



LONGFORD COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE

Strategic Plan

2007 – 2010

Funded by the Irish Government under the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010



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under the National Development Plan 2000-2006



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2.0 Summary of the Review of Strategic Plan 2002-2006

During the consultation phase for the Strategic Plan 2007-2010, a review was undertaken of the previous Strategic Plan 2001-2006. The review focused primarily on the following:

- Strategic objectives and aims for 2001-2006, i.e.:
 - Equality of access
 - Support quality improvement for all childcare services
 - Support and develop training
 - Support and develop afterschools service
 - Support and develop full day care
 - Childminding
 - Addressing the needs of children in rural areas
 - Updating information on service provision
 - Future consultation
 - Monitoring and evaluation

- Implementation of the objectives, through discussions with the LCCC, lead agencies, groups, representatives and providers

- Future considerations for new objectives, based upon the following:
 - Growth in the childcare sector in the County since 2001, including number and range of childcare services, both community-based and private
 - Social and Economic developments in the County since 2001, including, for example, economic developments, population changes, infrastructure, etc.
 - Changes in the profile of childcare within the County since 2001

A brief summary of the review of the Strategic Plan 2001-2006 is provided in Appendix I of this document.

3.0 Executive Summary

3.1 Introduction

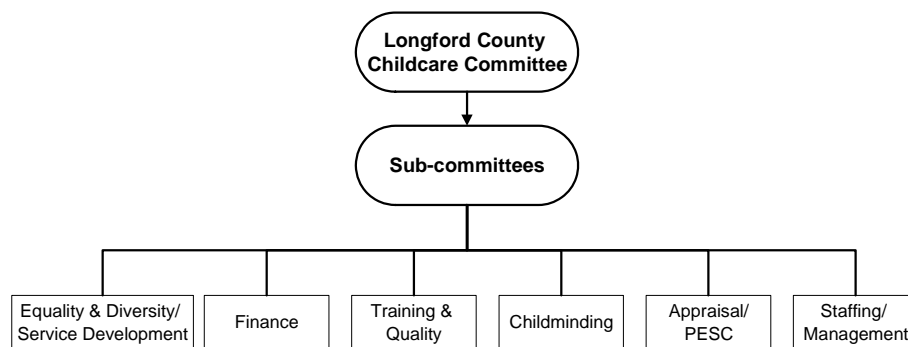
Longford County Childcare Committee (LCCC), having committed itself to the National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP), has undertaken the development of a Strategic Plan for the period 2007-2010. This Plan reflects the shared commitment of LCCC members to increasing the provision of quality childcare services in the County based on the criteria of the NCIP and an analysis of local need.

3.2 Longford County Childcare Committee

Established in 2002, the LCCC is a partnership of the statutory, voluntary, community, and private sectors, including parents, working together for the enhancement of childcare in the County and is comprised of representatives of these sectors including:

- ❑ Parents
- ❑ ICTU
- ❑ FAS
- ❑ Longford County Council
- ❑ Farming Pillar
- ❑ Community Service Providers
- ❑ Longford Community Fora
- ❑ Private Providers
- ❑ Pobal
- ❑ Health Service Executive
- ❑ Department of Social & Family Affairs
- ❑ County Longford VEC
- ❑ Longford Community Resources Ltd.
- ❑ National Voluntary Childcare Organisations
- ❑ IBEC/Longford Chamber of Commerce
- ❑ Department of Education and Science
- ❑ Longford County Enterprise Board

The current structure of the LCCC is as outlined in the following chart:



3.3 Strategic Planning Process

The development of this Longford County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan 2007-2010 was undertaken in three key stages:

- Strategic Mapping Exercise
- Consultation and Strategic Planning with Stakeholders
- Development of Strategic Aims and Objectives

3.4 Strategic Mapping Exercise

The Strategic Mapping Exercise, undertaken in 2006 identified 35 pre-school childcare facilities and 22 voluntary notified childminders located in the County; providing approximately 1,000 childcare places to meet local needs. The Mapping Exercise, which audited these existing childcare services, highlights the following points:

- 33% of non-childminder pre-school services are privately owned
- Half of these services are located in or adjacent to Longford Town
- Only a third offer a full day childcare service

The Mapping Exercise's review of childcare services included an analysis of projected future growth of the County. From this review, gaps in the current provision of childcare services and areas of future childcare need in the County were able to be identified.

Location	Existing Gap	Future Need
Edgeworthstown	Yes	Yes
Drumlisk	Yes	Yes
Rathcline (Lanesborough)	Yes	Possibly Yes
Ardagh East or West	Yes	Yes
Ballinamuck East or West	Yes	Yes
Longford Rural	Yes	Yes
Coolamber	Yes	Yes
Cashel West	Yes	Yes
Cloondragh / Caldragh / Cloonee	No	Possibly Yes
Kilcommock	No	Possibly Yes
Granard Urban	No	Possibly Yes
Moyne	Yes	Yes
Killoe	Yes	Possibly Yes

3.5 Strategic Planning

The Strategic Planning process commenced in late 2006 and was comprised of extensive one-to-one and group consultation with stakeholders in the childcare sector in County Longford. Those consulted included representatives of the following sectors:

- ❑ LCCC and sub-committee members, specifically representatives of agencies and groups represented on the LCCC, including, for example:
 - HSE Dublin-Mid Leinster
 - Longford County Enterprise Board
 - Longford Community Resources Limited
 - Longford Women's Centre
 - Parent for Parent Support Group
 - Parent Representative
- ❑ LCCC management team and staff members
- ❑ Community and voluntary childcare service providers
- ❑ Private childcare service providers
- ❑ Childminders

The purpose of consultation was to receive feedback from stakeholders in relation to the childcare sector in Longford, the effectiveness of the LCCC, and to identify areas for future development. The results of this consultative process, and the Mapping Exercise, were reviewed and analysed by the members of the LCCC as part of the Strategic Planning process and from this the Committee was able to identify Strategic Aims and Objectives for the period 2007-2010.

3.6 Summary of Needs and Priorities

As a result of the Strategic Planning process, the LCCC has established Strategic Objectives for the period 2007-2010 that are in keeping with the aims and objectives of the NCIP. These Strategic Objectives, which are detailed in the main body of this Plan, are in keeping with the LCCC's four Strategic Aims, as follows:

- ❑ Improve the Quality of Childcare
- ❑ Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places
- ❑ Support Families to Break to Cycle of Poverty
- ❑ Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare

3.7 Evaluation and Monitoring

To ensure success in delivering the Strategic Plan 2007-2010, the LCCC will continuously monitor and review its implementation in conjunction with partnering bodies and stakeholders. The LCCC will specifically link future actions directly to the objectives set forth in the Strategic Plan and ensure that the plans and strategies of its partners are also directly linked where childcare is highlighted. Finally, the LCCC will revise and update the Mapping Exercise and the Strategic Plan itself where needed to reflect any changes impacting upon either document, or the workings of the Committee.

4.0 Details of the Committee

4.1 Background and Formation

4.1.1 Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP)

Under the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform's Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) the primary focus of County Childcare Committees was the increasing of the supply and quality of childcare facilities in the County. Specifically, the EOCP called for each County to:

- Develop a co-ordinated approach to childcare provision
- Develop a local childcare information strategy
- Develop quality statements and targets for the county
- Identify local 'black spots' in the provision of childcare and put forward proposals for alleviating the position
- Promote the establishment of new childcare facilities without displacing existing services
- Identify priority objectives for the county

One of the 33 committees established under the EOCP, Longford County Childcare Committee is the body responsible for the coordinated delivery of quality childcare within County Longford.

4.1.2 National Children's Strategy

Published in 2000 following extensive consultation with children and those involved in providing care and support for young people, the Strategy is the Government's ten year plan for improving the lives of all children, especially those with needs or who experience disadvantage. The Strategy envisages:

An Ireland where children are respected as young citizens with a valued contribution to make and a voice of their own; where all children are cherished and supported by family and the wider society; where they enjoy a fulfilling childhood and realise their potential.

The three National Goals of the Strategy are:

- Children will have a voice in matters which affect them and their views will be given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity.
- Children's lives will be better understood; their lives will be benefit from evaluation, research and information on their needs, rights and the effectiveness of services.
- Children will receive quality supports and services to promote all aspects of their development

4.1.3 Office of the Minister for Children (OMC)

Established in late 2005, the Office of the Minister for Children (OMC) has as a remit for harmonising policy issues that affect children in areas including early childhood care and education. The OMC's Childcare Directorate is responsible for implementing the National Childcare Strategy 2006 - 2010, which aims to further develop childcare infrastructure to meet the needs of children and their parents for quality childcare. The Directorate also manages the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 - 2006 and the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 - 2010 in conjunction with POBAL.

4.1.3.1 Tackling Educational Disadvantage

As part of the National Childcare Strategy, the Department of Education and Science (DES) will work with the OMC in delivering the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) social inclusion programme, which aims to add value to existing childcare programmes to ensure that the care and education of children are delivered in an integrated manner.

4.1.4 National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP)¹

The Minister for Finance announced the Government's National Childcare Investment Programme 2006 - 2010 in early December 2005. Building upon the EOCP, the new programme, for which €575 million has been allocated including €358 million for capital investment, will be administered by the OMC and incorporates the following key objectives:

- Increasing the supply and improvement of early childhood care and education services, including full day, part-time and sessional childcare, childminding and school age childcare.
- Supporting the coordinated delivery of child-centered care.
- Supporting the breaking of poverty and disadvantage encountered by families.

Specific targets for the NCIP include the following:

- The creation of 50,000 new childcare places of which:
 - 22,000 places will be in the private sector
 - 28,000 places in the community and voluntary sector
 - 20% of new places will be for children 3-4 years of age and provide early childhood care and an education focus
 - 10% will be for children of school going age outside of usual school times
- 9,200 additional childcare workers
- Increase the number of trained childcare personnel by 17,000

Key to the implementation of the NCIP is the role played by county-based Childcare Committees. Under the NCIP, Childcare Committees are afforded increased responsibility for the further development of quality childcare provision during the period 2006 - 2010.

This Plan provides the framework for the implementation of the NCIP within County Longford by the promoter, Longford County Childcare Committee through its Strategic Plan 2007-2010.

¹ NCIP 2006-2010, Scope and Outline, January 2006.

4.1.5 Role of childcare and child development in tackling social exclusion

All children and parents have a right to quality childcare and education, and this is particularly important for children and families experiencing social exclusion. Social exclusion places many stresses on families, and community childcare is only one component in alleviating this stress, while simultaneously making long-term investments in the development of children, families and communities. It is also now acknowledged that parental circumstances should not be the cause of any child being denied access to key developmental opportunities.²

In areas experiencing social exclusion, there has been to date an over-reliance on Community Employment and other Active Labour Market Schemes that are not always the most appropriate model for providing quality childcare in the long term.³ It is also acknowledged that some children require more support than others⁴, while others can have specific additional childcare requirements, as their primary needs may not be met fully in the home. New challenges also exist in meeting the needs of children and families in a more diverse society.

Research shows that high quality childcare programmes make lasting differences to children and families, and particularly those at risk. In disadvantaged areas, however, childcare needs to play an additional role. In order to tackle social exclusion, childcare needs to be a more general support, closely integrated with other social services.

In considering the development of the next Local Development Social Inclusion Programme (LDSIP), it is vital to accept that the social inclusion objectives cannot be met without a holistic approach to child wellbeing, development, education and family support.

² page xx & xxiii, NESR Report 113, The Developmental Welfare State, 2005

³ The PLANET Children's policy group has addressed this issue in their paper "Community Childcare Services in Disadvantaged Areas - Current Review & Future Recommendations", 2004

⁴ NESR Report 113, The Developmental Welfare State, May 2005

4.2 Ethos

4.2.1 Mission Statement

The LCCC's mission statement, which will guide the development and implementation of its strategic objectives has been provided by POBAL, and is as follows:

To facilitate childcare providers to develop appropriate childcare services which respond to and cater for the childcare needs of local parents and their children and meets the objectives of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010; and to continue to support and work with childcare providers, parents and other key stakeholders at local level.

4.2.2 Vision Statement

The following statement, developed by the members of LCCC, provides a vision of what the LCCC will achieve through the implementation of its Strategic Plan 2007-2010.

The Longford County Childcare Committee will support the development of high quality childcare provision in the county that is appropriately resourced to:

- Respond to the real needs of children and families*
- Provide equality of access to all children in the County*
- Work in partnership with parents*
- Have trained staff who are recognised and rewarded as childcare professionals*
- Reflect best practice as informed by internationally recognised models of care and education for children*
- Respond to the strategic objectives of the Longford County Childcare Strategic Plan*

4.3 **Membership and Structure**

Established in 2002, the LCCC is a partnership of statutory, voluntary, community, and private sectors, including parents, working together for the enhancement of childcare in the County. As a partnership, the LCCC is comprised of the following members:

Sector	Name
Parents Representative	Patricia Harrison - Chairperson
Trade Unions	Richard McGhee
FÁS	Soinbhe Hoare
Longford County Development Board	Laura Heneghan
Farming Pillar	Gertie Egan
Community Service Providers	Alice Connell Peggy Kiernan
Longford Community & Voluntary Forum	Edel Kelly and Connie Gerety - Secretary
Private Providers	Brenda McGuinness
Longford County Enterprise Board	Michael Nevin
Health Service Executive	Anne Gerety - Assistant Chairperson
Department of Social & Family Affairs	Declan Neville
County Longford VEC	Josephine O'Donnell
Longford Community Resources Ltd. ⁵ (LCRL)	Monica O'Malley
National Voluntary Childcare Organisation	Ann Marie Smith Margaret Connell
IBEC/Longford Chamber of Commerce	Seamus Butler - Treasurer
Department of Education and Science	Noeleen Rooney
POBAL Representative	Orla McEntee

⁵ Longford Community Resources Ltd. is the lead Partnership Company in the County.

4.3.1 Committee Structure

The structure of the LCCC is outlined in the chart below.

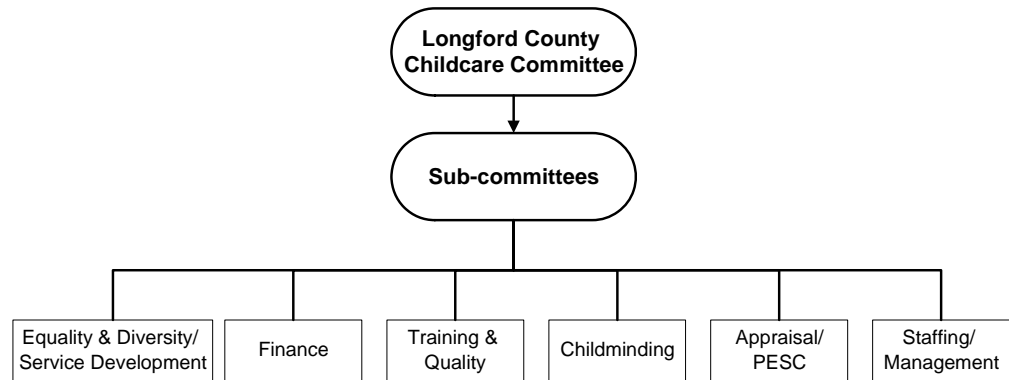


Figure 1 Committee Structure

The Committee is responsible for the overall operation of the company and for establishing policy guidelines. However, in order to facilitate prompt, knowledgeable and effective running of the Committee, sub-committees have been formed to undertake research, monitoring and reporting functions on behalf of the wider Committee. Membership of sub-committees will be decided by the Committee either by nominating members, or by agreeing proposals from substructures.

Sub-committees comprise of members from the LCCC and from external organisations, in order to pool knowledge and resources, and to promote access and joint work with external agencies. The nature of the substructures reflects the Committee's priorities and needs for any current period and, as with these needs, will develop and change over time.

Each Sub-committee has been provided with a terms of reference, which includes the provision that they should aim to meet on a monthly basis.

4.3.2 Sub-committees

4.3.2.1 Finance

The role of the Finance sub-group is to agree budget expenditure, monitor and adjust budget as necessary. This sub-group will ensure that correct systems are implemented in relation to proper record keeping, financial control and audit procedures. It is comprised of the following representatives:

- Parents' representative
- Self-employed providers
- Department of Social and Family Affairs
- Longford County Enterprise Board
- IBEC/Chamber of Commerce

4.3.2.2 Equality and Diversity

The role of the Equality and Diversity sub-group is to ensure that the needs of Traveller groups, minority ethnic groups and children with special/additional needs/requirements are included in the Committee's plans. This will include the examination of the range of service requirements for the provision of high quality, affordable and accessible childcare in Co Longford. This group will formulate and implement strategies to enable the effective delivery of same. It includes the following representatives:

- Refugee/Asylum seekers
- Rapid co-ordinator
- LCRL
- Parent for Parent
- Longford Traveller Movement
- HSE Early Intervention
- VEC
- St. Christopher's
- Self-employed providers

4.3.2.3 Childminding

The childminding sub-committee aims to progress actions relating to childminding initiatives. The representatives on the sub-committee include the following:

- Childminder Advisory Officer
- Parents' representative
- Childminders' representative

4.3.2.4 Training & Quality

The role of the Training & Quality sub-group is to ascertain the training needs of providers across the county and to support a programme of locally based, flexible accessible training. It is comprised of the following representatives:

- Parents' representative
- HSE Training officer
- Childminder Advisory Officer
- VEC
- Longford Women's Link

4.3.2.5 Management/ Staffing

The role of the Management/Staffing sub-group is the recruitment of staff, drawing up of guidelines, policies and procedures including health, safety and welfare, contracts of employment and grievance procedures. The representatives on the sub-committee are as follows:

- Self-employed providers
- Longford CDB
- Department of Education and Science
- VEC
- LCRL

4.3.2.6 Project Evaluation Sub-Committee (PESC)

In accordance with the requirements of the NCIP, the LCCC has established a Project Evaluation Sub-Committee (PESC) to evaluate and make recommendations regarding all applications for childcare funding under the new programme. The sub-committee is responsible for evaluating all NCIP applications from County Longford and the submission of recommended applications to the OMB/ POBAL. In assessing applications, the PESC will consider the identified childcare needs of the County in line with the LCCC's Strategic Objectives for the period of the NCIP.

Membership of the PESC includes local representatives of the following bodies:

- HSE - Pre-school Inspection
- LCRL
- IBEC/Chamber of Commerce
- NVCO's
- Longford CDB
- Longford CEB
- POBAL

Representatives of POBAL and the LCCC attend the PESC meetings to provide technical support.

4.3.3 Operational Guidelines

All executive, administrative and delivery functions are being carried out by the LCCC in accordance and co-operation with the CCC handbook and operational guidelines provided by POBAL. These include formal mechanisms for keeping boards fully and appropriately informed.

4.3.4 Submissions to POBAL

All documentation required by POBAL is submitted by LCCC in an accurate and timely fashion, including:

- Performance monitoring documentation every six months
- Financial returns on a quarterly basis
- Annual progress reports yearly

4.3.4.1 Financial Practice

The LCCC adheres to financial best practice and its financial procedures provide an adequate level of financial control, according to a June 2006 verification visit by POBAL. Recommended actions highlighted by this visit have been implemented by the LCCC.

4.3.5 Legal Structure

LCCC is a company limited by guarantee. The Memorandum and Articles of Association for the LCCC state that the Directors may delegate any of their powers to committees. This provides the necessary authority to the Directors to establish the Committee and Sub-committee. The Committee and Sub-committee operate solely within the Terms of Reference provided by them, as authorised by the Directors.

4.3.5.1 Review of Structure

To coincide with the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2001-2010 under the NCIP, the LCCC will review its current structure. This will include the following:

- Preparation of new Memorandum and Articles of Association to reflect new role of LCCC and, in particular, clarify membership (Directors) of the Company
- Preparation of detailed Terms of Reference for the Committee and all sub-committees, to include:
 - Roles and remit

- Tasks
- Membership
- To ensure confidentiality and proper procedure under the NCIP, the LCCC will adopt, within the Terms of References, a policy to clarify representation among the members, e.g. identify specific representatives from each agency/group and identify the limited circumstances in which a substitute representative may be present at meetings.

4.3.6 Customer Charter

Both a Customer Charter and a complaints procedure are currently being developed by the LCCC.

4.4 LCCC Staff

4.4.1 Positions and Responsibilities

Staff positions and responsibilities within the LCCC are outlined briefly below:

Post	Responsibilities
Manager	Plan and manage all activities of the offices and implement the Strategic Plan.
Administrator/Information Officer	Carry out all office administration.
Development Worker (1)	Support all existing and developing childcare providers in the County.
Development Worker (2)	Support all existing and developing childcare providers in the County.

4.4.2 Personnel Practices

4.4.2.1 Policies and Procedures

A brief summary of the personnel policies and procedures operating within the LCCC include:

- An employee handbook is being developed which will support adherence to good employment practice with respect to areas such as recruitment, induction, leave, grievance and disciplinary procedures. All employees will be presented with the handbook have access to it at all times.
- All employees have a contract of employment, formal job description and personnel file, all of which are stored securely in the Manager's office.
- The contract of employment and formal job description includes a commitment to flexibility in relation to working arrangements and co-operation with, and participations in, work and organisational evolution and change.

4.4.2.2 Performance Management

The performance management system in operation within LCCC can be described as follows:

- All actions identified in the Annual Action Plan are assigned to individual LCCC staff.
- Each member of staff is responsible for implementing and reporting on the progress of their assigned actions. All reports and administrative documents relating to the actions are recorded and stored in two formats:
 - Hard copies of all documents relevant to reporting procedures are kept in a file dedicated solely to each action
 - Electronic copies of all reporting documents are submitted to the manager on a regular basis
- A Support and Supervision meeting, attended by the Manager and all staff, is held every month.

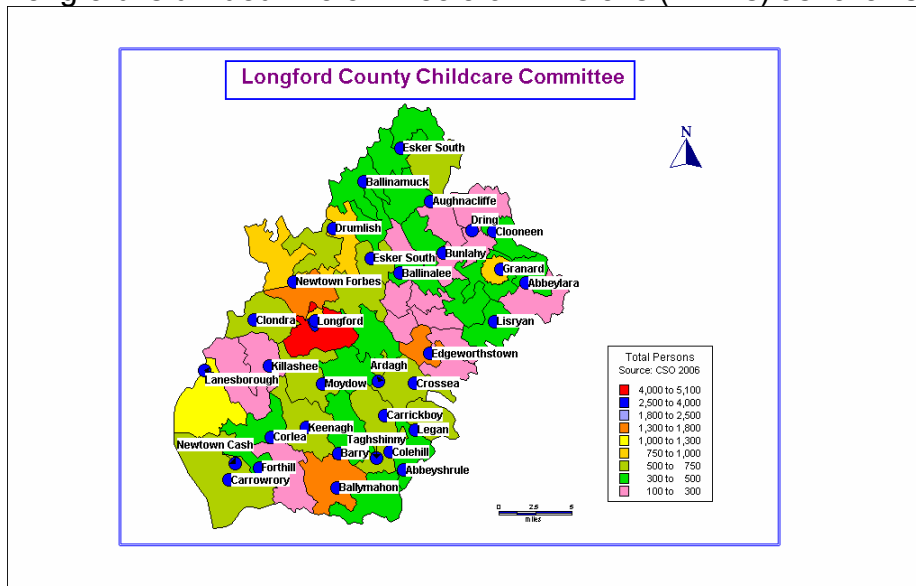
- A work report, providing a detailed description of the progress of relevant actions, is provided by each member of staff at the Support and Supervision meeting.

5.0 Details of the Area – County Longford

Centrally situated in the Midlands Region of the island, which also incorporates Counties Laois, Offaly and Westmeath, Longford is a primarily low-lying area of 1,091km² (421 square miles) approximately two-thirds of which is farmland. Located 120km from Dublin, on the main route to the Northwest region, the County is the smallest in Ireland and consists of five main towns; Granard, Ballymahon, Edgeworthstown, Lanesborough, and the largest, Longford Town.

5.1 Demographic Profile

In 2006, the Longford area reported a population of 34,391⁶ persons as being then resident in the County. This total reflected a 10.7% increase in population for the period 2002-2006,⁷ a figure more than the 8.1% increase experienced by the State as a whole during this period, but slightly lower than that for the entire Midlands Region, 11.5%. County Longford is divided into 54 Electoral Divisions (DED's) as follows:⁸



Map 1 Total population in County, with Town names⁹

⁶ Central Statistics Office, Census of Population, 2006.

⁷ The total population increase for Longford during the ten-year period 1996-2006 was 14% and the State total for this period was 17%.

⁸ All of the maps have been incorporated from the Tipperary Institute's, *Childcare Facilities in County Longford Current Provision and Future Needs*, November 2006.

⁹ Tipperary Institute, *Childcare Facilities in County Longford Current Provision and Future Needs*, November 2006, pg.88.

As depicted in Map 1, the largest concentration of people living in the County can be found in and around Longford Town, an area that has experienced a considerable increase in population in recent years.

5.2 Changes in Population

Since the last Census, the population of Longford Town and its environs has grown by 17%, as shown in the table below.

Town	2002	2006	% change
Longford Town/ Environs	7,557	8,836	17
Edgeworthstown	726	1,221	68
Lanesborough/Ballyleague	943	1,112	18
Ballymahon	827	963	16
Granard	1,013	933	-8
Newtownforbes	561	668	19
Drumlish	277	429	55

Table 1 Changes in Town Populations, 2002-2006¹⁰

Somewhat similar increases have been experienced in many other towns throughout the County with the notable exceptions of Granard, which experienced an 8% decrease in local population, and, most significantly Edgeworthstown, which grew by 68% to 1,221 inhabitants.

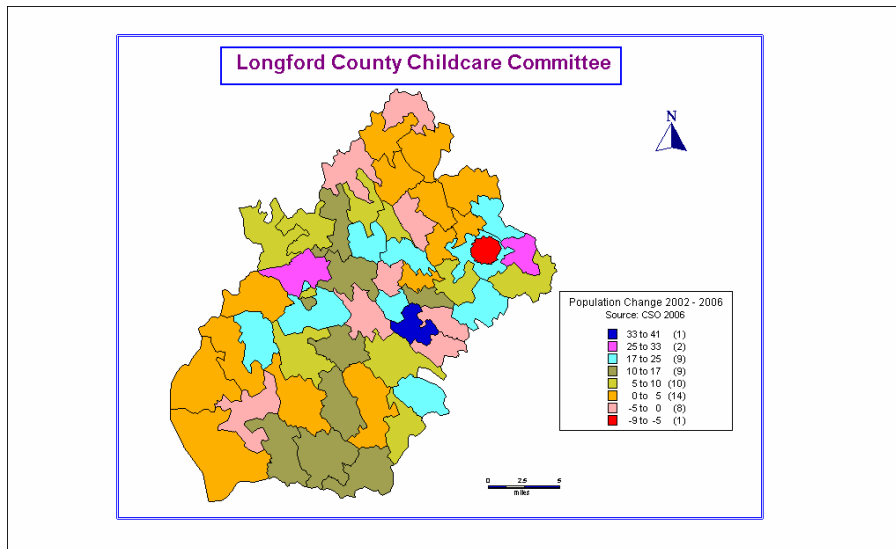
DED	2002	2006	% change
Edgeworthstown	1,098	1,544	41
Caldragh	1,269	1,596	26
Coolamber	263	321	22
Longford Rural	4,317	5,053	17
Ballymahon	1,548	1,802	16.5
Drumlish	828	935	13
Ardagh East/ West	926	1,007	9
Killoe	284	302	6.5
Kilcommock	581	595	2.5
Cashel West	538	547	2
Rathcline (Lanesborough)	1,268	1,289	1.7
Ballinamuck East/ West	923	915	-1
Moyne	321	305	-5
Granard Urban	1,013	933	-8

Table 2 Changes in DED Population, 2002-2006¹¹

¹⁰ Central Statistics Office, Census of Population, 2006.

¹¹ Ibid.

As shown in the table above, while most of the County's DED's have experienced increases in population during the period 2002-2006, some have not and the percentage of this change varies significantly from one DED to another.



Map 2 Percentage change in population 2002-2006¹²

Map 2, shown above, depicts the changes in DED populations for County Longford between the 2002 and 2006 Censuses. It highlights specifically the continuing growth of Longford Town and its environs as well as the more dramatic increase experienced in the Edgeworthstown area. It also portrays the growth that has occurred in many of the more rural areas of the County such as the areas surrounding Granard, though neither town nor the DED in which it is located experienced any increase in population.

5.3 Children Under 15 Years of Age

The 2006 Census also reports that there were 2,611 children 4 years of age or younger living in the County at the time. In total, 7,463, or 22% of the County's total population, were aged 14 years or younger¹³ which is in keeping with the State average of 20% for this age group. This, as presented in the following table, represents an increase of 8% between the 2002 and 2006 Censuses in the number of children in the County under the age of 15 years.

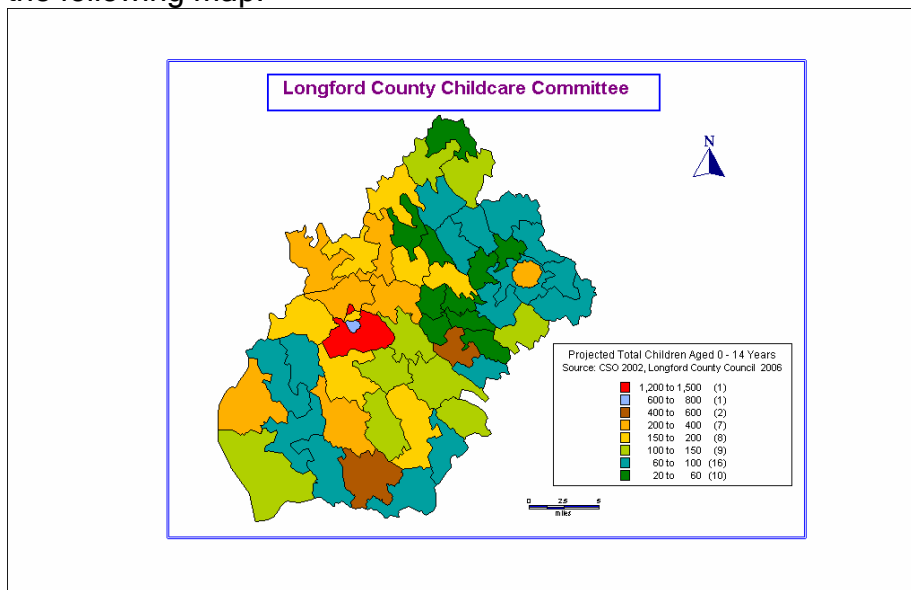
¹² Ibid., pg. 89.

¹³ Central Statistics Office, Census of Population, 2006.

Age in Years	0-4 yrs	5-9 yrs	10-14 yrs	Total	Change
Census 2006	2,611	2,448	2,404	7,463	8%
Census 2002	2,203	2,217	2,475	6,895	

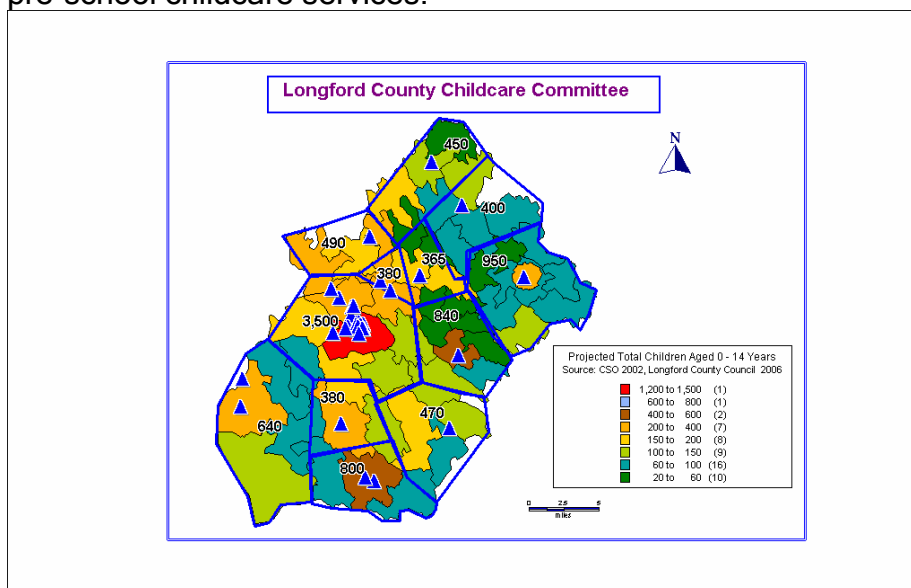
Table 3 Change in Number of Children Under 15 Years¹⁴

Although statistics regarding the breakdown of ages by DED have yet to be published by the CSO, the Mapping Exercise provides the projected numbers of children aged 0-14 years for each DED in the County based upon 2002 CSO figures. This information is presented in the following map.



Map 3 Projected total children aged 10-14 years

Based upon the above, the following provides an overview of the projected population of 0-14 year olds combined with the location of pre-school childcare services.



Map 4 Projected total children 0-14 years and existing childcare services in the County

¹⁴

Ibid.

5.4 Live Register

According to the CSO¹⁵, the Department of Social and Family Affairs reported 2,021 persons as being on the Live Register for Longford in March of 2007. This figure represents recipients, less than 65 years of age, of Jobseekers Allowance and Jobseekers Benefit and reflects a - 1% decrease from the March 2006 figure for the County.

5.5 Lone Parent Families

In 2002, there were 8,314¹⁶ total one parent families living in the Midland region of which 1,291, or 16% of this total, were reported as living in Longford. In its most recent Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) for Childcare¹⁷, the CSO reported that there were 6,300 lone parent families in Midland region with preschool and/ or primary school childcare needs in 2005.

The QNHS further states that approximately 1,100 of lone parent families in the region rely upon 'non parental childcare'¹⁸ for their preschool childcare needs with a similar number, 1,100, relying upon 'non parental childcare' for primary school childcare needs as well.

Using this CSO provided data on lone parents in the region, and the percentage for County Longford given above, it is possible to estimate the number of lone parent families in Longford with childcare needs as being 1,008, or 16% of the 6,300 lone parent families in the region. Furthermore, using this same measure, the number of lone parent families in Longford relying upon 'non parental childcare' for their preschool childcare needs can be estimated at 176. Similarly, the approximate number for those relying upon 'non parental childcare' for their primary school childcare needs is also 176 families.

¹⁵ Central Statistics Office, Live Register March 2007.

¹⁶ Central Statistics Office, Census of Population, 2002.

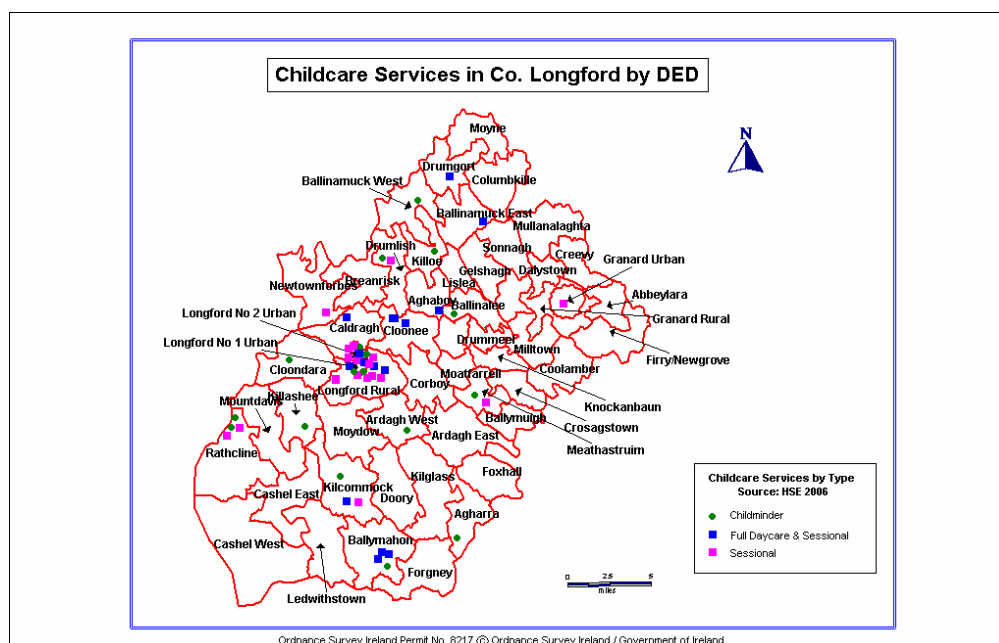
¹⁷ Central Statistics Office, *Quarterly National Household Survey Childcare, Quarter 1, 2005* (31 May 2006).

¹⁸ In this instance, 'non-parental' includes to paid/ unpaid relatives, paid carers, crèches/ Montessori, etc.

5.6 RAPID AND CLÁR

Longford Town has been designated a RAPID Area and much of the rest of the County is included in the CLÁR programme.

5.7 Description of Provision and Supply



Map 5 Childcare Services in Co. Longford, by DED

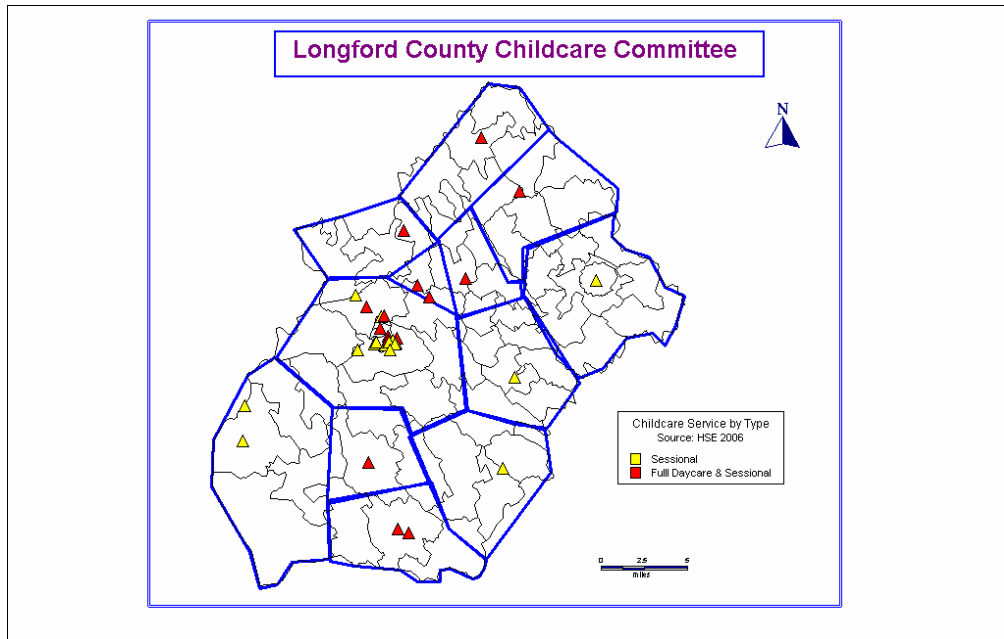
There are 35 pre-school childcare facilities and 22 voluntary notified childminders in County Longford.

A total of 45 childcare services responded to the survey conducted by the Tipperary Institute in 2006 as part of the LCCC's Strategic Mapping Exercise (10 community, 17 private and 18 childminders.) This represents 74% of the total number of childcare services in the County. These 45 services provide a total of 948 childcare places for the County with approximately 942 children attending at the time the survey was conducted. Also, the majority of non-childminder pre-school services in the County, 63%, are privately owned.

In 2002, there were 38¹⁹ providers in the County of which 12²⁰ only were offering full-day care (FDC) services for a total of 157 children. Five of those providers offering FDC were located in Longford Town

¹⁹ 'LCCC Strategic Plan 2002-2006', p.31.
²⁰ Ibid, p.35.

where the majority of childcare services, 36%, and childcare places, 30%, are located. By 2006, as depicted in Map 3 below, 13²¹ providers responding to the Mapping Exercise survey stated that they offered FDC and four of these were in Longford Town. It should also be noted that not one respondent stated that they provided a drop-in service.



Map 6 Childcare services by type²²

²¹ 'Childcare Facilities in County Longford Current Provision and Future Needs', p. 43.
²² Ibid., pg. 95.

6.0 Analysis of needs

A detailed analysis of the information provided in summarised form below is available in Appendix II of this document.

6.1 Analysis of Provision and Supply

Tipperary Institute, the organisation which conducted the Mapping Exercise, considered a range of demographic factors in order to identify existing gaps in childcare provision in County Longford. From this research they were able to point to ten specific DED's in the County that they considered to be lacking in adequate childcare in 2006. The following information is drawn from the final report provided to the LCCC.

This section will examine demographic and socio-economic data in relation to Longford County, both at present (2002 / 2006 Census) and in the near future, to determine whether the existing gaps identified in the sections above will equate to future needs of new childcare facilities.

The socio-economic data of particular interest and importance to this analysis is the data presented in the section of the Strategic Mapping report on 'Planning and Future Developments' in the county, in which those childcare facility developments that have been given planning permission by Longford County Council since 2001 are listed. Furthermore, based on projections of approximate increases in multiple residential dwellings by DED, forecasts of the growth in population of those aged 0-14 years have been developed and presented in the table below.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
001 Longford No. 1 Urban	2,841	3,129	593	1,079	5	0-5%	600 to 800	No ²³	5 new facilities being developed, sufficient capacity to serve town and surrounding areas.
002 Longford No. 2 Urban	711	755	141	239	-	0-5%	150 to 200	No	Use services in Longford Town.
003 Agharra	331	359	70	115	1	10-20%	60 to 100	No	No gap at present and 1 new facility being developed.
004 Ballymahon	1,548	1,797	313	545	3	30-45%	400 to 600	No	Sufficient new facilities being developed to cater for DED & surrounding areas.
005 Cashel East	324	313	63	108	-	0-5%	60 to 100	Possibly Not	No future need IF new facility developed in Cashel West
006 Cashel West	538	549	112	194	-	0-5%	100 to 150	Yes	Existing gap and no future plans for any facilities.
007 Doory	358	411	87	117	-	0-5%	100 to 150	No	Use existing & new services in Ballymahon.
008 Forgney	393	445	85	133	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Use existing & new services in Ballymahon.

²³ Where the term “No” is used in Future Need, it refers to the fact that existing and potential services should meet the current need. However, this is dependant on current planning permissions being implemented and the demand remaining the same. If the planning permissions are not implemented or demand increases, the Future Need may become a “Yes.” For this reason, the LCCC intend to liaise regularly with the Longford County Council to keep informed of possible changes in number and implementation of planning permissions for childcare services in the County.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years		Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission					
009 Foxhall	431	510	95	149	-	20-30%	100 to 150		No	Use existing childminder & 1 new service in Agharra (Legan).
010 Kilcommock	581	591	147	197	1	45-55%	200 to 400		Possibly Yes	Has enough existing facilities, but also serves surrounding area. Future plan for 1 new service. This facility may not be sufficient to cater for projected increase in children aged 0-14 years.
011 Kilglass	588	615	135	196	-	10-20%	150 to 200		No	Can use new & existing services in Legan, Ballymahon & Kenagh.
012 Ledwithstown	258	285	54	86	-	0-5%	60 to 100		No	Can use new & existing services in Ballymahon & Kenagh.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
013 Abbeylara	245	309	61	86	-	30-4%	60 to 100	No	Can use existing facility in Granard urban. Although large % of increase in dwellings, only up to 100 extra children aged 0-14 years. These should be able to be accommodated in Granard town.
014 Ballinalee	376	453	88	129	1	55-70%	150 to 200	No	Caters for surrounding areas too. 1 new facility being developed. This should cater for future needs, as current capacity is fully used.
015 Ballymuigh	255	247	58	88	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Can use services in Edgeworthstown, but need more in Edgeworthstown to cater for surrounding areas into the future.
016 Bunlahy	167	175	34	50	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Can use new & existing facilities in Ballinalee.
017 Columbkille	596	603	121	190	-	0-5%	100 to 150	No	Can use new & existing facilities in Moyne & Sonnagh (capacity at maximum currently).

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
018 Coolamber	263	323	86	73	-	0-5%	100 to 150	Yes	No new facility being developed here and existing gap in area.
019 Creevy	289	352	63	106	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Can use facilities in Granard town, which has capacity.
020 Crosagstown	226	217	51	73	-	0-5%	20 to 60	Possibly Not	Gap existing here would be met IF get new facility in Coolamber.
021 Currygrane	126	125	28	43	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Small projected growth of those aged 0-14 years. Use facilities in Edgeworthstown.
022 Dalystown	170	175	41	54	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Small projected growth in those aged 0-14 years. Use facilities in Granard town.
023 Drummeel	127	127	23	42	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Use existing & new services in Ballinalee.
025 Gelshagh	322	319	79	103	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Substantial growth in those aged 0-14 years, but can use services in nearby Ballinalee.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
026 Granard Rural	256	300	59	82	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Use existing services in Granard Urban.
027 Granard Urban	1,013	926	210	354	-	30-45%	200 to 400	Possibly Yes	Although existing service has large capacity, no new facilities planned for town and surrounding areas have no other facility to use.
028 Knockanbaun	132	146	26	42	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Small growth in persons aged 0-14 years. Use facilities in Edgeworthstown.
029 Lislea	142	152	24	44	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Small development. Use services in Ballinallee.
030 Meathas Truim	1,098	1,543	224	345	1	70-100%	400 to 600	Yes	Capacity can not cater for present needs, and if developments occurring in surrounding areas the 1 new facility might not be able to cater for needs in future. Will most likely require more services / capacity in future.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
031 Milltown	323	352	81	92	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Small development. Use services in Granard town.
032 Moatfarrell	158	188	40	56	-	0-5%	20 to 60	No	Small growth in persons aged 0-14 years. Use facilities in Edgeworthstown IF get more facilities in future.
033 Moyne	321	305	48	114	-	0-5%	20 to 60	Yes	No facility planned for future. Will need additional facilities in the future to cater for area.
034 Mullanalaghta	292	296	72	102	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Small population growth projected. Use facility in Aughnacliffe.
036 Sonnagh	281	286	60	96	1	30-45%	60 to 100	No	1 new facility planned. Should be enough capacity for projected growth in those aged 0-14 years, and provide for surrounding areas.
037 Aghaboy	509	605	135	162	-	0-5%	150 to 200	No	Use existing & new services in Ballinallee.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
038 Ardagh East	529	567	97	186		0-5%	100 to 150		
039 Ardagh West	397	439	117	129	-	0-5%	100 to 150	Yes	No new service being developed in either Ardagh East or West.
040 Ballinamuck East	464	473	81	156		0-5%	60 to 100		
041 Ballinamuck West	459	442	118	147	-	10-20%	150 to 200	Yes	Existing gap and no new facility planned for either Ballinamuck East or West.
042 Breanrisk	642	696	150	208	-	0-5%	150 to 200	No	Small growth projected. Use existing / new facilities in Drumlish or Newtownforbes.
043 Caldragh	1,269	1,592	337	384	-	0-5%	200 to 400		
044 Cloondara	549	575	116	181	-	5-10%	150 to 200		
045 Cloonee	618	682	165	197	-	0-5%	200 to 400	Possibly Yes	No new facilities planned for these areas. To avoid people commuting to Longford Town, could develop 1+ new facility.
046 Corboy	395	382	102	123	-	0-5%	100 to 150	No	Small development, use new / existing facilities in Longford Town & Longford Rural
047 Drumgort	416	435	87	148	-	0-5%	100 to 150	Possibly No	Use existing facilities in Moyne and future needs should be met IF new facility developed in Moyne.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years	Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission				
048 Drumlish	828	933	204	252	-	45-55%	200 to 400	Yes	No new facilities being developed, so will not cater for future projected growth in those aged 0-14 years or cater for surrounding areas.
049 Killashee	234	285	47	85	1	20-30%	60 to 100	No	Existing gap but 1 new facility planned so will cater for future needs.
050 Killoe	284	303	49	105	1	0-5%	20 to 60	Possibly Yes	1 new facility planned. Small growth projected in area, but has insufficient existing capacity. More than 1 new facility may be required in future.
051 Longford Rural	4,317	5,084	1,039	1,357	2	10-20%	1,200 to 1,500	Yes	Existing gap will be somewhat catered for by 2 new facilities but possibly need more to cater for quickly growing area.
052 Mountdavis	197	204	61	62	-	0-5%	60 to 100	No	Small projected growth and can use existing and 1 new facility in Lanesboro.

Possible Future Needs of Childcare Facilities by Location

DED	2002	2006	2002	2002	Since 2001	Approx. Projected % Increase in Household Units	Projected total children aged 0-14 years		Future Need	Comment
	Total Persons	Total Persons	Total Population 0-14 years	Total Households	Childcare Facilities - Planning Permission					
053 Moydow	557	588	123	175	-	5-10%	150 to 200		No	Can avail of new facilities in Longford Rural being developed.
054 Newtown Forbes	847	894	165	280	1	30-45%	200 to 400		No	Sufficient existing capacity. 1 new facility planned for near future.
055 Rathcline	1,268	1,284	252	444	1	20-30%	200 to 400		Possibly Yes	Possible gap of capacity identified for future, and 1 new facility in Lanesboro might not fully cater for this.
701 Firry/Newgrove	209	220	58	72	-	0-5%	60 to 100		No	Small growth and can use service in Granard town.
Co. Longford Total	31,068	34,361	6,975	10,375	19	10-20%				

Source: CSO 2002 and 2006, Longford County Council 2006, Longford County Childcare Committee Surveys, 2006

*It is clear from the tables above that there are a number of potential future needs in certain locations around the county for new childcare facilities. These conclusions have been based, as mentioned above, on current and projected population and planning development information presented in previous sections of the Strategic Mapping report. A number of the locations identified above as potentially requiring new childcare services (in many instances these areas have no facilities at present), were identified in the table above as also having existing childcare service gaps. However, some of the locations that currently have service gaps have received planning permission from Longford County Council since 2001 to develop a childcare facility, and therefore these gaps **should in theory** be met in the future, **if** the facilities are actually developed. The table below summarises this in a user-friendly format:*

Summary of Existing Gaps and Future Childcare Needs in Specific Locations

Location	Existing Gap	New Childcare Facility Planned	Future Need	Comment
Meathas Truim (Edgeworthstown)	Yes	1	Yes	1 new facility probably not enough to cater for needs of surrounding areas in future.
Drumlish	Yes	0	Yes	Need for additional facilities to cater for area and surrounding areas.
Rathcline (Lanesboro)	Yes	1	Possibly Yes	1 new facility possibly not enough to cater for needs of surrounding areas in future.
Ardagh East or West	Yes	0	Yes	Need new facilities to reduce existing gap and service area.
Ballinamuck East or West	Yes	0	Yes	Need new facilities to reduce existing gap and service area.
Longford Rural	Yes	2		2 new facilities but area growing very quickly so might need more to cater for future requirements.
Coolamber	Yes	0	Yes	No new service planned so need a facility to cater for this area.
Killashee	Yes	1	No	New facility should cater for future needs.
Cashel West	Yes	0	Yes	Need a facility to service Cashel West & East.

Contd.: Summary of Existing Gaps and Future Childcare Needs in Specific Locations

Location	Existing Gap	New Childcare Facility Planned	Future Need	Comment
Cloondragh / Caldragh / Cloonee	No, except people have to commute	0	Possibly Yes	People have to commute to Longford Town to use services there. If new service provided, could reduce commute time / cost.
Kilcommock	No	1	Possibly Yes	No existing gap but might need more than 1 new facility to cater for needs in future (in this area and surrounding locations).
Granard Urban	No	0	Possibly Yes	No other service in surrounding area, so pressure in future on Granard town to provide services to all surrounding locations.
Moyne	Yes	0	Yes	Will require additional facilities to cater for area in future.
Longford Town	Yes	5	No	Additional facilities will sufficiently cater for future need in town and surrounding areas.
Killoe	Yes	1	Possibly Yes	Has insufficient existing capacity and 1 new facility may not be enough to cater for future needs.
Sonnagh	Yes	1	No	New facility should cater for future needs of Sonnagh and surrounding areas.
Ballinalee	Yes	1	No	New facility should cater for future needs.

7.0 Strategic Planning Process

Following the completion of the Mapping project, LCCC appointed Meehan Tully & Associates Ltd. to assist the Committee in developing its Strategic Plan. This planning process entailed the following activities:

- ❑ Consultation with providers, LCCC members and staff, and others with an interest in and/ or remit for the provision of childcare in the County
- ❑ Strategic planning meetings/ workshops with LCCC members and staff
- ❑ Development of a *Longford County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan 2007-2010*

The methodology adopted by the LCCC in developing this Strategic Plan is portrayed in the following diagram:

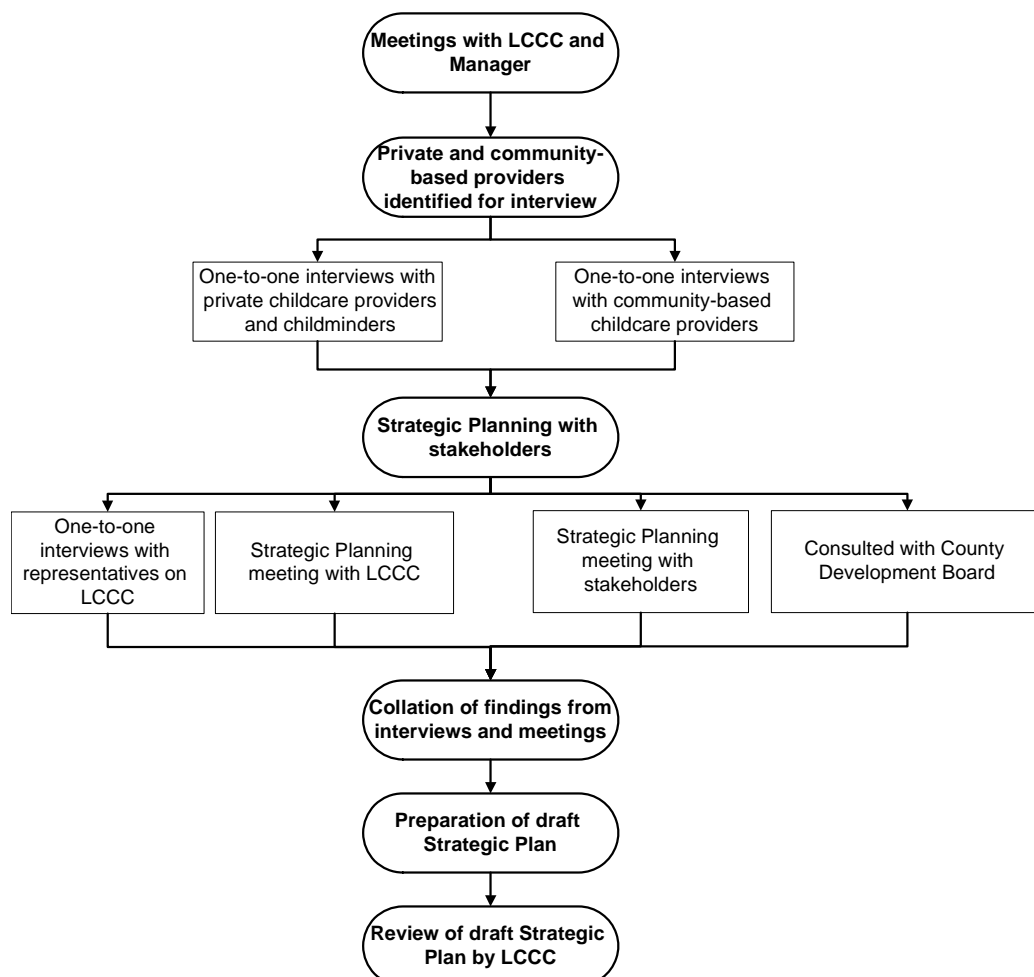


Figure 2 Methodology

8.0 Consultation

A key element of LCCC's Strategic Planning process was the conducting, by the consultants, of extensive consultation with representatives of all sectors involved in providing, using, facilitating and monitoring childcare services in County Longford. This consultation was comprised of one-to-one interviews, group meetings and telephone surveying. Those consulted included the following:

- LCCC and sub-committee members, specifically representatives of agencies and groups represented on the LCCC, e.g., HSE Dublin-Mid Leinster, Longford County Enterprise Board, Longford Community Resources
- LCCC management and staff members
- Community childcare providers
- Private childcare providers
- Childminders

This consultation was conducted in order to elicit responses from key stakeholders in relation to, specifically, the following:

- Personal and organisational opinions as to the general state of childcare in County Longford, i.e. issues, areas of concern, etc.
- Suggestions for possible future childcare initiatives, challenges, etc
- Feedback from clients in relation to supports and services provided by the LCCC and from partnering bodies regarding the functioning and activities of the Committee

8.1 Consultation with Private Providers

In total, fourteen private childcare providers were interviewed during the consultative phase of the Strategic Planning process. The primary purpose of this consultation was, as outlined above, to identify the concerns, issues and views of private providers in the County, particularly in regard to their relationship with LCCC.

Most of the issues expressed by those providers consulted as part of this process can be categorised under the following headings:

- Communication
- Support
- Training
- Networking
- Community Childcare facilities

8.1.1 Communication and Information

- Private providers expressed satisfaction with the amount of information they received on a regular basis from LCCC, especially in regard to training opportunities.
- Though most stated that they had been visited by LCCC staff within the past year, some said they had not or had only been visited for a specific purpose, e.g. to deliver forms, assist with an application.
- Overall, most providers stated a desire for more frequent and regular “face to face” visits from LCCC staff and to be able to “put a face to a name.”
- Several providers stated that they were unable to attend LCCC meetings as they were held during working hours, e.g. 9-5, and some felt that this was done to suit agency representatives.
- Many of the providers stated that they would be very interested in knowing the average wage level for childcare workers; as a guide for their own business.

8.1.2 Support

- A majority of those interviewed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with LCCC staff and their helpfulness to providers, and “know that (they) can ring them at anytime.”
- Several private providers stated that their success in applying for grant aid was due entirely to the assistance they received from LCCC staff.
- However, a few providers stated that there could be more support from the LCCC in following up on enquiries and/ or

providing advise in regard to problems not related to training or grant aid.

- ❑ Many providers are concerned about the sustainability of their businesses, especially in relation to the impact of new regulations, higher wages, rates, etc.
- ❑ Some expressed the opinion that the LCCC should advocate on behalf of providers in relation to important issues, e.g. rates, regulations, funding, and in dealing with agencies, e.g. HSE.

8.1.3 Training

- ❑ Almost all private providers were happy with the LCCC's training efforts especially in keeping providers informed about courses.
- ❑ Most providers and/ or their staff had availed of LCCC sponsored or facilitated training in the past year.
- ❑ However, some providers noted that not all training is easily accessible by childcare workers, e.g. training times, locations, and suggested that the LCCC try to bring more comprehensive/ accredited training programmes into County Longford on a regular basis.
- ❑ Staffing and personnel management were identified by a number of providers as an important area for current and future support.
- ❑ A significant number of providers also asked specifically for more training, as well as supports, in relation to working with children with Special Needs.

8.1.4 Staffing

- ❑ Providers need support in relation to personnel management, e.g. contracts, probationary periods, pay issues.
- ❑ LCCC support in identifying Relief Workers for both staff and manager positions is greatly needed.
- ❑ Activities and initiatives directed at re-energising staff and managers would be beneficial, e.g. site visits to facilities in other locations, social events.

8.1.5 Networking

- All providers were aware of the existence of the providers' network, though only a few admitted to their trying to attend meetings and events.
- Many providers felt that they were unable to commit time to attending meetings due to other commitments.

8.1.6 Relationship with Community-based Providers

- There is a common perception among some private providers that there is an “unfair playing field” with community-based services receiving more support and assistance.
- Private providers in proximity to community providers were critical of unfair competition arising from subsidised childcare services, e.g. staffing grants, Community Employment schemes, etc., and the fees being charged by in these facilities, “I get nothing, they get everything.”
- These providers stated that there should be greater enforcement of the “three tier structure” among community-based providers to ensure “fair practice” as subsidised childcare “should be for disadvantaged children.”
- Private providers accepted the need for community-based facilities, but felt that private providers too should have access to other supports, e.g. staffing grants.

8.2 Consultation with Childminders

County Longford has a high ratio of voluntary notified childminders four of whom were consulted as part of this process. A summary of their responses includes:

- Though all had received support and benefited from training provided by LCCC, several were uncertain as to the distinctions between agencies, i.e., the HSE, LCCC, and the Childminder Advisory Officer.

- ❑ Each childminder noted positively the support and assistance provided by the Childminder Advisory Officer.
- ❑ All wish to see the perception of childminding as a quality service enhanced among agencies and the general public.
- ❑ Several wanted minimum standards enforced for childminding.
- ❑ Childminders were pleased with their network and attribute success of the network partially to the ability to bring their children to events.
- ❑ A relief panel for childminders would be helpful in providing them with greater flexibility in the provision of their services when they would not otherwise be available, e.g. emergencies, holidays, etc.

8.3 Consultation with Community-based Providers

Representatives of nine community-based childcare facilities were also consulted during this stage of the Strategic Planning process. As with the private providers, the aim was to obtain feedback concerning the LCCC and the delivery of childcare in the County as well as to identify areas of concern for community-based providers. Their responses are outlined below.

8.3.1 Relationship with LCCC

- ❑ Most community-based providers were positive in their comments in relation to the LCCC.
- ❑ As with the private sector, feedback was particularly favourable in regard to the LCCC's efforts to facilitate childcare training, assist with funding applications, and in keeping providers informed about developments in childcare.
- ❑ Most providers stated they had recent on-site visits by LCCC staff members in addition to telephone contact.
- ❑ A few individuals voiced the view that the LCCC Committee was comprised of people many of who "really don't have any idea about childcare" and "could not be bothered about our problems".
- ❑ Another expressed the view that they felt "daunted" about speaking out at meetings where "business people" and agency representatives, e.g. FAS, HSE, were present.

8.3.2 Staffing and Personnel Management

- Staffing and personnel management was identified by some community-based providers as an important area of support for both voluntary committees and childcare managers. This includes:
 - Support and advice to voluntary committees in managing the childcare manager.
 - Support and advice to the childcare manager in managing their staff.
- The support identified in this regard included both advice on employment rights and general support for personnel management.
- More specifically, some providers highlighted the observation that it was “too easy to work in childcare” and that more should be done in relation to performing checks on individuals.
- Community services with FAS Community Employment schemes also expressed a need for support in dealing with participants.

8.3.3 Funding, Viability and Sustainability

- As with private providers, many community-based providers stated that the LCCC had provided significant support in making funding applications.
- Most providers stated that staffing grant support was crucial to their projects, but that more support was needed to expand and develop existing services, e.g. funding support for manager positions.

8.3.4 Networking

- Networking was not identified as a major area of concern for managers of community-based facilities. However, as with private providers, the amount of time they are willing to devote to attending network meetings is limited.

- Some providers asked for more networking specifically between community and private providers.

8.3.5 Training

- Several community-based providers asked for more support and guidance in implementing tiered fee structures, this included, specifically:
 - Advice in developing policies and procedures
 - Training for managers and staff
 - Training for voluntary committees
- Most providers noted the need for more Special Needs training for those involved in childcare, especially in relation to behavioural problems.
- Training in relation to establishing and operating school age childcare services is also desired.

8.3.6 Relationship with Private Providers

- In some areas where both community and private providers co-exist there is friction between sectors primarily due to fee structures.
- In one instance, the relationship between community and private providers is said to be “very bad” because of the fee issue.

8.4 Consultation with Other Stakeholders

Representatives of agencies and organisations involved in the LCCC, partnering bodies, and LCCC staff members were also consulted during the course of this Strategic Planning project. In most cases, the responses received from these individuals related specifically to the interests and remit of the agencies they represented.

The key issues arising from the consultation conducted with these stakeholders can be summarised under the following four topical headings relating to NCIP.

8.4.1 Coordination

- ❑ The delivery of quality childcare in County Longford demands greater coordination and input from key players/ stakeholders to enhance services and prevent duplication.
- ❑ The role, responsibilities and expectations of LCCC partner organisations need to be clearly defined.
- ❑ Stakeholders need to ensure that their representatives actively participate in LCCC activities, are aware of the workings of the Committee, and understand the expectations of their input and role as members of the LCCC.
- ❑ LCCC structures and committees need to be reviewed and revised to ensure effectiveness and appropriateness.
- ❑ Committees and subcommittees need to have clearly defined roles and should focus on strategic planning rather than day-to-day issues and support.
- ❑ More regular and effective meetings need to be scheduled for sub-committees in particular.
- ❑ Childcare owner/ managers need to make time to attend LCCC meetings and events.
- ❑ There is now a need for a County Longford dedicated Childminder Advisory Officer.
- ❑ The needs of employers, as well as families and providers, must also be considered in developing childcare services in the County.

8.4.2 Quality

- ❑ High quality childcare must be the norm in the County and not related to the cost of the service being provided.
- ❑ The importance of childcare to the local economy, as a career option, and as a means of targeting social exclusion and disadvantage needs to be emphasised by the LCCC.
- ❑ Childcare employees must be supported in accessing and undertaking professional development opportunities.
- ❑ Training in Special Needs, Equality and Diversity, cultural subjects, etc., should be seen as fundamental requirements for those employed in the sector and not as optional extras.

- There should be a quality mark/ standard established for childminders in the County.
- The panel of relief workers developed by Women's Link will play an important role for ensuring the provision of a quality service within many childcare facilities.

8.4.3 Accessibility

- There has to be a range of childcare choices and options available to parents and their children at the local level, e.g. different types of childcare must be available to families as, and when, they are necessary.
- Access to short-term services, e.g. drop-in services, full-day care, etc., is essential particularly when availing of training and employment opportunities. As a result, childcare needs to be flexible when addressing the needs of the community, especially the socially excluded and disadvantaged. This is reflected in the projected being implemented through Women's Link, in co-ordination with LCR and LCCC in the development of a mobile playbus for the County, to be used for short-term childcare services.
- Childcare can be a tool for encouraging greater integration by sections of the community, e.g. asylum seekers, Travellers, etc., who may require added assistance and support.
- School age childcare projects, such as those supported through the LCR are an effective way of addressing educational disadvantage through childcare.
- LCCC has successfully addressed the immediate childcare demands of the County and must now look closely to addressing the social exclusion found in less affluent areas of Longford Town.
- Many families of children with Special Needs wish their child to be integrated into mainstream childcare and, for this to be successful, support and encouragement must be given to providers.
- HSE support for children with Special Needs and/ or disability, where available, is limited to a maximum of four

hours per week and some providers are reluctant to accept these children without external support.

- The sustaining of community childcare facilities is a concern and should be a priority for the LCCC.

8.4.4 Affordability

- More community facilities are necessary in ensuring an adequate supply of affordable childcare in the County.
- Funding should be prioritised in favour of project located in areas identified by the LCCC as having inadequate levels of affordable childcare.
- Childcare services should only receive funding if they can show they have or are developing a local capacity to manage their projects.
- Committees should be empowered to develop local capacity for their projects.
- Community-based facilities must be encouraged to meet the needs of socially excluded and disadvantaged residents of Longford Town

8.4.5 Specific Target Groups

8.4.5.1 Children with special needs

Particular issues of note identified for the provision of childcare services to children with special needs over the coming years include the following:

- There should be greater access to training for childcare workers relating to children with special needs. This will assist in the integration of children into mainstream services by allaying concerns among some providers when considering whether to provide services to a child with special needs. (Access to training relating to children with special needs was identified an important area of concern by many community-based and private providers.)

- Address the difficulties faced by many parents of children with special needs in identifying a support worker for their child. This can be addressed somewhat by the provision of a list of support workers by the LCCC to parents.
- Encourage other staff within childcare facilities to become familiar with the requirements of children with special needs in their facility. This will ensure the continued provision of a quality service to the child, even when the support worker may not be available for short periods of time.

8.4.5.2 Members of the Traveller Community

County Longford has the highest density of members of the Traveller community in Ireland with more than 542 persons resident in the County in 2006. This represents 15.8 per 1,000 of the total population of the County, as opposed to the average of 5.3 per 1,000 in the State.

Discussions with representatives and agencies working with the Traveller community identified the following issues as important to the provision of childcare services in the future:

- Childcare facilities should reflect some elements of the Traveller culture. This could be addressed by the inclusion of the Traveller community on posters, charts, etc.
- Having a member of the Traveller community on the staff of a childcare facility greatly increases the chances of its use by the general Traveller community.
- Childcare leaflets aimed directly at the Traveller Community, should be proofed to ensure they can be used by the Traveller community, e.g. literacy issues.

8.4.5.3 Other Ethnic Minorities

While there are no statistics available to determine the number of non-Irish national workers in Longford, discussions with agencies within the county indicates that the number of non-Irish nationals has grown significantly, particularly within the Polish community. The CSO Statistical Yearbook of Ireland 2006 states that non-Irish nationals living in Ireland account for approximately 10% of the total population. For indicative purposes, based upon the population of Longford Town, where the vast majority of non-Irish nationals are living in Longford, 10% would represent 761 people.

Regarding childcare, discussions with local agencies have indicated that while, in the past, many of the non-Irish nationals were workers residing in Ireland without families, this situation has changed. Many of the non-Irish national workers are now living in the County with their families and the requirement for childcare will increase among the community. Particular issues of relevance in this case will be:

- Access to information regarding childcare, including information in languages other than English
- Training, facilitation and/or multi-cultural days for staff and parents to encourage diversity in childcare
- Integration of children of particular ethnic backgrounds into a greater number of childcare facilities and ensure that do not have a limited choice of services

9.0 Linkages and Collaboration

The membership structure of the LCCC demonstrates the strong representation from agencies and groups within the County, including statutory agencies and NGO's. The LCCC liaises directly with each of the representatives on a regular basis, ensuring co-ordination between actions at a local level. A listing of the LCCC's key partnering bodies within County Longford, with a short description of each, is included at Appendix III.

The need to develop quality childcare has also been highlighted by both the County Council and the County Development Board as being of strategic importance to both the social and economic wellbeing of the County.

9.1 Longford County Council

Longford County Development Plan 2003 - 2009 specifically mentions that quality childcare is needed "to contribute to the social, emotional and educational development of children" and also to "improve access to employment opportunities for parents or guardians."²⁴ The Plan also sets forth a number of objectives in relation to the development of childcare services in the County including:

- Identifying appropriate locations for childcare facilities and
- Favouring the development of childcare facilities in settlement centres convenient to public access and external play areas

Longford County Council's recognition of the importance of childcare is also reflected in their commitment towards meeting childcare promoters for planning purposes prior to the submission of formal planning; to discuss planning considerations and minimum requirements for planning regulations.

9.2 Longford County Development Board

In its *Longford CDB Strategy 2002-2011 & Implementation Plan*, Longford County Development Board (Longford CDB), of whose Steering Group the LCCC is now a member, highlighted the lack of

²⁴

Longford County Council, *Longford County Development Plan 2003-2009*, p. 97.

childcare facilities as a barrier to the accessing of services by local residents. In addressing this problem the CDB specifically identifies the development of accessible, affordable, high quality childcare services for all as a Strategic Action for the period of the Plan.

The CDB's *Action Plan 2006-2008* further identifies the need for actions in response to a range of Key Issues, including the following:

- **Challenges for social inclusion**
 - Develop drop-in and part-time childcare services
- **Actions for the economic development of County Longford**
 - Provide a range of supports in terms of childcare and transport to improve participation rates.
- **Actions for the reduction of early school leaving & the provision of services for those who have left school early**
 - Develop pre-school services in disadvantage areas.”²⁵
 - Funding to be secured for after-school services run by local committees

With the Action Plan due for revision in the near future, the CDB have stated that they intend to be even more pro-active regarding childcare in the coming years. This will ensure greater co-ordination and collaboration with the LCCC in the development and implementation of Actions for the CDB.

9.3 Approval and Consultation with CDB and Social Inclusion Co-ordinating Group (SIM)

The LCCC is a sub-group of the CDB and, as such, liaises directly on a regular basis. This will include the submission of the Strategic Plan for approval by the CDB for formal endorsement.

The LCCC also consults on a regular basis with the SIM group and will continue to do so during the lifetime of the Strategic Plan.

²⁵

Longford County Development Board, *Action Plan 2006-2008*, pgs. 15 & 21.

10.0 Review and Monitoring

The LCCC is committed to reviewing and monitoring the Strategic Plan 2007-2010 on a regular basis. This will be achieved through the implementation of existing and new methodologies to be employed by the Board and staff, the procedures for which can be summarised below:

10.1 Procedure for linking the Strategic and Action Plans

- 1) Prior to the preparation of the annual Action Plan, the Committee and LCCC Manager will hold a Strategic Planning meeting to review the strategic objectives of the LCCC
- 2) The Action Plan will be prepared within one month of the Strategic Planning meeting and all actions within the Action Plan will be referenced directly to the LCCC's objectives in the Strategic Plan
- 3) All actions will be delegated to appropriate staff within the LCCC, who will have responsibility for reporting on the progress of their assigned actions through their Work Plan
- 4) The manager will hold a Support and Supervision meeting with all staff on a monthly basis to review their Work Plans and monitor progress of all actions
- 5) The manager will report to the Committee on a monthly basis, providing details on the progress of the actions
- 6) An Annual Report will be prepared yearly, providing:
 - a. Details of the actions implemented during the year and how they have impacted on the delivery of the Strategic Objectives
 - b. A review of how the stakeholders collaborated to deliver on the Strategic Objectives
 - c. All actions will be referenced to the Strategic Plan identified the specific objectives to which they are linked

10.2 Procedure for monitoring Staff Performance and Implementation

- 1) Each staff member will be delegated appropriate actions, as identified in the Action Plan.

- 2) Each staff member have responsibility for reporting on the progress of their assigned actions through their Work Plan
- 3) Each staff member will present their Work Plan at the monthly Support and Supervision Meeting
- 4) An annual Performance Review will be undertaken by the Manager for all staff.
 - a. The Manager will discuss the Performance Review process with all staff
 - b. A Performance Review sheet will be used for the process
 - c. One week prior to the Performance Review, each member of staff will be provided with a copy of the Performance Review sheet
 - d. The review will include an assessment of performance linked to individual and strategic objectives
- 5) The Performance Review will be discussed and signed off by the Manager and staff member

10.3 Procedure for Strategic Plan Review

- 1) The Committee and LCCC Manager will meet on a quarterly basis to review the Strategic Plan. This will include a review of the following:
 - a. Delivery on the Strategic Objectives through the sample measurable outputs
 - b. The degree to which the stakeholders identified in the Plan are working collaboratively to deliver on the objectives
 - c. The effectiveness of the structure and membership of the LCCC and sub-committees in implementing the Strategic Plan
- 2) The Committee will agree on the measures necessary, if any, to ensure the effective implementation of the Strategic Plan

11.0 Strategic Aims and Objectives

In committing itself to the aims and objectives of the NCIP, the Committee has established the LCCC's Strategic Aims and Objectives for the period 2007-2010. These Aims are based upon the aims of the NCIP, while the objectives are based upon the findings of the Strategic Planning process.

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare

- 1.1 Ensure the development of quality childcare through the provision of supports and information
- 1.2 Promote childcare as an attractive and rewarding career option
- 1.3 Ensure minimum training standards for childcare workers in the County
- 1.4 Encourage the involvement of childcare workers in the development of the sector
- 1.5 Support the development of a quality childminding sector in County Longford

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places

- 2.1 Support the development of new services in the County
- 2.2 Support the maintenance of existing services
- 2.3 Support the development of childcare services for children of 3-4 years
- 2.4 Support the development of school age childcare services throughout the County
- 2.5 Develop linkages between pre-schools and primary schools
- 2.6 Support the development of a sustainable childcare sector in the County

Aim 3: Support Families to Break to Cycle of Poverty

- 3.1 Increase the accessibility of affordable childcare in the County
- 3.2 Promote inclusiveness in the provision of childcare in County Longford

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare

- 4.1 Foster greater linkages and collaboration in developing childcare in County Longford
- 4.2 Support the development of childcare to meet the needs of local businesses
- 4.3 Facilitate and encourage parental in the provision of childcare services

- 4.4 Actively support the development of childcare provider networks in the County
- 4.5 Promote the LCCC as the lead agency for childcare issues in the County
- 4.6 Continually review the effectiveness of the structure and procedures of the LCCC
- 4.7 Support training and development of all LCCC staff
- 4.8 Ensure the relevancy of the Strategic Plan

Notes on abbreviations used in the following tables:

HSE	Health Service Executive - Dublin and Mid-Leinster Region
IPPA	The Early Childhood Organisation
LCCC	Longford County Childcare Committee
Longford C&V Forum	Longford Community & Voluntary Forum
Longford CEB	Longford County Enterprise Board
Longford CDB	Longford County Development Board
LCRL	Longford Community Resources Ltd.
Longford VEC	County Longford Vocational Education Committee
NCNA	National Children's Nurseries Association
OMC	Office of the Minister for Children
NVCO	National Voluntary Childcare Organisation

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare		
Objective 1.1: Ensure the development of quality childcare through the provision of supports and information.		
Evaluation criteria	Timeframe	Delivery Team
Support local providers in attaining an accredited quality childcare standard, e.g. High/Scope, NCNA, IPPA, Montessori with aim of 50% of pre-school service providers in Longford achieving a recognised standard by 2010.	2010	LCCC Providers' Network CECDE, Siolta, High/Scope, IPPA, NCNA, Montessori
Press releases to be prepared highlighting the importance of quality childcare. The press releases will be distributed for publication in the following: <input type="checkbox"/> Media publications <input type="checkbox"/> Newsletters of other local organisations and agencies, e.g. Community and Voluntary Forum, Longford County Council, Longford CDB, Longford CEB, etc. The LCCC will also promote quality childcare on local radio, e.g. Shannonside.	2007 for one article to be published in each publication and two broadcasts on local radio. 2008-2010 At least one article/ one local radio broadcast per year.	LCCC Longford CDB Longford C & V Forum Longford County Council Longford CEB
A section of the LCCC's website to be dedicated to the promotion of accredited quality childcare in County Longford and will contain a list of accredited providers.	2007	LCCC
Presentations on quality childcare to be made to parents and will include an overview of different quality standards and the Siolta framework.	2007-2010	LCCC,
Childcare providers to be supported in implementing the Siolta framework. The target percentage of childcare facilities implementing the framework will be 75%. This will be measured by the number of childcare facilities that the LCCC are satisfied are operating within the Siolta framework.	2010	LCCC Providers' network Siolta
100% of all new facilities to receive advice on the implementation of the Siolta framework	2007-2010	LCCC Siolta
Facilitate and support site visits by local providers to childcare models of excellence outside of the County	2007-2010	LCCC and Providers LCRL, LCEB

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare Objective 1.2: Promote childcare as an attractive and rewarding career option.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
<p>Work with Longford VEC, and FÁS to raise awareness of childcare as an attractive career choice using printed material, advertising, career day presentations, etc. This will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ All secondary schools in the County be visited at least once per year to provide information on career's within the childcare sector □ Preparation, publication and distribution of a booklet on career paths and opportunities in childcare, e.g. through FETAC and third level programmes. 	<p>Visits to secondary schools to be undertaken once per year.</p> <p>Booklet to be published by 2008.</p>	<p>LCCC FÁS Longford VEC Secondary schools and Career Guidance Teachers Longford CEB</p>
<p>Publicly recognise career development achievements of childcare workers through a press release, to be printed in at least two local newspapers, e.g. Longford LEADER and Longford Today.</p>	<p>2008</p>	<p>LCCC</p>
<p>Work with Longford CEB, Longford VEC, and FÁS to promote working in the childcare sector as an attractive career choice for men. This will include promotional activities through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Media publications such as the Longford LEADER and Longford Today □ Enterprise newsletters and publications, e.g. Longford CEB materials □ Promotional segment on the local radio Station, Shannonside. 	<p>2007-2010 Article to be published in at least one media publications and all newsletters by end-2008. Radio segment by end-2007.</p>	<p>LCCC FÁS Longford VEC Secondary schools and Career Guidance Teachers Longford CEB LCRL</p>
<p>Promote working within the childcare sector as an attractive and accessible career choice for minorities and people from disadvantaged sectors of the community, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ People with disabilities, including learning difficulties □ Members of minorities groups, e.g. refugees, Travellers, migrant workers. <p>This will include presentations on opportunities for working within the childcare sector, to be presented directly to representatives of target groups.</p>	<p>2007-2010 Presentations to be made to each target group by mid-2008.</p>	<p>HSE FÁS LCRL Longford Traveller Movement Longford Women's Link Diversity groups</p>

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare		
Objective 1.3: Ensure minimum training standards for childcare workers in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Work with childcare providers towards maximising the number of existing and new childcare workers in the County possessing, at a minimum, FETAC Level 5 or equivalent. The target level of childcare workers with FETAC Level 5 or equivalent will be 100% by 2010.	2010	LCCC Providers' network
Establish a usable and accessible database detailing the number of full-time and part-time childcare workers employed by each childcare facility in Longford, and the qualifications of each worker. The database should be updated on a quarterly basis.	end-2007	LCCC Providers' network
Use the database to identify training needs of childcare workers in the county and deliver appropriate training in accessible locations throughout the County.	2008-2010	LCCC Providers' network

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare		
Objective 1.4: Encourage the involvement of childcare workers in the development of the sector.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Provide career progression advice and guidance to childcare workers in the County and support individuals seeking to develop their careers.	2007-2010	LCCC LCEB FÁS Longford VEC
Assist career progression by continuing to facilitate the local delivery of training programmes, e.g. IPPA courses.	2007-2010	LCCC LCEB FÁS Longford VEC
Raise awareness of the LCCC and its activities among childcare workers.	2007-2010	LCCC Providers' Network

Aim 1: Improve the Quality of Childcare Objective 1.5: Support the development of a quality childminding sector in County Longford.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Support and facilitate Childminders' Network events and meetings, and greater childminder involvement in the LCCC. Establish a text service to communicate with childminders regarding meetings, events, etc.	2007-2010	LCCC Childminders' Network HSE
Provide appropriate training programmes to voluntary notified childminders in the County.	2007 identify training 2007-2010 implement training programmes	As above
Support the establishment of minimum standards within childminding, for example, attaining an accredited quality childcare standard level 5, and aim to develop a recognised quality mark for this sector.	2007-2010	As above
Raise awareness of childminding as a source of quality childcare among agencies, providers and the general public using the LCCC website, newsletters and press releases, etc.	2007-2010	As above
Provide mentoring assistance to childminders in regard to both childcare and business related matters.	2007-2010	LCCC Childminders' Network LCEB
Ensure that all efforts to improve the accessibility of childcare by all sections of the population, e.g. children with Special Needs, etc., include the childminding sector	2007-2010	LCCC HSE Parent for Parent Childminders' Network

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.1: Support the development of new services in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Through the PESC evaluate and make recommendations based upon local need and in accordance with NCIP criteria in relation to all funding applications from private and community-based providers wishing to expand and/or create services.	2007-2010	LCCC POBAL OMC
Twice a year update the Strategic Mapping Exercise and Childcare Census to assist in the identification of areas in need of childcare services.	2007-2010	LCCC
Prioritise childcare needs of the County based upon an annual review of future childcare needs, i.e. areas of population growth, disadvantage, and gaps in service provision.	2007-2010	LCCC LCRL Longford County Council Longford CDB Enterprise Ireland FÁS, Longford CEB, Longford VEC
Advise and support applicants beginning with the pre-development stage of their project, e.g. preparation of funding application, through the post application development of their service.	2007-2010	LCCC
Work with partnering agencies in developing local strategies to identify and source additional funding and resources for new childcare services in the County, e.g. developing new afterschools programmes, social inclusion initiatives, etc.	2007-2010	LCCC LCRL Longford County Council HSE Enterprise Ireland FÁS Longford CEB Longford VEC

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places		
Objective 2.1: Support the development of new services in the County. (CONTINUED)		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Support the development of new Parent and Toddler Groups by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Providing advice and support ❑ Raising awareness of groups through promotional activities ❑ Liaising with the Katherine Howard Foundation in relation to Parent & Toddler Group Initiative Grants 	2007-2010	LCCC Katherine Howard Foundation HSE POBAL OMC

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places		
Objective 2.2: Support the maintenance of existing services.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Through the PESC evaluate and make recommendations based upon local need and in accordance with NCIP criteria in relation to all applications for staffing grants.	2007-2010	LCCC POBAL OMC
The LCCC will endeavour to support existing childcare facilities through its general services and by, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Ensuring the non-displacement of existing services when considering NCIP applications ❑ Support efforts to increase quality in existing services ❑ Encourage existing services to diversify to maintain sustainability 	2007-2010	LCCC
Work with partnering agencies in developing local strategies to identify and source additional funding and resources for the County's existing childcare facilities, e.g. developing new afterschools programmes, social inclusion initiatives, etc.	2007-2010	LCCC LCRL Longford County Council HSE Enterprise Ireland FÁS Longford CEB Longford VEC

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.2: Support the maintenance of existing services. (CONTINUED)		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Support the existing Parent and Toddler Groups in the County by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Providing support and advice □ Continue to promoting Parent and Toddler Groups through LCCC's activities and materials, e.g. the LCCC's website □ Liaising with the Katherine Howard Foundation in relation to Parent & Toddler Group Initiative Grants 	2007-2010	LCCC Katherine Howard Foundation HSE POBAL OMC

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.3: Support the development of childcare services for children of 3-4 years.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Where there are gaps in the provision of childcare services for children 3-4 years of age the LCCC will endeavour to address this problem by, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Prioritising areas identified as having no or inadequate provision of childcare for 3-4 year olds and supporting local efforts to develop new services for this age group □ Meeting with providers to encourage the expansion of existing services 	2007-2010	LCCC
Through the PESC evaluate and make recommendations based upon local need and in accordance with NCIP criteria in relation to all applications from private and community-based providers wishing to develop or expand services to cater to the needs of 3-4 year olds.	2007-2010	LCCC POBAL Office of the Minister for Children

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.4: Support the development of school age childcare services throughout the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Establish guiding principles, within a Longford context, by which the LCCC will support school age childcare in the County.	2007	LCCC LCRL Parents' Associations Community Groups Parish Councils School Boards
Prepare an information leaflet addressing frequently asked questions regarding school age childcare, e.g. childcare within the national school system, insurance, staffing, space requirements, etc.	2007	LCCC
Meet with representatives of the Rural Transport Initiative and Longford Community Resources to review the possibility of using the Rural Transport Initiative to transport children from schools to school age childcare facilities.	2007	LCCC LCRL Rural Transport Initiative
Deliver presentations on establishing community-based school age childcare to local Parents' Associations, Community Development Groups, Parish Councils, School Boards of Management, etc., in target areas.	2007-2008	LCCC LCRL Parents' Associations Community Groups Parish Councils School Boards
Work with the Longford Community Resources Ltd. to identify how the school age childcare initiative can be used to address educational disadvantage in the County, e.g. the development of pilot projects for on-site school age childcare services in disadvantaged schools in Longford.	2008	LCCC LCRL

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.5: Develop linkages between local pre-schools and primary schools.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Promote the roll-out of the Síolta Framework throughout the county. <i>(Detailed objectives for this roll-out are provided in the Strategic Objectives referring to Quality.)</i>	2010	LCCC Providers' network Síolta
Develop and roll-out a county-wide primary school transition policy and programme and review the possible inclusion of sections of the DEIS programme (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools - Department of Education and Science) in the transition programme, particularly those relating specifically to linkages between school and childcare, e.g. the Early Start Pre-school Scheme. This will also facilitate the inclusion of socially disadvantaged areas in the roll-out of the transition programme.	Develop the programme by mid-2008 Roll-out the programme mid-2008-2010.	LCCC Providers' network Teachers' Education Centre HSE LCRL Parents' Associations Community Groups Parish Councils School Boards NCCA Síolta

Aim 2: Maintain and Increase Childcare Facilities and Places Objective 2.6: Support the development of a sustainable childcare sector in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Provide training for private and community-based childcare providers. The training should be aimed specifically at developing skills regarding the viability and sustainability of childcare services as a business.	2007-2010	LCCC Longford CEB HSE Longford VEC FÁS
Facilitate the delivery of business mentoring supports to providers needing assistance	2007-2010	LCCC LCEB
Avoid duplication in the provision of childcare in the county by co-ordinating service delivery and funding, based upon identified need.	2007-2010	LCCC
In rural areas develop linkages between existing facilities and services and childcare providers, e.g. schools, community centres, enterprise centres, etc.	2007-2010	LCCC Longford CDB LCRL Longford C & V Forum
Raise awareness among providers of relief worker database.	2007-2010	LCCC LCRL

Aim 3: Support Families to Break the Cycle of Poverty Objective 3.1: Increase the accessibility of affordable childcare in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Establish and implement LCCC guidelines for ensuring the delivery of affordable childcare in the County.	2007	LCCC
Provide community-based providers, both managers and committees, with guidance on implementing tiered fee structures as a means of ensuring accessibility by all.	2008	LCCC POBAL
Support the development of affordable childcare in areas of disadvantage by assisting community groups in applying for and accessing Staffing Grants.	2007-2010	LCCC

Aim 3: Support Families to Break the Cycle of Poverty Objective 3.2: Promote inclusiveness in the provision of childcare in County Longford.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
<p>Work with agencies to establish a protocol that will address the difficulties faced by many disadvantaged members of the community when trying to access childcare while pursuing education, training and employment. This will include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Co-ordinating with education, training and employment agencies to identify possible short-term demand by participants and workers for childcare services. □ Providing a list of available short-term childcare places to agencies, for distribution among participants and workers. 	<p>2008 to establish protocol</p> <p>2008-2010 to maintain and distribute list on ongoing basis</p>	<p>LCCC Longford CDB FÁS Longford VEC HSE LCRL Longford Traveller Movement Longford Women's Link Diversity groups in Longford Parent for Parent Support</p>

Aim 3: Support Families to Break the Cycle of Poverty Objective 3.2: Promote inclusiveness in the provision of childcare in County Longford. (CONTINUED)		
<p>Provide assistance to existing and new childcare services to support the integration of new communities and disadvantaged members of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Intercultural training days to be provided for childcare services that can be attended by all members of the service, including owners, managers, committee members, childcare workers, parents, etc. □ Provision of childcare booklets targeted specifically at sections of the community such as the Traveller community, International workers, families of children with disabilities, asylum seekers and refugees. The booklets will be printed in a variety of languages and will be proofed to ensure they can be used by targeted groups. 	<p>2007 for first intercultural training day</p> <p>2008-2010 at least two intercultural training day to be held per year</p> <p>2008 for booklets to be published</p> <p>2007-2010 to promote networking</p>	<p>LCCC Longford CDB FÁS Longford VEC HSE LCRL Longford Traveller Movement Diversity groups in Longford Longford Women's Link Parent for Parent Support</p>
<p>Support to the Traveller community will include the provision of information regarding available short-term childcare places, to be used by Travellers participating on education, training and/or work programmes. This information will be distributed in conjunction with the agencies directly involved in the education, training and/or work programmes</p>	<p>2007-2010</p>	<p>LCCC Longford Traveller Movement FÁS Longford VEC HSE LCRL</p>
<p>Facilitate International Workers in accessing quality childcare, through the publication and distribution of information booklets, to be printed in a variety of languages.</p>	<p>2008-2010</p>	<p>LCCC Longford Women's Link Diversity groups in Longford</p>
<p>Promote LCCC-conducted multicultural events and activities, e.g. cultural awareness visits, through media coverage, newsletter articles, and other means of communicating with parents, providers, and the general public.</p>	<p>2007-2010</p>	<p>LCCC Longford Women's Link Diversity groups in Longford</p>

Aim 3: Support Families to Break the Cycle of Poverty Objective 3.2: Promote inclusiveness in the provision of childcare in County Longford. (CONTINUED)		
<p>Support the provision of childcare for children with special needs through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Provide training to providers, available to all members of staff, regarding childcare for children with special needs ❑ Work with the Parent for Parent Support to identify and implement actions regarding childcare for children with special needs, e.g. provide a list of support workers ❑ Review the possibility of implementing elements of the Roscommon Páistí le Chéile programme in County Longford ❑ Facilitate networking between childcare providers and parents of children with special needs through, for example, the Parent for Parent Support and the Providers' Network 	<p>2007-2010 provide training for providers 2007-2010 work with Parents' Support Network 2007- Review roll-out of elements of Páistí le Chéile 2007-2010 facilitate at least three meetings per year between Parents' Support and Providers' Network</p>	<p>LCCC HSE Parent for Parent Support Providers' Network</p>
<p>Work with partner agencies in identifying sources of additional funding and/ or resources for childcare services in the County that have a social inclusion focus, e.g. FÁS Social Inclusion Unit funding, etc.</p>	<p>2007-2010</p>	<p>LCCC Longford CDB FÁS Longford VEC HSE LCRL Longford Traveller Movement Diversity groups in Longford Longford Women's Link Parent for Parent Support</p>

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.1: Foster greater linkages and collaboration in developing childcare in County Longford.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Provide evidence of integrated planning for childcare through a co-ordinated approach among agencies. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ All references to childcare strategies, policies and actions by agencies should involve direct consultation with the LCCC □ Reference to childcare planning in, e.g. Development Plans and Local Area Plans, should involve consultation with the LCCC, to ensure integration and avoid duplication of services 	2007-2010	LCCC Longford County Council Local Area Plan Sub-committees Longford CDB
Collaborate on projects in support of the development of childcare in the BMW region	2007-2010	LCCC BMW CCC's NVCO's
Co-ordinate with Childcare Committees in neighbouring counties in relation to the delivery and development of childcare services in border communities, e.g. Lanesborough, Ballymahon	2007-2010	LCCC Leitrim, Roscommon, Cavan and Westmeath CCC's

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.2: Support the development of childcare to meet the needs of local businesses.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Work with agencies and businesses to promote the development of a family friendly environment within the enterprise culture in Longford by, for example, identifying a number of family-friendly case-studies among small and medium-sized businesses in Longford and prepare a press release for publication in local newspapers, magazines and enterprise newsletters.	2007-2010 2008 for publication of press release	LCCC Longford CDB Longford CEB Enterprise Ireland FÁS
Conduct a survey of employers in the Longford region to identify childcare needs of both businesses and their employees	2007	See above

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.3: Facilitate and encourage parental involvement in the provision of childcare services.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Establish a mechanism for parental input on childcare matters through the Parents' Network	2007-2010	LCCC Parents' Network
Conduct at least one annual information night specifically for parents	2007-2010	LCCC Parents' Network
Include parental issues in newsletters and provide adequate copies for distribution to each family using childcare services in the County	2007-2010	LCCC Parents' Network
Explore, with LCRL, the HSE, and other partners, new opportunities to encourage and support parental involvement in schooling and the delivery of school age childcare, e.g. the Triple P's (Positive Parenting Programme), etc.		LCCC LCRL HSE Parents' Network

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.4: Actively support the development of childcare provider networks in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Facilitate and support the Providers' Network	2007-2010	LCCC Providers' Network
Facilitate and support the Childminders' Network	2007-2010	LCCC Childminders' Network
Provide a formal method of communicating Providers' / Childminders' Network concerns and issues to the LCCC and for responding back to these groups.		

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare Objective 4.5: Promote the LCCC as the lead agency for childcare issues in the County.		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Maintain effective communication with partner agencies and ensure the effectiveness of LCCC's co-ordinating role in childcare in Longford	2007-2010	LCCC All agencies
Maintain ongoing personal contact with each childcare provider in the County on an annual basis as a means of ensuring mutual understanding and communication between LCCC and providers	2007-2010 All providers to have face-to-face contact with LCCC at least once per year	LCCC
Regularly promote the LCCC as the lead body for childcare development in Longford and highlight this fact in all press releases, articles, and publications.	2007-2010	LCCC
Undertake to advocate on behalf of childcare providers in the County in relation to relevant issues of regional and/ or national interest, e.g. dealings with state agencies, rates, regulations, funding requirements.	2007-2010	LCCC

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare Objective 4.6: Continually review the effectiveness of the structure and procedures of LCCC		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Terms of reference to be adopted for all sub-committees	2007	LCCC
Periodic review of the effectiveness of internal committee structures, including, e.g., membership of committee and sub-committees, attendance at meetings, terms of reference for sub-committees, etc.	2007-2010	LCCC
The procedures of the LCCC will be reviewed and revised on a regular basis to ensure effectiveness and efficiency, taking into account new technologies that will improve business and service delivery.	2007-2010	LCCC

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.7: Support training and development of all LCCC staff		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Policy and procedure to be developed regarding training and development for all LCCC staff.	2007	LCCC
A training and development plan to be prepared each year, based upon needs identified through the performance review process and linked to individual job descriptions and the Strategic Plan.	2007-2010	LCCC

Aim 4: Support a Co-ordinated Approach to Delivery of Childcare		
Objective 4.8: Ensure the relevancy of the Strategic Plan		
Measurable Outputs	Timeframe	Stakeholders
Develop a procedure for reviewing/ revising the Strategic Plan	2007	LCCC
Show direct links between the Action Plan and the Strategic Plan.	2007-2010	LCCC
Liaise with other agencies to ensure direct links between references to childcare in other Development Plans within the County and the LCCC's Strategic Plan.	2007-2010	LCCC

Appendix I

**Summary of Review of
Strategic Plan 2001-2006**

Strategic Objective	Summary of Aim	Summary Review of Implementation	Moving Forward
Equality of Access	To support access to childcare services by all children in the County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of childcare facilities has increased by 63% since 2002 • Eleven community services supported • Public information sessions held • Equality & Special Needs training and support for providers • Childcare facilities in disadvantaged areas supported 	Ensuring that all children, including those with Special Needs and from disadvantaged backgrounds, have equal access to a range of affordable childcare services will continue to be a focus of future LCCC efforts.
Support Quality Improvement for all Childcare Services	Promote quality standards for childcare, support enhancing of childcare management, and accessing of grant aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local childcare projects received €11.7 million funding under EOCP • Providers supported with Quality information, training and assistance • Business management support given • Quality standards promoted 	Quality, especially the implementation of quality programmes and the Síolta framework, will remain the primary focus of the LCCC.
Support and Develop Training	Conduct analysis of training needs and in response implement a plan to meet identified requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of staff training levels • Range of relevant training programmes delivered annually to local providers by LCCC and partner agencies 	The LCCC continue to deliver appropriate and accessible training programmes to meet the identified needs of providers and to ensure development opportunities for childcare workers in the County. Training in business management will be delivered to volunteer committees.
Support and Develop Afterschools Service	Work with partners to develop and support school age childcare services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School based services supported • Afterschool childcare established in disadvantaged areas in co-ordination with LCR 	Priority will be given in assisting existing and potential new services interested in developing afterschool childcare with training, funding and other supports.
Support and Develop Full Day Care	Support and facilitate the development of additional Full Day Care services in the County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistance provided to project/businesses in establishing new FDC services 	Priority will continue to be given to those interested in developing new Full Day Care services.

Strategic Objective	Summary of Aim	Summary Review of Implementation	Moving Forward
Childminding	Encourage and support the development of the childminding sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childminders' network established • 22 childminders voluntary notified and 3 notified childminders engaging with the Advisory Officer and LCCC • Training and development grants provided to childminders 	An important element of childcare provision in the County, the childminding sector will be strengthened through the provision of supports and greater integration into the activities and functioning of the LCCC. This will include the establishment of a Childminder Advisory Officer position for Longford.
Addressing the Needs of Children in Rural Areas	Support the development of childcare in rural areas of Longford	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 17 pre-school services supported in areas outside of Longford Town • 8 community services provided in more rural areas 	The childcare needs of rural families will be addressed through the LCCC's continuing efforts to increase accessibility including funding for projects in targeted areas of the County.
Updating Information on Service Provision	Ensure accuracy of information on childcare provision in the County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The LCCC conducts public meetings, and seminars, and publishes a range of informative materials to the public, providers, and agencies. • Providers confirm that the LCCC plays an important role in keeping stakeholders informed of childcare issues. 	The LCCC will endeavour to ensure that up-to-date and relevant childcare information is disseminated regularly to the public, providers and partner agencies. The effectiveness of information systems will routinely be reviewed and revised as needed.
Future Consultation	Develop a strategy that ensures engagement with stakeholders in childcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networks established for providers and childminders • Annual reports published by the LCCC • Extensive consultation with Stakeholders conducted as part of Strategic Planning process 	All stakeholders in childcare will be involved in developing the strategic objectives of the LCCC and will continue to be consulted in the implementation of the Strategic Plan 2007-2010. Review of new Strategic Plan to be conducted.