78 no. 1 and 2 bed apartments in 3 no. Blocks ranging in height from 4 to 5 storeys with basement/undercroft parking), a 747 sqm creche and all associated ancillary development works including vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access, drainage (including the re-routing of an existing wayleave), landscaping, amenity and open space/play areas, footpaths and cycle lanes, boundary treatments, bicycle and car parking, bin and bike storage, public lighting and all other ancillary development. There are vehicular, cycle and pedestrian connections to the Waterfall Heights residential development (including two vehicular connection points connecting on to the Waterfall Road via the Waterfall Heights development); a pedestrian/cycle connection to the north (onto an existing footpath/cycle way); and provision for future vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access points to the adjoining lands to the south and east of the proposed development. An Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) has been submitted to the planning authority with the application. The Environmental Impact Assessment Report will be available for inspection or purchase at a fee not exceeding the reasonable cost of making a copy during office hours at the offices of the Local Authority. The application may be inspected online at the following website set up by the applicant: www.waterfallmanorlrd.ie at : Waterfall Road, Ardostig (townland), Bishopstown, Cork

In accordance with plans and particulars submitted on 05/09/2025.

Subject to the (57 No.) conditions and reasons set out in the attached Schedule.

If there is no appeal against said decision, a grant of Permission in accordance with the decision, will be issued after the expiration of the period within which an appeal may be made to An Coimisiún Pleanála (see footnote).

It should be noted that until a grant of Permission has been issued, the development in question is **NOT AUTHORISED**.

Signed on behalf of Cork City Council



Niamh Fitzgerald
Administrative Officer
Date: 29/01/2026

NB: See Notes Overleaf

Please read the following carefully

1. The Applicant is advised to carefully read through all conditions and notes attached to this decision. Please note that a number of conditions attached to this planning permission may require the submission of compliance plans and/or particulars for the agreement of the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. Failure to comply with a condition of a planning permission is an offence under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). Such compliance submissions should be emailed to planningcompliance@corkcity.ie
2. An appeal against a decision of a planning authority made under section 34 of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) may be made to An Coimisiún Pleanála within 4 weeks beginning on the date of decision (note: not the date on which the decision is sent or received. This is a statutory time limit and An Coimisiún Pleanála has no discretion to accept late appeals). See enclosed notes. Appeals must be fully complete in all respects, including the appropriate fee, when lodged. It is not permissible to submit any part of an appeal at a later date, even within the time limit. For details of the appeals procedure including details of the correct fee, contact An Coimisiún Pleanála. An Coimisiún Pleanála, 64 Marlborough Street, Dublin 1. www.pleanala.ie.
3. A grant of planning permission under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) is not to be taken as a waiver of the responsibility of the Applicant and/or developer to comply with the provisions of any Act, Order, Regulation or any other statutory provision (e.g. the Building Regulations, Waste Management Acts, etc).
4. A grant of planning permission under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) does not exempt the Applicant from any requirements which the Fire Authority (pursuant to the Fire Services Act, Building Control Act and Building Control Regulations) may require to be implemented. The Applicant is therefore advised to contact the Cork City Fire Department to discuss these matters prior to the submission of the Commencement Notice (as required under the Building Control Regulations) and/or the making of an application for a Fire Safety Certificate (pursuant to the Building Control Regulations, if applicable).
5. Please note that a grant of planning permission does not imply that the submitted drawings are in compliance with the Building Regulations. Compliance with the Building Regulations is a matter for the Applicant and their technical advisors.
6. Any requirements under the above two items may require physical or other changes to the development that may require a grant of permission under the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended). The Applicant is advised to contact the Planning Authority to clarify any issues that may arise.
7. Please note that a grant of planning permission does not entitle the Applicant / developer to undertake works which would involve excavation or damage to the public road, or to erect a hoarding, scaffolding or temporary fencing on the public footway/roadway. The specific consent by way of licence from Cork City Council (Roads Protection and Asset Management Division) will be required for any such works, subject to compliance with the licence conditions as based on the "Directions for the Management and Control of Roadworks in Cork City". In the event of accidental damage to the public footway/roadway the Applicant / developer shall be responsible for its immediate temporary reinstatement. Cork City Council at all times reserves its right to undertake the said works, at the Applicant's / developer's expense, in the event of failure or unsatisfactory execution of the works. The cost of same shall be calculated in accordance with the Roads and Transportation Directorate schedule of reinstatement charges prevailing at the date of the works by Cork City Council.
8. Please note that the provisions of Section 34(13) of the Planning and Development Act 2000 (as amended) which states that a person shall not be entitled solely by reason of a grant of planning permission to carry out any development. Compliance with other regulations and legal requirements may also be necessary.
9. Please note that no part of the proposed development should encroach onto or oversail adjoining public or private land. In the event of encroachment or oversailing of adjoining property, the consent of the adjoining property owner is required.
10. The Planning Authority, in deciding this planning application, has had regard to any submissions or observations received in accordance with the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended).
11. In accordance with Article 20 of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001 (as amended) you are hereby required to remove forthwith any site notice erected in respect of this planning application.

Planning Ref. No.: 25/44140

First Schedule

Having regard to the nature, location and context of the site and surrounding area, the policies and objectives of the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 and the nature and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that, subject to compliance with the conditions set out in the Second Schedule, the proposed development would not seriously injure the residential or visual amenities of the area, and is in accordance with the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.

**Schedule of Conditions attached to
Planning Permission issued by Cork
City Council – Ref.: 25/44140**

Second Schedule

No.	Condition	Reason
1	The development shall be carried out in accordance with the plans and particulars submitted to the planning authority on 05/09/2025, as amended by further information plans and particulars submitted on 28/11/2025, except where otherwise altered or amended by conditions contained in this Schedule.	To define the scope of the permission, and to enable the planning authority to check the proposed development when completed, in the interests of proper planning and sustainable development.
2	Samples (physical or brochure)/full details of all proposed finishes shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to development commencing.	In the interests of visual amenity.
3	Full details of the days and hours of operation of the creche unit shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to development commencing.	In the interests of the amenities of the area.
4	Full details of any signage associated with the creche unit shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to its erection on site.	In the interests of the visual amenity.
5	<p>(a) Prior to the commencement of any house, or duplex unit in the development as permitted, the applicant or any person with an interest in the land shall enter into an agreement with the planning authority (such agreement must specify the number and location of each house or duplex unit), pursuant to Section 47 of the Planning and Development Act 2000, that restricts all houses and duplex units permitted, to first occupation by individual purchasers i.e. those not being a corporate entity, and/or by those eligible for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing, including cost rental housing.</p> <p>(b) An agreement pursuant to Section 47 shall be applicable for the period of duration of the planning permission, except where after not</p>	To restrict new housing development to use by persons of a particular class or description in order to ensure an adequate choice and supply of housing, including affordable housing, in the common good.

	<p>less than two years from the date of completion of each specified housing unit, it is demonstrated to the satisfaction of the planning authority that it has not been possible to transact each specified house or duplex unit for use by individual purchasers and/or to those for the occupation of social and/or affordable housing, including cost rental housing.</p> <p>{c} The determination of the planning authority as required in (b) shall be subject to receipt by the planning and housing authority of satisfactory documentary evidence from the applicant or any person with an interest in the land regarding the sales and marketing of the specified housing units, in which case the planning authority shall confirm in writing to the applicant or any person with an interest in the land that the Section 47 agreement has been terminated and that the requirement of this planning condition has been discharged in respect of each specified housing unit.</p>	
6	<p>The Applicant, or any other person with an interest in the land to which this application relates, shall prior to the lodgement of a commencement notice within the meaning of Part II of the Building Control Regulations 1997, enter into an agreement with the planning authority under Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended, in respect of the matters referred to paragraphs (a) or (b) of Sub - section (3) of Section 96.</p>	<p>To comply with the provisions of Section 96 of the Planning and Development Act, 2000 as amended.</p>
7	<p>The applicant shall enter into a Connection Agreement(s) with Uisce Éireann to provide for a service connection(s) to the public water supply and/or wastewater collection network and adhere to the standards and conditions set out in that agreement. All development shall be carried out in compliance with Uisce Éireann's Standard Details and Codes of Practice. Uisce Éireann does not permit Build Over of its assets. Where the applicant proposes to build over or divert existing water or wastewater services the applicant shall have received written Confirmation of Feasibility (COF) of Diversion(s) from Uisce Éireann prior to any works</p>	<p>To provide adequate water and wastewater facilities.</p>

	commencing.	
8	The childcare facility shall be constructed and operational prior to the occupation of any residential dwelling of 2 or more beds within the subject site, unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, in consultation with Cork City Childcare.	In order to ensure the provision of essential childcare services.
9	Prior to the commencement of development revised details and drawings shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority to clearly show the following: (a) revised elevations and floor plans clearly identifying all secondary high-level windows located on the southern elevation of apartment Block 1 and the western elevation of apartment Block 2, along with the corresponding rooms served by the windows clearly identified in the floor plans. (b) revised Landscape Plan to provide additional tree planting along the northwest boundary of the site.	In the interest of privacy and the protection of residential amenities.
10	The active travel route permitted under ABP Ref No. 310274, shall be completed and operational/usable by members of the public prior to the commencement of development on the remainder of the site.	In the interest of orderly development and support enhanced sustainable mobility.
11	a) The mitigation measures and monitoring commitments identified in the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) and other plans and particulars submitted with the planning application on the 05/09/2025 as amended by the Further Information received on the 28/11/2025 shall be implemented in full by the developer, except as may otherwise be required in order to comply with the following conditions. b) A detailed schedule of these measures and monitoring requirements shall be included in the final Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and any other relevant plans. The final CEMP and monitoring schedule shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any works on site.	In the interest of clarity, protection of the environment and the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.
12	The phasing of the proposed development shall be carried out in accordance with a Final Phasing Strategy to be submitted to and	In the interests of clarity and in order to ensure the satisfactory implementation of the development and services within a timely manner.

	<p>agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. This Phasing Plan shall take account of the requirements of Conditions 8 and 10 above.</p>	
13	<p>Site clearance works, including removal of existing vegetation and buildings, shall not be permitted during the bird nesting season (1st March to 1st September). Where this is not possible, such works shall only proceed if it has been verified in writing by a qualified ecologist that no nest is present. If a nest is present, then works shall only proceed under licence from the National Parks and Wildlife Service. All records of breeding birds shall be submitted to the National Biodiversity Data Centre</p> <p>(b) The developer shall commission a qualified ecologist who is an NPWS licensed bat worker to survey the site for bats prior to commencement of site clearance works and, if there is bat usage of the existing vegetation or buildings of the site found, the developer shall ensure that: a) a licenced bat worker is present on site prior to and during the removal of any existing trees planned for removal and b) all necessary licences for relocation of bats are obtained in advance from NPWS.</p> <p>(c) Prior to the commencement of development, detailed plans shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority to show the quantity (minimum of 6), materials and location (dispersed) of bat roosts to be included within suitable trees, and maintenance details. Such roosts shall be installed under the supervision of a qualified bat ecologist and to follow guidance from Bat Conservation Trust on installation of bat boxes, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.</p>	<p>In order to protect the bird species present on site during the construction phase of the development.</p>
14	<p>(a) A suitably qualified Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) shall be present on-site for the duration of the construction phase.</p> <p>(b) The EcoW shall organise toolbox talks for all construction staff and biosecurity measures to prevent to unintentional introduction of invasive species on site.</p>	<p>To ensure that all targeted ecological mitigation measures within the Ecological Impact Assessment are met.</p>
15	<p>The public lighting shall be friendly towards nocturnal wildlife within the</p>	<p>To reduce the impact of the proposed development on nocturnal</p>

	<p>proposed development and shall follow guidance note from Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Engineers, 2023. A detailed report & drawings of the public lighting scheme to highlight the light spill, lux levels and the light and dark corridors throughout the site shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.</p>	<p>species.</p>
16	<p>Prior to the occupation of the development full details of the incorporation of a variety of bird nest boxes on site, including the locations, number and variety of bird nest boxes (which shall be determined by an experienced ecologist) shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.</p>	<p>To enhance nesting sites for bird species.</p>
17	<p>Prior to the commencement of the development, details shall be provided by the Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) of the location of 2 insect hotels which shall be installed within secluded areas within the development.</p>	<p>To provide habitats for invertebrates.</p>
18	<p>Prior to the commencement of development on site detailed drawings shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority to provide for connectivity within the proposed development for hedgehogs by ensuring the provision of suitable gaps/permeability through fencing, railings, gates of the proposed dwelling units.</p>	<p>To support the use of the whole site by hedgehogs.</p>
19	<p>Prior to the commencement of development, revised details and drawings including location, elevations and floorplans, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority to show the following:</p> <p>(a) Details (including location and elevation plans, and maintenance) shall show which building(s) and elevation(s) which shall incorporate a minimum of 15 swift bricks (located at minimum of 5m above ground).</p> <p>(b) Full details of a caller system(s) playing the recording call of swifts to help establish a new swift breeding site (elevation(s), sound levels, duration / frequency and time periods to be agreed).</p>	<p>To establish a new swift colony within the townland of Ardrostig.</p>

	The swift bricks shall be installed under the guidance of a supervising ecologist, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.	
20	<p>(a) The site shall be landscaped, and earthworks carried out in accordance with the detailed Landscape Masterplan and Landscape & Green Infrastructure Report which accompanied the application submitted, unless otherwise agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of the development.</p> <p>(b) Boundary treatment details shall be carried out in accordance with the Boundary Treatment Plan submitted to the Planning Authority unless affected by conditions in this permission or otherwise agreed in writing with the Planning Authority.</p>	In the interest of visual and residential amenity.
21	This landscaping scheme shall be implemented fully before any of the units are made available for occupation and shall be maintained as public open space by the developer until taken in charge by the management company. Any plant materials that die or are removed within 3 years of planting shall be replaced in the first planting season thereafter.	In the interest of visual and residential amenity and to ensure the satisfactory development of the public open space areas, and their continue use for this purpose.
22	The developer/Landscape Architect shall submit a Certificate of Effective Completion of Landscape Works (which shall be completed by a registered Landscape Architect – (Irish Landscape Institute) or Chartered Landscape Architect (UK Landscape Institute) and which states that the landscape works are in accordance with the lodged plans and particulars.	To ensure the satisfactory development of the of all landscape areas both public and private.
23	All wildflower seeds used for the creation of any wildflower meadows shall be of native species, suitable to the soil type, of local provenance and sourced within 50kms of the proposed site. The supplier shall provide certification of provenance and species origin prior to sowing. No substitutions of species or origin is permitted without the prior written approval from the Planning Authority.	In the interest of biodiversity.
24	Any hedgerow which forms part of the boundary of a property shall be the sole responsibility of the property owner and shall be maintained by them and shall not be removed unless without the express	In the interest of biodiversity.

	prior written agreement of the Planning Authority. This condition shall be brought to the notice of the estate agent and purchasers prior to sale of the relevant properties.	
25	The natural play areas and exercise equipment shall conform to relevant European standards. A post installation inspection shall be completed prior to completion of the development - the details of which shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to occupation of the development.	In the interest of public safety.
26	The management and maintenance of the natural play areas and exercise equipment shall be the sole responsibility of the appointed Management Company.	In the interest of the provision of sustainable play areas.
27	A maintenance plan for the Green Roofs shall be submitted – stating the life span and what are the contingencies if it fails.	In the interest of biodiversity , and sustainable nature based solutions.
28	Proposals for an estate/street name (in Irish and English), house numbering scheme and associated signage shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority prior to commencement of development. Thereafter, all estate and street signs, and house numbers, shall be provided in accordance with the agreed scheme. The proposed name(s) shall be based on local historical or topographical features, or other alternatives acceptable to the planning authority. No advertisements/marketing signage relating to the name(s) of the development shall be erected until the developer has obtained the planning authority's written agreement to the proposed name(s)	In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.
29	If, during the course of site works and construction, archaeological material is discovered, the City Archaeologist shall be notified immediately. Further, it is obligatory under the National Monuments Amendment Act 1994 (Amended 2004) that such is brought to the attention of the National Monuments Service.	In the interest of preserving in situ or by record archaeological material likely to be damaged or destroyed in the course of development.
30	(a) Prior to commencement of development the developer shall retain the services of a suitably qualified archaeologist at the developer's expense to advise regarding the archaeological implications of the development site.	To ensure the continued preservation (either in situ or by record) of features of archaeological significance.

	<p>Notification of these arrangements shall be submitted to and agreed with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of any development.</p> <p>(b) The excavation of all foundations, pilecaps, walls and floors below present ground level shall be supervised by the archaeologist.</p> <p>(c) The Planning Authority shall be notified of the commencement of the development in writing.</p> <p>(d) The archaeologist shall submit a report to the Planning Authority outlining the results of the investigation and a report on any archaeological finds.</p>	
31	The applicant or developer shall enter into water and/or wastewater connection agreement(s) with Uisce Eireann prior to the commencement of this development.	To ensure the satisfactory completion of water supply and waste water collection infrastructure.
32	Prior to the commencement of the development, the applicant shall submit and agree details in writing with the Planning Authority of the internal road network serving the proposed development, including, where applicable, turning bays/areas, cul-de-sac's, circulation routes, ramps, junctions, parking area, footpaths and kerbs, and signing & lining. All works shall be in accordance with the details construction standards of the planning authority for such works and design standards outlined in the Design Manual for Urban Roads and Streets and/or the Sustainable Residential Development in Urban Areas guidance and Making Places A design guide for residential estate development guidance,. All costs associated with the condition shall be borne by the developer.	In the interest of amenity and of traffic and pedestrian safety
33	The areas of the development for Taking in Charge shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority, prior to the commencement of development on site. The developer shall provide wayleaves in advance of Taking in Charge Application submission for any public infrastructure located within private areas, e.g. within private car parking spaces.	To provide for the satisfactory future maintenance of the development in the interest of residential amenity.
34	Any damage to the existing road(s), footpath and services resulting from this development shall be repaired	In the interest of orderly development.

	<p>by the developer at his own expense, to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.</p>	
<p>35</p>	<p>(a) Construction waste such as wood, metal, and concrete, shall be segregated and submitted for recycling. Waste Gypsum shall be segregated and delivered to an appropriate facility. Hazardous construction waste such as paint, lubricants, oil, lighting, wood preservative shall be segregated and disposed of at an authorised facility.</p> <p>(b) All asbestos arising from the demolition section of this development shall be disposed of in accordance with the procedures of Health and Safety Authority "Guidelines on Working with Materials Containing Asbestos Cement".</p> <p>(c) The developer shall ensure that any waste moved off site during site clearance operations or construction works is removed by authorised waste contractors only. The material shall be taken only to sites authorised by a local authority or the Environmental Protection Agency.</p> <p>(d) The developer shall consult with Cork City Council in regard to any proposed offsite disposal of excavated soil or other construction waste and shall submit details of proposed disposal sites along with estimated quantities of waste prior to commencement of construction activities. The developer shall submit a construction and demolition waste management plan to the planning authority. This plan shall, inter alia, include the information recommended in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 of the document titled "Best Practice Guidelines on the Preparation of Waste Management Plans for Construction and Development Projects" published by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government in June 2006.</p> <p>(e) The information provided in the Construction Management Plan and Waste Management Plan is sufficient. Prior to the commencement of the development, an updated Construction Management Plan and Waste Management Plan needs to be</p>	<p>In the interest of orderly management and disposal of waste.</p>

	resubmitted to the Local Authority for agreement when the main contractor has been appointed or when changes have occurred to the previously submitted plans.	
36	<p>(a) During the construction and demolition phases, the proposed development shall comply with British Standard 5228 "Noise Control on Construction and open sites Part 1. Code of practice for basic information and procedures for noise control."</p> <p>(b) Noise levels from the proposed development shall not be so loud, so continuous, so repeated, of such duration or pitch or occurring at such times as to give reasonable cause for annoyance to a person in any premises in the neighbourhood or to a person lawfully using any public place. In particular, the rated noise levels from the proposed development shall not constitute reasonable grounds for complaint as provided for in B.S. 4142 "Method for rating industrial noise affecting mixed residential and industrial areas".</p> <p>(c) Prior to the commencement of the development, should any changes occur to the previously submitted plans, the developer shall identify all potentially significant noise sources at the proposed development site, and their expected noise output quantified by (a) reference to LWA levels or LAeq T levels (at a specified distance) provided by the manufacturer/supplier, (b) reference to typical levels set out in the relevant British Standards BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, or (c) direct measurement of the equipment onsite or at a similar facility. Items that need to be considered are extract fans, air-conditioning, etc. (This is a non-exhaustive list.)</p>	In order to ensure a satisfactory standard of development, in the interests of residential amenity.
37	(a) The developer shall constitute a waste management company or structure for dealing with waste arising in the development. Prior to commencement of development the developer shall submit to the Planning Authority for written agreement, full details of a waste management structure proposed for the development. Details shall include proposals for waste	In the interest of orderly management and disposal of waste.

reduction, reuse, recycling, vented bin storage, as well as who will manage the waste, present it for collection, and dispose of it.

(b) The developer shall provide and maintain within the confines of the site, facilities for the storage of recyclable materials e.g. paper, cardboard, glass, and metal. The developer shall make arrangements for the proper collection and submission for recycling of these materials.

(c) All solid wastes arising on the site shall be recycled as far as possible. Materials exported from the site for recovery, recycling or disposal shall be managed at an approved facility and in such a manner as is agreed with the Planning Authority. In any case no such wastes shall be stored on the site except within the confines of the buildings on site. Adequate on site arrangements shall be made to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority for the storage of recyclable materials prior to collection. The developer shall ensure that the site and its environs are maintained at all times in a clean and tidy condition. The applicant shall maintain a register of waste material disposed from the site and records shall be made available for inspection by the Local Authority at all reasonable times.

(d) Prior to commencement of the development the Developer shall submit to the planning authority for agreement, full details of the waste management proposed for the development. Details shall include proposals on waste reduction, reuse, and segregation, recycling, and vented storage as well as who will manage the waste, dispose of it and present it for collection. The developer shall clearly identify vented bin storage area of appropriate capacity, clearly identifying on the drawing designated location for same with dimensions clearly visible.

The developer should refer to the British standards BS 5906: 2005 in relation to waste management in buildings to ascertain capacity

	required for development.	
38	<p>(a) Noise during site clearance and construction shall not exceed 65 dB (A), Leq 30minutes and the peak noise shall not exceed 75 dB (A), when measured at any point off site.</p> <p>(b) Working hours during site clearance and construction shall be restricted to 0800-1800 hours on Mondays to Fridays and to 0800-1600 hours on Saturdays. Activities outside these hours shall require the prior approval of the Planning Authority.</p> <p>(c) Bored piling as opposed to percussive piling shall be used during site clearance and construction.</p>	In the interests of residential amenity.
39	<p>(a) The Developer shall ensure that no appreciable negative environmental impacts occur because of the construction works associated with this development. The developer shall give particular attention to dust, noise, odour, litter, dirt on public roads, surface water runoff and spillage of fuel oils. Operations liable to produce dust shall be screened and dust suppression devices used where appropriate. Fuel oils and other chemicals shall be adequately bunded, with bunds having volumes of at least 110% of the volumes of fuel stored.</p> <p>(b) The developer shall take measures to ensure that construction works do not give rise to dirt or litter on the public road, and shall be responsible for the immediate removal from the public road of any dirt or litter caused by the construction works.</p> <p>(c) The developer shall ensure that any waste moved off-site during site clearance operations or construction works is removed by authorised waste contractors only. The material shall be taken only to sites authorised by a local authority or the Environmental Protection Agency.</p>	In the interests of orderly management and disposal of waste.
40	<p>(a) The developer shall ensure that any excavated material stockpiled on site during construction shall be held in a manner such as to ensure that no silt or run-off from these stockpiles enters any watercourse.</p>	In the interest of preservation of wildlife.

	(b) The developer shall ensure that surface water from the development is free from herbicides, pesticides, fertilisers and other substances which could have a harmful affect on the environment.	
41	Prior to commencement of development the developer shall submit to the Planning Authority for agreement, proposals for energy use within the development. The developer shall endeavour to use sustainable sources of energy, and to operate an energy conservation policy on the design and operation of the complex. In particular the use of combined heat and power technology shall be investigated for possible use.	In the interest of sustainable development.
42	Prior to the commencement of development, the developer shall prepare a Construction and Demolition Resource Waste Management Plan (RWMP) as set out in the Best Practice Guidelines for the Preparation of Resource and Waste Management Plans for C&D Projects (2021) including demonstration of proposals to adhere to best practice and protocols. The RWMP shall include specific proposals as to how the RWMP will be measured and monitored for effectiveness. These details shall be placed on the file and retained as part of the public record. The RWMP shall be submitted to the planning authority for its written agreement prior to the commencement of development. All records (including for waste and all resources) pursuant to the agreed RWMP shall be made available for inspection at the site office at all times.	In the interest of proper planning and sustainable development.
43	All drainage shall be separated throughout. All paved and roofed areas shall discharge to the storm drainage system. All toilets, urinals, wash hand basins, sinks, showers, baths, dishwashers and washing machines shall discharge to the foul drainage system.	In the interest of public health.
44	The Applicant shall comply with their obligations under the Water Services Act 2007 (as amended) and Part H of the Building Regulations 2016 in terms of avoiding any negative impacts upon existing drains and sewers, including private common drainage.	In the interest of public health.
45	Drainage layouts and details shall be	In the interest of public health.

	In accordance with drainage layouts, drawings, details and calculations submitted as part of the Planning Submission and as modified by Further Information, subject to drainage conditions.	
46	Upon completion, the developer shall submit a SuDS Assessment Report based on the as-constructed development. This report shall include drainage layouts, drawings, details, calculations and confirm the discharge rate from the development.	In the interest of public health.
47	Prior to commencement of development on site the developer shall confirm that the proposed attenuation system makes adequate provision for access for inspection and maintenance (including desilting), be suitable for use in areas affected by groundwater and be suitably load-rated to withstand traffic loadings. Where a development is to be taken in charge, attenuation tanks shall be reinforced concrete tanks.	In the interest of public health.
48	<p>Prior to commencement, clarification shall be given with respect to the Management / Taking in Charge of the proposed development.</p> <p>Where it is intended that the development is not to be Taken in Charge, the Applicant shall propose a management system for operation and maintenance of the drainage system including the petrol interceptors and attenuation tanks within the site.</p> <p>Where it is intended that the development's drainage infrastructure is to be Taken in Charge, the following shall apply:</p> <p>a) All drainage laid in public areas shall be in accordance with the City Council Minimum Engineering Requirements and / or Uisce Éireann's Wastewater Code of Practice (as per prior agreement with the Drainage Section of Cork City Council). No public sewer shall be within 5m of an existing or proposed structure.</p> <p>b) Detailed design and longitudinal sections shall be submitted to the Planning Authority.</p> <p>c) On completion of the</p>	In the interest of public health.

	<p>development, 4Nr. sets of "As Constructed" drawings in agreed electronic format shall be provided to the Planning Authority.</p> <p>d) On completion of the development, CCTV shall be provided for all drainage (including attenuation tanks) to be Taken in Charge. Where necessary, remedial works shall be carried out as determined by the Planning Authority.</p> <p>e) On completion of the development, 4Nr. sets of the Safety File and Operation and Maintenance Manual in agreed electronic format shall be provided for the attenuation tanks, swales, filter drains, etc. and/or all other SuDS features.</p> <p>f) Wayleave agreements shall be entered into to allow Cork City Council access to the public sewers within the site for the purpose of maintenance. Wayleave drawings shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority. No public sewer, or drainage infrastructure such as tanks etc., shall be within 5m of an existing or proposed structure.</p>	
49	The future potential active travel and vehicular access point to the east and south of the site shall be constructed to the boundary of the proposed scheme to ensure unimpeded connectivity to the neighbouring zoned lands to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority.	In the interest of orderly development and support enhanced sustainable mobility.
50	Prior to the commencement of development on site revised drawings shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority to show the removal/relocation of a basement car park space opposite the access point to the basement cycle parking under Apartment Block 3.	To support enhanced sustainable mobility.
51	The off-curtilage parking spaces opposite Units 1089-1093 (11 spaces) shall not be reserved for individual residential units and shall be subject to 'taking in charge' as they lie between the public road and the public footpath.	In the interest of sustainable transportation.
52	The final 'Taking in Charge' details/mapping shall be agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to the completion of the	To ensure equitable access to sustainable transport options.

	development and shall include the final locations of all electric vehicle charging points. All EV noted parking spaces shall be enabled to support the delivery of electric vehicle charging points and shall be designed in line with the Universal Access Guidelines as prepared by Zero Emission Vehicles Ireland.	
53	The final construction traffic management plan shall be prepared in consultation with the appropriate Directorates in Cork City Council, and shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Planning Authority prior to commencement of development. The plan shall include further details of the phasing of works, details of construction traffic access routes, construction related parking, the location of the compound for the storage of plant and machinery, etc..	In the interest of orderly development.
54	(a) All areas not intended to be taken in charge by the local authority, shall be maintained by a legally constituted management company. (b) Details of the management company contract, and drawings/particulars describing the parts of the development for which the company would have responsibility, shall be submitted to, and agreed in writing with, the planning authority before any of the residential units are made available for occupation.	To provide for the satisfactory future maintenance of the development in the interest of residential amenity.
55	Prior to commencement of development, the developer shall lodge with the planning authority a cash deposit, a bond of an insurance company, or other security to secure the provision and satisfactory completion and maintenance until taken in charge by the local authority of roads, footpaths, public lighting, drains, public open space, and other services required in connection with the development, coupled with an agreement empowering the local authority to apply such security or part thereof to the satisfactory completion or maintenance of any part of the development. The form and amount of the security shall be as agreed between the planning authority and the developer or, in default of agreement, shall be referred to An Bord Pleanála for determination.	To ensure the satisfactory completion and maintenance of the development until taken in charge.
56	At least one month before	It is considered appropriate that the

	<p>commencing development or at the discretion of the Planning Authority within such further periods of time as it may nominate in writing, the development shall pay a special contribution of €26,250* to Cork City Council, updated monthly in accordance with the Consumer Price Index from the date of grant of permission to the date of payment in respect of works proposed to be carried out by the authority for the upgrade to the Waterfall Road/ Bandon Road junction necessary to support the additional traffic generated by the proposed development. The payment of the said contribution shall be subject to the following:</p> <p>(a) Where the works in question –</p> <p>(i) are not commenced within 5 years of the date of payment of the contribution (or final instalment if paid by phased payment, or</p> <p>(ii) have commenced but have not been completed within 7 years of the date of payment of the contribution (or final instalment if paid by phased payment, or</p> <p>(iii) where the Council has decided not to proceed with the proposed works or part thereof, the contribution shall, subject to paragraph (b) below</p> <p>(b), be refunded to the applicant together with any interest which may have accrued over the period while held by the Council.</p>	<p>developer should contribute towards these specific exceptional costs, for works which will benefit the proposed development</p>
57	<p>Prior to the commencement of the proposed development, the Developer shall pay or enter into an agreement with the Planning Authority to pay a contribution to Cork City Council in respect of the following classes of public infrastructure and facilities benefiting development in the City of Cork and that is provided or that is intended to be provided by or on behalf of Cork City Council, in accordance with the General Development Contributions Scheme ("the GDSC scheme"):</p> <p>Class 1 - Roads, Transportation Infrastructure and Facilities</p> <p>Class 2 - Water and Drainage Infrastructure and Facilities excluding Water and Wastewater</p> <p>Class 3 - Parks, Recreation, Amenity and Community Facilities</p>	<p>To comply with the General Development Contribution Scheme 2023-2029, which was adopted by Cork City Council on 13th February, 2023, and in the interests of the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.</p>

	<p>The present value of the contribution as determined under the GDCS made by Cork City Council on the 13th February, 2023 is €646563.87, which sum is subject to indexation in accordance with the Consumer Price Index prevailing at the date of payment and subject further to such exemptions or reductions as apply to the proposed development having regard to the provisions of Tables 5 and 6 of the GDC Scheme.</p>	
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**Federation of Early
Childhood Providers**

FEDERATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD PROVIDERS

VOICES FROM THE FRONTLINES: SERVICE
PROVIDERS IDENTIFY KEY CHALLENGES AND
OPPORTUNITIES FOR IRELAND'S ELC AND SAC
SECTOR

Prepared by

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report, developed by the Federation of Early Childhood Providers and based on first-hand information from the Early Years Learning (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) services in Ireland, presents a comprehensive overview of the challenges and concerns facing these service providers. The report is divided into several sections, each exploring a different aspect of the sector.

It is important to note that various issues recur throughout the document and are dealt with in more than one section, indicative of the complex nature of the ELC and SAC sector in Ireland.

FUTURE OF EARLY YEARS SECTOR: INTENTIONS TO CLOSE IN JUNE 2023

A recent survey reveals that 7% of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) providers in Ireland plan to close in June 2023, with 68% unsure of their businesses' future. Key reasons include financial viability, staffing challenges, administrative burden, mental health and well-being, and lack of respect and appreciation. Immediate government intervention is required to address these challenges and ensure the sustainability of this vital sector.

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS IN THE ELC AND SAC SECTOR IN IRELAND

Drawing directly from ELC and SAC services' experiences, this section highlights the main issues contributing to service closure threats, financial struggles, staffing difficulties, and overall dissatisfaction with the current state of the sector. Key findings include the staffing crisis, with 73% of respondents stating that it is impacting their services, and a significant disconnect between providers and the Department, with 98% of respondents feeling they are not engaged as partners.

CHALLENGES FACED BY SESSIONAL ELC AND SAC SERVICE PROVIDERS IN IRELAND

This section examines the feedback from sessional ELC and SAC service providers, who feel undervalued, overworked, and underpaid. It also discusses the impact of regulations on their ability to provide quality care, with insights gathered directly from the providers themselves.

FACTORS ENCOURAGING ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND TO SIGN UP FOR CORE FUNDING

Informed by the concerns and suggestions of ELC and SAC providers, this section presents the factors affecting their decision, and intention, to sign up for Core Funding in the early years sector, covering aspects such as financial reasons, core funding, administrative burden, and control over businesses.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS IN ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND

This section evaluates the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) within ELC and SAC services, based on their first-hand experiences. Key findings include 95% of services noting an increase in the number of children requiring support over the past three years and the need to potentially revise support systems in place for the ELC and SAC providers in Ireland.

THE FUTURE OF EARLY YEARS SECTOR IN IRELAND: ELC AND SAC PROVIDERS' INTENTIONS TO CLOSE IN JUNE 2023

INTRODUCTION

A recent survey of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) providers in Ireland has revealed a concerning trend regarding the future of these services. With 7% of providers intending to close in June 2023 and a further 68% unsure of their businesses' future, the impact on families and communities could be significant. This report investigates the key reasons behind these decisions through direct quotes from providers and highlights the need for immediate government intervention to ensure the sustainability of this vital sector.

MAIN FINDINGS

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Many providers expressed financial concerns, with one stating that their service is "not economically viable." Another provider said, "ECCE only scheme capitation is not nearly sufficient to stay in operation," while another commented that they "had to borrow €7,000 to cover staff wages & holidays."

STAFFING CHALLENGES

Providers reported difficulties in hiring and retaining qualified staff, with one saying they "can't cope with no staff." Another provider lamented the "increasingly difficult[to] hire staff" and the hoops they need to jump through to hire short-term workers. A provider said they were "burnt out with the stress of staff out sick, on holiday - no cover."

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

The excessive paperwork and administrative pressures have caused frustration among providers. One provider stated, "it's not about the kids when I'm there nowadays, it's about paperwork and red-tape." Many providers believe that the inspection process and paperwork requirements should be streamlined to ease the burden on their businesses.

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The constant scrutiny, financial uncertainty, and administrative workload have taken a toll on providers' mental health and well-being. One provider said they were "overwhelmed with stress and financially struggling," while another mentioned they were "burnt out" and felt "no money, lots of bills."

LACK OF RESPECT AND APPRECIATION

A common theme among providers is a sense of being undervalued and underappreciated, with providers expressing feelings over being "undervalued" and stating that there is a "lack of full understanding of what we do for children."

RECOMMENDATIONS

REVIEW AND INCREASE CAPITATION LEVELS

The government should review and increase capitation levels to ensure the financial viability of ELC and SAC services. This would enable providers to cover their operational costs, pay staff competitive wages, and continue to offer quality care for children.

ADDRESS STAFFING CHALLENGES

The government should address the staffing challenges faced by providers, such as providing funding for relief staff and streamlining the process of hiring qualified professionals for short-term positions.

SIMPLIFY ADMINISTRATIVE PROCESSES

Efforts should be made to simplify and streamline administrative processes, including inspection and paperwork requirements. This would allow providers to focus on their core responsibility of caring for and educating children.

FOSTER RESPECT AND APPRECIATION

Greater efforts should be made to foster a culture of respect and appreciation for ELC and SAC providers, acknowledging their critical role in the development and well-being of Ireland's children.

CONCLUSION

The future of the early years sector in Ireland depends on the sustainability of ELC and SAC services. Immediate action is required from the government to address the financial, staffing, administrative, and mental health challenges faced by providers. Without such support, the consequences of service closures on families, communities, and the future of Ireland's children could be dire. By incorporating the voices of providers and addressing their concerns, the government can take the necessary steps to create a more sustainable and supportive environment for the early years sector.

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS IN THE ELC AND SAC SECTOR IN IRELAND

INTRODUCTION

This section aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges and concerns facing service providers in the early years learning and school age childcare sector in Ireland. Based on survey responses from service providers, this report identifies and analyses the main issues that contribute to service closure threats, financial struggles, staffing difficulties, and overall dissatisfaction with the current state of the sector.

The findings of the survey highlight a number of pressing issues facing the sector. While 86% of respondents have signed up for CORE funding, only 75% intend to do so in September 2023. This could potentially impact the accessibility and affordability of childcare services for many families. Additionally, with 49% of respondents prioritising full-time places this year and 40% discontinuing part-time places in September 2023, the availability of flexible childcare options is also diminishing.

One of the most concerning findings is the staffing crisis within the sector, with 73% of respondents stating that it is impacting their services.

It is apparent that there is a significant disconnect between ELC and SAC providers and the decision-making process for ELC and SAC, as 98% of respondents feel they are not engaged as partners in the sector. Moreover, the administrative burden on providers has increased considerably over the past five years, with 99% experiencing an increase and 94% indicating that the increase has been substantial. The resulting stress has negatively impacted the mental health of 92% of respondents.

MAIN ISSUES RAISED

STRESS AND BURNOUT

Many providers report experiencing high levels of stress and burnout due to the administrative burden, constant inspections, and the pressure of maintaining ratios. This has led to negative impacts on their mental health and family life, with some even experiencing physical health issues. Participants described the sector as "very stressful," "soul-destroying," and "at crisis point." Another respondent stated that the pressure of financial worries, staff shortages, and excessive paperwork has negatively affected their mental health.

LACK OF RECOGNITION AND RESPECT

The feedback from the service providers reveals a significant level of frustration with the government and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Providers feel undervalued and that their work is not respected. They feel that the government is focused on paperwork over children's needs and that this has led to a reduction in the quality of care. Self-employed wages are also reducing, making it difficult for providers to keep their businesses afloat. Staff absenteeism is a constant issue, and providers find it very challenging to manage. The feedback also indicates that there is discouragement from entering the sector due to these issues.

Providers feel undervalued and disrespected by the government, with many feeling that those working in the sector are being driven out. They express a desire for more recognition, better pay, and improved pension and holiday benefits, similar to those in the teaching profession. One respondent reported a lack of trust and respect towards them as educators and business owners, feeling that they are treated like children, especially when non-compliant with Tusla, Ireland's Child and Family Agency.

STAFFING CRISIS

A significant issue raised is the difficulty in attracting and retaining staff, with many leaving for better-paying roles in schools or other sectors. The lack of incentives and job security is a major concern for providers, who fear losing even more qualified staff to Special Needs Assistant (SNA) posts.

LOSING TRAINED STAFF TO OTHER SECTORS AND EMPLOYERS

Despite significant training costs being incurred by numerous services, there is widespread reports of losing staff to other sectors and employers, including Tusla, Better Start, Dept of Education, SNA positions, Training Colleges, etc. One service stated that "my own Preschool has lost two staff to both Dept of Ed and a training college over the past few weeks."

TRAINING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

There is a perception that the sector is in need of professionalisation, with many providers feeling that their qualifications and training are not being recognised or respected. Additionally, the cost of obtaining a degree is often viewed as too high for the potential financial reward.

It should also be noted that, when asked to, the sector carried out a comprehensive and very significant upskilling initiative, generating a highly experienced, innovative and skilled workforce, including both business owners and those employed. When professional development within the sector is supported, there is, as has been demonstrated in the past, a clear progression route from room leader to business owner.

APPRENTICESHIP MODEL

In a recent separate survey, related to the above issues, 84% of services (434) stated that they would support an Apprenticeship model if it was introduced to the sector. This offers a potential option in terms of addressing the current staffing crisis.

QUALITY OF CARE FOR CHILDREN

The feedback from the service providers highlights significant concerns about the quality of care for children. The Aistear Framework Curriculum and Siolta cannot be delivered under current ratios, and children will lose out for the next 5 years or more. Providers feel that they are overregulated and answerable to too many agencies. Staff shortages and constant admin and paperwork are making it challenging to maintain the quality of care. Providers believe that the core funding model has kicked quality into the background, leading to a change in mood due to ERO and core funding. Providers are at breaking point financially, and quality is being forced to cut corners to keep businesses afloat.

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Providers report insufficient funding for the sector, particularly for AIM and ECCE. Core funding is not fit for purpose, and the lack of investment is making it difficult for services to remain viable. This has given rise to the likelihood of potential closures, due to the failure of the funding model and the fact that "one size does not fit all" when developing a funding model for the sector.

Providers also express concerns about the rising costs of running their businesses and paying staff. One participant claimed that "small services will disappear over the next decade" due to the financial struggles faced by small businesses in the sector.

OVERREGULATION AND ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Providers feel overwhelmed by the amount of paperwork, inspections, and regulatory requirements placed on them. This has led to a shift in focus away from the children and their experiences, as providers are

increasingly consumed by administrative tasks. One respondent mentioned that the increased administrative burden has led to a lack of quality interactions with children and an overall decline in the quality of early years services. For example, the sector is subject to inspections from a wide number of different agencies, departments and organisations, giving rise to duplication, repetition and lack of clarity for the sector, e.g. Tusla, Pobal, Department of Education, HSE Environmental Officer, etc.

IMPACT ON SMALL SERVICES

It is evident that small services are struggling more than larger corporate providers. Many small providers feel that the government is favouring larger corporate services, forcing smaller businesses to close due to lack of funding and support. For example, "recent media coverage indicates some examples of services expanding, however these are all chains, an example of the funding model more suited to this business model."

TERMINOLOGY

Many within the sector believe that the terminology used by the Department has failed to acknowledge the role and professionalism of the sector. For example, in a separate study focusing on the use of the term 'education', 91% of respondents (667) stated that the term was extremely important, with 96% stating that Early Childhood Education and Care is a more appropriate title for their role than Early Learning and Care.

SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Providers report a growing number of children with additional needs requiring extra support. However, they feel that the current support systems, such as Better Start and AIM, are insufficient, and resources are not available to adequately support these children.

CONCLUSION

The ELC and SAC sector in Ireland is facing a multitude of challenges that impact the overall quality and sustainability of services. Key issues identified include stress and burnout, lack of recognition and respect, staffing crisis, funding and financial viability, overregulation and administrative burden, the impact on small services, training and professional development, support for children with additional needs, and pressure from parents and changing demands. Service providers express a strong desire for more recognition, respect, and support from the government and the wider society. To address these concerns and improve the overall quality of the sector, it is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to engage in open dialogue with service providers and take concrete steps towards addressing these challenges.

Recommendations for addressing these challenges include:

- Increasing funding and financial support for providers, particularly for small services and those catering to children with additional needs.
- Streamlining regulations and reducing the administrative burden on providers to allow them to focus on the quality of care and education for children.
- Implementing measures to attract and retain qualified staff, such as competitive wages, career incentives, and professional development opportunities.
- Recognising and respecting the qualifications, training, and expertise of ELC and SAC professionals.
- Strengthening support systems and resources for children with additional needs.

CHALLENGES FACED BY SESSIONAL ELC AND SAC SERVICE PROVIDERS IN IRELAND (SESSIONAL ONLY)

INTRODUCTION

Sessional services play a critical role in early childhood education and care in Ireland. However, recent feedback from service providers in this sector indicates a significant level of concern and frustration. The providers feel undervalued, overworked, and underpaid. They also express concerns about the quality of care for children and the impact of regulations on their ability to provide quality care. This report will examine the feedback received and identify the main issues highlighted by the service providers.

MAIN FINDINGS

FUNDING AND FINANCIAL CHALLENGES

One of the most significant issues facing ELC and SAC providers is the lack of funding and financial support. Providers report struggling to pay staff and themselves adequately, with one stating, "I pay my staff more than myself. I only can afford a wage once a month of €300." The lack of funding has forced some providers to consider downsizing or closing their services, as one provider said, "I am struggling and NOT viable or sustainable with the core funding. It can't be one for all. I am going to stay open one more year out of loyalty to my parents and in the hope the department will see how wrong they have got the new funding model for ECCE only services. I don't want to close."

STAFFING ISSUES

The ELC and SAC sector is experiencing a significant shortage of qualified staff, leading to difficulties in maintaining appropriate staffing ratios and providing adequate support for children with additional needs. Providers report a lack of applicants for open positions, with one provider stating, "We have advertised, but there is no one applying." The staffing crisis is also causing staff burnout, with one provider sharing a story of experienced staff members leaving after a "chaotic" session.

The sector is experiencing difficulties in attracting and retaining qualified staff. For example, providers have mentioned having only one applicant for a position, which they had to offer immediately due to desperation. This staffing shortage may result in the closure of ELC and SAC services in the coming years, as one provider admitted, "Lack of staff will, more than likely, see our service close in the next few years."

ADMINISTRATION WORKLOAD

Providers report feeling overwhelmed by the administrative workload required in the sector, with one provider stating, "Administration workload is immense." The excessive paperwork and documentation demands have led to some providers "drowning in paperwork," affecting their ability to focus on the quality of care and education for the children. This is exacerbated by the use of a 'portal' that is deemed "not fit for purpose" by many.

The administrative burden often leaves providers feeling overwhelmed and stressed, with little time for actual childcare and education.

INCLUSION AND SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS

Many providers welcome children with additional needs into their services but face challenges in providing adequate support. One provider shared their experience: "Needs are incredibly high and complex, and most are not assessed yet, so we are stabbing in the dark to provide the best care for their needs."

The lack of support from Better Start and long waiting lists for occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy (SLT) exacerbate the situation. One provider expressed, "I feel as a provider I am now left trying to meet the needs of children when I do not have the skill base to do it."

RELIANCE ON GOVERNMENT FUNDING

The sessional model is the only model that is fully dependent on government funding, with no option to access parental fees or donations.

RESPECT AND RECOGNITION

A common theme among the providers is the lack of respect and recognition for their work as professionals. Many providers feel a lack of respect and recognition for their work, with one stating, "We are treated with what feels like contempt." Providers are seeking better communication, respect, and acknowledgment for their role in the lives of children and families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to address the concerns of service providers in the early years learning and school age childcare sector in Ireland:

- Increase funding and capitation rates to improve the financial sustainability of services and allow for higher staff wages.
- Implement targeted strategies to attract and retain qualified staff, such as providing better wages, working conditions, and professional development opportunities.
- Improve ELC's and SAC's access to support services, facilitating other professionals (e.g., Occupational Therapists, Speech and Language, Child Psychologists, etc.) coming into services for early intervention and support services, and re-evaluating the AIM support model.
- Streamline administrative processes and reduce paperwork requirements to alleviate the burden on service providers and allow them to focus on delivering quality care and education.
- Enhance communication and collaboration between the government and service providers, ensuring that policies and support mechanisms align with the realities and needs of the sector.
- Foster a culture of respect and recognition for service providers as professionals in the early years learning and childcare sector, addressing issues related to pay, working conditions, and overall acknowledgment of their contributions.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the concerns raised in the survey responses paint a picture of a sector under significant strain, with service providers facing financial, staffing, and administrative challenges that threaten the sustainability of their businesses. Without adequate support and policy changes, the possibility of services closing remains a genuine threat for the early years learning and school age childcare sector in Ireland.

FACTORS ENCOURAGING ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND TO SIGN UP TO CORE FUNDING

INTRODUCTION

This section presents the concerns and suggestions of early learning centres and school-age childcare services in Ireland about signing up to Core Funding in the early years sector.

POTENTIAL CLOSURES

17% of respondents stated that they are seriously considering looking at closing their business in June. In terms of the survey itself, this represents 114 services, which is not only significant, but potentially detrimental when applied to the wider sector as a whole.

FINANCIAL REASONS

Many respondents mentioned that they had no choice but to sign up for Core Funding due to financial reasons. They expressed concerns about increased wages, inflation, and the inability to increase monthly fees without losing clients. Some respondents also reported having no money in their accounts, struggling to pay their staff, and facing Revenue bills they could not afford.

CORE FUNDING

Several respondents requested a substantial increase in ECCE funding or double the core funding to encourage them to sign up for Core Funding. Some respondents believed that fair funding should be provided for all sectors of childcare, and others mentioned the need for recognition of experience rather than just degree-led qualifications.

ADMINISTRATIVE BURDEN

Many respondents were concerned about the paperwork and scrutiny involved in signing up for Core Funding. They requested less arduous reporting, a reduction in the amount of paperwork, and a more streamlined application process. They also suggested having combining inspections, to avoid duplication, and improving the NCS system.

CONTROL OVER BUSINESSES

A common concern among respondents was the perceived loss of control over their businesses due to government involvement. They did not want the government to dictate their operations and preferred to maintain control over their private businesses. Some respondents mentioned that they were not interested in running the NCS and believed it should be managed by the government itself.

CONCLUSION

This section highlights the main concerns and suggestions of early learning centres and school-age childcare services in Ireland regarding signing up for Core Funding. Key issues include financial reasons, core funding, administrative burden, and control over private businesses. Addressing these concerns and providing a more supportive environment for these services could encourage them to sign up for Core Funding and improve the overall quality of early years provision in Ireland.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS IN ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND: KEY CONCERNS AND CHALLENGES

INTRODUCTION

The Early Learning Centre (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) sectors in Ireland have recently been surveyed to evaluate the implementation of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) within their services. The survey, which garnered responses from 326 ELC and SAC providers, revealed insights into the types of support being applied for and the efficacy of the support being provided.

Among the providers surveyed, 27% offered full-day care, 57% sessional, and 15% part-time and SAC services. It was found that 83.5% of them employed AIM staff, and 94% had applied for AIM for a child in their service. A significant majority, 97%, applied for Level 7 support, while 27% applied for Level 1-4 support, and the rest for Level 5 (7.5%) and Level 6 (3%). (86% of the applications were in line with the level of allocation provided.)

It should be noted that, even when successful in accessing AIM, the support is limited to 3 hours, impacting the provision of support in a full day care setting, regardless of the fact that the needs of the child are not limited to hours or type of service being used.

Upon receiving Level 7 support, 78% of the providers successfully employed a new staff member, but 22% faced challenges in doing so. The survey also highlighted that 77% of respondents believed that the child being supported benefited from the lower staff ratio, while 24% did not observe such benefits. Despite the level of support provided, 64% of the services claimed that the assistance from Better Start and the lower ratio was insufficient to support the child.

In a separate finding, an alarming 95% of services noted an increase in the number of children requiring support over the past three years. This data emphasises the need to evaluate and potentially revise the support systems in place for the ELC and SAC sectors in Ireland.

Among the service providers, 84% completed the LINC course, with 34% finding the skills learned very or extremely useful and 48% stating they were somewhat useful. The LINC course's effectiveness highlights the importance of ongoing professional development and training for those working in the ELC and SAC sectors.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

FUNDING AND RESOURCE ALLOCATION

One of the main concerns reported by service providers is the inadequacy of funding for children with additional needs. Providers feel that funding should be allocated per child, rather than being shared among several children.

"I feel if a child is granted level 7, it should be for that child only and not shared...with their own funding we would be in a position to employ another teacher."

STAFF TRAINING AND SKILLS

Service providers reported that staff often lack the necessary training and skills to support children with additional needs effectively. As a result, some providers believe that the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is not fulfilling its potential.

"My concern is that staff are not equipped or trained for the specific skills they need to support the children and therefore AIM is a waste as honestly children are just existing in the service for the 3 hours and gaining no benefit."

INCLUSION AND IMPACT ON OTHER CHILDREN

While providers strive to create an inclusive environment for all children, they also express concerns about the impact on other children in the group when resources and attention are diverted to support children with additional needs.

"Not all children with an AN can be part of an ECCE integrated program. The needs of ALL children in the group must be addressed."

COMPLEXITY OF NEEDS AND ASSESSMENT

Service providers face challenges in addressing the diverse and complex needs of children with additional needs. Delays in assessment and lack of access to professionals such as psychologists further exacerbate the situation.

"Needs are incredibly high and complex, and most are not assessed yet, so we are stabbing in the dark to provide the best care for their needs."

STAFFING RATIOS AND ONE-TO-ONE SUPPORT

Service providers stressed the importance of having lower staffing ratios and providing one-to-one support for children with additional needs. They also noted that AIM staff should be paid for longer hours to ensure the same level of care throughout the day.

"The ratio certainly needs to be lower where there is a child or children requiring extra support in the class and should be able to stay later in the day with the same level of care. So AIM staff need to be paid for longer hours."

ACCESS TO SERVICES AND EARLY INTERVENTION

Providers reported long waiting times for early intervention services and difficulties in accessing necessary supports, such as speech therapists, occupational therapists, and psychologists. One educator expressed the need for "direct access to professionals in the classroom," demonstrating the importance of a strong support network for early years settings.

"Children at the moment are not receiving early intervention or diagnosis, long waiting lists and not getting regular visits from early intervention teams, you can see the huge difference compared to years ago."

RESOURCES AND EQUIPMENT

Service providers highlighted the lack of funding for essential resources and equipment, such as sensory rooms and specialised materials, which are needed to support children with additional needs effectively. Funding for equipment can be applied for under AIM, however it has to be returned when the child for whom it was allocated goes to school.

"I am concerned by the increase of children year on year requiring support. My room does not always meet needs, there is no funding for extra equipment, sensorial/weighted material."

STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

Service providers face challenges in recruiting and retaining AIM staff, which can negatively impact the support available for children with additional needs.

"I know from colleagues that it's almost impossible to recruit Aim staff."

IMPACT ON SERVICE PROVIDERS

Providers expressed concerns about the financial implications of supporting children with additional needs, as well as the potential for staff burnout due to increased workload and pressure.

"I purposefully don't apply for AIM support because it costs me too much to have them in place... And if I did this for 5 children, I'd be out of business!"

COLLABORATION AND DECISION-MAKING:

Providers reported that collaboration among stakeholders and timely decision-making by AIM specialists are often lacking, which further hinders the provision of adequate support for children with additional needs.

"Decisions taking too long to be made by AIM specialists."

CONCLUSION

This section highlights the concerns and challenges faced by ELC and SAC service providers in Ireland in supporting children with additional needs. The findings underscore the need for improvements in funding, staff training, resources, and access to services, as well as better collaboration among stakeholders.

IMPACT OF INSURANCE ON ELC AND SAC SERVICES

INTRODUCTION

We conducted an extensive survey within the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) sector in Ireland to investigate insurance costs. We collected responses from 430 providers, of which 60% offered sessional services, and 28% provided full-day care. The findings indicate that 74% of respondents experienced increased insurance costs since the previous year. Among these, 61% reported a 10-20% increase, 27% saw a 30-40% rise, and 22% faced a substantial surge of over 50%.

The primary concerns emphasised in the responses include elevated insurance premiums, pressure to join another organisation to obtain insurance discounts, limited insurance options, and inconsistent pricing. Through this report, we aim to shed light on these concerns, offering a detailed account of the issues faced by providers in the childcare sector and the impact it has on their operations.

MAJOR CONCERNS

INCREASED INSURANCE PREMIUMS

Many respondents have expressed their dissatisfaction with the rising insurance premiums. Some providers experienced increases as high as 80.75%, which significantly affected their business operations. Providers believe that these increased costs are unjustified, given that their services have not changed and they have not made any claims in the past.

One participant shared, "We are absolutely deflated with this hike 80.75% increase!! We need more insurers. We need help!" These increases have led to concerns regarding the sustainability of childcare services and the potential need to pass on costs to parents.

PRESSURE TO JOIN ANOTHER ORGANISATION FOR INSURANCE DISCOUNTS

Respondents have voiced their frustration with the pressure to join another organisation in order to avail of significant insurance discounts. Many feel that they are being forced to join the organisation solely for this purpose, as they do not see any additional benefits in becoming a member. Providers feel that this requirement is unfair and coercive, as they have no other option but to join to access affordable insurance rates.

LACK OF INSURANCE OPTIONS

The survey responses indicate that there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the lack of insurance options available for childcare providers. Providers believe that having only one insurance company for childcare insurance is unfair, leading to a monopoly that allows the company to dictate prices and conditions without competition. The respondents have called for the introduction of more insurance providers to increase competition and improve the affordability of insurance in the sector.

One respondent said, "We need another insurance company. We are held to ransom. Not fair." Some participants also highlighted the challenges they face when seeking insurance for both their childcare service and their dwelling.

INCONSISTENCIES IN PRICING

Respondents have also highlighted inconsistencies in insurance pricing for similar services. Providers have reported significant differences in quotes for services with similar characteristics, such as the number of children and the type of service provided. This lack of transparency in pricing has led to confusion and frustration among providers who believe that there should be more consistency and fairness in how insurance costs are determined.

One participant mentioned, "I think that the Insurance company is basing their pricing by geographical location, seems to me that providers in Dublin/Cork (cities) are paying much more." These discrepancies in pricing have led providers to feel that insurance companies are "guessing" what to charge, resulting in a lack of transparency and fairness in the sector.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

Several respondents called for government intervention to address the issues surrounding insurance in the ELC and SAC sector. Some providers suggested that discounts should be government-based rather than tied to membership of another organisation. Others urged the government to take action to halt price increases, especially for services with no claims history.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this section highlights the major concerns faced by childcare providers, including increased insurance premiums, pressure to join another organisation for insurance discounts, the lack of insurance options, and inconsistencies in pricing.

TAILORING SOLUTIONS: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FECP

With recent developments in the early years sector, including the implementation of the EROs, the simplification of the NCS, as well as the option of core funding, there has been a positive move towards attempting to establish a fair and equitable business environment for all early years services. However, while a number of these developments have been beneficial, one overall impact of their implementation has been to highlight the major discrepancies that exist between certain types of service models within the sector; directly impacting upon the viability and sustainability of a large number of early years providers.

DISCREPANCY BETWEEN EARLY YEARS SERVICES

The most glaring example of this is evident when analysing many mid-sized services that are owned and managed by a single owner/ manager; which is one of the most popular models of early years services throughout Ireland. In many of these cases, the apparent viability of the services is being achieved artificially, with the owner/ managers reducing their salaries where necessary to support increases in operational costs. As a result, while the term 'profitability' is often described to refer to the 'bottom line' in annual finances, the 'profit' being generated within many of these owner/ manager mid-sized facilities actually excludes the salary of the owner/ manager themselves. As a result, while the financial accounts of the service may indicate that the service is viable based upon annual accounts and returns, the model is completely unsustainable and, in reality, is financially unviable.

This would be of major concern if it were a recent issue, arising out of latest changes in the provision of early years services. However, the consequences are more imminent, due to the fact that this situation has been the case for years, clearly highlighted by various reports within the sector that date back to 2015; and are now exacerbated by recent developments in sectoral policy.

ADDRESSING THE ISSUE

In other social and business sectors, this issue would not be the concern of the state. Understandably, it would be regarded a matter of concern for the owner/ managers themselves, requiring changes to the business in terms of its operational income (fees and number of clients) and costs (primarily wages) to address viability.

However, this is not possible within the early years sector. In terms of operational income, the early years providers have little to no room to manoeuvre, with fees having been regulated by core funding (a prerequisite for the receipt of core funding), and the number of clients (children) limited to the ratios stated by the Childcare Act and Regulation. On the other hand, staff wages, which represent on average between 75%-90% of total operational costs, are controlled by the recent ERO. As a result, the usual release mechanisms used by businesses to adapt their operations to achieve viability have been removed, and the early years sectors are now dependant entirely upon the ability of the Core Funding, or similar programs, to provide a solution; which the FECP believe it cannot currently do without being adapted to better reflect the commercial realities facing early years providers.

SUBMISSION BY FECP

FECP accept the need for regulation, and this submission by FECP should never be regarded as an attempt to promote deregulation or any reduction of quality in the services being provided. Nevertheless, it is unrealistic to approach the early years sector in a similar manner to other social or business sectors. On the one hand the sector is heavily regulated, with controls that impact both income and costs, while, on the other, privately-owned services are expected to be able to adjust their business model to achieve viability and sustainability. These two positions are not compatible.

FECP are aware that the Core Funding initiative was introduced to address this market inefficiency, providing funding, subject to EU guidelines, to support the early years services and reflect the need for significant regulation within the sector. However, FECP are stating that not only does the Core Funding initiative fail to

adequately represent the diverse business models in the early years sector, this failure is likely to result in the closure of many mid-sized privately-run owner/manager services throughout Ireland.

To address this issue, it must be acknowledged that privately-owned services cannot be regarded as a single homogenous type of early years service. In reality, there are a number of different types of general models operating within the sector, that require different approaches regarding funding and pricing.

OWNER/ MANAGERS SALARY TO BE REFLECTED IN CORE FUNDING

Core Funding is based upon assumptions regarding the profitability of early years services, and the financial supports required to sustain viability. However, FECP are stating that the profitability assumptions never took into consideration the fact that owner/ managers of many small and mid-sized services have maintained the viability and sustainability of the business through the use of their own salaries and through the provision of out-of-hours support and non-contact unpaid hours to parents, families and children.

In many cases, as has been clearly demonstrated in previous Irish reports into the sector, owner/ managers have either not taken any salary, or reduced their salary significantly to achieve breakeven or a small profit. In truth, this historic practice, which has, and is, widespread, across the sector has sustained an 'artificial' breakeven point that, with increased standardisation and regulation regarding fees, ratios, qualifications and wages, cannot now be addressed within the business by the owner/ manager themselves.

As their options for adjusting the level of income and costs become even narrower, a relatively large number have now come to the conclusion that to continue operating in this manner would be detrimental to their own personal circumstances. As a result, many of the owner/ manager services operating this model will be closing over the next 1-2 years.

FRANCHISES VS OWNER/ MANAGER SERVICES

While FECP accept that it is not possible to adapt the Regulations, Core Funding, or other funding programmes, to meet the needs of all various models, one immediate consequence of the concerns raised above is now becoming evident in the provision of early years childcare services among privately-owned facilities.

As mentioned above, to date, many owner/managers of services have managed to keep their businesses operating by creating an artificial breakeven point; put simply they have either not taken any salary or have reduced their salaries significantly to keep the business afloat.

Which begs the question – what happens when the option of reducing or eliminating the owner/ manager's salary is not available? In that case, what options are available to the service to maintain financial viability and meet structured payments by the early years service?

An example of such a business model in the early years sector is the large franchise, whereby the service is provided on a private basis, but not with direct involvement by an owner/ manager. The 'artificial' release mechanism provided by the salary of the owner/ manager (regardless of it being detrimental to the viability of the business) is no longer available in this case and, with major overhead costs such as leasing, etc. being fixed and non-negotiable, the only other major option available is likely to involve staff costs, i.e. wages.

SUMMARY

In summary, while there have been significant benefits arising from recent developments within the early years sector, there are a number of legacy issues that have been neglected by the Core Funding program, with direct impacts upon the real viability of early years services. The immediate impact is certainly going to result in the closure of many owner/ manager services within the next 18 months, and the likely adoption of practices by other business models that are contrary to the provisions of the Childcare Act and regulations.

CONCLUSIONS

FUTURE OF EARLY YEARS SECTOR: INTENTIONS TO CLOSE IN JUNE 2023

The future of the early years sector in Ireland depends on the sustainability of ELC and SAC services. Immediate action is required from the government to address the financial, staffing, administrative, and mental health challenges faced by providers. Without such support, the consequences of service closures on families, communities, and the future of Ireland's children could be dire.

CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS IN THE ELC AND SAC SECTOR IN IRELAND

The ELC and SAC sector in Ireland is facing a multitude of challenges that impact the overall quality and sustainability of services. Key issues identified include stress and burnout, lack of recognition and respect, staffing crisis, funding and financial viability, overregulation and administrative burden, the impact on small services, training and professional development, support for children with additional needs, and pressure from parents and changing demands.

CHALLENGES FACED BY SESSIONAL ELC AND SAC SERVICE PROVIDERS IN IRELAND

The concerns raised in the survey responses paint a picture of a sector under significant strain, with service providers facing financial, staffing, and administrative challenges that threaten the sustainability of their businesses. Without adequate support and policy changes, the possibility of services closing remains a genuine threat for the early years learning and school age childcare sector in Ireland. Addressing these concerns is crucial for the continued sustainability and success of the sector.

FACTORS ENCOURAGING ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND TO SIGN UP FOR CORE FUNDING

This section highlighted the main concerns and suggestions of early learning centres and school-age childcare services in Ireland regarding signing up for Core Funding. Key issues include financial reasons, core funding, administrative burden, and control over businesses. Addressing these concerns and providing a more supportive environment for these services could encourage them to sign up for the Core Funding and improve the overall quality of early years provision in Ireland.

SUPPORTING CHILDREN WITH ADDITIONAL NEEDS IN ELC AND SAC SERVICES IN IRELAND

The findings underscore the need for improvements in funding, staff training, resources, the expansion of AIM, and access to services, as well as better collaboration among stakeholders. Addressing these issues is essential for ensuring that all children, including those with additional needs, receive the support and care they require for their development and well-being.

IMPACT OF INSURANCE ON ELC AND SAC SERVICES

This section highlighted the major concerns faced by childcare providers, including increased insurance premiums, pressure to join another organisation for insurance discounts, the lack of insurance options, and inconsistencies in pricing.

TAILORING SOLUTIONS: STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS FROM FECF

In summary, while there have been significant benefits arising from recent developments within the early years sector, there are a number of legacy issues that have been neglected by the Core Funding program, with direct impacts upon the real viability of early years services. The immediate impact is certainly going to result in the closure of many owner/ manager services within the next 18 months, and the likely adoption of practices by other business models that are contrary to the provisions of the Childcare Act and regulations.

SOLUTIONS

Based on the extensive research conducted by FETC, which involved reviewing more than 3,300 responses from various surveys, we present a concise summary of the immediate solutions being suggested.

€100 ECCE CAPITATION

To address the financial difficulties encountered by Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) providers, we propose increasing the capitation for the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program to €100. This enhancement will ensure improved financial stability for providers, enabling them to concentrate on providing high-quality care and education while reducing the financial and personal strain that is very evident within the sector and threatens the future of a significant number of services.

FEE FREEZE LIFTED TO SUPPORT ERO

Lift the fee freeze within the sector, to support the ERO, enabling providers to revise their fees to accurately reflect the costs associated with operating their businesses; avoiding a 'one-size-fits-all' model and adjusting to the different types of services. This will help alleviate financial pressures and ensure that providers can continue to offer high-quality care.

APPRENTICESHIP MODEL INTRODUCED IMMEDIATELY TO MITIGATE STAFF CRISIS

Introduce an apprenticeship program to tackle the staffing crisis in the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC) sectors. This will provide a pipeline of skilled professionals entering the field, and reduce the strain on existing staff, ultimately improving the quality of care and education provided.

EXTENSION OF AIM ALLOCATION TO FULL DAY CARE HOURS

Expand the AIM allocation to cover full day care hours for children with additional needs, ensuring that these children receive the support they require for their development and well-being. Additionally, this approach lessens the pressure on childcare providers to accommodate the unique requirements of children needing extra support.

OPTIONAL EXTRAS TO BE REINSTATED

Reinstate optional extras for providers, allowing them to offer additional services and resources to families; enabling them to customise their offerings based on the specific needs of their communities. This approach ensures that all children receive care that can be tailored to their requirements.

INCREASE RATIO TO 3:22 AND FUND ACCORDINGLY

Change the legislation to increase the staff-to-child ratio from 2:22 to at least 3:22, and provide funding to support this change. This will help address staffing concerns and ensure that children receive more individualised attention, ultimately improving the quality of services provided by ELCs and SACs.

