

Community Childcare Subvention Scheme Survey



Early Childhood Ireland
March 2013

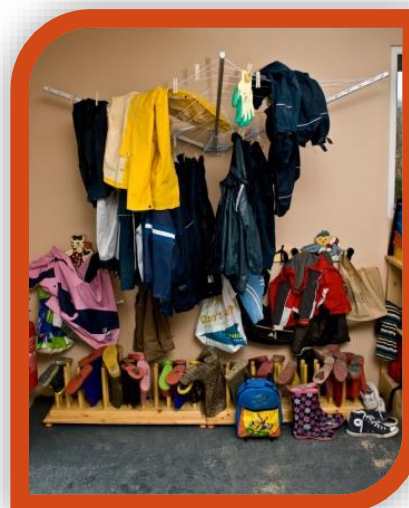


Introduction

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme is a scheme for community based childcare services to provide quality childcare at reduced rates to disadvantaged parents.

The changes to the scheme that came into effect from September 2012 have impacted in a loss of revenue and further challenges for some community services.

Early Childhood Ireland conducted a survey to ascertain the impact these changes have had on community childhood care and education services.



Key Findings

One hundred and one community childhood care and education services completed the survey, 98% of these were Early Childhood Ireland members. All of these services participate in the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme, 98 participate in the ECCE scheme and 55 participate in the CETS scheme.

84% of community child care and education services reported a deficit in their projected funding ranging from **€86 to €86,500**.

This decrease in CCS funding was attributed to the changes regarding eligibility in the scheme, and to the reduction in the higher capitation rate. This change has meant that many parents are no longer eligible for the full subvention rate, and yet they cannot afford to pay the increase in fees, so they have reduced the hours their children attend the service, or withdraw their children from the service.

The decrease in revenue has resulted in 51% of services rescheduling staff timetables, with 47% reducing staff hours. Thirty eight per cent of services have increased their fees while 25% of services have reduced staff wages. Many of the comments suggest that the financial implications will result in further changes in the future, once the full impact of this deficit has hit.

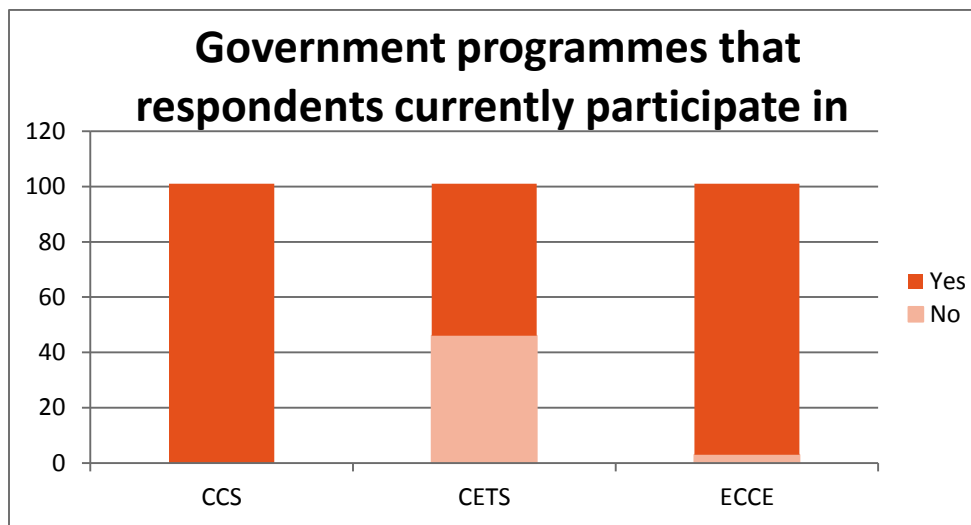
Methodology

One hundred and one participants from the community childhood care and education sector, completed an online survey and 98% of these respondents were Early Childhood Ireland members.



All of these services participate in the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme, 98 participate in the ECCE scheme and 55 participate in the CETS scheme.

All the services who participated in the survey, operated part time sessional childcare places, while 59 of respondents were also full time childcare services. An after school session was offered by 62 survey respondents, and 6 offered a drop in service.



<i>What type of childcare service do you provide?</i>	
Full day care and education	59
Part time / sessional	100
After school	62
Drop in service	6

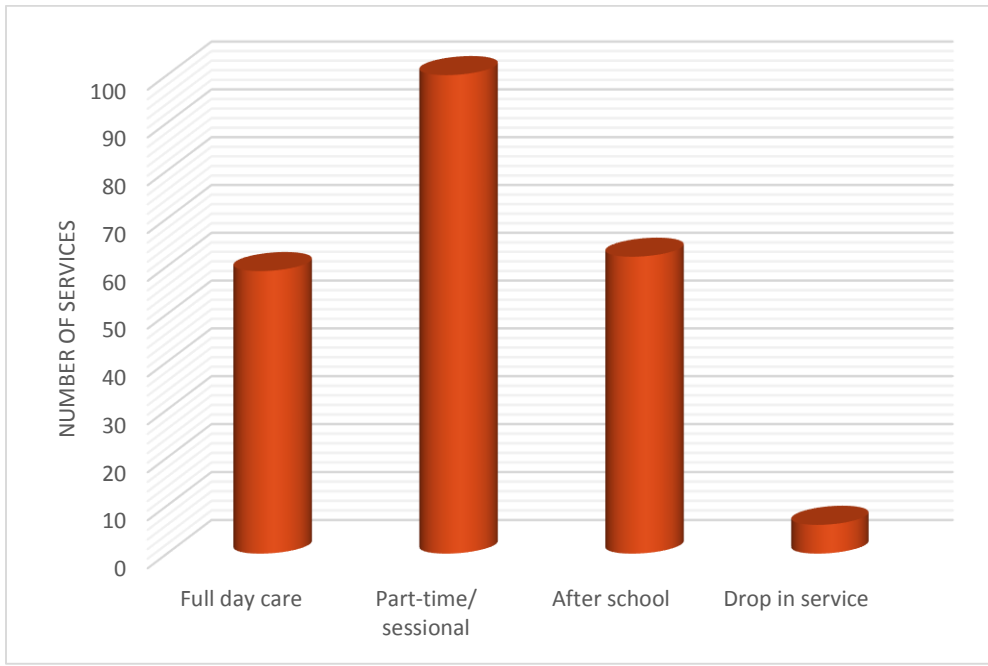


Figure 2: Types of early childhood care and education services provided by survey participants

The average number of children availing of fulltime childcare places in each service was 23, while 48 was the average number of children accessing part time places.

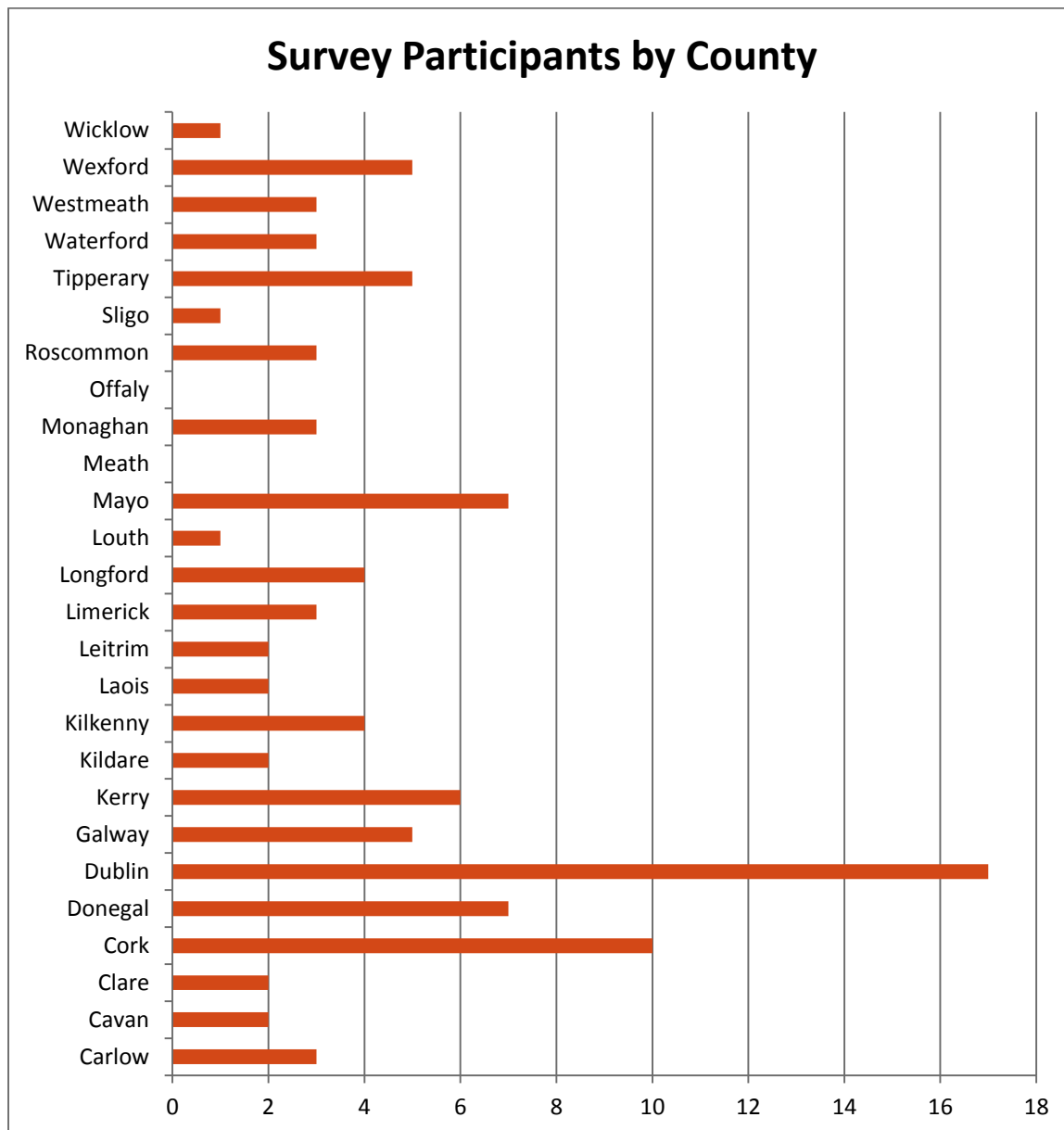
<i>How many children are enrolled in your service?</i>	<i>Response Average</i>	<i>Response Total</i>
Full time	22.74	1,728
Part time	47.34	4,639

Table 2: Average number of full time and part time children attending each service.

Participants by County

Seventeen of the respondents came from Dublin, 10 were from Cork, 7 were from Mayo and Donegal, with all counties except Meath and Offaly represented by at least one participant.

Figure 1: Counties that survey respondents reside in.



Projected and Actual Income for the financial year starting in September 2012

How much did you expect to receive under the CCS Scheme?	response average
	€72,994.73
How much did you actually receive?	
	€57,691.17
Average Deficit	€15,303.55

The average amount that community services expected to receive from the CCS scheme was **€72,994.73** but the average actual amount they received was **€57,691.17**

There was a very large range in the difference of the amount received from the CCS to what was projected, ranging from €43 more than expected to €86,500 less than expected.

This resulted in the average deficit between the projected income and the actual income for services being **€15,303.55**

84% of participants reported a deficit in their projected funding ranging from **€86 to €86,500**. 15% reported no difference between the projected and actual CCS Funding amounts, and 1 service reported that €43 extra was obtained from CCS funding than they had projected.

Receiving less income – reasons

- The majority of responses indicated that the change in eligibility criteria for Band A was the reason they received less funding.
- The decrease in capitation was another reason (ie €95 not €100)
- Some responded that the children have now moved onto the ECCE scheme.
- A number of services are putting in appeals, because the parents have been put into the wrong bands.
- Others commented that it is impossible to predict future need, based on one snapshot week.

Further comments

'Some places weren't filled by the snapshot week in October - some were empty and some children were out sick or on holidays and we were not able to get all their details and signature so could not include them on the e return'.

'Due to change in rates for band payments days were cancelled by parents. Bookings are take prior to June and parents did not know there would be such a difference in subvention level'.

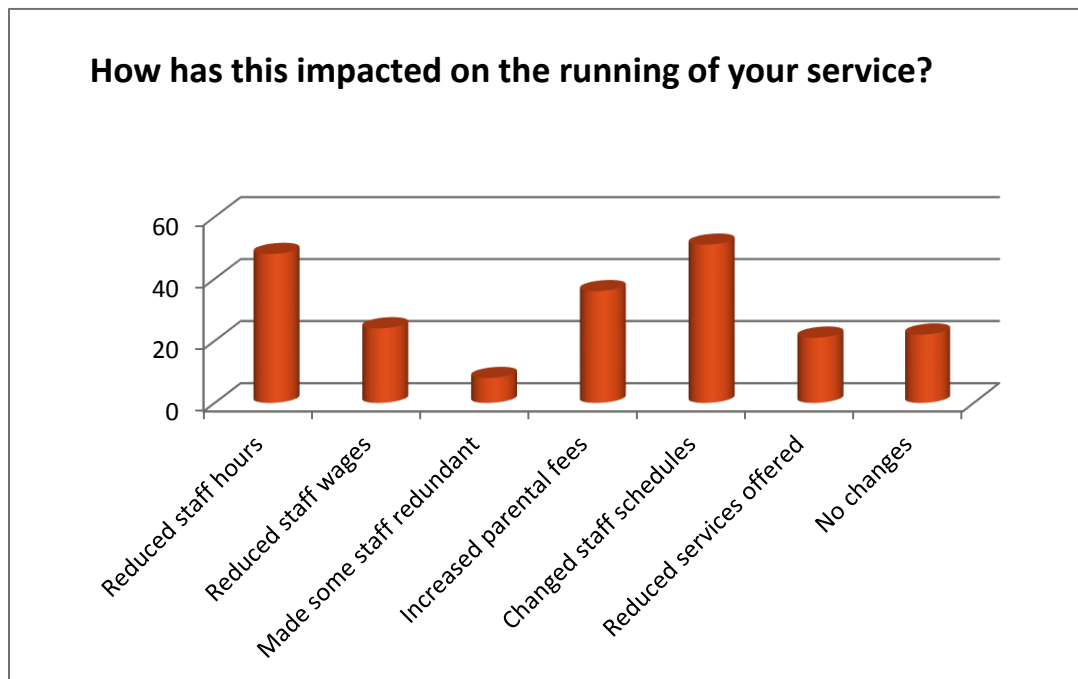
'Also lost children as a result of less people accepting CE positions'.

'All my parents are on lone family payment but were allocated a band B status as they held a GP card not a medical card'.

'Many of the parents are reluctant to bring evidence of social welfare payment to us so we can only presume which band they will be placed on'.

Q9:How has this decrease in income, impacted on the running of your service?	%
Reduced staff hours	48%
Reduced staff wages	25%
Made some staff redundant	8%
Increased parental fees	36%
Changed staff schedules	51%
Reduced services offered	21%
No changes	22%

Table 4: Impact on community services from the changes to the CCS Scheme



The decrease in revenue has resulted in 51% of services rescheduling staff timetables, with 48% reducing staff hours. Thirty six per cent of services have increased their parental fees while 25% of services have reduced staff wages. Eight per cent of survey respondents have made staff redundant, while 22% have not made any changes, though the comments would suggest that they may have to do so in future.

A number of participants made comments in the 'Other' comments section ...

Many of the comments in the 'other' category of question 9 indicated that survey respondents are **waiting to hear back from appeals** before they decide to make decisions such as reduce staff hours, let staff go or make other changes.

"I have appealed again on some but if they stay band b I will have to let up to 2 staff go which will have a major impact on our service".

"If 11 parents do not get Band A approved we will probably have to reduce staff's hours to be able to continue service provision".

"Currently carrying out financial review to see what other changes necessary, including reduction in staff numbers, and change in working conditions and possibly reduction in services from September 2013".

Some services said they are **operating at a loss**, and others are '**sailing very close to the wind**' financially, suggesting that the financial impact of the deficit will result in future changes.

"We will have to see how it works out for the next few months, but things will have to change here because that is a huge amount of money to be down, and we will have to make up the loss somewhere. We are operating at a loss".

Some survey participants commented on the **administration of the scheme** and how there were delays and other misnomers:

"I would also like to note that it took over 4 months to get confirmation on the bands submitted - then you have to start appeals for ones the dept have given incorrectly - I think the turnaround time on this is too long and should be looked at".

"Children can't avail of the scheme mid-year - they can only avail of this scheme if they start in the play school in September. This is unrealistic. Previously we could do a return in January for children that start after Christmas. It should operate similar to ECCE where children can join at any time during the year".

The impact of the changes to the CCS scheme on the children and families in your service

- Parents have reduced the number of hours their children are in the service, or taken their children out as they can't afford it.
- Some services have decreased their opening hours or other services.
- Some have closed their after school service or their drop in service for example.
- More paperwork and increased administration for parents.
- Those children who need the service most are missing out/for some children it is their only outlet/they miss out on the social aspect.
- Parents are relying on elderly relatives to look after children.
- Quality of some services is diminished for children because of the financial constraints.
- If parents want any extra days they have to pay full rate.
- Parents have a greater financial burden.
- Parents are very confused with all the changes
- Some services have continued taking children even if their parents can't afford the fees

'It is insane that we have spaces in our service, parents want to use our service and yet neither of us can afford to pay for the space. Our fundraising, which traditionally went into building maintenance and supplies, is now being used to subsidise places for parents in need'

'We have had to stop some children's places due to arrears and this makes a very difficult situation for all involved when living and working in the community.'

'From September 2013 we might need to reduce our service level and only offer part time mornings which means that we will no longer meet the need of the few working parents who avail of the service. We also need to look at whether it is financially worthwhile to take the younger children so this again will impact on many. We have already made significant cutbacks in our budgets for food, equipment, materials and supplies and staff training. None of this makes for quality provision'.

'It has made it more difficult for parents to afford the service and limiting our resources makes it more difficult to support these families in need and provide quality services for the children and

families in the area'.

Summary

The changes to the CCS scheme that came into effect from September 2012 have impacted in a loss of revenue and further challenges for many community services.

84% of community child care and education services reported a deficit in their projected funding ranging from **€86 to €86,500**.

This decrease in CCS funding was attributed to the changes regarding eligibility criteria in the scheme, and to the reduction in the higher capitation rate. This change has meant that many parents are no longer eligible for the full subvention rate, and yet they cannot afford to pay the increase in fees, so they have reduced the hours their children attend the service, or have withdrawn their children from the service.

The decrease in revenue has resulted in 51% of services rescheduling staff timetables, with 47% reducing staff hours. Thirty eight per cent of services have increased their fees while 25% of services have reduced staff wages.

A number of respondents also commented that they themselves took on the financial loss as a result of parents not affording the fees, as the parents badly needed their support. Some services commented that there was a decrease in the quality of their service as a result of increasing financial restraints.

Survey respondents also commented on the administration of the scheme, the delays for appeals, increased administration and confusion from parents, and the restrictions on their service as a result of the changes.

Many of the comments from the survey suggest that the financial implications will result in further changes in the future, once the full impact of this deficit has hit.