



# Early Childhood Ireland Budget 2024 Submission



## Putting Children at the heart of Early Years and School Age Care in Ireland

**A large body of international evidence has established that high-quality Early Years and School Age Care experiences for children, provide long-lasting benefits for them, their families, and communities. Those living in poverty or who experience other disadvantages are especially supported and an inclusive Early Years and School Age Care system creates a more equitable society for all.**

At a time of unprecedented levels of investment in Early Years and School Age Care, Early Childhood Ireland is calling on the Government to build on public funding commitments, by refocussing on a new ambition for our youngest citizens.

The Irish Early Years and School Age Care system is under significant pressure, despite a committed workforce and unprecedented investment. The Government needs to use the opportunity which Budget 2024 offers, to strengthen and enhance current levels of quality, so that every child can have access to consistently high-quality education and care in settings and childminders' homes.

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## Early Childhood Ireland has five key proposals for next year's Budget which build on existing provision and policies but would also be transformative.

1

Publish a 5-year plan for implementing additional investment, to reach €4bn - 1% of GDP - by early 2029, thus achieving a publicly funded Early Years and School Age Care system in Ireland.

2

Building on Aistear, and as part of increasing investment, embed the philosophy of the world-renowned Reggio Emilia Approach in the system, to ensure that the rights of children are interlinked with educators, families, and communities.

3

Unify the existing funding programmes (National Childcare Scheme (NCS), Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Core funding) to allow settings to use capacity as a funding measurement, and not children's attendance, so that flexibility can be offered to families, with no financial consequences for providers and parents.

4

Increase the Graduate Premiums to further incentivise the recruitment and retention of graduates.

5

Implement fully the 'Better data' recommendations from Partnership for the Public Good and initiate a system of national and local 2-year and 5-year planning cycles, to ensure there are enough Early Years and School Age Care places, in settings and in childminders' homes, for children in their own communities.

**Early Childhood Ireland's proposals would vindicate children's rights in a world-class Early Years and School Age Care system and support all families regardless of their individual circumstances. We urge the Government to prioritise our vital sector in Budget 2024.**

Early Childhood Ireland is the leading children's advocacy and membership organisation. We work in partnership with our members to achieve quality experiences for every child in Early Years, School Age Care and Childminding settings. We advocate for an effective and inclusive Early Years and School Age Care system which values, supports and invests in childhood, children and services.

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