

Dr. Katherine Zappone, T.D.,
Minister for Children & Youth Affairs,
Department of Children and Youth Affairs,
Block 1, Miesian Plaza,
50-58 Baggot Street Lower,
Dublin 2. D02 XW14,

21st March, 2019

Our Ref: M61803

Re: Clondalkin Area Committee Meeting of South Dublin County Council
held on 20th March, 2019

Dear Minister Zappone,

I write on behalf of the Elected Members who at the Clondalkin Area Committee meeting held on 20th March, 2019, passed the following motions:

"That this Council supports the recommendations of the Family Resource Centre National Forum - Ireland's largest network of community childcare providers - following on from compliance visits from Pobal which are resulting in already stretched community childcare centres having to alter and even close down their valuable services as funding is taken back based on children's individual absences and attendance. This could have serious consequences for the childcare services of Quarryvale FRC and the other two FRCs with childcare services in our county: Ballyboden and St. Kevin's, Kilnamanagh. Childcare is an important link in the family support work carried out by FRCs, as is evidenced by the fact that three of the four FRCs in our county provide this service.

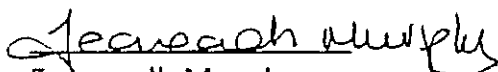
"We recommend the following five proposals to be urgently implemented in the subvention process if more of us are to avoid reductions of services or possible closure of our centres.

- 1. An one hour's grace period at the beginning and at the end of any part-time, full-time and sessional placement**
- 2. As is the case with primary schools, a minimum of 22 days absence allowed for every child; it is worth noting that childcare services usually have the children for more weeks than schools do.**
- 3. A change of the compliance month from November to January.**
- 4. Recompense for the many voluntary managed community childcare services that will have to close if the current compliance reports are allowed to stand.**
- 5. Department officials to work with community projects to help them review and identify their true unit costs to ensure future sustainability of our voluntary managed, not for profit, community childcare services.**

We commit to writing to the Minister for Children for consideration and the Manager of QFRC to express our support "

I would be obliged for your comments and response as soon as possible to enable me to revert to the Committee.

Yours sincerely,


Feoneadh Murphy,
Senior Staff Officer.



26 April 2019

Ms Feoneadh Murphy
Senior Staff officer
South Dublin County Council
County Hall
Tallaght
Dublin 24

Dear Ms Murphy

Thank you for your correspondence of 21st March 2019 on behalf of community childcare services in the South Dublin County Council area concerning the recent Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) compliance visits and subsequent outcome for community services.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs funds a number of Early Learning and Care and School Age childcare programmes. Given the large amount of public money that is used in funding these programmes, there needs to be an appropriate level of oversight and accountability. We believe that the Department's approach to compliance and supporting services strikes the necessary and appropriate balance.

A high level of compliance with the rules of the various childcare programmes is vital to maintaining existing investment as well as ensuring future investment. It is a requirement that services operating the Early Learning and Care and School Age childcare programmes funded by the Department must be compliant with the 'Rules for DCYA childcare funding programmes', the most recent of which was published on 9th August 2018. Compliance with these rules is overseen by Pobal on behalf of the Department. Subsidies for the Early Learning and Care and School Age childcare programmes are paid based on attendance (not enrolment). This is a vital governance component of the funding for which the Department is responsible.

The Department appreciates that community childcare settings provide a valuable service to children and families across the country and that they may face a variety of challenges to their sustainability. However, supports are available to them to bring their service onto a more sustainable footing, whilst maintaining the necessary level of compliance with scheme rules.

The Department oversees an integrated Case Management system operated by Pobal through which a dedicated team assess services facing challenges. This Case Management service provides non-financial assistance or support in the first



instance. Financial supports are also available for community services facing certain challenges which may also be accessed through Case Management following a financial assessment.

With regard to the specific recommendations included in your letter, many of these have already been incorporated in the design of the new National Childcare Scheme (NCS) which will replace the targeted schemes beginning towards the end of this year. The snapshot window will no longer exist and the NCS contains reasonable flexibility around start and finish time and non-attendance. The case management system, mentioned already, enables Pobal, on behalf of the Department, to work with services to identify their costs and to assist them transition onto a sustainable footing. A finite sustainability fund is available for services which require interim support.

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) will not operate for the 2019/2020 programme cycle. Services will have the option to register children on the Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) scheme which carries the same level of subvention as CCS.

Results from Pobal compliance visits for the first part of the programme year 2018/2019 show serious issues in relation to non-compliance which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Improving compliance is essential to enable the Department to continue to seek much needed additional investment in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare. It is encouraging that most services have engaged constructively with the process so far. Services should be urged to contact Pobal or their local City / County Childcare Committee (CCC) to enquire about the supports available to them.

If a service has queries in relation to the details of a compliance visit, they should be encouraged to contact Pobal directly at cvisit@pobal.ie. If they have concerns about the sustainability of their service, they should contact their local CCC or Pobal to enquire about the Case Management process.

I hope this response is helpful in providing clarification. However, if you have any further questions, please let me know.

Yours sincerely


Lisa Hughes
Private Secretary to Minister Katherine Zappone TD.

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