

**South Tipperary County Childcare
Committee**

Strategic Report 2007 - 2010

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1. Introduction

South Tipperary County Childcare Committee is one of the thirty-three County Childcare Committees established throughout the country by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), part of the National Development Plan 2000-2006. The National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) succeeds the EOCP. It is administered by the Minister for Children under the Department of Health and Children. The NCIP aims to provide a response to the development of quality childcare supports and services which will be planned for and developed in South Tipperary.

The South Tipperary County Childcare Committee (CCC) is responsible for the co-ordinated approach to the improvement of childcare services in the region. Its membership includes representatives from statutory agencies as well as stakeholders such as parents, providers and the social partners. South Tipperary CCC is required to develop a four-year Strategic Plan for the county covering the period 2007-2010.

The focus of South Tipperary CCC during 2007-2010 will be to successfully implement the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) by meeting its targets and objectives. The national target of the programme is to deliver 50,000 new childcare places which respond to identified local needs. The role of the South Tipperary CCC in identifying local childcare needs and supporting applicants under the NCIP who can meet these needs, will be crucial to the achievement of this target and to further develop a quality childcare infrastructure. This report outlines the strategic direction that South Tipperary CCC intends to take to achieve these aims.

From bright beginnings in 2002, in the last couple of years South Tipperary CCC has had a high level of staff turnover and administrative problems that have hampered its ability to follow up on this progress. However, it is currently in the process of hiring new staff to bring it up to a full complement of people with the enthusiasm and dynamism to succeed in its aims. Primary among these will be to restore the high profile the South Tipperary CCC had previously and to continue to support the provision of quality childcare through the county.

Successes in the first period of its operation have included a major increase in the amount of training available to childcare workers, both for the purpose of gaining qualifications and in the form of ongoing training. Networks have been developed and, though some have suffered from the lack of staff to promote them, these will be restored in the near future.

The findings of the Strategic Childcare Mapping project, recently completed, have identified the priority areas that need to be worked on as regards the provision of childcare facilities and places. This will link in to the County Development Board's Spatial Strategy and allow the committee to focus on areas of greatest need.

Overall, South Tipperary CCC can look back with some pride on its early years and look to the future with confidence that with a hard-working committee and capable and dedicated staff it can meet the challenges it faces and succeed in the coming years as it has done in the past.

2. Review of the Strategic Plan 2001-2006

One of the initial aims of the research study was to conduct a review of the previous Strategic Plan for South Tipperary CCC, published in 2002. However, South Tipperary CCC had already commissioned an external company, Exodea, in June 2006 to conduct a review of the performance of South Tipperary CCC in each year covered by that Strategic Plan. The findings of this report were presented to the committee members of South Tipperary CCC at a consultation meeting and then a discussion of these followed. In addition, we conducted an interview with Ger Boland, a staff member at South Tipperary CCC, to get her views on the topic.

The following is a summary of the findings of the Exodea report that were presented to the committee, a detailed outline of the discussion points that were raised by the committee following this presentation, followed by a full outline of the consultation with Ger Boland.

2.1 South Tipperary CCC Strategic Objectives 2002

The objectives of South Tipperary CCC as set out in the 2002 report were as follows:-

- Boost childcare provision
- Improve quality standards
- Support child-minders
- Promote childcare issues and provide info
- Support and develop childcare networks
- Encourage and promote training
- Co-ordinate strategy and monitor delivery

2.2 Key Performance Indicators / Achievements

The following is a summary of the Key Performance Indicators identified by Exodea in its report.

- 125 grant applications approved since 2000
- 137 full-day places and 776 part-time places developed in 2006
- Seminars and workshops organised
- Childminding Policies and Procedures Pack available
- Training calendar published annually and updated on web site
- Four childminder networks supported with 37 childminders participating – 242 participants in South Tipperary CCC-run training
- 350 copies of newsletter distributed twice a year
- Childcare link library established
- Resource section in South Tipperary County Library
- List of childcare service updated annually by South Tipperary CCC / HSE
- Good quality website set up – more download functionality would be welcome
- Five networks up and running – Childcare Provider, Childminder, Parent, Pilot Community Parent, Childcare Tutor Networks
- 60 attendees at Provider Network and 96 at Parent Network

- 13 accredited training courses, 9 non-acc courses, 305 training hours
- 348 participants on training courses, 177 on accredited training (not incl. childminders)

2.3 Issues Highlighted / Challenges

Just as there have been successes and achievements during this period, the Exodea report highlighted issues that needed to be addressed. These can be summarized as follows:-

- **Area based approach**
 - much current provision in Clonmel and other urban areas
- **Gaps in provision in following areas needs to be addressed**
 - Carrick-on-Suir
 - New Inn
 - Emly
 - Burncourt
 - Clogheen
 - Dundrum
 - Grangemockler

Please note the gaps in provision have been examined in detail as part of the Strategic Mapping exercise, a summary of which is included later in the report.

- **Target Groups**
 - Substantial progress made in provision for some vulnerable sectors
 - Targets for travellers and special needs children not yet met
- **Non-national community increasing in size**
 - communication must be improved to meet needs of this group
 - Multi-lingual publications and adverts
 - Non-national liaison personnel
- **Notified Child Minders**
 - Hard to get childminders to engage with formal structures
 - Though estimated 4000+ children being minded by childminders only 5 notified with HSE [now up to 7]
 - [Govt tax break mentioned as being likely to incentive childminders to register]
- **Training**
 - Accredited training best way to improve childcare services and boost provision
 - STCCC focus on training has been effective and should continue
 - Training for work with Special Needs children needed
- **Networking**
 - Concept of Supportive Cluster Groups aimed to boost provision in some areas with gaps in provision not followed up

➤ **Capacity Building**

- Issue of capacity building and ongoing support for individuals raised during review
- Resources need to be made available to ensure that this is available to all recipients of EOCP funding
- Supports to include capacity building, training and project management

2.4 Committee Consultation – Review of 2001-2006

Having examined the findings of the Childcare Strategy Review 2002-2005, a consultation was held with the committee to further review the 2001-2006 period. The detailed findings of this consultation are listed below.

- **Capacity Building** – the primary focus going forward for new facilities will be through planned developments where support will be provided either to the developer or a potential provider who is working with a developer
- **Training** – FETAC level 5 Classroom Assistant Course was hugely successful and over-subscribed. A lot has been done in the area of training as there was previously no training within South Tipperary. The work that is now being done with the VEC could also possibly be extended thus removing the need for a Q/A (Quality Accreditation) centre application
- **Committee structure** – the Committee structure has deteriorated somewhat and networks are not being delivered on. In particular there
- seems to be a lack of clarity regarding the roles and relationships between sub-committees and staff.
- **Childminder network** - no childminder network currently in place
- **Outreach library** - the idea of an out-reach library with story telling to attempt to bring childminders closer to the STCCC was suggested
- **Traveller Programmes** - the challenges involved in rolling out traveller programmes were raised. The success of the Clonmel Women’s Health Programme in enabling regular pre-school attendance was mentioned.
- **Cultural awareness training** – the delivery of cultural awareness training is a CCC supported project. A multi-lingual leaflet for non-nationals has been developed by another committee and could be used
- **Special needs booklet** – the development of a special needs booklet was discussed along with the provision of pilot support for childcare services. This is thought to sit in the remit of the Quality and Diversity Sub-committee
- **Address different needs of community and private facilities** - it is important to support both community and private capacity building and existent facilities however there is a view that the two require a different approach and that private facilities are less likely to be developed in rural areas.
- **Affordable training** - affordable training for the private sector
- **Quality** - how can pressure be brought to bear upon the achievement of quality

2.5 Staff Consultation

The following is a detailed outline of the issues raised by the staff member interviewed during the consultation to review the last strategic plan.

How has South Tipperary CCC performed in meeting the broad 2002-2006 objectives?

Infrastructure

- South Tipperary CCC has come a long way in terms of service development with a high level of funding applications under the EOCP. Seeing more applications now for full day care and development of extensions to existing premises
- Rural areas have had mixed success. Outreach programmes were developed to promote funding but sometimes a lack of drive within the community groups meant that the applications were not continued with despite there being a need.
- EOCP was perceived to be a very difficult process which was responsible for some of the above. NCIP is easier and more applications are making their way through the system
- From a private provider perspective South Tipperary CCC has worked with developers very successfully. An open day was held in 2005 and South Tipperary CCC has worked with 12 developers who have either sold on or sub-let childcare facilities. In some cases these have been community facilities where special arrangements have been made e.g. 5 years of a 25 year lease rent free.
- South Tipperary CCC has good links to CDB and planning department

Quality

- Promoted quality programmes through networks
- Developed 1 day workshops on special needs and childhood behaviour which have been very popular
- Provided a workshop and training suggestions sheet to providers attending networks to ensure that courses were tailored to actual requirements.
- There have been issues in the recent past due to some staff absences which have not been covered (e.g. parental leave). This has meant that some important tasks such as the development of the training calendar have not been completed in good order
- Have very good facilitators and trainers
- Have run well attended seminars on Quality
- Developed a quality assurance document related to South Tipperary CCCs' position as a FETAC centre. These policies and procedures have been particularly useful when applied to workshops etc.

Information Dissemination

- Have linked with county library to develop a full section on childcare
- Dissemination has been quite poor as it has been un-coordinated with each development worker undertaking their own mail-shots, etc.
- The quality (look and feel) of some of the documentation has been quite poor
- Proof reading of documentation has, however, been put in place
- There has been very little contact from STCCC in the last 6 months e.g. training calendar not developed
- South Tipperary CCC profile has disimproved, however, the infrastructure and staffing levels are improving / are due to improve so outlook is very positive

Networking

- Strong provider network
- Parents networking based on working with parents councils from national schools and providing courses/seminars on issues such as:
 - Transition from pre-school to primary school

- Anti-bullying
 - Healthy eating
- Parent network events have been successful and over-subscribed
- As with providers, (see quality) parents who attend seminars are provided with a suggestions questionnaire which forms the input for future parents focussed events
- Ran a pilot parents group in a rural area which met regularly which was quite successful. This has fallen off now due to one of the key members being unable to attend, however, it is a concept that could be rolled out.
- Childminder network was strong but lack of a CMAO has caused this to fall off
- Provider networks are run in Tipperary Town, Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir. Two meetings in each per annum with speakers on topics such as health and safety, fire safety etc. Networking is prior to the formal presentation. Approximately 30 attend each session.

3. Executive Summary of Strategic Plan 2007-2010

This section of the report seeks to provide a summary of the content of the strategic report as well as a description of the consultative process used to assist in the preparation of the plan and the methodologies used.

3.1 Introduction to the Strategy

This section summarises the strategic direction that has been decided by South Tipperary CCC for the forthcoming period to 2010.

The following are the key actions identified under each heading:-

Top Level / Structural – Actions

- **Staff** - get full complement of staff up and running. This is an absolute necessity at present where South Tipperary CCC is failing in its role due to the lack of sufficient staff numbers.
- **CMAO** – hire a new Childminding Advisory Officer. This is a particularly key appointment as the Childminders Network which had been up and running is now dormant for want of a childminding officer to drive it. The need has been shown to exist during the consultations carried out as part of this process.
- **Governance** - review and further develop internal structures for on-going good governance. Good structures are in place already and the committee is ready and committed to improve governance so that staff and committee members can work together for the overall benefit of childcare in the county.

Infrastructure - Actions

- **Spatial strategy** – South Tipperary CCC will work closely with the CDB on its spatial strategy.
- **Improve infrastructure** - ensure a focussed and proactive development of infrastructure (in association with mapping). Set areas of priority for infrastructure development based on greatest need e.g. current availability and disadvantage. This work is ongoing and extra staff will help this effort greatly.
- **Improve sustainability** - develop a programme to build expertise for sustainable community facilities including review of different requirements for set-up and management. The committee is determined to do whatever it can to help childcare facilities, particularly those in the community sector, to gain the skills they need to make their facilities sustainable in the medium to long term.

Quality – Actions

- **Improve training partnerships** – South Tipperary CCC will evaluate its current training delivery process and partnerships to establish a partnership structure to ensure the optimum level of training delivery to childcare personnel
- **Co-ordination of training** - develop a co-ordinated approach to training

Information – Actions

- **PR** - Work on the South Tipperary CCC Brand and improve public relations. This will be possible when the new staff members are in

place. A more detailed action plan to re-build the profile of the South Tipperary CCC will be required. However, it will involve promotion and / or advertising in the local media, communications with all childcare providers and making efforts to renew those networks that were up and running and starting new ones.

Networking – Actions

- **Networks** - revive old, and establish new networks. As stated above, one of the key benefits of the new South Tipperary CCC staff will be the potential to get networks up and running again.
- **Work with national / primary schools** - improve liaison with national schools
 - Explore methods of working with primary schools
 - Explore possibility of moving pre-school into schools
 - Link with parents councils
- **Partnership** - work more closely with other childcare bodies. Again, when more staff are available it will be possible to renew and strengthen links with other stakeholders in childcare, including many of those organisations who are represented on the committee itself.

3.2 Methodology

Market Dynamics used a combination of desk research and primary research in the form of consultations with a range of stakeholders in the childcare sector in South Tipperary when completing its work on the Strategic Plan.

Research Approach

Stage 1 – Desk Research

The desk research phase involved the collation of existing materials on service provision, waiting lists etc. Among the documents investigated during this phase were:-

- South Tipperary CCC - County Childcare Strategy 2002
- South Tipperary CCC – Action Plans 2006 and 2007
- South Tipperary CCC – Annual Reports
- Demographic information on South Tipperary, CSO

Stage 2 – Consultations

It is vital for the development of the strategic plan to be a participatory and inclusive process. As such, consultations were conducted with a range of groups.

Consultations Based on Focus Groups

The following groups were consulted through the mechanism of focus groups:-

- Committee members
- Parents
- Childcare Providers
- Childminders

A full list of attendees at each of the groups is included as an Appendix to this report.

Recruitment of Attendees for Consultations

All recruitment of attendees for the focus groups with parents and childcare providers was conducted by staff at Market Dynamics. Market Dynamics selected a random selection of people from lists supplied by the committee in each case. People on these target lists were called and invited to attend the focus groups.

Focus Group Scripts

The scripts used for the various groups were written by Market Dynamics and passed to the committee for approval. These are included in the Appendix to this report.

Consultations Based on Face to Face / Telephone Interviews

Only one member of staff was available for consultation as part of the process. This was conducted with the following:-

- South Tipperary CCC staff (Ger Boland)

3.3 Overview of the Committee Structure

South Tipperary CCC currently comprises 18 members. These are listed below.

- Kathleen Prendergast, South Tipperary County Development Board
- Catherine Corbett, Fás
- Mark Doyle, Dept of Social and Family Affairs
- Mark Hennessy, Voluntary Sector
- Sally Ivers, Community Forum
- Mary Hayes, Childminding Representative
- Phil Mackey, HSE
- Anne Murphy, Community Providers Representative
- Yvonne Murphy, Trade Union Pillar
- Liz O'Connor, Pobal
- Cllr Mattie McGrath, South Tipperary Co. Co.
- Frank O'Donoghue, Chamber of Commerce
- Timmy O'Donovan, IFA
- Fiona George, Parent Provider Representative
- Teresa Ring, Parent Provider Representative
- Phil Shanahan, Clonmel Community Partnership
- Helen McCarthy, Childminding Representative
- Áine Sheehan, Childcare Provider Representative

Five sub-committees are also in existence. Further details of the committee and its structure are provided in chapter 4 of this report.

3.4 Summary of the Analysis of Needs and Priority Objectives

Market Dynamics has identified the following major gaps in provision in the county. There are the areas that are most in need of attention from the South Tipperary CCC.

Clogheen

- Clogheen is a rural area with just two community facilities offering a total of thirty sessional places. Per hundred children, it offers just 14 places, well behind the county average of 24.2. Though just one facility claimed it had excess demand, it noted that much of the demand was for full day care of which there is no availability in the area. If this full-day demand was met it would represent an increase of 67% on current provision. The provision of at least some full-day care in the region should be a priority for South Tipperary CCC.

Cahir

- This is the fourth largest and fastest growing of the regions. It is clear that availability of childcare places is not keeping up with that of other regions. There are only six childcare facilities altogether and though the full-day care number are not too far behind the county average the ratio of sessional places, at 10.2, is just over half the county average. When compared to Cashel, a town of similar size and growth, its childcare provision figures are in considerable contrast.
- There are 110 more pre-school children in Cahir than there were in 2002 and the South Tipperary CCC needs to work to double the number of sessional places to bring Cahir up to the county average for this type of childcare.

Dundrum

- Dundrum is the region that showed the highest level of excess demand when measured as a proportion of existing childcare places. There is a need for a community facility here to add to the number of sessional places and to offer Montessori and / or after school care. South Tipperary CCC needs to work to facilitate the provision of a community facility here.

Carrick

- The major deficiency in the Carrick is the lack of full-day care available. Despite the fact that there are a total of eight facilities only six full-day places are available and two of these facilities noted the lack of full-day care in the region. This is a Rapid region and South Tipperary CCC needs to work with the relevant bodies to publicise this lack of full-day care and to work with providers to see if further full-day places can be made available.
- Though the region is also deficient in sessional places, it is not too far below the county average and, as a region that seems to show less demand than other regions, it is likely that the level of sessional supply is meeting demand. One thing that could be promoted is the need for Montessori places as there are none at present.

Killenaule

- Though Killenaule is toward the top of the list for childcare availability, nonetheless, it is very deficient in full-day care, with less than half the county average of places available. All of the providers in this area are community facilities with two offering full-day care. It should be a priority for the South Tipperary CCC to focus on the best way to encourage existing or new facilities to provide full-day care. One provider claimed to have a waiting list for crèche places if they became available.

Tipperary

- Tipperary's figures look good overall, however, it still has a bit of ground to make up in terms of the provision of sessional care. It is currently at around two-thirds the county average in this category. Tipperary is a Rapid area too and South Tipperary CCC should focus attention on encouraging existing facilities to expand on the number sessional care places available.

3.5 Synopsis of Evaluation and Monitoring Mechanisms

The committee will put a review and monitoring process in place to check progress of the actions outlined in this plan. These will focus on the extent that the committee is meeting the key objectives of the plan under the following key category headings:-

1. Infrastructure - the number of new childcare places created;
2. Quality programmes
3. Information provision / dissemination
4. Networking

More specifically, the review and monitoring procedure will focus on the extent to which the committee is succeeding in its aims, measured by:

1. The number of childcare facilities in South Tipperary and the number of places available in those facilities.
2. The availability of courses leading to childcare qualifications and the number of people taking part in these courses and entering the childcare sector
3. The availability of individual training courses on specific topics, e.g. first-aid and the number of people taking these courses
4. The number of notified childminders
5. The number of childminders who undertake training courses organised by the South Tipperary CCC, or under the umbrella of the STCCC.
6. The extent to which the owner / managers of childcare facilities make improvements to the way in which they operate their facilities through the ongoing training of staff and adoption of quality standards
7. The extent to which children in areas of greatest disadvantage have improved access to childcare in South Tipperary
8. The level and quality of information generated and supplied by the South Tipperary CCC and the extent to which this information is made available in rural as well as urban areas.
9. The extent of participation in the various stakeholder networks established in the childcare sector in South Tipperary.

The co-ordinator will carry out quarterly evaluations based on objectives set for the strategy overall.

4. Details of the South Tipperary County Childcare Committee

South Tipperary CCC recognises that to be effective it needs to include the broadest possible representation of stakeholders in childcare. Currently the committee comprises eighteen members all with relevant interest in, and experience of, the development of childcare. The structure is balanced to include representation from the statutory sector, local development groups, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and providers of childcare in the county.

4.1 Mission Statement

It is important for any organisation to have a mission statement South Tipperary CCC's mission statement is as follows:-

"To encourage and co-ordinate the development of child-centred, flexible accessible childcare in South Tipperary that offers a choice of a high quality service for all in a stable, secure environment".

4.2 Overview of the Committee Structure

The names of, and agencies represented by, the eighteen members of the committee are listed below.

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Kathleen Prendergast, (Chairperson)	South Tipperary County Development Board
Catherine Corbett	FAS
Mark Doyle	Dept of Social and Family Affairs
Mary Hennessy	Voluntary Sector
Sally Ivers	Community Forum
Mary Hayes	Childminding Representative
Frank O'Donoghue	Chamber of Commerce
Phil Mackey	HSE
Anne Murphy	Community Providers Representative
Yvonne Murphy	Trade Union Pillar
Liz O'Connor	Pobal
ClIr Mattie McGrath	South Tipperary Co. Co.
Timmy O'Donovan	IFA
Fiona George	Parent Provider Representative
Teresa Ring	Parent Provider Representative
Phil Shanahan	Clonmel Community Partnership

Helen McCarthy	Childminding Representative
Aine Sheehan	Childcare Provider Representative

South Tipperary CCC is a company limited by Guarantee.

4.3 Sub-Committee Membership

In addition to the work of the plenary committee a number of sub-committees operate. Each sub-committee has up to 8 members.

These are as follows:-

Executive Committee

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Kathleen Prendergast, (Chairperson)	South Tipperary County Development Board
Mary Hennessy	Voluntary Sector
Phil Shanahan	Clonmel Community Partnership
Phil Mackey	HSE
Yvonne Murphy	Trade Union Pillar
Anne Murphy	Community Providers Representative
Frank O'Donoghue	Chamber of Commerce
Tracy Costelloe	South Tipperary CCC Co-ordinator

Infrastructure / PESC sub-committee

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Kathleen Prendergast	South Tipperary County Development Board
Mary Hennessy	Voluntary Sector
Phil Mackey	HSE
Robert Speers	South Tipperary Co. Co. Planning Dept.
Ger Boland	South Tipperary CCC Development Officer
Tracy Costelloe	South Tipperary CCC Co-ordinator

Training, Quality and Network (TQN) sub-committee

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Catherine Corbett	FAS
Teresa Ring	Parent Provider Representative

Frank O'Donoghue	Chamber of Commerce
Kay Mullaney	VEC
Ger Boland	South Tipperary CCC Development Officer
Tracy Costelloe	South Tipperary CCC Co-ordinator

Equality, Diversity and Social Inclusion sub-committee

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Mark Doyle	FAS
Sally Ivers	Community Forum
Phil Shanahan	Clonmel Community Partnership
Gavin Cullen	South Tipperary Co. Co. Access Officer
Catherine Leamy	Cashel Primary Health Care
Ger Boland	South Tipperary CCC Development Officer
Tracy Costelloe	South Tipperary CCC Co-ordinator

Childminders' sub-committee

Member / Position	Agency Represented
Mary Hayes	Childminding Representative
Yvonne Murphy	Trade Union Pillar
Childminding Development Officer (vacant)	South Tipperary CCC
Tracy Costelloe	South Tipperary CCC Co-ordinator

4.4 Staff and Operations

At time of writing the staff situation at South Tipperary CCC is as follows:-

- Co-ordinator – Tracy Costelloe
- Development worker – Ger Boland

South Tipperary CCC is in the process of hiring new staff at time of writing.

4.5 Process for CCC's to Support Verification of Salary Increases

The following is a list of commitments that South Tipperary CCC has agreed to factor into its strategic plan to support the verification of salary increases for relevant staff at the South Tipperary CCC.

1. Implementation of and co-operation with the CCC handbook and all operational guidelines by carrying out all executive, administrative and delivery functions to support good corporate governance of the company, including formal mechanisms for keeping boards fully and appropriately informed.
2. Submit performance monitoring, financial returns and annual progress reports to Pobal in an accurate and timely fashion.
3. Set defined targets, in agreement with Pobal, for Programme implementation and carry out annual review of outcomes and impacts.
4. Adherence to good employment practice through implementing policies agreed by the board with respect to areas such as recruitment, leave, grievance and disciplinary procedures.
5. Develop and implement a performance management system for staff.
6. Commit to maintaining a well managed industrial relations environment to minimise disputes affecting the level of service to the public.
7. Implement and agree a customer charter, to include a customer complaints procedure.
8. Adherence to financial best practice as set out in the Manual of Accounting Procedures and Practices which includes, adherence to the highest standards in project file maintenance, adhering to public procurement procedures as advised and development of and adherence to a code of standards and behaviour for staff.
9. Commit to increased flexibility including in relation to working arrangements and co-operate with and participate in work and organisational evolution and change.
10. Co-operate with the introduction of new technology to further enhance business processes and service delivery to clients.

5. Details of the South Tipperary Area

This chapter of the report sets out to provide a description of county South Tipperary from a demographic perspective, to describe the current levels of provision and supply and comment on the specific requirements and unique features of childcare provision in the county.

5.1 Demographic Profile of the County

County Tipperary is divided for the purposes of local government administration into North and South Ridings and the southern one, South Tipperary forms part of the area covered by the South Eastern Regional Authority (SERA). Unlike other counties, South Tipperary has no single dominant urban centre. The major towns are well spread out with Clonmel and Carrick-on-Suir in the South and East, Tipperary town in the west and Cahir and Cashel in the centre of the county.

Population growth in South Tipperary between 1996 and 2002, at 4.8%, was well short of the national average of 8%. While that was a period of six years the growth figure for the last inter-censal period 2002 to 2006 was similar at 5%. South Tipperary had the lowest growth of any county in the South East region with it and Waterford (6.3%) being the only counties below the national growth average of 8.1%. However, it should be noted that this upward trend reversed a fall of 2% between 1986 and 1996. The recent increases in population have been caused by a combination of factors such as inward migration primarily from Eastern European countries, an increase in the birth rate among the indigenous population and the return of people who had emigrated in the past.

The county is divided into five electoral areas, Cahir, Cashel, Clonmel, Fethard and Tipperary. However, for the purposes of this research the county has been divided into eight regions as shown in the table below. These areas have been defined by South Tipperary CCC with the assistance of the Planning Department of South Tipperary County Council and it hopes that these regional divisions can allow it to examine more closely childcare provision in different parts of the county. It is also hoped that the information obtained as part of this childcare needs analysis can be used to inform the County Development Board's Spatial Strategy. A map of these areas is included in the appendix to this document.

Table 1 - Population Growth - South Tipperary 2002-2006

	2002	2006	Growth Actual	Growth %
Tipperary	13,217	13,468	251	1.9%
Clogheen	3,300	3,410	110	3.3%
Cahir	9,336	10,659	1,323	14.2%
Clonmel	22,009	22,337	328	1.5%
Carrick-on-Suir	9,052	9,504	452	5.0%
Killenaule	7,540	7,781	241	3.2%
Cashel	9,988	11,014	1,026	10.3%
Dundrum	4,679	4,879	200	4.3%
Total	79,121	83,052	3,931	5.0%

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Demographic Profile of the County - Children

At time of writing the only figures that are available from the Census 2006 returns are preliminary figures for population by DED and county. Therefore, the figures in the table below total population are correct for South Tipperary for both 2002 and 2006. The pre-school and school age figures for 2006 and all the figures for 2010 are estimates based on two assumptions. Firstly, we expect the level of growth in the population overall to fall slightly but we expect that the proportion of children in each of the two age-groups listed will remain the same.

These estimates have been used in the Strategic Mapping project, conducted recently, which forms the basis of the later chapter of this report on Analysis of Needs.

Table 2 – Estimates of Child Population 2006-2010

	2002	2006	2010 (estimates)
Population	79,121	83,052	85,564
Growth %		5.0%	3.0%
Pre-school 0-4 years	5,567	5,875 (est)	6,069
Growth %		5.5%	3.3%
School age 5-14 years	11,824	12,468 (est)	12,873
Growth %		5.4%	3.3%

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

5.2 Other Demographic Information

The following are other notes of economic and social importance regarding the South Tipperary region. Please note that many of the figures are based on the 2002 census as full data for 2006 is not yet available.

- South Tipperary has a relatively low population density as 60% of the population live in rural areas with 40% living in urban areas. Though the state average is 60% in urban areas, this is heavily influenced by the population of Dublin and the South Tipperary figure is not unusual for "rural" counties.
- Clonmel is the dominant town in the county. However, as a "region" of the county, as defined by this research, its population grew least of all eight regions. Highest growth was in Cahir with Cashel a close second. These two regions accounted for 60% of the growth in terms of actual numbers. Carrick on Suir was the only other area that grew at or above the county average of 5%.
- Clonmel has been the key driver of economic progress in the county with many healthcare and pharmaceutical companies now present in the area. However, agriculture still maintains a strong presence in the county with 16.8% of the labour engaged in agriculture in 2002, exactly twice the national average of 8.4%.
- There were a total of 402 travellers living in the county according to the 2002 census or 5.1 per thousand population. This is lower than the state average of 6.1/1000.

5.3 Current Provision

There are a total of 69 childcare facilities / organisations in South Tipperary. There are also 7 notified childminders and all 76 have been included in the Mapping project recently completed. It was possible to interview a total of 69 providers with data provided by the HSE for those remaining upon which estimates were made.

In order to put the level of current provision in some context it should be noted that the vast majority of children in childcare in South Tipperary are in the care of childminders other than those notified to the HSE. Though no exact figures exist due to the informal nature of childminding in many cases, it is thought that up to 85% of children in childcare in Ireland are looked after by childminders. This group is not included in this research and, when examining the number of childcare places available to children in South Tipperary, the existence of this type of childcare should be kept in mind.

The table below shows how childcare providers are distributed by geographic region within the county.

Understandably, the majority of facilities are in the Clonmel area as this is the largest centre of population.

Note: Throughout this report, the number of **places** refers to the number of child places that are available at any one time. A place could be a morning session at a community facility, for example. The number of **children catered for** is the total number of different children who attend a childcare facility or notified childminder.

Childcare Places and Children Catered For

Table 3 – Childcare Facilities, Places and Children Catered For by Region (as of April 2007)

	Facilities	Places	Children Catered For
Clonmel	29	554	807
Tipperary	10	193	306
Cashel	9	200	304
Carrick	8	140	221
Killenaule	7	135	206
Cahir	6	116	171
Dundrum	5	56	89
Clogheen	2	30	33
Total	76	1,424	2,137

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Facilities by Provider Type

Table 4 below shows the number of facilities by type of provider. Overall, there are a similar number of community and private providers. However, this even split is not found when we look at the figures by region. More than half of all the private providers are in the Clonmel region while the community facilities are more evenly spread. While private providers can be found in rural areas and areas of low population, since they are driven by market forces alone, by definition they are more often found in areas of high population and high demand.

Table 4 – Childcare Facilities by Type of Provider (as of April 2007)

	Community	Private	Childminder
Tipperary	6	3	1
Clogheen	2	0	0
Cahir	3	3	0
Clonmel	8	19	2
Carrick	5	2	1
Killenaule	7	0	0
Cashel	2	5	2
Dundrum	0	4	1
Total	33	36	7

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Childcare Places by Type of Place

The following shows the distribution of childcare places by type of place provided, for example, the number of full day places as compared to the number of sessional places. It should be noted that the number of Montessori places are not separate to the full-day or sessional places. They are a sub-set of these. After-school and Drop-in places are not included in the overall total number of places but each are separate standalone figures.

Note: Short definitions / description of the different types of childcare places are included as an Appendix to this report.

The majority of places are sessional and again most are provided in the Clonmel area. The availability of Montessori places outside Clonmel region is very limited and half of the regions have no Montessori places at all. There are just two facilities offering Drop-In services in the county, one in Tipperary and one in Clonmel.

Table 5 – Childcare Place by Type of Place Provided (as of April 2007)

	Total Places	Full-day	Sessional		Montesori	After School	Drop In
Clonmel	554	134	420		166	51	5
Cashel	200	52	148		40	50	0
Tipperary	193	78	115		31	27	17
Carrick	140	6	134		0	0	0
Killenaule	135	5	130		0	50	0
Cahir	116	38	78		20	6	0

Dundrum	56	17	39		0	0	0
Clogheen	30	0	30		0	0	0
Total	1,424	330	1,094		257	184	22

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Children Catered For by Age-Group

Turning our attention to the number of children catered for by age-group we see that 71% of all places are for the age-group 3-5 pre-school age. This demonstrates that the vast majority of childcare available in South Tipperary is for pre-school age children. Only 21% of places available for the 0-5 pre-school age-group are available for under 2's despite the fact that they comprise approximately half the 0-5 pre-school age-group. This suggests that there is a need for greater provision for children under 2 and particularly for those under 1 year old. This is borne out by the nature of excess demand seen by existing providers which will be examined later in this section.

Table 6 – Children Catered For by Age-Group (as of April 2007)

	Under 1	1 to 2	3 to 5 Pre-school	5 to 14 School age	Total Children
Clonmel	31	144	568	64	807
Tipperary	14	55	200	37	306
Cashel	13	71	162	58	304
Carrick	1	8	212	0	221
Killenaule	0	10	141	55	206
Cahir	11	30	124	6	171
Dundrum	1	10	78	0	89
Clogheen	0	0	33	0	33
Total	71	328	1,518	220	2,137

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Demand for Places Based on Perceptions of Existing Facilities

Though we can compare and contrast the availability of places in each region, we cannot quantify to what extent the lack of availability in certain regions is due to lack of demand or how much is just to do with supply shortages.

In order to get some idea of the surplus of demand over supply we asked each childcare provider to say whether they could fill extra places if they had them available. The majority said they could and the table below provides some detail on the situation in each region. The number of facilities who are experiencing excess demand is close to 57% of the total. Given that we

were unable to completed interviews with eight facilities and therefore unable to ask them this question, it is possible that more, in fact, are seeing higher levels of demand than they can cope with. Tipperary was the area of greatest need when compared with current provision with the existing providers saying they could fill 109 more places. However, the greatest actual need is in Clonmel where providers estimate they could fill 155 extra places.

Respondents were asked what type of childcare was most in demand and for what age-groups. It is not surprising that the highest demand was for full-day care with 24 of the 43 providers who could fill extra places stating the greatest demand is for full day care.

Demand for childcare by age-group was high across the different age-groups. Demand for childcare for 3-5 year olds was mentioned by 23 providers, or half the total. Twenty stated that childcare for Under 1s was in demand. In many cases childcare facilities don't provide care for babies as the staff requirements for this age-group are higher. Demand for care for 1-2 year olds was not far behind with 17 providers naming this age-group. Demand is high for all ages with a few mentioning the 5+ age-group which was can assume to be after-school care.

Table 7 – Excess Demand for Places by Region (as of April 2007)

	Facilities with Excess Demand/Total	Excess Places	% proportion of existing places
Dundrum	4/5	39	70%
Clogheen	1/2	20	67%
Tipperary	6/10	109	56%
Clonmel	18/29	155	28%
Carrick	3/8	34	24%
Cahir	3/6	20	17%
Cashel	6/9	24	12%
Killenaule	2/7	0	0%
Total	43/76	401	28%

Note: The 2 facilities in Killenaule were unable to quantify the number of extra places they could fill. A total of 8 facilities were not interviewed and where estimates were made could not be asked this question so the actual number who could fill more places may be higher.

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Childcare Places per Hundred Children

The table below shows the number of each type of pre-school childcare places per hundred children in each region of the county. The county average for each type is also shown as we have used these when setting targets for new places to be created by 2010. We have also highlighted the regions with the highest ratio for each type of service (e.g. Clonmel – 8.3 full-day places per hundred) as these ratios have also been used when setting targets.

The table shows that Clonmel has the highest level of childcare provision but with one place for every three children. The county average is just one place for every four children. Full day care is in short supply everywhere with Clonmel the highest with less than one place for every ten children. Two regions, Killenaule and Carrick have very low levels of full-day care while Clogheen has none at all. The high level of availability of Montessori places in Clonmel distorts the average of places in the county when, in fact, there are no Montessori place in four of the regions. Killenaule has the highest level of after-school places but the county average is very low at 1.5 places per hundred children of school age.

Overall, Dundrum region lags behind all the others in terms of childcare places.

Table 8 – Childcare Places per Hundred Children by Region (as of April 2007)

	Total Pre-school	Full day	Sessional	Montessori	After School
Clonmel	34.5	8.3	26.2	10.3	1.5
Cashel	26.4	6.9	19.5	5.3	3.2
Killenaule	25.4	0.9	24.5	0.0	4.0
County Average	24.2	5.6	18.6	4.4	1.5
Tipperary	20.6	8.3	12.3	3.3	1.4
Carrick	18.8	0.8	18.0	0.0	0.0
Dundrum	17.6	5.3	12.3	0.0	0.0
Cahir	15.2	5.0	10.2	2.6	0.4
Clogheen	14.0	0.0	14.0	0.0	0.0

Note: After-school calculated as a proportion of children aged 5-14 as per census data

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Childcare Catered For per Hundred Children

The table below shows a different distribution in that it focuses on the actual number of children that are availing of childcare in South Tipperary, segmented by age-group. While there are places for only one in four children in South Tipperary at any one time as we saw in the previous table, nonetheless the total number of children who avail of childcare is, at 36.4, closer to four in ten children. However, we can also see that the majority of childcare places are aimed at children aged 3 to 5 years. This is because demand is generally greatest for children in this age-group who are either one or two years away from school age. Availability for those younger than this varies from approximately one place for every four in the 1-2 age group to just less than five per hundred for those under 1 year old. Again there are variations by region. Clonmel, however, leads the way in availability for children of Under 1 year and 3 to 5 years. Cashel leads in the 1 to 2 years age-group and Killenaule in the 5 to 14 years age-group.

There is no childcare available for children under 1 year in Killenaule, Clogheen or Dundrum and practically none in Carrick on Suir. Cahir is in the unusual position of having a higher than average number of places available

for the Under 1 age group but is, nonetheless, second last in the overall list because of below average availability in the other age-groups.

Table 9 – Children Catered For by Age-Group per Hundred Children by Region (as of April 2007)

	Total Children	Under 1	1 to 2	3 to 5 Pre-School	5 to 14 School Age
Clonmel	50.2	7.7	35.9	70.7	1.9
Cashel	40.1	6.9	37.4	42.7	3.7
Killenaule	38.8	0.0	7.5	53.1	4.4
County Average	36.4	4.8	22.3	51.7	1.8
Tipperary	32.6	6.0	23.4	42.6	1.9
Dundrum	28.0	1.3	12.6	49.0	0.0
Carrick	29.6	0.5	4.3	56.8	0.0
Cahir	22.4	5.8	15.7	32.5	0.4
Clogheen	15.4	0.0	0.0	30.8	0.0

Note: After-school calculated as a proportion of children age 5-14

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

Childminder Initiatives

Though only notified childminders are included in this research project, it should be pointed out that there are initiatives in place to target them. There are new voluntary notification procedures in place that will encourage childminders to become notified. The government has also introduced tax benefits that it hopes will act as a financial incentive for childcare childminders. Both of these will be used by South Tipperary CCC to encourage childminders to become notified and reap the benefits of so doing.

6. Analysis of Needs – Strategic Mapping

This section of the report outlines the findings of the Strategic Childcare Mapping Analysis of South Tipperary conducted by Market Dynamics on behalf of South Tipperary County Childcare Committee (STCCC). The project was completed during March and April 2007.

6.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

The following are the main conclusions and recommendations as determined by Market Dynamics on completion of the Strategic Mapping project in 2007.

Current Situation

- There are a total of 69 childcare facilities and 7 notified childminders in South Tipperary. Between them they offer a total of 1,424 places to 2,137 children.
- Providers are split evenly between private and community facilities but more than half of the private providers are in the Clonmel region with the community facilities more evenly spread.
- There are about three sessional places to every one full day place. Two-thirds of all full-day places are in Clonmel and Tipperary regions.
- The availability of Montessori places is very limited outside Clonmel region which has 65% of the county total. Four of the eight regions have no Montessori places available.
- After school places are in short supply with just 184 in the whole county. Four regions have few or no after-school places.
- Clogheen has only 30 places available, all sessional with no full-day care. The Carrick region which includes the Carrick-on-Suir urban area has only six full-day places available and no Montessori or after-school places.
- 71% of children catered for in childcare facilities are between 3 - 5 years old.
- Clogheen region has no availability for under 2 year olds, Dundrum has one Under 2 in childcare while Carrick offers care to just nine under 2 year olds.
- 57% of childcare facilities claim that they experience excess demand or, in other words, that they could fill more places if they had them available. Overall, they estimate that they could fill a total of 401 extra places.
- Analysing the places available per hundred children of pre-school age we find that Clonmel is the best served region, with Cashel next followed by Killenaule, all of whom have higher than the county average of places available.
- Clonmel has the highest ratio of places of all types with the exception of after-school places where Killenaule is top.
- Killenaule and Carrick all have low ratios of full-day care while Clogheen has none at all.

6.2 Gaps in Provision

Market Dynamics has identified the following major gaps in provision in the county. There are the areas that are most in need of attention from the South Tipperary CCC.

Clogheen

- Clogheen is a rural area with just two community facilities offering a total of thirty sessional places. Per hundred children, it offers just 14 places, well behind the county average of 24.2. Though just one facility claimed it had excess demand, it noted that much of the demand was for full day care of which there is no availability in the area. If this full-day demand was met it would represent an increase of 67% on current provision. The provision of at least some full-day care in the region should be a priority for South Tipperary CCC.

Cahir

- This is the fourth largest and fastest growing of the regions. It is clear that availability of childcare places is not keeping up with that of other regions. There are only six childcare facilities altogether and though the full-day care number are not too far behind the county average the ratio of sessional places, at 10.2, is just over half the county average. When compared to Cashel, a town of similar size and growth, its childcare provision figures are in considerable contrast.
- There are 110 more pre-school children in Cahir than there were in 2002 and the South Tipperary CCC needs to work to double the number of sessional places to bring Cahir up to the county average for this type of childcare.

Dundrum

- Dundrum is the region that showed the highest level of excess demand when measured as a proportion of existing childcare places. There is a need for a community facility here to add to the number of sessional places and to offer Montessori and / or after school care. South Tipperary CCC needs to work to facilitate the provision of a community facility here.

Carrick

- The major deficiency in the Carrick is the lack of full-day care available. Despite the fact that there are a total of eight facilities only six full-day places are available and two of these facilities noted the lack of full-day care in the region. This is a Rapid region and South Tipperary CCC needs to work with the relevant bodies to publicise this lack of full-day care and to work with providers to see if further full-day places can be made available.
- Though the region is also deficient in sessional places, it is not too far below the county average and, as a region that seems to show less demand than other regions, it is likely that the level of sessional supply is meeting demand. One thing that could be promoted is the need for Montessori places as there are none at present.

Killenaule

- Though Killenaule is toward the top of the list for childcare availability, nonetheless, it is very deficient in full-day care, with less than half the county average of places available. All of the providers in this area are community facilities with two offering full-day care. It should be a priority for the South Tipperary CCC to focus on the best way to encourage existing or new facilities to provide full-day care. One provider claimed to have a waiting list for crèche places if they became available.

Tipperary

- Tipperary's figures look good overall, however, it still has a bit of ground to make up in terms of the provision of sessional care. It is currently at around two-thirds the county average in this category. Tipperary is a Rapid area too and South Tipperary CCC should focus attention on encouraging existing facilities to expand on the number sessional care places available.

6.3 Number of Target Childcare Places

This section outlines the number of target places that were considered necessary to be provided to deal with expected demand in 2010.

Target Childcare Places by Region

The table below shows the target number of places that Market Dynamics suggests South Tipperary County Childcare Committee should work to make available within each region of the county before the end of 2010. The targets are based on bringing each region up to the level of the best in each of three categories, full day care, sessional care and Montessori care. Where we consider there is probably too much of a gap for a region to make up within that time, we have suggested a target based on the region achieving the county average figure. Earlier in this report, we examined the level of excess demand that was thought to exist by current providers. We outlined in that section what number of places would be needed to meet this perceived demand. However, these targets are different from those figures. In this exercise we realise that in the majority of cases, childcare providers are not gearing up to meet excess demand as they are running operations that are big enough for their needs. In addition, much of the demand is for services, such as full-day care, for example, which may not be available at all in a particular region. There is also the ongoing issue that though demand is strong, parents are often unwilling or unable to pay the market price for childcare and use childminders instead. For these reasons we believe that it will very difficult to bring childcare provision up to the level of perceived demand expressed by the childcare providers. It is better, therefore, in our view, for South Tipperary CCC to focus on bringing the provision of places up to the levels outlined above and shown in numeric form in the table below.

More detail on the methodology used for setting numeric targets is provided below.

Table 10 - Childcare Places and Targets by Region 2010

Region	Target 2010	Extra Places	% Increase
Clogheen	23		78%
Cahir	86		74%
Dundrum	23		41%
Cashel	77		38%
Tipperary	63		33%
Carrick	46		33%
Killenaule	38		28%

Region	Target 2010	Extra Places	% Increase
Clonmel	144		26%
Total	499		35%

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

In the absence of specific targets for childcare provision set by the government, we have concentrated on pointing out areas of major concern where childcare provision is very obviously deficient. However, during the course of this analysis Market Dynamics introduced our own methodology for setting targets for childcare places. We have used this methodology to produce a target number of extra places that each region should aim to provide for each type of childcare.

Since the mapping project is to support planning from 2006 to 2010, the targets are based on our view of the minimum number of places required by the end of 2010.

Methodology for 2010 Target Setting

The methodology used to set the targets is a simple one. For each type of childcare, e.g. full day, sessional, Montessori, when the current number of places are analysed in the context of the child population of each region we find that there is, obviously, one region of the county which has the best level of provision.

In practice, Clonmel has the highest level of provision of all types of childcare when measured against the child population of the region.

As well having a figure that pertains to the region which has the highest level of provision of each service, we can calculate the county average figure. The average figure for full day care in the county is 5.6 places per hundred.

We have used one or other of these figures in each case to set a target for each region for the number of extra places it should be providing by the end of 2010.

Ideally we would suggest that all regions should reach the same level of provision as the best region for all types of childcare. However, given the disparity in provision between regions and with an eye to setting realistic targets, we have, in some cases, set a region a target of achieving the current (2006) county average level of provision by 2010.

In the tables we have noted whether the target is to reach the level of the best region (designated B) or whether the target is to reach the county average (designated CA).

Please note that the targets allow for expected population increases to 2010.

Note: Because Clonmel is the 'Best' region for all types of childcare for which targets are being set, this means that it is left with a very small target if we use this methodology. In order to make the target for Clonmel more realistic, what we have done is to look at what growth level would result in the county as whole if all the regions' (excluding Clonmel) targets were met (26%). We have then assigned this as a target growth figure for the Clonmel region which gives it a target of 144. This results in a county target of 499 (a growth figure of 35%) which we think is a reasonable and achievable target.

Childcare Services Availability – County Overall

Moving on to the level of childcare services availability we can see the county summary below. Overall, there are 1,424 pre-school childcare places

at present and we recommend that a total of 499 places new places will be required by 2010.

Table 11 – South Tipperary Overall - Specific Services Availability 2006 and 2010 Requirements (as of April 2007)

Type of childcare	Places 2006	Places per 100 pre-school age	Target Extra Places 2010	Target Places 2010	Increase % of Current Places
Pre-school childcare places	1,424	24.2	499	1923	35%
Full day care	330	5.6	136	466	41%
Sessional care	1,094	18.6	363	1457	33%
Montessori places	257	4.4	194	451	76%
After-school places	174	1.5	178	352	102%

Source: Market Dynamics, 2007

6.4 Rapid and Clár Areas

The Clár programme is a targeted investment scheme for rural areas. There are three areas in South Tipperary included in the scheme.

These areas are as follows:

- Glengar
- Curraheen
- Clogher

RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) is a focused Government initiative to target the 46 most disadvantaged urban areas and provincial towns in the country. The implementation of the RAPID programme is led by the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs. Pobal coordinates programme implementation on behalf of the department. The following parts of South Tipperary are included in the Rapid programme.

- Carrick-on-Suir
- Clonmel – part of town (there is currently a community-based childcare facility being developed under the EOCP programme in the Rapid area of Clonmel).
- Tipperary town

7. Objective Setting

The key inputs to the objective setting process for this Strategic Report have been the consultations undertaken with a range of stakeholders with the specific purpose of setting the strategy for South Tipperary County Childcare Committee for the coming years.

Consultations were undertaken with the following stakeholder groups:-

- Committee members – two consultation sessions
- South Tipperary CCC staff – two one to one interviews
- Childcare providers – one focus group
- Parents – one focus group
- Children – we drew on the research "Listening to Children" which was conducted by Gretta Murphy of Kilkenny CCC as part of her MA studies

The appendix details the names of those people who attended the various consultation meetings / focus groups.

7.1 SWOT Analysis – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

We saw earlier in this report a summary of the findings of the consultations with committee members and staff on the topic of past performance of the South Tipperary CCC. This was an important scene-setting exercise which offered an insight into the achievements of the committee since its inception as well as highlighting those areas where it was felt less progress had been made.

The next stage of the consultation process, and a necessary one prior to setting the strategy for the future, was to undertake an investigation of the current state of childcare in South Tipperary. The most appropriate way to do this was to conduct SWOT analyses with the staff and the committee members.

Summary of SWOT Analysis

The following table provides a summary of the findings of the SWOT analysis undertaken with both the staff and the committee. Full details of this element of the consultation can be found in Appendix 1.

<p>Strengths</p> <p>Funding available – as part of the national network of CCC's there is funding available and the PESC committee is empowered to make key decisions on the allocation of that funding. South Tipperary CCC staff are proactively working to generate interest in setting up childcare facilities and working closely with those applying for funding.</p> <p>South Tipperary CCC has built a strong foundation in all areas of its brief – South Tipperary CCC is considered a credible source of advice on childcare issues. It has built up networks and good relationships with other partners in childcare such as the HSE.</p> <p>Committee includes parents and providers – the committee is a team effort and there is now considerable knowledge sharing within the committee as a result of the trust developed over time. South Tipperary CCCC is overcoming its recent internal challenges</p> <p>Providing ongoing training – South Tipperary CCC is very involved in the provision of training which is helping to improve the quality of childcare in South Tipperary.</p>	<p>Weaknesses</p> <p>Staff turnover high – South Tipperary CCC has had a high level of staff turnover in recent years which has had an impact</p> <p>Co-ordination between committee and staff – the level of co-ordination between committee and staff has been a weakness but one which has been addressed. The committee has a need to provide terms of reference for sub-committees to enable better communication.</p> <p>Somewhat insular committee – the committee felt it needs to work more with those organisations in the childcare sector, particularly those who have representatives on the board</p> <p>Lack of communication with some providers – the lack of staff available in recent times has led to a lack of communication with some childcare providers in the county.</p> <p>Lack of awareness of South Tipperary CCC and its role – the lack of staff has also, for example, resulted in a drop in the brand image of the committee, e.g. there are more mentions of the North Tipperary CCC on local radio in Clonmel than the South Tipperary CCC.</p>
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>County Development Board (CDB) Spatial Strategy – South Tipperary CCC is taking the opportunity to link up with the new Spatial Strategy. The Strategic Mapping findings will be particularly valuable in this regard.</p> <p>New staff – the new team being recruited will provide new enthusiasm and dynamism to the South Tipperary CCC. As a result a greater awareness of the South Tipperary CCC should be built up quickly with better communication with stakeholders.</p> <p>NCIP / PESC – the NCIP and South Tipperary CCC's central involvement in it allows the committee to drive the childcare</p>	<p>Threats</p> <p>No hub town in South Tipperary – this is a problem when trying to promote childcare provision. Geographic spread makes it difficult to build networks, for example. Infrastructure is also a problem with a poor road network, poor rural transport and the existence of many geographically isolated areas.</p> <p>Sustainability of community projects – this is a real concern as voluntary boards are looking after large amounts of capital with no training programme available to help them manage such projects.</p> <p>Increasing functionality of Pobal mission statement – there is a concern that local autonomy could</p>

<p>agenda and make decisions based on good quality information.</p> <p>Increasing population – new parents should be targeted through hospitals and foreign nationals through leaflets in appropriate languages.</p> <p>Good governance – The committee has improved structures in place and is ready and committed to face the challenges so that staff and committee members can work together for the overall benefit of childcare in the county.</p>	<p>be revoked by central government.</p> <p>Deployment of new staff – with a lot of new staff being hired there is a challenge of effective deployment and management of these staff. Clear actionable priorities need to be set for them.</p> <p>New facilities – there must be a strong requirement for all new facilities before funding is allocated.</p>
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7.2 Challenges and Other Issues

As part of the staff consultation process we also posed questions on the issues of challenges relating to the promotion of quality childcare, and some of the more operational issues relating to improving childcare provision. The key issues raised are outlined below.

One of the key challenges pointed to was the need to re-build the profile of the South Tipperary CCC. Another is dealing with the expectation on the part of childcare providers that the South Tipperary CCC will complete funding applications on behalf of these providers. In addition, the point was made that there are now concerns about the sustainability of existing childcare facilities and overcoming these through appropriate training must become a priority.

On the issue of quality childcare, the cost of training was raised as an issue for private providers who are already very cost constrained. This financial constraint adds to the difficulty in getting providers to commit to quality programmes.

Staff felt that the NCIP was a very positive move in the right direction and that it is a much more manageable process than the EOCP with faster and more effective processing of funding applications.

With regard to networks, the provider network was considered to be strong while parents' workshops and seminars have been over-subscribed, a good indicator of success. An additional suggested initiative that might be of benefit would be a calendar of network events for both parents and providers, published at the start of the calendar year

7.4 Parents Consultation

One of the most important stakeholder groups in the childcare sector is, of course, the parents of young children. A focus group consultation was conducted with a group of parents to elicit their views and opinions on a range of childcare care issues. The main points arising include the following.

Parents don't believe that there is sufficient childcare available in the county. Much childcare is provided informally and through extended families and there is a requirement for more community crèches. One parent, who has a child with special needs, felt that such children should be catered for in mainstream childcare facilities, rather than in dedicated facilities. In his view, many of the techniques available to children with special needs should also be available to all pre-school children. He gave the example of sign-language which is taught to his child as a communication aid and which could be used by children prior to their being able to speak.

Another issue that concerned parents was the lack of men in childcare. They felt that a greater effort needed to be made to attract men into the childcare sector and that the profession would benefit as a result. The point was made that if there was a greater focus on being outdoors, this would make the job more attractive to men.

A number of things were suggested during a discussion on the keys to good quality childcare. First of all, there needs to be greater availability of childcare in the county. This will mean a greater degree of choice for parents, something that doesn't exist at present. Of course, more resources are needed.

Ireland should look to examples of best practice from other countries as a guide to what should be provided here. This should be used to build a structure for good quality childcare. An outdoor curriculum should be provided and this should include provisions for children to be outside in the winter months. Currently, it was felt that children were kept inside to far too great an extent. Finally, more qualified staff are required to improve the quality of childcare being provided.

In ten year's time, South Tipperary should have a safe and nurturing environment for all children with greater cultural diversity and gender equality in childcare. There should be greater promotion of 'culture' and cultural diversity. This could be done through the use of music and sport and could involve people visiting childcare facilities to act as positive role models. The ratio of staff to children should be high and facilities should be funded rather than self-interested.

7.5 Childcare Providers Consultation

Important stakeholders in the childcare sector are the people who run childcare facilities. A focus group consultation was conducted with a group of childcare providers to elicit their views and opinions on a range of childcare issues. The group was made up of both community and private providers.

The main points arising include the following.

One of the major challenges that childcare providers face, in their view, is to set a good standard of quality for parents. The recruitment, and retention, of good quality staff is an ongoing challenge too. However, it was noted that the South Tipperary CCC has been very involved with the VEC in providing training with the result that there are now more qualified staff available. In addition, providers are more confident in the staff they are hiring and can let them work quite independently after induction. Qualified staff bring in new ideas and this can be particularly beneficial to smaller facilities, acting as a 'refresher course'

There is, however, a lack of funds available to pay staff and providers have difficulties with benefits such as sick leave and overtime. One of the reasons for the lack of funds is parents' lack of willingness to pay for the service provided. Despite demanding the best service for their children, it was felt that parents still don't expect to pay what providers' need to charge to provide the service.

Another issue for providers is the increasing burden of administrative work they are required to do such as the completion of incident books which cuts into childcare time. Similarly, HSE inspections take time with regulations getting tighter and tighter. Another administrative issue is the process for applying for funding under the EOCP and NCIP. Some who had applied but failed to gain funding stated that they would not apply again. There also seems to be a lack of awareness about the funding available to private providers, at least when compared to the community sector. Perhaps the message about the additional funding opportunities for private providers is not getting through to them.

The key's to quality childcare, in the view of providers, is a safe and loving environment. Facilities should act as a 'second home' to children. In the light of the difficulties that providers have in making ends meet, some form of subsidisation of salaries would be welcome. While the need for regulation is understood and appreciated, it is also felt that some of the regulations are too prescriptive and should be relaxed. One example that was given of over-regulation was the requirement that children have two snacks in the morning. The holistic nature of childcare was noted as being important. Childcare should be about children being comfortable, confident, building their self-esteem and learning social skills. As the parents did in their consultation, the providers also noted the importance of outdoor facilities for children. These are considered essential by providers.

Just as the parents whom we consulted considered that Ireland should look to best practice from abroad when deciding what type of childcare to provide in the future, so too did the childcare providers. However, they were more specific, naming the Swedish model as the one that should be followed. Providers also expressed the hope that childcare would be better recognised as a profession in ten year's time. Parents have a role to play in this and the wish was expressed that parents and childcare providers would act in a partnership to ensure that quality childcare would be provided in a professional environment which was recognised as such.

7.6 Childminders' Consultation

The biggest section of the childcare sector is made up of childminders. A focus group consultation was conducted with a group of childminders to elicit their views and opinions on a range of childcare issues. The group was made up of both notified and non-notified childminders.

The main points arising include the following.

A key challenge for childminders is to be taken seriously for the job they do and the service they provide. There is a lack of recognition of the training that childminders have undertaken. Parents don't have an expectation that childminders are trained. At times, parents seem surprised when childminders point out the training courses they have done. Childminders friends, too, often betray their lack of recognition that childminding is work when they says things that suggest childminders are just at home all day.

However, an even greater challenge is that of setting out terms and conditions of service and then getting parents to stick to them. Parents often don't perceive that childminders are running a business and childminders find it difficult to communicate assertively with parents particularly in relation to money. This results in childminders often not putting up prices in line with cost increases to avoid confrontation with parents. As well as issues of payment, childminders find that parents regularly fail to adhere to terms and conditions particularly in relation to time-keeping. Ironically, this is in the context of strong demand from parents for childcare. Many parents seem to be desperately looking for childcare.

Childminders see themselves as being treated less well than childcare facilities with regard to available funding. All grants/subsidies tend to go to childcare facilities and it would be good if there was more money available for advertising or if a childminder wanted to extend their business. Nobody seems to know where to find childminders and parents are regularly turned away.

The availability of training has fallen since the childminder network has been out of action in the past year. Demand for training is high and all those consulted had undertaken some training. They would like to see further training being made available on behaviour management, special needs / behaviour assessment, assertiveness and running childminding as a business.

The keys to good quality childcare, in their view, are to ensure that children are enabled to develop to their full potential and to recognise that children of different ages have different requirements and to ensure that children have a happy and secure childcare environment. It was also considered important to be taken seriously as a professional and to work in partnership with parents for the betterment of childcare.

In ten year's time it was hoped that all childminders would be notified to the HSE, all would have at least a minimum level of qualifications. By the same token, the hope was expressed that parents would be actively looking for quality childcare, understand what quality childcare means and be willing to pay for it.

In order for these aspirations to become reality it was felt that supports would be needed. For a start, more training would need to be made available and it should be noted that it is a stated commitment of the South Tipperary CCC that when a new Childminding Advisory Officer is in place that the Childminders' network, with all the supports that were once provided, will be restored. Better communication with parents will be required and better facilities will be needed, for example, playgrounds and indoor play spaces/facilities. It was felt that the provision of more parent and toddler groups in South Tipperary would be a help, particularly in rural areas, and that the South Tipperary CCC could run outings for children and minders during school holidays. Help could also be provided in the form of 'lesson plans' as well as in stress management to deal with the difficulties of the job.

7.7 Children's Consultation

The last consultation was not undertaken specifically as part of the process to develop the strategic report but as part of the work conducted by Gretta Murphy of Kilkenny CCC in pursuit of her MA in Therapeutic Childcare, April 2006. In her thesis, "Listening to Young Children" we get an insight into the things that young children like and dislike about their childcare environment.

The main findings of the research were that the things young children like best about their childcare environment are as follows:-

- **Children opt to be outdoors** – during the research project which was conducted over a number of days children expressed the wish to be outdoors as much as possible. This finding corroborates the findings of other research which demonstrated that children will opt to be outdoors for at least part of the day if given the opportunity. Some children who were quite reserved indoors "emerged as inquisitive, chatty and humorous once outside". The fact of "being outside appeared to offer significant communication opportunities to children with both each other and adults".
- **Importance of friends** – another major finding was the importance that children place on being with their friends. Friendship was also seen to be link to conflicts and the resolution of these. There was displeasure when children had a falling out with a friend but there was an ability to find solutions too.

These are just a couple of the main findings of the study. Overall the study showed that children could communicate skilfully about the details of their lives. It showed that childcare practitioners and parents can learn a lot from listening to children.

7.8 Recommendations to South Tipperary CCC Based on Research

A considerable amount of research has been completed as part of the process of developing this Strategic report. The following are a few key

recommendations from Market Dynamics on the way forward for South Tipperary County Childcare Committee.

South Tipperary CCC is at a cross-roads. The recent high turnover of staff has resulted in a lack of resources being available to work on the various areas that require attention. There has been a reduction in communication with childcare providers, a lack of involvement in networks, less information being disseminated and this lack of engagement has resulted in a lowering of the profile of the committee. This has caused some damage but is not irrecoverable. Based on the consultations undertaken with all the stakeholders involved, the following are some of the key areas that require attention, in the view of Market Dynamics personnel.

- **New staff needed** – this is the most obvious first step and this process is underway already. Just by having resources available South Tipperary CCC will be able to increase the amount of activity it gets involved in.
- **PR effort needed** – it will not be enough to let new staff catch up with activities and initiatives that may have fallen behind. South Tipperary CCC needs to take the opportunity of the new hires to make as much noise as possible about the new resources. It should be open about the fact that staff numbers had fallen and make a virtue of the fact that new staff have been taken on. This coupled with communications to a wide range of stakeholders will go a long way to appraise people of the new situation at the CCC.
- **Strategic Mapping** – the findings of the mapping study need to be acted on as soon as resources allow. The information is timely and can act as a focus for the newly resourced CCC.
- **Governance** – the committee has structures in place and has improved governance in relation to committees and staff. It has realised that it has been on a steep learning curve in this regard and is ready and committed to face the challenges it faces to ensure that there is no recurrence of the problems of the past.
- **Childcare as a profession** – as part of its work the South Tipperary CCC ought to consider initiatives to educate parents about the value of childcare as a profession. Any success in this effort will yield results in the greater appreciation of the profession and the service it provides and a greater willingness on the part of parents to pay their childcare costs.
- **Childminding sector** – the Childminding sector had good support in the past and strongly feels the loss of this. The consultation with childminders pointed to the lack of the network, support and training courses. These are particularly needed by this sector of childcare as childminders are more likely to be working on their own and to feel isolated. All of these supports need to be restored and this should be a priority once the new CMAO has been recruited.
- **Infrastructure sustainability** – the committee needs to carefully evaluate the sustainability of proposed community projects and provide on-going supports
- **Engagement with South Tipperary CCC** – the PR campaign will help to raise awareness of the STCCC once again but this will not, on its own, improve the level of engagement of childcare providers with it. This needs to be encouraged through pro-active communications with providers.

7.9 Proposed Actions to Meet Pobal Objectives

The framework document issued by Pobal to the County Childcare Committees to guide them in setting their strategy for the period 2007-2010

outlined 13 objectives and asked each county to submit an overview of how the strategy will meet these objectives.

The objectives are listed below and have been numbered for identification purposes.

1. Maintain and build the local capacity to establish and sustain childcare places/services across all categories of childcare providers/services.
2. Develop and promote quality standards and targets for childcare in the county.
3. Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues.
4. Enhance and develop co-ordination at all levels.
5. Establish, develop and maintain a relevant support strategy for childcare providers at local level.
6. Through the CCC role in the NCIP application process, establish a strategic and proactive approach to be taken to childcare development at county level.
7. Identify and promote initiatives targeted at the development and support of School-Age Childcare in the county.
8. Identify, promote and improve the supply of early childhood care and education services for 3 to 4 year olds.
9. Promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders – including the development of voluntary notification with the local HSE.
10. Enhance childcare networks appropriate to the range of childcare providers and workers in the county.
11. Identify training needs, developing a relevant strategy in consultation and collaboration with relevant training bodies/agencies.
12. Develop and improve information sharing and learning systems.
13. Attract resources from local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives.

After a review of the consultations to date with staff, committee members, parents and providers the 13 Pobal objectives for the strategic plan were reviewed. It was decided to allocate each objective to one of the four broad headings that are deemed by South Tipperary CCC to be most relevant to their work. These are Infrastructure, Quality, Information and Networks.

7.10 Allocation of Objectives

In the allocation of objectives it is clear that some objectives could fall into different categories. However, we have attempted to put them into the most appropriate one in all cases.

- Infrastructure

The objectives that are considered to belong to the Infrastructure category are as follows:-

- Maintain and build the local capacity to establish and sustain childcare places/services across all categories of childcare providers/services.
- Promote initiatives that enhance the level of appropriate service provision that targets disadvantage and social inclusion issues.

- Through the CCC role in the NCIP application process, establish a strategic and proactive approach to be taken to childcare development at county level.
- Identify and promote initiatives targeted at the development and support of School-Age Childcare in the county.
- Identify, promote and improve the supply of early childhood care and education services for 3 to 4 year olds.

- Quality

The objectives that are considered to belong to the Quality category are as follows:-

- Develop and promote quality standards and targets for childcare in the county.
- Identify training needs, developing a relevant strategy in consultation and collaboration with relevant training bodies/agencies.

- Information

The objectives that are considered to belong to the Information category are as follows:-

- Develop and improve information sharing and learning systems.
- Establish, develop and maintain a relevant support strategy for childcare providers at local level.

- Networks

The objectives that are considered to belong to the Networks category are as follows:-

- Promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders – including the development of voluntary notification with the local HSE.
- Enhance and develop co-ordination at all levels.
- Enhance childcare networks appropriate to the range of childcare providers and workers in the county.
- Attract resources from local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives.

7.11 Actions to Address Objectives

Following this revision, the four categories were then individually reviewed by the committee members and staff at a consultation meeting to identify the key actions required to achieve these objectives. Due to the fact that South Tipperary CCC has had a small complement of staff for some time, as well as some ongoing staffing issues, some of the actions listed by the committee members were felt to be structural by nature. For example, the hiring of staff is a fundamental structural requirement of improved governance. As a consequence, some of these actions have been included in a separate heading "Top Level / Structural". It should be noted that these structural actions are already being undertaken by South Tipperary CCC.

The following are the key actions identified under each heading:

Top Level / Structural – Actions

- **Staff** - get full complement of staff up and running. This is an absolute necessity at present where South Tipperary CCC is failing in its role due to the lack of sufficient staff numbers.

- **CMAO** – hire a new Childminding Advisory Officer. This is a particularly key appointment as the Childminders Network which had been up and running is now dormant for want of a childminding officer to drive it. The need has been shown to exist during the consultations carried out as part of this process. South Tipperary CCC will strive to encourage childminders to become notified by pointing out the benefits to be had from the voluntary notification guidelines as well as tax benefits.
- **Governance** - review and further develop internal structures for on-going good governance. Good structures are in place already and the committee is ready and committed to improve governance so that staff and committee members can work together for the overall benefit of childcare in the county.

Infrastructure - Actions

- **Spatial strategy** – South Tipperary CCC will work closely with the CDB on its spatial strategy.
- **Improve infrastructure** – ensure a focussed and proactive development of infrastructure (in association with mapping). Set areas of priority for infrastructure development based on greatest need e.g. current availability and disadvantage. This work is ongoing and extra staff will help this effort greatly.
- **Improve sustainability** – develop a programme to build expertise for sustainable community facilities including review of different requirements for set-up and management. The committee is determined to do whatever it can to help childcare facilities, particularly those in the community sector, to gain the skills they need to make their facilities sustainable in the medium to long term.

Quality – Actions

- **Improve training partnerships** – South Tipperary CCC will evaluate its current training delivery process and partnerships to establish a partnership structure to ensure the optimum level of training delivery to childcare personnel
- **Co-ordination of training** – develop a co-ordinated approach to training

Information – Actions

- **PR** – Work on the South Tipperary CCC Brand and improve public relations. This will be possible when the new staff members are in place. A more detailed action plan to re-build the profile of the South Tipperary CCC will be required. However, it will involve promotion and / or advertising in the local media, communications with all childcare providers and making efforts to renew those networks that were up and running and starting new ones.

Networking – Actions

- **Networks** - revive old, and establish new networks. As stated above, one of the key benefits of the new South Tipperary CCC staff will be the potential to get networks up and running again.
- **Work with national / primary schools** - improve liaison with national schools
 - Explore methods of working with primary schools
 - Explore possibility of moving pre-school into schools
 - Link with parents councils

- **Partnership** - work more closely with other childcare bodies. Again, when more staff are available it will be possible to renew and strengthen links with other stakeholders in childcare, including many of those organisations who are represented on the committee itself.

8. Linkages and Collaboration

A key theme of South Tipperary CCC since its inception has been that of partnership. It has always recognized that as a resource-constrained organisation it cannot do everything on its own. For this reason it has developed linkages and collaborations with a number of organisations who also have a role to play in childcare and the CCC and these organisations work together in a co-operative spirit to maximise the impact of their individual efforts.

Among the linkages that South Tipperary CCC has developed in recent years are with the following organisations:-

- County Council / County Development Board
- HSE – the South Tipperary CCC has a particularly strong working relationship with the HSE in the county. It will continue to work with the HSE to further strengthen this relationship and to ensure that both organisations work in tandem to improve the quality of childcare in the county.
- FÁS
- VEC – South Tipperary CCC will work to evaluate its current training delivery process and partnerships to ensure that the optimum process is in place for the delivery of training to personnel in the childcare sector in the county
- Area Partnership/ Community-based Local Development Groups
- National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
- Trades Unions
- County Enterprise Board

Many of these organisations have representatives on the committee as can be seen earlier in this report.

South Tipperary CCC will continue to work with these agencies to improve the availability and quality of childcare in the county.

9. Review and Monitoring

The committee will put a review and monitoring process in place to check progress of the actions outlined in this plan. These will focus on the extent that the committee is meeting the key objectives of the plan under the following key category headings:-:

1. Infrastructure - the number of new childcare places created;
2. Quality programmes
3. Information provision / dissemination
4. Networking

More specifically, the review and monitoring procedure will focus on the extent to which the committee is succeeding in its aims, measured by:

1. The number of childcare facilities in South Tipperary and the number of places available in those facilities.
2. The availability of courses leading to childcare qualifications and the number of people taking part in these courses and entering the childcare sector
3. The availability of individual training courses on specific topics, e.g. first-aid and the number of people taking these courses
4. The number of notified childminders
5. The number of childminders who undertake training courses organised by the South Tipperary CCC, or under the umbrella of the STCCC.
6. The extent to which the owner / managers of childcare facilities make improvements to the way in which they operate their facilities through the ongoing training of staff and adoption of quality standards
7. The extent to which children in areas of greatest disadvantage have improved access to childcare in South Tipperary
8. The level and quality of information generated and supplied by the South Tipperary CCC and the extent to which this information is made available in rural as well as urban areas.
9. The extent of participation in the various stakeholder networks established in the childcare sector in South Tipperary.

The co-ordinator will carry out quarterly evaluations based on objectives set for the strategy overall.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Detailed Consultation Findings

The content of the various consultations conducted as included below in detailed form.

SWOT Analysis – Committee Consultation

The following were the topics listed by committee members during the SWOT analysis consultation.

- Strengths

- CCC's are a national network which means that funding resource is available
- South Tipperary CCC is heading in the right direction
- Solid foundations have been built in all areas
- Networks have provided clarity between the roles of the CCC and the HSE
- Committee structure – includes parents and providers – now a team effort
- Knowledge sharing within the committee – a result of trust
- Openness to advice provided by South Tipperary CCC – good communication
- Better relationships with national schools and parents
- Long standing staff member has provided continuity and support during a period of high staff turnover. This has resulted in a mutually supportive relationship between this staff member and the committee.
- Partnership and support from the HSE and willingness to engage with South Tipperary CCC – has provided knowledge, support and resources
- PESC committee – empowered to make key decisions
- Have become more strategic

- Weaknesses

- High staff turn-over to date – partially due to poor co-ordination skills.
- Under utilisation of committee members expertise by the CCC, the result of poor co-ordination of sub-committees which is a structural issue where roles and relationships are unclear and facilitation skills are lacking. There need to be terms of reference to provide greater clarity
- Weakness in co-ordination between staff and committee. Sub-committees don't have terms of reference and staff who depend on these sub-committees have been frustrated
- Failure to address the above two issues. Reluctance by the committee to address operational issues as these was perceived to be line management issues. Informal processes overtook the formal processes
- Somewhat insular – don't link up enough with IPPA Naoinra, Childminding Ireland etc. – not getting the best from those that are on the board
- Not as yet taken on the mantle of a pressure group which could be part of the CCC remit.

- South Tipperary CCC brand is not known, for example, you hear more about NTCCC on Clonmel based local radio.
- Lack of push behind childminding due to having had no staff member for some time.

- Opportunities

- County Development Board review (spatial strategy) will be an opportunity for STCCC
- Recognition of the value that South Tipperary CCC can provide to the broader childcare arena not only in pre-school e.g. after school regulation.
- PESC allows South Tipperary CCC to drive the agenda and enables decision making based on more macro thinking
- The new NCIP
- Changing demographics – increase in population.
- Alignment with Office of Minister for Children – should empower CCC's as could provide the opportunity to influence and drive policy
- Availability of funding to undertake research enables structured planning
- New team being recruited – new blood, greater enthusiasm and dynamism which should in turn strengthen the board
- Opportunity for the board to learn from the past and to ensure future good governance which will lead to better performance and a more strategic approach
- Implementation of wide reaching quality initiatives

- Threats

- If strategic recommendation of STCCC are not taken on board then the drive to change could be lost and this will negatively impact committee representation as expertise could be lost as committee representation is degraded
- Increasing functionality of Pobal mission statement resulting in lack of autonomy as it is linked into a central objective. Autonomy could be revoked by central government. Also framework might be considered to be restrictive as it has to be worked to.
- Childminders might perceive CCC as a threat to them considering them to be policing on behalf of authorities
- Boundaries – 5 counties border South Tipp. Service drains away at these outer limits
- South Tipp has no 'hub' town/city
- Geographic spread makes it difficult to build networks
- Lack of a third level institute
- Infrastructure –
 - Poor road network creates an issue with accessibility
 - Many geographically isolated areas
 - Poor rural transport
- NCIP – balanced in favour of community projects although capital grant for private providers has been increased
- Sustainability of community projects - voluntary boards are managing large amounts of capital, there is no programme of training to ensure good development, management and governance of such projects.

SWOT Analysis – Staff Consultation

The following were the topics listed by staff member, Ger Boland, during the SWOT analysis consultation.

- Strengths

- Have a strong source of funding
- Networks
- Number of new providers
- Promote a quality based service
- Certified to provide on-going training
- Provide pre and post application support
- Proactively working to generate interest in setting up facilities both community and private
- Are overcoming recent internal challenges
- Strong communication with providers that are working with, perceived to be approachable with good after-service.
- Good office location

- Weaknesses

- Lack of communication with some providers
- STCCC has poor brand/image currently – lack of awareness of CCC's role
- Lack of consistency due to changing staff
- Poor dissemination of information
- Administrator role could be widened to act as information provider rather just message taker
- Lack of collaboration with other CCC's as should really be able to piggy – back on what they are doing
- Lack of awareness of new office location

- Opportunities

- Huge improvement with imminent appointment of new staff should automatically result in improved awareness
- Results of the Mapping Project
- Promotion of quality
- Provision of practical information
- Social inclusion, equal access to childcare – only currently skimming the surface.
- Increasing birth rate – target new parents in hospitals through EU mum pack or similar
- Targeting of foreign nationals – provision of leaflets in many languages in partnership with relevant groups e.g. doctors, health centres etc.

- Threats

- Implementation of new staff – a lot of new people and if unsuccessful will be a problem
- If clear actionable priorities for co-ordinator and development workers for both the short and medium term are not set
- Possible duplication/displacement of services
- Lack of targeted implementation of funding and support, must ensure there is a strong requirement for all new facilities
- NCIP process – not always kept abreast of developments. Lack of clarity in how it works
- Lack of internal process for channelling information, policy changes etc.

Challenges to South Tipperary CCC and Other Issues - Staff Consultation

The following were the answers given to a range of questions during the staff consultation.

What are the key challenges facing South Tipperary CCC - in relation to promoting childcare availability?

- **Improving South Tipperary CCC's profile** – lack of staff in the past year has led the STCCC's profile to drop and this needs to be re-built
- **Funding applications** – Dealing effectively with the expectation that STCCC will undertake all work on applications for committees/providers
- **Society's general attitude towards childcare** – Training committees in the area of finance, business management, HR issues to enable sustainability

What are the key challenges facing South Tipperary CCC in relation to promoting quality?

- **Buy in from providers** – Getting buy in from providers to commit to undertaking quality programmes
- **Cost of training** – there is a need to provide cheaper training for private providers in particular.
- **Information dissemination** –
 - Dissemination of appropriate information to providers
 - Disseminating information to parents on what they should be looking for in childcare

What efforts are being made to improve availability in the areas shown to have poor childcare provision in the country?

- Have held public meetings to promote need for childcare in these areas and to provide information on how this might be done, for example, Ballyporeen who are now in the process of applying for funding

What is the balance of effort between trying to provide at least some childcare in all areas versus the provision of different types of childcare in areas where there already is provision?

- Have advised potential providers on areas where little availability exists and put them in touch with developers where relevant
- Where existing facilities exist have made recommendation on types of childcare where gaps exist e.g. after school if pre-school already well catered for

How have recent government initiatives helped you to do your job more effectively?

- Overall government initiatives considered to be very beneficial
- Pobal training under NCIP has been excellent and has really helped with NCIP applications
- Pobal development workers also very supportive with regard to applications
- NCIP is much more manageable than EOCP
- Now working more closely with applicants in a faster and more effective process

What initiatives have been undertaken to improve networking among parents and providers in South Tipperary and how successful have these been?

- Parents workshops and seminars have been very well attended
- Pilot parent network programme worked very well and could be rolled out further
- Provider network is on the whole strong and well attended
- Would be useful to provide a calendar of network events for both parents and providers at the start of the calendar year

Parents Consultation

The following is a more detailed outline of the topics noted by parents during the consultation.

Based on your knowledge of what childcare is available to you within a reasonable distance of where you live, how well do you think you are served in South Tipperary?

- Very few community places available, perception that standards are higher in community run facilities and are more trusted but these do have long waiting lists.
- Anecdotally, seems to be a problem with getting affordable childcare that you would choose to have. Seem to be a lot of informal arrangements between mothers locally for after school care and a lot of pre-school care is still very much in the extended family

Without talking specifically about your childcare provider but focusing more on general childcare availability in South Tipperary, what needs to be done to improve the quality of childcare in the county?

- More local, community crèches.
- If childcare is perceived as a profession by more people it would result in better quality
- Small child to staff ratio
- More special needs assistance
- Children with additional needs to be included in mainstream care
- Attach pre-school/Montessori to primary schools
- More men in childcare – market the concept of childcare differently to attract men in
- Some of the techniques that are being used for children with special needs to be available to all children e.g. one-on-one time, prevents quiet children being ignored
- Promotion of the use of sign language for all children during the early years of development

What things do you believe your children like best about their childcare?

- Their teachers and the childcare staff
- Friends that they have made
- Special needs assistance programme – the challenge that this provides for the child

Are there any things that you believe they are not so keen on?

- Lack of playground equipment for the older children
- Large classes, seem to get lost sometimes

What are the keys to good quality childcare?

- Resources
- Greater availability and choice
- Build a structure for good quality childcare based on best practice from other countries
- Outdoor curriculum including for the winter (could also attract men into childcare)
- Qualified staff which should improve standards

- Carefully regulated and overseen
- Promotion of 'culture' and cultural diversity e.g. music, sport, Diwali, stories of the past. Also visitors to childcare facilities to act as positive role models

Looking ahead a few years, what type of childcare should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

- Safe and nurturing environment for all children
- Small child to staff ratio
- Greater cultural diversity and gender equality in childcare
- Striving for excellence
- Funded rather than self-interested

Childcare Facility Providers' Consultation

The following is a more detailed outline of the topics noted by childcare providers during the consultation.

What do you consider to be the primary challenges that you face as a childcare provider in 2007?

- To set a good standard in quality for parents
- Staffing
 - Recruiting and retaining quality staff
 - Lack of funds to pay staff and difficulties with paying benefits e.g. sick leave, overtime
 - Private providers would like to see subsidies/staffing grants for their staff
- Changes due to be introduced in September
- No acknowledgment of the work, effort and responsibility of providers by parents, they insist on the best and are not prepared to pay for it.
- Getting through paperwork e.g. incident books doesn't leave much time for looking after the children
- HSE inspections – every year it seems that things change and regulations are becoming tighter and tighter
- Discrepancy between what is acceptable in schools and in childcare e.g. class sizes
- Parents are concerned about leaving their children and are asking more and more questions of the providers and looking to sit in on classes etc.
- The human touch seems to be leaving childcare with trainee's concerned about cuddling children

Has the greater availability of capital funding for childcare been of benefit to you? Have you, or do you plan to make an application for funding?

- One community provider stated she was in the process of receiving funding and had historically received some. She commented that the process was very rigorous and that if you knew before you got started what you were letting yourself in for you might not do it.
- Those who had applied in the past and failed would not do so again
- Private providers seemed unaware of what was available now and felt that it is only possible to get funding if you are running a full day-care centre
- It was acknowledged that STCCC does help with forms on request

Has the greater availability of training for staff been a help?

- Yes but it is very expensive although the fact that it is tax deductible is a good thing
- It means that you are more confident of the quality of the staff that you are hiring and after initial induction are able to let them work quite independently
- Training accreditations are good to show to parents
- It was noted that STCCC has done a lot of work the VEC and that training is now more available locally. Means also that there are more staff available locally.
- Also bringing trainees into the facility was acknowledged to be useful especially for the smaller facilities as they bring in the latest ideas in childcare and can sometimes act as a 'refresher course'
- The issue of trained childcare workers moving into classroom assistants positions in national schools with good working hours and pay and conditions was raised as a problem.

What are the keys to good quality childcare? / What would be your ideal childcare situation?

- A safe and loving environment – second home
- Assistance with staff salaries to free up time to be with the children
- Less regulation/less prescriptive (e.g. two snacks in the morning as a regulation)
- Quality programme with learning activities
- Structured curriculum
- Holistic childcare – where children can be comfortable, confident, build self esteem and learn social skills
- Outdoor facilities are a must

Looking ahead a few years, what type of childcare should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

- The system they have in Sweden
- Affordable
- Well-rounded, happy with learning through play
- Recognition of childcare as a profession and to be recognised for the work done
- Parents to feel confident in the facility where they leave their children
- Parents to be partners with facilities in childcare – showing an interest in their child's work
- No child to go to school before they are five
- Childcare providers able to set up a pension

What will support you in providing this?

- Support from government bodies
- Reduced paperwork
- Playschool should be free for all children for the last year
- Divert money from transition year to pre-school learning and ensure that no child goes to school before they are five. The individuality of the child is not encouraged in the same way in school as it is in pre-school

Childminders' Consultation

The following is a more detailed outline of the topics noted by childminders during the consultation.

What do you consider to be the primary challenges that you face as a childminder in 2007?

- Not taken seriously by friends and acquaintances – 'You're at home all day doing nothing'
- Dealing with parents – drawing up T's and C's and sticking to them. Parents are lax about time keeping, provide late notification of non-attendance and bring in sick-children with contagious illnesses. Parents don't perceive that childminders are running a business and all four attendees stated that they find it difficult to communicate assertively with parents particularly in relation to money
- Childminding Ireland guidelines are very loose and it is hard to get a real indication of what they should be charging, for example.
- Very little funding available to childminders if you want to extend or advertise, all grants/subsidies go to childcare facilities
- Lack of childminder network over the last year has been a problem. It is important to meet with your peers as childminding can be quite isolating and it is good to have a group you can use as a sounding board for problems
- A lot of parents seem quite desperate to get childcare. Nobody seems to know where to find childminders and parents are regularly turned away.
- Parents don't seem to realise that they should have an expectation that childminders are trained. They never ask about qualifications and are only ever told about qualifications by the childminders themselves.

How did you hear about STCCC network?

- Newspaper
- Training course
- Dropped into the offices – these have now moved and are a lot less accessible which was felt to be a disadvantage by all attendees

Have you already, or would you be interested in undertaking training courses e.g. first aid, arts and crafts, Montessori, Fetac accredited Childminding courses? Why/why not?

- All attendees had attended training including the following:
 - First aid refresher
 - Fire safety in the home
 - Policies and procedures
- Would like to see training on behaviour management, special needs, behaviour assessment, assertiveness and running childminding as a business

How available and accessible do you believe training is to you as a childminder?

- Has been very little in the last year
- Not been informed locally about local courses
- Do receive information from Childminding Ireland occasionally

What are the keys to good quality childcare? / What would be your ideal childminding situation?

- Ensuring that all of the age groups being cared for develop to their full potential and recognising that children of different ages have different requirements
- A safe, happy, child-friendly environment
- A harmonious environment where the children get on together
- Ability to identify childhood 'issues'
- To be able to approach parents, be taken seriously as a professional and to work in partnership with parents

Looking ahead a few years, what type of childminding should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

- All childcare should be notified
- All childcare workers should have a minimum level of qualification
- Parents should be actively looking for quality childcare, understand what quality childcare means and be willing to pay for it.

What will support you in providing this?

- More training
- Better communications with parents, networks and support groups
- More local facilities for children e.g. playgrounds, indoor play spaces/facilities
- Mother and toddler groups particularly in more rural areas
- Group outings for children and minders organised by STCCC during school holiday – hard to undertake these as stand-alone minder due to issues with capacity in cars etc.
- Help with putting together 'lesson plans'
- Stress management

Appendix 2 – Consultation Attendees

Childcare Providers – Focus Group Attendees
Breda Ryan
Geraldine Byron
Marie Weissenbach
Edel Millea
Anne Murphy
Vera O'Donovan
Childminders – Focus Group Attendees
Elizabeth O'Neill
Caroline Landers
Gwyneth Brophy
Mericia Fitzgerald
Parents – Focus Groups Attendees
John Maher
Danny Ryan

Appendix 3 – Consultation Questionnaires

South Tipperary County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan

Staff Consultation Script

- How has STCCC performed in meeting the broad 2002-2006 objectives under the following broad headings?
 - 1) Infrastructure:
 - 2) Quality:
 - 3) Information Dissemination:
 - 4) Networking
- SWOT Analysis
- What are the key Challenges Facing STCCC in relation to the following?
 - 1) Promoting Childcare Availability
 - 2) Promoting Quality
- What efforts are being made to improve availability in the areas shown to have poor childcare provision in the county?
- What is the balance of effort between trying to provide at least some childcare in all areas versus the provision of different types of childcare in areas where there already is provision?
- How have recent government initiatives helped you to do your job more effectively?
- What initiative have been undertaken to improve networking among parents and providers in South Tipp and how successful have these been?

South Tipperary County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan

Childcare Providers Focus Group Script

Introduction

Market Dynamics is a research company based in South Kilkenny and we have been commissioned by South Tipp County Childcare Committee to work with them on their Strategic Report for 2007-2010. This report, as the name suggests, will act as a guide to the activities of the committee in the coming years.

As part of the process of preparing the report, the committee wants to consult with as many relevant groups as possible and this is why you have invited here this evening. Thank you all for taking the time to come along. We would like to assure that the input we receive from you this evening will be given careful consideration when the strategy document is being produced.

Finally, by way of introduction, can I assure that all the information you provide will be treated confidentially and nothing that anyone says will be attributed to them in any document.

Q1. Firstly, can I ask everyone to introduce themselves and to say what type of childcare facility you run and how many children you look after?

Now that we have been introduced, I am going to go through a series of questions and everyone will get an opportunity to give their views. And remember, it is your views and opinions that we are looking for. There are no right or wrong answers.

Q2. What do you consider to be the primary challenges that you face as a childcare provider in 2007?

Q3. Has the greater availability of capital funding for childcare been of benefit to you? Have you, or do you plan to make an application for funding?

Q4. [If not everyone is positive] What are the issues preventing you from availing of this funding?

Q5. Has the greater availability of training for staff been a help?

Q6. [If not, or if barriers are mentioned] What are the problems with access to training for staff? How do think they can be overcome?

Q7. What are the keys to good quality childcare? / What would be your ideal childcare situation?

Q8. Looking ahead a few years, what type of childcare should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

Q9. What will support you in providing this?

South Tipperary County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan

Childminders Focus Group Script

Introduction

Market Dynamics is a research company based in South Kilkenny and we have been commissioned by South Tipp County Childcare Committee to work with them on their Strategic Report for 2007-2010. This report, as the name suggests, will act as a guide to the activities of the committee in the coming years.

As part of the process of preparing the report, the committee wants to consult with as many relevant groups as possible and this is why you have invited here this evening. Thank you all for taking the time to come along. We would like to assure that the input we receive from you this evening will be given careful consideration when the strategy document is being produced.

Finally, by way of introduction, can I assure that all the information you provide will be treated confidentially and nothing that anyone says will be attributed to them in any document.

Q1. Firstly, can I ask everyone to introduce themselves and to tell us a bit about the type of childcare you offer, whether you mind children for a relative, for example, how many hours you do, how many children you look after and if you have any staff working with you?

Now that we have been introduced, I am going to go through a series of questions and everyone will get an opportunity to give their views. And remember, it is your views and opinions that we are looking for. There are no right or wrong answers.

Q2. What do you consider to be the primary challenges that you face as a childminder in 2007?

Q3. Have you already, or would you be interested in undertaking training courses e.g. first aid, arts and crafts, Montessori, Fetac accredited Childminding courses? Why/why not?

Q4. How available and accessible do you believe training is to you as a childminder?

Q5. What are the keys to good quality childcare? / What would be your ideal childminding situation?

Q6. Looking ahead a few years, what type of childminding should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

Q7. What will support you in providing this?

South Tipperary County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan

Parents Focus Group Script

Introduction

Market Dynamics is a research company based in South Kilkenny and we have been commissioned by South Tipp County Childcare Committee to work with them on their Strategic Report for 2007-2010. This report, as the name suggests, will act as a guide to the activities of the committee in the coming years.

As part of the process of preparing the report, the committee wants to consult with as many relevant groups as possible and this is why you have invited here this evening. Thank you all for taking the time to come along. We would like to assure that the input we receive from you this evening will be given careful consideration when the strategy document is being produced.

Finally, by way of introduction, can I assure that all the information you provide will be treated confidentially and nothing that anyone says will be attributed to them in any document.

Q1. Firstly, can I ask everyone to introduce themselves and to say how many children you have of what ages and what your situation is with regards to childcare?

Now that we have been introduced, I am going to go through a series of questions and everyone will get an opportunity to give their views. And remember, it is your views and opinions that we are looking for. There are no right or wrong answers.

Q2. What is the primary reason that you have your children in childcare? (for example is it primarily to do with the requirement that you have to/ or wish go out to work or is it more because you consider that they benefit from childcare). What is the balance between the two?

Q3. Based on your knowledge of what childcare is available to you within a reasonable distance of where you live, how well do you think you are served in South Tipperary?

Q4. What types of childcare are not available to you that you wish were available?

Q5. Without talking specifically about your childcare provider but focusing more on general childcare availability in South Tipperary, what needs to be done to improve the quality of childcare in the county?

Q6. What things do you believe your children like best about their childcare?

Q7. Are there any things that you believe they are not so keen on?

Q8. What are the keys to good quality childcare?

Q9. Looking ahead a few years, what type of childcare should we aspire to provide in the future, say in 10 years time?

Q10. Are there any other services which you would like to see available for children?

Q11. Are there any other supports/services which you would like to see available for parents?

Appendix 4 – List of Regions with DEDs Included

Tipperary and District

Ballykisteen	155	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Solloghobeg	174	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Kilmucklin	169	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Rathlynin	171	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Cullen	160	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Tipp West Urban	88	Tipperary Town
Tipp East Urban	87	Tipperary Town
Kilfeackle	167	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Thomastown	176	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Rodus	172	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Shronell	173	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Emly	164	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Lattin	170	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Bruis	157	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Bansha	156	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Clonbeg	159	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Templeneiry	175	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Killadriffe	168	Tipp No 1 Rural Area

Clogheen and District

Coolagarranroe	123	Clogheen Rural Area
Burncourt	120	Clogheen Rural Area
Kilcoran	126	Clogheen Rural Area
Ballyporeen	119	Clogheen Rural Area
Clogheen	122	Clogheen Rural Area
Tullaghorton	131	Clogheen Rural Area

Cahir and District

Kilcommon	125	Clogheen Rural Area
Mortlestown	127	Clogheen Rural Area
Tubrid	129	Clogheen Rural Area
Caher	121	Clogheen Rural Area
Derrygrath	124	Clogheen Rural Area

Ardfinnin	117	Clogheen Rural Area
Tullagmelon	130	Clogheen Rural Area
Ballybacon	118	Clogheen Rural Area
Newcastle	128	Clogheen Rural Area
Knockgraffon	111	Cashel Rural Area
Ballyclerahon	132	Clonmel No. 1 Rural Area

Clonmel and District

Peppardstown	115	Cashel Rural Area
Anner	140	Slievardagh Rural Area
Cloneen	98	Cashel Rural Area
Fethard	104	Cashel Rural Area
Graigue	106	Cashel Rural Area
Colman	101	Cashel Rural Area
Kiltinan	138	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Lisronagh	139	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Ininshlounaght	134	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Clonmel Rural	133	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Killaloan	136	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Clonmel West	86	Clonmel Borough
Clonmel East	85	Clonmel Borough

Carrick-on-Suir and District

Garrangibbon	90	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 rural area
Kilcash	135	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Kilsheelan	137	Clonmel No 1 Rural Area
Kilmurry	91	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 Rural Area
Carrick-on-Suir Rural	89	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 Rural Area
Carrick-on-Suir Urban	83	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 Rural Area
Newtown	92	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 Rural Area
Carrickbeg Urban	82	Carrick-on-Suir No 1 rural area

Killenaule and District

Kilcooly	147	Slievardagh Rural Area
Buolick	143	Slievardagh Rural Area
Ponystown	152	Slievardagh Rural Area
New Birmingham	151	Slievardagh Rural Area

Ballyphilip	142	Slievardagh Rural Area
Farranrory	145	Slievardagh Rural Area
Killenaule	109	Cashel Rural Area
Crohane	144	Slievardagh Rural Area
Ballingarry	141	Slievardagh Rural Area
Modeshil	149	Slievardagh Rural Area
Cooleagh	102	Cashel Rural Area
Drangan	103	Cashel Rural Area
Mullinahone	150	Slievardagh Rural Area
Kilvemnon	148	Slievardagh Rural Area

Cashel and District

Clonoulty East	99	Cashel Rural Area
Gaile	105	Cashel Rural Area
Ardmayle	93	Cashel Rural Area
Nodstown	113	Cashel Rural Area
Ballysheehan	95	Cashel Rural Area
Greystown	107	Cashel Rural Area
Ballygriffin	154	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Cashel Urban	84	Cashel Town
Cashel Rural	96	Cashel Rural Area
Magorban	112	Cashel Rural Area
Ardsallagh	94	Cashel Rural Area
Kileenasteena	108	Cashel Rural Area
Tullamain	116	Cashel Rural Area
Golden	166	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Ballycarron	153	Tipp No 1 Rural Area

Dundrum and District

Kilpatrick	110	Cashel Rural Area
Oughterleague	114	Cashel Rural Area
Drumwood	163	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Cappagh	158	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Donohil	162	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Clonoulty West	100	Cashel Rural Area
Clogher	97	Cashel Rural Area
Currahene	161	Tipp No 1 Rural Area
Glengar	165	Tipp No 1 Rural Area

Appendix 5 – Childcare Definitions / Descriptions

The following are definition and descriptions of the various types of childcare.

Full-day Care

As the name suggests, full-day childcare is childcare that is attended on a full day basis, in other words children attend from the morning to late afternoon. Typically, facilities offering this type of childcare will open at 8 am or earlier and stay open until 6pm.

Sessional Care

Sessional childcare is the term given to childcare which children attend for 2-3 hours at a time, typically for either a morning or afternoon 'session'. This is the type of childcare most commonly offered by community facilities.

Montessori

Montessori care is the term given to the form of pre-school education developed by Maria Montessori. Many childcare facilities have staff that are trained in Montessori education techniques and include this as part of the service they offer. However, the term is often used loosely so that 'Montessori' childcare is often used to describe pre-school care for 3 to 5 year olds.

After School Care

This refers to childcare provided for school-going children after school closes, generally, 3pm.

Appendix 6 – Map of Regions