

Strategy for the Development of

Childminding Ireland

2009 – 2012



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Introduction

This Strategic Plan is formulated to guide *Childminding Ireland* in its mission to carry out the objectives of the organisation as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association under which funding and charity status are held.

It describes the strategic focus of activity to be undertaken to achieve the objectives at this time, supported by a set of high level strategic goals.

The Strategic Plan defines the Vision, Mission and Ethos of *Childminding Ireland*, which underpin the activities of the Board of Directors and the executive.

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Vision

At 2012, 20% of Childminders in Ireland are Registered Members of Childminding Ireland, implementing the Síolta Quality Standards and Childminding is valued as the major childcare sub-sector receiving strong statutory support mechanisms

Mission Statement

“Childminding Ireland, as the National Association, is committed to promoting the development of quality in family based care for children by providing a range of services for Childminders, promoting Síolta Quality Standards, developing training for the Childminding sector and promoting the development of local Childminding networks.”

Ethos

The guiding principles of the Organisation, as a caring and effective professional body for Childminders and the children they care for are :

1. The rights of Children as asserted in the UN Convention
2. Valuing the contribution made by Childminding to families and to social and economic life
3. A commitment to quality throughout all the activities of the Organisation
4. Implementation of the Síolta Quality Standards
5. Support and respect for Families through partnership with parents
6. Equality, inclusion and respect for diversity in all aspects of the work of the Organisation
7. Accountability

The Strategic Plan describes how *Childminding Ireland* will achieve its Main Objectives (From Memorandum & Articles of Association)

1. To promote high standards in family based care for children, where their developmental, emotional, educational and recreational needs will be met along with their physical care
2. To support and inform all Childminders and parents in the matter of family based care for children
3. To maintain a code of standards for family based care for children
4. To encourage the recognition of Childminding as a positive care setting for children

These objectives are pursued in a consultative and participatory manner.

National Policy Context

Childminding Ireland is committed to the objectives of the National Childcare Strategy 2006 – 2010 which aims to improve the availability and quality of childcare to meet the needs of children and their parents, and which recognises Childminders “as an important part of childcare provision in Ireland and the preferred choice for many parents.”

Childminding Ireland continues to receive funding under the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 – 2010 and is committed to working with the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) to improve the quality through implementation of the Síolta Quality Standards and increase the supply of childcare and in the promotion of social inclusion and the development and roll-out of support measures for Childminders.

Childminding Context

Childminding in the Republic of Ireland continues to be regulated under the 1991 Childcare Act, exempting Childminders who care for

- three or fewer children under six years of age not attending national school
- relatives' children
- children from one other family

Under the 2006 Regulations – Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Childminders are normally restricted to caring for no more than five children under six years, with exceptions for siblings.

Childminding Ireland welcomes and actively supports the implementation of the following initiatives developed by the OMCYA to sustain and develop quality Childminding and appreciates the annual funding of the organisation's activities to ensure a highly professional representative body for the Childminding sub-sector :

- Development of National Guidelines for Childminding, to provide information and guidance for good practice
- Development of the Síolta Quality Standards for Childminding
- Childminders Development Grants and Capital Grants
- Childminders Tax Relief measure
- Childminder Advisory Service available through HSE or City/County Childcare Committees (C/CCCs)
- Voluntary Notification whereby Childminders may notify their C/CCC and avail of information, training and networking opportunities (where the Childminder is not *required* to notify the HSE under the 1991 Child Care Act)
- Budgets provided to C/CCCs ring-fenced for Childminding
- Grant to support Mother and Toddler Groups

These objectives and support mechanisms coincide with or are complementary to the main objectives of *Childminding Ireland* as set out in the Memorandum and Articles of Association under which registered company and charity status are granted.

Strategies to Achieve Main Objectives

Main Objective No. 1.

To promote high standards in family based care for children, where their developmental, emotional, educational and recreational needs will be met along with their physical care

- Identify quality standards in line with current research findings, through full participation in the International Family Day Care Organisation and other relevant bodies
- Lobby for increased local support for developing and sustaining Childminding, through Government funding of *Childminding Ireland* and increased investment in the Childminder Advisory service
- Provide information on high quality care through newsletters, printed materials, on the website, directly to queries received at head office and through participation in any forum which influences policy
- Promote and provide information on Garda Vetting
- Promote the National Guidelines for Childminders and Voluntary Notification and other grants and support mechanisms listed above
- Promote the Síolta Quality Standards for Childminding
- Provide information on high quality care through newsletters, printed materials, on the website and directly to queries received at head office
- Working in collaboration with C/CCCs and Childminder Advisory Officers
- Carry out and promote research relevant to high standard Childminding provision

- Continue to develop accredited training for the Childminding Sub-sector at national level
- Continue to deliver training, responsive to the needs of Childminders

Main Objective No. 2

To support and inform all Childminders and parents in the matter of family based care for children

- Define “Childminding” as a term and promote this unique form of childcare
- Maintain a complement of well-informed staff members, capable of providing information and a range of services for Childminders, which are sensitive to their needs
- Promote the benefits of membership of *Childminding Ireland*
- Identify membership potential, the range and category of membership
- Increase the diversity of membership
- Establish targets for each category of membership
- Reach out to Childminders, particularly new-comers to Ireland and those experiencing social disadvantage or geographical isolation
- Provide all Childminders with current, relevant information
- Inform families about quality indicators in family child care, including the Síolta Quality Standards
- Assist families in accessing Childminding places
- Work collaboratively with Childminder Advisory Officers, City & County Childcare Committees

Main Objective No. 3

To maintain a code of standards for family based care for children

- Maintain guidelines for good practice for Childminding with reference to Síolta Quality Standards and agreed international best practice for quality
- Define the range and extent of advisory and information services required by members ongoing through 2008 – 2012 and identify those which are priorities for delivery
- Lobby appropriately to ensure that the regulatory and inspection processes are proportionate to the care of 5 children
- Operate modern communications systems through telephone, face-to-face, web-based, texting, publications, events and any appropriate mechanisms
- Promote and provide information on Garda Vetting, child welfare and protection
- Provide input into policy and proposed relevant training, guidelines and legislation
- Provide information about legislation which is relevant to Childminders
- Advise statutory and voluntary agencies in the matter of best practice for quality Childminding provision

Main Objective No. 4.

To encourage the recognition of Childminding as a positive care setting for children

- Identify and publicise the unique attributes of the family home Childminding setting, offering as it does the possibility of small group, non-cohort care, with continuity of care from one Childminder from infancy through school age with an individualised programme of care for each child, maintaining siblings in close contact in the pre-school years and offering parents a very personalised, flexible, local childcare service

- Promote Childminding as a valid career option, particularly for parents who wish to be hands-on in the care of their own children
- Publish and publicise widely positive research findings regarding Childminding
- Promote the support mechanisms provided by the state to Childminders, such as tax relief, RSI entitlements, grant schemes and exemptions from various requirements available only to family-home based childcare
- Develop a promotion strategy for the Childminding sub-sector, aimed at key audiences, i.e. parents, policy makers, Childminders and potential Childminders
- Promote Childminding as a fundamental social inclusion measure, through Government investment in local Childminding networks so as to provide appropriate training and support, enabling children to have a quality, monitored childcare experience and their parents to break the cycle of disadvantage by accessing further education or employment
- Continue to lobby for mechanisms and interventions to develop and sustain the Childminding sub-sector, as the largest sub-sector in childcare
- Identify mechanisms for measuring how government values Childminding
- Achieve representation, participate, consult and collaborate with relevant statutory and other bodies and international, national and local level to promote quality Childminding
- Secure funds for a substantial marketing campaign to attract the interest and trust of Childminders
- Develop partnerships and programmes with the corporate sector to promote the use of Childminding services

Framework for Actions under the Strategic Plan

The activity for the development of *Childminding Ireland* in the period 2009 – 2012 will be described in two sections, Internal and External. The plan of actions for each year will be developed and implemented in line with the Strategic Plan and underpinned by the ethos of the organisation.

Internal

Structure of Organisation

Childminding Ireland, as the national professional organisation for Childminders, will continue to be structured for good governance as a member-based national voluntary organisation in the following way :

1. Formed as a Company limited by guarantee of its membership
2. Operate as a non-profit organisation with Charity Status
3. Implement policy formulated by a Board of Directors, elected by the membership
4. Employ necessary management and staff to implement policy and to represent the organisation
5. Provide a pleasant, supportive working environment
6. Employ consultants as necessary

Membership

1. Those who provide care for children in a family home setting and who pay an annual subscription
2. Others who wish to join the organisation in the various categories of membership (see Memorandum and Articles of Association)

Action :

- *To extend the membership base by continuing to develop and market the benefits for members*

- *To consult the members with regard to the development of appropriate services through regular surveys and the Newsletter*
- *To respond to matters affecting Childminding raised by members*
- *To support members in the development of quality in their Childminding services*

Board of Directors

Twelve Directors, elected by the Members, design policy and direct the affairs of the Organisation in compliance with relevant legislation and directives

Action

- *To utilise the talents and experience of the Directors*
- *To inform Directors of their corporate responsibilities and support the Board in carrying out its role*
- *To provide appropriate induction and training for Directors*

Professional staff to implement the policies and actions

Action

- *To lobby for funding to maintain the necessary staff complement*
- *To implement a transparent equal opportunities recruitment and employment policy*
- *To employ sufficient staff at head office and regionally to carry out the activities in the annual action plan*
- *To maintain a Staff Forum as a channel for bringing forward concerns*
- *To offer staff members role support and training opportunities*
- *To operate family-friendly employment practice as far as possible*
- *To enable staff to participate in relevant external bodies to further the development of Childminding and of Childminding Ireland*
- *To implement planning, monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in terms of all actions, the process, the output and the impact.*

External

Children in Childminding Homes

The welfare of children in family childcare settings is at the centre of all the activities of *Childminding Ireland*

Action

- *To promote the rights of children, as individuals, to quality in their family based childcare settings*
- *To encourage Childminders to consult children and listen to children*
- *To promote quality in family based childcare in line with evidence-based good practice guidance and the Síolta Quality Standards and to develop relevant training for Childminding which has the well-being of the child at its core*
- *To bring a child-centred perspective to bodies where Childminding Ireland has representation*
- *To provide training and information on child welfare and protection to Childminders*

Parents

Childminding has been described as a more intimate form of childcare, with a small group of children of mixed ages, replicating familial care. A close partnership, based on mutual respect between the parents or guardians of the children and the Childminder is the foundation for quality, individualised care for each child.

Action

- *To assist parents in accessing childminding places*
- *To provide parents with information about quality indicators in a family based childcare setting*
- *To consult and respect parents wishes*

Training

To continue to develop Training modules and Courses for Childminding

Action

- *To develop accredited modules for the Childminding Sub-sector to fit in with the National Qualifications Framework*
- *To provide Childminders, whether members or otherwise, with current best practice information and certification, through engagement with the Síolta Quality Standards, the Distance Learning Programme and the Quality Awareness Programme*

The Statutory Sector

Childminding Ireland is committed to participation in all statutory committees and initiatives where policies and regulations for the childcare sector are formulated.

Action

- *To obtain funds to implement actions which are in line with the published strategies of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and those of other relevant Government Departments*
- *To appoint representatives to relevant Government bodies, consultation and working groups*
- *To tender for goods and services and to maintain high standards of administration in the office for the avoidance of waste and providing value for money*
- *To record and report activity and expenditure in line with funders' requirements*
- *To lobby for legislative change in the interests of children or Childminders or parents seeking accessible, affordable quality childcare*
- *To collaborate with statutory agencies charged with the development of accredited training for Childminding*

Voluntary & Community Sector

Collaboration with other national voluntary organisations concerned with the childcare sector and children in their family setting and with community groups and partnerships is essential to the achievement of *Childminding Ireland's* Aims and Objectives and ethos of inclusion.

Action

To participate in the International Family Day Care Organisation

To participate in the National Voluntary Childcare Collaborative

To provide training for community groups and partnerships

To establish and maintain links with the voluntary sector

Consultants

Professional Consultants are required for audit, legal, training and other purposes

Action

- *To tender openly for services sought*
- *To have signed contracts in place*
- *To evaluate the service provided*

Implementation and Review

This strategy is a framework for developing action plans for each year or other period as required during the timespan of the strategy, 2009 – 2012. Each action is reviewed quarterly and annually.

The strategy will be reviewed at the end of the first half of the period, at January 2011.

On behalf of the Board of Directors
ChildmindingIreland

Anne Caulfield,
Chairperson
2009

Note :

This Strategic Plan (originally 2008 – 2012) has been revised in May 2009, to comply with NCIP government policy of the implementation of the Síolta Quality Standards for Childminding settings.