

Wicklow County Childcare Committee

2021 Annual Report for AGM 8th July 2022

It has to be firstly acknowledged that Covid still had a major impact on the work of Wicklow CCC during 2021 and the delivery of the 2021 LIP/SOW. Notwithstanding this, WCCC achieved a great deal. They supported and advised all services within the county in a more flexible way than was anticipated at the beginning of 2021. Under the national priorities as outlined in the LIP/SOW WCCC:-

Progress and achievements

1. Worked intensively with services in relation to compliance.
2. Supported services with regard to applying for the re-opening grants
3. Supported and advised services regarding sustainability particularly in light of Covid 19 and the implications of same.
4. Administered and processed Learner Fund applications
5. Administered and processed FAR applications
6. Supported 10 services who were closing and also 5 who opened in 2021.
7. Promoted AIM in a more flexible way due to Covid
8. With ECCE moving to The Hive this impacted on the work of WCCC as intensive support had to be given to some services particularly those who had not attended any previous training on using the EYP - Hive.
9. Considerable support was given to services and parents regarding all childcare schemes.
10. As the Manager of WCCC was a member of PPOP she was heavily involved in programme readiness for 2021.
11. WCCC had 22,427 hits on the website in 2021
12. WCCC had a total of 6,239 enquiries and 13,083 (phone calls, emails etc.) interactions during 2021

Significant changes and obstacles

1. The majority of training was postponed due to Covid - EDI, Aim Information sessions and NSAI workshops. One Child Protection course was held face to face.
2. WCCC staff ensured that telephone and email support was unaffected. WCCC were available to support providers, parents and all agencies Monday to Friday 9 to 5 and outside hours when required which it has been during 2021.
3. Lack of proper access to the EYP - Hive.
4. Misinformation which circulates on social media and as a result WCCC has to dispell and clarify this misinformation
5. While WCCC have limited access to The Hive it is difficult at times to support and advise services and parents

Highlights/Successes

1. Implementation of the LIP/SOW and the completion of the vast majority of the actions albeit in a more flexible/adaptable manner.
2. Weekly updates to the sector is an effective communication process
3. Experienced, effective and supportive Board
4. The development of a Board Handbook, Staff Handbook and the revision of a considerable number of policies and procedures.

Collaboration with other agencies

WCCC collaborates very effectively and has very good working relationships locally with the following:

1. Co Wicklow CYPSC on various sub groups and supports with the delivery of actions
2. Wicklow County Council - through the resettlement programme group and also supporting and assisting planning department with queries.
3. Wicklow County Partnership and Bray Area Partnership - promotion of childcare schemes
4. KWETB - liaising regarding FETAC training
5. IT Carlow - liaising regarding HETAC Levels 7, 8 and 9.
6. ABC Project Bray - supporting preschools with quality
7. CCI/DCEDIY/Pobal collaboration with regard to the implementation of LIP actions and other requests as necessary and also PPOP issues/queries
8. Liaising with neighbouring CCC's
9. Working with regional childminding development officer promoting childminding

Additional Actions

1. Collaborating with CYPSC in the delivering of actions, it was intended to deliver I am Baba but that was cancelled due to Covid. Promotion of the Keeping Well and Healthy Ireland campaigns and this is continuing in 2022.
2. WCCC continues to work closely with the ABC project in Bray in promoting quality within early year's services and providing supports to vulnerable families during the closure of the early years and school age services.
3. All the additional actions which were necessary due to Covid 19.
4. The NSAI workshops had to be postponed but WCCC worked on a one to one basis with services who needed support during this time.
5. WCCC were also involved in the dissemination of the Transition packs to services for families, some services did their own packs but approx. 120 availed of the packs supplied by the Department.
6. The Manager is involved in a number of CCI working groups - PPOP, Tusla oversight working group and Communications working group.

Governance

All long standing members of the Board (over 6 years) have now resigned. WCCC elected a new Chair in July 2021. The Board held 8 meetings including the AGM which took place in July this year due to Covid, it normally takes place in April. All meetings were held via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.

Staffing

The staffing of Wicklow CCC remained unchanged in 2021. The Manager linked in with the staff working both in the office and remotely on a daily/weekly basis and more often if required. Staff also attended all webinars/information sessions delivered by Pobal and DCEDIY throughout 2021.

Financial Management

WCCC had an under spend of €6,320 due to Covid. The biggest variation was in Travel and Subsistence as it was not possible for staff to be out supporting and advising services and very little face to face training was delivered throughout the county as is WCCC's usual practice. All spending and budgets have been approved by the Finance subcommittee and signed off by the Board.

Conclusion

2021 was another year where ultimately it was necessary to 'expect the unexpected' and as such WCCC had to be flexible, adaptable and available to meet the considerable needs to DCEDIY, Pobal, providers and parents. The need for a local presence representing the DCEDIY was very evident in 2021 when CCC's were the first point of call for services. The CCC's also had to source information and data from all services locally and feed this back to DCEDIY and Pobal on a regular basis. The changes this year also highlighted that more remote working by CCC staff is possible. The year 2021 has seen significant changes - the early workforce development plan, Covid 19 and registration of school age services, re registration of existing services. The impacts of these significant developments will be evident in years to come and consideration needs to be given to sustain services with regard to these significant developments. The landscape of the country has changed considerably in 2021 and this is also seen in the early years and school age sector.