

# Mayo County Childcare Committee

## STRATEGIC PLAN 2002 – 2006





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# réamhrá

Siad Coiste Chúram Leanaí Chontae Mhaigh Eo a d'ullmhaigh agus a chuir an Phlean Straitéise seo do 2002 - 2006 ar fáil.

D'oibrigh an Coiste de réir treoracha an *Operational Guidelines for County Childcare Committees*, a chuir an Roinn Dlí agus Cirt amach. Chuireadar eolas ar fáil, agus chuadar i gcomhairle leis na dreamanna atá bainteach le cúram leanaí sa chontae, chomh maith le dul i gcomhairle leis na ranna stáit atá freagrach do chúram leanaí. Tugadh aird ar chuile eolas náisiúnta agus áitiúil atá ar fáil faoi pháistí agus teaghlaigh Chontae Mhaigh Eo chun pictiúr a dhéanamh de theaghlaigh agus de pháistí an chontae, agus na riachtanais a bhéas ann maidir le cúram leanaí amach anseo.

*D'aontaigh an coiste an Ráiteas Misin seo a leanas:*

*"Sén chuspóir atá againn ná pobal a chaomhnaíonn an páiste agus a mhuintir a fhorbairt i gContae Mhaigh Eo, tré réimse de sheirbhísí maithe, saora, spraoiúla a chur ar fáil, seirbhísí a shásódhe riachtanais chuile pháiste, agus riachtanais agus mianta a dtuismitheoirí"*

Is ar an *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* atá prionsabail an Choiste bunaithe, agus geallann siad oibriú de réir dlí chomhionannais Rialtas na hÉireann agus an Aontas Eorpaigh, chun uaisleacht chuile pháiste, a dtuismitheoirí agus a lucht cúraim a chosaint.



Chuir an Coiste *Tuairisc Choimisiún an Teaghlaigh 1998* san áireamh, agus níl siad dall ar a bhfuil amach roimh mhuiríní na hÉireann ar na saolta seo. Cuireann an Straitéis seo béim faoi leith ar riachtanais na dtuismitheoirí atá ag iarraidh cúram a dhéanamh dá bpáistí chomh maith agus is féidir leo, go minic faoi mhíbhuntáiste de bharr na dífhostaíocht, páigh íseal, toisc gur tuismitheoirí aonair atá agus/nó ag maireachtáil in áiteacha bochta iargúlta, faoi mhíbhuntáiste sóisialta, teangan agus/nó eacnamaíochta. Táthar chun na heaspaí atá sna seirbhísí faoi láthair a fhiosrú, agus bealaí chun feabhas a chur ar chúrsaí a mholadh.

Breathnaíonn an straitéis ar pháistí mar dhaoine iontu féin, mar bhaill theaghlaigh agus phobail, a bhfuil tacaíocht, cúram agus cothú a leasa dlite dóibh. Tugann an straitéis le fios gurb iad na tuismitheoirí céad múinteoirí agus caomhnóirí a gclainne, agus gur ceist mhór a chaithfear déileáil léi sa Phlean Gníomhaíochta í.

Aithníonn an Straitéis seo gur gné shuntasach de chontae Mhaigh Eo iad an daonra tuaithe scaipthe, ceantair móra Gaeltachta, líon mór Lucht Siúil, a lán larrthóirí Dídeana, go leor Oibríthe Eachtranacha i gceantair áirithe; agus níos mó ceantair ná meán na tíre atá i dteideal an Chlár Bochtanais (CLÁR); le scór an ard d'easpaí de réir an *Hasse Index of Relative Poverty*; líon mhór páistí le riachtanais feoi leith; agus áit chónaithe agus líon na bpáistí réamhscoile le riachtanais faoi leith. Tá fhios ag an Straitéis seo gur dúshlán é seirbhísí faoi leith a chur ar fáil dá leithéid de chontae, agus léiríonn sé sraith de Chuspóirí Straitéiseacha agus molann sé Gníomhartha dá réir.

'Sé móraidhm Coiste Chúram Leanaí Mhaigh Eo ná pobal a fhorbairt a chaomhnaíonn an páiste, agus a thuismitheoir, tré réimse de sheirbhísí maithe, saora, spraoiúla a chur ar fáil, seirbhísí a d'fheilfeadh do riachtanais chuile pháiste, agus do riachtanais chuile thuismitheoir. Tá structúr an fhochoiste atá molta sa Straitéis seo leagtha amach sa chaoi is go mbainfear an chuspóir sin amach go héifeachtach.



# Chapter 1

## The Mayo County Childcare Committee Structure and Context

### (i) **Membership, Mission, Vision, Principles, Equality Charter, Structure**

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The Mayo County Childcare Committee as advised under the National Childcare Strategy held its inaugural meeting on Thursday 17 May 2001. The Committee brings together a range of key players from the statutory, voluntary, community and independent sectors including parent's representatives and builds on a history of partnership working in the field of childcare in County Mayo. (Appendix I; Membership of the County Mayo Childcare Committee).

The remit of the Mayo County Childcare Committee is to support a co-ordinated partnership approach to the planning and development of childcare services within the County.

#### **Specifically the Childcare Committee will develop actions to:**

- Maintain and build local capacity.
- Support initiatives and strategies to develop childminders.
- Agree and support the development of quality standards.
- Identify, assess and address training needs.
- Develop information sharing and learning systems.
- Support local Childcare networks.
- Develop linkages and synergies with local and national policy initiatives.
- Attract and leverage additional resources.

### **Mission**

The Mayo County Childcare Committee has agreed the following mission statement, which will underpin the work of the Committee.

*Our aim is to develop a society in County Mayo which cherishes the individual child and parent by providing a range of quality, fun-filled affordable childcare services suitable to the individual needs of all children and which meets the needs and aspirations of all parents*

### **Principles**

**The guiding principles for the Mayo County Childcare Committee are based on the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child and encompass the following key principles:**

- All children have a right to a high quality early childhood service.
- All children have a right to be consulted and involved in the development of early childhood services.
- All parents should have access to appropriate early childhood services to suit both their needs as parents and their needs as participants in economic and community life.
- A well trained, thinking Childcare workforce, which is warm, practical, involved has patience and a sense of humour while maintaining a professional approach.
- Respect for individual ethnic and cultural differences and support for a culturally integrated curriculum.
- Courtesy and support for parents and a belief in the active involvement of parents in their children's growth and development.

## Equality Charter

The Mayo County Childcare Committee recognises that groups and individuals continue to be discriminated against on the grounds of gender, marital status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, race, and membership of the travelling community. The committee will work in the spirit of the Equality Legislation to ensure the dignity of all children and their carers.

### **Mayo Childcare Committee is committed to :**

- Promotion and implementation of equality of opportunity, fair treatment and social justice.
- The development of an integrated approach to the promotion of an equality agenda in childcare services
- Ensuring that awareness of existing inequalities is translated into pro-active positive childcare practice
- Ensuring that there are mechanisms and procedures which ensure that the Equality Agenda is an integral part of all areas of the work within the Committee's remit.

## Vision

### **The Mayo County Childcare Committee has articulated the following vision for the future development of childcare services in County Mayo:**

- An appropriate range of childcare service in every community in County Mayo.
- Access to, and choice of, service for every family which requires/needs service.
- Equality of opportunity for all children and families – to include ethnic minorities, children with special needs, rural children, and children from Irish medium backgrounds.
- Quality childcare services as a right for all children and families.
- A comprehensive range of training available for all - parents and service providers alike.
- A range of appropriate play and leisure facilities in all communities.
- Affordable services based on appropriate subventions for those who need it.
- A professional childcare workforce appropriately trained and remunerated.
- Child friendly, multi-functional, premises for children's services.

## Structure

To date, the Mayo County Childcare Committee has met monthly as a corporate group. At their first meeting, the members elected an Interim Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer. The membership agreed that this arrangement would be in place until January 2003, when the Committee would formally elect office bearers.

A sub-group was set up to look at a legal entity for the Committee. Two options were given serious consideration. One was the possibility of the group becoming a Limited Company and the second was that the Committee be an associate of an existing authoritative legal entity. The decision on the preferred option was taken at the meeting on 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2001, when the majority of members recommended alignment with the County Development Board / Mayo County Council subject to agreement on a satisfactory "Memorandum of Association".

A recruitment sub-group was set up to draw up job descriptions, and advertisements for the recruitment of a Co-ordinator and an Administrator. These posts were advertised in September 2002. The appointment of a Co-ordinator was completed in March. The appointment of an Administrator took place in August 2003.

An Appraisal Sub-group has been set up to advise upon applications for funding, made by local community groups / individuals to the Equal Opportunities Childcare Funding Programme.

The Committee has also identified the potential needs for sub-groups to take forward actions emanating from the Childcare Plan. These may include a Quality and Training Sub-Group, an Information Sub-Group and a Diversity Sub-Group.

## Structure of Service Delivery

The Development and support of services will be undertaken in a co-ordinated way by a variety of groups. In this section we have outlined the main inputs to the plan through the co-operation of various stakeholders.

### (a) Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.

The Forbairt Naíonraí Teo. Development Officer will continue to support the 11 Naíonraí in the county. At the time of printing there are 51 community services and the Naíonraí provision is an important element of pre-school services in Mayo

### (b) County Committee

The County Committee will be staffed by a Co-ordinator (who will also manage and supervise staff) one development Worker and one full time administrator. Staff will work as part of a team with specific functions but with a flexible and joint approach, which will reflect the operational plan. This structure will best meet a number of common issues and ensure greater efficiency.

**County Committee staff will be responsible for;**

- Supporting the County Committee
- Supporting the providers
- Information for all services
- Co ordination of a Quality Strategy for all Services
- Specific initiatives for Childminding working with the Western Health Board childminding advisory officer
- Local Networks / Fora
- Research

### (c) Mayo County Enterprise Board

Mayo County Enterprise Board will continue to provide business training for Childcare Providers

### (d) Mayo Vocational Education Committee

The Mayo VEC will take the lead role in organising and providing accredited training for childcare staff through its Adult and Further Education Services.

### (e) Partnership Company

Objectives to be achieved through the community development measure include to facilitate the creation of 50 Community Childcare places each year from 2001 to 2006 (total 300 places) and the development of family support service in each village in County Mayo by the year 2006 (villages not defined).

Objectives to be achieved through community based youth initiative measures include facilitating the development of two after school services each year in urban areas of disadvantage between 2000 and 2006.

Mayo County Childcare Committee will seek to build an effective partnership on community issues with the Partnership Company and its Local District Partnership Boards throughout the county, and through their representative on the Committee.

**(f) National Voluntary Childcare Organisations**

**The National Voluntary Childcare organisations Collaborative Group is currently made up of nine national childcare organisations**

- Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.
- Barnardos
- Children in Hospital Ireland
- IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation
- ISPCC
- Irish Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Association
- National Childminding Association of Ireland
- National Children's Nurseries' Association
- St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association

**The NVCO Collaborative Group will continue to provide:**

- Information on a wide range of topics in various media
- Training, both accredited and tailor-made, as negotiated with the Committee
- Support relating to Quality Improvement programmes
- Support related to networking
- Other supports as detailed in the ADM Framework of Support document
- Membership on the Mayo County Childcare Committee

**(g) Údarás Na Gaeltachta**

Údarás Na Gaeltachta will continue to support the development and progress of the 6 Language based Naíonraí in the Mayo Gaeltacht in conjunction with other relevant organisations.

The Údarás mission statement is:

*To preserve and strengthen the Gaeltacht and the Irish language so that strong, self confident communities can emerge to achieve their full potential and enjoy a high quality of life*

**Among the main aims for childcare are:**

- To expand the existing Naíonraí network and thus set up additional Naíonraí with special emphasis on services in areas of low population
- Develop the number and continued quality of Gaeltacht Naíonraí, with special attention to:
- Ensure that Naíonraí staff in the Gaeltacht have achieved a suitably recognised qualification in pre-school education. This qualification must incorporate several modules on the Irish Language
- Continued support for language development for parents and children.

**(g) Western Health Board**

**In January 2002 the Western Health Board appointed an Early Childcare Services Manager. The postholder is responsible for managing the following staff;**

- 3 Early Years Development Workers
- 2 Pre-school services officers (Inspectors) – one in place and one to be recruited
- 1 Childminder Advisory Officer
- Administration Staff

The Board will take a lead role in supporting community services and with the Partnership Company to identify areas of greatest need and encourage and support the development of services in these areas. The support to the Community services will be voluntary and will follow a model to be agreed with the IPPA.

The Western Health Board will continue to be responsible for Inspections under the Child Care Act and the accompanying regulations will provide support to the Community services. A Childminding Advisory Officer has been appointed and will share the workload of the county committee childminding initiatives.

## Sub-committee Structure

Sub-Committees	To link up with the following subcommittees
Capacity Building	Quality and Training, Anti-bias, Range of Services
Quality and Training	Training, Capacity Building
Anti-Bias	Training and Capacity Building
Information and Networking	All
Organisational	All
Range of Services	All
Consultation	All

The membership of the sub-committees will expand the inclusiveness of the County Committee.

## (ii) National Policy Context

### National Children’s Strategy - Our Children, Their Lives (2000)

Following an extensive consultation process the Government published its National Children’s Strategy developed by an Inter-Departmental Group to provide a framework for policy development and service provision for children. In his introduction, the Taoiseach states

*“the strategy sets out an ambitious series of objectives to guide children’s policy over the next 10 years. It sets out a common vision to work towards and identifies six principles to guide all actions to be taken and it proposes a more holistic way of thinking about children which reflects contemporary understanding of childhood.”*

#### There are 3 National Goals:

- Children will Have a Voice
- Children’s lives will be Better Understood
- Children will receive Quality Supports and Services.

#### Objectives relative to the work of the county committee are

- **Objectives A** -Children’s early education and developmental needs will be met through quality childcare services and family friendly employment measures. The document states *“a key challenge in this period of expansion would be to ensure that the needs of children are the primary consideration in the development of new quality places”*.
- **Objective D** - Children will have access to play, sport, recreation and cultural activities to enrich their experience of childhood.
- **Objective G** recognises the need for increases in child benefit and the financial benefits for families with children.

- **Objective J** Children with a disability will be entitled to the services they need to achieve their full potential.
- **Objective K** Children will be educated and supported to value social and cultural diversity so that all children including travellers and other marginalised groups achieve their full potential.
- **Objective L** Children will have the opportunity to experience quality of family life.
- **Objective M** Children will benefit from and contribute to vibrant local communities.
- **Objective N** Children will benefit from a built and natural environment, which supports their physical and emotional well being.

The government has established new mechanisms for taking forward the Children's Strategy including the establishment of a National Children's Office which will review all Departmental strategy statements in order to identify existing or potential crosscutting children's issues and will agree with Departments the action to be included in individual departmental business plans for 2001. The Strategy states *"the substantial investment in the development of our childcare sector will continue and full inroads will be made to support parents in reconciling their work and family lives."* It goes on to indicate that special additional funding will be provided by government to support specific actions targeted at achieving the three national goals of the strategy.

## The National Childcare Strategy (1999)

The National Childcare Strategy is the report of the Partnership 2000 Expert Working Group on Childcare established under the aegis of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

### The Expert Working Group recognised the following social context: -

- Longstanding recognition of the need for development of childcare on a national basis over 20 years.
- Parents use childcare for a variety of reasons.
- Increased participation of women in the workforce has increased demand.
- Availability and cost of childcare and difficulties in balancing work and family life are significant barriers to women in returning to work.
- The need for public policy to help parents reconcile employment with caring for their children in a way which improves quality of life for all.
- The need for measures, which encourage increased involvement of fathers.
- The rights of children to quality care and education.

## The National Childcare Strategy Guiding Principles

The Expert working group has agreed a statement of principles to underpin the National Childcare Strategy. These principles should guide all childcare services whether family or centre based and in both public and private sector.

### (a) Needs And Rights Of Children

- All childcare provision should be child-centred in its ethos, policies, practices, curricula, premises, personnel/carer attitudes and environment.
- Care and education are inextricably linked elements in a child's holistic development - this reality must be reflected in the ethos and programme of all services.
- Play is one of the essential experiences of childhood.

### (b) Equal Opportunities and Equality of Access and Participation

- The provision of quality, affordable and accessible childcare is recognised as a mechanism to achieve equality of opportunity in education, training and employment for men and women.
- All children should have equality of access to, and participation in quality childcare.

### (c) Diversity

- The provision of childcare in Ireland must acknowledge and appreciate the value of diversity in Irish society.
- Different approaches to quality service development and provision are essential to meet the childcare needs of families with children.

### (d) Partnership

- A partnership approach at national and local level is essential to ensure cohesion, co-ordination and effective collaboration at all levels: policy, planning and local implementation.

### (e) Quality

- Achieving high quality childcare services is an integral part of the structure and implementation of a National Childcare Strategy.
- A quality childcare service must be regarded as one which provides enhancing experiences for children and positive interactions between adults and children.

### (f) Rationale for Childcare Strategy.

Quality childcare benefits children and parents, employers and communities in general. Studies show the social benefit of early education on children's confidence and social development, particularly for children from disadvantaged areas. Economic benefits in investing in quality childcare include social benefits for children, increased employability of parents, improving the capacity, profitability and sustainability of childcare provision and job creation in the childcare sector. It is estimated that demands for childcare are likely to increase by between 25% and 50% over the period to the year 2011.

### (g) Local Planning and National Co-ordination.

The Expert Working Group recommends that the implementation of the National Childcare Strategy takes place in the context of local needs led planning, involving consultation and participative planning of all the stakeholders. In order to facilitate this process the Expert Working Group proposes that the following structure and mechanisms be put in place.

- County Childcare Committees.
- A National Childcare Management Committee.
- An Inter-departmental Policy Committee on Childcare.

## Ready to Learn - White Paper on Early Childhood Education (1999)

The White Paper on Early Childhood Education outlines the objective of Government Policy on early Childhood Education is "to support the development and educational achievement of children through high quality early education, with particular focus on the target groups of the disadvantaged and those with special needs"

It primarily deals with the education requirement of children aged 3 –6 years and aspires to raise practice standards within primary school and pre-schools for this age group

It provides for special assistance to disadvantaged and special needs groups including support and improvement of existing services, training of service providers and additional provision of early childhood education through local communities and direct state provision.

### Some of the recommendations include;

- Direct responsibly to provide Pre School services for a number of target groups
- Changes in curriculum in infant classes in schools

- Quality in education mark for all services wishing to provide education and care service
- Early childhood education Agency to be set up and take responsibility for implementation
- Changes to inspection and the promotion of a joint inspection model between the Early Childhood Education Agency and the Health Boards
- Materials for parents of children in the home backed up by drop in centres located in schools
- Montessori teachers in infant classes of schools
- Smaller class sizes for infant classes

## Strengthening Families for Life - Commission on the Family (1998)

The Commission on the Family was established by the Minister for Social Welfare in October 1995 “to examine the effects of legislation and policies on families and make recommendations to the Government of proposals which would strengthen the capacity of families to carry out their functions, in a changing economic and social environment.”

The report recognises the many challenges faced by families in Ireland. The Commission advocates prioritising the needs of families who are trying to do their best for their children in difficult circumstances which may be due to unemployment, low income, lone parenthood and or living in communities that are socially and economically disadvantaged. It recognises the gaps in current provision and makes many recommendations as to how community based responses might be developed. These include a Nation Wide Network of Family and Community Services Resource Centres and refocusing statutory Social Welfare Services to provide a one stop shop as a gateway to all services for families.

### Most relevant recommendations for County Childcare Committees are: -

- There should be a network of Family and Community Services Resource Centres throughout the country
- Reshaping of local Department of Social Community and Family Affairs Offices to become one-stop shops, which provide a gateway to all services for families.
- In order to ensure greater accessibility to family support services at a preventive level the Commission recommends greater investment in family support services, e.g. The Community Mothers Programme should be extended to reach 10% of children under 2.
- The Commission recommends that parents be made more aware through information strategies, of the role of the Public Health Nurse and potential for flexible working hours for Public Health Nurses to be considered.

The Key principle underpinning the Commissions work is that parents are the first educators and carers of their children and the State has a responsibility to support parents in carrying out these responsibilities. “Sharing, caring responsibilities with families must underpin the policy approach in promoting a family friendly work environment which values families’ caring roles and ensures that families can get access to the labour market”. The reconciliation of family work responsibilities and caring responsibilities is a major issue, which must be addressed by Government and Social Partners. Facilitating fathers in taking on a significant role in caring for their children is important and close co-operation at local level between the providers of programmes and services is essential.

Children are recognised as individuals, within the family, and within the wider community with rights to adequate support, care and promotion of their wellbeing. Family wellbeing should be singled out as an area of critical importance for Government in the years ahead. Part 5 of the Commissions report deals specifically with the need to invest in services for children including nursery, crèches, pre-schools, playgroups and Naíonraí (Irish Medium Playgroups) and day care by childminders either in the childminders home or in the child’s own home. The Commission makes a number of recommendations including the need for an Early Years Opportunity Subsidy for children from 3 years to school going age to enable them to avail of quality day care services. In addition to providing access to quality services for young children, the subsidy would help expand the range of options, encourage extra places in the private and community sector, promote standards and allow for recognition of the special needs of some children. The Commission recognises the work being undertaken by the Expert Working Group under Partnership 2000, particularly with regard to developing a co-ordinating mechanism at national level as well as at local community level.

- In particular the Commission considers the situation with regard to childminders recognising that parents need to be reassured about the care their children are receiving in their absence while childminders need to receive practical support and training.

## National Development Plan

The NDP is the largest and most ambitious investment plan drawn up for Ireland. It consists of an investment fund of 52 billion Euro made up of national and EU funds from 1999 until 2006.

The government has made childcare a priority under the National Development Plan 2000-2006 and funding of £344 million has been allocated specifically to childcare with two main objectives: -

- An increase in both the supply and quality of childcare facilities.
- The introduction of a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare services at local and national level.

## A Shared Vision For County/City Development Boards

The County/City Development Boards are the mechanism for local Government, local Development, State Agencies and the Social Partners to work out an agreed vision for their County or City. The Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development will provide the framework within which all public and local development services will be implemented at local level. The establishment of County/City Development Boards (CDB) in each County and City Local Authority is an attempt to address the challenge of local service integration at County and City level. Each CDB has to develop a strategy covering all major services, which will provide a shared vision “for development of the area for up to 10 years”.

**The process aims to provide: -**

- A greater sense of ownership and commitment at all levels.
- Reinvigorated local governance.
- Better local integration of the broad range of public services.
- A better quality of life for citizens.

The Strategy Document for each County and City was developed in January 2002 to promote and encourage co-operation and co-ordination between the various agencies and interests on an ongoing basis and monitor the development of the strategy.

A representative of the Mayo County Development Board sits on the Mayo County Childcare Committee. A summary of actions from the Mayo County Childcare Plan have been included within the Integrated Strategy for economic social and cultural development (Mayo County Strategy) The Mayo County Committee will make an input into the County Development Plan

## **(iii) Local Policy Context**

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### **Meitheal Mhaigheo Teo**

The Area Partnership Company for County Mayo is Meitheal Mhaigheo Teo. The mission statement is to:

*“Adopt a Meitheal approach to working together: between the different sectors - Statutory and Voluntary Sectors and Social Partners, and between the Local District and Central Partnership Board Structures, to ensure that development funding is directed to the benefit of the most disadvantaged communities in Mayo”.*

#### **Meitheal Mhaigheo Teo’s core objectives are: -**

- To highlight the needs of socially excluded persons in County Mayo and inform mainstream State Organisations of these needs.
- To co-ordinate work carried out by different organisations addressing the needs of socially excluded people.
- To pilot new approaches to enable socially excluded people to be more included in society especially in their local communities.
- To attract resources into County Mayo which can be directed towards disadvantaged persons.
- To lobby Central Government, The European Commission and National Organisations to adjust macro policies which currently reinforce social exclusion.

The Company was established in 1991 and structurally is composed of a Central Partnership Board which is responsible for the administration and strategic direction of the Local Development Programme and 5 Local District Partnership Boards (LDPs) which are responsible for the implementation of the programme at a local level.

The Central Partnership Board of Meitheal Mhaigheo Teo comprises of 2 representatives of each of the 5 LDP Boards as well as representatives from the Statutory Sector and Social Partners.

It identifies childcare as a countywide issue, which is being addressed by the Central Office working in conjunction with the Sub-boards. Some of the Working Groups established by the Central Board of MEITHEAL MHAIGHEO TEO which may be of relevance to children include the following: -

- A Travellers Working Group.
- Rural Resettlement Working Group.
- Small Holders Working Group.
- Childcare Working Group.
- Education and Youth Working Group.
- Community Development Working Group.
- Employers Working Group.
- Services to the Unemployed Working Group.

### **Western Health Board Child and Family Care Services – 5 Year Strategy 2001**

#### **The mission statement of the Board is:**

*“The Western Health Board will develop, provide and support a comprehensive and integrated range of quality, family focused, child and family care services. The Board in partnership with others will promote the welfare and protection of children and families in its area in accordance with legislation and the health strategy.”*

The strategy is the guiding framework for Western Health Board staff responsible for the management and continuing development of Child and Family Care Services. There are three main domains of responsibility allocated to the Board from the Child Care Act 1991:

- **Family Support**

Children and families who are encountering difficulties in their day to day lives which, without ongoing support, may lead to further more debilitating problems which ultimately may result in the breakdown of families or the entry of children into the care of the Board

- **Child Protection**

Child and Families who face a situation where children are at risk of and/or experiencing neglect, sexual, physical or emotional abuse

- **Alternative Care**

Where the needs of children are best met outside their families in the care of the Western Health Board in either residential foster or relative foster care.

**The Western Health Board's Core Principles are those contained in the Child Care Act 1991**

- Regard the welfare of the child as the first and paramount consideration
- Have regard to the rights and duties of the parents
- Give due consideration to the child's wishes
- Have regard to the principle that it is generally better for children to be brought up in their own families

**The strategy has outlined seven new Service Delivery Goals which will guide all child and family care services for the next five years;**

- Be child and family friendly
- Be adequately resourced
- Be founded on the quality of its staff
- Be accessible
- Be delivered in a transparent fashion
- Embrace partnership models
- Be inclusive

**(a) Contribution to the County Committee**

The Board's role in the county Childcare plan must concentrate on the target group of children who are most in need and who without support service may have to come into care.

At present in County Mayo the Western Health Board's contribution to Childcare services is summarised in the 2001 Section 8 Report – Review of Adequacy of Child Care and Family Support Services.

### **The main childcare activities are as follows;**

- Inspection and regulation of 95 notified services
- Grant aid of 67k to 56 community play Groups and 18 Parent and Toddler groups
- Contribution to Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.
- Grant Aid to Erris Early Years Project
- Funding of Needs assessments

## **Local Research Projects**

More localised assessments of need have been undertaken, including a household survey of those with children aged 0-6 in the Barony of Erris, and a survey of the needs of families with young children living in and around Castlebar town. These studies have been taken into account when informing the plan

### **(a) Kids In Castlebar**

Funded by Western Health Board, this assessment of childcare and family support needs in Castlebar included extensive consultation with young people themselves as well as an audit of existing services in the town.

#### **The findings demonstrated:-**

- Significant differences in the profile of Castlebar Urban and Castlebar Rural. DEDS.
- A trend whereby couples are locating in the more affluent rural DED while single parents and single males tend to live in the urban DED.
- A higher percentage of women working than the national average with women often working in the evenings.
- In 2/3 of the sample households, mothers minded their children during the day.
- A number of childcare issues were identified including cost, access, inflexible hours and lack of information.
- The majority of respondents preferred family to care for children to paid childcare arrangements.

The key conclusions of the research were that those planning services for the 0-6 age group, must address the needs of families in which both parents are working as well as families where 1 parent stays at home to raise the children. Families need and want better information about all aspects of childcare and family services. Families and young people themselves want to have access to facilities.

#### **Recommendations include: -**

- Safe public playgrounds, in appropriate locations including on housing estates to ease access for families.
- A central support facility providing a range of services and training facilities.
- An accessible and acceptable Parenting Support Service.
- Parent and Toddler Groups.
- Social and sports venues for young teenagers.
- Parental involvement in planning of new services.

The report recommends a central resource in the town to meet the needs of parents with children under 6 years and the needs of young teenagers. Castlebar requires a response, which acknowledges its urban problems and difficulties and provides relevant and accessible childcare services. The proposal could be piloted as a model of good practice for other urban centres.

## (b) **Erris Early Years Project - Supporting Families In Erris**

A study into the needs of families with children aged 0-6 years was funded by the Western Health Board and commissioned by a multi-agency steering group. Interviews were carried out with families identified by Public Health Nurses in addition to a postal survey of all primary schools and service providers. The area is characterised by high unemployment, a low density of population, a poor transport infrastructure, and given that much of it lies within the Gaeltacht, service developments must preserve the culture of the region.

### **The Recommendations included the need to:**

- Work through existing infrastructure of public health nursing services and primary schools.
- Adapt an integrated cross-agency partnership approach.
- Address 2 main identified needs namely childcare for working parents and support for parents in raising their children.
- Ensure services are locally based and staffed by people known to the families.

### **The Services identified as priorities were: -**

- Playgrounds providing safe play areas for children, possibly within primary schools.
- Information and education for parents using the medium of community radio.
- Home-based parent and toddler groups.
- A telephone help-line for parents.
- Enhanced facilities in health centres.

The research is extensive and the recommendations resource intensive. However, this is a neglected area of extreme deprivation and deserves a comprehensive multi-agency strategy to test models for service delivery in remote rural areas.

## **Consultation with Stakeholders**

### (a) **Children**

As part of the consultation process a pilot consultation exercise was carried out with pre-school children. It is recognised that this was a limited exercise. If a range of views from children are to be part of the childcare planning process, then a consultation strategy with children needs to be developed and take place on an ongoing basis.

**Children were very clear about what they wanted from service provision whether sessional or full day-care.**

**The most important aspect for children was the opportunity for a variety of play experiences.**

**Their understanding of why they were attending pre-school/full day-care provision was interesting;**

*“To learn to stay inside lines when colouring in.”*

*“To put on my coat because I’m big.”*

*“To be good and put my rubbish in the bin.”*

### **Children were also definite about what they did not like;**

*“When I’m tired and feel sick and have to come.”*

*“When I can’t do the jigsaws.”*

*“When someone shouts.”*

If children and especially young children are to be consulted on an ongoing basis then training on consultation will be a key consideration for the consultation strategy.

## **(b) Parents**

As part of the consultation session with service providers, parents were also consulted on their views about childcare service provision within the Castlebar area and through a women’s conference in Erris.

### **Parents felt that:**

- There is a real shortage of childcare places generally and a dearth of quality childcare provision.
- Childcare is not affordable to most parents. Parents choice of facility is linked to the costs and for lone parents, services are not affordable.
- Parents felt that generally childcare services were not able to offer a range of family support services. Parents cited the lack of parent-toddler groups as an important area for development.
- Parents viewed childcare services as a preparation for school and a medium for socialisation. Few parents understood the value of play in young children’s development.
- Current barriers for parents in terms of accessing services were lack of information about where childcare services were located, lack of flexibility of services to meet their family and employment needs, cost and distance.
- Parents were also concerned about the lack of afterschool provision and the low levels of funding available to current sessional providers.

The following are some of the issues, which were raised as a result of the Erris consultation process.

- Few parents feel involved or are aware of the childcare planning process.
- There was a general feeling that childcare services are very limited. While there may be some pre-school sessional services, the availability of crèches, childminding, full day-care services, parent-toddler groups were non-existent. There was little recognition of the importance of the informal sector, i.e. care by families and grandparents and their need for support.
- The quality of services and the perception that currently, childcare services do not offer quality was an important consideration for parents. For parents, a shared value base with an appropriately trained workforce would be an important indicator for quality childcare. At present, parents reported that they felt compromised, that they had no choice, therefore, they were reluctant to comment on how individual services met or did not meet their needs.
- There were many barriers to parents accessing suitable childcare arrangements; limited availability of a range of services, costs of services, transport, lack of information on quality and service type, and lack of resources for children with special needs were outlined as some of the key barriers.
- Parents wanted a range of accessible, high quality services encompassing pre-school, afterschool, leisure and outdoor play services.
- Parents expressed a wish to be more actively consulted and involved in the development of the County Childcare Committee Plan. They wanted more information of who was on the Committee and whom they represented. They wanted a draft summary statement of the content of the plan. They would like to see the setting up of local fora to oversee the development and implementation of the Plan.
- Parents also expressed a need for a range of appropriate information about the types and quality of childcare support services they should expect to have available to them.

## (c) Providers

A consultation exercise was carried out with representatives from private full day-care services and community managed sessional pre-school services in Castlebar. While not a representative sample, the views reflected in this consultation echoed the feedback in Erris. The following comments are a reflection of the views of the staff within settings:

- There was recognition of the support provided by the Western Health Board and the IPPA Advisor. However, in general, staff did not feel valued as childcare professionals.
- The low pay scales for work in the sector was seen as a key factor in staff turnover.
- Staff felt that they had very limited access to training, citing that many courses were held in Dublin and therefore inaccessible. It is interesting to note that staff in these settings had a range of qualifications such as Montessori, City & Guilds, NCVA, Level II. However, they expressed the need for ongoing professional development opportunities such as training on planning and observation, child development, adult-child interaction, policy development and management.
- Basic play resources were cited as a major weakness in both settings.
- The private provider identified their isolation as a major issue. In particular they would favour contacts on a cross border basis. The community sector provider felt they had developed stronger links with parents, schools and other community sector organisations.
- The vision of childcare services for these providers reflected the vision for services expressed by the County Childcare Committee. They wanted to see:
  - Investment in existing services as well as the development of new services.
  - Funding for resources for children's play.
  - Better terms and conditions for staff.
  - A focus on a strategy for quality.
  - The development of good outdoor play areas.

## (d) National Voluntary Organisations

### 1. Barnardo's

Barnardo's have a library and information centre based in Galway, which offers support for the Western Region. They have a Regional Development Worker who offers support in respect of quality for all community childcare services who work with children aged 14 and younger, with a focus on disadvantage. This support worker can offer intensive assistance, training, advice etc., with regard to enhancing the quality of childcare that is being offered to children.

### 2. Forbairt Naíonraí Teo.

Forbairt Naíonraí Teo. is committed to supporting Naíonraí services. With funding from the Western Health Board they employ an adviser to support Naíonraí and Irish medium childcare services in Co. Mayo including Gaeltacht areas.

#### **Forbairt Naíonraí Teo aim:**

- To assist in the promotion of the total development of the child through play, by supporting the role of parents in the development and education of their children.
- To give children the opportunity and support necessary to acquire Irish naturally by providing a quality Irish medium service
- To provide a quality support service for parents.
- The Forbairt Naíonraí Teo. adviser is committed to working with the County Mayo Childcare Committee to assure appropriate ongoing support is given to Naíonraí and other Irish Medium Childcare Services within the County.

### 3. Childminding Ireland

#### **The National Childminding Association's main objectives are:**

- To promote high standards in family based day-care for children.
- To support, inform and advise all childminders in the matter of family based day-care for children.
- To maintain a code of standards for family based day-care.
- To encourage the recognition of childminding as a positive day-care setting for children.

Childminding Ireland estimate that family based day-care represents over 80% of full day-care in Ireland and is the first choice of majority of parents. However, only 6 childminders are notified to the Western Health Board. Childminding Ireland is committed to encouraging childminders to notify, to promote quality childminding by providing practical help to childminders by identifying and meeting their training needs and developing local networks of childminders. Childminding Ireland is committed to working collaboratively with the Mayo County Childcare Committee and the newly appointed Western Health Board Childminding Adviser.

### 4. IPPA – The Early Childhood Organisation

IPPA is a national voluntary childcare organisation whose membership of over 2000 provides early childhood education and care to more than 36000 children annually. Since its foundation in 1969, IPPA has provided professional support and technical assistance to members, parents and the public. It has played a leading role in developing adult-friendly training for the sector, both accredited and tailor-made. Requested by FETAC to develop a Level 3 course, IPPA has piloted this course twice and provides support and in-service to other trainers providing the course through VEC and other colleges around the country.

There are 57 IPPA Childcare Provider members in Mayo, three of whom include Parent and Toddler meeting in their service. In addition another 12 members of IPPA (bringing the service membership in Mayo to a total of 69) are Parent and Toddler Groups, run by volunteer parents. All 69 avail of the IPPA Group Insurance scheme. Individual members of the organisation in Mayo number 10, many of whom are involved in tutoring the organisation's courses, but do not provide childcare services.

#### **Services to members include the:**

- Quarterly magazine children@play
- A wide range of accredited and in-service training courses
- Public meetings, seminars and conferences
- Resource centres in Dublin and Cork
- Publications
- Quality Improvement Programme
- Group Insurance scheme
- Assistance with funding application and sources
- Research and Consultancy
- Advocacy and Policy development
- Branch / area meetings which, apart from the IPPA business element, are open to parents and other non-members.

In Mayo, IPPA is co-operating with the Adult Education service to provide level 2 training over two years, while a 20 hour course, of interest to parents and carers, "Play and the Developing Child" is run on a recurring basis.

### 5. ISPC – Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children

The ISPC is a child centred Society, which has as its primary aim, the protection of every child's right to a safe passage through childhood. The 'ISPC Castlebar' works with children from 0-18 year and their parents through the following services. The Childhood Support Worker, Training and Awareness Officer, STEPS, CRIB service and a team of ten volunteers. Specific programmes offered are: Individual work with children, Group work with children, Individual and group work with parents; and preventative and educative training.

# Chapter 2

## Demographic Profile of County Mayo

### (i) Mayo County profile

#### Population

The population of County Mayo was 111,524 at the 1996 Census and the child population (0-15) was 27,438. Between 1996 and 2002 the population increased by approximately 6,000 or 5.3%. The natural increase amounted to 498 with 5,406 the result of immigration. The increase is not evenly spread throughout the county with the increases centred around the urban towns and a decline of approximately 1000 in the rural population. The problem of rural depopulation is even more acute in North and West Mayo "Taking a line from south of Killaha to south of Newport, thirty nine out of 42 E.D.s show decline<sup>1</sup>," with a total loss of 1209. There has been a population decrease in some towns of North and West Mayo which showed an increase between the 1986 and 1991 census

2002	1996	1991	1986
117,428	111,524	110,713	115,184

The county is predominately rural with population density as low as two per square mile in the Northwest near Glencoo, and four per square mile in Shramore and Erriff. The average population density in the county is 52.1 persons per square mile. The structure of service delivery will have to take into account the dispersal patterns of population.

During the period 1986-1996 (Map 1) there has been a marked centralisation of population with marked decreases in the population in the south-east and Northwest of the County. Castlebar, Westport, Crossmolina have become the most densely populated areas. The 1996 – 2002 population change statistics (Map 2) reflects a similar shaft in population. The Gaeltacht areas of the Northwest and South West of the County have been particularly affected by rural depopulation.

#### The central areas of population area as follows:

- Ballina
- Castlebar
- Westport
- Claremorris

#### Child Population

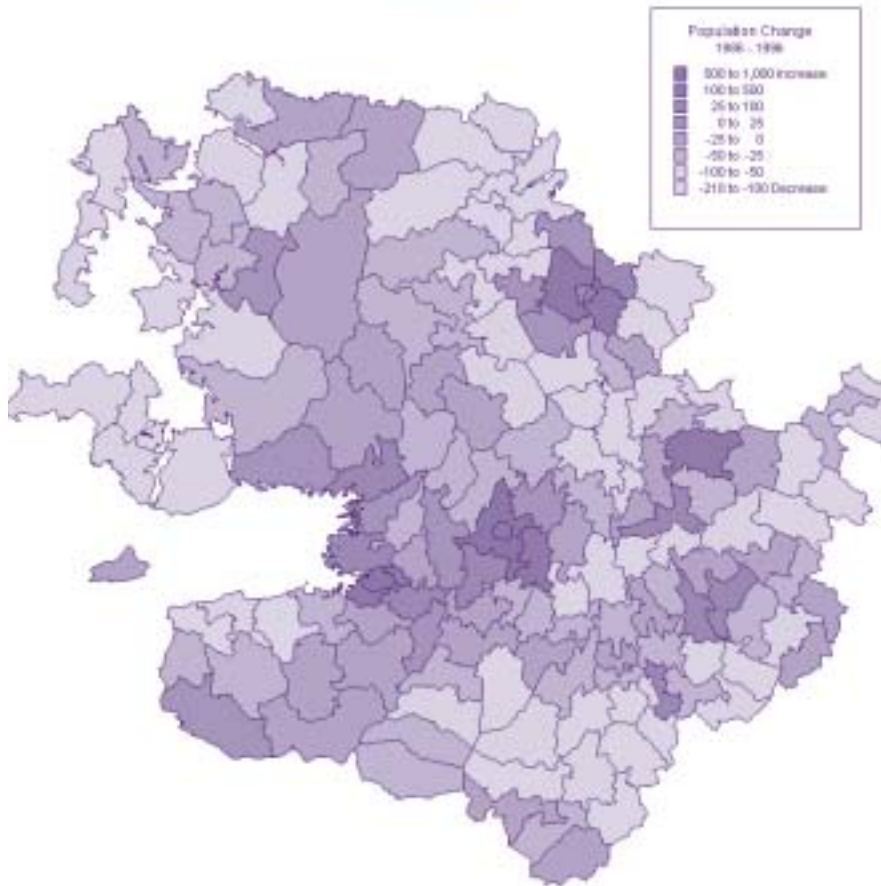
The analysis in this section concentrates on the 1996 C.S.O. figures. From 1986 to 1996 there was an 18% decline in the under 15 population and a 22% decline in the under 12 population. The decline in the under 6 population was particularly marked.

The Childcare Census report demonstrates considerable variations in the child population within the seven Electoral Areas.

<sup>1</sup> Dr Seamus Caulfired "Two Mayos – One in crisis@ Western People 113/11/02

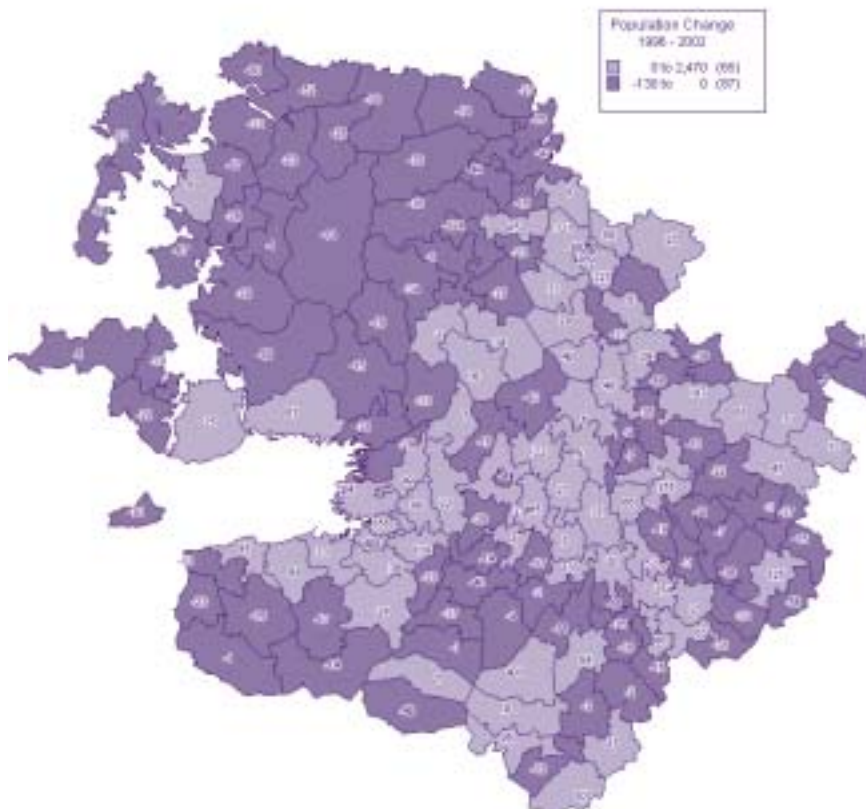
Population change  
1986 - 1996

Map 1



Population Change By DED  
1996 - 2002

Map 2



**Table 2** Child population under 12 by electoral areas (1996 census)

	0 – 1	1 – 3	3 – 6	6 - 12	TOTAL
Ballina	295	611	1088	2425	4419
Ballinrobe	110	219	402	1004	1735
Belmullet	159	285	543	1421	2408
Castlebar	307	612	1012	2447	4378
Claremorris	153	330	575	1377	2435
Swinford	149	341	620	1466	2576
Westport	186	384	655	1447	2672
<b>Total Co Mayo</b>	<b>1359</b>	<b>2782</b>	<b>4895</b>	<b>11,587</b>	<b>20,623</b>

For the purposes of this report it is estimated that the county's childcare population for the planning period will be gradually increasing in the 0 –3 age group but declining in the 4 –6 age groups.

**Table 3** Population Projections of children aged 0 -12

AGE RANGE	2001	2006
0-3	1285	1322
1-3	4088	4206
4-6	5262	4155
7-12	9844	8493
13-15	6341	5109
<b>Total</b>	<b>25819</b>	<b>23285</b>

## Deprivation

County Mayo's overall deprivation score using the Haase Index of Relative Affluence and Deprivation shows a score of 6:9 compared to the national average of 4:6. The general pattern is one of extreme disadvantage throughout the county with increasing levels of deprivation in the Gaeltacht areas, pockets throughout Swinford, Castlebar and Ballinrobe and to the Southwest. The major concentration of disadvantage is in the North among DED's such as Urlaur, Kilmovee, Turngesh and Kilgarvan and in the west in Erris and Achill Peninsulas.

## Employment

The main employment in County Mayo is agriculture (22%) manufacturing (18%) and professional services (18%). In 1996 the unemployment rate in County Mayo was 16.35% compared to the national average of 14.8%. The unemployment rate in Belmullet was 35%.

**Table 4** Unemployment rate by sex age and location 2001 -2002

	March 2001	March 2002	Males Under 25 years	Males Over 25 years	Females Under 25 years	Females Over 25 years
Mayo	5956	6420	571	3313	371	2165
Achill	305	319	37	226	14	79
Ballina	1834	1894	182	1016	108	588
Ballinrobe	363	434	22	241	21	150
Belmullet	787	811	69	441	47	254
Castlebar	770	959	107	438	81	333
Claremorris	514	547	33	282	16	216
Swinford	838	810	70	364	41	335
Westport	545	646	51	342	43	210

The figures represent a growth in unemployment figures during the past 12 months. Unemployment within the over 25 age group for men and women considerably outstrips unemployment rates in the under 25 year olds. Unemployment figures are significant for Ballina, Bellmullet, Castlebar and Swinford.

In 1996, 75% of 13,200 women employed were engaged in full time work, 25% of women reported working part time. Current figures do not report a significant decline in employment of women, however anecdotal information would suggest that women's employment rates have decreased.

**Table 5** Incidence of lone parenthood families with children under 15 by electoral district

Electoral district	Lone Parents	% total families
Ballina	797	20
Ballinrobe	329	19
Belmullet	503	23
Castlebar	665	18
Claremorris	476	21
Swinford	504	22
Westport	440	19
<b>Total Co Mayo</b>	<b>3714</b>	<b>20</b>

It is also of interest to note the slightly higher incidence of children growing up in one-parent families in areas with high deprivation scores. Overall Mayo's incidence of children living in lone parent families is consistent with the National average of 20%.

However, in Belmullet in the Northwest of Co Mayo 23% of households are headed by lone parents and this is higher than the national and county average, as is Swinford in the east at 22% and Claremorris in the Southeast at 21%.

## Social Inclusion

Meitheal Mhaigheo Teo's Strategic Plan 2000 – 2006 contains information about factors contributing to social exclusion. It notes that 41% of the county population left school at 15 with no formal education qualification compared to the national average of 34.5%. In some rural areas the figure is as high as 70%. It is also of note that there is higher than average long-term unemployment in Mayo and a mismatch between skills required and skills available. The plan also noted the following:

- Lack of transport networks in rural areas.
- Increased centralisation of social and economic services.
- Exclusion of target groups from existing community and voluntary organisations.
- Declines in the traditional support structure for families in rural areas. The ability of women to undertake their traditional role of caring for children and older dependants is under pressure from the increasing demands for workers and the need for dual incomes.
- Mayo is dominated by three urban centres - Ballina, Castlebar and Westport. This growth is at the expense of more rural areas of the county as the urban centres are attracting the younger more educated and mobile elements of the population.
- Sustaining vibrant communities on the islands off the coast of County Mayo.

Services to the unemployed include the development of childcare services and an aspiration to increase female participation in the labour force from 36% in 1996 to 50% in 2006.

## Clar

Clar is a programme designed to tackle the problem of depopulation, decline and lack of services in rural areas. Areas selected under Clar have suffered the greatest depopulation and on average these areas have lost 50% of their population in the last 75 years. It is one of the measures focusing on quality of life issues and was launched in 5<sup>th</sup> October 2001

Much of Mayo is in the Clar programme (Map 3) as region 8 and has suffered a population loss of 51.49%.

## (ii) Unique Features of Co. Mayo

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### Gaeltacht areas

There are two main Gaeltacht areas in County Mayo; the Iorras and Acaill Gaeltachtaí are situated in the Northwest while the Tuar Mhic Eadaigh Gaeltacht is located in the south of the county on the Galway border. Gaeltacht areas in County Mayo have experienced long periods of substantial emigration creating material and social deprivation due to the loss of the working age population and a sector most likely to invest in the locality.

The 2002 Census of population shows a marked movement of population from the Gaeltacht areas; North Mayo has been particularly affected. Reasons young people have given for leaving the Gaeltacht areas are as follows:

- Absence of third level qualification
- Absence of suitable leisure facilities
- Unavailability of suitable employment

<sup>2</sup> Based on estimates contained in "Implementation Plan for Actions Proposed in Traveller Health – A National Strategy 2002 – 2005". WHB

Mayo DEDs with  
Clár & Gaeltacht  
Areas in Mayo

Map 3

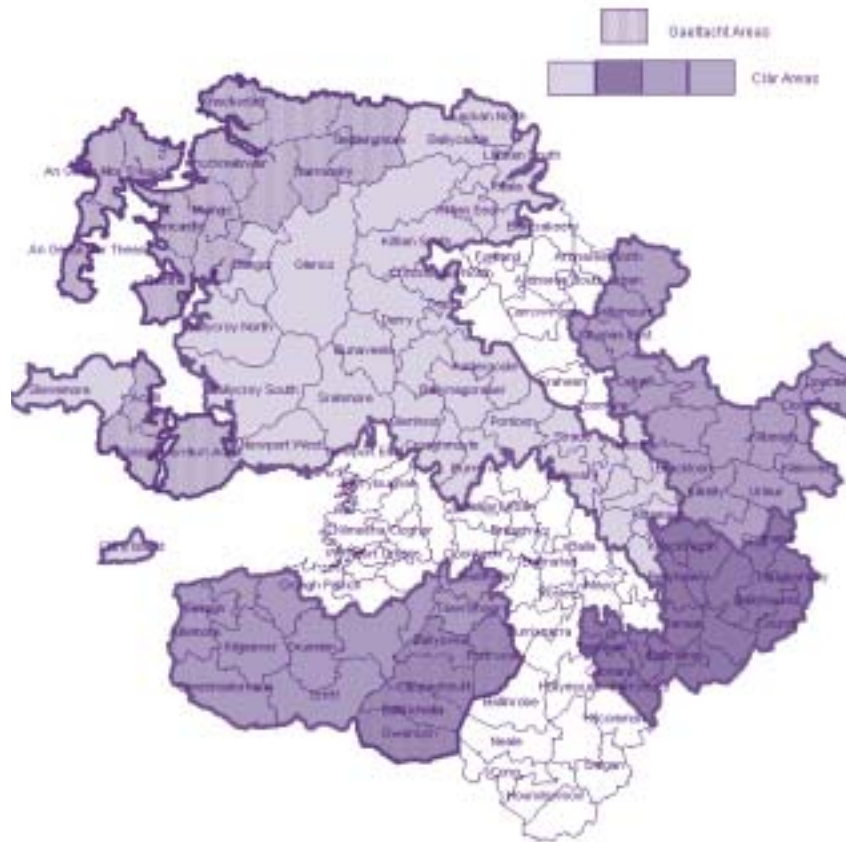


Table 6 Census of Population 1996 Mayo Gaeltacht Areas

Area	0-2 Yrs	3-4 Yrs	5-9 Yrs	10-14 Yrs
Tuar Mhic Eadaigh	56	43	147	205
Beal an Mhuirthead	255	217	630	897
Acaill	60	44	124	198
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>304</b>	<b>901</b>	<b>1300</b>

## Traveller Community

According to the 1996 Census and the Western Health Board<sup>2</sup> figures there are 4,130 travellers in the Western Health Board region (counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon) with approximately 921 of these in Mayo. The families are located in 4 main areas Ballina, Castlebar, Ballinrobe and Ballyhaunis which account for 140 families out of a total of 162 families in the county. It is estimated 74% of the population are aged less than 25 years of age.

Table 7 Traveller Population by age groups Mayo Census 1986

Age Group	Number	Percentage
0-4	169	19
5-9	156	17.5
Less than 10	325	36.5
Less than 15	463	52
Less than 25	659	74
Less than 35	757	85
Over 45	75	8.4
65 and Over	15	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>847</b>	<b>100</b>

**Table 8:** Geographic locations and numbers of traveller families

Location	House	Caravan	Halting Site	Total
Ballina	39	6		45
Ballindine	1			1
Ballinrobe	27	6		33
Ballyhaunis	8	9		17
Castlebar	18	20	7	45
Charlestown		5		5
Claremorris	2	1		3
Foxford	1			1
Swinford	2	4		6
Westport	4	2		6
<b>Total</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>162</b>

## Children with a Disability

Enable Ireland estimate that there are 300 children (0-18) with physical and sensory disabilities in County Mayo. Western Care Association estimates that there are 221 children with a generalised learning disability and 55 with an autistic condition giving a total of 276 children. There are 26 children under 6 with a learning disability and 16 children under 6 with autism. While no breakdown of location is available at present it is reasonable to assume that the distribution of families with a disability follows the settlement patterns of the population as a whole. The spread of and number of pre school children with a disability will challenge the provision of specialised services.

## Asylum Seekers

The increase in the number of Asylum Seekers to Ireland in the past 10 years has been well documented. Initially impacting on the major cities the policy of dispersal has included the location of families with children in County Mayo. The first placement of Asylum Seekers in Mayo happened in 1999 when a contract was signed with a hostel in Cong. This is now operating as a reception centre. A reception centre has also opened in Kiltimagh (2004).

There are approximately 450 asylum seekers in Mayo the vast majority of whom are in Castlebar and Ballyhaunis. Outside Castlebar and Ballyhaunis there is a scattering of other families.

Asylum seekers and their children have many additional needs which are difficult to meet but which are more challenging in a county such as Mayo with its patterns of rural dispersal and poor infrastructure.

## Non Nationals

With continued economic development a recent development is the number of non-nationals from outside the European Union working and living in Mayo. The number of permits issued between January and November 2002 totalled 613, broken down into 387 new permits and 226 renewals. There are no figures available for the number of children of work permit holders. Even with a small proportion of family units the needs for childcare could be challenging and the strategic plan should take this into account. In Ballyhaunis the local Chamber of Commerce estimates that there are 180 foreign workers of 17 nationalities which creates a unique challenge in this area.

# Chapter 3

## Current Provision of Childcare Services in County Mayo

### (i) General Childcare provision

At the time of the Child Care Census 2000 there were;

**Table 9** Childcare provision by type 1999

<b>47 Playgroups;</b>	37 offering sessional services, 5 offering full day-care
<b>15 Montessori;</b>	11 offering sessional services, 4 offering full day-care
<b>8 Naíonraí</b>	
<b>8 Crèche/Full Day-care</b>	
<b>1 Workplace Nursery</b>	
<b>7 Parent / Toddler Groups</b>	
<b>0 Afterschool Provision</b>	

**Table 10** Children attending services by age - 2000 Childcare Census

Children attending services		
Age range	Number	Percentage
0-1	25	1.8%
1-3	211	7.6%
3-6	1035	33%
6-12	12	21%

In December 2002 there were 101 services notified to the Western Health Board.

**Table 11** Increase in Notified Services 2000 - 2002

Provision	2000	1st December 2002
Sessional Day-care	62	71 (17 of these services provide 2 session per day)
Full Day-care	9	18
Registered Childminders	0	3
Naíonraí	5	11 (4 of these services provides 2 sessions per day)
Parent and Toddler Groups	7	18

Between the child care census 2000 figures (based on figures collated between September 1991 – January 2000 i.e. approximately three years ago) for 1/12/02 the number of notified services has increased from 76 to 101 or by approximately 30%. In terms of places the increase is up from 1,286 to 1,827 a numerical increase of 541 or 42%. This is a significant increase and reflects the effects of various demands, supports and The Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. There has been a doubling of full day care services, Naíonraí and parent and toddler groups. While there is no requirement for parent and toddler groups to notify under the regulations it is the experience of the Health board that a significant number of these services will develop into sessional services.

These figures are not broken down by age group but some generalisations may be helpful. There are 20,623 children under 12 (1996 Census) which indicated that less than 8.9% attend a formal service, up from 6.2% in the 2000 childcare census. Taking the figure for children aged under 6 (9,036) the percentage rises to 20% compared to 14% in

2000. As most of the services are provided in sessional services it can be concluded that most children are cared for in a home situation either with parents or by childminders. Calculations of the numbers of childminders are not possible but there are a number of childminders who have notified. It is reasonable to assume that the vast majority of childminders care for less than 4 children.

At the time of the Childcare Census in 2000 there were no afterschool services and now there are 23 services which provide an after school dimension. The afterschool services are provided as part on an existing full care or sessional service.

**Table 12** Notified Services by Type

Provision	Community	Private
Sessional	36	27
Naíonraí	11	0
Full Day Care	4	17
Childminders	0	6
Drop-In Centre		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>52</b>

## (ii) Location of services

### Introduction

Mayo County Committee has adopted the 7 electoral areas as a basis for the networking subdivisions of the county. These areas are roughly equal in terms of population but vary greatly in density, physical characteristics and provision of service. The 7 areas are Ballina, Ballinrobe Belmullet, Castlebar, Claremorris, Swinford, and Westport.

The following section considers the location of services by electoral areas and considers the distances travelled to access them.

### Ballina

**Table 13** Services in Ballina Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	8	6	14
Naíonraí	1	0	1
Full Day Care	0	2	2
Childminders	0	1	1
Drop In Centre	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>18</b>

There are two full day care services concentrated in the Ballina area with no full service available outside the town of Ballina. Sessional services are concentrated mainly in Ballina with 10 services. There is a group in Crossmolina and Killala, one in Ballycastle in the north, and one in Lahardane. These latter 3 groups each cater for 10-20 children, Within Ballina town there are a range of services with 1 group catering for under 10, several catering for 10-30 children, and 1 larger group catering for 30-40 children. Children travel anything up to 9 miles to access services in Ballina town while children in the Ballycastle group travel between 5 to 9 miles to the service. Those accessing services in Crossmolina travel 3 to 5 miles. There are no services to the west of the Crossmolina area.

## Ballinrobe

**Table 14** Services in the Ballinrobe Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	4	1	5
Naíonraí	1	0	1
Full Day Care	1	1	2
Childminders	0	1	1
Drop In Centre	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>

There are two full day care services in the town of Ballinrobe and 2 sessional services. The other services are in Cong, The Neale, Roundfort, Shrule and Ballyglass. The area has the joint lowest provision of services in the county.

## Belmullet

**Table 15** Services in the Belmullet Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	2	1	3
Naíonraí	6	0	6
Full Day Care	1	1	2
Childminders	0	0	0
Drop In Centre	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>12</b>

There is a community full day care facility in Achill (Keel) and a private full day care facility in Belmullet. Of these sessional services in this area, there are eight community, six of which are Naíonraí, one private service and one drop in centre. Geesala, Doohoma and Inver are disadvantaged areas with no service. Two services in this area offer an after-school service, and there are six parent and toddler groups in this electoral area.

## Castlebar

**Table 16** Services in the Castlebar Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	4	7	11
Naíonraí	3	0	3
Full Day Care	1	6	7
Childminders	0	1	1
Drop In Centre	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>22</b>

Not surprisingly, Castlebar, the County's principal town has the largest provision of childcare services. In the town of Castlebar there are 7 full day care services out of 18 for the county. There are no full day care services outside the town of Castlebar in this electoral area. There are 11 sessional services in and around Castlebar. There are no facilities north of Castlebar in this electoral area. The other sessional facilities are at Balla and the Naíonra in the Tourmakeady Gaeltacht area in the south of the electoral area. Distances travelled to services outside Castlebar are typically under 5 miles but some children travel up to 9 miles and sometimes more to services in Castlebar town. The largest rise in the services over the past three years has been in the Castlebar area.

## Claremorris

**Table 17** Services in the Claremorris Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	7	7	14
Naíonraí	0	0	0
Full Day Care	1	1	2
Childminders	0	2	2
Drop In Centre	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>18</b>

In Claremorris in the Southeast of Co Mayo there is one full day care and six sessional services. In Ballyhaunis there are three sessional services and one full day care service. Mayo Abbey has a full day care and a sessional service. There is a good spread of sessional services between Tooreen, Brickens, Taugheen, Knock, Barnacarroil and Irishtown. Children travel 3 to 5 miles to the group at Knock and up to 9 miles to access some of the services at Ballyhamis community and Claremorris.

## Swinford

**Table 18** Services in the Swinford Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	5	2	9
Naíonraí	0	0	0
Full Day Care	0	1	1
Childminders	0	2	2
Drop In Centre	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>10</b>

The Swinford Electoral Area is poorly resourced with only one full time service based in Kiltimagh. There are two sessional facilities in Kiltimagh and Foxford and a group in Swinford Kilkelly and Charlestown. However, distances travelled to the facilities in Swinford Electoral area are higher with children travelling over 9 miles to the service in Charlestown. With Ballinrobe, Swinford has the lowest provision of services.

## Westport

**Table 19** Services in the Westport Electoral Area

Provision	Community	Private	Total
Sessional	7	6	13
Naíonraí	0	0	0
Full Day Care	0	2	2
Childminders	0	0	0
Drop In Centre	0	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>16</b>

There is a full day care facility, eight sessional services and one drop in centre in Westport town. In Kilmeena there is a full day care facility and a sessional service in Aughagower, Killeen, Louisburgh, Clare Island and Newport. There is a dearth of provision in the west and south of the electoral area. The Children attending in Louisburgh travel up to 9 miles to access a service. Typically there is little provision in the most disadvantaged areas. There are three after-school services and three parent and toddler groups in this electoral area.

## Services in Gaeltacht areas:

There are Naíonraí services available in

- Acaill (Achill)
- Beal an Mhuirhead (Belmullet)
- Ceathru Thaidhg
- Cuain Oiligh (Elly-Bay)
- Gleann na Muaidhe (Glenamoy)
- Thuar Mhic Eadaigh

## Services for the traveller community

### Location of Services for Traveller Children

#### (a) Castlebar

There is a Department of Education Traveller Pre-school sessional service. It is a traveller only service managed by non-parent management committees. The service is centrally located on school grounds in Castlebar. Children travel to the service by special bus.

There is a Sonas Sessional Crèche about 2 miles outside Castlebar. Sonas are organised under Meitheal Mhaigheo. Access is difficult for traveller children.

#### (b) Ballyhaunis

In Ballyhaunis, there is a Pre-school and a Sonas Crèche, managed jointly under the auspices of the East Mayo Partnership Board and a local voluntary committee, which is inclusive of parent representatives. Currently these services cater largely for traveller children and are operating on site with Mayo VEC's St. Catherine's Traveller Training Centre at Tooaree. The Crèche can cater for 9 children and the Pre-school for 6-8 children.

#### (c) Ballinrobe

There is a crèche operating on site with Mayo VEC's St. Catherine's Traveller Training service, at the Parish Centre. The service is Full-day Care and is organised by the South West Mayo Local Development Project. The service is for Travellers only. It is centrally located, and convenient for parents bringing their children. It can cater for 9 children.

Three places in local Community Playgroup are allocated to traveller children and two places in the local Naíonra are allocated to traveller children.

Currently a steering group chaired by the local home-school officer is working towards the development of a purpose built integrated Community Early Childhood Centre. The steering group is comprised of representatives from the local community playgroup, the Traveller community, the local Naíonra, Parent and Toddler group, local parents, WHB EYS adviser.

#### (c) Ballina

There is a Traveller pre-school on the grounds of St Catherine's Convent. Children are bussed to the service. There is a crèche and a sessional playgroup located in Parkside Project on Parkside Estate, which is accessible to Travellers. Children are brought to this service by their parents.

## Children with disabilities – Provision

All children with a learning disability are referred by Western Health Board Child Health Services to the Western Care Association. Western Care operates a Full-day Care service for children with autism in Castlebar. There are also two special schools based in Ballina and Castlebar. Most of the services are provided in-home, in mainstream schooling, and through local provision, such as playgroups. There is an Early Childhood team who provides therapeutic and family support services. Where appropriate parents are supported in placing children in sessional services support from Western Care in the form of specialised advice, or the provision of a support worker for the playgroup.

Enable Ireland provides in home support and respite for children with physical disabilities. They also provide an assistant where needed for pre-school children in playgroup settings.

There are also two special schools based in Ballina and Castlebar.

### **(iii) Present training strategy for County Mayo**

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The Mayo County Childcare Committee believes that initial training and on-going professional development opportunities for childcare staff is critical in terms of both developing a quality childcare service and developing the childcare profession. Within the County there has always been a strong focus on the development and delivery of training for childcare workers with the development of local and regional approaches to the development and delivery of appropriate training.

In 1997 a research study carried out for the West of Ireland Network for new sources for jobs highlighted the following issues in relation to the training needs of the childcare workforce;

- The majority of staff in County Mayo had more than 10 years experience of working with children, with the remainder having between 3-10 years.
- 84% of staff had attended IPPA introductory courses, 20% IPPA Foundation, 13% IPPA Diploma Course. Other training attended included Naíonraí, FAS, City & Guilds, Montessori and other private training colleges.
- 88% of staff in 1997 indicated a need for nationally accredited training.
- Staff indicated the need for flexible arrangements for training to include evenings and weekends.
- Cost, location and family commitments, were cited as barriers to accessing training.
- Other issues highlighted in this research were the poor rates of pay, low job status and the perception of being undervalued.
- The lack of appropriately qualified trainers.

This research led to the development of the Western Region Early Childhood Training Project which trained 17 trainers regionally. 32 childcare providers in County Mayo received training accredited at NCVA Level 2. This project finished in 1999.

The National Childcare Census Report 2000 highlighted the most up-to date training needs analysis across the County. When the qualifications of staff in County Mayo were examined a number of significant findings emerged;

- Over one quarter (46 of a total of 157 staff) employed in childcare had no formal qualification.
- 10% of staff were qualified at NCVA Level II and a further 9% had diplomas from a range of private colleges and agencies.

It is estimated that since the Census that there has been a significant increase in the numbers of staff who have attained Level II qualifications. It is estimated that in excess of 400 people have completed Level II courses of study.

The Mayo County Childcare Committee recognises that the development of an appropriate training strategy linked to National and International development in Early Childhood Training is now essential. The vision for the County Mayo Training Strategy is a fully qualified workforce, which has access to a range of initial and ongoing training and professional development, opportunities to include the following levels of training for appropriate staff grades;

<b>Level 2</b>	Training for all front line staff <i>(childminders, playgroup assistants, crèche workers, afterschool providers, Naíonraí staff).</i>
<b>Level 3</b>	Leaders / Supervisors
<b>Level 4</b>	Managers
<b>Level 5 (Diploma/Degree)</b>	Development/Support Workers

Ongoing profession development on a variety of issues to be provided on a regular basis as part of staff teams yearly development plan. Issues such as child development, observation and record keeping, equal opportunities, and providing for children with special needs were deemed essential.

It is recognised that this vision will only be achieved incrementally year on year and will require a partnership approach by all training providers i.e. National Voluntary Organisations, FAS, VEC and others.

In 2002 there have been 4 full time and 3 part time Level II courses ensuring qualification for 132 people. There were also three modules (one through Irish) provided to staff on children with special needs. The Western Health Board has provided training under the Children First child protection procedures to assist childcare services to comply with the national guidelines

## **(iv) Current status regarding the level of quality of childcare services**

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The 1998 National Census of Childcare Provision Providers one of the only sources of quantifiable information on the status of the sector regarding quality indicators. The Census highlights a number of issues such as the low levels of staff training, the poor terms and conditions of staff, the absence of a number of services implementing critical policy initiatives such as equal opportunities, child protection, child management, child observation and recording, parental partnerships, etc.

103 full day and sessional pre-school services currently notify the Western Health Board and adhere to minimum legislative standards on health and safety, physical environment, planning and curriculum programme. It is recognised by the committee that curriculum development is not covered adequately in the regulations.

There is no objective information on the nature, range, and quality of provision in the home based childminding sector, nor on After-school provision.

There is limited information, mostly that collected as a result of the National Census, on the management arrangements in privately managed or community managed early childhood services.

There is agreement within the Mayo County Childcare Committee that a strategy to improve quality childcare services will require a series of actions. The actions will focus on curriculum and programme content for children and management arrangements provided by committees or individuals.

### **The focus on programme content will look at:**

- The physical environment – buildings, physical design and service layout.
- The educational, care and play curriculum.
- The adult-child interactions, observation and recording systems.
- The policy framework.
- The relationship with parents.

### **The focus on management arrangement will look at:**

- The vision, objectives, and aims of service and how they are communicated with service users.
- The adherence to legislative requirements to include equal opportunities requirements.
- The recruitment, management and development of staff.
- The development and review of appropriate childcare policies.
- The financial management and long term financial strategies in place.
- The management of physical resources, to include accessibility and child friendly design.
- The linkages with other early childcare services locally and nationally.

# Chapter 4

## Future Service needs in County Mayo

### Representation and Co-ordination

The Mayo County Childcare Committee has been meeting regularly since its establishment in 2001. Generally there is a balanced representation.

The committee will set up a system of subcommittees which will ensure wider representation and the full involvement of all committee members.

### Capacity Building

Mayo is a large county with a rural dispersed population, Transport is difficult with a mountainous terrain separated by large lakes. Capacity building will have to address the urban needs as well as the rural demographic patterns.

There is a minimal level of supply across the entire range of childcare provision. Provision is inequitable throughout the County with sometimes several facilities in one area and large geographical areas with little or no provision. Rural families, babies under 3 and children in the afterschool age groups are particularly poorly serviced. There is a particular lack of services in the Ballinrobe and Swinford electoral areas.

Since the 1999 Census there has been a growth in service provision. While an updated notification list is available from the Western Health Board these services and in particular new developments need to be mapped annually.

Considering that many services throughout the County operate for sessions which typically last 2½ -3½ hours, parents and carers travel considerable distances often on poor roads to bring their children to childcare services. In view of the levels of deprivation throughout the County, the costs of travelling to services as well as the distances involved may preclude some families from taking up resources.

Only 6 childminders have notified the Western Health Board. There is an absence of information on childminding services across the county. Childminding and other similar home based service may be an appropriate model of service provision for rural areas

While some local research has taken place in Erris and Castlebar, there are many areas of the county where there is little information about the needs and requirements of families. Providing appropriate childcare services in offshore islands is a particular challenge

### Equality Issues

There are significant populations of Gaeltacht areas, Travellers, asylum seekers island communities and foreign workers and children with disabilities who have significant needs. In most instances specialist services even if appropriate are not practical because of the demographics of County Mayo. There is a need for the committee to examine the issues and challenges of integration vis a vis the provision of separate services. In most cases services should be supported to provide care which is based on the best anti discriminatory practice.

### **(a) Gaeltacht areas**

The fact that part of the county is a Gaeltacht area requires that any initiatives which aim to provide support and develop services must be culturally appropriate. Initiatives in Gaeltacht areas should aim to foster and nurture the Irish language. Due to the isolated geographic location of the Gaeltachtaí in Mayo, training and support services should be provided locally through Irish. Parents in the Iorras Gaeltacht who are raising their children in this area believe they should receive supports, which address their needs as was evident in the Erris Early Year's research.

### **(b) Issues for Traveller Provision**

Non-Traveller Committees manage most Traveller services. Parents we spoke to all expressed a desire to be involved in the management of their own services. It is also an issue of equality as parents manage most other community playgroups. The parents also expressed a preference for integrated services; they did not want their children to attend traveller only pre-schools. Some parents wanted full day-care services in order to be able to work.

The location of services in Ballyhaunis, Ballina and Castlebar are a matter of real concern. In Ballyhaunis, both services urgently need to be relocated. Children under 5 years currently attend services located in a derelict area and plagued by rodents. In Ballyhaunis the children are segregated and isolated from the wider community. The centre is plagued by rubbish and the conditions of the surrounding houses seriously militate against the children developing a sense of equality with the wider community and contribute to ongoing prejudice and segregation within the wider community.

The location of Sonas Crèche in Castlebar is isolated and remote from the community. Children have to travel by special bus, this contributes to a sense of segregation and 'difference'. It also means that parents have limited contact with the staff caring for their children.

### **(c) Issues for Disability Provision**

The Western Care provision of support structures to local childcare services is a practical and popular way of addressing services for children with a learning disability. Where possible the trend is to support children with a disability in their local service and school. It is more difficult to address the needs of children with severe disabilities. Again the numbers involved and the dispersal throughout the community mean that local services must be flexible and backed up with specialist advice and practical support in order to provide services to those children.

### **(d) Issues for Asylum Seeker Provision**

The majority of Asylum Seeker Children are in the under 5s pre-school age group. These children have a real need to access local childcare and playgroups in order to become familiar with Irish Culture and to learn English prior to starting mainstream national school. It is also important for them and for their families to have opportunities to be socially engaged in their local communities. Many of these families have been through traumatic experiences prior to coming to this country and are in need of support to help re-build their lives and to heal.

As with services for families in the general population in Mayo, there are not yet enough pre-school and afterschool places available to meet their needs. Children with term time only places, needing opportunities to learn English prior to starting school may be adversely affected by an eight week break immediately prior to starting school. Services such as summer camps and out of school clubs could perhaps be useful in ensuring the children receive the support and preparation they need to prepare for national school. Opportunities to access parent and toddler clubs are important for Asylum Seeker Families wishing to get to know other people in their area and are also a source of support for parents. Language clubs for parents associates with childcare services may be helpful in helping parents to meet their children's needs in a new environment.

Childcare and early years workers working with children for whom English is a second language need training and support in providing appropriate opportunities for the children to learn English. Training in providing an anti-bias curriculum is also very important. It is important that all early childcare services should be culturally sensitive and welcoming to all children.

Ballyhaunis has been identified as having a large number of Asylum Seekers, Travellers and foreign workers relative to its size and must be prioritised for development.

The County Childcare Committee co-ordinator will be a member of the interagency Social Inclusion Measures Working Group and the Mayo county Council Social Inclusion group.

## Quality Services

There is a lack of information on the quality of services. The regulations do not sufficiently address the curriculum needs of children. A key strategic objective for the Mayo County Childcare Committee is to develop a high quality childcare service in County Mayo. The Mayo County Childcare Committee will base its approach to developing quality childcare services on the European Childcare Networks framework for quality and on International Research Indicators for quality childcare services and on the Multiple Perspectives model for quality.

**The following indicators of quality childcare services will determine the actions of the Mayo County Childcare Committee.**

- A belief that building quality childcare service is about process.
- An understanding that quality childcare services are clear about organisational values, mission, strategic goals and service design.
- A clear understanding of the importance of standard setting, service delivery schemes, performance monitoring and review and evaluation within services as part of their process

**The lessons from international research will influence thinking and developments within County Mayo. These are as follows:**

- All services will have clear aims and objectives, and a clearly articulated philosophy shared by management, staff and parents.
- A clear management structure for devising policy.
- Meet minimum legislation requirements.
- Provide developmentally appropriate curriculum.
- Promote real and meaningful partnerships with parents.
- Be staffed by a well-trained workforce committed to ongoing professional development.
- Implement equal opportunities policies and practices.
- Operate in appropriate physical environments with suitable indoor and outdoor space.
- Incorporate play, care, educational and equal opportunities.
- Develop collaborate approaches to planning which is systematic and based on regular observations based assessments of children's learning and development needs.

The cultural and rural context for the development of childcare services in County Mayo are of significant importance for the Committee. Specifically the right to a high quality childcare experiences through the medium of the Irish language, the right to similar experiences for rural children and the importance of community values and the involvement of the extended family were all cited as important considerations in the development of quality childcare services in County Mayo. Models of quality service provision, which reflect the importance of home based service will have to be developed.

## Training

Large numbers have been trained over the past three years in particular but the information available is out of date. The Committee needs to establish a new census of training baselines within services. There is a need to establish the progress of those who have completed the Level II training.

The Committee will set annual targets for the provision of training and will support the development of degree level training. All training provision will have to take into account the type, cost, organisation, location and timing of provision. Training should provide a variety of choices to maximise accessibility.

Work has begun on the support of childminding. Training will be developed suitable to this type of provision. The take-up of training in relation to children with special needs is encouraging and the committee has agreed that all training will have a strong anti discriminatory focus. The Western Health Board will provide support for services developing child protection policies and guidelines as recommended by “Children First”

## Information

There is a shortage of accessible and timely information on child care services in the county. The County Childcare Committee recognises that information and an information and publicity strategy is critical to its future development and ongoing success.

If the County Childcare Committee is to become the major player in the development, management, review of childcare services within the County, then the following key pieces of information need to be readily available to the Committee;

- Up-to-date census/audit of existing services to include their quality and capacity for further development.
- Up-to-date information on needs within the County especially in relation to disadvantaged and child sensitive indicators of need.
- Up-to-date information on accredited training available within the County.
- Information on the needs and wishes of parents in relation to childcare provision.
- Information on the needs of employers in relation to childcare and family friendly working policies.
- Information on best practice on childcare issues from international, national and local research.
- Information on local needs led approach to assessing parents needs, aspiration for service at local level.
- Information from on-going consultation sessions with children and young people about their views on services and how services should be developed.
- Information on the needs of Traveller families, ethnic minorities and children with a disability in relation to childcare development.

The County Childcare Committee also recognises that if it is to work effectively and engage with a range of stakeholders, then its needs to develop an effective publicity campaign. The Childcare Committee needs to use a range of media, bearing in mind the linguistic and literacy needs of the population.

## Employers

The core objective of the Equal Opportunities Programme is to increase the quantity and quality of childcare places and support greater social inclusion by facilitating women and men to participate in and return to education, training and employment.

The reality for working parents with childcare needs is that there is still a difficulty in assessing affordable, quality formal childcare services. Working parents remain under considerable pressure.

There is a need for commitment by employers organisations to the childcare issue. Failure to address emerging work life issues will have a long-term negative impact on families communities and business. Unions and employers need to establish a consultation process to help stimulate supply and support demand. Employers must take up the challenge to create the workplace, which adequately responds to the needs of their employees who have childcare responsibilities.

## Funding and Support

The committee will be responsible for the proper management of funding from ADM under the Equal Opportunities Childcare programme. In line with national guidelines it will advise on applications under the programme.

Childcare services need secure funding for both capital staff and ongoing costs. Issues of pay and status of staff are important and the committee needs to update the census report in this respect.

Affordability is a crucial issue and the committee will seek to maximise the resources provided to childcare services in the county. Non monetary support is also important. Forbairt Naíonraí Teo. continues to support the 9 Naíonraí. The Western Health Board has recruited four early years' development workers to support community services and childminders. Recruitment of the County Committee Co-ordinator is complete. With the remaining county committee staff to provide support appropriate to services (eg private, childminders and community groups) in co-operation with all agencies, there will be a vast improvement in the quantity and quality of support to all childcare services.

## Monitoring and Evaluation

An annual action plan will be agreed by the committee, which reflects this strategy and the resources available. The annual action plan will set both time and quantity targets.

The committee will need regular reports on the progress of the action plan and will need to review and change targets as the year progresses. Reports will be prepared by a monitoring sub committee and discussed at the committee on a quarterly basis.

# Chapter 5

## Strategic Objectives and Actions for 2002-2006

### Aim

The overarching aim of the Mayo County Childcare Committee is to develop a society which cherishes the individual child and parent by providing a range of quality, fun filled, affordable child care services suitable to the individual needs of all children, while also meeting the needs of all parents.

The Mayo County Childcare Committee recognises that to achieve this aim will take time. It has therefore set a number of key strategic objectives for the period 2002- 2006.

### Strategic Objective 1: Representative Committee

*To develop a broad, inclusive representative Committee so as to ensure a co-ordinated approach to childcare planning across the County.*

### Actions

- M.C.C.C. will keep its membership under review to ensure effective representation from all the key stakeholders within the County.
- On the decision of a majority of its members present and voting it will request any agency, organisation, or body, with a childcare remit within County Mayo, to nominate a representative for membership. Not later than 1<sup>st</sup> October of each year the serving M.C.C.C. Co-ordinator shall request each of its current nominating bodies to nominate its representative to commence membership at a general meeting of M.C.C.C. to be held before the 31<sup>st</sup> January of the succeeding year, which general meeting shall nominate the Officer Board of M.C.C.C. and shall review the number and type of each Subcommittee and nominate their the membership.
- The term of office of the first M.C.C.C shall terminate in January 2004 immediately prior to the first General Meeting of the new M.C.C.C. The term of office of each subsequent M.C.C.C.s shall terminate in the following January immediately prior to each subsequent First General Meetings.
- The term of office of any member of M.C.C.C shall terminate on that member's absence from four successive general meetings properly convened. Where such termination of term of office occurs the nominating group may be invited, by a General Meeting of MCCC, on the decision of a majority of its members present and voting, to nominate a replacement.
- M.C.C.C. will ensure the quality of its internal processes, by regularly reviewing the Ground Rules it developed to facilitate optimum functioning. Some external auditing may also be undertaken.
- M.C.C.C. will develop appropriate sub structures in the form of Subcommittees comprising M.C.C.C members and external expertise, as appropriate, to take forward key tasks. The M.C.C.C. Co-ordinator, or her/his representative shall be the non-voting secretary to each subcommittee. The Chair of each Subcommittee shall be an M.C.C.C. member, elected by the M.C.C.C. and shall be the Subcommittee's Reportare.
- M.C.C.C. will establish a **Human Resources Subcommittee**, which will ensure that there are the best possible relationships between the Committee and Mayo County Council the accountable body in relation to remuneration, conditions of work, support for the retention of efficient qualified staff appropriate staff are in place to take forward its Strategic and Action Plans.
- M.C.C.C. will establish a **Networks Subcommittee**, which will work to establish local representational networks to assure the active involvement of local childcare providers, children, parents, employers and other stakeholders. The networks will be based on the 7 electoral areas.
- The Networks Subcommittee will develop a Consultation Strategy to ensure ongoing consultation with all relevant stakeholders. In particular, the Consultation Strategy will focus on what is unique in County Mayo in terms of Childcare needs, such as the needs of children with disability, the needs of the Gaeltacht areas, the needs of the Islands, the needs of economically, socially and geographically marginalized individuals and communities, the needs of the Traveller Community, the Immigrant Workers community and the Asylum Seekers community.

## Strategic Objective 2: Expand the Range, Type, & Distribution of Services

To develop the range, type and geographical distribution of childcare services across the county by 2006.

### Actions

- M.C.C.C. will establish a **Capacity Building Subcommittee**.
- The Subcommittee will update the findings for County Mayo of the National Census to provide an accurate overview of all services in relation to need, and will advise M.C.C.C. on appropriate actions.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will examine the recommendations from the Erris, Greenhills Estate, Castlebar Town and other local research, and will initiate local needs assessment initiatives in areas of low / non-existent provision.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will research and advise M.C.C.C. on the development of models of provision, which may have general application.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will collaborate with Trade Unions, employers and employees throughout the County and will carry out a childcare needs analysis of working parents. The Subcommittee will seek to co-ordinate the co-operation of stakeholders in meeting those needs through the expansion of current services and the creation of complementary new services, cognisant of the fact that at least 75% of employed women are in full time work [Page 23] and the aspiration to increase female participation in the workforce from 36% to 50% during the term of the Strategy [Page 24]
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will collaborate with the Equality Subcommittee to examine M.C.C.C.'s concerns about the uniqueness of the dimensions of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the population of the Ballyhaunis town and district and the possible need for a purpose-built Integrated Early Childhood Centre there.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will carry out research as deemed appropriate by M.C.C.C. on play and leisure facilities throughout the county with a focus on type, quality and location. It will collaborate with the Equality Subcommittee and will seek to coordinate the collaboration of all stakeholders in identifying deficiencies and gaps and in taking appropriate actions.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will liaise with the Equality Subcommittee in assessing the outcome of its audit and the monitoring of 'equality of access' to services throughout the County so as to establish the need for expansion of services to satisfy the unique needs in County Mayo such as access for families with children with disability, Asylum Seeker families, Traveller families, families of immigrants, rural and socially marginalized families and cognisant of Mayo's larger than national average "deprivation score" [Chapter 2]
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will support existing service and new services to access funding. Capacity building support will be provided in terms of applying for funding, identifying new models of provision and training for Management Committees.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will liaise and collaborate with the Training Subcommittee and the Anti-bias Subcommittee in establishing and providing for the training needs of both services management and workers, necessary to underwrite quality and capacity building throughout the county.
- The Capacity Building Subcommittee will seek to ensure M.C.C.C.'s vision of *equality of access* and the *negation of marginalization* by seeking the provision of appropriate monitory subventions for services and individual parents in disadvantaged areas and communities, cognisant of the large and uneven distribution of lone parent families. [Chapter 2, Table 5]
- M.C.C.C. will establish a Range of Services Sub-committee
- The Range of Services Subcommittee will research and advise M.C.C.C. on the development of a Childminding Strategy for the County in collaboration with Childminding Ireland and Western Health Board Early Childcare Services.
- The Childminding Subcommittee will advise on the focus for the work of the M.C.C.C. Childminder Advisor and on target numbers of childminders to be supported in year one, and subsequent years.
- Mayo VEC and the Western Health Board have agreed a system of voluntary support for the 40 childminders supported under the VTOS, Youthreach and Senior Traveller Training Centres programmes.
- The Range of Services Subcommittee will collaborate with the Capacity Building Subcommittee in researching and advising M.C.C.C. on a strategy for the development of Afterschool Services, with the aim to ensure that all Primary Schools in areas of disadvantage will have an After-school facility. The Subcommittee will work with existing services and the Department of Education and Science and encourage them to 'bolt-on' After-school services when and where required.
- The Range of Services Subcommittee will collaborate with the Quality of Services Subcommittee in researching and advising on a Quality Framework for After-school Services to be adopted by M.C.C.C.

- The Range of Services Subcommittee will liaise with the Capacity Building Subcommittee in supporting the development of Parent – Toddler groups in each location as a means of family support and services capacity building for parents. The previous experience, skill and expertise of the relevant NVCO's will be utilised in this work.
- The County Committee Co-ordinator will be member of the Mayo County Council play policy sub-group.

### **Strategic Objective 3: Services based on Equality**

*To ensure that all services are open, inclusive and based on principles of equality.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C. will establish an **Anti-Bias sub-committee**
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will research and advise M.C.C.C.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will carry out an audit and monitor equality of access to services throughout the County with a focus on the unique needs in County Mayo, such as access for families with children with disability, Asylum Seeker families, Traveller families, families of immigrants, rural and socially marginalized families.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will collaborate with the Training Subcommittee to ensure that all services will receive training on anti-bias curriculum, and culturally appropriate resources.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will seek to ensure the M.C.C.C. vision of affordable quality services as a right for all children and families by on-going linkage to the work of the Capacity Building Subcommittee.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will collaborate with the Capacity Building Subcommittee to examine the M.C.C.C.'s concerns about the uniqueness of the ethnic and cultural diversity of the population of the Ballyhaunis town and district, and the suggested need for a purpose -built Integrated Early Childhood Centre there.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will support families with children with disability, Asylum Seeker families, Traveller families, families of immigrants, rural and socially marginalized families to become involved in the Management of Childcare Settings.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will liaise with the Capacity Building Subcommittee in monitoring play and leisure facilities for children and in taking actions to improve quality of services
- The Anti-bias Subcommittee will seek to ensure the M.C.C.C. vision of affordable quality services as a right for all children and families by on-going links and collaboration with Capacity Building Subcommittee and the Western Health Board's Childcare Advisor Services and the National Voluntary Organisations.
- The Anti-bias sub-committee will work with the Training sub-committee to ensure that diversity training is provided to all providers
- Equality for Irish speaking families and children wishing to avail of Pre School and after school services through Irish.

### **Strategic Objective 4: QUALITY OF SERVICES**

*To support the development of highest quality childcare services across the County Mayo by 2006.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C. will establish a **Quality and Training sub-committee**
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will carry out a quality audit of all existing services.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will be cognisant of the importance of appropriate remuneration, and conditions of work, for the retention of efficient qualified staff and will link with the Human Resources sub-committee in monitor and advise M.C.C.C on such matters.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will link with all other M.C.C.C. Subcommittees, and will bring together all research in relation to national, international models of quality childcare. It will advise M.C.C.C. on the matter, so that it can develop, articulate and communicate a vision for and a Quality framework for Childcare Services for County Mayo. This vision and framework will be linked to national and international developments.

- The Quality and Training sub-committee will link with the Capacity Building Subcommittee in order to identify and develop strategies to overcome the anticipated gaps between current service provision, and where they need to be, in terms of quality assurance.

### **Strategic Objective 5: Trained Workforce**

*To support the development of a highly qualified childcare workforce by providing all staff with access to initial and ongoing training and professional development opportunities.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C will establish a training fund to support the Training sub-committee to deliver on its strategic objectives and to support services and individual childcare workers who have particular difficulties in accessing training.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will assess applications from services and individual childcare workers for training grants, and will advise M.C.C.C.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will carry out a training needs assessment and will advise M.C.C.C. on training program targets.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will work collaboratively with Mayo VEC, National Voluntary Organisations and FAS to deliver M.C.C.C strategic objectives.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will liaise with the Capacity Building Subcommittee and the Anti-bias Subcommittee and will collaborate with Mayo VEC in setting training targets and in co-ordinating the provision of FETAC Level 2 and Level 3 training as appropriate, including the provision of training through Irish for staff in Irish speaking services.
- This subcommittee will work with the Western Health Board to provide child protection training as recommended by Children First
- The Quality and Training Subcommittee will collaborate with Mayo VEC to research the possibility of Third Level Certificate, Diploma and Degree courses in Childcare studies to be delivered in adult-worker-friendly and family-friendly modes into County Mayo.
- The Quality and Training Subcommittee will establish links with the Quality Subcommittee and with the Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education in order to maximise the training within the County.
- The Quality Training sub-committee will collaborate with other C.C.C. in establishing links with the National Qualification Authority of Ireland.
- The Quality and Training sub-committee will link with the County Enterprise Board in relation to business training for childcare providers.

### **Strategic Objective 6: Information Systems**

*To develop an appropriate range of information systems which will support the work of the Childcare Committee.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C. will establish an **Information Subcommittee**
- The Information Subcommittee will liaise with all MCCC subcommittees and will produce the results of their various audits and needs analysis in easily accessible form.
- The Information Subcommittee will seek to ensure, thorough a variety of publicity means, that the mission, aims, objectives and actions of M.C.C.C. are known, understood and appreciated as widely as possible by all childcare stakeholders and the general public throughout County Mayo.
- The Information Subcommittee will be responsible for the development and management of the M.C.C.C. website.
- The Information Subcommittee will collate information on best practice in childcare from local, national and international research and will disseminate it to the relevant stakeholders throughout the County.

- The Information Subcommittee's publicity campaign will be designed bearing in mind the linguistic and literary needs of the population.
- The committee will provide a one-stop shop for all County Mayo childcare information.

### **Strategic Objective 7: Funding**

*To carry out an appraisal of each application for Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme Funding referred to M.C.C.C. by Area Development Management Ltd. and to make recommendations to M.C.C.C. on each such application.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C. has established an **Consultation Subcommittee**
- The Consultation Subcommittee will carry out an appraisal of each application for Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme Funding referred to M.C.C.C. by Area Development Management Ltd. and will make recommendations to M.C.C.C. on the advice to be given to ADM, under Terms of Reference to be decided by M.C.C.C.

### **Strategic Objective 8: Monitoring and Evaluation**

*To develop and implement systems of effective assessment and monitoring of actions and outcomes against the statements of mission, aims and objectives of M.C.C.C. and in the context of National and EU Childcare policies and legislation.*

#### **Actions**

- M.C.C.C. will establish a **Monitoring Subcommittee**.
- The Monitoring Subcommittee will develop an appropriate Monitoring Framework, cognisant of both qualitative and quantitative indicators.
- The Monitoring Subcommittee will liaise with each M.C.C.C. Subcommittee on an ongoing basis to assess and monitor its modes of operation, objectives, actions and outcomes.
- The Monitoring Subcommittee will deliver a Quarterly Monitoring Report to a Quarterly General Meeting of M.C.C.C.
- The Monitoring Subcommittee will produce a draft Annual Monitoring Report for consideration by a General Meeting of M.C.C.C. before 31<sup>st</sup> December of each year.
- The first task of the Monitoring sub-committee will be to develop an Annual Report of the achievements of MCCC's first year of operation, 2002.
- The sub-committee will review the internal committee processes on a regular and ongoing basis. Mayo county Childcare Committee is dedicated to quality in all of its services. To this end the Committee will review its own functioning and actions, to ensure that all members are able to contribute fully to the implementation of the Strategy. The quality of the meetings, in relation to both task and process, will be regularly reviewed, as will the quality of between meetings communications, the functioning of sub-groups and their reporting to the Committee and anything else identified by Committee members as affecting the quality of the Committee processes.
- The monitoring sub-committee will liaise with other County Committees.
- The M.C.C.C will set up a **Finance Sub-Committee**.
- The finance sub-committee will include representation from Mayo County Council, Co-ordinator and ADM. It will advise the MCCC on compliance with the agreed accounting procedure.

# Appendix 1

## Membership of County Mayo Childcare Committee

<b>NAME</b>	<b>ORGANISATION</b>
Lily Cunningham	Department of Social and Family Affairs
Breege Jackson	Chambers of Commerce
Vivienne Rattigan	I.C.T.U.
Pat Higgins	V.E.C.
Mary Mulryan	Community Pillar Community and Voluntary Sector
Vacant	Farming Pillar
Yvonne Coyne	National Childcare Voluntary Organisation
Brid Ni Lionaird	National Childcare Voluntary Organisation
Hilary Kenny	National Childcare Voluntary Organisation
Justin Salmon	Local Development Groups/Partnerships
Paul Murphy	Western Health Board
Maria Cross	Western Health Board
John Coll	Mayo County Council / County Development Board
Geraldine Glendon	FAS
Sr Margaret McHale	Traveller Representative
Mary Lenaghan	Parent Representative
Maire Connaghton	Parent Representative
Mary O'Boyle	Service Provider
Vacant	Dept of Education
Pamela Ni Thaidhg	Udaras Na Gealtachta

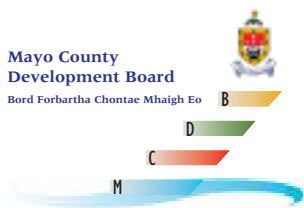
### The address and location for the Mayo County Childcare Committee is :

Mill Lane  
Bridge St.  
Castlebar  
Co Mayo

**Tel.** 094 9034778  
**Fax:** 094 9034815  
**Email:** [maryconway@mayococo.ie](mailto:maryconway@mayococo.ie)  
**Website:** [www.mayocdb.ie](http://www.mayocdb.ie)



# Your Plan - Your Future



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**M.C.C.C., 2nd Floor, Mill Lane, Bridge Street, Castlebar, Co Mayo.**

**Tel: 094 9034778, 094 9034779 Fax: 094 9034815**

**E-mail: [maryconway@mayococo.ie](mailto:maryconway@mayococo.ie) Website: [www.mayocdb.ie](http://www.mayocdb.ie)**