



## Proposed Amendments to the CSO Census

### Introduction

Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) is a membership organisation which represents over 3,800 early years settings, who support over 100,000 children & their families through pre-school, afterschool & full day care provision nationwide. Our work includes quality enhancement, publications, advocacy, training, business support & information for a sector that employs 25,000 people today.

Early Childhood Ireland welcomes the opportunity to propose amendments to the content of the census with the overall aim of increasing the amount of reliable information available on the early years sector in a period of great change in the sector. Over the past few years, there has been changes in the dynamics of the early years sector from increased government investment, universal access to the ECCE scheme, qualification requirements and actions taken by unions to organise the sector. Further changes in the sector are on the horizon including the potential implementation of pay scales, increased government investment and the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme. Accurate data is vital to effective policy planning and evaluation and ECI has identified an opportunity to utilise the obligatory and nationwide elements of the census, to increase the amount of reliable data available on the early years sector, which is representative of every child in Ireland.

ECI proposes several amendments to existing census questions and the inclusion of a new question in census 2021. ECI acknowledges that some information on the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector is already collected in the census through the identification of occupations and other sources which are discussed in this submission. ECI is fully aware of the restrictions on questions included in the census and does not aim to use it to collect data on all aspects of ECEC. Instead, if implemented, the amendments outlined in this submission will maximise the collection of data on ECEC from existing questions in the census without burdening the households filling it out.

ECI values children as competent learners and citizens with equal rights. Another advantage of collecting data on the ECEC sector in the census is the recognition of the early years sector as equal to other education institutions that are monitored at national level. It will consolidate young children's rights by ensuring data specific to children aged under 6 years are collected in the same way the census currently does for children aged over 6 years e.g. their place of school.

Ultimately, ECI aims for every child in Ireland to have access to the highest standard of early education and care possible. To make this a reality, an essential first step is to collect accurate data that is representative of every child in Ireland to inform policy planning and evaluation. This data will not only be of use to ECI who aim to support all of the 180,000 plus children in centre-based settings (Pobal, 2017). It will also prove vital to shaping policies that could improve the lives of a wide range

of groups in the population from childminders, au pairs and relatives like grandparents who find themselves responsible for the early education and care of young children.

## Proposed Amendments - Census 2021

### Definitions

To make the questions as easy as possible to fill out and work within the limited space available, ECI proposes that early childhood education and care (ECEC) is referred to as 'childcare' in the amendments to the census proposed below. Childcare will then refer to "childcare arrangements usually made by parents/guardians on a regular weekly basis during the working day." <sup>1</sup>This includes all forms of childcare from parental, paid and unpaid relatives, childminders, Au Pairs and centre-based childcare as outlined in the answer options of the question suggested below.

### Objectives

ECI suggested the following amendments to the census in order:

- To collect information on the type of early childhood education and care used by each child in Ireland.
- To contextualise the use of early childhood education and care for each child in Ireland on a small area and small population level, to discover possible influences on its use e.g. the location of a household or whether a child is living with a disability.
- To ensure the activities of children aged under 6 years that have not yet started school are recognised as equally important to those of older children by collecting the same level of information for both age groups.

### New Question

**Type of childcare availed of** (*select more than one option where appropriate*) :

Parent/Partner  
Unpaid relative or family friend  
Paid relative or family friend  
Childminder  
Au Pair/Nanny  
Crèche/Playgroup  
Montessori  
After-School

A version of this question appears in a Special Module on Childcare in the Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) for the third quarter of 2016 (CSO, 2016). It is envisaged that the question would be answered for each child in the house aged 0-13 years<sup>2</sup> rather than for the household in general. Two or more options would be selected by the respondent where appropriate e.g. if a toddler attends crèche in the morning and then a childminder in the afternoon. As a result, the data will be collected on the number of children that use two or more types of ECEC each day as well as the amount using individual types of ECEC nationwide.

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<sup>1</sup> This definition is taken from the CSO Quarterly National Household Survey Special Module on Childcare.

<sup>2</sup> This age range was chosen based on the upper age limit of the of the After-School Child Care Scheme which is 13 years.

## Justification of User Need

The inclusion of this question in Census 2021 will establish an accurate dataset of the number of children nationwide that use different forms of ECEC and the context in which it is availed e.g. the child's location and the socio-economic status of their household. This data is already collected in Ireland to some degree but not on an obligatory, national level.

Although there is no EU requirement for nationwide information on the use of different types of early childhood education and care according to the EU Regulation on national population censuses (EC No. 763/2008), it is still important for accurate data on this subject to be collected on a national level given the recent increase in government investment in the early years sector. This sector is rapidly evolving and acquiring an accurate overview of the use of all types of ECEC nationwide is essential for relevant government departments to target policies using this evidence base and evaluate the effects of their policies over time.

The data on the different forms of early childhood education and care could be used to shape a range of policies that will impact on a wide range of groups in the population. For instance, to measure if increased funding for parents results in increased uptake of places in crèches or if people still favoured parental childcare. The data would be useful for planning accessibility and availability of sufficient numbers of ECEC places in local areas which is explored in further amendments in this submission. The data on the type of ECEC used will also be beneficial to other interest groups as well as the government. For instance, groups representing childminders will be able to use the data to feed into their organisation's initiatives. This data would also capture the numbers of childminders and therefore the scope of infrastructure required to regulate this to be implemented by the government. Groups such as the Migrants Rights Council of Ireland that fight for the rights of au pairs will also find use for the data on the number and location of au pairs. These are only a few examples of the potential use for this data that could work to improve the lives of a large amount of the population.

If the amendments proposed are accepted, Researchers and Policy Analysts working both for the government and other organisations will have use of a reliable and robust dataset from which to analyse policies and make recommendations. Information is already accessible on some level in relation to the number of children nationwide availing of different types ECEC from two main sources the Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Profile and the Special Module on childcare in the QNHS published periodically (latest in Q3 2016). County and City Childcare Committees also conduct surveys of childcare providers. However, these sources of information do not include data on the ECEC use of every child in Ireland and do not provide information on the context of a child's household such as the principal economic status of the child's parents.

The Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Profile provides information on the number of children in centre-based ECEC facilities across Ireland. However, ECEC providers are not obliged to fill out the survey and although the response rate in the 2017 survey was very high at 84%, not all services were represented and therefore the profile does not present the full picture of the use of centre based ECEC (Pobal, 2017). Although useful for research into centre-based ECEC providers, the profile does not capture information on other types of ECEC. The Pobal Profile does provide some information on the context of ECEC use as it gives a breakdown of the number of children using centre based services that fall into the category of minority groups. However, the data is based on the response of the care and education provider who "to the best of their knowledge" identify children/families who avail of their services from minority groups (Pobal, 2017).

Data on the use of different ECEC types including centre-based and non-centre based such as relatives or childminders can be found in the QNHS Special Module on Childcare published periodically (most recently Q3 2016) (CSO, 2016). The proposed question features in the QNHS Special Module for Q3 2016 on childcare and although useful, the data collected in the module is from a sample survey. Including the question in the census would mean that an accurate, more representative picture of the use of all types of ECEC Ireland would be established.

#### Small Area, Small Population and Cross-Tabular Analysis

As highlighted already in this submission, putting the use of early childhood education and care in the context of a child's household and location is essential to informing policy decisions in the early years sector. This could be achieved through analysing ECEC data collected in the census on a small area and small population level. It is important to understand how ECEC is used in different locations around the country, to see if its use is influenced by location. The data on childcare use is important on a small population level to discover if factors such as socio-economic status of a child's parents or household type influence childcare methods. This detailed information would provide a basis for other studies such as the reasons why the area a child lives influences their childcare choice.

Analysing the data on a small area level would also prove essential to mapping the location of services and demand for ECEC places across areas.

There is a requirement for cross-tabular analysis of the data on ECEC use to capture the possible trends outlined above. This includes the influence of household factors as well as those relating to the child itself such as:

- Whether the location of a household influences ECEC use.
- How the age of the children influences ECEC use.
- If the socio-economic status of parents influences ECEC use.
- If household composition influences ECEC use.
- If the occupation of one or both parents influences ECEC use.
- If the nationality or ethnicity of the family and child influences ECEC use.
- If there is a link between the commute of parents and their ECEC use.
- If a child has a disability and if this influences ECEC use.

Cross-tabular analysis would also produce useful information for ECEC providers and the government on the access of the parents of children attending ECEC services to computers and internet in households. This is important as it is proposed parents will upload data themselves to an online system under the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

## Suggested Amendments to Existing Census Questions

Amendment One and Two: Change Question 19 and Question 20 to add in 'Childcare' as an option in question:

**19 - How do you usually travel to work, school, college or childcare** *(for those aged under 6 years if applicable)?*

Not at work, school or college  
On foot  
Bicycle  
Bus, minibus or coach  
Train, Dart or Luas  
Motor cycle or scooter  
Driving a car  
Passenger in a car  
Van  
Other including lorry  
Work or childcare mainly at home

**20 - What time do you usually leave home to go to work, school, college or childcare** *(for those aged under 6 years if applicable)?*

Not at work, school, college, childcare at home  
Before 06.30  
6.30 - 7.00  
7.01 - 7.30  
7.31 - 08.00  
08.01 - 08.30  
08.31 - 09.00  
09.01 - 09.30  
After 09.30

**21 – How long does your journey to work, school, college or childcare** *(for those aged under 6 years if applicable) usually take?*

Write in minutes:

It is envisaged that the questions would be answered in relation to early childhood education and care for children aged under 6 years that have not yet started school. Although data was collected on ECEC options for children up to the age of 13 years in the prior proposed amendment, it is assumed children attending school who may use afterschool care, will answer the question in relation to their journey to school in the morning as is the case in the current census format.

It is also understood that these questions will be answered for the first ECEC setting attended by children under 6 years if they attend more than one per day. This is in the same way that it is assumed the question is answered for children aged over 6 years attending school.

### Justification of User Need

The census already gathers important information on how people travel to work, school or college

including what time they leave their house. The National Transport Authority uses this data to plan for transport initiatives and it is essential that journeys to places of ECEC outside the home for children under 6 years who have not yet started school are also included. This will ensure that journeys for all people living in Ireland, are recorded and analysed to feed into transport initiatives. This is particularly important in the context of decreasing use of parental care and increased use of other forms of ECEC outside of the home over the past decade (CSO, 2016).

As well as improving the accuracy of transport data, including childcare as an option in these questions will also provide the government with data specific to journeys to ECEC settings that could work to improve the lives of children through specific ECEC policies such as introducing buses to crèches in rural areas if required.

Including childcare as an option in these questions will ensure that the activities of children under 6 years old are treated with equal importance to those of children over 6 years old attending school.

#### Small Area, Small Population and Cross-Tabular Analysis

The data would be required on a small area level to identify if there are any community specific issues in relation to commutes and transport to ECEC settings. In addition, ECEC providers could monitor the time taken to travel to settings which may feed into research on a practice level of how this influences behaviour in ECEC settings.

Cross-tabular analysis would be required to identify:

- Type of ECEC used and transport taken to get to the setting.
- Type of ECEC and length of commute to setting.
- Age of child, transport method and commute.

Amendment Three: Change Question 34 to add in 'Childcare' as an option:

<b>34 - What is the FULL NAME and ADDRESS of your place of work, school, college or childcare (for those aged under 6 years if applicable)?</b>
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#### Justification of User Need

Once again, it is envisaged that the question will be answered in relation to ECEC for children aged under 6 years that have not yet started school. It is assumed children attending school who may use afterschool care, will answer the question in relation to school as is the case in the current census format.

Including childcare as an option for those aged under 6 years will ensure that there is accurate data on the location of ECEC settings that are not registered with Tusla. This will ensure that government policy and initiatives of interest organisations such as ECI are based on reliable location data that can pinpoint the exact whereabouts of all ECEC settings. This data can be used to map settings and the demand for ECEC places in local areas.

The answers to this question will assist with the small area, small population and cross-tabular analysis on the use of ECEC.

#### Small Area, Small Population and Cross-Tabular Analysis

This information is required on a small area and small population level to inform government policy initiatives. Firstly, it will prove useful in evaluating the transport methods and commuting time to ECEC settings as outlined above.

Secondly, the data collected from this question will enable an analysis of the uptake of different types of ECEC in small areas to inform government policy and the initiatives and recruitment campaigns of interest groups such as ECI. Prospective childcare services can also use the data to map which areas may be best to start up their service. Local authorities may also require information on the location of ECEC settings for plans and investment for their area.

Analysis of the data would be required on a small population level to create a profile of the households and children which use specific ECEC settings. As outlined earlier, details of minority groups that use centre based ECEC is available in a limited form in the Pobal Early Years Profile and is dependent on the answers of the providers filling out the survey rather than the households themselves. However, it would be possible to analyse the profile of households and children including, nationality, principal economic status of parents etc and do so for specific ECEC settings identified in this census question. This information would be beneficial to relevant government departments when targeting policies and ECEC supports. Early Childhood Ireland would be able to analyse the data for its members so that they can use it to ensure their service provides the best ECEC possible for the children attending.

Cross-tabular analysis could be used to support the small area and small population analysis such as:

- The distance the ECEC setting is from the household/the parent's work.
- The type of ECEC used and the location.
- Principal economic status/nationality of parents and the location of the ECEC setting.

## Conclusion

Early Childhood Ireland has proposed the above amendments to the census questions in order to collect information on some elements of the early years sector that will prove essential to planning and evaluating government policy in this time of great transition for the sector. ECI hopes to maximise the obligatory and national nature of the census to ensure accurate and reliable data on the use of early childhood education and care is available to the government, researchers and ECEC providers to ultimately ensure the children of Ireland have access to the highest standard of education and care possible. The data produced from the amendments could be used to shape policies that could improve the lives of a wide range of groups in the population from children, au pairs, childminders to grandparents who are responsible for the care and education of young children.

ECI envisages the amendments to the census proposed above will produce information on the ECEC use of each child in Ireland; contextualise the ECEC use of each child on a small area and small population level as shown in various examples throughout this submission. Finally, ECI aims that the amendments outlined in this submission will consolidate the rights of young children by ensuring the significance of their activities is considered on par with those of older children aged over 5 years whose activities are already recorded in the census.

## References

Pobal (2017) *Pobal Early Years Sector Profile 2016/2017*. Available: <https://www.pobal.ie/Publications/Documents/Early%20Years%20Sector%20Profile%20Report%20016-2017.pdf>. Accessed (October 2017).

CSO (2016) *Quarterly National Household Survey: Special Module Childcare Q3 2016*. Available:

<http://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/er/q-chi/qnhschildcarequarter32016/>. Accessed (October 2017).