

SCHOOL AGE CHILDCARE IN IRELAND

Executive Summary

A Introduction

A.1 In June 2001, the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) which is chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) and which oversees the development of an integrated childcare infrastructure throughout the country, established a Working Group on School Age Childcare with a remit to:

- (i) *review existing provision for school age childcare, in Ireland and in other jurisdictions;*
- (ii) *develop guidelines on quality standards for school age childcare;*
- (iii) *make proposals for the development of school age childcare services, on an all year round basis, taking into account the diverse forms of such childcare; and*
- (iv) *to report to the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee on these issues.*

B. Contexts

B.1 An Expert Working Group on Childcare was established in 1997 under Partnership 2000 (P2000) to develop a strategy which would integrate the different strands of arrangements for the development and delivery of childcare and early educational services. The principal reason the P2000 Expert Working Group was convened at that time stemmed from the fact that changed social and economic conditions and expectations in Ireland had resulted in more women opting to combine work and family responsibilities at a time when the availability of childminders and places in childcare centres was contracting.

B.2 The P2000 Expert Working Group was chaired by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (D/JELR) and had wide ranging terms of reference and a broad membership of seventy members, drawn from Government Departments, statutory bodies, the social partners, non-governmental organisations, the childcare sector and parents.

B.3 The P2000 Expert Working Group decided that its 'childcare' remit related to the provision of day care facilities and services for pre-school children and school-going children out of school hours and further noted that it includes services offering care, education and socialisation opportunities for children to the benefit of children, parents, employers and the wider community.

B.4 The P2000 Expert Working Group published a comprehensive report in which it laid down a series of principles which it recommended should underpin the delivery of childcare services in Ireland and recommendations for the development and implementation of a seven year strategic plan for childcare.

B.5 In relation to School Age Childcare, the P2000 Expert Working Group noted that

“There is a growing need for locally based programmes which provide children with social, recreational and development activities outside school hours and during holiday time. This need arises because of women’s increased labour force participation and because of the diminishing supply of part-time childcare places. Such provision could be provided on school premises or in community buildings.

The development of this sector also requires attention to the training needs of childcare personnel working with 6 - 12 year olds.”

- B.6 The NDP 2000 - 2006 (NDP) made available the financial resources to facilitate the development of childcare as a measure for social inclusion and the advancement of labour force opportunities. The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 (EOCP) was incorporated as a key Sub-Measure of the Social Inclusion Measures in each of the Regional Operational Programmes within the NDP. The Programme offers the framework within which all supply aspects of childcare are being advanced in accordance with the recommendations of the P2000 Expert Working Group.
- B.7 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare also made a series of recommendations on the structures which were appropriate to oversee the implementation of its recommendations. The National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee (NCCC) has established a number of Sub-Groups and Working Groups to undertake specific tasks. The Working Group on School Age Childcare is one such Group.

C. What is School Age Childcare?

- C.1 Centre-based “School Age Childcare” is a relatively new concept in Irish society although it has been widespread in its provision throughout much of mainland Europe for many years and has also expanded considerably in its provision in the United Kingdom (UK) in recent years.
- C.2 The formal definition of school age childcare is not an easy task. There is no widely accepted international definition, largely because of the varying approaches which have evolved in different countries to childcare and to primary school and the lines of demarcation between the two. In many European countries, children normally start primary school at a later age than do Irish children and therefore parents are less likely to be faced with the dilemma of finding a further strand of care for their children until the children are six or seven years old.
- C.3 In a 1996 Report, the European Commission Network on Childcare described School Age Childcare services as:

“services which take over the responsibility for children when school is over but parents are not available - whether because they are working or for other reasons.”
- C.4 In an Irish context, there is a need to provide a childcare facility to meet the care needs of children whose parents’ work or educational timetables are incompatible with school timetables. To fully address the gaps between school hours and the parents’ timetables, such a childcare service may be required to provide for the care needs of children before school starts in the morning, after school finishes in the afternoon and during school holidays and pre-planned school closures.
- C.5 Again, in an Irish setting, care for school going children, out of school hours and where the parents are unable to provide direct care due to employment or education and training commitments, may be provided by a child minder (either a relative or non-relative and formally or informally), or in a group setting. In Ireland it is not unusual to hear terms such as After-school Care, Out of School Care, After School Clubs, Summer Schemes, Homework Clubs being applied to services which meet the needs of parents of school going children. Some of these terms derive directly from the titles used for services in other countries.

- C.6 For the purposes of this Report and the recommendations therein, the Working Group defines School Age Childcare as being

“Childcare for school going children provided outside of normal school hours where the same children attend the childcare facility on a regular basis and access to the service is clearly defined by agreement with parents and guardians.”

D. Current provision of School Age Childcare in Ireland and Elsewhere

- D.1 Although there has been a significant increase in the provision of early or pre-school childcare places in Ireland in recent years, there has not been a parallel increase in the provision of places to cater for the childcare needs of the school age child outside of school hours. As a result, the majority of Irish parents have limited options from which to meet the childcare needs of their school going children outside of school hours. Indeed this deficit is the *raison d'être* for the present Working Group.

- D.2 The availability of information in relation to School Age Childcare usage in Ireland was greatly enhanced with the publication by the Central Statistics Office in July 2003 of its findings from the special module in relation to Childcare conducted as part of the Quarterly National Household Survey in late 2002. The Survey shows that 67,500 families of primary school children avail of non-parental childcare for their children. Of these families, the mother or guardian (in the case of a one parent family) in 62,600 families was in employment with only 1,100 mothers/guardians in education. On the basis of the tables, it is estimated that about 125,000 primary school children receive non parental childcare. (As the survey was conducted during term time, this reflects term time usage of childcare).

- D.3 Turning again to the 67,500 families using non-parental childcare for their primary school children, the CSO survey found that 31,100 (46 per cent) used unpaid relatives; 9,500 (14 per cent) used paid relatives; 21,500 (32 per cent) used paid carers; 4,100 (6 per cent) availed of crèches and 2,900 (3 per cent) used other childcare facilities.

- D.4 The structures and arrangements for the delivery of School Age Childcare vary among the Member States of the European Union. The European Commission Network on Childcare and other Measures to reconcile Employment and Family Responsibilities commissioned and published a comprehensive review of the services available in EU Member States, albeit in 1996. The Review sums up the situation as it then applied as follows:

“A number of countries have a strong proactive policy and high levels of provision, notably Denmark, France and Sweden. In other Member States, services in recent years have been increasing from a low baseline (for example, Luxembourg and Portugal); in some cases (for example Netherlands, Flemish Community in Belgium and UK) in response to short-term government initiatives to promote services. A few countries show little sign yet of significant development of formal school age childcare services, for example Ireland, Italy and Spain.”

- D.5 New Zealand and Australia have been to the forefront in the development of high quality childcare in the English speaking world and are also well advanced in their thinking on school age childcare.

D.6 The Working Group reviewed material from eight countries to inform its understanding of current international practice in the delivery of school age childcare.

E. The Need for School Age Childcare in Ireland

E.1 At a time of great economic change, it is not easy to predict the demand for School Age Childcare in Ireland with any great degree of accuracy. Ireland has, as we shall see, undergone major changes in its labour market in recent years while changing economic pressures are requiring ever increasing numbers of women to remain in the labour market.

E.2 The Working Group has linked Central Statistics Office (CSO) Education data with the National Household Survey data and estimates that the 152,500 family units with school going children and two parents in employment in the case of couples and a working parent in the case of lone parents are likely to have about 360,000 school going children under 15 years between them. While many female employees are known to be in part time employment, those with dependent children of primary school going age are almost all likely to have a need for childcare during school holidays.

E The Further Development of School Age Childcare in Ireland

E1 The implementation of the recommendations by the P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare is being achieved by building on the existing range of services through a range of financial grants for the creation and support of new and enhanced childcare facilities through the EOCP 2000-2006. In adopting this approach, the P2000 Expert Working Group sought to build upon existing services.

E2 The Working Group on School Age Childcare is of the view that a similar approach should be taken in respect of the further development of School Age Childcare. However, in so recommending, the Working Group is of the view that projects identified to receive financial support should be carefully focussed to meet the needs and interests of the children availing of the service through the delivery of a high quality service the opening hours of which meet with the needs of the parents in the workplace as well as those who might be in education or in training.

E3 Accordingly, the Working Group recommends that, in evaluating school age childcare projects for grant assistance, the appraisal process should focus, *inter alia*, on:

- The provision of a high quality service in accordance with the guidelines developed by the Working Group;
- The provision of a year round school age childcare service to meet the needs of parents to combine their childcare and employment (or training and education) responsibilities; and
- The economic sustainability of the project.

E4 The Working Group recommends that the following groups be actively encouraged to develop school age childcare facilities:

- Community based/not for profit groups, including existing groups who have the capacity to expand into this childcare sector on a year round basis;
- Managing authorities of schools who have space in existing premises to adapt to establish 'stand alone' childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;

- Managing authorities of schools who have land available to establish ‘stand alone’ childcare facilities which would conform with best practice and would be available on a year round basis;
 - Private childcare providers who are prepared to establish school age childcare facilities which would be open on a year round basis; and
 - Work based childcare facilities.
- E5** The Working Group recommends that provision be made within the EOCP Childminding Initiative to encourage childminders to provide quality childcare for school going children. Supports should be provided to enhance the skills of childminders, thereby increasing the provision of quality childcare for school going children by childminders.
- E6** The Working Group recommends that groups which have received grant support for sessional childcare services under the EOCP be encouraged to further expand the range of services they provide, thereby maximising use of the premises.
- E7** The Working Group recommends that such groups be given priming support to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to cater for the older age group.
- E8** The Working Group only recommends the use of school premises or school lands for the delivery of school age childcare in circumstances where the school managing authorities and owners are prepared to make those premises available for a long term lease or other long term commitment to ensure that facilities are available for a reasonable number of years.
- E9** The Working Group recommends that the School Age Childcare facility located in the school setting must be of a standard equivalent to the high, child-focused, specification being recommended for stand alone school age facilities or for the school age childcare elements of integrated services.
- E10** The Working Group recommends that new school building projects be encouraged to incorporate a school age childcare facility.
- E11** The Working Group recommends that private childcare providers who have already received a grant for one property be permitted to submit an application for further priming support for the same property to cover the cost of the additional capital items needed to provide a school age childcare service, provided that such service is made available five days a week and for fifty weeks of the year. (Such additional funding would subject to compliance with the European Union’s State Aid rules which set a maximum amount of grant assistance which may be made available to the private sector.)
- G.** Quality in School Age Childcare
- G.1** The Working Group on School Age Childcare is aware that it is undertaking its work when the provision of centre-based school age childcare in Ireland is in its infancy. Accordingly the Working Group believes that Ireland is in a position to espouse the highest international standards for the sector from the beginning.
- G.2** The Working Group recommends that grant support should only be made available to childcare providers who are prepared to deliver a comprehensive school age childcare programme which addresses the social, physical, developmental, recreational and creative needs of the child in a happy and caring environment.

G.3 A number of key elements contribute to the delivery of a quality school age childcare service. These include the activity programme and the importance of play; the physical environment; the regulation of school age childcare; training for the sector; and relationships between providers of school age childcare, the client children, their parents and on occasion the schools.

G.4 The Working Group is of the view that such services must be underpinned by sound principles which support inclusion and participation. The following concepts are particularly important:

- Children and adults have rights and responsibilities within the service.
- The work and ethos of the service should be underpinned by the United Nations Charter on the Rights of the Child and on the National Children's Strategy.
- Access and participation in the life of the service is open to all stakeholders.
- Children learn and develop in the context of a caring community which values their individual and combined strengths.
- Links with and between the child, family, service and wider community promote a sense of identity and belonging.
- Mutually respectful relationships are fostered and recognised as being central to the life of the service.
- Children, staff and parents engage in meaningful dialogue.
- The voice of the child is heard, respected and contributes to the service.
- Interactions are sensitive and responsive.
- The ethos and practice of the service values diversity and promotes equality.
- The programme is culturally and socially appropriate to the children, families and staff participating in the service.
- Staff and children work together in ways that are respectful and inclusive.
- Children are protected from bullying and abuse.
- The environment provides opportunities for learning.
- The service should provide opportunities for positive experiences which support learning, development and well being for all.
- The programme should promote healthy life choices.
- The programme should offer opportunities for challenge and risk.
- The programme should be of recreational and educational benefit to children.
- The programme should have breadth, depth and balance.
- Staff should be valued for the knowledge, expertise and life experience they bring to the service.
- The professionalisation of staff should be supported within the service.
- Programmes, policies and procedures should be responsive to the needs of children, families and staff.

H. The Activity Programme and the Importance of Play

H.1 Play is recognised as a basic human right for all children. The importance of play has been reaffirmed by the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, which Ireland ratified in 1992. Article 31, sets out the child's right to play:

“Parties recognise the rights of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts: parties shall respect and promote the rights of the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life and shall encourage the provision of appropriate and equal opportunities for cultural, artistic, recreational and leisure activity.”

- H.2 The Working Group fully endorses the view that play is central to the healthy growth and development of children. As a result, the Working Group concludes that a strong focus on play must be a core principle and indeed a distinguishing characteristic of school age childcare.
- H.3 The Working Group recommends that the school age childcare service should plan and provide a range of play opportunities and activities to foster the development of children's social, physical, intellectual, creative and emotional capabilities.
- H.4 The Working Group recommends that each school age childcare facility should set aside a period of time each week to enable children and practitioners to work together to review previous activities and to develop the programme of activities for the coming week.
- H.5 The Working Group recommends that when planning play for children, the childcare facility should offer a mix of free play and structured play opportunities.
- H.6 While Homework Clubs are outside the scope of the present Report, school aged childcare services often provide facilities, help and supervision for children to complete homework as part of the range of services. Whereas the Working Group acknowledges that homework support may be an element of a range of activities within the school aged childcare service, it recommends that homework support should not be the core activity of a school aged childcare service. The Working Group recommends that dialogue with the parents and children is critical on the issue of homework.
- H.7 The Working Group recommends that risk taking in the school age childcare setting should be accommodated under circumstances which could include:
- good practice;
 - appropriate supervision;
 - awareness of the child's capabilities;
 - appropriate activities;
 - communication and trust between the parents and the provider as well as the child and provider;
 - relevant training and qualifications for the activity provider;
 - risk assessment for purposeful activity; and
 - appropriate insurance coverage.
- H.8 The Working Group recommends that school age childcare practitioners enshrine principles of inter-culturalism and diversity of the P2000 Expert Working Group in the programmes of activities and attitudes they are developing in their facilities. They should be inclusive in encompassing those with special needs or who might otherwise be marginalised through a disability, those who are members of the Travelling Community and those from an ethnic minority group.
- H.9 The Working Group recommends that the school age childcare facility should value the diverse ethos of Irish society, including a positive approach to Irish language and culture.

I. Other Key Issues Impacting on a Quality Service

I.1 The Working Group makes the following recommendations in regard to the physical design of a school age childcare facility:

- The facility should offer a bright, warm environment;
- It should be accessible by children with disabilities;
- It should have a range of rooms or areas to facilitate more than one activity by a child or group of children at a time;
- It should provide adequate open internal space to facilitate more physical activities including sports and drama, where appropriate;
- It should provide a quiet area for reading, table based activities and homework;
- All areas should be designed for easy and unobtrusive supervision;
- Every room should, as far as possible, have natural light;
- Every facility should have access to an outside play area;
- Every facility should have adequate storage to keep the area as clutter free as possible;
- It should be clean and well maintained;
- It should be well insulated to maintain heat and quiet;
- It should include a kitchen area to facilitate the preparation and storage of food and hot drinks for children after the school day;
- It should have suitably appointed toilet facilities.

I.2 The Working Group recommends that every school age childcare facility should prepare a statement with comprehensive health and safety policies and procedures dealing, *inter alia*, with:

- The identification, handling and reporting of accidents;
- Child welfare and protection;
- Illnesses;
- First aid practices;
- Supervision;
- Use of potentially hazardous equipment;
- Regular safety checks on equipment;
- Behavioural problems; and
- Hygiene practices.

I.3 In line with Children First National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children and “Our Duty to Care”, all childcare providers should develop their own local procedures and guidance for dealing with child protection and all staff should be informed of and be aware of these procedures.

I.4 Every childcare facility should have adequate insurance cover to provide against every eventuality. Both management and staff should be aware of the terms of the facility’s insurance and must avoid all activities which do not come within the terms of such insurance.

I.5 The Working Group recommends that procedures are put in place in every setting to foster a spirit of co-operation between parents and service managers and childcare practitioners; to facilitate the ongoing sharing of information with parents; and to facilitate parental access to both the school age childcare facility and to the practitioners at all appropriate times.

- I.6 The P2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare discussed the pros and cons of notification and registration for childcare in its 1999 work and came down in favour of registration, noting that

“Registration ...requires the State to register or licence a service as meeting the minimum standards. It also empowers the State to refuse registration and allows for annual review.”

- I.7 This view led to the first recommendation of the P2000 Expert Working Group which is endorsed and restated by the Working Group on School Age Childcare which recommends an amendment of the primary legislation (Child Care Act, 1991) to encompass the regulation of school age childcare.
- I.8 In relation to the content of any new Regulations or Guidelines for the Voluntary Regulation of the School Age Childcare Sector, the Working Group recommends that they be standardised to follow closely the regulations and guidelines which emerge following the present revision being undertaken by the Department of Health and Children.
- I.9 The Working Group recommends that the adult to child ratio for centre-based school age childcare should be 1 adult per 8 children.
- I.10 While the need to amend primary legislation has already been cited as an obstacle to the regulation of school age childcare, the Working Group recommends that a voluntary code of standards be drawn up and a voluntary notification process be put in place to enable school age childcare facilities to notify their local health board. This would incentivise the facilities to attain and maintain high standards, resulting in the delivery of quality childcare.
- I.11 The Working Group, under its terms of reference, has been asked to develop guidelines for the sector. These have been developed on the basis of the recommendations of this Report and are presented in annex to the Report. In the absence of regulation of the school age childcare sector, the Working Group recommends that these guidelines be used as a quality standard against which applications for grant assistance under the EOCP might be evaluated and be further developed for use as a voluntary standard for the school age childcare sector.
- I.12 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees, where appropriate, identify the transport needs of childcare groups to the Rural Transport Initiative projects in their respective counties.
- I.13 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Transport introduce appropriate legislation regarding safety procedures and insurance for the transportation of specific groups of people (including children).
- I.14 The Working Group on School Age Childcare recommends that the Department of Education and Science review the regulations of the School Transport Scheme to facilitate the provision for transport from schools to school aged childcare facilities.

J. Training for School Age Childcare

J.1 The Working Group noted the training delivered for School Age Childcare practitioners in a number of other countries. It also took note of the approach to training and professionalisation contained in the Model Framework document prepared by the Certifying Bodies Sub-Group on the NCCC.

J.2 The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following occupational abilities to work effectively in the school age childcare sector:

The ability to:

- implement good practice and work effectively in a school age setting;
- understand the specific role of the school age childcare practitioner;
- be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, child protection guidelines and procedures;
- assist in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the school age child care environment;
- understand and promote all aspects of child development, education and care;
- acknowledge and promote individuality and diversity in all children and to promote equal opportunities and anti-discrimination practice;
- work effectively as part of a team;
- understand the importance of consultation with children, parents and colleagues;
- establish and maintain linkages between schools, other services that could be accessed by children (sport, dance, etc.) and the wider community;
- be aware of, and to be able to implement where relevant, all legislation regarding children, equality, discrimination and health and safety; and
- establish and maintain all relevant records.

J.3 The Working Group has already noted the importance of recognising the special developmental needs of the children who are availing of school age childcare. The fostering of these needs require a special set of skills for the school age childcare practitioner. The Working Group is of the view that the school age childcare practitioner should have the following skills to work effectively in the school age childcare sector.

The skill to:

- build relationships with children, their parents and carers;
- understand and promote the different developmental needs of children and young people availing of a school age childcare service;
- support children's involvement and participation in the life of the service;
- ensure a safe and stimulating environment;
- recognise and provide for the emerging independence of the child;
- promote individuality, balancing the needs of the child and of the group;
- promote fair and caring behaviour;
- develop the cultural awareness of the child; and
- encourage choice and self confidence.

J.4 The Working Group recommends that a specific training strand be developed to equip childcare practitioners to provide a high quality service to meet the particular needs of the older age group of four to twelve year old children who are likely to avail of school age childcare. Given the recreational nature of school age childcare, the training programmes to be developed should have a significant practical focus although it is also important to include the theoretical material which is essential to the preparation of a well-informed childcare practitioner and to the contextualisation of school age childcare.

J.5 The Working Group recommends that the following skills and knowledge should be incorporated into the courses and modules to be developed for the School Age Childcare sector:

- Quality practice in school age childcare;
- Play and activities;
- Child development;
- Health and safety, including child protection;
- Work experience;
- Role of the school age childcare practitioner; and
- Personal professional development.

K. The Way Forward

K.1 The Working Group recommends that a campaign be undertaken to increase understanding of the school age childcare sector, to create awareness of the availability of grant assistance and to promote and encourage community groups, schools and their managing authorities and existing childcare practitioners, both community groups and private providers, to consider the development of these much needed services.

K.2 The Working Group is aware that the City/County Childcare Committees have a strong mandate from the National Childcare Co-ordinating Committee to work with local interests to develop childcare to address local childcare needs. The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees be asked to take a prominent role in working with and supporting community groups, private childcare providers and schools' authorities throughout their city/county to develop school age childcare facilities to meet the childcare needs of parents who are in employment, education and training and whose school going children require childcare outside of school hours.

K.3 The Working Group recommends that the City/County Childcare Committees and the National Voluntary Childcare Organisations as appropriate promote awareness of the guidelines developed by the Working Group for the development of a quality School Age Childcare Sector.

L. Guidelines

- L.1 In accordance with its terms of reference and based on its research and findings, the Working Group has developed guidelines laying out key pointers for the development of a quality School Age Childcare Service which will inform community based not for profit groups and private providers who may consider seeking grant support for the development of services under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006.
- L.2 The guidelines are contained in Appendix 2.

CÚRAM LEANAÍ D'AOIS SCOILE IN ÉIRINN

ACHOIMRE FEIDHMEANNAIS

A Réamhrá

A.1 I Meitheamh 2001, rinne an Coiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanaí (CCNCL) faoi chathaoirleacht na Roinne Dlí agus Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí (R/DCCAD), a mhaoirsionn forbairt ar bhonneagar comhdhlúite cúraim leanaí ar fud na tíre, Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile a bhunú a raibh sé mar shainchúram air

- athbhreithniú a dhéanamh ar an soláthar le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile in Éirinn agus i ndlínsí eile;
- treoirlínte a fhorbairt maidir le caighdeáin cháilíochta do chúram leanaí d'aois scoile;
- moltaí a dhéanamh maidir le seirbhísí cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a fhorbairt ar an mbonn go bhfeidhmeoidís ó cheann ceann na bliana, ag cur san áireamh cineálacha éagsúla cúraim leanaí dá shórt; agus
- tuairisciú don Choiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanaí ar na saincheisteanna seo.

B. Comhthéacs

B.1. Bunaíodh Sainghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí i 1997 faoi Chomhpháirtíocht 2000 (C2000) chun straitéis a fhorbairt a chomhtháthódh duail éagsúla na socrúithe a bhí ann chun seirbhísí cúraim leanaí agus luathoideachais a fhorbairt agus a sheachadadh. Ba í an phríomhchúis ar tionóladh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 ag an am, gur tharla, de bharr tosca agus ionchais shóisialta agus gheileagracha na hÉireann, go raibh níos mó ban ag roghnú a gcúraimí oibre agus teaghlaigh a chomhcheangal, fad a bhí an líon feighlithe leanaí agus an rochtain ar lárionaid leanaí ag laghdú.

B.2. Ghlac an Roinn Dlí is Cirt, Comhionannais agus Athchóirithe Dlí (R/DCCAD) an chathaoirleacht ar Shainghrúpa Oibre C2000, a raibh téarmaí tagartha fadréimseacha aige agus ballraíocht leathan de sheachtó ball, a glacadh as Ranna Rialtais, comhlachtaí reachtúla, na comhpháirtithe sóisialta, eagraíochtaí neamh-rialtasacha, an earnáil chúraim leanaí agus tuismitheoirí.

B.3. Chinn Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 go raibh a shainchúram 'cúraim leanaí' ag baint le háiseanna agus seirbhísí cúraim lae a sholáthar do leanaí réamhscoile agus leanaí scoile, lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile, agus thug sé faoi deara, freisin, go gcuimsíonn sé seirbhísí a thairgeann cúram, oideachas agus deiseanna caidrimh do leanaí, chun tairbhe leanaí, tuismitheoirí, fostóirí agus an mhórphobail.

B.4. D'fhoilsigh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 tuairisc chuimsitheach inar leagadh síos sraith prionsabal a moladh mar bhonn le seachadadh seirbhísí cúraim leanaí in Éirinn agus moltaí maidir le plean straitéiseach seacht mbliana chun cúram leanaí a fhorbairt agus a fhorfheidhmiú.

B.5. I dtaca le Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile, chuir an Sainghrúpa Oibre an méid seo a leanas in iúl:

“Tá gá méadaithe le cláir a bheadh bunaithe go háitiúil chun imeachtaí caidrimh, caithimh

aimsire agus forbartha a sholáthar do leanaí lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile agus le linn laethanta saoire. Tá an riachtanas seo ann de bharr rannpháirt mhéadaithe na mban san fhórsa saothair agus laghdú an tsoláthair d'ionad páirtaimseartha le haghaidh cúraim leanaí. D'fhéadfaí an soláthar seo a dhéanamh in áitribh scoile nó i bhfoirgnimh phobail.

Éilíonn forbairt na hearnála seo go ndíreofaí aird ar na riachtanais oiliúna atá ag cúramóirí leanaí a oibríonn le leanaí 6-12 bhliain d'aois.”

B.5 Chuir PFN 2000-2006 (PFN) na hachmainní airgid ar fáil chun go n-éascófaí forbairt chúraim leanaí mar bheart cuimsitheachta sóisialta agus mar bheart chun deiseanna a chruthú don fhórsa saothair. Ionchorpraíodh an Clár Comhdheiseanna um Chúram Leanaí 2000-2006 (CCCL) mar Fho-Bheart tábhachtach de na Bearta Cuimsitheachta Sóisialta a bhí i ngach Clár Réigiúnach Oibríochta den PFN. Tairgeann an Clár creat ina bhfuil gach gné soláthair de chúram leanaí á cur chun cinn de réir moltaí Shainghrúpa Oibre C2000.

B.6 Rinne Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 sraith moltaí freisin maidir leis na struchtúir a d'oirfeadh chun forfheidhmiú a chuid moltaí a mhaoirsiú. Tá roinnt Fo-Ghrúpaí agus Grúpaí Oibre bunaithe ag an gCoiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanaí (CCNCL) chun tabhairt faoi shaintascanna. Orthu seo tá an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile.

C. Cad is Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile?

C.1 Is coincheap measartha nua i sochaí na hÉireann é “Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile” atá ionadhbhunaithe, cé go raibh seo ar fáil go forleathan ar fud mhórthír na hEorpa le blianta agus gur tháinig méadú measartha mór ar an soláthar sa Ríocht Aontaithe (RA) le blianta beaga anuas.

C.2 Ní furasta sainmhíniú foirmeálta a thabhairt ar chúram leanaí d'aois scoile. Níl sainmhíniú idirnáisiúnta ann a bhfuil glacadh coitianta leis, toisc, den chuid is mó, go bhfuil modhanna éagsúla cúraim leanaí agus bunscolaíochta tagtha chun cinn i dtíortha éagsúla agus líne idirdhealaithe eatarthu. I mórán tíortha Eorpacha is gnách go dtosaíonn leanaí sa bhunscoil ag aois níos sine ná leanaí na hÉireann agus mar sin de is lú an fhadhb a bhíonn ag tuismitheoirí teacht ar ghné eile cúraim dá leanaí, go mbíonn na leanaí sin sé nó seacht mbliana d'aois.

C.3 Ina thuarascáil i 1996, rinne Gréasán Choimisiún na hEorpa um Chúram Leanaí cur síos ar sheirbhísí Cúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile mar

“seirbhísí a ghlacann freagracht as leanaí nuair a bhíonn an scoil thart agus gan na tuismitheoirí ar fáil – toisc go bhfuil siadsan ag obair, nó ar chúiseanna eile”

C.4 Sa chomhthéacs Éireannach, is gá áis chúraim leanaí a sholáthar a fhreastlóidh ar riachtanais cúraim na leanaí a bhfuil a dtuismitheoirí ar obair nó a bhfuil amchláir oideachais acu nach réitíonn le hamchláir na scoile. D'fhonn lánaghaidh a thabhairt ar an mbearna idir uaireanta scoile agus amchláir tuismitheoirí, tharlódh sé gur ghá seirbhís chúraim leanaí dá short chun freastal ar riachtanais chúraim leanaí roimh thosú scoile ar maidin, tar éis chríochnú scoile tráthnóna, agus le linn laethanta saoire scoile agus clabhsúir réamhphleanáilte scoile.

- C.5 Arís, sa suíomh Éireannach, d'fhéadfaí cúram leanaí scoile a sholáthar lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile nó nuair nach féidir le tuismitheoirí cúram pearsanta a thabhairt dóibh, de bharr dualgas fostaíochta nó oideachais agus oiliúna, le cabhair feighlí leanaí (gaolmhar nó neamhghaolmhar, ar bhonn foirmeálta nó neamhfhoirmeálta), nó i suíomh grúpa. In Éirinn cloistear go minic téarmaí ar nós Cúraim Iarscoile, Cúraim As-Scoile, Clubanna Iarscoile, Scéimeanna Samhraidh, Clubanna Oibre Baile i leith seirbhísí a fhreastlaíonn ar riachtanais tuismitheoirí na leanaí scoile. Díorthaítear roinnt de na téarmaí seo go díreach ó na teidil a thugtar ar sheirbhísí i dtíortha eile.
- C.6 Chun críocha na Tuarascála seo agus na moltaí inti, déanann an Grúpa Oibre sainiú ar Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile mar

“Cúram leanaí a chuirtear ar fáil do leanaí scoile lasmuigh de ghnáthuaireanta scoile, sa chás go bhfreastlaíonn na leanaí céanna ar an áis chúraim leanaí go rialta, agus go bhfuil rochtain ar an tseirbhís sainithe go soiléir trí chomhaontú idir tuismitheoirí agus caomhnóirí”

D. Soláthar reatha i leith Cúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn agus in Áiteanna Eile.

- D.1 Cé gur tháinig méadú suntasach ar sholáthar ionad cúraim leanaí réamhscoile in Éirinn le blianta beaga, níor tharla an méadú céanna ar sholáthar ionad a d'fhreastlódh ar riachtanais cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile. Dá thoradh, tá teorainn leis na roghanna atá ag bunús tuismitheoirí na hÉireann chun freastal lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile ar riachtanais cúraim na leanaí atá ar scoil acu. Le fírinne, is é an t-easnamh seo is bunchúis leis an nGrúpa Oibre reatha.
- D.2 Cuireadh go mór leis an eolas faoi Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn nuair a d'fhoilsigh an Príomh-Oifig Staidrimh in Iúil 2003 torthaí an mhodúil speisialta faoi Chúram Leanaí a seoladh mar chuid den Suirbhé Náisiúnta Ráithiúil na dTheaghlach ag deireadh 2002. Léiríonn an Suirbhé go mbaineann 67,500 teaghlach ina bhfuil leanaí bunscoile leas as cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora dá leanaí. As na teaghlaigh seo, bhí an mháthair nó caomhnóir ag 62,600 teaghlach (i gcás teaghlaigh aontuismitheora) i bhfostaíocht, agus gan ach 1,100 máthair/caomhnóir ag gabháil d'oideachas. Ar bhonn na dtáblaí, meastar go bhfaigheann thart ar 125,000 leanbh bunscoile cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora. (Ós rud é go ndearnadh an suirbhé le linn téarma, léiríonn sé an úsáid théarmach a bhaintear as cúram leanaí).
- D.3 Ag casadh arís ar an 67,500 teaghlach a úsáideann cúram leanaí neamhthuismitheora dá bpáistí bunscoile, fuair suirbhé an POS amach gur bhain 31,100 duine (46 faoin gcéad) leas as gaolta gan phá; bhain 21,500 (32 faoin gcéad) leas as cúramóirí ar phá; bhain 4,100 (6 faoin gcéad) leas as creiseanna agus d'úsáid 2,900 (3 faoin gcéad) áiseanna eile, le haghaidh cúraim leanaí.
- D.4 Tá difríocht idir na struchtúir agus socrúithe le Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile a sheachadadh i measc Bhallstáit an Aontais Eorpaigh. Choimisiúnaigh agus d'fhoilsigh Gréasán an Choimisiúin Eorpaigh um Chúram Leanaí agus Bearta eile Réitithe idir Dualgais Fostaíochta agus Teaghlaigh, athbhreithniú cuimsitheach ar na seirbhísí atá ar fail i mBallstáit an AE, cé gur i 1996 a tharla sin. Cuimríonn an tAthbhreithniú an staid ag an am mar a leanas:

“Tá beartas láidir onghníomhach agus ardleibhéil soláthair ag roinnt tíortha, go sonrach an Danmhairg, an Fhrainc agus an tSualainn. I mBallstáit eile, tá na seirbhísí méadaithe le

blianta beaga ó bhunlíne íseal (mar shampla, Lucsamburg agus an Phortaingéil); i roinnt cásanna (mar shampla, san Ísiltír, i bPobal Fléimeanach na Beilge agus sa RA) mar fhreagra ar thionscnaimh gearrthéarmacha rialtais le seirbhísí a chothú. I roinnt tíortha, is beag comhartha atá ann go fóill go bhfuil forbairt shuntasach á déanamh ar sheirbhísí foirmeálta le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, mar shampla, Éire, an Iodáil agus an Spáinn.”

D.5 Tá an Nua-Shéalainn agus an Astráil chun tosaigh i measc tíortha an Béarla i bhforbairt cúraim leanaí d'ardchaighdeán, agus tá siad cuid mhaith chun tosaigh, freisin, ina smaointe faoi chúram leanaí d'aois scoile.

D.6 D'athbhreithnigh an Grúpa Oibre ábhar as ocht dtír chun tuiscint níos fearr a fháil ar an gcleachtas idirnáisiúnta reatha maidir le cúram leanaí d'aois scoile a sheachadadh.

E. An Gá le Cúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn.

E.1 In am mórathraithe geilleagraigh, ní furasta an t-éileamh ar Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn a réamhaithris le haon mhórchruinneas. Tá mórathruithe tagtha ar mhargadh saothair na hÉireann le blianta beaga, mar a fheicimid, agus éilíonn na brúnna geilleagair atá ag síorathrú, go bhfanfaidh líon méadaithe ban sa mhargadh saothair.

E.2 Tá sonraí Oideachais ón bPríomh-Oifig Staidrimh (PSO) nasctha ag an nGrúpa Oibre le sonraí Shuirbhé Náisiúnta na dTeaghlach agus meastar go bhfuil thart ar 360,000 leanaí scoile faoi 15 bliana ag an 152,500 aonad teaghlach a bhfuil leanaí scoile acu le beirt thuismitheoirí ag obair, i gcás cúplaí agus, i gcás tuismitheoirí aonaracha, tuismitheoir ag obair. Nuair is eol an-chuid banfhostaithe a bheith ag obair go páirtaimseartha, is é is dócha ná go bhfuil gá ag a mbunús a bhfuil leanaí spleácha in aois bunscoile acu, le cúram leanaí le linn laethanta saoire na scoile.

F. Breisfhorbairt ar Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile in Éirinn

F1 Tá moltaí Sainghrúpa C2000 maidir le Cúram Leanaí á mbaint amach trí thógáil ar an raon seirbhísí atá ann cheana, le cabhair raoin deontas airgid atá ar fáil chun nua-áiseanna feabhsaithe a chruthú agus a chothú do chúram leanaí tríd an CCCL 2000-2006. Leis an gcur chuige seo, tá Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 ag iarraidh tógáil ar na seirbhísí atá ann.

F2 Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile, gur chóir cur chuige den sórt céanna a úsáid i gcás bhreisfhorbairt ar Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile. Agus sin á mholadh aige, áfach, measann an Grúpa Oibre gur chóir na tionscadail atá sainithe do thacaíocht airgid, a dhíriú go cúramach ar riachtanais agus ar leasa leanaí a úsáideann an tseirbhís, trí sheirbhís ardchaighdeán a thabhairt a bhfuil a huaireanta oscailte oiriúnach do riachtanais tuismitheoirí ar obair nó dóibh siúd a bhfuil cúrsaí oideachais nó oiliúna ar siúl acu.

F3 Mar sin, molann an Grúpa Oibre, nuair atá tionscadail cúraim leanaí á meas do chúnamh deontais, gur chóir an próiseas meastóireachta a dhíriú, inter alia, ar

- sheirbhís ardchaighdeán a sholáthar de réir na dtreoirilínte atá forbartha ag an nGrúpa Oibre;
- sheirbhís chúraim leanaí a sholáthar ó cheann ceann na bliana a fhreastlaíonn ar riachtanas na dtuismitheoirí a ndualgais cúraim leanaí agus fostaíochta (nó oiliúna agus oideachais) a chomhcheangal; agus

- inbhuaíne gheilleagrach an tionscadail.
- F.4** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar go gníomhach na grúpaí seo a leanas le háiseanna cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a fhorbairt:
- Grúpaí pobalbhunaithe/neamhbhrabúis, lena n-áirítear grúpaí reatha a bhfuil an cumas acu leathnú amach san earnáil chúraim leanaí seo ar feadh na bliana ar fad;
 - Údaráis bhainistíochta scoileanna a bhfuil an spás oiriúnaithe acu ina n-áitribh reatha d'áiseanna cúraim leanaí neamhspleácha a d'fhreagródh don chleachtas is fearr agus a bheadh ar fáil ó cheann ceann na bliana;
 - Údaráis bhainistíochta scoileanna a bhfuil talamh acu ar a bhfeádfaí áiseanna cúraim leanaí neamhspleácha a bhunú a d'fhreagródh don chleachtas is fearr agus a bheadh ar fáil ó cheann ceann na bliana;
 - Soláthróirí príobháideacha cúraim leanaí a bheadh sásta áiseanna cúraim leanaí a bhunú agus iad a bheith oscailte ó cheann ceann na bliana; agus
 - Áiseanna cúraim leanaí bunaithe ar an ionad oibre.
- F.5** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go ndéanfaí soláthar laistigh de Thionscnamh Feighlíochta Leanaí an CCCL le feighlithe leanaí a spreagadh chun cúram leanaí d'ardchaighdeán a sholáthar do leanaí scoile. Is cóir tacaí a sholáthar chun scoileanna na bhfeighlithe leanaí a fheabhsú agus soláthar ardchaighdeáin cúraim leanaí ag feighlithe leanaí do leanaí scoile a mhéadú, dá réir sin.
- F.6** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar na grúpaí a fuair cúnaimh deontais do sheirbhísí seisiúnacha cúraim leanaí faoin CCCL, chun a raon seirbhísí a mhéadú a thuilleadh, agus chun úsáid a n-áitreabh a uasmhéadú dá réir.
- F.7** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go dtabharfar tacaíocht phrímeála do ghrúpaí dá shórt chun costas na mbreismhíreanna caipitil is gá chun freastal ar an ngrúpa níos sine a chlúdach.
- F.8** Molann an Grúpa Oibre, freisin, go n-úsáidfear áitribh agus tailte scoileanna le cúram leanaí d'aois scoile a sheachadadh, sa chás go bhfuil údaráis bhainistíochta na scoileanna sásta na háitribh sin a chur ar fáil ar léas fadteármach nó ar ghealltanais fadteármach eile a chinnteoidh go mbeidh na háiseanna ar fáil ar feadh lín réasúnta blianta.
- F.9** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh aon áis Chúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile a lonnaithear i suíomh scoile ar aonchaighdeán leis an ardsonraíocht leanbhdhírithe a mholtar i gcás áiseanna neamhspleácha d'aois scoile nó na gnéithe sin de chúram leanaí d'aois scoile atá i seirbhísí comhtháite.
- F.10** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go spreagfar lucht tionscadal tógála na nuascóileanna chun áis chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a ionchorprú iontu.
- F.11** Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gceadófaí do sholáthróirí príobháideacha an chúraim leanaí, a fuair deontas cheana féin d'áitreabh amháin, iarratas a dhéanamh ar bhreistacaíocht phrímiúchta don áitreabh céanna, chun costas na mbreismhíreanna caipitil do sheirbhís chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a chlúdach, ar acht go mbeidh an tseirbhís sin ar fáil ar feadh cúig lá na seachtaine agus caoga seachtain na bliana. (Bheadh maoiniú breise dá short faoi réir socraithe go gcomhlíonfar rialacha Chúnaimh Stáit an Aontais Eorpaigh, a leagann síos an t-uasmhéid cúnaimh deontais is féidir a sholáthar don earnáil phríobháideach)

G. Caighdeán an Chúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile

G.1 Is léir don Ghrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go bhfuil a chuid oibre á tionscnamh aige ag an am a bhfuil cúram leanaí d'aois scoile atá ionadhbhunaithe i dtús a ré in Éirinn. Dá réir sin, creideann an Grúpa Oibre go bhfuil Éire anois i riocht taobhú ó thus leis na caighdeáin idirnáisiúnta is airde don earnáil.

G.2 Molann an Grúpa Oibre nach gcuirfear tacaíocht deontais ar fáil ach amháin do sholáthóirí cúraim leanaí atá sásta clár cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a sheachadadh ar bhonn cuimsitheach, ag tabhairt aghaidh ar riachtanais shóisialta, fhisiciúla, fhorbartha, chaithimh aimsire agus chruthaíocha an linbh i dtimpeallacht shonasach chomhbhách.

G.3 Tá roinnt phríomhghnéithe ann a chuireann le seachadadh an ardchaighdeáin seirbhíse i gcúram leanaí d'aois scoile. Cuimsíonn siadsan an clár gníomhaíochta agus an tábhacht a bhaineann le súgradh; an timpeallacht fhisiciúil; rialú cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile; oiliúint don earnáil; an gaol idir soláthróirí cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, na cliantleanaí, a dtuismitheoirí agus, ó am go ham, na scoileanna.

G.4 Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre gur gá prionsabail fhollána a thacaíonn le cuimsitheacht agus le rannpháirtíocht mar bhonn le seirbhísí dá shórt. Tá tábhacht ar leith leis na coincheapa seo a leanas:

- Tá a gcearta laistigh den tseirbhís ag leanaí agus ag aosaigh.
- Is cóir go mbeadh Cairt na Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh agus um Straitéis Náisiúnta na Leanaí mar bhonn le hobair agus éiteas na seirbhíse.
- Tá rochtain ar shaol na seirbhíse agus rannpháirt inti ar fáil ag gach páirtí leasmhar.
- Foghlaimíonn agus fobhraíonn leanaí i gcomhthéacs pobail chomhbháigh a bhfuil meas aige ar a nirt indibhidiúla agus ar a nirt chomhcheangailte.
- Cothaíonn naisc idir an leanbh, an teaghlach, an tseirbhís agus an mórphobal mothú aitheantais agus muintearais.
- Cothaítear gaoil chómheasúla agus aithnítear go bhfuil siad ag croílár shaol na seirbhíse.
- Déantar plé a bhfuil éifeacht léi idir leanaí, foireann agus tuismitheoirí.
- Cloistear guth an linbh, bíonn meas air agus cuireann sé leis an tseirbhís.
- Bíonn íogaireacht agus freagracht ag baint le hidirghníomhartha.
- Cothaíonn éiteas agus cleachtas na seirbhíse meas ar ilghnéitheacht agus ar chomhionannas.
- Bíonn an clár oiriúnach, ón taobh cultúrtha agus sóisialta de, do leanaí, do theaghlaigh agus don fhoireann atá páirteach sa tseirbhís.
- Oibríonn an fhoireann agus na leanaí le chéile ar bhealaí atá measúil agus cuimsitheach.
- Cosnaítear leanaí ar bhulaíocht agus ar dhrochíde.
- Cuireann an timpeallacht deiseanna foghlama ar fáil.
- Is cóir go soláthróidh an tseirbhís deiseanna le haghaidh eachtraí dearfacha a thacaíonn le foghlaim, forbairt agus dea-bhail cách.
- Is cóir go gcothóidh an clár roghanna saoil sláintiúla.
- Is cóir go dtairgfídh an clár deiseanna dúshláin agus fiontair.
- Is cóir go mbeidh an clár tairbheach do leanaí ó thaobh caithimh aimsire agus oideachais de.
- Is cóir go mbeidh leithne, doimhneacht agus cothromaíocht sa chlár.

- Is cóir go mbeidh meas ar an bhfoireann as an eolas, saineolas agus taithí saoil a thugann siad leo chuig an tseirbhís.
- Is cóir go dtacófar leis an bhfoireann a chur ar bhonn gairmiúil laistigh den tseirbhís.
- Is cóir go bhfreagróidh na cláir, beartais agus gnáthaimh do riachtanais na leanaí, teaghlach agus foirne.

H. An Clár Gníomhaíochtaí agus Tábhacht an tSúgartha.

H.1 Aithnítear an súgradh mar buncheart daonna ag gach leanbh. D'athdhearbhaigh Coinbhinsiún na Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Linbh, a dhaingnigh Éire i 1992, tábhacht an tsúgartha. Leagann Alt 31 amach ceart súgartha an linbh.

"Aithníonn na páirtithe cearta an linbh chun sosa agus foillíochta, a bheith páirteach in imeachtaí súgartha agus caithimh aimsire atá oiriúnach d'aois an linbh agus saorpháirt a ghlacadh sa saol cultúrtha agus sna healaíona: caithfidh páirtithe ómós a thabhairt do chearta an linbh a bheith lánpháirteach sa saol cultúrtha agus ealaíonta agus soláthar comhdheiseanna cuí a spreagadh le haghaidh imeachtaí cultúrtha, ealaíonta, caithimh aimsire agus foillíochta."

H.2 Tacaíonn an Grúpa Oibre go hiomlán leis an dearcadh go bhfuil áit lárnach ag an súgradh i bhfás agus i bhforbairt shláintiúil leanaí. Mar sin de, tá an Grúpa Oibre ag déanamh gur gá go mbeadh fócas láidir ar shúgradh mar chroíphrionsabal agus, le fírinne, mar thréith shonrach de chúram leanaí d'aois scoile.

H.3 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go bpleanálfaidh agus go soláthróidh an tseirbhís chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile raon deiseanna agus gníomhaíochtaí súgartha a chothóidh forbairt achmainní sóisialta, fisiciúla, intleachtúla, cruthaíocha agus mothúcháin na leanaí.

H.4 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuirfidh an tseirbhís chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile tréimhse ama ar leataobh gach seachtain chun cabhrú le leanaí agus le cleachtóirí oibriú le chéile chun imeachtaí san am atá thart a athbhreithniú agus chun clár imeachtaí a fhorbairt don tseachtain le teacht.

H.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre gur chóir don áis chúraim leanaí, agus cúrsaí súgartha leanaí a bpleanáil, meascán deiseanna saorshúgartha agus súgartha struchtúrtha a thairiscint.

H.6 Cé go bhfuil Clubanna d'Obair Bhaile lasmuigh de scóip na Tuarascála seo, go minic soláthraíonn seirbhísí cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, mar chuid dá raon seirbhísí, áiseanna, cabhair agus maoirsiú do leanaí chun obair bhaile a chríochnú. Cé go nglacann an Grúpa Oibre go bhféadfadh an tacaíocht d'obair bhaile a bheith mar chuid de raon imeachtaí laistigh de sheirbhís chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, molann sé nach mbeidh an tacaíocht d'obair bhaile ina chroí-imeacht ag seirbhís chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile. Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh sé fíor-thábhachtach plé a dhéanamh le tuismitheoirí agus leanaí maidir le hobair bhaile.

H.7 Molann an Grúpa Oibre gur cóir ionad a dhéanamh don fhiontraíocht i suíomh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, faoi chúinsí a chuimseoidh:

- dea-chleachtas;
- maoirsiú cuí;

- feasacht maidir le cumais an linbh;
- gníomhaíochtaí cuí;
- cumarsáid agus muinín idir tuismitheoirí agus an soláthróir, agus idir an leanbh agus an soláthróir;
- oiliúint agus cáilíochtaí ábhartha don soláthróir gníomhaíochta;
- measúnú priacail i gcás gníomhaíochta diongbháilte; agus
- cumhdach árachais cuí.

H.8 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go nglacfaidh cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile leis na prionsabail idirchultúir agus ilghnéitheachta atá ag Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000, sa chlár imeachtaí agus dearchtaí atá á fhorbairt acu ina n-áiseanna. Is cóir sin a bheith cuimsitheach, sa mhéid go gcuimsíonn sé daoine le riachtanais speisialta agus daoine a bheadh imeallaithe ina easnamh, de bharr míchumais nó a mballraíocht i ngrúpa eitneach mionlaigh, lena n-áirítear an Lucht Taistil.

H.9 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh meas ag an áis chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile ar éiteas ilghnéitheach an tsochaí Éireannaigh, agus go mbeadh cur chuige dearfach aici i leith na Gaeilge agus chultúr na hÉireann.

I. Príomhcheisteanna eile a bhfuil Tionchar acu ar Sheirbhís Ardchaighdeáin.

I.1 Déanann an Grúpa Oibre na moltaí seo a leanas maidir le dearadh fisiciúil áise le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile:

- Is cóir go dtairgfídh an áis timpeallacht gheal theolaí;
- Is cóir go mbeidh sí inrochtana ag leanaí faoi mhíchumais;
- Is cóir go mbeidh raon seomraí nó limistéar aici a éascóidh níos mó ná gníomhaíocht amháin ag an leanbh nó ag grúpa leanaí san am céanna;
- Is cóir go soláthróidh sí leordhóthain spáis inmheánaigh chun gníomhaíochtaí níos fisiciúla, lena n-áirítear spóirt agus drámaíocht, a éascú nuair is cuí;
- Is cóir go soláthróidh sí limistéar ciúin don léitheoireacht, d'imeachtaí bordbhunaithe agus d'obair bhaile;
- Is cóir go ndearfar gach limistéar ar shlí gur féidir maoirsiú éasca neamhbhuannúil a dhéanamh air.
- Is cóir go mbeidh solas nádúrtha ar fáil i ngach seomra, oiread agus is féidir;
- Is cóir go mbeidh rochtain ag gach áis ar limistéar súgartha lasmuigh;
- Is cóir go mbeidh stóras sásúil ag gach áis chun an limistéar a choinneáil chomh saor ó thranglam agus is féidir;
- Is cóir í a bheith glan, dea-choinnithe;
- Is cóir í a bheith dea-inslithe chun teas agus ciúnas a choinneáil;
- Is cóir go gcuimseoidh sí limistéar cistine inar féidir bia agus deochanna te a ullmhú agus a stóráil do leanaí tar éis an lae scoile;
- Is cóir go mbeidh áiseanna leithris cuíchóirithe inti.

I.2 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-ullmhóidh gach áis le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile ráiteas a chuimseodh beartais agus gnáthaimh chuimsitheacha sláinte agus sábháilteachta a bhaineann, *inter alia*, le

- Sainaitint, láimhseáil agus tuairisciú timpistí;
- Leas agus cosaint leanaí;
- Breoiteachtaí;
- Cleachtais Chéadchabhrach;

- Maoirseacht;
- Úsáid trealaimh inghuaise;
- Seiceáil rialta ar shábháilteacht trealaimh;
- Fadhbanna iompair; agus
- *Cleachtais sláinteachais.*

- I.3 Ag teacht leis na Treoirlínte Náisiúnta Leanaí ar dTús maidir le Cosaint agus Leas Leanaí agus “Ár nDualgas Cúraim”, is cóir do gach soláthróir cúraim leanaí a gháthaimh agus treoracha áitiúla féin a fhorbairt chun plé le cosaint leanaí agus is cóir na gnáthaimh seo a chur in iúl do gach ball foirne sa tslí go mbeidh siad feasach orthu.
- I.4 Is cóir go mbeidh leorchlúdach árachais ag gach áis chúraim leanaí chun soláthar a dhéanamh do gach teagmhas. Is cóir go mbeidh idir bhainistíocht agus foireann feasach ar árachas na háise, agus gach imeacht nach dtagann faoi théarmaí an árachais sin a sheachaint.
- I.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuirfear gnáthaimh i bhfeidhm i ngach suíomh, chun spiorad an chomhoibrithe a chothú idir tuismitheoirí agus bainisteoirí seirbhíse agus cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí; chun roinnt leanúnach an eolais le tuismitheoirí a éascú; agus chun rochtain na dtuismitheoirí a éascú i ngach am cuí ar an áis chúraim leanaí d’aois scoile agus ar na cleachtóirí.
- I.6 Ina chuid oibre i 1999, phléigh Sainghrúpa Oibre C2000 argointí i bhfabhar agus in aghaidh faisnéise agus clárúcháin cúraim leanaí, agus rinne sé cinneadh i bhfabhar clárúcháin, á chur seo a leanas in iúl:
- “Éilíonn clárúchán ar an Stát seirbhís a chlárú nó a cheadúnú ó thaobh caighdeán íosta a shásamh. Tugann sé cumhacht don Stát freisin clárúchán a dhiúltú agus ceadáíonn sé athbhreithniú bliantúil.”*
- I.7 Ba de thoradh an dearcaidh seo a rinneadh an Sainghrúpa Oibre a chéad mholadh, atá formhuinithe agus athluaite ag an nGrúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile, a mholann leasú ar an reachtaíocht phríomhúil (an tAcht um Chúraim Leanaí, 1991) d’fhonn rialú an chúraim leanaí d’aois scoile a chuimsiú.
- I.8 Maidir le hábhar aon Rialachán nó Treoirlínte nua le haghaidh Rialú Deonach na hEarnála um Chúram Leanaí d’Aois Scoile, molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcaighdeánófar é i dtreo go leanfar go dlúth na rialacha agus na treoirlínte a nochtfar tar éis athbhreithniú reatha na Roinne Sláinte agus Leanaí.
- I.9 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go mbeidh coibhneas 1 aosach in aghaidh 8 leanaí i gceist do chúraim leanaí d’aois scoile atá ionadbhunaithe.
- I.10 Cé gur luadh cheana gur gá an reachtaíocht phríomhúil a leasú le nach gcuirfidh sí bac ar rialú cúraim leanaí d’aois scoile, molann an Grúpa Oibre go gceapfar cód de chaighdeáin dheonacha agus go bhfeidhmeofar próiseas faisnéise deonach chun go mbeidh ar chumas áiseanna le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d’aois scoile, faisnéis a thabhairt dá mBoird Sláinte. Spreagfadh seo na háiseanna le caighdeáin arda a bhaint amach agus a choinneáil, agus ardchaighdeán cúraim leanaí a sholáthar dá bharr.
- I.11 Faoina théarmaí tagartha, iarradh ar an nGrúpa Oibre treoirlínte a fhorbairt don earnáil. Tá siadsan forbartha anois ar bhonn moltaí na tuarascála seo agus luaitear iad in aghaidh leis an tuarascáil. In éagmais rialú na hearnála cúraim leanaí d’aois scoile,

molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-úsáidfear na treoirlínte seo mar chaighdeán cáilíochta trínar féidir iarratais ar chúnamh deontais faoin CCCL a mheas agus go bhforbrófar a thuilleadh iad mar chaighdeán deonach don earnáil chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile.

- I.12 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go gcuirfidh Coistí Cúraim Leanaí na Cathrach/an Chontae, nuair is cuí, riachtanais iompair na ngrúpaí cúraim leanaí in iúl do thionscadail an Tionscnaimh Iompair Thuaithe ina gcondaetha ar leith.
- I.13 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go dtionscnóidh an Roinn Iompair reachtaíocht maidir le gnáthaimh sábháilteachta agus maidir le árachas chun sainghrúpaí daoine (leanaí san áireamh) a iompar.
- I.14 Molann an Grúpa Oibre um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile go ndéanfaidh an Roinn Oideachais agus Eolaíochta athbhreithniú ar rialacha na Scéime Iompair Scoile, d'fhonn an soláthar iompair ó scoileanna chuig áiseanna cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a éascú.

J. Oiliúint le haghaidh Cúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile

- J.1 Tharraing an Grúpa Oibre aird ar an oiliúint a thugtar do chleachtóirí an Chúraim Leanaí d'Aois Scoile i roinnt tíortha eile. Thug sé faoi deara, freisin, an cur chuige maidir le hoiliúint agus an gnó a chur ar bhonn gairmiúil sa Chreatdoiciméad Eiseamlarach a d'ullmhaigh Fo-Ghrúpa Chomhlachtaí Deimhnithe an CCNCL.
- J.2 Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre gur chóir go mbeidh na cumais ghairmiúla seo a leanas ag cleachtóir an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile chun feidhmiú go héifeachtach in earnáil an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile:

An cumas le

- dea-chleachtas a fhorfheidhmiú agus oibriú go héifeachtach i suíomh leanaí d'aois scoile;
 - sainról chleachtóir an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a thuiscint;
 - a bheith eolach ar threoirlínte agus ar ghnáthaimh chosanta leanaí agus ábalta iad a fhorfheidhmiú nuair is ábhartha;
 - cuidiú le pleanáil, forfheidhmiú agus measúnú thimpeallacht an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile;
 - gach gné d'fhorbairt, d'oideachas agus de chúram leanaí a thuiscint agus a chothú;
 - féiniúlacht agus ilghnéitheacht a aithint agus a chothú i ngach leanbh, agus idir chomhdhiseanna agus cleachtas frithleatrom a chothú;
 - oibriú go héifeachtach mar chuid d'fhoireann;
 - a thuiscint go bhfuil sé tábhachtach comhairle a ghlacadh le leanaí, tuismitheoirí agus comhghleacaithe;
 - naisc a bhunú agus a choinneáil idir scoileanna, seirbhísí eile a bhféadfadh leanaí rochtain orthu (spórt, rince etc.), agus an mórfhobal;
 - a bheith feasach ar gach reachtaíocht maidir le leanaí, comhionannas, leatrom agus sláinte is sábháilteacht, agus in ann iad a fhorfheidhmiú nuair is ábhartha; agus
 - gach taifead ábhartha a bhunú agus a choinneáil.
- J.3 Tá luaite cheana ag an nGrúpa Oibre go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go n-aithreofaí riachtanais

forbartha speisialta na leanaí a bhfuil cúram leanaí d'aois scoile á fháil acu. Éilíonn cothú na riachtanas seo go mbeadh sraith scileanna speisialta ag cleachtóir an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile. Is é dearcadh an Ghrúpa Oibre é gur chóir go mbeadh na scileanna seo a leanas ag cleachtóir an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile d'fhonn feidhmiú go héifeachtach in earnáil an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile.

An scil chun

- gaol a chothú le leanaí, a dtuismitheoirí agus a gcúramóirí;
- riachtanais forbartha éagsúla leanaí agus daoine óga atá ag baint leasa as an tseirbhís le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a thuiscint agus a chothú;
- tacú le rannpháirt agus bainteachas leanaí le saol na seirbhíse;
- timpeallacht shábháilte spreagúil a chinntiú;
- neamhspleáchas linbh a aithint agus é á nochtadh, agus soláthar a dhéanamh dó;
- féiniúlacht a chothú, ag cur riachtanais an linbh i gcothromaíocht le cuid an ghrúpa;
- iompar cothrom comhbhách a chothú;
- feasacht chultúrtha an linbh a fhorbairt; agus
- cumas roghnaithe agus féinmhuinín a chothú.

J.4 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go bhforbrófar sainchineál oiliúna a chumasóidh cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí le seirbhís ardchaighdeán a sholáthar a fhreastlóidh ar an ngrúpa leanaí níos sine, ó cheithre bhliana go dhá bhliain déag, ar chosúil go mbainfidh siad leas as cúram leanaí d'aois scoile. Ag cur san áireamh nádúr caithimh aimsire an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile, is cóir go mbeadh fócas éifeachtach praiticiúil ag na cláir oiliúna atá le forbairt, cé go bhfuil sé tábhachtach go gcuirfí san áireamh, freisin, an t-ábhar teoiriciúil atá fíor-riachtanach chun cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí dea-oilte a ullmhú agus chun cúram leanaí d'aois scoile a chur ina chomhthéacs cuí.

J.5 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcuimseofaí na scileanna agus an t-eolas seo a leanas sna cúrsaí agus modúil atá le forbairt d'earnáil an Chúraim Leanáí d'Aois Scoile:

- Cleachtas ardchaighdeán i gcúram leanaí d'aois scoile;
- Súgradh agus gníomhaíochtaí;
- Forbairt an linbh;
- Sláinte agus sábháilteacht, lena n-áirítear cosaint an linbh;
- Taithí oibre;
- Ról cleachtóirí an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile; agus
- Forbairt ghairmiúil phearsanta.

K. An Bealach Chun Cinn

K.1 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go rachfar i mbun feachtais chun tuiscint ar earnáil an chúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a mhéadú, feasacht a chothú faoin gcúnamh deontais atá ar fáil, agus grúpaí pobail, scoileanna agus údaráis bhainistíochta agus na cleachtóirí cúraim leanaí atá ann, idir ghrúpaí pobail agus soláthróirí príobháideacha, a chothú agus a spreagadh chun smaoineamh ar na seirbhísí fíor-riachtanacha seo a fhorbairt.

K.2 Is eol don Ghrúpa Oibre go bhfuil sainordú láidir ag na Coistí Cúraim Leanáí Cathrach/Contae ón gCoiste Comhordaithe Náisiúnta um Chúram Leanáí, feidhmiú le lucht leasa

áitiúil chun cúram leanaí a fhorbairt a fhreastlóidh ar na riachtanais áitiúla maidir le cúram leanaí. Molann an Grúpa Oibre go n-iarrfar ar na Coistí Cúraim Leanaí Cathrach/Contae ról suntasach a ghlacadh ag obair agus ag tacú le grúpaí pobail, le soláthróirí cúraim leanaí príobháideacha agus le húdaráis scoileanna ar fud a gcathracha/gcontaetha, d'fhonn áiseanna le haghaidh cúraim leanaí d'aois scoile a fhorbairt a fhreastlóidh ar na riachtanais chúraim leanaí atá ag tuismitheoirí atá i bhfostaíocht, in oideachas agus in oiliúint, agus a dteastaíonn cúram leanaí lasmuigh d'uaireanta scoile uathu dá leanaí atá ar scoil.

K.3 Molann an Grúpa Oibre go gcothóidh na Coistí Cúraim Leanaí Cathrach/Contae agus na hEagraíochtaí Náisiúnta Deonacha um Chúram Leanaí, de réir mar is cuí, feasacht maidir leis na treoirlínte a d'fhorbair an Grúpa Oibre chun Earnáil ardchaighdeáin um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile a fhorbairt.

L. Treoirlínte

L.1 De réir a theármaí tagartha agus ar bhonn a chuid taighde agus na torthaí uaithe, tá treoirlínte forbartha ag an nGrúpa Oibre a leagann síos príomhtháscairí chun Seirbhís ardchaighdeáin um Chúram Leanaí d'Aois Scoile a fhorbairt a chabhróidh le grúpaí pobalbhunaithe neamhbhrabúis, agus le soláthróirí príobháideacha a smaoineodh ar tacaíocht dheontais a lorg chun seirbhísí a fhorbairt faoin gClár Comhdheiseanna um Chúram Leanaí 2000-2006.

L.2 Tá na treoirlínte le fáil in Aguisín 2.