



MEATH COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE
STRATEGIC PLAN 2007-2010

Embracing the Evolving Role of Childcare

Foreword

I am delighted to have the opportunity, as Chairperson of Meath County Childcare Committee, to introduce the new Strategic Plan for Meath County Childcare Committee. This plan will guide our work until 2010.

Meath County Childcare Committee was formed in 2001 and has witnessed enormous changes in the county since then. Meath is the second fastest growing county in Leinster with a population that exploded by 21.1% from 1996 to 2002, to reach 134,005 and then went on to increase by a further 21.5% from 2002 to 2006 to reach 162,831, according to the CSO.

In order to address the childcare needs of this growing population, Meath County Childcare Committee, under the auspices of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) and the National Children Investment Programme (NCIP), has worked diligently in partnership with statutory and voluntary agencies across the county, as well as with private and community childcare providers. The leadership shown by Meath County Childcare Committee in the development of childcare places in the county is a crucial element in the development of good infrastructure across the county.

The availability of childcare has increased significantly in the county:

Type of Service	2001	2007
Sessional	85	152
Full Day Care	16	29
Notified Childminders	0	134
Number of Childcare Places	1353	4568

This increase in places has been made possible with funding received in Co. Meath from the EOCP and NCIP of €185,701.83 and a further €50,400 has been awarded in grants to 80 childminders. We look forward to continued investment from the NCIP in order to continue to establish high quality childcare services in Co. Meath to meet the demand and growth for childcare in Co. Meath.

I would like to acknowledge the work of the Strategy Development Subcommittee of Meath County Childcare Committee who worked in partnership with the staff in putting this wide-ranging plan together. Their work in hosting focus groups and consulting with the providers across the county is invaluable in the development of this far-reaching plan which will direct our work for the next four years. Sincere thanks are due to this subcommittee, members of the providers' subcommittee and the staff for all their hard work and dedication. To Burtenshaw Kenny Associates, in particular Susan Bookle, for all their support.

Marie Daly

Chairperson, Meath County Childcare Committee.

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1 REVIEW OF MEATH CCC STRATEGIC PLAN 2001-2006

This is a brief summary of the review of the Strategic Plan 2001-2006. It includes an overview of work to date breaking down each heading to give a brief description of Meath CCC's success and challenges.

- Summary of Key Strategic Objectives 2001-2006
- Meath County Childcare Committee Progress
- Challenges and Lessons Learned
- Points of Progress

1.1 Summary of Key Strategic Objectives 2001-2006

In 2001, Meath CCC developed their first strategic plan for a co-ordinated approach to developing childcare in Co. Meath. The plan identified eight strategic objectives with 20 implementation actions. The eight objectives are outlined below:

- **Increased numbers of childcare service provision throughout the county for children aged 0-14**
In 2001, the following were the numbers of notified services to the HSE in the county: 16 full day care, 85 sessional, 3 notifiable childminders and 0 childminders known to Meath CCC. By the end of 2006, the following were the numbers notified to the HSE in the county: 29 full day care, 152 sessional, 2 notifiable childminders and 135 childminders known to Meath CCC.
- **Parents will have more choice enabling them to select the type of provision that suits their needs and those of their children**
In 2001, Meath CCC had no way to measure what parents wanted from their childcare or the types of provision that they would prefer. Meath CCC published an information booklet to enable parents make an informed choice on childcare. Two of these booklets were published and distributed; one specifically on childminding and the other on all childcare services. These books were re-printed in 2006 due to demand.
- **Increased uptake of childcare grants and supports, especially in disadvantaged communities**
When the committee formed there were already some applications in process thanks to some local community development agencies and 6 grants were applied for in 2001. To date 142 grants have been applied for under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) with a further 39 under the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) totalling 181; from these 143 were successful. In 2004 under the EOCP a fourth strand of funding became available - the Childminding Development Grant. To date Meath CCC have approved 70 of these grants.
- **Development of a varied range of childcare services tailored to local needs and priorities**
Prior to the establishment of MCCC, local development agencies had identified

childcare as a need. TIDE and NMCDCA had been working with 10 individuals and groups to develop childcare services. Meath CCC staff have been working in communities where gaps have been identified in provision. To date Meath CCC have worked with 537 individuals and groups at pre-development stage.

- **Increased flexibility, inclusiveness, affordability and accessibility**

Two full day care community facilities have opened; two new community school age and one new community pre-school. Meath CCC also published leaflets for providers; one on tiered fee structures and another on a guide to working with children who are learning English as an additional language.

- **Promotion of the provision of quality**

Prior to Meath CCC, the National Childcare Voluntary Organisations had started to work with providers on quality. Six services in Meath participated in the BCCN quality programme. Two services have received the NCNA Centre of Excellence award. Meath CCC facilitated workshops on quality for all providers. In 2004 a quality overview poster was disseminated. Meath CCC is committed to the Síolta process with one workshop delivered. Meath CCC published a leaflet on quality childcare and are working with the Health Promotion Unit of the HSE on their programme for children age 3-4 years entitled "Smart Start".

This heading was further broken down into two points.

- 1) Engaging a development team to support the development of quality childcare services within the county. Three full-time support and development workers and a childminding advisory officer are employed by Meath CCC
- 2) Engaging additional support and guidance from a range of support agencies. Quality programmes been delivered by the Border Counties Childcare Network, National Children's Nurseries Association and the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education.

- **Support families and enhance the development of Meath's future citizens**

Meath CCC facilitated parents' workshops and a family fun day for 3 years and completed a parents' survey to identify parents' needs. Meath CCC work with the Family Support Services of the HSE.

- **Promote partnership between services for children aged 0-14 and their families**

- 1) Multi-purpose community facilities. One service in Meath has been developed within a community centre offering a wide range of services including sessional and school age childcare.
- 2) Greater cooperation and integration between existing providers. Meath CCC established a Providers' Network. Meath CCC has representation on a variety of agencies and forums.
- 3) Increase access to and uptake of all services and joint planning of future services.
- 4) Increase the flow of information at all levels between all stakeholders. Meath CCC developed different methods of disseminating information.

1.2 Meath County Childcare Committee Progress

Over the past six years, Meath County Childcare Committee has successfully completed many tasks as part of their annual action plans, which were identified from the 20 implementation actions. (For a full list of these actions please see Appendix B).

Some of the major achievements came from information, networking and training with Meath CCC reaching an audience of 500 with information sessions, a further 300 at networking opportunities and 926 individuals participating in training.

Some of the challenges for Meath CCC were: the implementation actions were too ambitious to implement; there were restrictions within the EOCP funding available; and the expectations placed on community childcare committees who needed to become companies limited by guarantee. This proved to be an obstacle in applying for funding as a large amount of pre-development work was required.

1.2.1 Increased Childcare Provision

Since the introduction of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP), Meath has experienced a significant rise in the number of childcare facilities from 104 to 333 (Meath CCC 2006 Annual Report). €18,570,183 has been received in funding which has seen our childcare places grow from 1,353 to 4,568 places. There are approximately 160 childminding places supported by the approval of 70 childminding developing grants totalling €50,400. Co. Meath is predominately serviced by private childcare facilities. There are currently 195 childcare services and 135 childminders in Co. Meath; of these 16 are community childcare services with two providing full day care. Meath has also attracted funding for five new community services with a sixth in the NCIP process and one at pre-development stage. This will ensure that every large urban area in the county will have access to a community service with two in the town of Navan, where there is a population of 3,415 0-14 year olds.

Private Providers

Meath County Childcare Committee has supported 142 applicants in the EOCP. Out of the 195 providers in Co. Meath, 92% are private providers, with the majority providing sessional services. Private providers are childcare services that are operated by individuals or companies.

Community Based Childcare

Two new full day care community services have opened in Co. Meath since 2001. Between them they provide over 300 childcare places. Five other full day care services have received funding and are at different stages in the planning process with two more in the pipeline. Meath CCC continues to develop the community childcare sector in large urban areas, where there has been an identified need. In small rural areas there has been a strong tradition of community sessional childcare. Meath CCC hope to develop wrap around services for these areas where large community facilities are not sustainable.

The areas with community services are:

Ballivor	Full Day Care	Open
Athboy	Full Day Care	Open
Summerhill	Full Day Care	Opening September 2007
Simonstown (Navan)	Full Day Care	Opening September 2007
Trim	Full Day Care	Opening September 2007
Dunshaughlin	Full Day Care	Funding approved - €1 million
Kells	Full Day Care	Funding approved - €1.1 million
Navan	Full Day Care	Funding approved - €1 million
Laytown	Full Day Care	Pre-development

For both sessional and full day care services Meath CCC have developed a tiered fee structure for a leaflet in partnership with the CCCs in the northeast. Community facilities can apply for larger capital grants and additional staffing grants from the EOCP and therefore must operate a tiered fee structure.

Childminders

Prior to the establishment of Meath CCC childminders who cared for 3 or less children had no support and operated their business in a very isolated manner. Over the last 4 years there has been a steady increase of six place sessional services in the home. This accounts for the reduction of HSE notified childminders. The number of voluntary notified childminders (those caring for 3 or less) started at zero and currently there are 135 childminders known to Meath CCC. It is widely recognised that there are more significant numbers working as childminders as it is estimated by Childminding Ireland that 80% of childcare arrangements involve childminders.

Funding Applications

Under EOCP there were 115 grant applicants approved; 17 of which were community childcare services. The introduction of the NCIP has increased the involvement of Meath CCC in the funding application process. Since its inception, Meath CCC have sent out 156 Expression of Interest forms and received 77; of these 28 have been approved for funding. Currently we are working with 244 potential providers who are at varying stages of development. To facilitate this work Meath CCC established the Project Evaluation Subcommittee (PESC). While this process is welcomed by the board and staff, it has increased the work load significantly.

The Childminding Development Grant is also available. This is a smaller grant available to those who care for children in their own home. To date Meath CCC have received 86 grant applications; 70 childminders have been successful in receiving the grant.

Childcare and Childcare Related Training

Since the establishment of Meath CCC, 926 people have participated in 41 different training

courses. Training in Meath is provided by several different agencies throughout the county including community groups and state organisations. Meath CCC's role is to co-ordinate the training for the childcare sector. To facilitate providers all training takes place during the evenings or at weekends. Meath CCC was involved with Monaghan CCC and the BCCN in developing a training qualification guide, identifying different qualifications in the sector and the possible positions of employment. This document has been further developed by other CCCs in later years. Meath CCC hosted two training information days. Speakers included experts on the National Qualifications Authority Framework. Also those who deliver childcare courses gave an outline of course contents.

Quality

Meath CCC has been committed to developing quality services since its establishment. Existing quality programmes were advertised through the reproduction of a quality overview (this was first produced by the BCCN and reprinted with their permission). The aim was to raise awareness of quality programmes available to childcare providers in a user friendly format. Two information evenings were hosted where each agency presented their programme. By the end of 2005 take-up of quality programmes was still low with only 6 participants on the BCCN programme and two on the NCNA Centre of Excellence. It was decided that Meath CCC would carry out a piece of research identifying the barriers to participating in quality programmes. 49% of those surveyed said they were unaware of any quality programmes and felt the incentive for participation was low. Meath CCC is currently working in partnership with the agencies who deliver quality programmes to encourage greater participation.

Information and Networking

Meath CCC has been working to engage with childcare providers since their establishment. This has been achieved through different information and networking initiatives. Meath CCC has produced a number of publications on their own, with other CCCs in the northeast and with the Childminding Advisory Officer nationally. These include information leaflets on childminding and centre based provision, school age childcare, quality information, a start-up pack, newsletters and monthly tips. Meath CCC developed a website with Meath County Council called 'Communities on-line together'. However, the website was hard to access and following a piece of research, carried out by a member of staff as part of a degree programme, Meath CCC decided to develop their own site. To support the dissemination of information conferences, workshops and information evenings on a variety of subjects have been facilitated; some independently and some with CCC colleagues in the northeast region.

Networks were established with the different types of providers as they had very different needs. The networks included full day care, sessional, Montessori, Naionra and childminding. Where possible Meath CCC worked in partnership with the appropriate National Voluntary Childcare Organisation, for example the National Children's Nurseries Association work with us in the development of the Full Day Care Network. The first Montessori Network was piloted in Meath. This network was developed in partnership with St. Nicholas Montessori. In later years, the numbers of participants in networks decreased due to other commitments. This prompted Meath CCC to amalgamate the specialised networks and have one providers' network. This has seen the development of the Providers' Subcommittee. The Montessori Network was successful and has continued as a specialised network.

Meath CCC has employed a part-time Parents Officer in response to the growth in the number of enquires received from parents regarding childcare matters. All incoming and outgoing information is recorded on telephone sheets, followed up and then filed. This process will be developed to assist with the customer charter that will be developed.

Research

Meath CCC has been involved in carrying out pieces of research, which included research "on parents needs in relation to childcare in Meath" and on "the barriers to participating in quality programmes". In 2004, at the request of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Meath CCC carried out an update of the original childcare census carried out in 2000. During 2006, Meath CCC were requested by the Office of the Minister for Children to carry out an extensive piece of research; an audit of childcare in Meath (Mapping 2006). J4B, an external agency, were contracted to carry out this piece of work. The report identified current provision by electoral divide and highlighted areas where there is a gap in the provision. This document has also been used to inform this strategic plan.

1.3 Challenges and Lessons Learned

The past six years have been a learning curve for Meath CCC and this learning will continue, through the challenges we face on a daily basis e.g. NCIP applications, support work with current providers and the management of a growing team of staff.

Implementation of Strategic Objectives 2001-2006

Members of Meath CCC staff team carried out a review of the actions identified in the Strategic Plan 2000-2006 and the following are their views and their findings. Overall the plan was comprehensive and included all aspects of childcare development with the county representing the input from the original consultation process. One of the biggest challenges of the plan was its heavy reliance on community development. Meath was and continues to be predominately serviced by private providers with 92% of services provided by self-employed individuals. To develop quality childcare provision strategically, Meath CCC will endeavour to support existing services to fill gaps where possible, before developing new services.

Providers

Many of Meath's providers were established long before the CCCs were introduced and the relationship building with these providers has been challenging for Meath CCC. It is hoped with the development of the Providers' Subcommittee that providers' voices will be heard on the committee. Meath CCC will continue to support this subcommittee.

Meath is a large county with a growing population which presents additional challenges to the development of services. There are 3 full-time support and development workers currently employed by Meath CCC who support potential and current providers. It is becoming increasingly difficult for staff to meet the demands of new providers and support existing providers. Later in the document reasons for structural changes will be highlighted which will include the need for additional staff in order to implement the NCIP effectively.

Meath CCC has facilitated various training courses over the past six years. Initially this process was easier to manage. The training demands have increased greatly influencing the administration and the work load within Meath CCC offices. This process has highlighted that there are training agencies that are better positioned to deliver childcare training. Meath CCC will work with these agencies and change their role from facilitation to co-ordination.

Parents

Meath CCC has employed a Parents Information Officer to assist with one of Meath CCC's greatest challenges which is to get the participation of parents. To discover the types of childcare parents preferred Meath CCC carried out a survey in 2005. This survey identified that parents recognise the lack of full day care and would like more choice, with more one-to-one care for babies under 12 months. Meath CCC is also aware that one size does not fit all and a more targeted approach for the different needs in the five EDs will be required.

Organisation

Since its establishment in 2001, Meath CCC has seen its organisation undergo rapid growth. Meath CCC is made up of statutory and voluntary representatives who have a vast amount of skills and knowledge between them. Due to rapid growth and the demands placed on them the board acknowledges the need to review and expand their membership to ensure the best skills and knowledge is available to them. The board has undertaken two reviews since 2001 and is committed to reviewing and developing the current board by 2008.

1.4 Points of Progress

Overall Meath CCC has obtained their strategic objectives by:

- Increasing provision from 104 services in 2001 to 332 services in 2006.
- Increasing places from 1,353 places in 2001 to 4,518 places in 2006.
- Increasing the number of community facilities with the introduction of centres in every large urban area.
- Increasing the number of voluntary notified childminders to Meath CCC.
- Increasing choice for parents, striving towards meeting their needs as identified in our survey.
- Supporting grant applications - by the end of 2006, 181 grant applications were submitted to Pobal, with a further 244 potential providers working with Meath CCC staff.
- Increasing the number of people on quality programmes from 0 to 10. Meath CCC has engaged with the providers through networks and information.
- Increasing the numbers of qualified professionals by training 926 childcare personnel.
- Assisting in the co-ordination of childcare services in Co. Meath.

2 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2007-2010

- Introduction
- Profile of Meath
- Consultation and Review
- Going Forward

2.1 Introduction

Meath County Childcare Committee was established in 2000 as an initiative of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Meath CCC has successfully developed and managed a six-year strategic plan, working in partnership with key stakeholders always keeping the child as a central focus.

While Meath CCC's brief is to extend the number of childcare places available within the county we also successfully executed a large number of actions that support and develop existing services and help to build the capacity of the community to ensure sustainable childcare within Co. Meath.

Over the course of the strategic plan 2001–2006, we have seen childcare places grow from 1,353 to 4,518. Since the introduction of the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme, Meath has experienced a significant rise in the number of childcare facilities from 104 to 333. These services include full day care, sessional and childminding. Meath provides support to 135 voluntary childminders coming from a base line of zero.

Co. Meath is predominately serviced by private childcare facilities. There are currently 198 childcare services in Meath.

Meath County Childcare Committee has supported 142 applicants in the EOCP funding process and approved 80 childminding developing grants. The introduction of the NCIP has increased the involvement of Meath CCC in the funding application process. Since its inception, Meath has sent out 156 Expression of Interest forms and received 74; of these 18 have been approved for funding. Currently we are working with 150 potential providers who are at varying stages of development. We have hosted information sessions on various topics reaching an audience of over 500 childcare providers.

2.2 Profile of Meath

Co. Meath is situated on the northern and northwestern border of Co. Dublin and borders counties Kildare, Westmeath, Louth and Cavan.

Meath is the second fastest growing county in Leinster, according to the 2006 preliminary Census results, with an increase of 21.4% as compared to a national average of 8.1%. Density levels vary greatly from the rural areas in the northwest and west of the county (25 persons

per sq. kilometre) to the main urban areas of Navan, Trim, Kells, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ashbourne, Ratoath and Duleek/Laytown (149 persons per sq. kilometre).

The population has grown from 134,005 people in 2002 to 162,621 people in 2006.

The population of children aged 0-14 years is 38,210.

In 2001 only Navan had a population over 10,000. Now Dunshaughlin and Meath Rural (Duleek/Laytown area) both have populations over 10,000.

2.3 Consultation and Review

To optimise learning and ownership, the Strategic Planning Subcommittee decided to carry out the process of consultation between the subcommittee and staff members. The Strategic Planning Subcommittee used two forms of consultation to inform the research and the strategic objectives; focus groups to gain the views of the key stakeholders and questionnaires for agencies and organisations.

The aim of the focus groups was to allow Meath CCC gather the views of their main target groups; parents, existing and potential childcare providers, childminders and parent & toddler groups.

The consultation process recognised and complemented a lot of the work Meath CCC had completed to date and identified a number of key issues to be addressed in the future.

2.3.1 Thematic Analysis

Information and networking can be improved through greater support on the ground developing information initiatives to a wider audience.

For greater participation in training, there needs to be more localised training and assistance in covering the cost of training including support for relief staff. Meath CCC will need to consider the individuals delivering the training and provide support and ongoing professional development to this part of the sector.

The focus groups highlighted that one of the largest issues for providers is displacement. Existing services need to be afforded the opportunity to develop before a new service is developed.

Support for quality improvements to existing services was a concern. The opinion from the focus groups was the need for full day care and baby places, as well as more childminders.

Lack of funding was identified as a barrier for services who wish to participate in a quality programme.

The second piece of primary research was a questionnaire to all agencies working in Meath. This research gave Meath CCC a clearer picture of where other agencies and organisations are in relation to childcare issues and allowed them to identify linkages. It also tackled the issue of duplication of childcare activities and asked agencies how Meath CCC could work with them to ensure there is no duplication.

The feedback from the agencies is consistent with those who work within the sector. Meath CCC need to develop more effective information and communication structures within their strategic plan.

2.4 Going Forward

Over the life of the Strategic Plan 2007-2010, Meath County Childcare Committee will focus on a number of key areas that have been identified through our experience throughout the first plan, our understanding of the issues on the ground, the consultation process and the analysis of provision.

2.4.1 Strategic Objectives

Information & Networking

- To develop and improve information sharing and learning by ensuring that accurate, accessible information is available to childcare providers, parents, agencies and the wider community.
- To continue to develop the co-ordination of childcare services at all levels and build new alliances/working relationships where appropriate.

Training & Quality

- To identify and respond to the training needs of childcare providers in order to provide the progression paths for the professional development of the childcare sectors (pathways of learning through the childcare sector).
- To support practitioners to improve quality through promoting quality standards and targets for childcare in the county.

Social Inclusion

- To promote initiatives that increase the level of appropriate service provision and pro-actively target areas of disadvantage towards better social inclusion.

Capacity Building Providers

- To support potential new providers, new providers and existing providers in establishing and sustaining a range of childcare facilities including childminders across the county.

Capacity Building Meath CCC

- To ensure that Meath CCC continues to develop a vision of childcare services in Co. Meath and in so doing represent all stakeholder views and is effective and efficient in its work.

3 DETAILS OF MEATH COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE

This section contains the following information regarding Meath CCC:

- **Background**
- **Meath CCC Mission Statement**
- **Membership of Meath CCC**
- **Subcommittees**
- **Staff**
- **Structure of Meath County Childcare Committee**
- **Legal Status and Verification Report**

3.1 Background

The county/city childcare committees were established as part of the National Development Plan from a recommendation of the Expert Working Group 2000 Report on Childcare. Meath CCC was established in June 2001, where they undertook to develop a six-year strategic plan. This plan was the first time all agencies involved in childcare at a county level were formally brought together for the development of services.

The Government's funding programme was under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform - Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme. In 2006 the programme changed from having EU funding to exchequer funding and became the National Childcare Investment Programme. This programme promotes a more localised approach to the grants application system. With a more localised approach the role of the CCC has increased with the process of evaluating the funding applications. To evaluate the applications Meath CCC recently set up their Project Evaluation Subcommittee (PESC) under the direction of Pobal.

3.2 Meath CCC Mission Statement

To agree Meath CCC's view and definition of quality, the Meath CCC members came together in November 2006. This statement has now been incorporated into our mission statement, which will underpin all of Meath CCC's work.

"Meath County Childcare Committee recognises the right of each individual child and their family to quality, affordable, accessible childcare services. Meath County Childcare Committee believes and states that quality childcare recognises and respects the importance and value of childcare to children, families and society.

Meath County Childcare Committee will support the development of quality childcare services within the county by working in partnership with parents, providers, the broader community, local, regional and national agencies to provide a coordinated approach to the delivery of childcare for all."

3.3 Membership of Meath CCC

There are currently 16 representatives on the Meath CCC board with two vacancies. The members are representative of the key stakeholders at senior level in the county. The board currently meet bi-monthly. The membership of the board is very stable and for some members they are facing into the development of their second strategic plan.

Marie Daly	TIDE	<i>Chairperson</i>
Teresa Heeney	NVCC – Childcare Sector	<i>Vice-Chair</i>
Bernadette McHugh	DES Navan Education Centre – Statutory	<i>Secretary</i>
Conall Collier	Community & Voluntary	<i>Treasurer</i>
Caroline O’Keane	FAS – Statutory	
Catherine McGlone	Family Support Services & Child Welfare (HSE)	
Annette Clinton	Department of Social, Community & Family	
Sheila Fitzpatrick	Farming Pillar	
Carol Duffy	NVCC – Childcare Sector	
Karen McBride	Provider Rep Full Day Care – Childcare Sector	
Marion Guckian	Provider Rep Sessional Care – Childcare Sector	
Pearse Ferguson	Provider Rep Community – Childcare Sector	
Denise McCormilla	BCCN – Childcare Sector	
Ursula Creegan	Enable Ireland – Childcare Sector & Social	
Ellen McDonagh	Navan Traveller Workshop – Local Development	
Arlene Fitzsimons	Parents Representative	
Vacant	Childminders Representative	
Vacant	Meath VEC – Statutory	

The role of the committee is to:

- Support the development of quality childcare services within the county by working in partnership with parents, providers, the broader community, statutory agencies and local, regional and national agencies to provide a co-ordinated approach to the delivery of childcare for all.
- Respect the importance and value of childcare to children, families and society.
- Be responsible for the implementation of the strategic plan.
- Act as an information broker for all key stakeholders in childcare.
- Act as a link in developing qualified childcare staff and to improve the professionalism of the childcare sector.
- Support and develop staff and employ staff where appropriate.
- Access additional funding.

The strategy was guided by the subcommittee, co-ordinated in partnership with the Meath CCC Co-ordinator and the staff of Meath CCC. It was based on proactive prioritisation of local

needs in the county, extensive stakeholder consultation and an integrated planning approach to the development of childcare in Co. Meath, to ensure that the growing childcare needs of Meath were met.

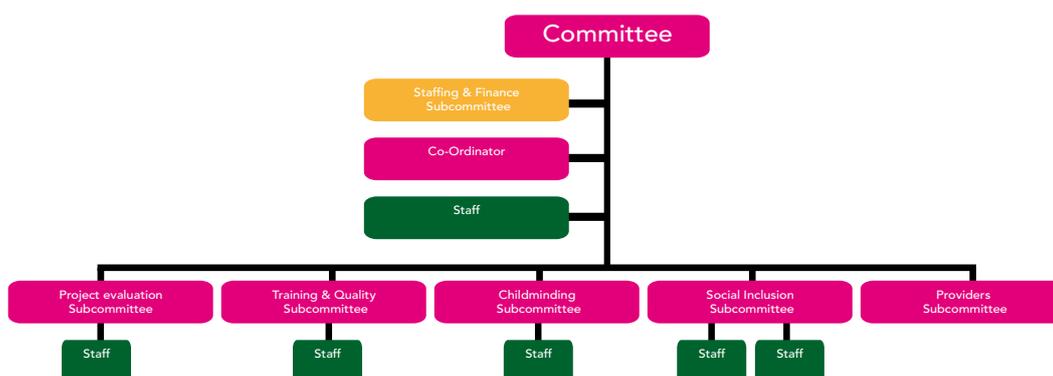
3.4 Subcommittees

Subcommittees have been developed by the board to ensure the implementation of the yearly action plans and meet the objectives of the strategic plan. The board have established six subcommittees. They are:

- Staffing and Finance Subcommittee
- Project Evaluation Subcommittee (PESC)
- Training and Quality Subcommittee
- Childminding Subcommittee
- Social Inclusion Subcommittee
- Providers Subcommittee

Each of these subcommittees has individual terms of reference. They meet approximately every quarter, with the Staffing and Finance Subcommittee meeting bi-weekly. The membership includes the relevant or interested members from the board. Agencies that may not be on the board are invited for their expertise in the area. For example the Enterprise Board have representation on the PESC but do not have representation on the board. The chairperson of each subcommittee must be a member of the board. At each board meeting there is an agenda item for feedback from the committees. The chairperson of each subcommittee is required to have filled in and signed the feedback template; this template is a summary of the meeting and the minutes. The key points recorded on the template are the number in attendance, discussion points and decisions being brought forward to the board for discussion/ratification. All subcommittees are supported by individual staff members who provide secretarial assistance and where relevant the implementation of any tasks required by the subcommittee.

Fig. 1 Committee Structure



3.5 Staff

In 2002 Meath CCC started the recruitment process for the staff who would be employed to implement their strategic plan. This process started in the summer of 2001; by November 2002 the posts of Administrator, Co-ordinator, Childminding Advisory Officer and Support & Development Officer were filled. Meath CCC employ experienced staff with the relevant qualifications and since 2002 the turnover has been low; three members have been in place since 2002 and two since 2004. The team have built up successful relationships with the providers in Meath. Meath CCC team work closely with their colleagues at regional and national level to develop new and innovative ways of supporting and developing the sector. As the work continues to grow so do the team employed by the committee.

Co-ordinator	1 full-time
Support & Development Workers	3 full-time
Childminding Advisory Officer	1 full-time (Funded by HSE)
Administrator	1 part-time
Parents Information Officer	1 part-time
Social Inclusion Officer	1 part-time (Co-funded with FAS)
Administration Support	3 part-time (Community Employment funded by FAS)

Main Roles of Staff Members:

Co-ordinator

The Co-ordinator's responsibility is to co-ordinate childcare services within Co. Meath in line with the aims and objectives of Meath County Childcare Committee; to assist in the implementation of the Meath County Childcare Committee strategy, with a focus on developing quality childcare services for pre-school children and school age children out of school hours; and to line manage all staff and the daily running of Meath CCC offices.

Support & Development Officers

To support the development of existing and potential childcare services in Co. Meath. To assist in the implementation of the Meath County Childcare Committee strategy, with a focus on developing quality childcare services for pre-school children and school age children out of school hours in Co. Meath.

Childminding Advisory Officer

To provide support to childminders in Co. Meath. To assist in the implementation of the Meath County Childcare Committee strategy, with a focus on developing quality childcare services in the home.

Parents Officer

To support parents in Co. Meath in choosing the childcare that will meet their needs. To provide accurate up-to-date information on childcare options in Co. Meath.

Social Inclusion Officer

To promote the inclusion of children and better access of services from different ethnic groups,

Traveller children, children with disabilities, children with special needs and any other children who are marginalised or socially excluded under the nine grounds of discrimination.

Administrator

To provide administrative and financial reports to Meath County Childcare Committee.

Administration Support Team

To provide administration support to Meath County Childcare Committee staff.

3.6 Structure of Meath County Childcare Committee

Meath CCC has a committee handbook and a staff handbook which clearly identify the policies and procedures that are adhered to. Staff members receive the handbook during their first few weeks of employment with their contract of employment.

All new members of Meath CCC are greeted by the Chairperson before their first meeting. The aim of this meeting is a brief induction and to go through the procedures of the committee and to allow the new member to ask any questions.

The agendas for the meetings are set prior to the meeting by the Co-ordinator and agreed with the Chairperson. If members would like an item placed on the agenda they must bring it to the attention of the Co-ordinator a week before the meeting. The Administrator attends the committee meetings to take the minutes which are then distributed by post. In recent times Meath CCC has sent out minutes electronically.

The Staffing and Finance Subcommittee has responsibility for all staff issues. The Co-ordinator carries out secretarial duties for this committee and provides feedback from the staff and updates on the action plan. The agenda for these meetings are set by the Co-ordinator based on the needs or issues that arise. In addition the committee have identified a Staff Liaison Officer.

3.7 Legal Status and Verification Report

Legal Status

Meath CCC is a company limited by guarantee and governed by a board of directors. The company holds charitable status and is a not-for-profit organisation.

Update on Verification Report

All findings from the verification visit that took place from 6th-7th March 2006 have been addressed and supplementary documentation sought afterwards was sent to Michael Mullarky in Pobal on 20th July 2006 as per attached page.

4 DETAILS OF THE AREA

- Introduction
- Demographics of Meath
- Density
- Family Structure
- Unemployment
- Overall Affluence and Deprivation
- RAPID and CLÁR Programmes
- Gaeltacht Areas
- Children with Additional Needs
- Types of Childcare Services Available
- Conclusion for Section 4

4.1 Introduction

This section highlights the demographic profile in Co. Meath and will highlight area details, which are relevant to planning childcare needs.

- Looks at broad information such as population, age structure and family structure.
- Highlights social exclusion factors that influence childcare such as lone parents, unemployment and areas of affluence and deprivation.
- Looks at unique areas within Co. Meath such as CLÁR, RAPID and Gaeltacht areas.
- Looks at additional needs of children and families through profiling children with a disability, children presented to child protection and welfare services, Traveller children, and children of ethnic minorities including asylum seekers families.

4.2 Demographics of Meath

Co. Meath is situated in Leinster on the northern and northwestern border of Co. Dublin and borders counties Kildare, Westmeath, Louth and Cavan.

Meath is the second fastest growing county in Leinster according to the 2006 preliminary Census results with an increase of 21.4%. The population has grown from 134,005 in 2002 to 162,621 in 2006. The national average population growth was 8.1%. The increase in population reflects that Meath is on the commuter belt of Dublin. Fingal, Meath and Kildare made up 29% of the population growth in Ireland. Some areas of Co. Meath have seen greater increases for example Meath Rural (Duleek/Laytown) recorded the seventh highest population increase in the country. Navan town, Dunshaughlin and Ratoath areas have also seen above average county percentage increases. Throughout this strategic plan reference has been made to the 2002 Census results, as complete results from the 2006 Census were not yet published.

Fig. 2 Census 2002/2006 Total Population by Electoral Areas

	Census 2002	Census 2006	% Increase
Meath Rural (Duleek/Laytown Area)	19,039	27,566	44%
Trim Rural	23,175	28,084	21%
Dunshaughlin Rural	35,238	41,715	18%
Navan Rural	29,958	36,435	21%
Kells Rural	12,483	13,948	11%
Oldcastle Rural	3,817	4,272	12%
Navan Town	3,406	3,742	10%
Trim Town	1,447	1,581	9.3%
Ardee No. 2 Rural	2,920	3,025	3.6%
Kells Town	2,522	2,253	10% (decrease)
Total Population	134,005	162,621	21%

The latest projections suggest that there will be a considerable expansion over the next fifteen years. Assuming that Meath's share of the mid-eastern population remains unchanged, CSO projections indicate that the population of Meath may grow to between 193,200 and 215,100 by 2021.

¹Navan is the ninth largest town in the Republic of Ireland and the largest town in Meath with over 19,000 inhabitants and is situated in the centre of the county where most of the activities in the county radiate from. Most unusual in the growth of Navan is the fact that new housing developments account for over half of the houses in Navan, which were built between 1996 and 2002. There is an average annual increase in the population of Navan of 1,101 persons. The population has grown by 10% since the 2002 Census.

Ashbourne is the second largest town in Meath and this reflects its location on the eastern edge of Meath and within commuting distance of Dublin. Trim is the third largest town in Meath and has increased by 33.9% between 1996 and 2002, with a further increase of 9.3% between 2002-2006.

Laytown-Bettystown is the fourth largest town in Meath and again this reflects its location in the commuter belt area of Meath.

4.2.1 Child Population

There were 38,428 children in Co. Meath according to the 2002 Census. The 2006 Census results were unpublished at the time of writing. The breakdown of the child population is as follows:

Fig. 3 Child Population

Area	Total Child Population	0-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs	14-18 yrs
Meath	38,428	11,205	9,932	10,529	6,761

¹ Reference - Meath Education and Training Audit Dec '05

4.2.2 Birth Rates for Meath

The birth rate in Co. Meath is increasing every year. Between the years 2003 and 2006, 11,983 births were registered in Meath. This indicates that population growth is set to continue and, as such, demand for childcare is likely to increase as well. The breakdown of birth rates per year is as follows:

Fig. 4 Birth Rates for Meath

Birth Rates							Projected Figures for 2007
Year	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	
	2,421	2,550	2,820	2,981	2,962	3,220	3,353

In order to calculate the birth rate for 2007 the average birth rate between 2001-2006 was used. There were greater numbers of births recorded in Duleek, Laytown, Navan, Ashbourne and Dunboyne.

Based on projected figures the child population under five years of age will be 15,545 children by 2008. Estimated child population using the 2002 Census multiplied by 21.4% for 2006 population growth indicate child population in each age category as follows:

Fig. 5 Age Category of Child Population

Area	Total Population	0-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs
Meath	162,621	13,602	12,057	12,782

4.2.3 Age Structure

Analysis of age structure in the 2002 Census indicates that 20% of all households in Meath have children less than five years of age. The following is a breakdown of the areas with children less than five years of age:

- Navan Electoral Divide: 3,413 (26%)
- Dunshaughlin Electoral Divide: 3,362 (25%)
- Slane Electoral Divide: 2,324 (17%)
- Trim Electoral Divide: 2,115 (16%)
- Kells Electoral Divide: 2,127 (16%)

4.3 Density

Meath is a county of contradictions. Population density levels vary greatly from very rural areas in the northwest and west of the county (25 persons per sq. kilometre) to the main urban areas of Navan, Trim, Kells, Dunboyne, Dunshaughlin, Ashbourne and the environs of Drogheda (in excess of 149 persons per sq. kilometre).

The need for more affordable houses outside of Dublin county is influencing the increasing population of main towns within commuting distance of Dublin such as Dunshaughlin, Ashbourne, Dunboyne and Ratoath. These towns are situated along the primary roads which

run through the county (N1, N2 and N3). This trend is now shaping the rank order of town sizes in Co. Meath. There is also a decline in the population in the northwest of the county as well as in scattered areas to the south. Kells town has decreased in population from 2002-2006 by 9.4%.

Meath is the only county in the NE area that is not designated to be part of the BMW region and as a result is in line for lower levels of funding/grants etc. Funding that targets economic and social disadvantage, such as the Peace and Reconciliation Fund, the Cross Border Initiatives and the Border INTERREG funding initiative are unavailable in Co. Meath.

This has impacted upon the Meath area over the last decade as there are no extra resources in order to invest in training/educational opportunities especially in the areas of adult and further education/community initiatives.

4.4 Family Structure

In the 2002 Census, 80% of family households had an average of 3.17 persons per household (out of a total of 41,675 households). This Census highlighted that families with children of school-going age accounted for 45% of households. 20% of these households had children under five years of age and 20% of households had children aged between 5-12 years. In analysing total family households with children of school-going age within Co. Meath in 2002, 19,068 families had at least one child less than 13 years of age. This represents 45% of all households in Co. Meath. 20% had children aged 0-5 years and the remaining 25% of the households had children aged between 5-12 years.

10.3% (4,295) of households within the county were lone parent families. The number of lone parent families within Co. Meath is lower than the national average. Notwithstanding this, 12% of the family households in Navan were lone parent families, which represents three times the county average and twice the national average.

According to the 2002 Census, there are 4,685 lone parents registered in Co. Meath. Of these 2,788 were financially dependant on the lone parents allowance.

Navan and Duleek/Laytown have twice the county average and three times the national average of lone parents. In these households, 11.9% had children of pre-school age and 35.8% of households had children who were of school-going age

4.5 Unemployment

3,070 people are on the live register in Meath according to the Central Statistics Office. However, unemployment rates have consistently fallen between 1996-2002. It is important to note that the highest unemployment levels in Meath are associated with the town centres of the larger urban areas, and this also includes other towns such as Slane, Duleek/Laytown and Kells. The social class of all persons aged 15 and over is determined by their occupation and employment status. Lowest unemployment levels were recorded in the southeast of Meath

particularly within the Dublin commuter belt.

- The population distribution in Co. Meath between the different social classes diverges very little from the national profile.
- Within Meath, there are high levels of people working in the managerial, professional and technical social class groups which tend to be concentrated in the commuter belt areas.
- Percentages in the manual social class tend to be higher in the northern areas of the county, which corresponds with the placement of industries.

4.6 Overall Affluence and Deprivation

The Deprivation Index developed by Haase Pratschke provides a single measurement of the overall deprivation of an area. The index takes the underlying dimensions of social disadvantage (social class, demographic decline and labour market deprivation) into consideration.

This indicates the following:

- Towns such as Navan, Kells and Trim are deemed marginally below average.
- Areas of deprivation and decline within Meath are predominantly located to the north and southwest of the country. For example Oldcastle, Ballinlough, Ardagh, Kilmainham, Drumconrath, Slane and Donore DEDs.
- The most affluent electoral divides and district electoral divides in the county are located in close proximity or within commuting distances from Dublin along the N2 and N3 routes e.g. towns such as Dunshaughlin, Ratoath, Ashbourne and Dunboyne.

Meath has experienced population explosions in certain areas and these explosions are affecting the county dramatically; certain population growths can be attributed to Meath's proximity to Dublin. The main areas that experienced population explosions were Drogheda, Ratoath, Dunshaughlin, Dunboyne, Navan Rural, Kentsown, Athboy, Castlerickard, Enfield, Kells Rural, Duleek, Julianstown, Stamullen and Slane.

See Appendix C: Map Indicating Level of Affluence in Meath in 2002.

4.7 RAPID and CLÁR Programmes

As mentioned previously Meath is a county that has significantly varying levels of affluence and deprivation.

There are particular areas highlighted in the county as needing additional support and funding opportunities to break the barriers faced by these communities. They are the CLÁR and the RAPID areas of Meath.

The RAPID programme areas are in the town of Navan and the CLÁR programme areas are located in the rural northwestern DEDs of the Kells Electoral Division.

RAPID

The RAPID programme areas are prioritised for investment and development under the National Development Plan in line with priorities set out in the area plan. Priorities include health, education, housing, childcare, community facilities, sports facilities, youth development, employment, drug misuse, policing, the elderly, the disabled and community development.

The RAPID areas within Navan have the following aims:

- Encouraging people to become more involved and more active in their community.
- Working with agencies like the health services and the local authorities to ensure a better service for people who live in the RAPID estates.
- Attracting more investment to RAPID estates.

RAPID areas in Meath are identified in more detail in Appendix C.

CLÁR

The CLÁR programme (Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais) prioritises targeted investment programmes in both urban and rural disadvantaged areas. In Meath the CLÁR areas are located in the northwestern DEDs.

CLÁR provides funding and co-funding to Government departments, state agencies and local authorities in accelerating investment in selected priority developments. These investments support physical, economic and social infrastructure across a variety of measures. The measures introduced under the programme reflect the priorities identified by the communities in the selected areas whom the Minister consulted at the outset.

CLÁR areas in Meath are identified in more detail in Appendix E.

4.8 Gaeltacht Areas

There are two Gaeltacht areas in Co. Meath. One in Rath Cairn and the other in Baile Gibb. Rath Cairn is situated adjacent to Navan, Kells, Trim and Athboy and Baile Gibb is situated southeast of Kells. According to the 2002 Census results, all Gaeltacht areas apart from the two in Meath, experienced a decline in the proportion of Irish speakers resident in the areas.

See Appendix F: Map of Gaeltacht Areas.

4.9 Children with Additional Needs

There are vulnerable children that need additional supports, including childcare arrangements, in order to meet their specific needs. These include children with disabilities, children where there are child protection concerns and Traveller children (primarily located in Navan and Trim). Mosney Direct Provision Centre, a centre for families who are asylum seekers, is located in Co. Meath. This is impacting on the number of children in Meath from ethnic minorities.

4.9.1 Children with a Disability

HSE Disability Services indicate that there are 404 children with a disability, currently registered on their Co. Meath database

Fig. 6 Registered Disability

Type of Disability	0-5 yrs	6-18 yrs
Physical and Sensory Disabilities	12	194
Intellectual Disabilities	23	175

It should be noted that this database structure is in its infancy and some children with disabilities may not appear on this database. These children require placement within childcare settings and may require additional supports such as special needs assistants to assist them in their integration with their peer group and in their learning.

4.9.2 Child Protection and Welfare Concerns

There are on average 775 child protection/welfare reports annually to the Health Service Executive social work services. There are an additional 107 families referred to HSE Family Support Services which involves 152 children.

More serious child protection concerns indicating abuse, are notified to the Child Care Manager through the Child Protection Notification System. An average of 50 new children are registered to the Child Care Manager every year.

Both services assist families in coping with pressures in their family life and reducing risks to children. In considering packages of care for these families, childcare is important in order to reduce pressures on families. HSE Community Welfare Officers (CWOs) can give financial supports to families when childcare places are available in community childcare facilities. Meath have few community childcare facilities. Families cannot receive financial support through the CWO Service where private providers are available for childcare.

Reports/referrals are distributed throughout the county. However, higher numbers of reports/referrals are recorded in specific areas e.g. Navan, Duleek/Laytown and Kells.

4.9.3 Traveller Children

Travellers are a group that has traditionally felt excluded from many aspects of society. Meath has 185 Traveller families². Of these families, 129 were living in houses; including 69 in standard local authority estates and 41 in Traveller Group Housing Schemes in Navan and Trim. Another 42 families were accommodated on halting sites. The main concentrations of families are around Navan and Trim with some families also in Ratoath, Bellewstown, Dunshaughlin, Dunboyne and Kells.

The population growth of Navan has increased alongside the Traveller population growth, having increased by 16% between 1999 and 2003. The Navan Travellers Workshop Ltd are working with HSE Primary Care and Childcare Services in considering the childcare needs of Travellers. Currently there is one pre-school service provided by NTW Ltd; this is a segregated facility. The Department of Education and Science are promoting social integration of Traveller

2 Census of Travellers 2004

children within childcare facilities. Agencies such as the Department of Education and Science, Navan Travellers Workshop Ltd, HSE Child Care Services and the Meath Primary Health Care Unit (Traveller Health Project) are considering how best to move forward and consider the possibility of Traveller led community childcare facilities.

Meath County Development Board under the Community and Enterprise section have recently developed a Traveller Strategy and childcare needs of Travellers have been identified as a priority.

See Appendix G: Traveller Population in Co. Meath based on Location (NTW Ltd).

4.9.4 Ethnic Minorities

The most recent group of residents in the county that are susceptible to various forms of exclusion are refugees, asylum applicants and economic migrants, with many nationalities now residing in Co. Meath. For those seeking refugee status, uncertainties concerning asylum applications lead to considerable difficulties with regard to accommodation, education and lack of opportunity to participate in the labour force. Many economic migrants also experience difficulties with regard to housing, tenure of employment and social integration. In planning for these communities, cultural sensitivity will be required. Many of these ethnic minorities have set up home in Ireland with their families and according to the 2006 Census results the national highest populations of children under 14 years of age in descending order are African 7,647, Asian 5,497, Polish 4,790, Lithuanian 2,778 and Latvian 1,238 children. Our work on the ground with childcare provision would reflect and support this view.

Mosney is a unique relocation settlement community for asylum seekers and refugees coming into Co. Meath. Upon arrival into Ireland asylum seekers must apply for asylum. While their applications are being considered they and their families are accommodated in a settlement community. Mosney is one of these settlement communities. They must remain at the settlement centre until their application for asylum is fully processed. There are approximately 800 residents in Mosney at any given time. For Mosney residents the asylum seeking period takes an average of 18 months and in some cases up to three years. Currently there are 305 children living in the centre; 151 children aged between 0-2 years, 69 children between 3-4 years, 61 children between 5-11 years and 24 children aged between 13-18 years. Childcare is an issue for the 0-3 year olds on the campus. There are 118 lone parents currently residing in the Mosney settlement community. The Daughters of Charity Pre-School facility, which receives funding from the HSE, is located in Mosney. The Daughters of Charity Pre-School facility applied for Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme funding. However, they were unsuccessful as they did not meet the programme criteria and are supported directly by another government agency, namely the Reception and Integration Agency under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform.

4.10 Types of Childcare Services Available

The government made childcare a priority under the National Development Plan 2000-2006. Funding was provided as a response to the social and economic changes in Ireland. In particular the rapidly rising participation of females in the workforce has resulted in an ever-

increasing demand for childcare services. The EOCP's main aim was to provide childcare enabling parents to participate in training, education and employment. With the introduction of the NCIP the focus has shifted and is now more child and family friendly.

There has been an increase in childcare places throughout the county since 2001. Provision has increased in the areas of full day care services, sessional day care services and childminding. Today there are 330 services offering places for 4,550 children. These services span a wide range including playgroups, Naionrai, Montessori schools, nurseries, crèches, school age childcare and childminding.

4.11 Conclusion for Section 4

The county of Meath has many unique features:

Population Growth: It is the fastest growing county in Leinster with a population growth of 21.4% compared to the national average of 8.1%. There are areas in Meath that are heavily populated and areas that are extremely rural. The most densely populated areas are in the east of the county and the areas most sparsely populated are in the west and north of the county. We have seen an explosion of population in Bettystown and Laytown and a population decrease in the town of Kells. The HSE Public Health Nurse statistics indicate that birth rates in Meath are increasing annually with significant growth in Duleek/Laytown and Navan town.

Demographically: It is on the border of Dublin and the population increases reflect this proximity with the highest population explosions in the eastern region of the county and along the major roads (N1, N2 and N3). The east of Meath has a rail link (Drogheda) and this has contributed to the commuter status of this part of the county. The lack of public transport in some areas has affected their growth; rural areas such as Oldcastle do not have frequent public transport available. House prices in Meath are lower than those in Dublin and this may have influenced population growth. This has also affected the social isolation that new families to an area feel as houses are being built first and community amenities are being developed later e.g. schools in the Laytown, Bettystown areas.

CLÁR & RAPID: There is a CLÁR area on the western edge of Meath and this suffers deprivation through lack of employment, access to public transport and industry. While Navan has a RAPID area comprising eight housing estates, these estates suffer deprivation from early school leavers through to lack of investment.

Gaeltacht: There are two Gaeltacht areas in Co. Meath; Rath Cairn and Baile Gibb. Meath CCC are aware that both areas are serviced by Naíonra. Rath Cairn are hoping to develop a community facility.

Mosney: There are approximately 800 residents in Mosney, with 305 children. Meath CCC was unable to find any research about where these families locate to once they have been granted refugee status. Anecdotal evidence would suggest they move into large towns like Drogheda and Balbriggan.

Travellers: Meath has 185 Traveller families divided mostly between the Navan and Trim areas.

County of Contradictions: Meath has experienced a population explosion and a real fear in the county is that it will become a commuter county (a large suburb of Dublin), where people only sleep in the county as they go to Dublin to avail of services.

As the statistics show, in some areas we have huge growth and others are in decline. Those areas closest to Dublin are more urban while other areas are very rural and remote, particularly in the northwest of the county. To ensure that there is sustainable childcare provision, Meath CCC will look at developing targeted initiatives for each of the electoral divides while keeping a county focus.

5 ANALYSIS OF NEED

- Review of Mapping
- Audit of Provision
- Priorities for Meath

In order to analyse the need, Meath needed to collate all information available to them. Four components were identified for the purpose of this strategic plan; a review of the mapping, an audit of service provision and a review of the analysis from the consultations carried out.

5.1 Review of Mapping

In 2006, Meath CCC carried out a childcare mapping exercise. At that time (September 2006) there were 176 childcare providers and 246 childminders identified in Co. Meath. Responses were received from 113 services and 112 childminders. The service breakdown is as follows:

Full Day Care	15
Sessional	95
School Age Childcare (Before School)	8
School Age Childcare (Before and After School)	7
Childminders	112

From this breakdown, sessional services were highlighted as the dominant type of provision with the majority of provision in the Dunshaughlin ED. This identified a need for the development of full day care and baby places across the county. Only 7% of those surveyed operated before and after school services. According to Meath CCC (Mapping 2006) before and after school providers appear to be working at capacity. "The average number of children attending combined with the average number of children waiting equalling their average capacity rate" (Mapping 2006). Throughout the county there is a lack of school age services with most services being delivered as part of the full day care provision. Due to the ongoing development of services, an updated survey was required for the purpose of this strategic plan. A phone survey was conducted with the notified providers and childminders currently known to Meath CCC.

5.2 Audit of Provision

The survey was carried out in the form of a questionnaire which was administered to each existing childcare service in Meath (sessional, full day care service and drop in). A less detailed questionnaire was administered to childminders. In Meath there are five electoral divides (ED) and the services were identified in each of the areas (Navan, Trim, Kells, Dunshaughlin and Slane).

Respondents were selected from the registered list of those notified to the Pre-School Inspectorate of the Health Service Executive and the Meath CCC list of childminders. The staff

of Meath CCC rang each individual service and completed the questionnaire over the phone. From the research conducted a total of 195 providers were contacted. 128 private providers, 16 community services and 126 childminders responded to the questionnaire.

The analysis identified a total of 4,518 childcare places including all childcare services and childminders. Results for each specific ED were compiled to examine the current provision and supply. For the purpose of future strategic development, Meath CCC will identify priorities in line with each ED which will reflect the overall strategy for the county. Consultation with other CCCs will take place where areas are located on the border of neighbouring counties. The following is the breakdown:

Electoral Divide	Full Day Care	Sessional	School Age	Drop In	Childminder
Dunshaughlin	7	39	8		19
Navan Urban	4	7	3	1	40
Navan Rural	5	37	6		19
Kells	2	14	1		12
Slane	8	17	2		12
Trim	5	27	6	1	24
Total	31	141	26	2	126

Pre-school sessional providers were more prevalent in Navan Rural (29%) and Dunshaughlin (26%). Childminders were most prevalent in Navan Urban (32%) and Trim (19%). Within the childcare providers sector, baby places accounted for only 2% of the overall childcare places provided. The survey showed anecdotal evidence that the majority of childcare providers operate a loose-tiered fee structure within their service. It is Meath CCC's opinion, based on information received, that if a sessional service is in operation for a number of years, they are familiar with the families in the community. They offer support for families experiencing difficulty and in some cases children have access to free places. This is an informal structure; most services operate a structure which operates a discount for siblings. The survey identified a total of 943 childcare places in Trim, 510 in Slane, 1,220 in Dunshaughlin, 439 in Kells, 1,149 in Navan Rural and 216 in Navan Urban. Across the EDs there are substantially more sessional places than full day care provision. This is consistent with the findings of the Mapping 2006.

5.2.1 Analysis of Audit by Electoral Divide

Trim ED

In the Trim ED there are a total of 54 providers (5 full day care, 28 sessional, 7 school age services and 24 childminders); 22 of which are private providers and 8 community childcare services. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community childcare services within the DEDs followed by the type of childcare service provided.

TRIM DED	Self-Employed	Community
Trim Urban	1	0
Trim Rural	6	1
Summerhill	1	2
Rathmore	1	1

Rathmoylan	1	0
Rahinstown	0	1
Killaconningan (Ballivor)	1	1
Kildalky	1	0
Kilbride	2	0
Innfield	3	0
Gallow	2	0
Castlerickard	1	0
Athboy	1	1
Ballybonnigan	0	1
Castlejordan	1	0

Childcare	Under	1-2	2-3	3-5	5-6	6-11	11-14	Total
FDC	24	39	52					115
Sessional			9	503	3			515
School Age					99	64	15	178
Childminders								112
Drop In								
Total Places	24	39	61	503	102	64	15	920
Vacancies			2	21				
Total Places								943

Analysis for Trim ED

There are currently 943 childcare places in Trim ED, indicating that 16% of the projected child population (2006) in this locality have access to a childcare place. There are substantially more sessional places than full day care places. Funding for full day care places will be a priority under the NCIP. Trim has a projected population for persons aged 0-14 of 5,892. (This figure is only projected, as 2006 statistics are not yet available for age breakdown). Meath CCC staff believe that Trim is a developing area with a large influx of young families into the area. Enfield in particular is quickly becoming a commuter town of Dublin. Therefore, there is still a need for continuing childcare development; these figures will be reviewed again when the age population is available. School age childcare accounts for only 18% of the childcare provision in Trim, the highest level across Co. Meath. In Trim there is a total of 24 childminders catering for 50 children in the area. In 2003, 43 births were recorded and this continues to increase.

Slane ED

In the Slane ED, there are a total 35 providers (9 full day care, 16 sessional, 2 school age and 12 childminders); 18 of which are private providers and 2 community services. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community services within the Slane DEDs followed by the type of childcare services provided in the Slane ED area.

SLANE DED	Self-Employed	Community
Ardcath	1	0
Duleek	2	0
Julianstown	3	1
St. Mary's	8	1
Stamullen	4	0
Slane	3	0

Childcare	Under	1-2	2-3	3-5	5-6	6-11	11-14	Total
FDC	8	50	75	15				148
Sessional			1	271				272
School Age					5	24		29
Childminders								20
Drop In						7		7
Total Places Occupied	8	50	76	286	5	31		476
Vacancies	3	12	7	9		1	2	
Total Places								510

Analysis for Slane

There are currently 510 childcare places in Slane which has a projected child population of 2,636 (2006). This indicates that 19% of the population have access to childcare places. There are substantially more sessional places than full day care places or school age. The development of all childcare places is to be made a priority for funding under NCIP. Slane ED has seen the largest population growth in east Meath over the last five years. It also has specific areas of deprivation where childcare needs are not being met; only two of the existing services operate a community service. School age childcare accounts for 65 of the childcare places in Slane ED. In Slane ED there is a total of 12 childminders catering for 20 children in the area, further highlighting the need to expand on these childcare services. 878 births were registered in the Duleek/Laytown area and this is set to increase.

Dunshaughlin ED

In the Dunshaughlin ED there are a total of 60 providers (7 full day care, 35 sessional, 5 school age and 19 childminders); 39 of which are private providers and 2 community services. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community services within the DEDs followed by the type of childcare services provided in the ED.

DUNSHAUGHLIN DED	Self-Employed	Community
Culmullin	2	0
Donaghmore	7	0
Dunshaughlin	5	0
Killeen	4	1
Ratoath	9	1
Skryne	2	0
Dunboyne	10	0

Childcare Places	Under 1	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3-5 yrs	5-6 yrs	6-11 yrs	11-14 yrs	Total Places
FDC	36	52	104	81	37			310
Sessional			30	603	3			636
School Age					84	54		138
Childminders								41
Drop In								
Total Places Occupied	36	52	134	684	124	54		1,125
Vacancies			3	29	63			
Total Places								1,220

Analysis for Dunshaughlin ED

There are currently 1,220 childcare places in Dunshaughlin which means that 29% of the projected population aged 0-14 years or 4,171 (2006) have access to childcare places. However, there are substantially more sessional places than full day care places. There are 36 baby places available in Dunshaughlin which identifies a need for an increase in these places. School age childcare places are also an area of concern as there are only 5 services which cater for this age group and 14% of childcare places are school age. With Dunshaughlin on the commuter belt it is important for services to meet the needs of the commuting parents. Therefore, Meath CCC identify that more of an emphasis needs to be put on the increase in baby places and school age places to reflect the fact that 628 births were registered in 2003 in the Dunshaughlin/Ratoath/Dunboyne DEDs. In Dunshaughlin there is a total of 19 childminders catering for 23 children in the area known to MCCC.

Kells ED

In the Kells ED, there are a total of 26 providers (2 full day care, 13 sessional, 0 school age and 12 childminders); 10 of which are private providers and 4 are community. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community services within the Kells DEDs followed by the type of childcare services provided in the Kells ED.

KELLS DED	Self-Employed	Community
Staholmog	1	0
Oldcastle	2	0
Moynalty	1	0
Maperath	1	0
Kilmainham	0	1
Kells Town	1	0
Kells Rural	2	1
Crossakeel	0	1
Drumcondra	1	0
Trohanny	0	1
Balrathboyne	1	0

Childcare	Under	1-2	2-3	3-5	5-6	6-11	11-14	Total
FDC	1	32	27					60
Sessional			3	312				315
School Age					2	8		10
Childminders								23
Drop In								
Total Places	1	32	30	312	2	8		408
Vacancies			10	21				
Total Places								439

Analysis for Kells

There are 439 childcare places in Kells which means that only 25% (1,741) of the projected 0-14 population (2006) have access to childcare places. There are substantially more sessional places than full day care places. Therefore, funding for full day care places is to be prioritised under the NCIP. School age childcare places account for only 2.5% of the childcare provision indicating a greater need for before and after school places. A total of 12 childminders cater for 23 children in the area. MCCC believe that Kells ED requires priority in its development to reflect the rural nature of childcare provision, though population increases are less than in the rest of the county. There is a need to promote wrap around childcare services. 234 births were registered in 2003 in the Kells ED area.

Navan Rural Area

For the purposes of this analysis MCCC have divided Navan ED into 2 areas (Navan Rural and Navan Urban), in order to highlight specific needs. In the Navan Rural ED there are a total of 56 providers (3 full day care, 35 sessional, 6 school age and 58 childminders); 36 of which are private providers and 0 community services. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community services within the DEDs followed by the type of services provided in the ED.

NAVAN RURAL DED	Self-Employed	Community
Navan Rural	21	0
Ardbraccan	3	0
Ardmulchan	1	0
Bective	1	0
Castletown	2	0
Donaghpatrick	3	0
Kentstown	2	0
Painestown	1	0
Tara	2	0

Childcare	Under	1-2	2-3	3-5	5-6	6-11	11-14	Total
FDC		26	62	80				168
Sessional			87	626				713
School Age					24	20		44
Childminders								111
Drop In								
Total Places		26	149	706	24	20		948
Vacancies		11	10	88	4	0		
Total Places								1,149

Navan Urban ED

In the Navan urban ED, there are a total of 8 providers (4 full day care, 7 sessional, 3 school age and 1 childminder); 6 of which are private providers and 1 community service. The following tables show the breakdown of private and community services within the Navan Urban DEDs followed by the type of childcare services provided in the ED.

NAVAN URBAN ED	Self-Employed	Community
Navan Urban	6	1

Childcare	Under	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3-5 yrs	5-6 yrs	6-11	11-14	Total
FDC	9	18	28					55
Sessional				140				140
School Age					14	6		20
Childminders								1
Drop In								
Total Places	9	18	28	140	14	6		216
Vacancies		4	2	31	4			
Total Places								257

Analysis for Navan Rural and Urban

The 1,406 childcare places in Navan (Navan Urban and Navan Rural) means that only 41% (3,415) of the projected 0-14 child population (2006) in this locality have access to childcare places. There are substantially more sessional places than full day care places in both areas. Therefore, funding for full day care places is to be prioritised under the NCIP. The provision of baby places is also a priority for Navan town as 610 births were recorded in 2003, with this figure increasing annually. School age childcare accounts for only 5% of the childcare provision in Navan indicating that in Navan such facilities are a priority for funding. In Navan, there is a total of 59 childminders catering for 112 children in the area. This is the highest number of childminders within the county. It is important to continue to support these childminders.

5.2.2 Details of Operating Hours

As a result of Meath CCC focus groups, the issue regarding the opening hours of childcare services was identified as a matter of concern. The focus groups revealed that parents who were commuting to work were finding it difficult to find a service that could meet their needs.

Full Day Care Opening Hours

Of the 31 full day care services in Meath, 4 (13%) open from 7am to 7pm and 8 (26%) open from 7.30am to 6pm. This is a very low percentage of facilities to cater for commuting parents. These times apply to school age service also as most school age childcare services operate within a full day care setting.

Of the 133 sessional services questioned, 88 operate a morning session accounting for 66% of the service provision and 45 operate both a morning session and an afternoon session accounting for 34% of the service provision. The earliest opening for a morning session was 9am with the last closing time at 12.30pm. Those who operated a service in the afternoon operated on average no later than 3.30pm. Currently there are no childcare services offered at the weekend other than drop in services in the county. In rural areas where it is not sustainable to provide full day care services, the need for wrap around provision has been identified as a service for development i.e. sessional services that are supported by childminders in the area, to ensure all day provision for children. This would assist parents in their childcare while commuting to work.

5.2.3 Staffing and Training

Meath CCC believe training and ongoing professional development opportunities for childcare staff are critical in terms of both developing a quality service and developing the childcare profession. In order to include training in the strategic plan a current profile of childcare personnel was required. Part of the survey out by carried Meath CCC identified the levels of qualifications within the sector. Childcare training, like the sector itself, has developed in an ad hoc manner. There are no guidelines for qualifications or the levels required for the various positions within the sector. Childminders are not included in these figures. However, the questionnaire administered to the childminders identified that 95 out of the 112 childminders within the county are trained in First Aid, Childminding Practice or basic Quality Assurance Programmes.

For the purposes of this research Meath used the levels identified within the National Qualifications Authority Framework, adding two sections for specialised training such as Montessori courses and High/Scope and for modules completed (Special Needs, Childminding Practice, Child Development, School Age Childcare, Manual Handling, Food Hygiene). It should be noted that some personnel have more than one qualification while some do not have any. The figures represent the percentage of people who have that particular qualification. Therefore, people may be represented more than once.

This table represents the qualifications of Childcare Managers:

ED	Degree	Diploma	FETAC 6	FETAC 5	Specialised	Modules
Slane	3%	6%	3%	32%	18%	15%
Kells	0%	0%	0%	49%	20%	4%
Navan	1%	1%	0%	12%	30%	6%
Dunshaughlin	1%	5%	8%	32%	19%	1.5%
Trim	0%	1%	8%	23%	20%	2%

This table represents the qualifications of Childcare Supervisors:

ED	Degree	Diploma	FETAC 6	FETAC 5	Specialised	Modules
Slane	0%	0%	25%	25%	50%	0%
Kells	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%
Navan	0%	0%	0%	40%	40%	0%
Dunshaughlin	0%	6%	0%	20%	40%	19%
Trim	0%	0%	7%	21%	0%	0%

This table represents the qualifications of Childcare Workers:

ED	Degree	Diploma	FETAC 6	FETAC 5	Specialised	Modules
Slane	0%	0%	0%	61%	23%	0%
Kells	0%	0%	0%	27%	7%	7%
Navan	0%	18%	6%	23%	18%	0%
Dunshaughlin	0%	4%	0%	30%	4%	12%
Trim	0%	0%	0%	54%	15%	16%

This table represents the qualifications of Childcare Assistants:

ED	Degree	Diploma	FETAC 6	FETAC 5	Specialised	Modules
Slane	0%	6%	0%	47%	18%	30%
Kells	0%	0%	0%	31%	16%	0%
Navan	2%	0%	0%	37%	30%	7%
Dunshaughlin	0%	0%	2%	74%	4%	2%
Trim	0%	0%	0%	38%	8%	8%

The majority of childcare personnel have FETAC Level 5 childcare training. Only 5% of those working in childcare are qualified to degree level and 4% are in managerial positions. It has been Meath CCC's experience that there is a lot of confusion in relation to training, the levels of qualifications and the difference between a training module and a training course.

Meath CCC has provided 41 training courses over the last 5 years. Training for first aid is not represented in the above tables. However, there are a significant number of personnel seeking this course with 83 trained to date. Therefore, Meath CCC recognise that there needs to be clear progression routes for those in the sector and the opportunity to avail of higher level training.

5.3 Priorities for Meath

In conclusion:

Growth & Development: Childcare provision in Meath has grown substantially over the past six years. Meath CCC recognise and identify that there are still gaps with regard to the amount of childcare services provided and the types of provision. The population of Meath is expanding at a distinct rate and the need for more childcare places is a critical factor. Meath is what may be referred to as a commuter county as the majority of people who live in the south and east of the county commute into Dublin for employment. This identifies need for increased full day care provision, both centre based and home based. Development of these services is a priority for Meath CCC as all areas show a deficit. At present there are less full day care places available than sessional care; this is consistent with the Mapping 2006.

Meath CCC will continue to work to develop sustainable, affordable childcare places for the future. To combat issues of displacement and sustainability Meath CCC will develop childcare provision strategically in each of the five electoral divides; areas for priority will be identified according to the need of each area. This will support and target the development of places for children aged 3-4 years and school age provision. School age provision generally does not cater for children over 7 years of age; this type of service needs to be supported and developed within each of the EDs. The underpinning premise for all future development will be to ensure that all childcare provision will match the needs of the community, the parents and the child in terms of accessibility, affordability, flexibility and quality.

5.3.1 Thematic Analysis

- Out of the 143 respondents, there are 31 full day care services. Therefore, there is a need for increased full day care provision.
- In total, there are 4,518 childcare places in Meath. Only 2% or 78 of these are baby places indicating a need for baby places.
- Need for school age childcare provision is a priority as there are only 469 places out of 4,518 places.
- As Meath has rural areas where full day care may not be sustainable there is a need to develop wrap around services i.e. develop a model of practice where sessional services work in partnership with childminders.
- There is a gap in service provision for children in middle childhood and early teens.
- There is a need to continue to support childminders to identify themselves to Meath CCC in order to support them in their professional development and further develop the quality of their service.
- Each ED has specific needs, which require development in a strategic manner to remain in line with the overall county and national development.
- As the majority of providers have achieved FETAC Level 5, there is a need for progression within the sector to achieve higher levels of qualifications.

6 CONSULTATION

- Sector Consultation
- Sector Findings
- Consultation with Agencies
- Analysis of Consultation

6.1 Sector Consultation

The Strategic Planning Subcommittee used two forms of consultation to inform the research and the strategic objectives. Firstly five focus group meetings were held; one in each of the electoral divides in Co. Meath; Kells, Slane (Bettystown), Navan, Dunshaughlin (Dunboyne) and Trim.

The aim of the focus groups was to gather the views of Meath CCC's main target groups: parents, existing and potential childcare providers, childminders and parent & toddler groups. The strategic subcommittee agreed four questions that would be discussed at each meeting.

A wide publicity campaign including local radio, local newspapers, church bulletins, parish newsletters and via post targeted at existing services and parents informed people of the start of the consultation process.

In excess of 100 people attended the focus groups. Participants were representative of sessional providers, full day care providers, childminders, parents and parent & toddler groups.

The questions were open in order to collect qualitative data. This was decided to allow for individual views and opinions on current issues, future development and expectations.

There were four questions in total:

- Question 1: How is it for your service now?
- Question 2: What needs to happen to develop your service?
- Question 3: Have you identified any childcare related training you wish to participate in?
- Question 4: What are your expectations of Meath County Childcare Committee to assist you maintain and enhance your service?

6.2 Sector Findings

The consultation process recognised and complemented a lot of the work Meath CCC had completed to date and identified a number of key issues to be addressed in the future (for a full report see Appendix H).

6.2.1 Thematic Analysis of Focus Group Feedback

For the purposes of compiling strategic objectives, Meath CCC collated the feedback and main issues under the headings provided by Pobal to write annual action plans.

Information and Networking

Information and networking can be improved through greater support on the ground developing information initiatives for a wider audience. The overall effect is to have greater communication with the sector.

Training

For greater participation in training there needs to be more localised training and assistance in covering the cost of training including support for relief staff. Where training courses are not applicable there is a need for a workshop or a series of workshops on a given topic. Meath CCC will need to consider the tutors delivering the training and provide support and ongoing professional development to this part of the sector.

Capacity Building Providers

One of the largest issues that came back in the focus group was the issue of displacement. Existing services need to be afforded the opportunity to develop before a new service is developed. Currently under the NCIP, there is limited funding for quality improvements and each application is assessed on an individual basis. The focus groups identified the need for more full day care and baby places. In addition, there is also recognition for the need to develop wrap around services. To ensure all these developments the providers have requested additional support from Meath CCC.

Quality

Lack of funding was identified as a barrier for services who wish to participate in a quality programme. There needs to be more access for services to participate locally and staff need to be trained appropriately as currently not all members need qualifications to work in a service.

6.3 Consultation with Agencies

The second piece of primary research was a questionnaire issued to all agencies working in Meath. 32 questionnaires were posted out to agencies and followed up with phone calls to receive the information. 15 agencies responded; two of which stated they have no remit for childcare.

Director of Environmental NCNA	Meath Enterprise Board	Navan School Completion
St. Nicholas Montessori	IPPA, the Early Childhood	Navan Family Resource
Meath CDB	Meath Jobs Club	FAS Services to Business
Meath Women's Refuge	Director of Public Nursing	Meath Partnership
Border Counties Childcare	Children First Officer	Navan Travellers' Workshop
Navan Chamber of	TIDE	Childminding Ireland
Barnardos	RAPID	Summerhill Community
Gingerbread	Navan Community	Trim Family Resource Centre
Navan Young People's	Meath Local Sports	Meath VEC
Blanchardstown IT	Navan Spring Board	HSE Children Services
	ISPCC	

This questionnaire was aimed at assessing what agencies were currently doing in relation to childcare within the county and what links currently exist. It also tackled the issue of duplication of services and asked agencies how Meath CCC could work with them to ensure there is no duplication.

- Question 1: What the agencies are doing in relation to childcare?
- Question 2: How will this link to the work of Meath CCC?
- Question 3: What measures can we put in place to ensure there is a more co-ordinated approach?
- Question 4: What measures can be put in place to ensure there is no duplication?

6.3.1 Thematic Analysis of Consultation Responses

The main theme that keeps reoccurring is greater information sharing between the agencies; this will ensure greater collaboration and eliminate duplication.

Information

All agencies who responded identified the need for greater information sharing and some useful practical solutions were suggested e.g. presentations to be made at both staff and board level and more readily available information.

Training

Agencies that provide training identified that all childcare training should be provided in conjunction with Meath CCC.

Capacity Building Providers

Development agencies provide a range of supports to groups working on the ground. There was a request for more information regarding human resource issues for childcare services.

6.4 Analysis of Consultation

The feedback from the focus groups identifies training, quality and information/communication as the main issues for the sector going forward. Funding needs to be more flexible to allow existing providers apply to make quality improvements to their service. More information on practice needs to be available with more on the ground support for existing providers. Consideration needs to be given to the support structures for those who are participating in professional development through training and quality programmes.

The feedback from the agencies is consistent with that from those who work within the sector; Meath CCC need to develop more effective information and communication structures within their strategic plan.

7 STRATEGIC GOALS FOR MEATH COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE 2007-2010

- Information and Networking
- Training and Quality
- Social Inclusion
- Provision and Providers
- Capacity Building of Meath CCC

Meath County Childcare Committee has worked consistently over the last 6 years to improve the provision and quality of childcare in Meath. Through the strategic planning process Meath CCC have a vision of where they would like to see the childcare sector in Meath by 2010. The information that informed this vision and the strategic objectives were collated from our Meath CCC mapping which identified the gaps in provision, the updated analysis which identified the need for longer opening hours and training progression for the sector. From the focus groups held, Meath CCC are aware of the need to be more active on the ground with the providers and that the different EDs have very different needs. For this reason, Meath CCC have decided to provide targeted support and development for each of the areas. The following objectives and actions were identified in order to achieve this vision.

7.1 Information and Networking

7.1.1 To develop and improve information sharing and learning by ensuring that accurate, accessible information is available to childcare providers, parents, agencies and the wider community.

7.1.1.1	<p>To establish and develop outreach advisory and support services that are aligned to the five ED areas in Co. Meath (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane)</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will align the Meath CCC Officers to a designated ED area (5 ED areas in Meath). • Meath CCC will revise the role of the Meath CCC Officers to meet this change. • Existing and new providers will be able to access the designated Meath CCC Officer for their ED area for advice, support and development. • The Meath CCC Officer will be available on a regular basis in a local centre. • The Meath CCC Officer will work alongside other local agencies e.g. VECs, CICs, HSE Community Centres and Meath Partnership.

7.1.1.2	<p>To continue to support parents in accessing childcare, promoting links with agencies who support parenting programmes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will further develop their existing parents' information packs. Packs will be developed that are age specific: child 0-5 years, 6-10 years, and teenage years. (Packs will include information on childcare options, a list of available childcare providers, childcare regulations, requirements for notification systems to the HSE and Meath CCC, other relevant health promotion material and relevant websites useful to parents.) • Packs will be distributed to all parents on the Meath CCC database and all parent & toddler groups and providers at their request. • Information workshops will be held for parents in their ED area to support and raise awareness of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programmes and developments. • Meath CCC will work with parents to ensure that they are clear of the role, responsibilities, expectations and limitations of childcare providers. • Meath CCC will collaborate with other agencies within the county to support targeted initiatives with relevant stakeholders (parents/providers and the broader community).
7.1.1.3	<p>To regularly promote and publicise the work of Meath CCC by developing an ongoing publicity campaign</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will initiate and develop a regular newspaper column in the county newspapers. • Meath CCC will advertise upcoming events through appropriate media. • Meath CCC will continue to produce existing events/training calendars and information packs for providers. • Meath CCC will improve usage of other medium e.g. free local newspapers, local radio, parish bulletins and information boards. • Meath CCC will develop an advertising postcard to be administrated through An Post, to all households in the county.
7.1.1.4	<p>To further develop the Meath CCC website as a process in good information sharing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will further develop its website. • Meath CCC will develop a link site for parent information sessions. • Meath CCC will develop a link site to support existing providers through information sharing.

7.1.2 To continue to develop the co-ordination of childcare services at all levels and build new alliances/working relationships where appropriate.

7.1.2.1	<p>To continue to work with all local voluntary, statutory and community organisations that have a direct or indirect role in the provision of childcare</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will particularly explore ways to enhance working relationships with the HSE Pre-School Service Inspectorate, establishing common ground regarding advisory visits for new and existing providers. • Meath CCC will support the HSE Children’s Services and Pre-School Inspectorate to seek an expansion of the Pre-School Inspection Team (based on the population increase), to allow focus on advisory work to support providers in meeting pre-school regulations. • Meath CCC will particularly seek to enhance working relationships with Meath County Council, establishing common ground for new childcare facility developments through the county.
7.1.2.2	<p>To network with other CCCs, nationally and within the region, in order to share learning, collaborate on specific pieces of work and pool resources</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to support the development of a national county childcare committee network meeting within the CCC structure, in order to learn from existing committees and their work and share goals and objectives for the sector. • Meath CCC will continue work with Cavan, Louth and Monaghan at their regular planned and organised regional meetings in order to share experiences within the region and work together to ensure equity in service development.
7.1.2.3	<p>To continue to support networking between childcare providers in Meath</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will provide networking events within the county to meet the needs of the childcare providers. • These events will be coordinated with the relevant NVCCs. • These events will be aligned where appropriately to the 5 ED areas (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane). • Each Meath CCC Officer for the ED area will take responsibility for organising events within the ED area. • Events organised for the county will be agreed between Meath CCC Officers as appropriate. • An annual meeting of all ED areas will be organised.

7.2 Training and Quality

7.2.1 To identify and respond to the training needs of childcare providers in order to provide the progression paths for the professional development of the childcare sectors (pathways of learning through the childcare sector).

7.2.1.1	<p>To regularly assess the training needs of all childcare providers through carrying out regular needs assessments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will conduct an annual training audit of Meath childcare providers and childminders. • Meath CCC will consult with providers through the use of questionnaires and focus groups. • Meath CCC Officers will identify training needs for the designated ED areas (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane). • Meath CCC will continue to collaborate with other training agencies/childcare professional bodies/nursery associations in compiling data through collating data from evaluation forms at the end of each course held.
7.2.1.2	<p>To develop and collate information on training and organise training courses based on the training needs identified in the training audit</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to support the professional pathways of the childcare sector in the county. Meath CCC will provide information on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The level of qualifications required ➤ Training recommended ➤ Training courses available • Meath CCC will continue to work with other agencies to provide a range of courses (accredited, professional and interest courses), to provide training and to promote providers availing of these training opportunities, including Meath VEC to explore the possibility of providing an Early Years degree course in Co. Meath. • Meath CCC will continue to develop an effective system to monitor training taking place within the county. • Meath CCC will further develop the Meath CCC calendar to include information on training courses and link with other relevant training agencies.
7.2.1.3	<p>To develop and collate information on training for trainers supporting quality education for childcare workers/providers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to support the professional development of childcare tutors in Co. Meath. • Meath CCC will continue to improve resources available to tutors such as a resource pack. • Meath CCC will establish a Childcare Trainers Forum to meet on a regular basis in order to support trainers.

7.2.1.4	<p>To support practitioners with the implementation of the new pre-school regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to work with the NVCCs to raise awareness among providers on the new pre-school regulations. • Meath CCC will facilitate training seminars both locally through the ED area structure (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane) and county based as required. • Meath CCC will continue to work with the HSE Pre-School Inspectorate in promoting every opportunity to share information on the new pre-school regulations.
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7.2.1.5	<p>To liaise, encourage and support childcare providers to participate in training through on site support visits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to support childcare providers to participate in training. • Meath CCC will work to alleviate these obstacles identified by providers in relation to participating in training e.g. providing training locally and on site, reducing training costs through subsidised places/through agreements with other agencies. • Meath CCC will develop practical solutions to barriers to training.
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7.2.2 To support practitioners to improve quality through promoting quality standards and targets for childcare in the county.

7.2.2.1	<p>To raise the awareness of and need for quality programmes within the childcare setting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will support, promote and implement Síolta, the national quality framework. • Meath CCC will develop a training programme and pack for Síolta (See Information and Networking 7.1.1.2). • Meath CCC will continue to promote the range of quality programmes available through other agencies. • Meath CCC will continue to work in collaboration with agencies delivering quality programmes in developing these programmes and supports required by providers in attaining these standards. • Meath CCC will advertise available quality programmes through the media strategy.
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7.2.2.2	<p>To support the providers in providing quality childcare services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will provide support to providers through service and home visits. Meath CCC Officers will be aligned through the ED areas ensuring consistency (See Information and Networking 7.1.1.1). • Meath CCC will endeavour to source available funding for childcare providers for quality purposes. • Meath CCC will develop and build relations with relevant bodies supporting quality within childcare facilities/settings.
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7.3 Social Inclusion

7.3.1 To promote initiatives that increase the level of appropriate service provision and pro-actively target areas of disadvantage towards better social inclusion.

7.3.1.1	<p>To enhance interagency linkages/working groups for the development of community based 'not-for-profit' and other childcare facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop greater collaboration between agencies for the delivery of inclusive accessible childcare. • Support the implementation of actions agreed in the Meath Interagency Strategy for the Traveller Community. (Specifically 8.1 based on the outcomes of the research 'Barriers to Travellers accessing Childcare').
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7.3.1.2	<p>To support providers to develop accessible childcare services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actively work with childcare providers to ensure that all children have equality of access to childcare. • Support Enable Ireland's early intervention programme in the childcare setting. • Ensure providers have a range of culturally appropriate toys and equipment, reflective of modern society and diversity. • Continue to provide information on training for childcare personnel on inclusion and how to embrace other cultures and celebrate diversity. • Review the audit of provision for children with special needs. • Develop a database of Special Needs Assistants (SNA) in the county – perhaps via linking in with Meath County Council and its skills database.
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7.3.1.3	<p>To promote the inclusion of support services within all childcare facilities in order to find ways to respond to the needs of low income/marginalised children and their families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop greater supports for families with children where the family has issues of low income/marginalisation within their community. • Work in collaboration with agencies such as Meath Partnership, Meath County Council, HSE Child Care services (Social Work Services and Family Support Services), RAPID and other appropriate agencies as identified for the delivery of inclusive accessible childcare. • Support childcare providers, both community facilities and private providers, in responding to the needs of the most excluded in their areas.
7.3.1.4	<p>To support the development of mechanisms to equality proof information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See Information and Networking 7.1.1.2. • Meath CCC to work with agencies supporting information giving and ensure that language is appropriate and understandable to its target audiences. • Meath CCC to promote awareness of intercultural diversity in providing childcare services to migrant families and families of ethnic minority including Travellers.
7.3.1.5	<p>To proactively target childcare workers from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds to develop their skills and gain employment in the childcare sector in Meath</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will, with relevant agencies, support persons from diverse social and cultural backgrounds to train in childcare e.g. FAS, VEC, NTW Ltd, Cultúr etc.
7.3.1.6	<p>To work with appropriate agencies to develop a mechanism to subsidise places for children experiencing social exclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will work with appropriate agencies to develop a mechanism to subsidise places to promote social inclusion in all local childcare services.

7.4 Provision and Providers

7.4.1 To support potential new providers and existing providers in establishing and sustaining a range of childcare facilities including childminders across the county.

7.4.1.1	<p>To continue to promote and support potential new providers</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will use the information obtained through the mapping process to target key childcare facilities/childminding appropriate to the ED areas (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane). • Meath CCC will continue to work towards supporting the expansion of childcare services identified through the Meath CCC mapping process. Meath CCC recognise the need to prioritise development in the areas of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Community childcare facilities b. Full day care facilities c. School age places especially 7-14 years d. Facilities for children under two years e. Childminding and wrap around services in rural areas. • Meath CCC will work in partnership with the Kathryn Howard Foundation to support existing and potential parent & toddler groups. • Meath CCC will strengthen their links with other agencies that assist in identifying land available for community childcare facilities and full day care facilities e.g. Meath County Council potential developers, Meath Partnership and consultant advisors from successful projects such as Ballivor/Trim community childcare facility. • Meath CCC Officers to support potential providers within their assigned ED areas in the NCIP process, from conception to delivery. • Childminder Advisory Officer will promote childminding as a career option. • Meath CCC PESC will work with Pobal in simplifying and making practical the NCIP funding application process. • Meath CCC will update the childcare statistics annually.

7.4.1.2	<p>To continue to advise and support new providers and existing providers on childcare best practice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will deliver an outreach advice and support service aligned to ED areas – see Information and Networking 7.1.1.1. • Meath CCC will continue to support new providers in the set-up phase in relation to requirements for set-up including notification to HSE/Meath CCC. • Meath CCC will continue to advise and support providers where pre-school inspection reports have highlighted problems in their establishments. • Meath CCC will continue to link providers to training and quality programmes - see 7.2.1.
7.4.1.3	<p>To promote initiatives targeted at the support and inclusion of childminders including the implementation of voluntary notification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will continue to support childminders to comply with the national guidelines for voluntary notification through support and advisory visits, workshop seminars and information leaflets. • Meath CCC will work and liaise with the HSE Pre-School Inspectorate in assisting childminders to comply with pre-school regulations. • Meath CCC Childminding Advisory Officer will work with the Meath CCC team in targeting workshop seminars within the ED areas (Dunshaughlin, Navan, Trim, Kells and Slane).
7.4.1.4	<p>To identify, promote and improve the support of early childhood care and education services for three and a half to five year olds using a targeted approach</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will work with quality programmes and other agencies to support all childcare providers in providing up-to-date curriculum programmes for all children, targeting children 3-5 years.
7.4.1.5	<p>To support research in the area of childcare provision</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will support research in the childcare sector. Critical areas for research include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Impact of full day care on children - need to consider the requirement for parents to have childcare from early morning until late in the evening and what is best for the child. b. Consider what support childminders want in providing their service.

7.5 Capacity Building of Meath CCC

7.5.1. To ensure that Meath CCC continues to develop a vision of childcare services in Co. Meath and in so doing represent all stakeholder views and is effective and efficient in its work.

7.5.1.1	<p>To enhance the function of Meath CCC</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will review and develop its memos and articles of association. • Meath CCC will review and develop its board and subcommittees through membership and structure. • Meath CCC will review and develop its handbook and operational guidelines.
7.5.1.2	<p>To enhance the working of Meath CCC</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will review and enhance the workings of Meath CCC at all levels: working of the board; working of the staff; working relationship of board and staff; and working of subcommittees. • Meath CCC will prioritise a review of the subcommittee, in order to work more effectively. • Develop a performance management system for staff. • The committee will increase staff levels to meet the needs of childcare support and development as appropriate. • The committee will develop the capacity of existing staff. • Meath CCC will endeavour to offer promotion opportunities. • Meath CCC will develop a customer charter and complaints procedure.
7.5.1.3	<p>To attract additional resources through local, regional and national sources to implement/supplement specific initiatives within the childcare sector</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meath CCC will endeavour to seek other funding agents that support the work of childcare providers such as Enterprise, Lotto and Dormant Accounts.

8 LINKAGES AND COLLABORATION

- Introduction
- Additional Work

8.1 Introduction

Meath CCC recognise the importance of having childcare views represented on as many forums within the county as relevant. This ensures that the debate on childcare continues and the profile of the sector can be raised.

Through the County Development Board, Meath CCC give updates on childcare development and state where support for Meath CCC is required while building relationships with all other agencies represented. Meath CCC presents a copy of their annual plan for the endorsement of the CDB. Updates are also given by Meath CCC on the progression of the childcare actions in the county strategic plan.

Participating at the Meath Education Fora (a CDB initiative) is important on two accounts; one for the educational development of the professional itself and secondly to develop the quality of childcare training delivered. Through these fora, Meath CCC have made the necessary linkages to approach the Dublin Institute of Technology in relation to providing an outreach Early Years degree programme within Meath VEC.

Our participation on the interagency forum ensures information is shared with outside agencies and we receive updates on the work they are carrying out. The aim of the Mosney forum is to provide an interagency approach to service delivery for the residents.

Meath CCC also have representation on the following committees:

County Development	Social Inclusion Measures	Meath Educational Fora
Navan Interagency Forum	Navan Employment	Navan Travellers Childcare
Mosney Interagency Forum	BCCN Quality	

Meath CCC value interagency work and going forward will endeavour to forge new alliances with services such as the Children’s Disability Service under Enable Ireland.

8.2 Additional Work

The following are some of the additional pieces of work Meath CCC have been involved in:

County Development Board - Educational Audit

This was a complete audit of educational services including childcare facilities in Co. Meath. The audit was comprehensive and Meath CCC was named as the lead agency on some of the actions.

County Development Board - Community Audit

This piece of research was a complete audit of community groups in Co. Meath identifying their role and their funding source within the county. The aim was to enable greater collaboration and eliminate duplication of services.

County Development Board - Traveller Strategy

All agencies that provided services for the Travelling Community in Meath were brought together in 2006 to review resources that can be accessed by the Travelling Community. Stakeholders agreed on a planned interagency approach to meeting Traveller needs in Co. Meath.

North East HSE & CCCs - Childminding Strategy

In the northeast region the CCCs came together with the Family Support Services of the HSE to review the voluntary registration systems that each of the four counties were implementing. The agencies were hoping for recommendations in relation to the best way to implement a voluntary notification system within the region. This process is still ongoing and with the introduction of the childminding regulations, the system may have to be reviewed further.

HSE Primary Health Care Unit - Barriers to Travellers Accessing Childcare

In late 2006, Meath CCC were approached by the Primary Health Care Unit to be part of this research. Meath CCC have contracted a consultant to carry out this piece of research. The aim of the research is to review the current childcare provision, appropriateness, availability and demand for childcare among the Traveller Community. It is hoped that the research will be complete by the end of May 2007.

9 REVIEW AND MONITORING

Meath CCC review and prepare their action plans twice a year. The process involves all staff members; two days are taken away from the office to carry out this work. A report was compiled and presented to the board. This process is currently under review as the board identifies that with a growing staff team there is a need for the sessions to be facilitated.

Meath CCC will implement the Strategic Plan 2006-2010 by drawing up an annual action plan for each year during the plan. This work will be monitored by the Co-ordinator and staff through support and supervision sessions where targets are reviewed. A report and update of the implementation will be presented at board meetings. These reports will keep the board informed of issues that may arise so that they can discuss and plan a way forward.

It is proposed that the board and staff will participate in annual facilitated review sessions to reflect on the work being carried out and recommend necessary changes or amendments. These sessions will take place before the writing of the annual action plan and the annual report.

Meath CCC will continue to fully comply with all OMC and Pobal monitoring and reporting requirements on a monthly, quarterly and annual basis.

10 APPENDIX A - Acronyms

BCCN	Border County Childcare Network
CCC	County Childcare Committee
CDB	County Development Board
CECDE	Centre for Early Childhood Care and Education
CIC	Citizens Information Centre
CLÁR	Ceantair Laga Árd-Riachtanais
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DED	District Electoral Divide
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ED	Electoral Divide
EOCP	Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme
HSE	Health Service Executive
IPPA	Irish Pre-School Playgroup Association, The Early Childhood Organisation
MCCC	Meath County Childcare Committee
NCIP	National Childcare Investment Programme
NCNA	National Children's Nursery Association
NE	North East
NMCDA	North Meath Community Development Association
NTW	Navan Travellers Workshop
PESC	Project Evaluation Subcommittee
PHN	Public Health Nurse
SNA	Special Needs Assistant
TIDE	Trim Initiative for Development and Enterprise
VEC	Vocational Educational College

11 Appendix B - Summary of Action

INFORMATION	INFORMATION - PUBLICATIONS	NETWORKING	CAPACITY BUILDING PROVIDERS	SOCIAL INCLUSION
Newsletters	Information Leaflet	Network Meetings	Pre-development support to over 250 potential	Social Inclusion Workshop
Website	Executive Summary Strategic Plan	Full Day Care	Policies and Procedures	FETAC Training "Special
Resource Room	A Career in Childcare and Childcare Options	Montessori	Parents Survey	
Workshops	TIPS	Sessional	Community Discussion Group	
Publicity Events	Tiered Fee Structures	Participating in Additional Groups	HR Information and Advice for Services	
Information Stands at Events	Parents Guide	Belfast Trip		
	Starter Pack	Presentation Events		
	Traditional Games Manual			
	School Age Childcare Resource			

EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY	TRAINING	QUALITY	CAPACITY BUILDING STAFF & COMMITTEE	CHILDMINDING
Staff participated in training delivered by Pavee Point and the Eist project	FAS Start Your Own Childcare Business FETAC Level 2 Childcare (in association with the Meath VEC)	Promotion of Quality Programmes Benefits and Barriers to Participating in Quality Programmes	Evaluations	Information Childminding Leaflet Information Pack Children's Journal TIPS QAP Leaflet Fridge Magnet
	Policies and Procedures Civil Defence First Aid High/Scope	Quality Photograph competition	Team Building	Networking National and Regional Networks Subcommittee Belfast Trip Childminders Conference Presentation
	Behaviour Management	Working in partnership with the agencies who deliver quality programmes	Facilitated Sessions	Training Childminding Practice
	Manual Handling		Financial training on Pobal reporting process for staff	Quality Assurance Programme
	Watotto Training			FETAC Childminding Module
	Children First			First Aid
				Children First

13 Appendix D - RAPID Areas

RAPID Estates in Navan

The Navan RAPID programme caters for 14 estates broadly divided across 3 geographic areas as follows:

Table 1

Kells Road, Navan	Trim Road, Navan	Commons Road, Navan
Dean Cogan Place	Woodview Estate	Claremount Estate
Emmet Terrace	St. Columban's Crescent	Clogherboy/Oaklawns Estate
St. Patrick's Terrace	St. Benildus Villas	Townspark Estate
	Connolly Avenue	Reask Estate
		St. Brigit's Villas
		Parnell Park
		McDermott Villas

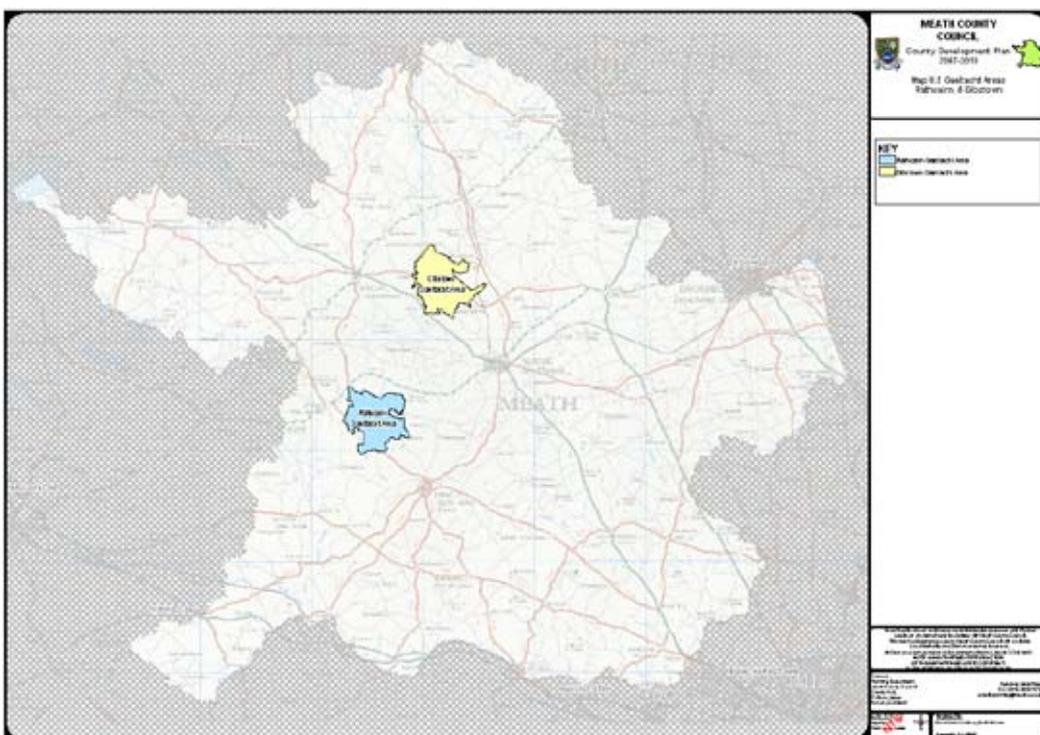
14 Appendix E - CLÁR Areas

All the DED areas that are classified as CLÁR are in the Kells ED and they include:

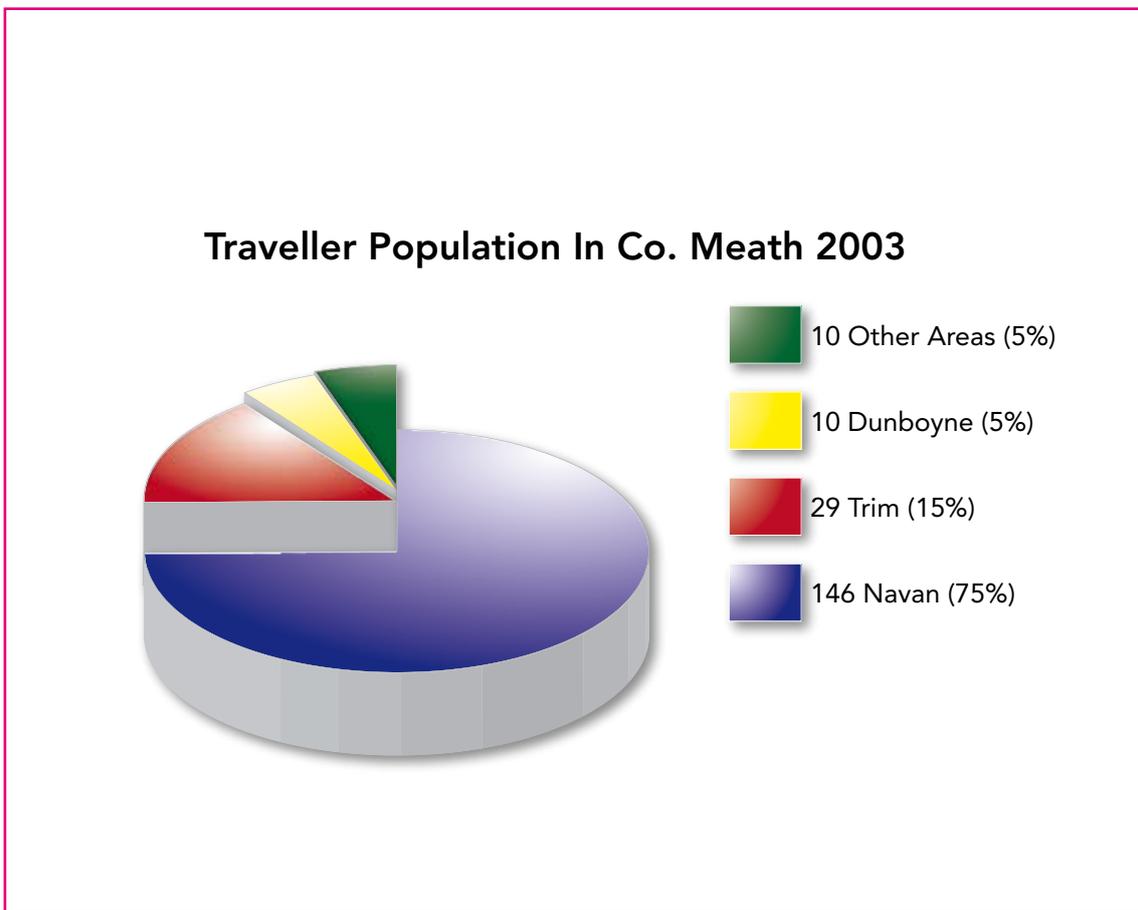
Moybolgue	Knocklough
Newcastle	Castlekeeran
Burry	Moylagh
Kilskeer	Stonefield
Killallon	Killeagh
Crosskeys	Ballinlough
Crossakeel	Trohanny

15 Appendix F - Map of Gaeltacht Areas

Gaeltacht areas of Rath Cairn and Baile Gibb



16 Appendix G - Traveller Population in Co. Meath based on Location (NTW Ltd)



17 Appendix H - Focus Group Feedback

The consultation process recognised and complemented a lot of the work Meath CCC had completed to date and identified a number of key issues to be addressed in the future. Here are some of the comments/suggestions/views expressed:

How is it for your service now?

- Displacement of services particularly in areas where services were long established and may be in need of an injection of capital to upgrade the existing building/premises was a worrying fact for many providers.
- The high cost of rates and water rates.
- New car seat regulations causing problems for childminders and parents.
- The need for more childminders particularly in rural areas and in the east of the county.

What is needed to develop your service?

- Greater access to funding to promote quality and upgrade older services which do not have the capacity to extend current provision.
- The development of a wrap around service particularly in rural areas was discussed; a service whereby the sessional provider would work alongside one or more childminders to provide full day service. This type of service may be more suitable in rural areas.
- Regular face-to-face contact with MCCC support and development team.
- Providers need access to support in order to address issues raised in HSE inspection reports.

Have you identified any childcare related training you wish to participate in?

- High cost of training.
- Access issues in relation to the location of training.
- Need for a complete calendar of training from all training providers operating in Meath County Childcare Committee.

What are your expectations of Meath County Childcare Committee to assist you maintain and enhance your service?

- Improve the flow of communication ensuring all areas are covered.
- Arrange regular meetings or workshops between the HSE Pre-School Inspection Team and providers to discuss issues/new regulations.
- Develop a system to ensure the MCCC Support Officer can work more closely in a support/advice role with existing providers.
- Centralise purchasing for providers.



DESIGN: LIA FAIL GRAPHIC DESIGN. PH: 046 902 5437

Meath County Childcare
Committee
No 1 New Bridge
Athlumney Road
Navan
Co.Meath

Telephone: 046-9073010
Fax: 046-9067221
Email:meathchildcare@eircom.net
www.mccc.ie

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