

Press Release

KILDARE COUNTY CHILDCARE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS STAFFING CHALLENGES AS WELL AS AVAILABILITY AND AFFORDABILITY OF CHILDCARE IN THE COUNTY

Strategic Plan focuses on building capacity of childcare sector and promoting childcare and childminding as a career option

A survey for Kildare County Childcare Committee has highlighted the recruitment and retention of staff as well as the availability and affordability of childcare as being amongst the key challenges facing the childcare sector in Kildare. The details of the survey were revealed today (Monday, 6 March) at the launch in Kiltashee Hotel of the Kildare County Childcare Committee's Strategic Plan for 2023-2026 by Councillor Suzanne Doyle.

Julie McNamara explained that the organisation's Strategic Plan was developed in response to this survey and other consultations and this is why it is focusing on building the capacity of the childcare sector in Kildare as well as promoting childcare and childminding as a career option in the county.

"Kildare County Childcare Committee conducted an extensive round of consultation with a range of stakeholders in the county and a number of issues came up consistently – in particular, issues around access to and availability of childcare places, affordability as well as staff recruitment and retention. Given the massive population growth in the county – especially at the younger end of the spectrum – these pressures are likely to increase over the period ahead."

Ms McNamara said that while the resolution of many of these issues lie outside of the remit of Kildare County Childcare Committee, they will be doing their bit to assist through the actions set out in our Strategic Plan for 2023-2026.

"In relation to building the capacity of the childcare sector in the county, Kildare County Childcare Committee will be conducting an annual update on childcare pressure points in the county which we will then disseminate to key stakeholders. In response, we will be supporting the establishment of service provision where gaps are identified and advocating for large-scale capital grants to support new childcare services.

"Given the importance of staff recruitment and retention, Kildare County Childcare Committee will be proactively attending job seeker training and employment events to promote the sector as an attractive career option as well as engaging with career advisers and school guidance counsellors in the county. We will also be looking to offer student placements to those undertaking Early Childhood degree courses and, crucially, promote core funding's aim to improve childcare pay and conditions."

Julie McNamara also highlighted a number of actions Kildare County Childcare Committee will be undertaking in relation to equal access to childcare and inclusion:

- Promote and support diversity and inclusive policy and practice in the local childcare and education sector.
- Promote the importance of participation in the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme for all children and families from all cultural, migrant and minority communities.
- Support understanding of the 0-3 years as a formative stage for all children and families from all cultural, migrant and minority communities.
- Grow and develop understanding of children's health, physical and emotional well-being amongst the local childcare and education sector including mental health, disability, trauma and neuro divergence.
- Promote and deliver Child Protection to the sector including raising awareness of impact of Domestic Violence on children.
- Develop the competencies of the sector to meet the needs of new communities.
- Promote Childcare as a profession to underrepresented groups in the sector.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, CONTACT:

Pat Montague 087-2549123