



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of
Children and Youth Affairs

Minister Frances Fitzgerald announces preparation of Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy

25th January 2012

The Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald TD has today announced that during 2012 her Department, in consultation with key stakeholders, will develop Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy, for children aged 0-6 years.

Minister Fitzgerald stated: "We know that early-intervention in children's lives and quality early childhood experiences are crucial to a child's emotional, cognitive and social development. As a society we need to work to promote quality childhoods for Irish children not just for their enjoyment but for the good of families, society and the economy."

"I have therefore asked my Department to prepare, in collaboration with key experts and stakeholders, Ireland's first National Early Years Strategy. I want this to be an innovative and exciting blueprint for the future strategic development of Ireland's Early Years Sector."

"The Strategy will support Irish families in bringing up their children, identifying the services they want to have access to and the information that will help them to be confident and secure parents and to improve outcomes for their children."

"But this Strategy will also play a significant part in Ireland's future economic planning. There is an increasing acceptance and focus internationally on the economic benefits accruing from investment in the early years. Longitudinal studies in the US, England France and New Zealand cite returns to the economy of between three and ten times the original investment. In these studies, children who experience high quality preschool are higher achievers in education and in employment and these benefits also transfer to the next generation."

"In Ireland's case, the OECD in its 2011 Economic Survey of Ireland emphasized that in order for Ireland 'to preserve its strengths in human capital' we should recognise the importance of pre-school education in having 'both a positive impact on later educational performance and an equity-enhancing effect.'"

The proposed Early Years Strategy will cover all aspects of children's experiences in their early years including health, family support, care and education and will identify the structures and policies needed to improve early year's experiences in Ireland.

The Minister announced the Early Years Strategy while addressing an OECD High Level Conference in Oslo on January 24th 2012 which was attended by ministers from around the world as well as by experts from the OECD, academics, senior public servants and representatives from the early childhood care and education sector.

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