



**Early
Childhood
Ireland**

Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Early Childhood Ireland Explainers

History

The first Minister of State for Children, the late Austin Currie, was appointed in December 1994. This was a junior ministerial position across three Departments: Health and Children, Justice and Law Reform, and Education and Skills. The Minister was responsible for Children's Affairs. In 1997, the Department of Health was renamed the Department of Health and Children. This essentially broadened the remit of the Minister of Health to include the implementation of Early Years legislation.

The Office of the Minister of Children was established in December 2005, allowing the Minister to attend Cabinet meetings, but this did not change the functions of the role. The last Minister of State for Children was Barry Andrews. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs was established in 2011, replacing the Department of Community, Equality, and Gaeltacht Affairs. The restructured Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth was set up by the incoming Coalition government in June 2020.

Minister of State for Children	
Austin Currie (Fine Gael)	20/12/1994 – 26/06/1997
Frank Fahey (Fianna Fáil)	08/07/1997 – 01/02/2000
Mary Hanafin (Fianna Fáil)	01/02/2000 – 06/06/2002
Brian Lenihan (Fianna Fáil)	19/06/2002 – 14/06/2007
Brendan Smith (Fianna Fáil)	20/06/2007 – 07/05/2008
Barry Andrews (Fianna Fáil)	07/05/2008 – 09/03/2011
Minister for Health and Children	
Brian Cowen (Fianna Fáil)	12/07/1997 – 27/01/2000
Micheál Martin (Fianna Fáil)	27/01/2000 – 29/01/2004
Mary Harney (Progressive Democrats/Independent)	29/01/2005 – 19/01/2011
Mary Coughlan (Fianna Fáil)	20/01/2011 – 09/03/2011
James Reilly (Fine Gael)	09/03/2011 – 04/06/2011
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs	
Frances Fitzgerald (Fine Gael)	09/03/2011 – 07/05/2014
Charles Flanagan (Fine Gael)	08/05/2014 – 11/07/2014
James Reilly (Fine Gael)	11/07/2014 – 06/05/2016
Katherine Zappone (Independent)	06/05/2016 – 27/06/2020
Minister for Children Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth	
Roderic O'Gorman (Green Party)	27/06/2020 – to present

Role

The Department's mission is to enhance the lives of children, young people, adults, families, and communities while recognising diversity and promoting equality of opportunity.

The Department is split into nine sections. This includes the Office of the Secretary-General, the Ukraine Management Office, and the Ukraine Operations section. There are also six divisions: the Adoption, Mother and Baby Homes and Research Division, the Disability and Youth Division, the Child Policy and Tusla Governance Division, the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Division, the Corporate and Business Support Division, and the International Protection and Equality Division.

The organisational chart of the Department can be found [here](#).

Child Policy and Tusla Governance Division

This Division oversees operational standards and performance, policy and legislative developments regarding child welfare and protection, alternative care, and related issues of children's rights. It also oversees the governance, performance, and support of Tusla. This includes cross-government assistance for the development of programmes within Tusla.

This Division is also in charge of cross-government coordination of policy direction and activity regarding parental support. It also oversees the implementation of Better Outcomes Brighter Futures, the Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programme, and the development of the Children and Young People's Services Committees (CYPSCs) interagency structures.

Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Division

This Division is responsible for ensuring access to high-quality and affordable Early Years and School Age Care. This involves the development of policy and legislation, the administration of a range of schemes and the associated budgetary, governance, and compliance functions, the regulation of the Early Years and School Age Care sector, and several initiatives to develop the workforce and improve the quality of services.

This Division also oversees and reports on the implementation of [First 5, a whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children, and their Families \(2019-2028\)](#).

