

## PRESS RELEASE



**An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais  
agus Comhionannais**  
Department of Children,  
Disability and Equality

### **National 'Aistear' Conference welcomes the launch of innovative new 'Nurturing Skills' website, designed to support over 30,000 staff in early years settings**

- **First of its kind portal for staff is a significant milestone towards a national Continuing Professional Development system for the sector.**
- **The Learning Hub will provide educators with learning materials and training opportunities in several areas including Quality & Inclusive Practice, Health & Wellbeing and the Irish language.**
- **Conference focused on familiarising stakeholders with the updated Aistear curriculum framework, which will come into effect this September.**

**Saturday, 24 May 2025**

The innovative new [Nurturing Skills](https://nurturingskills.ie) website was launched by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality at the national conference – 'Continuing the Journey: Exploring the updated Aistear' – which took place in Dublin today. This new online platform, [nurturingskills.ie](https://nurturingskills.ie), will support over 31,000 staff working with 235,000 children in early learning and care, school-age childcare and childminding settings in Ireland. It offers practical tools, reflective resources and professional guidance to promote inclusive practice and protect their own health and wellbeing.

The Nurturing Skills website will host the new Nurturing Skills Learning Hub, which provides educators with easy access to learning materials and training opportunities in several areas including Inclusive practice, Health & wellbeing and the Irish language.

The website also represents a significant milestone towards achieving a national Continuing Professional Development system for the sector, which was a commitment in Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Development Plan.

Commenting on the launch of the new Nurturing Skills website, Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley said:

*"I am delighted to see the launch of the new Nurturing Skills website, which is an innovative platform designed to support and empower educators in their ongoing professional journey. This online resource reflects our strong commitment to inclusive practice and continuous professional development, providing easy access to high-quality learning materials and training opportunities designed to support and inspire educators."*

*"By providing a central hub for professional development, we are investing not just in our educators but in the future of all children in early learning and childcare settings."*

The website was launched today as part of the national conference – 'Continuing the Journey: Exploring the updated Aistear'. This conference is one of a series of dissemination activities taking place following the launch of the updated Framework and associated Guidelines for Good Practice in December 2024.

Aistear, the Irish word for journey, was Ireland's first curriculum framework for early childhood education when it was introduced in 2009. This is the first update since then and it will come into effect in September this year.

The updated Aistear is for all children from birth to six years in all settings other than primary and special schools. Aistear acknowledges that babies, toddlers and young children's early experiences have a formative impact that can last throughout their lives. It is important for babies, toddlers and young children that Aistear is implemented in their early learning and care services to promote high quality learning experiences for children. The Framework can be used by all those who support babies, toddlers and young children and is particularly useful to those educators who work in professional roles and who play a significant role in the daily lives of young children.

Minister Foley said:

*"I am delighted that the Department of Children, Disability and Equality have hosted this national conference focused on the updated Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework."*

*"This updated Framework reaffirms our commitment to a play-based and inquiry-led approach to early education, recognising both as essential. By placing the child at the centre and valuing children's natural curiosity, educators are supported to nurture confident, capable and creative learners from the very start."*

*"This update reflects the latest research and best practice, and it ensures that every child can thrive in a setting that celebrates play, inclusion and joyful discovery."*

Minister for Education and Youth Helen McEntee said:

*"I very much welcome this conference marking the update of Aistear, the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and demonstrating the collective commitment to ensuring that the youngest members of our society are given the highest quality early learning and care experiences."*

*"The process of updating Aistear, by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, is supported by extensive research and consultation with children, parents and the many stakeholders across the ELC and education sectors. Early childhood is a significant stage of a child's development; one that establishes dispositions that impact on children's well-being, learning and development."*

*“Aistear, as the early childhood curriculum framework, seeks to ensure that children are supported to develop their creativity, resilience, empathy and independence and build their confidence to pursue their unique abilities, strength and interests. The core principles that underpin the updated Aistear will continue to be embedded in the next stages of their education through the new Primary Curriculum Framework, the Junior Cycle Framework and ultimately on into the Senior Cycle Framework. Education is a lifelong learning journey, and I am very pleased to be working collaboratively with the Minister for Children, Equality and Disability as we support ongoing Aistear implementation”.*

Speakers at the event included: Professor Iram Siraj, University of Oxford and National University of Ireland, Maynooth; Arlene Forster, Dr. Sharon Skehill, Dr. Mary Daly and Lorraine Farrell, National Council for Curriculum and Assessment; Dr. Geraldine French and Dr. Grainne Mc Kenna, Dublin City University; Shirley Heaney, Mary Immaculate College; and Máire Úi Mhurchú. Workshops on the day focused on a range of topics including slow relational pedagogy, outdoor learning, inclusive practice, Gaeilge, the role of the adult, and transitions.

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