

CHILDCARE STRATEGIC INSIGHT PROGRAMME

VIRTUAL

STRATEGIC INSIGHT LAB

30th NOVEMBER - 1st DECEMBER 2021





Challenge Question:

‘How can we ensure a high quality, child-centred, sustainable childcare infrastructure, that is accessible, flexible, meets diverse needs, and is more affordable for families and children in NI, that supports child development, parental employability, a more valued childcare workforce, and other Government strategies and priorities?’



CONTENTS

Page 5 - Background

Page 9 – Summary

Page 14 – Innovation Lab Process/Context

Page 16 – **DAY 1**

Page 16 - Art of the Possible

Page 19 – Challenges; Opportunities; Gaps (& Emerging Themes)

Page 21 – **DAY 2**

Page 21 – Idea Generation

Page 21 – GPS Analysis on Selected Ideas

Page 25 - Outputs/Next Steps

Page 27 – **APPENDICES**

Page 27 – **Appendix A: List of Participants**

Page 29 – **Appendix B: Agenda**

Page 31 – **Appendix C: Insights from Art of the Possible**

Page 42 – **Appendix D: Themes & Associated Ideas/Views from Idea Generation**

Page 49 – **Appendix E: GPS Analysis on Selected Ideas**



Background





BACKGROUND

The publication of an Executive Childcare Strategy is a commitment set out in the New Decade New Approach agreement (NDNA), alongside a specific commitment to extended provision for 3-4 year olds:

‘The Executive will publish a Childcare Strategy and will give immediate priority to developing arrangements to deliver extended, affordable, responsive, high quality provision of early education and care initiatives for families with children aged 3-4’

A draft Executive Childcare Strategy was published for consultation by The Executive Office in 2015. Lead policy responsibility for the Executive Childcare Strategy transferred to the Department of Education in 2016 and a document setting out the responses to the consultation was published in May 2018. While significant work has been carried out in terms of engagement with key stakeholders, including discussions with other UK jurisdictions to understand the development of their childcare offers, no strategic policy decisions could be made for an NI Executive Childcare Strategy in the absence of Ministers during the period of suspension of the Assembly January 2017 to January 2020.

Work on the development of the Childcare Strategy was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic, due to the need to prioritise resources to respond to the emergency viability and sustainability challenges faced by the childcare sector during this period. As we begin to emerge from the Pandemic, there are renewed calls for longer-term solutions for childcare, especially in light of some of the lessons learned throughout the past year.

Development of the Executive Strategy

The development of the Strategy will be overseen by a cross departmental programme board and the final Strategy, including the budget supporting it, will be agreed by the Executive. The Strategy will be developed on a co-design basis across a number of government departments and involving a wide range of stakeholders.

The aims within the 2015 draft Strategy are ‘supporting child development’ and ‘promoting parental employment’. It will be important that future strategy actions focus on the provision of appropriate (i.e. meeting the needs of all who need childcare) childcare services, which are high-quality, affordable and accessible.

The experience during the pandemic of more flexible working arrangements and parents working from home has changed the landscape of the childcare sector, with the use of, and demand for, formal childcare impacting on:-



- **Childcare providers with the cost of providing services; and**
- **Families with the cost of childcare.**

Affordability of childcare is a recurring concern, influencing both the amount of childcare parents may access and parents' employment choices. While government financial support is available to help many parents with the affordability of formal childcare, not all parents currently access this support or consider it to be sufficient.

It is known that the earliest years of a child's life are very important to a child's development and while the NDNA has a specific commitment to extend the education and care offer for 3 to 4 year olds, the Childcare Strategy will encompass wider aspirations for children aged 0-14 years.

It is known that the demand for childcare is different before age 3 and again changes when children start school. Irrespective of the age of the child, parents want to be able to access suitable childcare (for example, childcare, which is appropriate for children with disabilities/additional needs), when they require it, regardless of where they live.

There is much to be achieved by the new Strategy and it will be important that it sets out clear priorities and tangible actions to ensure maximum impact. However, this needs to be commensurate with the level of resources the Executive is prepared to commit to the Strategy.

To this end the Department of Education commissioned the NI Innovation Lab to deliver an Insights Programme on the challenge, culminating in a **virtual** 2-day Childcare Strategic Insight Lab, with the aim of providing strategic direction and informing design and implementation of policy in relation to this area.

The Insights Programme commenced with a series of Engagement Labs, which took place in October and November 2021, and which sought the views of Parents, Childcare Providers and MLAs on the key requirements for a Northern Ireland Executive Childcare Strategy. Outputs from these sessions informed the Strategic Insight Lab process.

A Challenge Lab, which is structured to define and debate the problem with a view to developing an agreed Challenge Question that will frame the two day Strategic Insights Lab, took place in October 2021. Participants at the Challenge Lab event agreed the following Challenge Question to be addressed at the Strategic Insights Lab:

'How can we ensure a high quality, child-centred, sustainable childcare infrastructure, that is accessible, flexible, meets diverse needs, and is more affordable for families and children in NI, that supports child development,



parental employability, a more valued childcare workforce, and other Government strategies and priorities?’

The Strategic Insights Lab is a consensus based interactive engagement event that brings individuals from different organisations and sectors together to tackle a complex problem. The iLab team bring participants through a series of activities that seek to identify strategic direction and ideas that address the Challenge Question.

The objectives of the Strategic Insight Lab were as follows:

- To identify the key challenges, opportunities and gaps relating to the challenge question.
- To develop ideas relating to the key themes identified by participants for further consideration by the sponsor Department.
- To produce a summary report capturing the detail of the **virtual** 2-day event to help inform design and implementation of policy.

In identifying attendees to attend the Strategic Insight Lab, engagement and discussion took place between the sponsor Department, key stakeholders and the Innovation Lab to ensure there was an optimal mix, spread and balance of participants, representing a maximum of sectors and groups. It was important to get a cross-sector spread of participant representation to enable collaboration and dialogue on this particular challenge. A full list of participants is set out in **Appendix A**.



Summary



SUMMARY

The *virtual* Strategic Insight Lab (SIL) took place on 30th November and 1st December 2021 and the interest of all participants in addressing the challenge question was evident throughout the course of the 2-day process, in the collaborative and partnership approach adopted throughout.

By working through a series of exercises, individuals representing key stakeholder groups were able to consider and understand the challenge from other perspectives. It is this approach, coupled with the energy, enthusiasm and passion of stakeholders at the event that was instrumental in leading to **147 ideas/views**, to help inform strategic design and implementation of policy.

The ideas/views identified by stakeholders were categorised into 8 overarching themes (listed below).



The 8 overarching themes, which framed the exercises on Day Two, also had sub-themes under each. The 8 overarching themes and 32 sub-themes are set out in the '**Challenges; Opportunities; Gaps**' section of the report. The full list of ideas/views captured are set out at **Appendix D** of the report.



A number of the ideas/views, which emerged from the Idea Generation session at the beginning of Day Two, were selected by each group for further exploration over the course of Day Two. Initial Good-Problem-Solution (GPS) analysis was carried out on 3 ideas from each of the 8 themes. These ideas are summarised in the table below. They are not prioritised in any particular order.

THEMES	KEY AREAS OF FOCUS		
	IDEA 1	IDEA 2	IDEA 3
Affordability & Sustainability	Independent evaluation of costs for all childcare providers and all types of childcare, including provision of a decent wage and time for planning and improvement carried out to set a funding rate and is subject to regular review.	Encourage more schools to provide wraparound care on site. Therefore reducing capital set up costs for providers. If schools run the services themselves this can also provide additional income for the school.	By 20xx no families (regardless whether working or not) are paying more than x% of their household income on childcare: Delivery options could include: (a) Fully funding an allocation of hours for all families. Setting a progressive cap on fees based on household income (incorporating an allocation of fully funded provision for disadvantaged children) applying a simple fee structure and using subsidies to make up the difference between parent fee revenue and the full cost of high-quality, inclusive early education and childcare, such as is proposed in the Canadian Early Learning and Childcare Plan.
Scope of Strategy	Introduction of a statutory underpinning, stating recognition of childcare as core public infrastructure, establishing a legal framework for the delivery of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare that meets the needs of children, families, providers and our economy and society more broadly, and a duty to report on the sufficiency, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of places. Requires specific measurable targets.	Cross-departmental and sectoral Implementation Group and an Accountability Group - to include consideration of regional issues - and intersectionality with wide range of strategies (economic, social inclusion etc).	Must be a clear framework as to how this strategy works alongside the social inclusion strategies and the key economic strategies brought forward by DfE.



<p>Accessibility & Inclusivity</p>	<p>Promote and facilitate workplace childcare, building on existing good practice.</p>	<p>Use data to create an assessment of supply and demand in certain areas and to match different work patterns of parents.</p>	<p>Develop a funding support scheme to enable childcare providers to meet the needs of children with disabilities / SEN/ethnic minorities, Irish medium, newcomer families, and generally vulnerable children - e.g. employ additional member of staff to support child, training, specialist equipment etc.</p>
<p>Economic & Societal</p>	<p>Rewrite the narrative around childcare by renaming childcare practitioners to something that better reflects what they do and its complexities, and ask sector what they would like to be called.</p>	<p>Identify the barriers to employment for parents / reasons why they do not work or work reduced hours and to what extent access to childcare is a barrier, and link this to other economic and social strategies (Green Growth, LGBTQ).</p>	<p>Challenge gender-based stereotypes in childcare, for example, by encouraging more men to work in childcare.</p>
<p>Childcare Workforce</p>	<p>Integrate and develop early year education for 0-4 years old based on the structure and framework already existing in nurseries for 3-4 years old. Fully subsidize and integrate early year education similar with education system.</p>	<p>Central pot for all providers to access for funding and training.</p>	<p>Valuing all the sector through recognition as early educators and pay appropriately.</p>
<p>Child Centred Services</p>	<p>Childcare should be welcoming and inclusive of all children including different cultures and children with disabilities.</p>	<p>Inspection should move towards outcomes for children - including participation of children's views - administered by a sole body.</p>	<p>A multi-disciplinary and play based framework approach to promote collaboration between Health Professionals, Educational Psychologists, to promote early intervention and capacity building while promoting a play based approach.</p>
<p>Leadership / Political Will</p>	<p>Strong political will and sign up needed across all parties (should be required to set out their stall) and commitment to ensure an Early Childhood care and Education act providing a legislative basis / requirement for the consistent and effective financing, supervision, support, coordination of</p>	<p>Strategy should be recognised as an essential public good and be central to PfG with an open, online micro site to track action plans across every department with adequate funding from each department - e.g. DfC social inclusion strategies and funding for women's centres,</p>	<p>All Departments need to sign up and continue engagement on a long term basis have responsibilities to report back on progress tracking actions setting key milestones for each agreed action to take the childcare strategy forward.</p>

	<p>the delivery of and the communication to all education and care services including from pre-birth, birth - three, three - six and school age as delivered by the voluntary, community, independent and statutory sectors.</p>	<p>DfE skills strategies, DAERA climate change sustainable investment, DOH guidelines etc.</p>	
<p>Quality</p>	<p>Department should embrace that it doesn't have all the answers – build the strategy in public, publish the approach and questions to be answered. This increases the chances crowdsourcing solutions, with the end result being a better strategy.</p>	<p>Develop standards which include ways to measure parent and provider partnerships. Explore revisit a joint inspection framework across health and education. An agreed quality framework for birth to 6 with focus on birth to 3 that reflects process, (Pedagogy), structural quality, minimum standards staffing, parent provider partnerships, and support appropriate practice for children who experience disadvantage for example SEND, English not first language, poverty and other forms of disadvantage. All stakeholders engaged in agreeing such a framework.</p>	<p>Empowering parents/families to understand & support their child's early development is vital – look at ways to enhance the home learning environment in partnership with parents to support understanding on child development supporting transitions.</p>



The Innovation Lab Process



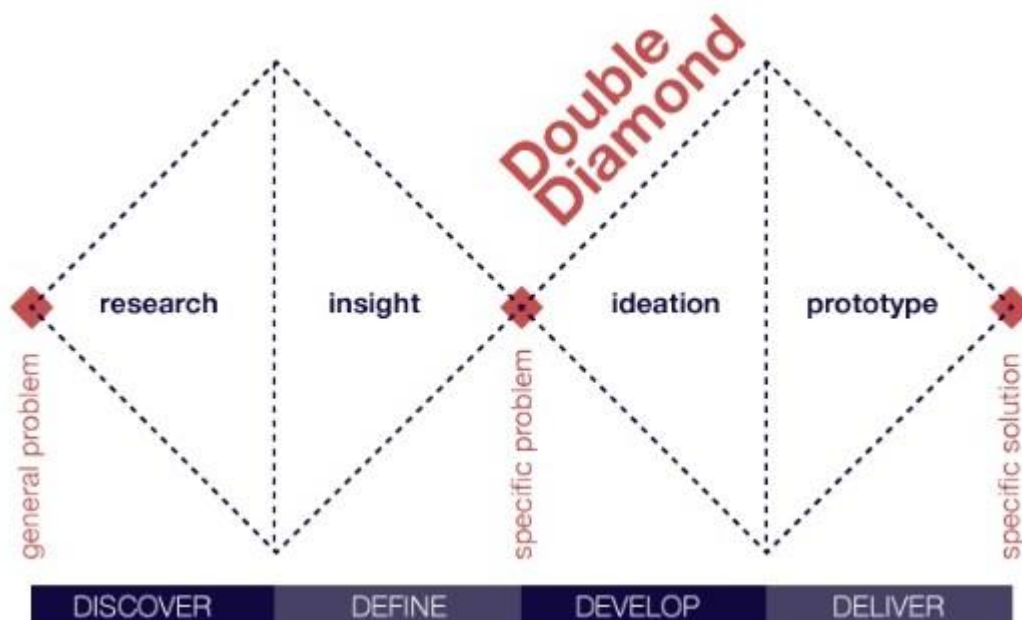
THE INNOVATION LAB PROCESS

GENERAL

The Childcare Strategic Insight Lab took place **virtually** over 2 highly intensive, practical and interactive days. The agenda for the 2 day workshop can be found at **Appendix B**.

The exercises were designed to ensure people worked in a collaborative and partnership manner, where relationships between different stakeholder sectors could be explored, harnessed and developed. Exercises took place on an individual basis, in stakeholder group settings (in Zoom breakout room settings), and in large group format.

The UK Design Council's Double Diamond Design Model was used as the framework for the workshop. It has 4 distinct phases: Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver. While normally used in service design projects, it provided a disciplined, logical process that participants were progressed through together to ensure the event had a productive output. The 2 days focused on the first 3 stages of the double diamond – Discover, Define and Develop.



The double diamond approach encourages people to diverge and converge their thinking at different parts of the process and the exercises were designed to achieve this approach. Additionally each exercise was carefully planned to build on the previous one to ensure that any learning or understanding was constant and focused, and anchored in outputs from the earlier parts of the process.



CONTEXT

The Challenge Question that formed the framework for discussion and consideration during the *virtual* 2-day Childcare Strategic Insight Lab, was developed and agreed by a cross-sector of NICS Departments and key stakeholders at an earlier Challenge Lab event. The Lab sought consensus on wording, scope and ambition and participants agreed on the following Challenge Question:

‘How can we ensure a high quality, child-centred, sustainable childcare infrastructure, that is accessible, flexible, meets diverse needs, and is more affordable for families and children in NI, that supports child development, parental employability, a more valued childcare workforce, and other Government strategies and priorities?’

Strategic Insight Lab attendees included key stakeholders representing parents, childcare providers, employer focused organisations, education and training, and a range of government and statutory bodies and other associated and interested parties. There were 3 broad groupings identified and represented at the Strategic Insight Lab. These are set out below (in no particular order):

- **NICS key Government Department and Statutory Bodies**
- **Parent and Childcare Organisations**
- **Education and Training delivery bodies; Academia; 3rd Sector; Employer Organisations**

As part of this cohort, the group welcomed two expert speakers, namely Dr Anne-Marie Brooks, Assistant Secretary General and Head of Early Learning and Childcare Division, Irish Government; and Sue Robb, OBE, General Manager, Pedagogy and Practice, Good Start, Australia (formerly Head of Early Learning at Action for Children in the UK), to present and provide their experiences of how Childcare is delivered in other jurisdictions and to demonstrate the ‘Art of the Possible’.

From the outset participants showed a willingness and eagerness to collaborate together and reach consensus on a pathway for progression for the challenge.

Participants had been provided with some background reading in advance of the 2-day Strategic Insight Lab, which included outputs from a series of Engagement Labs held with Parents; Childcare Providers; and MLAs in October and November 2021, which asked for their views in relation to the following:

- Current childcare provision;
- Key requirements for a Northern Ireland Executive Childcare Strategy;
- How the 7 published objectives from the 2015 Draft Childcare Strategy would meet needs in terms of their vision for a future strategy; and



- Actions required in any future Childcare Strategy, to address the following, balancing the dual aims of **Supporting Child Development**; and **Promoting Parental Employment**:
 - Available, Accessible and Responsive Childcare;
 - Affordable childcare;
 - Extended Early Years Education and Care Provision for 3-4 Year Olds; and
 - Quality childcare.

DAY 1 – STAGE 1: DISCOVER AND DEFINE

THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE

Day One commenced with presentations from the following speakers:

- **Dr Mark Browne** – Permanent Secretary, Department of Education.
- **Dr Anne-Marie Brooks** – Irish Government.
- **Sue Robb, OBE** – Good Start, Australia.

The speaker sessions were designed to provide attendees with an overview of the event, to put the challenge in context and open up minds with examples of different perspectives on childcare provision. This was to encourage participants to move into a more creative space in terms of addressing the challenge.

Following the speaker sessions all participants were given time to consider what they had heard, identify any key questions for the speakers, and write down any insights they had identified from the sessions in relation to what they wanted the process to address within the context of the Challenge Question. These early insights were populated on the 'Art of the Possible' insights board in Miro, an electronic whiteboard tool used for this virtual Lab, and were considered as part of the theming phase of the Strategic Insight Lab.

Some of the views/questions identified are included below and reflect participant views, captured over the course of the 2-day Lab. They have been grouped to highlight the degree of commonality and thinking from the stakeholder group from the outset of the process and very much align with the themes and ideas which emerged later in the 2-day Lab process. The list in full can be found at **Appendix C**:



Policy / Strategy / Scope

- Need to include age appropriate services in the strategy title.
- Strategy must recognise the importance of the first 1000 days.
- How do we link all the strategies that impact early childhood issues? E.g. IMH strategy, mental health strategy, children's strategy etc. The Ireland early years strategy model allows for a much more integrated approach. Ideally we'd have one Early Years strategy that covers everything.
- Is child development or employability the main focus? Unless everyone has the same offer, these will impact differently.
- Interesting view from Australia on 22.5 - the same as full time pre-school here. This is what we should aim for.
- Is there the scope to introduce childcare hubs, which connect providers with employers, parents with providers and parents with each other? It also creates the scope to have a mixed economy of provision, share resource and facilitate training/learning.
- This needs to be a cross department / whole Government Issue. We must not follow mistakes made by other jurisdictions just because there is a model in existence to follow.

Workforce Learning & Development / Value / Retention

- Can we provide more training for all providers, supporting everyone to improve and take part in continuous learning? How do we continue to avail of Zoom and online training for the future, ensuring providers can attain to a higher standard?
- Importance of VALUE - ensuring the staff working in the sector feel valued with pay, terms and conditions, career progression. Will contribute to recruitment and retention.
- Provide funded training opportunities for over 25s-workforce returners.

Quality / Measurement

- How can any inspection process ensure that small settings with limited resources aren't disadvantaged?
- Lack of collaboration between trust inspectors and providers.
- Interesting insight on the role of dual inspection. Something we need to consider - better outcomes freeing up dual resources.
- Importance of access to information – Family Support NI, plus information on financial support available – campaign to raise awareness, encourage parents to get checks. Requirement on childcare providers through inspections to demonstrate have raised awareness of financial support available. Inspection



report on childcare settings – outstanding / good / the way Ofsted etc do – and available online.

- Important learning this morning about the need for integrated regulation and inspection - standardising and avoiding confusion. There is duplication across Departments.
- Interesting comment on how the regulatory system has joined up in England. This was tested in NI previously. Is this worth revisiting?
- Currently no data being gathered on the number of children with disabilities living with their parents in the community - Ref Children's NI Order 1995 Reg and Guidance Vol 5 Children with a Disability requires the Department of Health to ensure each Trust has a register of children with disabilities - these registers do not currently exist.

Equality / Rural Provision

- Lack of provision for children with a disability has been an issue that is often raised by parents we support, how will the strategy support EY settings to offer inclusive places for children?
- All children have a right to quality early education/care, but all existing settings do not provide equal quality provision - need to address the imbalance.
- Providing childcare that is needs led for children with additional needs that is flexible and not always linked to parental employment.
- Recognise the value and support given by community based organisations, women's centres/groups.

Cost / Funding / Affordability / Sustainability

- We need to get better at forecasting demand and agreeing supply. We also need greater transparency in terms of cost.
- How are we going to ensure fairness and avoid some settings charging rates at odds with other settings?
- No mention of investment/budget or additional monies - where is the vision? Childcare is an essential public service and there should be significant investment in the sector. Also both speakers linked quality to inclusion and equality - this provides a useful framework to develop discussion.
- Only quality early years makes a measurable difference and therefore investment should support this - great example of a policy supporting affordable quality childcare from first speaker (RoI). We should therefore reject underlying assumption that childcare can be sustainable and affordable. Only way to do that with fees is to up the costs to parents who already can't afford this - investment to keep costs down - direct support for providers.



- If many areas in Australia are managing with higher childcare costs and no government support, what are we doing wrong?
- In light of the fact that there will be limited funding, there must be differential funding streams for children living in poverty or with additional needs.

CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND GAPS

The afternoon exercise encouraged participant groups to:

Focus on looking at Challenges, Opportunities and Gaps in terms of their understanding of the issue; what they had heard in the speaker sessions and within the scope of the Challenge Question. The process applied allowed all participants to input their individual views in relation to each of these areas.

Emerging Themes

Following the above exercises, participants were asked to consider all the information generated from the day (insights boards, sector priorities and the information populated in relation to Challenges, Opportunities and Gaps) and identify the key themes emerging from the information, based on what had been populated on the Miro Board.

Participants were split into 3 groups, with each group considering one of the following and identifying the key themes arising from the information on the specific frames.

- The information on the Gaps frame.
- The information on the Challenges frame.
- The information on the Opportunities frame.

Once groups had identified the themes from the information they had considered, one person from each group came forward with their group's emerging themes and assisted the Lab in developing overarching themes from all the information generated.

In total **8 overarching themes** were identified to be taken forward for progression to the next stage – idea generation. A number of sub themes / linked themes also emerged.

The themes and sub themes / linked themes are set out below. They are not listed in order of significance:



Affordability & Sustainability	Scope of Strategy	Accessibility & Inclusivity	Economic & Societal
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainability - Investment - Capital Development - Funding/Cost 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Measurement/ Evaluation - Strategy - how it interacts / cross departmental - Childcare as a public good and economic infrastructure - Strategy needs underpinned by legislation - Strategy components - legislative consideration - Governance of Sector/accountability - Co-design of Strategy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Availability - The employment rights landscape, how can it better support working parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advance Equality for parents/Providers/ children - Economic and Societal Benefits including equality for women returning to or advancing in the workforce - Role of employers
Childcare Workforce	Child Centred Services	Leadership / Political Will	Quality
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognition/ Reward & Conditions of the sector, including self-employed childcare providers - Recruitment and retention - Pay & Conditions for Sector Workforce - Opportunity to review minimum standards incorporate qualification CPD frameworks for all sectors at all levels - Value & Recognition for workforce - Skills Investment - Training/Valued/Trust 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Role of parents/ supporting parents - Flexibility - Equality of access and provision for all children - Use of technology, information, data and user experience design to help understand, simplify and make the system more accessible for all 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More specifically integrated leadership across all departments & links to existing strategies - Cross departmental consideration and implementation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Steps to ensure a quality service (including inspection, quality framework etc) - Childcare embedded as a public good - Evidence Based Approach/Measure

End of Day 1



DAY 2 – STAGE 2: DEVELOP (IDEATION)

Day 2 focused on the define and develop phase of the Double Diamond model, where the group continued to build on the great work from the previous day through the generation of ideas, associated with each overarching theme; further exploring a number of selected ideas and carrying out Good-Problem-Solution (GPS) analysis on these ideas.

Idea Generation

Day 2 commenced with participants developing ideas relating to each of the themes which emerged at the end of Day 1.

A World Café style session was held with 4 groups in Zoom breakout rooms, with each group having a period of time to discuss 2 themes and to develop ideas relating to each of the themes. At the end of this session, the group were asked to select up to 3 ideas from each theme for further exploration in later sessions. This process ensured everyone had the opportunity to input their views, ideas and opinions on the development of ideas/views relating to each theme.

The groups were asked to think about what ideas could exist if there were no barriers, restrictions, assumptions to be made in relation to each theme they were considering. However, this was caveated by asking all to develop ideas which were also workable, tangible, practical, achievable, deliverable, and within the scope of the Challenge Question, in relation to each of the 2 themes they had been allocated. In total, **147** ideas/views were generated across 8 themes in the Idea Generation session.

It was not possible to deliberate on each idea due to time constraints, but in the interests of providing a complete overview of the process, all ideas/views generated are listed at **Appendix D**, along with the 8 overarching themes to which they relate. Selected ideas, on which GPS was carried out, are highlighted below under their relevant theme. Themes and ideas are not prioritised in any particular order.

GPS Analysis

Following the Idea Generation session, 3 further World Café style sessions were held, with groups asked to consider **selected** ideas generated by a **different** group in each session, in relation to that group's themes and to consider, within the scope of the Challenge Question, what was:

- 'Good' about the ideas identified, i.e.:



- What will it address?
- How will it meet needs?
- Will it save money?
- How will it satisfy demand?

- What was **'Problematic'** about the ideas, i.e.:
 - What won't it address?
 - How will it not meet needs?
 - Will it cost money? (Is it too expensive?)
 - How will it satisfy demand?
 - Will it require legislation and if so, likely timescales?
 - Business Case required and if so, complexity?
 - Will there be any issues re political buy-in?

- Considering problems identified, what were the possible **'Solutions'** which could overcome those problems, i.e.:
 - Which organisations will need to work together to make this happen?
 - Will it require legislation to implement? If so, consider complexities and potential timescales.
 - What policy changes may be required for it to work?
 - Consider scope of solutions.

In total, **24** selected ideas (3 ideas from each of the 8 overarching themes) were further explored by participants, using high level, Good-Problem-Solution (GPS) analysis, over 3 sessions on Day 2. Outputs from these sessions have been captured and are listed in full at **Appendix E**.

The table below highlights the 3 ideas which were explored under each of the 8 themes. They are not prioritised in any particular order.

THEMES	KEY AREAS OF FOCUS		
	IDEA 1	IDEA 2	IDEA 3
Affordability & Sustainability	Independent evaluation of costs for all childcare providers and all types of childcare, including provision of a decent wage and time for planning and improvement carried out to set a funding rate and is subject to regular review.	Encourage more schools to provide wraparound care on site. Therefore reducing capital set up costs for providers. If schools run the services themselves this can also provide additional income for the school.	By 20xx no families (regardless whether working or not) are paying more than x% of their household income on childcare: Delivery options could include: <i>(b)</i> Fully funding an allocation of hours for all families. Setting a progressive cap on fees based on household income (incorporating an

			allocation of fully funded provision for disadvantaged children) applying a simple fee structure and using subsidies to make up the difference between parent fee revenue and the full cost of high-quality, inclusive early education and childcare, such as is proposed in the Canadian Early Learning and Childcare Plan.
Scope of Strategy	Introduction of a statutory underpinning, stating recognition of childcare as core public infrastructure, establishing a legal framework for the delivery of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare that meets the needs of children, families, providers and our economy and society more broadly, and a duty to report on the sufficiency, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of places. Requires specific measurable targets.	Cross-departmental and sectoral Implementation Group and an Accountability Group - to include consideration of regional issues - and intersectionality with wide range of strategies (economic, social inclusion etc).	Must be a clear framework as to how this strategy works alongside the social inclusion strategies and the key economic strategies brought forward by DfE.
Accessibility & Inclusivity	Promote and facilitate workplace childcare, building on existing good practice.	Use data to create an assessment of supply and demand in certain areas and to match different work patterns of parents.	Develop a funding support scheme to enable childcare providers to meet the needs of children with disabilities / SEN/ethnic minorities, Irish medium, newcomer families, and generally vulnerable children - e.g. employ additional member of staff to support child, training, specialist equipment etc.
Economic & Societal	Rewrite the narrative around childcare by renaming childcare practitioners to something that better reflects what they do and its complexities, and ask sector what they would like to be called.	Identify the barriers to employment for parents / reasons why they do not work or work reduced hours and to what extent access to childcare is a barrier, and link this to other economic and social strategies (Green Growth, LGBTQ).	Challenge gender-based stereotypes in childcare, for example, by encouraging more men to work in childcare.



Childcare Workforce	Integrate and develop early year education for 0-4 years old based on the structure and framework already existing in nurseries for 3-4 years old. Fully subsidize and integrate early year education similar with education system.	Central pot for all providers to access for funding and training.	Valuing all the sector through recognition as early educators and pay appropriately.
Child Centred Services	Childcare should be welcoming and inclusive of all children including different cultures and children with disabilities.	Inspection should move towards outcomes for children - including participation of children's views - administered by a sole body.	A multi-disciplinary and play based framework approach to promote collaboration between Health Professionals, Educational Psychologists, to promote early intervention and capacity building while promoting a play based approach.
Leadership / Political Will	Strong political will and sign up needed across all parties (should be required to set out their stall) and commitment to ensure an Early Childhood care and Education act providing a legislative basis / requirement for the consistent and effective financing, supervision, support, coordination of the delivery of and the communication to all education and care services including from pre-birth, birth - three, three - six and school age as delivered by the voluntary, community, independent and statutory sectors.	Strategy should be recognised as an essential public good and be central to PfG with an open, online micro site to track action plans across every department with adequate funding from each department - e.g. DfC social inclusion strategies and funding for women's centres, DfE skills strategies, DAERA climate change sustainable investment, DOH guidelines etc.	All Departments need to sign up and continue engagement on a long term basis have responsibilities to report back on progress tracking actions setting key milestones for each agreed action to take the childcare strategy forward.
Quality	Department should embrace that it doesn't have all the answers – build the strategy in public, publish the approach and questions to be answered. This increases the chances crowdsourcing solutions, with the end result being a better strategy.	Develop standards which include ways to measure parent and provider partnerships. Explore revisit a joint inspection framework across health and education. An agreed quality framework for birth to 6 with focus on birth to 3 that reflects process, (Pedagogy), structural quality, minimum standards staffing, parent	Empowering parents/families to understand & support their child's early development is vital – look at ways to enhance the home learning environment in partnership with parents to support understanding on child development supporting transitions.

		<p>provider partnerships, and support appropriate practice for children who experience disadvantage for example SEND, English not first language, poverty and other forms of disadvantage. All stakeholders engaged in agreeing such a framework.</p>	
--	--	---	--

Outputs

In total the participant group developed **147 ideas** for consideration, of which **24** were further explored, using GPS analysis.

Next steps

The Department of Education, in the first instance, will consider this report and the out-workings of the 2 day **virtual** Strategic Insight Lab.

This report provides a factual account of the 2-day workshop and summarises all of the key insights provided by stakeholder participants, individually and as part of a group.

Due to time constraints only a selection of ideas/views were able to be progressed through idea generation and development.

There is scope to further develop thinking and ideas around this issue by taking forward further ideas, through one-day facilitated workshops, or by delivering a Prioritisation Lab, which would apply rigour to ideas explored, leading to a prioritisation of actions, based on cost, timeframe, impact and complexity of implementation.



Appendices





APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

List of Participants

Childcare Strategic Insight Lab 30th November and 1st December 2021

Participant Name	Organisation
Paul Brush	DE
Rachel Powell	WRDA
Philip Dalgity	NIDCO
Aoife Hamilton	EfC
Eilis McDaniel	DoH
Christine Leacock	DE
Christine McKeown	Ashton Centre
Diane Koplewsky	NIEF
Karen Sweeney	WSN
Pauline Walmsley	EYO
Noel Griffin	DfC
Paula McAliskey	NIRWIN
Dr Corina Miller	QUB
Sue Pentel	Altram
Charlene Brooks	Parenting NI
Caroline Rice	Unite the Union
Louise Coyle	NIRWIN
Aggie Luczak	The Migrant Centre
Louise Long	DfE



Trasa Canavan	Barnardos NI
Jacqueline O'Loughlin	Playboard NI
Judith Divers	Mencap
Una Lernihan	HSCNI
Aisling Walls	Altram
Clare Moore	NICICTU
Jenny Adair	HSCNI
Neil Hutcheson	FSB
Frances Loye	Private Daycare Committee
Clare Dorris	National children's Bureau
Orla Fitzsimmons	Parent Action
Kathryn McNickle	Equality Commission
Tina Dempster (observer)	DE
Melanie Maxwell (observer)	DE
Oliver McKearney (observer)	DE
Lorraine Brown (observer)	DE
Tessa Court (observer)	DE



APPENDIX B

Childcare Strategic Insight Lab Agenda - 30th November and 1st December 2021

‘How can we ensure a high quality, child-centred, sustainable childcare infrastructure, that is accessible, flexible, meets diverse needs, and is more affordable for families and children in NI, that supports child development, parental employability, a more valued childcare workforce, and other Government strategies and priorities?’

DAY 1 Session 1: Start @ 9.30 AM
Lab – Introductions. What to expect over the 2 days. Ground Rules.
Senior Sponsors - Scene Setting
Expert speakers & Brief Questions
BREAK
Miro Introduction
Insight gathering and population.
LUNCH 11.30 AM – 1.30 PM
DAY 1 Session 2: Start @ 1:30 PM
Challenges – Opportunities – Gaps (COG) Model
BREAK
COG continued.
Theming Model.
DAY 2 – Session 1: Start @ 9.30 AM



Reflection on DAY 1.
Idea Generation.
BREAK
Development of ideas – Good-Problem-Solution (GPS) model. Session One – ‘Good’.
LUNCH – 12.00 AM – 1.30 PM
DAY 2 – Session 2 : Start @ 1.30 PM
GPS – Session Two – ‘Problem’.
BREAK
GPS – Session Three – ‘Solution’.
Wrap up, next steps and close.



APPENDIX C

FULL LIST OF INSIGHTS CAPTURED FROM THE 'THE ART OF THE POSSIBLE' SESSION IN EXERCISE ONE (grouped to highlight commonality and thinking from participants)

Policy / Strategy / Scope

- How will childcare strategy co-ordinate with Department for Communities Social Inclusion Strategies and Fair Start recommendations?
- Need to include age appropriate services in the strategy title.
- Will the NI Childcare strategy span the age ranges 0-12?
- Strategy must recognise the importance of the first 1000 days.
- How do we link all the strategies that impact early childhood issues? E.g. IMH strategy, mental health strategy, children's strategy etc. The Ireland early years strategy model allows for a much more integrated approach. Ideally we'd have one Early Years strategy that covers everything.
- Is child development or employability the main focus? Unless everyone has the same offer, these will impact differently.
- How will the Department ensure that there is an integrated approach to childcare and labour market issues? For example, there must be an overhaul of parental leave/flexible working frameworks etc.
- Interesting view from Oz on 22.5 - the same as full time pre-school here. This is what we should aim for.
- Is there the scope to introduce childcare hubs, which connect providers with employers, parents with providers and parents with each other? It also creates the scope to have a mixed economy of provision, share resource and facilitate training/learning.
- HOW to prioritise which actions to take first.
- This needs to be a cross department / whole Government Issue. We must not follow mistakes made by other jurisdictions just because there is a model in existence to follow.
- There is a real opportunity for Northern Ireland to value and invest in a world class early education and childcare infrastructure, bringing tangible benefits here and now, for parents and the economy, but also creating a legacy of improved educational outcomes for children and increased earning potential. Just as we spend public funds on delivering health care, education and roads – it is right to invest in early education and childcare as a core public service.
- How do we ensure that child development is at the heart of this strategy?
- Move away from individual reimbursement model (through benefit system) towards investment in publicly provided childcare.
- Everything is possible, but funding and other restrictions will mean compromise. So, how will decisions be made, and can we set out the decision making principles at the beginning?
- The community input into child development is key - this is included in the First 5 strategy - community providing a framework for involving parents in their children's early education, supporting families and parents by making links/signposting providing support services. This family/community approach supports effective early intervention and the family/community approach should be included in the strategy.
- How do we ensure that all Government Departments are working together on this strategy, as we need to address all inequalities?
- Government must work with providers, not against them.
- The strategy needs to be forward thinking, not just what government thinks can be achieved or costed for.
- How do we address the impact of caring responsibilities on women's employment and education opportunities through an executive childcare strategy?



- Accessibility, affordability and sustainability are important factors but are challenging concepts that can be at odds with each other.
- How do we ensure that the strategy is ambitious?
- Which model currently being used is best?
- Childcare strategy must focus on 0 upwards.
- Do we know what the current childcare infrastructure looks like? Has this been mapped out as part of the strategy work?
- How will strategy reduce gender stereotyping?
- How can we communicate the value of early childhood education? To parents, practitioners and wider society.
- What do we want to achieve?
- Why are we focusing on just pre-school age children or 2 years and upwards? Children in childcare attend from birth to 12 usually.
- How do we change the narrative from childcare to early education?
- Should there be closer links between schools and places of employment to deliver flexibility?
- What further engagement is planned for separate sessions with specific sectors including the Women's Centres delivering childcare, Community Day Care Network and Irish Medium sectors?
- The Department for Economy needs to take this issue seriously. To write a draft skills strategy which barely mentions childcare shows the fundamental problem.
- The quality of services is predicated on the quality of the workforce - how will we sure workforce is integrated in strategy development?
- Can there be clarity on the involvement of other Departments in the development of the Strategy and in the funding and implementation / delivery plans?
- What modelling has taken place to inform cost and funding projections?
- Children learn from day one, not just childcare but early educators.
- Is it envisaged the strategy will include - introduction of a statutory underpinning, establishing a legal framework for the delivery of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare that meets the needs of children, families, providers and our economy and society more broadly, and a duty to report on the sufficiency, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of places?
- Will the strategy factor in Heckman's research?
- How will we acknowledge and support families who don't want to access paid/registered childcare?
- How is the Budget going to be set for the Strategy, where will the come from, and will all actions be costed in the draft strategy for public consultation?
- How will learning from the experience of funds such as Bright Start be incorporated to inform the new strategy?
- Can we create a childcare strategy that supports parents in employment, education and training and not just focus on those in employment?
- The point about the financial offer having no impact on parental employment on the basis that parents were already using childcare. The emphasis should perhaps be on the most vulnerable children with some kind of contract between government and other parents based on their childcare needs (hours required).
- We need to consider scope of the strategy? Can it be an Early Years strategy and fulfill the dual aims of childhood development and parental employment?
- Community based childcare must be valued and supported.
- How will the terms of reference for the independent research report be agreed?
- How do we encourage more men to work in the childcare sector and how to we improve working conditions for those in the sector - which is majority women and with many working below the real living wage?
- Could engagement with other Departments across Departments help address the transportation issues across childcare provision from school to afterschool etc.? This is a real issue for CWD.



- The money that comes across via the Barnet Consequential in relation to the 30 free hrs in England should be spent on childcare here. It isn't at present.
- What role do early education settings have in supporting parent education on child development? How can they be better supported to play a role in this?
- Why has there not been more engagement with community based childcare?
- What can happen during the election period, and how to guarantee public consultation in early autumn?
- Need to value all forms of childcare, including community based childcare not just private.
- The community input into child development is key - this is included in the First 5 strategy - community providing a framework for involving parents in their children's early education, supporting families and parents by making links/signposting providing support services. This family/community approach supports effective early intervention and the family/community approach should be included in the strategy.
- We need flexible models, with a flexible pay structure included.
- Is there the scope to introduce childcare hubs, which connect providers with employers, parents with providers and parents with parents? It also creates the scope to have a mixed economy of provision, share resource and facilitate training/learning.
- How can we gain flexible, affordable and sustainable childcare with in the Ratios here in N Ireland?
- How will childcare strategy co-ordinate with DfC social inclusion strategies and Fair Start recommendations?
- Need to include age appropriate services in the title.
- We need to get better at forecasting demand and agreeing supply. We also need greater transparency in terms of cost.
- We need to value childcare.
- Will the NI Childcare strategy span the age ranges 0-12?
- Strategy must recognise the importance of the first 1000 days.
- No mention of investment/budget or additional monies - where is the vision - childcare is an essential public service and there should be significant investment in the sector- Also both speakers linked quality to inclusion and equality - this provides a useful framework to develop discussion.
- Is child development or employability the main focus? Unless everyone has the same offer, these will impact differently.
- How will the Department ensure that there is an integrated approach to childcare and labour market issues? For example, there must be an overhaul of parental leave/flexible working frameworks etc.
- How do we link all the strategies that impact early childhood issues? E.g. IMH strategy, mental health strategy, children's strategy etc. The Ireland early years strategy model allows for a much more integrated approach. Ideally we'd have one Early Years strategy that covers everything.
- We need to think about childcare as infrastructure which needs proper public subsidy. How will the Department ensure this?
- What measures will be put in place to ensure COVID19 doesn't become another ACE but is instead turned into an opportunity to be a great reset?
- How do we ensure that the strategy is evidence based and will lead to positive outcomes for children and families? And how do we measure this?
- Can we confirm the age range for the childcare strategy?
- The Strategy should support targeted investment & intervention in areas of disadvantage -high level outcomes - addressing barriers - poverty, disability, cultural/language barriers -build on existing infrastructure and prioritise early intervention.
- We need to see guidance come from 1 document, currently 2 documents are creating inconsistencies. Trusts are not all reading the same.
- Change requires government investment.
- Best practice example from across the world should be studied. Nordic countries provide excellent care.



- Our Early Years age limit is restrictive in supporting families with children with disabilities or even living in rural areas with children over 12. RCMs seem to be the bedrock of supporting families of this age group yet struggle then with their finances as ratios are still involved.
- We need to ensure that RCMs are not impacted by the desire for larger nurseries. Smaller communities need tailored childcare fit for that community.
- Use similar models to that in the south-appoint as minister to oversee Childcare and Early years.
- Need for appropriate, accessible and affordable childcare available for all families, meeting diverse needs of children and tackling gender stereotypes.
- Recognise childcare as an economically viable industry in its own right. Childcare is an important enabler for women in accessing the workforce but it is also an extremely valuable, and economically valuable, industry in itself.
- A Budget allocation focused on outcomes and deliverables, rather than one that limits what can be achieved.
- Focus needs to be on a play focused pedagogy.
- Recognise and support the ongoing growth of the IM sector and acknowledge its value as a workforce enabler, a contributor to the economy and a career pathway for many.
- We need to learn from others not do the least we can; this is an opportunity to lead.
- We should be looking across to Britain at England and Wales at Ratios and flexible childcare. The ability to steer your business with some autonomy.
- Provide funded training opportunities for over 25s-workforce returners.
- Interesting view from Oz on 22.5 - the same as full time pre-school here. This is what we should aim for.
- If many areas in Australia are managing with higher childcare costs and no government support, what are we doing wrong?
- Holistic support for children and families. Looking at the whole child in their whole environment, community. Think of Bronfenbrenner.
- The strategy should revisit the principles of child development-back to basics. Meet the children where they are at, meet their needs (Maslow) and bolt in the first 1000 days of a child's life in terms of developmental importance (0-3).
- High quality, accessible and affordable early education and childcare is the key to addressing these issues. It must be treated not as a luxury, or a nice to have, but rather as an essential part of our educational, societal and economic infrastructure. Childcare affects all of us, whether we have children or not we all rely on the skills of parents in the workforce who need childcare in order to be reliable colleagues.
- Should support and encourage employers to develop carer/ parent-friendly policy and practices, including through the promotion of flexible working practices and the equal sharing of family roles/responsibilities between women and men.
- Cannot achieve goals in isolation and without consideration of UK wide issues impacting on families – welfare reform, universal credit, shared parental leave, flexible working etc.
- Challenges that can be addressed through an ambitious early education and childcare strategy: Northern Ireland continues to report the highest levels of economic inactivity across the UK, particularly amongst women who have caring responsibilities. We also have consistently high rates of child poverty – approximately 27% of all children in Northern Ireland are living in poverty. Educational underachievement as a consequence of social-economic disadvantage has been identified as a key issue for children and young people. Many sectors of the economy are reporting a 'crisis' in staffing, recruitment and retention Parents are struggling to afford the childcare they need – with the average cost of a full-time childcare place, at more than £8,500 a year, more than a mortgage for many, and almost double the tuition fees for a Northern Ireland student studying at Queen's University Belfast.
- Parents of all incomes tell us they struggle to afford the childcare they need. While support is available, not everyone is aware, and for many, it just isn't enough. For a third of families here, their childcare bill is larger than their mortgage. So we'll see Government valuing the benefits of childcare for families by ensuring high-quality places are inherently affordable and for no-one



is the cost of childcare a barrier to access – that means free or heavily subsidised, particularly when it is likely to be of most cost to parents, and of greatest benefit to children.

- Increased investment in childcare could increase the total annual income of working mothers in the UK by up to £10 billion, according to a report from the Centre for Progressive Policy (CPP). The CPP says that 1.7 million mothers want to increase their working hours but are unable to do so due to a lack of affordable and flexible childcare and 1.3 million women have been prevented from taking on a potential job due to a lack of childcare.
- How will the needs of children in the most disadvantaged communities be factored into this strategy?
- Childcare Minister and one Department.
- Affordable isn't free. Need to consider what this means for individuals. Is it fair for those who work to pay more if this is about children's needs?
- If greatest impact of qualified staff is on older children, a strategy should follow this model. Perhaps support restructuring so higher qualified staff can move to older children.
- Monitoring and evaluation seems to have been built into the ROI strategy. This would be an essential element in the NI strategy to ensure its effectiveness.
- Reference to international context re rights based approach and UN findings: UN CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) Committee Report March 2019: welcomed measures taken to expand childcare entitlements for parents in GB. However, they are concerned that childcare costs remain 'excessive' in Northern Ireland and identified this as an obstacle for families to access the childcare they need and for women in particular to enter into and progress in the workplace.
- We should ensure that we are ambitious in setting the vision for the strategy - but also must ensure there are targets which are specific, measurable and can enable impact of interventions to be assessed.
- Some of the issues come from the cross-over of 2 departments. We need to see childcare either under 1 Department or more effective communication.
- High quality early education and care indicators: Quality of interactions between children and staff. Educational programmes to support learning and development. Connections with family and community. Leadership and management. Qualifications of staff, training and staff-to-child ratios. Quality of physical environment.
- There is a real opportunity for Northern Ireland to value and invest in a world class early education and childcare infrastructure, bringing tangible benefits here and now, for parents and the economy, but also creating a legacy of improved educational outcomes for children and increased earning potential. Just as we spend public funds on delivering health care, education and roads – it is right to invest in early education and childcare as a core public service.
- DfE workforce initiatives need to be aligned to the needs of the childcare sector e.g. over 25s access to MA framework.
- 65-70% of providers total costs are employees, without government funding prices are going to increase, further squeezing parents.
- Lessons learned from implementation in England on the 2 year old offer will be a useful insight for NI.
- We need to support services that are needed but not every service is needed. Government should prioritise rather than giving to everyone.
- Consideration must be giving to cross department innovative working, such as developing health based types of early ed support for children with disabilities, such as approved home childcare and direct payments opportunities.
- Currently there is limited / no financial support available for families with no recourse to public funds - need to ensure those families are supported through interventions in the strategy.
- Must be accessible - accessible – to all children, and all families, irrespective of household circumstances, disability, ethnicity and whether they live in a rural or urban area.
- It would be good to have a look at the parental poll from the ROI to develop a survey here to assess demand post Covid.
- A new Childcare Strategy must ensure all parents can access and afford the high quality childcare they need, while supporting providers to deliver this sustainably. This will deliver



significant developmental benefits to all children, regardless of their circumstances, help to reduce the gender pay gap, reduce poverty and support economic growth and rebuilding.

- This needs to be cross department / whole Government Issue. We must not follow mistakes made by other jurisdictions just because there is a model in existence to follow.
- Short Term fix needed to stop cots rising, rates relief as per wales and Scotland required ASAP.
- Must have core principals of child development e.g. Five to Thrive, infant mental health and development.
- Remove barriers to childcare/early years-meet the diverse needs of all within our community-inclusion should be at the core of the strategy. (Socio-economic disadvantage/ethnic/cultural/linguistic diversity). Address disability, disadvantage & poverty, the needs of ethnic minority and Irish language communities.
- SEED study identified an early start (2 years) and higher amount of ECEC delivers better outcomes.
- Need to ensure strong connections with full range of Government Departments and key linked strategies including, but not limited to anti-poverty, disability, gender, economy and skills.
- Parental wellbeing ensures children's wellbeing. Should be included in the challenge question as a goal alongside parent employability.
- Both inputs this morning focused on the quality of services and the need to invest in the workforce.
- Childcare needs to be child centred and available to all children.
- Recognition that quality childcare and early education are inextricably linked, working towards an integrated system of 'early education and childcare', with a focus on quality. This should be reflected in the name of the strategy, but important not to lose the childcare element - as this is key in enabling parents to work - relates to flexibility, opening hours etc.
- There is political will to get this right, from Ministers, elected representatives - what we need to see are bold, ambitious, brave decisions being taken that will result in the funding being allocated to support the achievement of the strategy's vision.
- The report should have a one page diagrammatic overview of the childcare structures, funding, numbers and terminology in Northern Ireland. The system is so complex and we need to know what it looks like.

Workforce Learning & Development / Value / Retention

- Can we provide more training for all providers, supporting everyone to improve and take part in continuous learning? How do we continue to avail of Zoom and online training for the future, ensuring providers can attain to a higher standard?
- Importance of VALUE - ensuring the staff working in the sector feel valued with pay, terms and conditions, career progression. Will contribute to recruitment and retention.
- Provide funded training opportunities for over 25s-workforce returners.
- How can we secure better access to funding to support access to higher level qualifications?
- What do we have to change to make childcare work for all sections of the sector? (Ratios, work commitments, paperwork overload, and lack of value on service all deflate providers.
- How can we encourage staff to stay and work full time, when they came in to this sector for part time working patterns?
- How do we make the sector an attractive employer?
- How will staff who have no or low qualifications be protected if degrees are required?
- How do we engage better with providers and give equal voice to all providers and staff?
- How do we address undervaluation of childcare sector workers?
- Can we provide more training for all providers, supporting everyone to improve and take part in continuous learning? How do we continue to avail of Zoom and online training for the future, ensuring providers can attain to a higher standard?
- How will the strategy help support practitioners to increase knowledge and skills to build parents confidence in setting to meet additional needs?
- How do we ensure quality whilst retaining providers' ability to comply within time?



- Increasing quality of early education needs workforce development and commitment to appropriate pay to attract staff.
- How do we continue to promote childcare as a professional career and not just a side-line to make a few pounds until our children are older?
- Training needs to be accessible for everyone. Giving opportunities to improve and climb the career ladder. We don't see much room for growth in childcare.
- Importance of VALUE - ensuring the staff working in the sector feel valued with pay, terms and conditions, career progression. Will contribute to recruitment and retention.
- Childcare is vital for all working parents. We need to recognise that providers are also working people with the need for proper wages and remove the need for reliance on benefits.
- Embed within the strategy a workforce, training and development plan to ensure the early education and childcare workforce is suitably qualified, skilled, valued and remunerated to deliver high quality early education and childcare, to include a plan for recruiting and diversification within the early learning and childcare workforce involving a Northern Ireland wide recruitment campaign that reflects the value of the sector.
- Should have higher pay and progress for staff who take the initiative and work for more qualifications.
- EY Practitioners are often described as 'plural practitioners' or needing to wear many hats. How will they be supported and the value of their work responded to appropriately?
- Employers (businesses) should value their workforce and contribute to childcare costs.
- Quality and professionalism within the sector needs to be recognised. Not only to keep current practitioners, but to encourage growth.
- Staff need to be paid hours worked. Accrued hours don't improve financial status.
- Objective needed in relation to valuing workforce, working conditions, higher wages and the precariousness of the work – can look to developments elsewhere including RoI for inspiration (developing a sectoral wage agreement).
- Sustainability should not be defined as the ability of childcare services to cover all costs through parental fees alone. The Government purchasing or funding places contributes to the sustainability of the setting. They are being paid for the provision of a service. Financial sustainability = ability to maintain financial capacity over time – maintain or expand services within the organisation, while developing resilience to occasional economic shocks in the short term. Government funding of places should be part of the mix supporting providers'. Financial sustainability. These aren't grants, they are payments for the provision of services.
- Alongside financial investment and policy and legislative development, it would be helpful for a clear emphasis to be given to the 'value' of the childcare and early education sector recognising the skills of the workforce, ensuring that there is career progression and that it is a 'sector of choice' to work in.
- Workforce issues such as pay, qualifications, CPD need urgently addressed = we are losing expertise from the sector on a daily basis as a consequence of Covid.
- The speakers this morning emphasized the importance of the workforce but this is dependent on terms and conditions and pay.
- Government investment in quality training for staff involved in early years education. Use of and increase capacity of existing nurseries/pre-school setting to provide enough capacity for at least 30h a week early years education. A min of 30h a week pre-school education is essential for both child development and women employment. Fully subsidized places for all pre-school children regardless of household income. Encouraging women into employment should be done, regardless of household income.

Quality / Measurement

- How can any inspection process ensure that small settings with limited resources aren't disadvantaged?
- Lack of collaboration between trust inspectors and providers.
- Interesting insight on the role of dual inspection. Something we need to consider - better outcomes freeing up dual resources.



- Importance of access to information – Family Support NI, plus information on financial support available – campaign to raise awareness, encourage parents to get checks. Requirement on childcare providers through inspections to demonstrate have raised awareness of financial support available. Inspection report on childcare settings – outstanding / good / the way Ofsted etc do – and available online.
- Important learning this morning about the need for integrated regulation and inspection - standardising and avoiding confusion. There is duplication across Departments.
- Interesting comment on how the regulatory system has joined up in England. This was tested in NI previously. Is this worth revisiting?
- Currently no data being gathered on the number of children with disabilities living with their parents in the community - Ref Children's NI Order 1995 Reg and Guidance Vol 5 Children with a Disability requires the Department of Health to ensure each Trust has a register of children with disabilities - these registers do not currently exist.
- How do we mitigate negative impact of COVID-19 closing pre-school settings?
- Can we ensure that aims / objectives are specific and measurable, with targets set in relation to key outcomes e.g. developmental milestones for children, reduction in childcare spend by parents as a proportion of household income, childcare provider sustainability, quality of provision and training and professional development within the sector?
- Can we get an undertaking that there will be one department who will take responsibility for childcare from funding to regulatory and inspection?
- How can we ensure 'continuity of quality' across all settings, from small private childminder to larger statutory settings?
- Quality should be based on outputs not inputs.
- How will uptake be monitored by equality group?
- Who will define quality? Will we have revised inspectorate as suggested by Susan?
- How do you measure quality of early year education in NI? Is it measured though the qualification of the staff? Is it an NVQ qualification enough? Why are we still discussing childcare and not concentrating attention and resources on Early Years education?
- How will success be measured?
- Interesting point about joint inspections. Should be investigated further.
- How can any inspection process ensure that small settings with limited resources aren't disadvantaged?
- Importance of access to information – Family Support NI, plus information on financial support available – campaign to raise awareness, encourage parents to get checks. Requirement on childcare providers through inspections to demonstrate have raised awareness of financial support available. Inspection report on childcare settings – outstanding / good / the way Ofsted etc do – and available online.
- Interesting insight on the role of dual inspection. Something we need to consider - better outcomes freeing up dual resources.
- EY Qualified inspectors as per England.
- We need to make the inspection process simpler. Too much pressure. Also the ability to have our own feedback on reports would show our own self-reflection in practice.
- Important learning this morning about the need for integrated regulation and inspection - standardising and avoiding confusion. There is duplication across Departments.

Equality / Rural Provision

- Lack of provision for children with a disability has been an issue that is often raised by parents we support, how will the strategy support EY settings to offer inclusive places for children?
- All children have a right to quality early education/care, but all existing settings do not provide equal quality provision - need to address the imbalance.
- Providing childcare that is needs led for children with additional needs that is flexible and not always linked to parental employment.
- Recognise the value and support given by community based organisations, women's centres/groups.



- We need to target certain groups of children/families and certain areas where provision is more of a challenge.
- Rural areas often need bespoke solutions, how do we plan for this?
- How can we ensure that rural childcare continues to support families' needs, without impacting on the provider?
- How do we ensure childcare is appropriate for all children and families, including children with disabilities, SEN, new residents etc?
- Should there be a specific objective relating to gender equality?
- A lack of specialist equipment and accessibility requirements are often a factor for children with disabilities accessing EY settings. Will links between health i.e. AHPs be supported to ensure children's needs are met?
- How do we maximise positive impacts of early years' education upon those children for whom it has most beneficial impacts, including children with disabilities, children from low-income households etc?
- What is will be the definition of early years education or learning? Where will we take lead from and how do we ensure continuity throughout NI?
- Lack of provision for children with a disability has been an issue that is often raised by parents we support, how will the strategy support EY settings to offer inclusive places for children?
- Specialist childcare is often expensive and availability is not equally available throughout NI.
- Need for skilled afterschool provision for children with disabilities over the age of 12, especially in rural areas.
- Training specific to learning disability/difficulties and how to support children in the EY is little and often focuses on school age children.
- Rural childcare – developing local childcare services, create childcare jobs. Rural providers can incur increased costs due to the need to pay for transport services. Support increased flexibility, hours of provision, cost, transport, access to training and qualifications.
- For many families, the closest childcare provision is the best option - they don't have the luxury of looking for a 'quality' one that is maybe further away. How do we ensure areas of high deprivation have quality provision options?
- Evidence in Scotland that the most rural areas are still not being reached adequately. We need to ensure this doesn't happen.
- Create opportunities for universal access to quality childcare and early learning (draw upon examples from other countries-tax free/funded childcare schemes).
- Community childcare is difficult to set up. Registered person not always available yet cannot be employed as they are the employer.
- Interventions to ensure that suitable, high quality childcare is appropriate, available and affordable for families who have a child with a disability, including up to age 18, and that providers are trained, resourced and empowered to deliver those services.
- Unregistered childcare is a problem especially in rural areas.
- Need to ensure the childcare strategy meets the needs of all children and parents. E.g. outside normal working hours, understanding of different cultural needs, children and/or parents with disabilities etc.
- This morning's presentations highlighted that care and education are inseparable. This is vital in terms of children with disabilities often require health care support to ACCESS their right to education.
- Consideration of this strategy alongside the Carers Strategy re parent carers, who lose their carers allowance when they earn more than £126 per week whilst still providing 100+ hours per week carer for their child with disability, and often other children.
- Rural childcare days tend to be longer we need transport infrastructure too.
- Equality of access to childcare for children with disabilities must be highlighted ref Employers for Childcare Survey this month. 87% of parent carers of CYP disabilities have no access to childcare.
- This morning's sessions highlighted the importance of quality standards not just for education quality, but the quality and accessibility of health care for children with disabilities in all



educational settings. Self reg of this quality MUST include effective engagement with parent carers of children with disabilities, and all parents in order to assess quality of each settings early education provision.

Cost / Funding / Affordability / Sustainability

- We need to get better at forecasting demand and agreeing supply. We also need greater transparency in terms of cost.
- How are we going to ensure fairness and avoid some settings charging rates at odds with other settings?
- No mention of investment/budget or additional monies - where is the vision? Childcare is an essential public service and there should be significant investment in the sector. Also both speakers linked quality to inclusion and equality - this provides a useful framework to develop discussion.
- Reference to international context re rights based approach and UN findings: UN CEDAW (Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) Committee Report March 2019: welcomed measures taken to expand childcare entitlements for parents in GB. However, they are concerned that childcare costs remain 'excessive' in Northern Ireland and identified this as an obstacle for families to access the childcare they need and for women in particular to enter into and progress in the workplace.
- Only quality early years makes a measurable difference and therefore investment should support this - great example of a policy supporting affordable quality childcare from first speaker (RoI). We should therefore reject underlying assumption that childcare can be sustainable and affordable. Only way to do that with fees is to up the costs to parents who already can't afford this - investment to keep costs down - direct support for providers.
- If many areas in Australia are managing with higher childcare costs and no government support, what are we doing wrong?
- In light of the fact that there will be limited funding, there must be differential funding streams for children living in poverty or with additional needs.
- How do we ensure sustainability is maintained in the long term?
- How do we ensure quality, affordability and sustainability?
- What does 'affordable' mean? How do we define it? It's such a subjective concept.
- How can we ensure that childcare is regarded as vital public infrastructure? It requires public subsidy in the same way as roads.
- Investment in the sector required. We spend less on EY than any other devolved nation or Ireland.
- Will the Department consider an approach such as the sectoral wage agreement, which is being used in the Republic of Ireland?
- How do we ensure that childcare is affordable but not at the expense of providers?
- Costs are going to spiral out of control.
- Some parents seem to have linked going to work and confidence in doing so with the quality of provision, rather than cost.
- Significant funding invested directly within the full range of childcare settings to enable them to offer flexible, fully funded or heavily subsidised early education and childcare hours to parents, particularly when it is likely to be of most cost to parents and of greatest benefit to children, from age 1 to age 4. This should be regulated to ensure providers receiving this public funding work towards meeting criteria making overall access fair, affordable, flexible and high quality, as well as enhancing workforce conditions to reflect the true value of the profession. Funding rates must be established based on an independent evaluation of the hourly delivery costs of childcare, in consultation with childcare providers, and subject to regular review. Delivery options could include:
 - Fully funding an allocation of hours for all families.
 - Setting a progressive cap on fees based on household income (incorporating an allocation of fully funded provision for disadvantaged children) applying a simple fee structure and using subsidies to make up the difference between parent fee revenue



and the full cost of high-quality, inclusive early education and childcare, such as is proposed in the Canadian Early Learning and Childcare Plan.

- How are we going to ensure fairness and avoid some settings charging rates at odds with other settings?
- We need to look at other ways of making childcare affordable. Are there other ways of bringing costs down?
- The earlier the investment the earlier the return - Investment in staff, salaries and terms & conditions/parity with education- review of quality framework and skill set 0-3s -challenge Fair Start graduate conclusion, investment in quality & innovation e.g. Solihull/Curiosity, all costs Progress made - marketing campaign and address IT support needs of providers and families - investment!! The existing infrastructure should be protected rather than focus on extending services in schools/community & voluntary infrastructure as provides vital early intervention services & wrap around family/community support Community/voluntary infrastructure enables projects like Sure Start to deliver in local communities of need - invest in community infrastructure.
- Only quality early years makes a measurable difference and therefore investment should support this - great example of a policy supporting affordable quality childcare from first speaker. We should therefore reject underlying assumption that childcare can be sustainable and affordable. Only way to do that with fees is to up the costs to parents who already can't afford this - investment to keep costs down - direct support for providers.
- Finance packages to support childcare access are required and should be universal.
- Commitment to ensuring all parents are aware of the financial support that they are entitled to with the cost of registered childcare, recognising that we are not going to secure a system where all childcare is fully funded. All registered childcare provider contracts should include a section advising parents that there may be help available towards registered childcare costs, signposting them to seek independent advice, and this could be monitored as part of the inspection process.
- Need to consider definition of sustainability - how this is defined so it doesn't conflict with quality and affordability? Sustainability of the sector should include Government funding and investment.
- The word families, needs to be replaced with parents in the question around affordability. This recognises that families are led by parents, parent pay for childcare, not families, and parental responsibility for decision making for the child is visible.
- Funding should 'follow the child' in that it should be provider neutral – enabling parents to access public, private, third sector, childminders – so long as providers meet a quality standard. This will increase choice and flexibility for parents and carers, whilst ensuring children benefit from high quality provision from the end of parental leave.
- Aim should be for a service that is valued by family and society - so parents should contribute but in a means tested way.
- Turning a family away when you have space but you may have an overlap cannot be sustained. We need to be able to make conscious choices for families and finances within safe working practice. Having to seek permission via panel and wait 4 weeks then to be told its short term is not supporting families or providers.
- Encourage and incentivise employers to engage more effectively in supporting their staff or prospective recruits to access childcare, including through workplace nurseries. This could be a condition of support for larger companies from Invest NI, and for new or international businesses that receive support to invest in Northern Ireland. Develop the pilot for a workplace nursery making use of the Stormont Estate (a working group was previously established for this).
- Flexibility: This is a key issue for parents, particularly those who work shifts, or travel further for work and childcare. Parents need an infrastructure that isn't still based on a model of reliance on either one parent staying at home or on other family members.



APPENDIX D

OVERARCHING THEMES AND ASSOCIATED IDEAS FROM IDEA GENERATION EXERCISE (ideas on which GPS analysis carried out are highlighted)

Theme: Affordability & Sustainability

- Independent evaluation of an hour's rate of childcare required.
- Comprehensive, independent review of childcare and early year's sector to assess what the capital and investment needs are.
- Mandatory employer contributions to childcare costs e.g. funded creches.
- Significant funding invested directly within the full range of childcare settings to enable them to offer flexible, fully funded or heavily subsidised early education and childcare hours to parents, particularly when it is likely to be of most cost to parents and of greatest benefit to children, from age 1 to age 4.
- Funding rates must be established based on an independent evaluation of the hourly delivery costs of childcare, in consultation with childcare providers and subject to regular review.
- Childcare places should be subsidised by the government to cover the actual costs.
- Parents should know upfront what the cost will be for them with as set by their chosen provider but not higher than a government max cap set annually but well ahead of time.
- Independent review of childcare costs to establish an hourly/daily cost. Set mechanism to review this regularly.
- Should not only be targeted at working parents - for all families. Targeted at ensuring affordability for years 1-4.
- If schools are to be involved in wrap around care, they must have sufficient investment and resourcing.
- Ensure caps/ subsidies do not unfairly impact on larger families e.g. no 'two-child limit'.
- Funding to cover enough hours to enable parents to work i.e. at least a half day. Also means that parents are only paying for half a day childcare if they work fulltime.
- Financial support for families who may need to travel further to meet specific needs e.g. children with disabilities.
- Ensuring that all parents are aware of the financial support available to them to help.
- Promotional campaign to ensure that all parents are aware of financial support they are entitled to with the cost of childcare and delivery of independent advice.
- Incentive employers to support their staff through offering access to childcare through workplace nurseries - this could be a condition of support for larger companies from Invest NI.
- If government believes Child Maintenance is at the below levels. Childcare should not be more expensive than that either: - one child, you'll pay 12% of your gross weekly income - two children, you'll pay 16% of your gross weekly income - three or more children, you'll pay 19% of your gross weekly income.
- By 20xx no families are paying more than x% of their household income on childcare.
- Move away from individual subsidy through the tax credit system and use the pot for investment in childcare infrastructure.
- Ensure funding covers the costs for the childcare sector and ensures that staff can be paid a decent wage.
- Investment in staff - a decent wage is at least the real living wage as set by the living wage foundation.
- This should be for all families (working / not working) targeted at ages 1-4 when childcare most expensive for families and most expensive to deliver
- Commitment to ensuring all parents are aware of the financial support that they are entitled to with the cost of registered childcare, recognising that we are not going to secure a system



where all childcare is fully funded. All registered childcare provider contracts should include a section advising parents that there may be help available towards registered childcare costs, signposting them to seek independent advice, and this could be monitored as part of the inspection process.

- Extended school programme should be encouraging school to provide more services with benefit to everyone involved and proper funding.
- Potentially a Ministerial sub-committee on childcare could achieve buy-in from other Departments.
- Along with decent wages, come decent terms and conditions.
- **Independent evaluation of costs for all childcare providers and all types of childcare, including provision of a decent wage and time for planning and improvement carried out to set a funding rate and is subject to regular review.**
- **Encourage more schools to provide wraparound care on site. Therefore reducing capital set up costs for providers. If schools run the services themselves this can also provide additional income for the school.**
- **By 20xx no families (regardless whether working or not) are paying more than x% of their household income on childcare: - Delivery options could include:**
 - **Fully funding an allocation of hours for all families**
 - **Setting a progressive cap on fees based on household income (incorporating an allocation of fully funded provision for disadvantaged children) applying a simple fee structure and using subsidies to make up the difference between parent fee revenue and the full cost of high-quality, inclusive early education and childcare, such as is proposed in the Canadian Early Learning and Childcare Plan.**

Theme: Scope of Strategy

- DfE / DfC working with Councils on employability / skills. Ensuring access to childcare will help move people into employment. Councils needs to be aware of what's available in their area.
- Firm commitments and actions, with an achievable delivery timeframe, funding allocated and measurable targets including in relation to:
 - Developmental milestones for children.
 - Reduction in childcare spend by parents as a proportion of household income.
 - Childcare provider sustainability.
 - Quality of provision.
 - Training and professional development within the sector.
- Strategy must be underpinned by appropriate human rights conventions eg: UNCRPD, CEDAW, and UNCRC.
- Mainstreaming of actions across Departmental corporate and annual business plan, and into high level frameworks e.g. PfG.
- SMART action plans, with a strong monitoring regime, with disaggregated data.
- Idea re monitoring and evaluating implementation of the childcare strategy across all 9 departments: Whole systems monitoring with each level of public service systems: EG: Dept for Communities monitoring, council level monitoring and outcomes and community planning teams monitoring and outcomes to be achieved with Childcare Strategy 'Reviewer' to oversee monitoring and implementation, against identified outcomes.
- Should also include working with local Councils - economic development, community planning and community centres, access to play.
- Importance of strengthening Children's NI Order 1995 Vol 3 and Vol 5 as underpinning legislation which needs specificity and implementation via strategy as regards Early Education and Childcare, perhaps with emphasis on children's rights focus as per the Children and Young Peoples Strategy 2020/2030 around outcomes involving access to education and learning, good mental health and wellbeing and access to play and learning.



- Co-ordination with DfC social strategies, Fair Start recommendations, 10X Vision.
- Scope of the strategy must include a review of employment rights to ensure that this supports working parents.
- Ongoing involvement of stakeholders through an advisory group - should include parents, all types of providers.
- Interaction with DfE on Higher Education and Further Education as childcare can be a barrier to participating in course which could enable individuals to access employment in higher skilled jobs.
- Strategy interacts cross departmentally. DfC through improving rates of economic inactivity (due to home / family care reasons), DfE through 10x Vision ensuring we have more people working in higher skilled jobs.
- How cross departmental interactions and collaboration can be facilitated: Idea: Cross Department Implementation Group specifically for Early Education and Childcare, underpinned by specific legislation to hold individual departments to account for fulfilling their duties to implement the Childcare Strategy.
- Childcare Strategy 'Reviewer' could ensure alignment with other relevant strategies e.g. Disability Strategy, Carer's Strategy and Autism Strategy.
- Rolling annual review, which involves stakeholders. Mid-strategy review and end of Strategy strategic review to ensure next strategy can be developed as needed.
- Balance on disposable income against household income.
- Potential cap on payment per child subsidies cover additional costs? How is this assessed and by whom?
- Ensure the funding actually covers the costs of delivery.
- Do an analysis of average cost of childcare provision in different type of childcare providers.
- Review uptake of the funding support & parent's financial support with childcare.
- Adopt a similar scheme to the ROI one.
- **Introduction of a statutory underpinning, stating recognition of childcare as core public infrastructure, establishing a legal framework for the delivery of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare that meets the needs of children, families, providers and our economy and society more broadly, and a duty to report on the sufficiency, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of places. Requires specific measurable targets.**
- **Cross-departmental and sectoral Implementation Group and an Accountability Group - to include consideration of regional issues - and intersectionality with wide range of strategies (economic, social inclusion etc).**
- **Must be a clear framework as to how this strategy works alongside the social inclusion strategies and the key economic strategies brought forward by DfE.**

Theme: Accessibility & Inclusivity

- Train childcare staff on caring for children with disabilities and children who have English as a 2nd language.
- Link with employers to work with childcare providers to solve the supply and demand issue.
- Provide childcare on-site of schools & employment.
- Public sector becomes leader in this area by providing childcare to staff.
- Use empty office spaces (due to Covid) to host childcare.
- Develop a range of courses for childcare providers to deal with children with special needs.
- Provide more home-based registered childcare provision to meet the needs of parents working antisocial hours and the needs of children with disabilities.
- Develop more work-based childcare with hours matching demand.
- Expand opportunities for a seamless range of services for the Irish speaking community from birth.
- Provide school-based childcare in special schools.



- Training to meet the diverse needs of all within our community-cultural/linguistic.
- Develop an IM specific training, skills and qualifications framework.
- **Promote and facilitate workplace childcare, building on existing good practice.**
- **Use data to create an assessment of supply and demand in certain areas and to match different work patterns of parents.**
- **Develop a funding support scheme to enable childcare providers to meet the needs of children with disabilities / SEN/ethnic minorities, Irish medium, newcomer families, and generally vulnerable children - e.g. employ additional member of staff to support child, training, specialist equipment etc.**

Theme: Economic & Societal

- Establish links between health visitors and early education / childcare providers to identify children who might benefit from funded places.
- Ensure children accessing childcare are receiving a quality child development experience.
- Provide funded early childhood education and care to children with delayed development / in need.
- A funding package to support childcare providers with early intervention (supporting trauma).
- Tackle enduring gender equalities - through the provision of childcare will benefit the economy and society.
- Link with DfE with their economic strategy (10x) and supporting families and parents in training and employment.
- **Rewrite the narrative around childcare by renaming childcare practitioners to something that better reflects what they do and its complexities, and ask sector what they would like to be called.**
- **Identify the barriers to employment for parents / reasons why they do not work or work reduced hrs and to what extent access to childcare is a barrier, and link this to other economic and social strategies (Green Growth, LGBTQ).**
- **Challenge gender-based stereotypes in childcare, for example by encouraging more men to work in childcare.**

Theme: Childcare Workforce

- Recognition of all sections of the sector. Focus on our language when we speak of childcare.
- Current pay rates, open up training/funding to 25+ years old.
- Age group for early years. Do we focus on early years or all ages?
- Value of volunteers? No Ratio, even though they complete the same work and takes time to train.
- Terms and Conditions of employees.
- Professionalise the sector. Not seen as a stopgap but a chosen career.
- Need to influence the apprentice scheme.
- Upskilling of all employees driving quality + CPD.
- Buy in from Colleges.
- Age appropriate training and qualifications aligned with sectoral need.
- Review of minimum standards important, but we need to protect quality agenda.
- Quality is predicted on the quality of the workforce.
- Need to strategically engage with colleges, sector skills bodies, awarding bodies.
- Ratios need reviewed when we look at other areas. They can offer Quality and more accessibility. Is N Ireland being held back by the standards?
- Age groups in regulations up to the age of 12 and many provide a service over and beyond that age with SEN and other disabilities.
- Staff qualified to classroom assistant level.
- Childminding needs to be made more attractive as a career path and paid accordingly.



- **Integrate and develop early year education for 0-4 years old based on the structure and framework already existing in nurseries for 3-4 years old. Fully subsidize and integrate early year education similar with education system.**
- **Central pot for all providers to access for funding and training.**
- **Valuing all the sector through recognition as early educators and pay appropriately.**

Theme: Child Centred Services

- Parental involvement, how do we engage? Technology, verbal.
- Single Inspection body/align inspection process.
- All children considered. This includes children in their own home impacted by regulation and inspections.
- What is the baseline for structural quality and process quality need defined for child centred?
- What do we need to change to bring flexibility? Autonomy in business, standard reviews?
- Participatory practice for all when changes are made.
- Play based pedagogy.
- Training and availability for providers to ensure equality, accessibility for all. Funding?
- Need to develop a play based framework and a multi-disciplinary approach?
- Use of technology to identify trends, challenges, opportunities to better adapt and develop provision.
- Multi-disciplinary approach to include all sectors.
- Participation of children's views in service design and delivery - should be incorporated into inspection.
- Technology should be part of the programme. How we use it.
- Flexibility and equality of access across the various sectors.
- **Childcare should be welcoming and inclusive of all children including different cultures and children with disabilities.**
- **Inspection should move towards outcomes for children - including participation of children's views - administered by a sole body.**
- **A multi-disciplinary and play based framework approach to promote collaboration between Health Professionals, Educational Psychologists, to promote early intervention and capacity building while promoting a play based approach.**

Theme: Leadership / Political Will

- Legislation should include number of measurable actions which are time limited and subject to annual review.
- Effective collaboration across the public sector to reduce working in departmental silos and policies designed in partnership with the sector with a child-centred focus and from the perspective of the family as a whole.
- Cross departmental buy in to legislation Increase level of GDP investment in early years.
- Community, voluntary, IM & ethnic minority communities to be involved in development of this.
- Clear action plan highlighting which department has responsibility for what aspect of the childcare strategy.
- It's manifesto time - ensure childcare and early learning is considered as a key priority across all political parties.
- Utilise existing children's champions more effectively across Departments.
- A common cross departmental and agency approach to funding, inspection and registration reflecting inequalities in such systems between statutory and non-statutory counterparts. A streamlined inspection and ratio and regulation system so that for the future there is greater synergy in one system with clear read across to all who provide and avail of care and development opportunities for children.



- Development and implementation plans that are based on input from stakeholders, evidence based and that are realistic, applicable and transparent and should be consistently measured, evaluated and reviewed.
- Engage key role models from political parties to use their voice effectively - at Education Committee, APG etc.
- Addressing differences/disconnect in relation to policy development, financial support and statutory requirements for childcare and early years due to the separation between the lead department DE and the regulatory authority DoH. To ensure a strong collaborative partnership is developed between the community and the school to ensure no duplication/replication of existing services and no loss of community provision. Recognition that community based childcare addresses economic, social, health & economic priorities.
- Departments have to be made accountable with measurable actions - review of NDNA commitment to 3-4 year old offer.
- Learn from good examples in other jurisdictions e.g. Scotland, England & Southern Ireland i.e. governmental buy in and increased investment as in the First 5 strategy published by the Southern government.
- A microsite with departmental targets and actions needs to be introduced as part of the childcare strategy development, then used once the strategy is implemented to track accountability.
- Childcare recognised as an essential public service which is embedded in legislation which would require an increase in the GDP level of investment.
- Use NI Children and Young People Commissioner - key function re childcare?
- What is the written position of each political party on how much should be invested in Childcare?
- Long lasting meaningful commitment from Departments, at least 10 years (can't disappear when funding ends such as DSC etc).
- A childcare and learning Champion (similar to mental health champion).
- Childcare strategy to be linked to the anti-poverty strategy and other relevant strategies and reports – family support strategy, 'Fair Start' report.
- **Strong political will and sign up needed across all parties (should be required to set out their stall) and commitment to ensure an Early Childhood care and Education act providing a legislative basis / requirement for the consistent and effective financing, supervision, support, coordination of the delivery of and the communication to all education and care services including from pre-birth, birth - three, three - six and school age as delivered by the voluntary, community, independent and statutory sector's.**
- **Strategy should be recognised as an essential public good and be central to PfG with an open, online micro site to track action plans across every department with adequate funding from each department - e.g. DfC social inclusion strategies and funding for women's centres, DfE skills strategies, DAERA climate change sustainable investment, DOH guidelines etc.**
- **All Departments need to sign up and continue engagement on a long term basis have responsibilities to report back on progress tracking actions setting key milestones for each agreed action to take the childcare strategy forward.**

Theme: Quality

- Effectively improving outcomes for children requires an overarching focus on child development including social, emotional, physical and cognitive areas and redirecting the focus to early years - the family community approach should be embedded in the strategy.
- Equal access means addressing barriers to accessibility for children in poverty & deprivation additional needs and/or obstacles arising from diverse ethnic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.



- Delivering quality would require redirecting the focus to early years 0-3 -and investing in the existing childcare infrastructure as a whole. Community based social economy/not for profit childcare settings offer a seamless range of services, from pregnancy to afterschool and have a key role in delivering high level outcomes for all children their families and the wider community. Empowering parents/families to understand & support their child's early development is vital – community based day care settings are uniquely placed to deliver this.
- Quality of workforce is good but essential to maintain - continued professional development essential to include opportunities for workers to be skilled up on importance of engaging with parents as partners.
- Quality should include child care, education, staff care and development, but also the quality of regulations and quality of the regulators themselves.
- Quality = quality of environment; quality of workforce; quality of policies and procedures; quality of parents as partners - important FRAMEWORK measures all.
- **Department should embrace that it doesn't have all the answers – build the strategy in public, publish the approach and questions to be answered. This increases the chances crowdsourcing solutions, with the end result being a better strategy.**
- **Develop standards which include ways to measure parent and provider partnerships. Explore revisit a joint inspection framework across health and education. An agreed quality framework for birth to 6 with focus on birth to 3 that reflects process, (Pedagogy), structural quality, minimum standards staffing, parent provider partnerships, and support appropriate practice for children who experience disadvantage for example SEND, English not first language, poverty and other forms of disadvantage. All stakeholders engaged in agreeing such a framework.**
- **Empowering parents/families to understand & support their child's early development is vital – look at ways to enhance the home learning environment in partnership with parents to support understanding on child development supporting transitions.**

APPENDIX E

DETAIL OF GPS ANALYSIS CARRIED OUT ON 24 SELECTED IDEAS (3 ideas from each of the 8 overarching themes).

THEME: Affordability & Sustainability – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
<p>IDEA: Independent evaluation of costs for all childcare providers and all types of childcare, including provision of a decent wage and time for planning and improvement carried out to set a funding rate and is subject to regular review.</p>	<p>IDEA: Encourage more schools to provide wraparound care on site. Therefore reducing capital set up costs for providers. If schools run the services themselves this can also provide additional income for the school.</p>	<p>IDEA: By 20xx no families (regardless whether working or not) are paying more than x% of their household income on childcare: Delivery options could include: (c) Fully funding an allocation of hours for all families. (d) Setting a progressive cap on fees based on household income (incorporating an allocation of fully funded provision for disadvantaged children) applying a simple fee structure and using subsidies to make up the difference between parent fee revenue and the full cost of high-quality, inclusive early education and childcare, such as is proposed in the Canadian Early Learning and Childcare Plan.</p>
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>Like independent nature. Evaluation based on evidence. All types of providers. Significant inputs are included. Subject to regular review.</p> <p>Sustainability - both in terms of providers being able to survive/thrive, and sustainability in terms of the environment.</p> <p>Good points. Independent review will include evaluation planning for improvement and would be subject to ongoing review.</p>	<p>Offers affordable, convenient care.</p> <p>It's good because it raises questions about all the issues with this idea.</p> <p>Logistically might be positive for some parents.</p> <p>May help with transportation issues for children with disability who are currently</p>	<p>Ambitious and lays out high expectations re quality for families.</p> <p>Learning from other countries would be good.</p> <p>Looking at other models good starting point. Contains both demand and supply measures.</p> <p>Proper data collection needed. Consider other groups including children with a disability.</p>

<p>Need to define and address sustainability - if childcare is a public good it needs to be universal and must be sustainable beyond fees and also be incorporated into challenges for environment e.g. is a green sector already. Sustainability needs to enable providers to thrive and rebalance our economy with care at core.</p> <p>The independent investigation should highlight the real cost of quality provision and the need for targeted investment in areas of need.</p> <p>Sustainability in face of covid.</p> <p>In order to make childcare affordable and accessible public investment is required to support providers to keep fees down. Independent evaluation would realistically identify the actual cost of providing quality childcare.</p>	<p>having to move across childcare provision.</p> <p>Easier access to equipment and resources.</p> <p>This could offer convenient affordable options for parents, particularly for those with children of varying ages who get out at different times.</p>	<p>Fully funded childcare places for the lowest income/disadvantaged, as all children should have access to early education.</p> <p>Consider universal cover for disabled children as well as disadvantaged. Maybe need to define disadvantage. More likely to under achieve or facing further barriers.</p> <p>This idea - funding and setting a progressive cap on fees - would support the development of existing childcare infrastructure rather than displace this. Targeted funding for disadvantaged children would support the most vulnerable children and families - community & voluntary childcare settings will play a vital role in delivering this. Targeted investment should support children facing barriers due to poverty, disability, cultural & language barriers.</p> <p>Is this what we are trying to achieve? If so, it seems do-able. Important to keep it this 'simple' - it's a case of money in versus money out for parents, guardians, providers etc.</p>
<p>Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>What is a decent wage and who is it set by?</p> <p>Lots of providers operate different business models no one set rate will take this into account.</p> <p>Who carries out the evaluation?</p>	<p>Using government money to displace private providers.</p> <p>Schools not focused on play.</p> <p>Is a tiered system fair to all?</p>	<p>Displacement of community services.</p> <p>Is this means tested then?</p> <p>Another expense and more red tape.</p> <p>Disadvantage should include all those facing barriers - poverty/disability/language/ethnic minority/mental and physical health challenges.</p>

<p>Increase wages by all means but without funding prices to parents will go up.</p> <p>Improvement should be rephrased as self-evaluation.</p> <p>Who is the independent evaluation completed by?</p> <p>Look at funding rates in England, they do not cover the costs of delivery, this is not the model to follow.</p> <p>Costs would depend on location, urban or rural.</p> <p>Implications for child-care providers who are self-employed.</p> <p>Cost vary according to age group i.e. ratios 0-2 different to 3-5.</p> <p>Business models (social economy, private, CIC) vary so difficult to come up with costs that can be aggregated.</p> <p>What is included in the funding; and what isn't. Does it cover costs?</p>	<p>Children in school long days, family balance on getting kids to go as they see it as school all day.</p> <p>This proposal would displace existing provision.</p> <p>Remember fees are effectively set by government, with NMW/NLW and carer: child ratios.</p> <p>Still operate in a segregated system.</p> <p>Potential loss of jobs in the community. RCMS.</p> <p>Needs to be cross community and all ethnicities catered for.</p> <p>Providers close, staff lose jobs (not ideal).</p> <p>Traditionally approach with homework clubs and rule.</p> <p>Too long on the school day.</p> <p>Who registered under? Ratios? Hours of service? Will this meet flexibility?</p> <p>Segregated nature of our schooling system means we further segregate children</p>	<p>Is a tiered system fair to all?</p> <p>Make system for financial support that parents can access, i.e. easy to use.</p> <p>We need to ensure families, workplaces, staff and providers are all capable of a living income per individual could we potentially miss out vital support for children who suddenly fall into disadvantage Remember fees are effectively set by govt, with NMW/NLW and carer: child ratios mean tested subsidy will increase inequality.</p> <p>Balance on disposable income against household income</p> <p>Potential cap on payment per child subsidies cover additional costs? How is this assessed and by whom?</p> <p>Ref a: make sure the funding actually covers the costs of delivery.</p>
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		



<p>Carry out an assessment on the costs of providing childcare. If we have a salary scale then it won't be that difficult to determine the costs for setting up different childcare.</p>	<p>Resolving this issue would be outside the scope of the childcare strategy.</p> <p>Create a joint inspection framework between education and childcare.</p> <p>Needs to be left up to parents -empower them.</p> <p>Make it part of the framework that childcare providers can promote inclusivity within their facilities.</p>	<p>Do an analysis of average cost of childcare provision in different type of childcare providers.</p> <p>Review uptake of the funding support and parent's financial support with childcare.</p> <p>Adopt a similar scheme to the ROI one.</p>
--	---	---

THEME: Scope of Strategy – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
<p>IDEA: Introduction of a statutory underpinning, stating recognition of childcare as core public infrastructure, establishing a legal framework for the delivery of accessible, affordable and flexible childcare that meets the needs of children, families, providers and our economy and society more broadly, and a duty to report on the sufficiency, affordability, accessibility and sustainability of places. Requires specific measurable targets.</p>	<p>IDEA: Cross-departmental and sectoral Implementation Group and an Accountability Group - to include consideration of regional issues - and intersectionality with wide range of strategies (economic, social inclusion etc).</p>	<p>IDEA: Must be a clear framework as to how this strategy works alongside the social inclusion strategies and the key economic strategies brought forward by DfE.</p>
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>Statutory underpinning essential. Recognises importance - no longer a hostage to political will or funding cuts. Provides for accountability and transparency. Like Accessible, Affordable and Flexible.</p> <p>Like tangible targets.</p> <p>Need to specifically report on qualitatively and quantitatively.</p> <p>Clear remit and direction for officials. Scrutiny guaranteed.</p>	<p>Cross departmental/sectoral implementation group should build on the children's champions - and engage sectoral stakeholders. Other strategies should be linked because they impact on the lives of children and families.</p> <p>Could feed into micro site where progress across departments and strategies are tracked.</p> <p>Visibility accountability and scrutiny.</p> <p>Work to minimise departments working in silos and a joined up approach to key issues impacting on children.</p>	<p>We should include the anti-poverty strategy and look at equality issues in relation to workforce.</p> <p>Good that it may lead to simplification of language and clarifying of definitions.</p> <p>Need cross departmental buy in upfront to make this happen i.e. not at implementation stage but at the outset?</p> <p>Would be very positive in supporting an effective workforce strategy.</p>

<p>Legal framework and statutory underpinning required.</p> <p>Statutory underpinning would give a more solid basis for development of the childcare sector.</p> <p>Specific measurable targets will allow us to measure progress.</p> <p>Accountability and transparency. Clarifies roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>If enshrined in legislation and requires reporting, then that will work. Quality needs to be mentioned.</p>	<p>Link to all other strategies.</p>	<p>Fit into Skills Strategy, Disability Employment Strategy, Gender-Equality, all 4 social inclusion strategies etc.</p> <p>Would very much enable other departments to buy into childcare strategy and make it more operational and cross-departmental.</p> <p>There would need to be input and engagement with the childcare sector and the community & voluntary sector.</p>
<p>Exploration of what ‘problems (issues)’ exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>Impact on provider on legal framework, if it can’t be attained to?</p> <p>Flexibility is great but from a provider point of view it is very hard to run/staff. It’s also not good for the children who are at the heart of this.</p> <p>Report to whom? Accountability.</p> <p>Affordable childcare and higher staff wages is what we all want, however funding from government will have come to allow this, with increasing running</p>	<p>Who does the implementation of the strategy actually lie with?</p> <p>Why 2 groups? Accountability can get lost or played football with.</p> <p>How do we make sure children are part of this process?</p> <p>Ensuring regional representation is there and is experienced and knowledgeable.</p> <p>Individuals within sections of sectors to participate, to ensure all voices are heard. Need</p>	<p>Will we be able to quantify the outputs easily?</p> <p>Failure of government/ attending meetings etc.</p> <p>Childcare still falls under DOE and DOH.</p> <p>Cohesive strategies.</p> <p>Should include the social and societal benefits and not only the economic benefits. Economic benefits can be estimated using robust research.</p> <p>There is an assumption that these are/will be good strategies that have a positive impact.</p>

<p>costs, staff costs and inflationary pressures. Prices are going to go rise significantly in the short to medium term.</p> <p>Working hours on providers? Attainment of staff? Registered childminders working alone. Home/life balance for everyone.</p> <p>Could be very restrictive with unintended consequences. Measurable targets must be part of a co-production process.</p> <p>Legislation requires a functioning Assembly, which is not guaranteed.</p> <p>More regulation is not the answer, especially adding in more red tape, which will require further investment from providers, again increasing costs.</p> <p>Legislation can be a blunt tool. If we get the legislation wrong it can be difficult to unpick or amend. Legislation can take a long time to get through the Assembly.</p>	<p>to hear lived experiences as part of these groups.</p> <p>By bringing many stakeholders together, it could cause delay and make it difficult to reach decisions.</p>	<p>Single clear accountable department to deal with childcare/EYL.</p> <p>Understanding and awareness within government and offices responsible.</p>
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		
<p>Only legislate for the actions that require legislation - be very specific about what the goal of the legislation is.</p> <p>Write legislation with some flexibility so that it can be amended via secondary</p>	<p>Set out the plans and actions for the advisory group from the start, and consideration of phased implementation and planning.</p> <p>To establish a stakeholder advisory group whose role is to advise and feed into development and implementation of the strategy (taking account of</p>	<p>Ensure that the childcare Programme Board is effective and that all departments contribute and are held to account for development and implementation of the executive childcare strategy.</p>



<p>legislation as opposed to primary, which takes a long time.</p> <p>Create an onus on providers to update how many places they have available at a given time.</p>	<p>existing groups such as the childcare partnerships).</p>	
--	---	--

THEME: Accessibility & Inclusivity – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
IDEA: <i>Promote and facilitate workplace childcare, building on existing good practice.</i>	IDEA: <i>Use data to create an assessment of supply and demand in certain areas and to match different work patterns of parents.</i>	IDEA: <i>Develop a funding support scheme to enable childcare providers to meet the needs of children with disabilities / SEN/ethnic minorities, Irish medium, newcomer families, and generally vulnerable children - e.g. employ additional member of staff to support child, training, specialist equipment etc.</i>
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>This would displace existing provision and would not necessarily provide a child centred environment that parents would opt for - existing facilities i.e. RVH & Queens have not been successful. A better approach would be to build on existing infrastructure - community, voluntary and others. Employers should be encouraged to make links with existing childcare providers.</p> <p>Better linkages between wages and childcare costs.</p> <p>Benefits for parents being able to spend commute with children, supports working patterns of parents.</p> <p>Could this include other children from local area - not just parents who work at that workplace?</p> <p>Incorporates previous learning.</p>	<p>Supply and demand can inform funding levels on an ongoing basis.</p> <p>Need good data sources - how can we get at the labour market data around work patterns?</p> <p>Examples of current data GAPS: Only data on children with additional needs being gathered by CYPSP, is counting numbers of children receiving DLA. Not all children with additional needs can claim DLA, or have had their DLA removed since welfare reforms in 2016.</p> <p>Commission research at community level, using community development methods, to assess what relevant data is being gathered, if it is being gathered effectively, and what gaps exist in the data currently being gathered on parents, children and early education provision, including data gathered by the EA and DE, DoF, Health and Councils.</p>	<p>A real opportunity to ensure newcomer policy and funding issues are looked at to make sure it works especially for the children and young people.</p> <p>Ensures that this is provided at no additional cost to parents.</p> <p>Meeting those needs comes at a cost to providers and it should be acknowledged to benefit all involved.</p> <p>Ensure funding is spent on benefiting children who are targeted, rather than just a general pot that could be spent on anything.</p> <p>Enables childcare to be truly available and accessible for all families and all children.</p> <p>Provides an opportunity for meaningful early support for children and should be linked with schools so knowledge is shared and consistent approach used to support children.</p> <p>Would ensure support for children who seem to benefit most from good quality early education - children with disabilities/ SEN, newcomers, ethnic minorities, children from lower incomes.</p>

<p>Would hopefully match the actual working hours of specific workplaces.</p> <p>Engage with employers/employer sectoral bodies to facilitate discussion and ideas.</p> <p>Integrated - not likely to be one community or another.</p> <p>All age groups - could provide summer childcare for school age children, not just day care for younger children. Benefits for employers - great tool for recruitment and retention of staff.</p> <p>Financial incentives (tax free) for parents and employers.</p> <p>Co design with providers and parents, and commission programmes of training specific to each childcare setting or provider, which enable and empower providers to deliver services based on equality, diversity, participation and inclusion, of everybody!</p> <p>Commission research on workplace childcare - best practice.</p>	<p>Continuous assessment tools can be developed as COVID showed the landscape can rapidly change.</p> <p>Data should include needs of different children/ families e.g. disabilities/ SEN, English as second language, Irish speakers etc.</p> <p>Important to base decisions on need/demand rather than what is available (but may not be fully meeting need).</p> <p>Make this data available to parents to aid in decision making about which provision they want to use (i.e. that meets their needs, such as opening hours, flexibility etc).</p> <p>Local approach to need - rural and urban, different demographics.</p> <p>Recognises parents have different or variable working patterns.</p> <p>Data should include non-working parents.</p> <p>Sound evidence base to develop policy and secure funding for Strategy.</p> <p>Would need ongoing data gathered as population changes.</p>	<p>Should be based on evidence - how much would this cost? Make sure that this is realistic and not done on the cheap.</p> <p>Vulnerable children and those with additional needs may benefit more from early intervention and high quality early education and care.</p> <p>Families with no recourse to public funds are not entitled to financial support with childcare through existing schemes, so important to ensure those parents are supported.</p> <p>We would need a scoping mechanism to fully understand the cost of supporting inclusion. It is whatever childcare provision is needed by the child and family - this must be tailored to the needs of the child Most children with additional needs are not in special schools - we are talking about inclusion in mainstream provision at every level and all ages Respite can help at a critical time for families and children meeting challenges.</p> <p>Recognises additional training and equipment may be needed.</p> <p>How do we identify children to be targeted? Can be difficult to get SEN statements, especially for young children.</p> <p>Include increasing confidence of childcare providers to deliver this care.</p> <p>Enable existing staff to be trained to meet these needs, therefore increasing the skills case of people working in childcare.</p>
--	---	---

<p>Parents - more time with children. Employers, great recruitment and retention tool.</p> <p>Make early education more attractive to our skilled workforce, particularly young people wanting to work with children as a viable career option.</p> <p>For smaller businesses this would mean maybe working collaboratively with other local business.</p> <p>Helps with the concept of childcare as a community good.</p> <p>Shows value of childcare as economic infrastructure.</p> <p>Stable and sustainable funding for childcare facility. Childcare hubs in areas where there are many small businesses.</p> <p>Good practice is effective engagement and participation skills with parents as experts in their child, particularly children with additional needs.</p> <p>Incorporate international learning e.g. LEYF delivering workplace nursery for House of Commons Westminster.</p>	<p>Will change over time so needs to involve continual or regular assessment / re-assessment.</p> <p>Data driven interventions are key to enabling assessment of progress / impact against objectives.</p> <p>Add to supply and demand: supply of what and demand of what – e.g. more care for older children, for families of ethnic minority background, rural, children with a disability.</p> <p>Offers ability to tailor initiatives and interventions to meet local need.</p> <p>Forward looking to include projections to inform future planning.</p> <p>Also parents in education and training.</p> <p>Re parents and parent carers who can't get out to work because of no access to childcare, being logged as 'economically inactive'. Got to change the narrative around working parents being blamed for not being able to get to work!</p> <p>Could this also be published - made publicly available?</p> <p>On supply - would need to include different kinds of childcare options available.</p>	<p>Good that this acknowledges the additional resources required to tackle disadvantage.</p> <p>Would help improve diversity of childcare settings.</p> <p>Involve parent carers and community health care staff in a systematic way, in the co design of training for staff to meet the needs of children with additional needs,</p> <p>Would ensure that children who are already disadvantaged are not further penalised by a childcare system where they are excluded. Will also benefit the entire family.</p> <p>Could also assist in getting parents with children who have a disability into work as traditionally this has been difficult for many.</p> <p>Could pilot specific initiatives to match children with appropriate providers - giving confidence also to their families.</p> <p>If nurseries/ childminders need to apply for funding, support should be provided with application forms etc.</p> <p>Would be needed to ensure various needs are met.</p> <p>Early education for children with additional needs is resource intensive and expensive...this fact needs to be incorporated when providers being funded to support our children.</p>
---	--	---

<p>Identify if other countries are delivering this successfully, and if so what their experiences have been.</p> <p>Businesses could collaborate to do this - through enterprise agencies? City hubs?</p> <p>Helps young families plan ahead if provided as a package from day one of employment.</p> <p>Open and available to all employees.</p> <p>Centres provision where the need is, employers can be proactive in planning provision where there is to be a change in business (e.g. expansion).</p> <p>Need to factor in hybrid working models - when workplace is the home - how to accommodate these parents/carers.</p> <p>Commission research with parents, including the parent carers of children with additional needs, into their experiences of community barriers to their children accessing affordable, quality childcare close to their homes, and record parents suggested solutions to these barriers.</p>	<p>Need to investigate if the data we are gathering is adequate...stop measuring things just because they are easy to measure, the harder things to measure, are what we should be gathering data on! E.g. parent carers' experiences of barriers their child faces to accessing vital public services, health education and childcare.</p> <p>Data gathered also on provider capacity.</p> <p>Consider parents who are in education/training.</p>	<p>Additional funding / training for staff so that they can identify those with SEN at an earlier stage and therefore provide the right support.</p>
--	--	--

<p>Add specific pilot to deliver a workplace nursery, such as on Stormont estate, and create toolkit as a result.</p> <p>Promoting cultures in each workplace, which celebrate each staff member and each child with a strengths based approach, challenging the 'deficit' model, looking what a child or staff member CANT do, rather than what they can do.</p> <p>Reduce stereotyping of gender roles - normalises childcare while working.</p> <p>This would be the ideal for many parents. Often parents have to travel to access childcare before travelling to their workplace. Childcare in the workplace would make the process more streamlined.</p> <p>Need to ensure appropriate facilities for all children e.g. different ages, SEN/ disabilities, non-English speakers.</p> <p>Parental employment and ability to stay in and progress in work.</p>		
<p>Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>Scoping needed to consider displacement.</p>	<p>Don't know the number of registered places etc.</p> <p>Only associated with workplace.</p>	<p>Needs to mention that this is in relation to employment, training and increasing skills.</p> <p>There is no funding for ethnic minority families.</p>

<p>Should mean provision better meets employee and employer needs, including for ad hoc changes where a parent needs to work longer than usual at short notice.</p> <p>Niche solution. Only suitable for very few employers and employees.</p> <p>How to incentivise employers to do this.</p> <p>Unsustainable long term.</p> <p>Parental choice, only allows for preschool, job loss in communities.</p> <p>Needs to cover work, education and training - not just workplaces. If this is about inclusivity and accessibility, it already excludes those parents needing access to childcare when accessing FE, HE or adult education. Should include workplaces, educational institutions and community groups including women's centres and community groups.</p> <p>Incentivise rather than mandate employers, as this allows for innovation and new ideas rather than finding the 'easiest' way to do what is 'required'.</p>	<p>Better use of data is good and should be a priority, but the problem here is that this theme is too narrow.</p> <p>Yes gather data/identify gaps.</p> <p>Other gaps - income levels, single parent households, geographical area and more.</p>	<p>Need to build understanding of the cost to deliver services to these ranges of children and families and develop a simplified measure to support providers to deliver for these families.</p> <p>Need multi-year funding, not annual grants, as that prevents staff retention and is unsustainable.</p> <p>Doesn't address accessibility issues for children with disabilities/parents on low income/people from minority, ethnic groups etc.</p>
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		

<p>Minimum standard review to allow at risk roles. Training community needs etc. Funding should follow the child/children.</p> <p>Promote the value of childcare to all sectors.</p> <p>Utilise the existing provider base.</p> <p>Promote partnership working between existing childcare providers, services and workplaces.</p> <p>New builds of public services or with public funds should be required to make provision for childcare onsite or nearby.</p> <p>Utilise childcare within communities who may be at risk of job loss.</p> <p>Post covid working has changed, need to assess need for workplace childcare with the prevalence of hybrid working.</p>	<p>Survey of impact in communities' especially rural, travel far from home. Centralised data base, spaces available v required spaces.</p> <p>Ratios, minimum standards, implementations review. Allow for flexible childcare. Overlaps of certain age groups.</p>	<p>Long term additional funding commitment from Government to enable sustainable investment. Funding support scheme for all, training for staff enables better provision. Taking on board a provider's assessment of a child's needs- the ability to draw down on funding until professional assessment in place.</p> <p>Assess local needs, requirements and services in area.</p> <p>Engage with minority ethnic communities to ensure childcare sector understands and is meeting their needs.</p> <p>Specific unit that falls under a new children's department to help providers deal and help with all children with additional needs.</p> <p>Co-operation between all services to ensure consistent support.</p> <p>Childcare workforce must be more diverse.</p> <p>Transition of child's support across services.</p> <p>Funding and resources to follow the child.</p> <p>Use existing assessments from education in childcare (statements).</p> <p>Link with review of SEN framework and provision and work that is already going on. Childcare sector cannot take that on alone.</p>
--	--	--

THEME: Economic & Societal – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
<p>IDEA: Rewrite the narrative around childcare by renaming childcare practitioners to something that better reflects what they do and its complexities, and ask sector what they would like to be called.</p>	<p>IDEA: Identify the barriers to employment for parents / reasons why they do not work or work reduced hours and to what extent access to childcare is a barrier, and link this to other economic and social strategies (Green Growth, LGBTQ).</p>	<p>IDEA: Challenge gender-based stereotypes in childcare, for example, by encouraging more men to work in childcare.</p>
<p>Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:</p>		
<p>Opportunity to showcase the real need and the fact those services are key. Opportunity to recognise childcare as essential economic infrastructure.</p> <p>Could be an opportunity to differentiate between registered and unregistered provision - protected terms?</p> <p>The narrative currently suggests this is a family / women's issue as opposed to a societal / economic / educational infrastructure issue.</p> <p>Huge impact of those providing child services on the lives of those children which should be acknowledged.</p> <p>Would raise awareness in wider society about importance of early investment in education.</p> <p>May lead to wider discussion on how society values care work.</p>	<p>Would be positive to have a strong evidence base for this within Northern Ireland - building on the existing stats around 'economic inactivity'. Gives an opportunity to build on growing recognition of childcare as economic infrastructure as a result of Covid-19.</p> <p>Would be good to capture underemployment and not just unemployment - so parents not progressing in work.</p> <p>Important to be able to see how barriers are different for different people - flexibility may be the issue for some, cost for others.</p> <p>Could also include barriers to accessing education and training - what are the barriers to this?</p> <p>Good to link with other strategies and wider government framework.</p> <p>Should consider different types of employment - part-time, flexible, self-employed, as well as training education opportunities.</p>	<p>Challenging stereotypes overall is positive as can go beyond workforce and look at lack of appreciation in the sector. Role for employers to recognise with their staff that childcare is an issue that affects everyone whether they have children or not.</p> <p>Also to challenge the stereotype that childcare is a mother's issue - this links too to the motherhood penalty - research shows that while mothers' careers suffer, fathers often have a benefit.</p> <p>Linking back to narrative piece - opportunity to ensure role seen for fathers, also need childcare and flexible working, address the 'fatherhood penalty' of fathers feeling unable to take time out to care for their children and be involved - not just a women's issue.</p> <p>Should include challenging gender stereotypes in both formal and informal/ family based childcare.</p> <p>More widely promote the benefits of working in the sector and show that there is good</p>

<p>Involvement of sector gives autonomy to workers and may help wider discussions on workplace conditions.</p> <p>The narrative is important in highlighting the benefits that childcare brings to the economy and society as a whole. This needs to be matched with placing greater value through pay and career progression.</p> <p>Childcare providers also recognised as early educators. Renaming may help challenge gendered narrative of care work by encouraging discussion on importance of early education.</p> <p>As part of this process, do a job evaluation which examines the skills and experience required to be a childcare practitioner, Could this be used to examine equal pay for work of equal value?</p> <p>Good to have a term co-designed with those who are providing the service.</p> <p>There are already a range of terms that are used, this is an opportunity to align and identify a core terminology.</p> <p>Changing language used in childcare strategy will influence other government strategies, potentially leading to wider changes in how</p>	<p>This could also help inform other policies where there are barriers identified that are not related to childcare.</p> <p>An opportunity to look deeper into the overall barriers caused by lack/inadequate childcare.</p> <p>Some of this will be identified at a high level through the labour force survey and will link into issues around economic inactivity. This idea could highlight the issue of low pay in Northern Ireland - where it does not pay (particularly women) to work.</p> <p>Really good opportunity to link in with NISRA and ensure the data they capture addresses this theme.</p> <p>Opportunity to look into wider issues for newcomer / migrant communities with lack of wider support circles.</p> <p>Linking back to narrative piece - opportunity to ensure role seen for fathers, also need childcare and flexible working, address the 'fatherhood penalty' of fathers feeling unable to take time out to care for their children and be involved.</p> <p>Lots of existing evidence on this - for example the feminist recovery plan.</p>	<p>opportunities for career progression. For example, by changing employer assumptions about who carries out parental childcare?</p> <p>Encouraging more men into childcare could raise wage levels.</p> <p>Better careers advice in schools. Highlight childcare as an option for boys.</p> <p>Challenge the whole understanding of 'care' and ensure that it is regarded as essential economic infrastructure.</p> <p>Proper apprenticeship framework with the associated proper funding.</p> <p>May help lead to more male teachers in primary schools, and together provide more male role models for young children.</p> <p>Men who do wish to work in childcare have less fear of stigma and able to pursue career they want.</p> <p>Opportunity to link with other strategies to ensure childcare recognised as economic and societal infrastructure.</p> <p>Important for children of all ages to have more male role models i.e. as childcare providers or teachers etc.</p>
---	---	---

<p>government represents early education more widely.</p> <p>It's also about highlighting the benefits to wider society. Economic benefit of enabling more people to enter the workplace as well as the economic benefit that the sector contributes in terms of employing large numbers of people.</p> <p>Opportunity to involve others - parents and employers in co-designing the term?</p> <p>This process could be used to challenge gender stereotypes – i.e. that childcare is a woman's job.</p> <p>An opportunity to re-evaluate the importance of care work to the functioning of society</p> <p>Important to ensure childcare as economic infrastructure, enabling parents to work or access training / education isn't 'lost' in considering this narrative.</p> <p>Great opportunity to actually re-write the whole narrative from start to finish with involvement of all stakeholders along the way.</p> <p>Good to consult and involve the childcare workforce.</p> <p>Reframe childcare provision as an essential societal infrastructure, as necessary as street lighting and roads.</p>	<p>Useful to have this data and to help identify if the decision not to work is due to barriers such as childcare or personal choice.</p> <p>ParentactionCONTACTCounting-the-Costs-2021.pdf</p> <p>Address the employment issues which particularly affect women - the motherhood penalty where women with children are paid less and work fewer hours. file:///C:/Users/orlap/OneDrive/Documents/parentactionContactcaring_more_than_most_exec_summary.pdf</p>	<p>Again more culture change work in society needed re the role of women, parents and carers/challenging misogyny.</p> <p>If employers and Executive truly recognise childcare as critical to enable someone to work as roads / IT infrastructure.</p> <p>Could also challenge other stereotypes and encourage a more diverse workforce - in terms of disability, ethnicity as well as gender.</p>
--	---	--

Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:

<p>Deliver different things re childcare - wraparound service and support for child and family.</p> <p>If childcare employees want this, it should be supported. The problem is that this theme should include use of terminology across the sector.</p> <p>Need to find way to challenge view that childcare is women's work or babysitting - perhaps re-frame it with apprenticeships, modify skills barometers and highlight career pathways to make more desirable - not sure if name change alone will achieve any of that.</p> <p>Workforce should be seen as professional practitioners and their skills should be recognised.</p>	<p>Doesn't identify training etc. Look beyond workforce.</p> <p>Barriers to women well known already and highlighted consistently by women's sector for decades- should be addressing and overcoming these barriers ASAP - 30% of women already considered "economically inactive" with number one reason being family/home commitments, 79% of PT workers are women, 91% of single parents are women etc. What are we actually going to do about it? Create a women's employment strategy to run alongside childcare strategy, social inclusion strategies and disability employment strategy.</p> <p>We know there are barriers and what they are. Need to address the barriers not carry out further scoping. We all understand the barriers.</p> <p>Quality childcare in early years delivers on long term education and health benefits. Unique period of development for young children in birth to 3.</p> <p>Need to be careful not to focus solely on paid employment - women considered economically inactive are performing unpaid domestic labour worth billions each year - should be focus on having the choice to do formal employment by having caring responsibilities re-balanced.</p>	<p>Similar issues elsewhere e.g. Scotland – learn lessons on how to overcome these issues.</p> <p>If don't have value as career will always be seen as women's work. Diversity in workforce is bigger issue than gender. Gender stereotyping is not the only reason there are few men in workforce.</p> <p>The problem is that this does not mention the value of the work and the pay structures and conditions which would support a more gender based inclusive diverse workforce that is representative of society.</p>
---	---	---

	<p>Needs to include access to training and education as well as employment.</p> <p>Idea doesn't recognise societal & economic benefits, including long term investment.</p>	
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		
<p>Expect our public figures to use a more professional narrative when speaking about childcare. Not always the women speaking about this sector and the impact on family life. Childcare being taken seriously by Government will help significantly. It needs to be seen as a career, with prospects.</p> <p>PR drive as to the benefits and value of childcare not only economically, but societal. Perceived value of the sector will automatically increase.</p> <p>FE/HE promote the sector more widely.</p> <p>Increase pay and provider moral.</p>	<p>Commission research to understand the problem.</p> <p>Gender stereotypes and inequalities are so deeply entrenched in society that it is important for this strategy to reap the benefits of other strategies e.g. gender equality strategy. Childcare support needs to be prompt and supportive.</p> <p>Commission in-depth, large-scale, NI-specific research to identify the real barriers which parents face in accessing childcare and/or employment.</p> <p>Benefits need to support working families on a needs basis, not pulled away too quickly.</p> <p>Minimum standards review. Enable autonomy of service, providing a more flexible childcare.</p>	<p>We have men in childcare. Why are we not seeing them? Assistants are mainly men in RCM section.</p> <p>Recognition of the value of the sector at governmental level.</p> <p>How do we change societal norms?</p> <p>Education. Promote to males as a career. It's not a women's' sector only.</p> <p>Many uncomfortable with males changing nappies/personal care etc. How do we change the thought process?</p> <p>Allow 2 RCMS to work in a setting. Male role models right to be a RCM in their own right was removed in the min standards.</p> <p>Children are being told in school that boys should not go into childcare - this must stop.</p>

THEME: Childcare Workforce – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
IDEA: Integrate and develop early year education for 0-4 years old based on the structure and framework already existing in nurseries for 3-4 years old. Fully subsidize and integrate early year education similar with education system.	IDEA: Central pot for all providers to access for funding and training.	IDEA: Valuing all the sector through recognition as early educators and pay appropriately.
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>Takes a more holistic perspective on 0-4 year olds.</p> <p>Builds cohesion across the childcare sector.</p> <p>Builds consistency within the sector.</p> <p>Will increase quality of care and outcomes for children.</p> <p>It would bolt in the first 1000 days of a child's life in terms of developmental importance (0-3).</p> <p>It would ensure lines of progression are consistent and that prior experiences are taken into consideration and home/setting link is made stronger.</p> <p>Subsidising would assist with affordability & sustainability.</p> <p>If integration means extending the curriculums downwards from pre-school (and adapting it</p>	<p>Could improve inclusivity by allowing practitioners to train for children of all learning abilities.</p> <p>If this central pot is for training, then the good things about this idea is that it would help certain settings compliance, as it would improve affordability of staying up to date with standards.</p> <p>Would allow practitioners to train during working hours.</p> <p>Access to training across NI right up to graduate level.</p> <p>It could address gaps in training and qualifications in Irish immersion early years sector.</p>	<p>Would retain and recruit passionate dedicated staff.</p> <p>Parents' confidence increases when the provision is good quality.</p> <p>Would attract more men to the sector.</p> <p>Improve morale and motivation to continue on with the likes of CPD.</p> <p>A higher cultural value placed on practitioners within childcare.</p> <p>By helping retention would increase experience, which might increase quality of care.</p> <p>Would break down perceptions that it is nothing more than babysitting and recognise the important role of Early years educators and that it is an essential public service.</p> <p>Culture change work needed with funders and public sector providers! Promoting culture and advocacy processes for the sector to promote</p>

<p>appropriately), then the benefit would be that it might improve the quality of provision.</p>		<p>cultures where the roles of early education staff and parents are better respected in public services and in communities: Initiatives to challenge current cultures of de valuing and disrespecting early education services and parents.</p>
<p>Exploration of what ‘problems (issues)’ exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>'Similar' is the problem. Have to do things very differently in the entire education system following the COVID19 pandemic, especially in doing some urgent work in overcoming the barriers to joint working with Health and Communities in enabling an inclusive and accessible early education and education system generally for children with additional needs. Education system 'silo' heavy still, so need a new culture and education infrastructure to be developed BEFORE we try to integrate early education into it!</p> <p>How many hours of childcare will this include - if similar to primary education system, this is limited hours, which will require wrap-around care to allow parents to work.</p> <p>Children cared for at home may be at a disadvantage when they reach primary school.</p> <p>How would this apply to atypical workers - shift patterns, especially single parent households? How will this incorporate important role of childminders?</p>	<p>Need to have a way to prioritise providers' needs within limited funds.</p> <p>Difficult to make access to a pot fair when sector includes so many different types of provider - does a childminder get the same access as a day care setting? Does a voluntary organisation get the same as a private business?</p> <p>Need to have a common qualification and training framework before a pot is established, otherwise unscrupulous employers may take advantage of this.</p> <p>Who decides what training is funded, who can access it and who provides it? Who will assess if the training needs have been addressed?</p> <p>Small providers/ childminders would need support to ensure they can have fair access to funding pot e.g. training on application forms.</p> <p>Central pot provided may be insufficient. Would it be better to introduce a curriculum equivalent to the early years' foundation stage (as in England) that can be delivered across all</p>	<p>Need to be specific - minimum pay to be real living wage.</p> <p>Ensure that all childcare workforce is paid at least the real living wage, as defined by the living wage foundation.</p> <p>Stereotypes and low valuing of care work/ 'women's work' need challenged and discussed - this will require significant societal change, possibly beyond the ability of one strategy.</p> <p>As pay and level of qualifications rise within the sector, are existing experienced staff likely to lose out to younger, less experienced people who have higher qualifications?</p> <p>Need a radical solution to the issue of low pay and precarious work. Establish a sectoral group incorporating employers, trade unions and government to set wage agreement and terms and conditions.</p> <p>Not just about pay, must also consider terms and conditions.</p>

<p>The problem might occur for those families that do not wish to send children to childcare providers before they are 3/4. Those children should not be disadvantaged if more formalised structures are put in place.</p> <p>Requires significant investment in 'professionalising' the workforce - qualifications framework.</p> <p>The cost of additional training for staff to deliver this.</p> <p>How would this interact with 'informal' care being provided by grandparents/parents/other carers?</p> <p>Is there scope for the infrastructure that would enable this to happen?</p> <p>Existing structure is not flexible and does not support parents to work?</p> <p>Many children in this age group not in formal childcare / educational settings.</p> <p>Too much burden might be put on current providers if their services were to be expanded as part of this. Cost on infrastructure, staff, training, etc.</p> <p>Level of demand is unlikely to be as high as for pre-school (3-4 year olds) and unlikely to be consistent in areas/providers - may cause</p>	<p>types of provider - so linking investment in settings to quality markers as well as conditions for workforce?</p> <p>Funding may not go to where need is greatest, but to larger providers who understand system. Pot must be easy to access and administer funding.</p> <p>Where is the funding coming from? Is it a government subsidy or a pot that all providers pay into and is then distributed equally?</p> <p>Again silo working between health and education NOT assessing or meeting holistic health and education needs of children with disabilities: Children not seen as children first as per Children's Order 1995 in current health and education systems, therefore medical model of disability predominates, the child's diagnosis defining the services they can access, rather than the child's needs and rights being assessed and promoted.</p> <p>Are all providers made equal?</p> <p>Funding might go to those more skilled at writing bids and not to where needs are.</p> <p>Should a central pot be divided to include, for example, a pot specifically for women's centres?</p>	<p>Any subsidy/funding should have a direct and instant link to changes in living wage.</p> <p>This is critical but should not be funded by an increase in fees for parents - needs to be subsidised properly by Government.</p> <p>Need to go beyond pay to broader terms and conditions.</p> <p>How will we ensure that the funding translates to higher pay and better conditions for individuals, both those within larger organisations and for childminders?</p> <p>Also about having career pathways and progression and ensuring quality isn't reduced.</p> <p>Recognised qualifications that will enable career progression and movement to other areas of education.</p> <p>Will need significant subsidising by government if not to lead to rise in prices for parents.</p> <p>Having an organised workforce is well established as being the best way of impacting on low pay and terms and conditions -encourage the organisation of the childcare workforce by trade unions. Harder to implement for self-employed child minders.</p>
---	--	--

<p>difficulties in long term planning, staff retention etc in individual providers.</p> <p>Some parents will prefer to have children at home or with family in earliest years, must ensure that system does not place these children at a disadvantage or alienate those parents.</p> <p>It may be more difficult for families to get their provision of choice - would it be possible to have the necessary infrastructure in place?</p> <p>Would need resourcing to support parents in providing appropriate home-learning environment.</p> <p>Steps might need to be taken well ahead of time to promote education courses for those who will be needed in the "extended sector".</p> <p>Might not give enough flexibility e.g. for parents who only use childcare 2-3 days per week or prefer small intimate settings.</p> <p>3-4 age group is primarily within the education sector, if extending down to birth,, need to emphasise the role of health professionals too, e.g. health visitors etc, especially for children not attending a childcare setting every day. Current maze of early education system having to be navigated by parent carers: Childcare providers under Education but regulated by</p>	<p>As an alternative, strategy could cover delivery of funded training that all providers are able to avail of.</p> <p>Continually having to apply for funding can be challenging for providers and doesn't suggest longer term sustainability.</p> <p>Would it be better to subsidise the training to make it more cost effective to access for all, instead of relying on providers to apply for funding.</p> <p>Unclear if pot is to fully fund costs or subsidise them.</p> <p>Very unclear what is meant by access 'for funding'?</p> <p>Central 'pot' again already legislated for under the Children's Co Operation Bill 2015, where all 9 departments have a duty to co-operate in pooling budgets for children's services...yet to be implemented in NI.</p> <p>Pot needs to be cross departmental and co designed with early education providers and parents as to what it should be used for. IE the 'pot' should not be only from DE budget. Very unclear what this idea is - is the funding for workforce development?</p>	<p>Increased pay for childcare workforce should be considered as part of the public/state subsidy.</p> <p>Intractable problem of low pay requires radical solutions - consider sectoral agreement where wages are taken out of competition. This could be considered as part of public/state intervention - economic infrastructure.</p> <p>How does this work for childminders? They are self-employed rather than reliant on a wage. To take home additional salary they need funded - if not through parent fees, then by Government.</p> <p>Increasing pay, whilst important, will also increase the costs for parents. Many providers had to put up costs when the national minimum wage increased. Intractable problem of low pay requires radical solutions - consider sectoral agreement where wages are taken out of competition. This could be considered as part of public/state intervention - economic infrastructure.</p>
--	---	---

<p>Early Years, under Health? Approved Home Child carers preferred by parent carers, but not trained or supported to train, in what are health care needs of children with disabilities: Direct payments for children with disabilities supposed to provide parents with control from social care budgets, to employ specialist health care support workers in homes, but hard to access by parent carers, because social services won't permit them to be used for childcare.</p> <p>If there are limited hours available then wraparound care still required to accommodate working parents - how will this be integrated?</p> <p>Clarification needed about what the term education means for younger age groups (i.e. 0-3). Too early to be formalising education.</p> <p>Ensuring appropriate training for different types of childcare e.g. private nurseries, childminders etc.</p> <p>Also to include: existing system does not offer flexibility for working parents - that can't be a problem that is extended.</p> <p>Providers will need resources to be able to make funding applications - funding may not go where most needed but to those who do best application.</p>	<p>How will this apply to childminders as opposed to larger private sector businesses?</p> <p>Sector already has difficulty recruiting staff. Expansion needs to be managed and timed so that it happens when sufficient people (who are suitably qualified) are coming in to childcare to actually deliver this.</p> <p>Providers may spend significant time applying for training they don't get - or may feel they don't have capacity to make applications and lose out.</p>	
--	--	--

<p>Destabilising for existing childcare infrastructure and may not suit the preferences of all families as it does not offer flexibility for working parents.</p>		
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		
<p>Comprehensive workforce plan which reviews qualifications and skills framework, pay and conditions recommended for the sector. Build on existing childcare infrastructure with a leading role by the community, voluntary & independent sector.</p> <p>Development of a real living wage scale in partnership with trades unions, providers and relevant departments.</p> <p>Build on existing infrastructure in the voluntary, community and independent sector through review of existing workforce composition and skills gaps analysis of current provision. No need to duplicate provision.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of low pay being responsibility of government too as covering costs solely from fees isn't sustainable - develop childcare sector pay scales, with V&CS and community providers/trade unions underpinned by government investment towards salary costs.</p> <p>Solution - cost out how much 0-4 subsidised childcare would cost, and let politicians decide how much they wish to spend. Parent or guardian then gets an amount of money to</p>	<p>Understanding of costs base across all sectors with an accessible & simplified funding formula that provides transparency for all users.</p> <p>There is a central pot for training funded via the DOH EYDF could other departments contribute to this central pot going forward.</p> <p>The funding applied for would need to allow providers to replace staff in training.</p> <p>Need to cover staff absences, Covid shown a light on this, more trained bank staff instead of closing whole units.</p>	<p>80% of childcare is provided by the independent sector. Review of the process in RoI. How do we ensure the continuity of their valued contribution within a new strategy? Revenue earned supports further investment and provision of enhanced services.</p> <p>Government should invest in each child, the parent picks, but then combined with standardised pay scales across all sectors 30 hours still a key ask.</p>



<p>spend per week on childcare, they choose where to spend that allowance and top up if needs be. Stop making this so complex!</p> <p>Standardised pay scales in line with qualifications and responsibilities across all forms of providers.</p> <p>We need a comprehensive workforce strategy that provides options for access to qualifications and CPD options that meets the needs of all sectors.</p>		
---	--	--

THEME: Child Centred Services – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
IDEA: <i>Childcare should be welcoming and inclusive of all children including different cultures and children with disabilities.</i>	IDEA: <i>Inspection should move towards outcomes for children - including participation of children's views - administered by a sole body.</i>	IDEA: <i>A multi-disciplinary and play based framework approach to promote collaboration between Health Professionals, Educational Psychologists, to promote early intervention and capacity building while promoting a play based approach.</i>
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>Takes a holistic view of the child in their whole community.</p> <p>This could enrich the settings by increasing the diversity within them.</p> <p>Is responsive of a changing society which now has more people of different backgrounds.</p> <p>Encourages reflection on why we need inclusivity and breaks the cycle of exclusion and encourages the respecting of differences.</p> <p>Would help more parents to be able to work by addressing the gap for children with needs, which can then also increase parental wellbeing.</p> <p>Provides social interaction between children of all learning abilities, which provides a better understanding of difference, and that difference is a good thing. It normalises diversity, which continues into later life.</p>	<p>From a provider perspective, it cuts down the number of assessments that they need to go through.</p> <p>If this allows for it to be a multidisciplinary team doing the inspection, then that is good.</p> <p>It would help ensure consistency and quality across all ages and stages.</p> <p>Helps promote shared best practice.</p> <p>It could increase awareness of the purpose and benefit of inspection.</p>	<p>Delivers better support for parents.</p> <p>Delivers better outcomes for children.</p> <p>Delivers more of a clear pathway for parents if there's joined up thinking between the services.</p> <p>Facilitates sharing of information, which supports the care of the child.</p> <p>By maximising on benefits of play, it increases wellbeing for children.</p> <p>Ideally would help with a child & family approach, in that the experience of the parent is considered alongside the experience of the child (e.g. a parent can build a community with other parents with similar experiences).</p> <p>Providers would have better access to professional health and education services.</p> <p>Would help to build better links with voluntary & community services.</p>

<p>By intervening earlier, it increases the number of kids that can go to mainstream schools.</p>		<p>Might lead more parents into registered childcare, due to there being better access to services.</p>
<p>Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>More than 'tick-box' approach needed - significant training and investment needed to ensure childcare appropriate for all children.</p> <p>Workforce itself may not be diverse.</p> <p>Not just children, also their families - may be that it is parents who do not feel included.</p> <p>Will require time and effort from providers (funding / time for training, awareness).</p> <p>Parent carers of children with disabilities need access to information about early ed opportunities in their area, and support to access it through independent advocacy for parent carers for example, as the systems are NOT actually integrated yet!</p> <p>Will need significant funding to ensure accessibility, training for providers.</p> <p>Must also be inclusive of all types of families, especially LGBTQI households.</p> <p>Needs to be backed up by funding and support so that every child can have the same access.</p>	<p>Parent carers of children with disabilities are their first and only advocate for their human rights to access early ed in most circumstances. Parents legal parental responsibility right under the Children's Order 1995, is not emphasised enough here aka, parents make decisions on early ed and therefore need to have their voices heard under this idea as well as children's voices.</p> <p>A single body might not be best placed to conduct inspections of all childcare settings.</p> <p>How will different types of providers be inspected e.g. private day nurseries, childminders etc.?</p> <p>Need clarity on what the sole body is and what they are doing - if inspection, an alternative is joint inspection as the norm, therefore bringing together expertise from across government areas.</p> <p>Some providers already find inspection a very challenging, stressful process - this would need to be mitigated.</p> <p>How are longer term outcomes measured through an inspection process?</p>	<p>System is already under resourced, this requires significant investment.</p> <p>There are a limited number of health professionals etc. - how can access for providers be achieved?</p> <p>What does capacity building mean in this context?</p> <p>Childcare is more than just the earliest years, when the play based approach may be most appropriate.</p> <p>Places burden on already stretched providers? How does this intersect with childcare provision?</p> <p>How will this work for childminders - how will they know who to collaborate with, and will they have time capacity to do so?</p> <p>As well as additional resources required from childcare providers, greater input needed from over-stretched health professionals.</p> <p>Is this about establishing a 'curriculum' such as the Early Years foundation stage for providers to follow?</p>

<p>More than just a welcoming environment in childcare itself, but also need to ensure parental involvement and access to other targeted services. May be expensive, particularly for childminders, to ensure they can meet needs of all children.</p> <p>Needs co-designed approach, with input from people of different backgrounds e.g. views should be sought from people of different cultural backgrounds to see what their needs are, rather than what Department or providers think they need.</p> <p>Will need a workforce that is more diverse and reflective of diverse communities.</p> <p>Could go further - not just welcoming - but also about promoting benefits of diversity.</p> <p>Currently no parent carer advocacy services being commissioned by any department: Many parent carers have additional needs/communication difficulties themselves and need advocacy support to navigate and access early education for their child, and all other public services....without this independent advocacy service, early education services are inaccessible to these parent carers and therefore their children.</p> <p>Issue if care is segregated along religious or community lines.</p>	<p>Inclusion of the voice of children is essential, but children with disabilities main means of communication is non-verbal, therefore specialist intensive support is required to ensure the voice of children is authentically heard and respected. The QUB Lundy Model for the voice of children is an example of principles for including the voice of children in decisions which affect their lives. This needs to be adapted to involve the voice of the parent carer when the child is pre or non-verbal.</p> <p>A sole body may not be the best way to do this - will they have the expertise to engage with children with a disability, or newcomer? Is it appropriate for the same inspection regime to apply to a childminder as a large day nursery or school based childcare?</p> <p>What do we mean by outcomes? Inspection must also focus on safeguarding issues.</p> <p>Need to have clear identification of what outcomes we want for children - what are the milestones / outcomes being inspected against?</p>	<p>How would this be funded / resources - professionals within settings? Or access to panels / experts through HSC trusts? Achieving this in practice may be difficult - there should already be collaboration, but clearly it doesn't.</p> <p>Would require training and infrastructural support for childcare providers.</p> <p>Play based approach could mainly work for young children. Childcare is more than just children aged 0-3.</p> <p>How would this be done across all settings? Within child minders, SAC etc?</p>
--	--	--

<p>Staff need training, skills, time and equipment/support to achieve this. Requires additional training and resources. I.e. staff who can provide care to children with specific needs, or maybe translators for children who don't speak English.</p> <p>Should look beyond tokenistic approaches to welcoming diversity.</p> <p>In particular areas this may be more difficult to achieve - will providers be 'penalised' if it is difficult to attract children from different cultures, for example, in relation to funding?</p> <p>Need to overcome societal prejudices.</p> <p>Suggest adding something about local community / diversity and the challenge of achieving this.</p> <p>Potentially prejudicial views amongst some parents may need challenged - including on disability, different cultural backgrounds, single-parents and LGBTQI+ families.</p> <p>May be difficult to achieve in some situations, e.g. in a small setting or childminder where a large number of diverse needs are presented - need flexibility in how childminder and children are supported.</p>		
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		

<p>Not just parents, can be staff also where difficult conversations may be needed, first steps training for parents, staff and children, available for CMs too, there are excellent specialist orgs that can deliver on this as well as EY. Be inclusive in all toys, books, materials etc.</p> <p>Training need for staff re having difficult conversations.</p> <p>EY have developed the Media Initiative Programme - respecting difference. Support for children, parents, carers/educators and management boards. This has been reviewed by a random control trial across 2-8 yrs olds (preschool and out of school.) More data can be made available upon request.</p> <p>Proactive awareness and training programmes which are resourced and evidence based, based on good practice and involvement of disability, ethnic minority, language and cultural organisations.</p> <p>Signposting required for organisations which can deliver training in this area - or on hub.</p> <p>Opportunity to engage with v & C sector.</p> <p>Create signposting hub and engage with VCS orgs from these diverse backgrounds to obtain training, develop best practice guidelines etc.</p>	<p>ETI already use an outcomes based process with safeguarding included within.</p> <p>Solution: one department oversees this e.g. Dept. of Education.</p> <p>Children's voices, checking milestones.</p>	<p>Develop a living quality framework drawing on existing quality systems, e.g. Curiosity EYFS. Solihull, and drawing on infant mental health and ACE for all children across all setting. Obvious gap for 0-3 years, learning through play.</p> <p>Need to consider a whole family model/approach to ensure services are child centred. Need to consider how we develop effective partnerships with parents who can provide access to multidisciplinary teams involved in their Childs care.</p>
--	---	---

<p>We also need to consider parent choice in terms of childcare and the fact that CM also provide care for 0-5 year old's.</p>		
--	--	--

<p>THEME: Leadership / Political Will Services – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas</p>		
<p>IDEA: Strong political will and sign up needed across all parties (should be required to set out their stall) and commitment to ensure an Early Childhood care and Education act providing a legislative basis / requirement for the consistent and effective financing, supervision, support, coordination of the delivery of and the communication to all education and care services including from pre-birth, birth - three, three - six and school age as delivered by the voluntary, community, independent and statutory sector's.</p>	<p>IDEA: Strategy should be recognised as an essential public good and be central to PfG with an open, online micro site to track action plans across every department with adequate funding from each department - e.g. DfC social inclusion strategies and funding for women's centres, DfE skills strategies, DAERA climate change sustainable investment, DOH guidelines etc.</p>	<p>IDEA: All departments need to sign up and continue engagement on a long term basis have responsibilities to report back on progress tracking actions setting key milestones for each agreed action to take the childcare strategy forward.</p>
<p>Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:</p>		
<p>Stability for the sector not subject to whim and political change, long term commitment.</p>	<p>Clearly outlines how childcare impacts on many key areas, e.g. gender equality, poverty, economic growth etc.</p>	<p>Effective early intervention and prevention, like early education, will save money in the long term which can be reinvested and bring about benefits for society as a whole.</p>

<p>Legislative footing would move us beyond different administrative cycles.</p> <p>Early childhood and Education recognises all ages and stages of development and childcare requirements.</p> <p>Effective, on what standard?</p> <p>Children's Services Co-operation Act is a key lever requiring Departments to work together to improve outcomes for children. Departments should commit resources and funding to the implementation of a Childcare Strategy.</p>	<p>Accountability.</p> <p>Recognition of the sector and showing value to the wider society.</p> <p>Important that this strategy falls under responsibility of 1 department but all departments must consider the strategy in all policies and all strategies going forward.</p> <p>Good strength in working across Departments policy outcomes areas.</p> <p>There is strength in working with the community and voluntary and private sectors.</p> <p>Professionalise the sector, and the value it places on the economy and society.</p> <p>Greater support for developing communities.</p> <p>Accountability, guidance moving forwards.</p>	<p>Reporting back to whom? Who is accountable?</p> <p>Participation with all providers.</p> <p>Will allow us to show what is and isn't working, enabling improvement and change where needed.</p> <p>Cooperation act provides a framework.</p> <p>Continual reviews and to adapt.</p>
<p>Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>It's unclear what legislation for effective financing would be. This legislation already exists to some extent, and there may be over-estimation of the need for further legislation.</p> <p>There's little political knowledge on what good quality childcare will really cost.</p> <p>This will require commitment/sign off from all political parties, and the political parties have</p>	<p>We're not at the stage where this can be done - we don't yet have a strategy to monitor.</p> <p>If we do this in line with PfG, outcomes will need to be outlined and measured.</p> <p>Need for data development to support measurement of outcomes.</p>	<p>There is a childcare programme board already established.</p> <p>There would need to be an advisory board to feed into this process.</p> <p>It would require very early investment to get it off the ground, to ensure successful outcomes.</p>

<p>very different ideas about how the world should be. There may be agreement on importance of childcare, but not on how to implement & fund it.</p> <p>There isn't much clarity on what childcare means, as it's a very all-encompassing term.</p> <p>Lack of certainty of the budget for the next 3 years.</p> <p>The budget plan is taking place now, but we don't yet have a clear strategy, so we don't know what needs to be funded.</p> <p>Competing budget pressures in particular in a post-pandemic world.</p> <p>More and more standards can mean more paperwork for providers.</p> <p>With more and more frameworks, the child can sometimes get lost in this process.</p>	<p>You can spend too much time on monitoring and evaluating and not enough on doing.</p> <p>If the executive is committing to this strategy, maybe this needs to be paid for from the centre rather than from other departments.</p>	<p>Ensure there is no duplication with other parental engagement programmes, e.g. Getting Ready for Baby / Getting Ready to Learn. Ensure complementarity and consistency in messaging.</p> <p>There are limited resources available to this within other departments and within DE.</p> <p>If this goes ahead, there's a need to ensure that it's not a tokenistic commitment to the approach.</p>
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		
<p>Ensure parental and children's voices when developing and implementing frameworks/ strategies.</p> <p>Evidence based cross Departmental solutions to implementation of Strategy which keeps the solution implementation community based and child and parent focused EG: Community Development approaches Community</p>	<p>Should the strategy be housed within The Exec Office, avoids departmental silos.</p> <p>Ensure stakeholders remain involved throughout reviewing process, to keep pressure on continued delivery, and not just monitoring what has been done.</p>	<p>Require annual progress reports to be published and given to the Assembly by the FM/DFM on progress.</p> <p>Need accountability mechanism when Depts report back - by Assembly, stakeholders, and TEO.</p> <p>We are in a position now where relevant strategies are being developed - skills, social</p>

<p>Development Summary Report.pdf (hscni.net) https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/Community%20Development%20Summary%20Report.pdf.</p> <p>Keep on learning from best practice elsewhere and implement lessons.</p> <p>Having enshrined in legislation a requirement to engage with children and families on the implementation of the strategy.</p> <p>Having a single person / role responsible for ensuring child is at centre of the process - such as a specific commissioner.</p> <p>Parents are the first advocates for their child and should be empowered to be so, so that they can join with providers in working to keep the focus on the child's needs. Advocacy services for parents is one way this empowerment of the parent and child's voice can happen parentactionFoNsfinalreport2016ParentActionEnablingAdvocacyEmpowering.pdf.</p> <p>A commissioner is a good idea, must have the appropriate powers and resources.</p> <p>Having very clear outcomes against which progress / impact can be measured - and ensuring that includes the child centred outcomes.</p>	<p>Having very clear outcomes against which progress / impact can be measured - need to monitor to understand impact. Could be iterative, and done in smaller pieces on-going rather than larger pieces at one time or retrospectively.</p> <p>This is an Executive Office Strategy, being developed by DE, needs to have Ministerial approval for significant funding.</p> <p>Monitoring and evaluation is essential - getting a meaningful and robust framework correct to begin with is important.</p> <p>Well written strategy has clear outcomes and goals with resourcing. Monitoring and evaluation is not for providers only but also for departments responsible for delivery etc.</p> <p>Bold decisions will need to be taken to ensure adequate funding can be allocated. For example, funding going into an 'unreformed' health care sector.</p> <p>Clear focus on OBA approach when monitoring and evaluating especially "is anyone better off".</p> <p>Ensure what is being monitored is meaningful - disaggregated data against clear targets, with rolling evaluation to allow delivery to be tailored as needed, and action plans updated.</p>	<p>inclusion - so the time is right to build this into those strategies and their implementation plans.</p> <p>Using the principles of coproduction, can keep everyone at all levels focussed on the needs of the child, parents and providers Co-Production Guide for Northern Ireland - Connecting and Realising Value Through People Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk) https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-production-guide-northern-ireland-connecting-and-realising-value-through-people.</p> <p>Ensure that this is captured within the Programme for Government.</p> <p>New strategy should not be a dead document put on a digital shelf. It should be a live document with mechanism for improvement and learning being incorporated.</p> <p>Treat childcare strategy as a priority when deciding on allocating resources. New strategy should resource all elements of delivery to ensure departments are ready for new delivery model.</p> <p>Having strong advocates in the Head of the Civil Service and other key individuals - politicians may come and go, elections happen - need consistent, strong advocates.</p>
--	---	--

<p>Where possible, amalgamate forms to streamline processes.</p> <p>Inspectors should have appropriate experience to enable them to inspect meaningfully.</p> <p>Developing the current Childcare Standards to align with HSC Quality Standards and to be more inclusive of diversity, children with additional needs and the voice of parents and parental responsibility decision making rights, could be an option Quality 2020 Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk) https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/topics/safety-and-quality-standards/quality-2020.</p>	<p>Need to see monitoring and evaluation having an impact - does it change things? Helping understand rationality behind it.</p> <p>Absolutely and the Children’s Cooperation Bill and CYP Strategy already legislate for how this could be done.</p> <p>Planning and coproduction of outcomes and outcome indicators, with parents and providers ensures effective implementation parentactionCESGuide_to_implementation_concepts_and_frameworks_Final.pdf.</p> <p>Ensuring funding for implementing new action plan - not allowing Strategy to be underfunded/ funding only admin costs and reporting on actions taking place anyway.</p> <p>Chance of a single inspecting body that reflects the needs presented not the perceived needs.</p>	<p>Having a legislative underpinning will help to ensure that childcare is recognised as a priority area.</p> <p>Change the silo mentality within departments so that resources can be more effectively utilised. Better use of cross departmental teams.</p>
--	---	---

THEME: Quality – GPS (Good-Problem-Solution) Analysis of selected Ideas		
<p>IDEA: Department should embrace that it doesn't have all the answers – build the strategy in public, publish the approach and questions to be answered. This increases the chances crowdsourcing solutions, with the end result being a better strategy.</p>	<p>IDEA: Develop standards which include ways to measure parent and provider partnerships. Explore revisit a joint inspection framework across health and education. An agreed quality framework for birth to 6 with focus on birth to 3 that reflects process, (Pedagogy), structural quality, minimum standards staffing, parent provider partnerships, and support appropriate practice for children who experience disadvantage for example SEND, English not first language, poverty and other forms of disadvantage. All stakeholders engaged in agreeing such a framework.</p>	<p>IDEA: Empowering parents/families to understand & support their child's early development is vital – look at ways to enhance the home learning environment in partnership with parents to support understanding on child development supporting transitions.</p>
Exploration of what is 'good' re ideas:		
<p>Need to review previous investments and take cognizance of lessons learnt.</p> <p>Opportunity to show different ideas.</p> <p>Allowing a strategy to be formed that is fit for purpose.</p> <p>Language used in strategy. How do we sell and encourage participatory practice in review of approach? Accessible to rural areas? Digital access? Formats to view in.</p> <p>Lived experience from children, providers, families and communities.</p>	<p>How do we measure some areas of disadvantage? Poverty etc. Many find disclosing this personal information invasive.</p> <p>Buy in from all providers on the agreed framework.</p> <p>Child centred.</p> <p>Accountability when it falls across departments.</p>	<p>Barriers?</p> <p>Better outcomes for children leading to better outcomes for wider society.</p> <p>Education of parents in relation to their children's early years is vital to move society forwards/helping those children from disadvantaged backgrounds move upwards again helping society as a whole.</p> <p>Additional support for children with needs, Early intervention.</p> <p>Outside influences. Domestic Violence, Poverty etc.</p>

<p>Strategy itself recognising it won't always get things right.</p>		<p>Health visitors, midwives etc. when does this home environment begin?</p> <p>Supporting and educating parents provides continuity of learning between home and early education which is very beneficial for children and promotes and reinforces their learning.</p> <p>Must have provision of both universal provision for all children and specialist provision for families who need additional support.</p>
<p>Exploration of what 'problems (issues)' exist re ideas:</p>		
<p>Difficult to maintain momentum of public involvement.</p> <p>Requires management of expectations of the people consulted. What can really be delivered?</p> <p>There's a need to ensure that solutions arising from these consultations are evidence-based.</p> <p>The people engaged with are very busy, and there can be a danger of expecting too much time of people. The return they see might not be what they expect, which leads to frustration of that group (e.g. iLab participants).</p> <p>One problem could be bias and conflict of interest amongst those that are consulted. If those that are going to benefit are involved in the solutions, then this could bring bias.</p>	<p>We need to differentiate at what point the education role stops in childcare (e.g. post school care should involve just care and not more education).</p> <p>With more and more frameworks, the child can sometimes get lost in this process.</p> <p>More and more standards can mean more paperwork for providers.</p> <p>Problem about having resources to do all of this Any quality standards will have to be meaningful for both parents and providers.</p> <p>Setting/reviewing current standards for both childminders and childcare settings can be very difficult.</p> <p>Opportunity to develop a framework specific to IM.</p>	<p>Is there really capacity to do this?</p> <p>It's very difficult for a childcare provider to convince parents who aren't interested in engaging. How do you reach the children who are most in need of it?</p>

<p>Difficult to maintain momentum of public involvement.</p> <p>Requires management of expectations of the people consulted. What can really be delivered?</p>	<p>With more and more frameworks, the child can sometimes get lost in this process.</p>	
<p>Exploration of potential 'solutions' re problems/issues highlighted above:</p>		
<p>After Strategy published, ensure rolling involvement of stakeholders through review/ implementation/ advisory group. Allow for updates to be made to action plans as strategy develops. Community based involvement using Community Development approaches: Solution is to give stakeholders OWNERSHIP of the work Co-Production Guide for Northern Ireland - Connecting and Realising Value Through People Department of Health (health-ni.gov.uk) https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/co-production-guide-northern-ireland-connecting-and-realising-value-through-people.</p> <p>Make clear how consultation will be considered alongside research commissioned for Strategy.</p> <p>Recognise that people will be in a position to engage differently at different times.</p> <p>Department will need to be very clear on why particular solutions have been identified, and why others haven't.</p>	<p>An Early Years foundation stage framework for delivery by all providers and a condition of funding.</p> <p>Develop a more integrated approach to inspections that is aligned both with quality outcomes for children (educational) and with safeguarding, standards.</p> <p>Framework could be co-designed using a similar process to the strategic insight lab.</p> <p>A solution to taking a social model of disability approach with this strategy is the commissioning by all departments of Independent Advocacy for Parent Carers.</p> <p>People with experience of the sector to be involved in inspection process.</p>	<p>Need to challenge the medical model of disability, which assumes that all barriers children face to learning in early years, exist solely within the home and with parents. The social model of disability, advocates for looking at the barriers our children face to reaching their full potential and vindicating their human rights, in the communities and schools and society in general. This solution must be reworded to reflect the social model of disability for children with additional needs.</p> <p>Make access to childcare rather than 'available to all who need it' a right for everyone, an expectation for all children.</p> <p>Speak to parents to understand how engagement would better work for them - some may seem like they aren't engaging, but could be working two jobs, struggling with other things in their lives.</p> <p>Children with disabilities face significant barriers in their communities and schools to learning, inclusion and development, because of denial of access to vital health and education services in NI, in 2021 parentactionniccy-too-little-too-late-parents-report-2019-web-version.pdf.</p>

<p>Need to get the language right re 'involvement' of community or public....consultation is NOT involvement or participation and members of the public including parents children and providers, need their capacity built to be involved and to stay involved.</p> <p>Need to have clear, accessible avenues for input, feedback, gathering experiences - using that as part of monitoring and evaluation</p> <p>Deliverables / interventions should be based on impact, not on money available.</p> <p>Strategy and actions must be based on evidenced needs - not about 'crowdsourced' ideas.</p> <p>Need to hear from those affected in a strategic way to understand living experience - but also need to appreciate limitations. Not all stakeholders will be fully informed of all the issues, implications.</p> <p>Properly resource organisations to meaningfully engage in consultation process.</p>		
---	--	--