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Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Leadership development in ECEC in Ireland

Berlin PLA, 22-24 May 2024



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Nurturing Skills:
The Workforce Plan for
Early Learning and Care
and School-Age Childcare
2022-2028

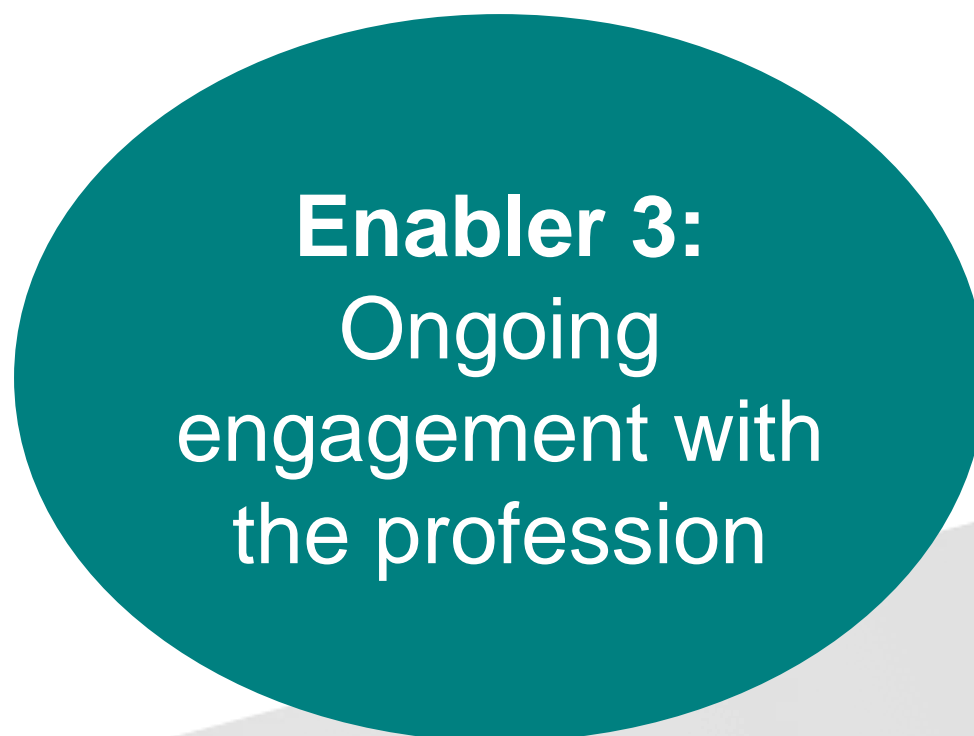
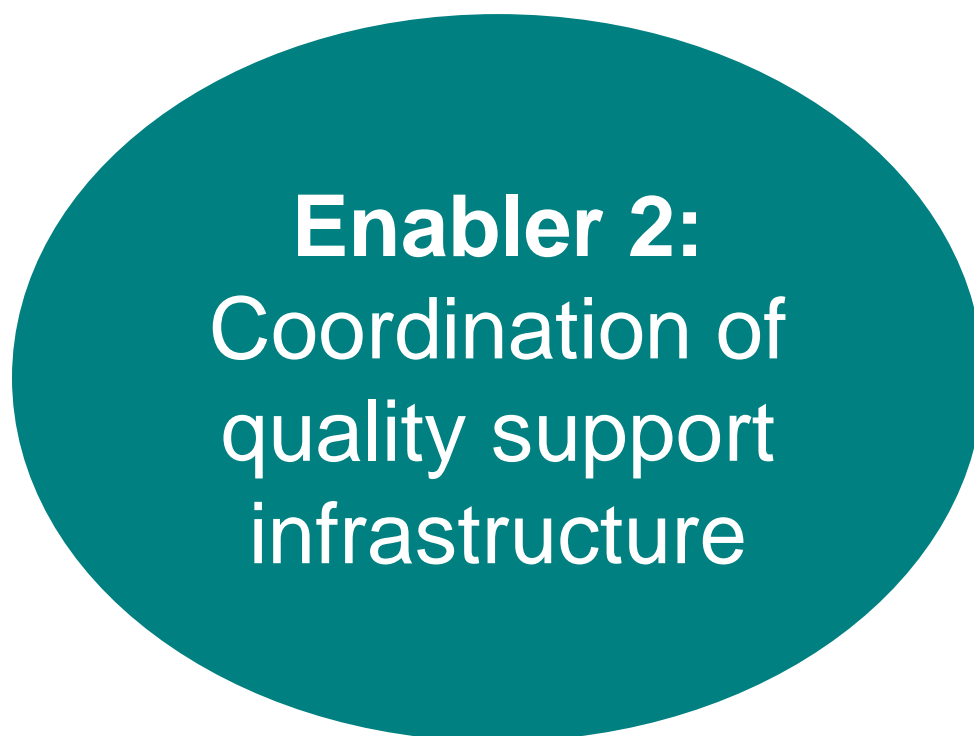
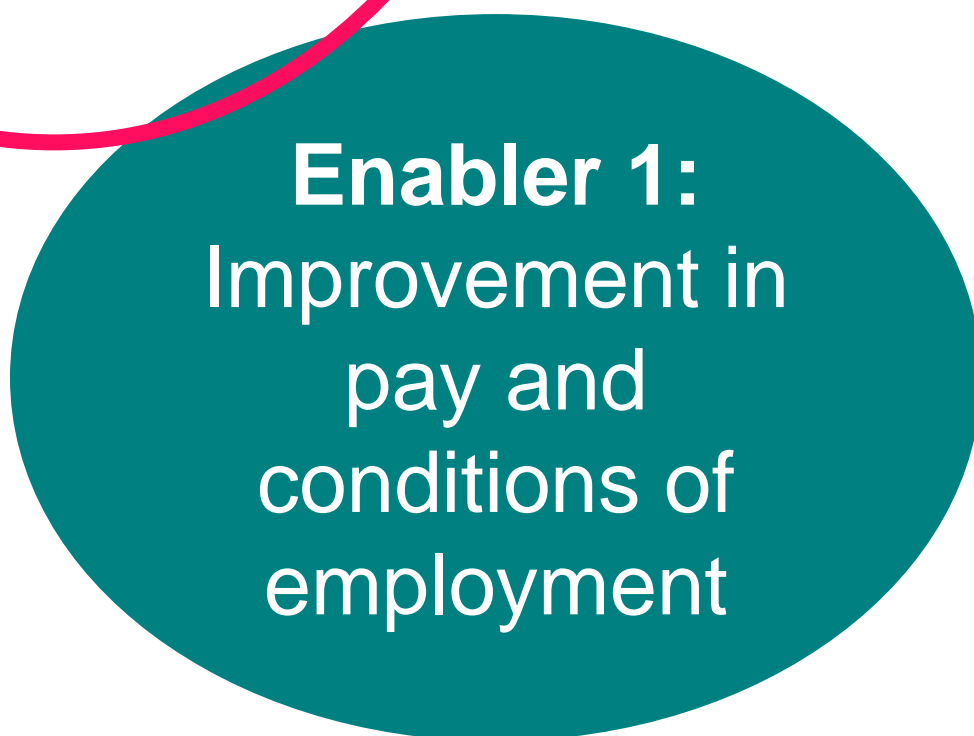
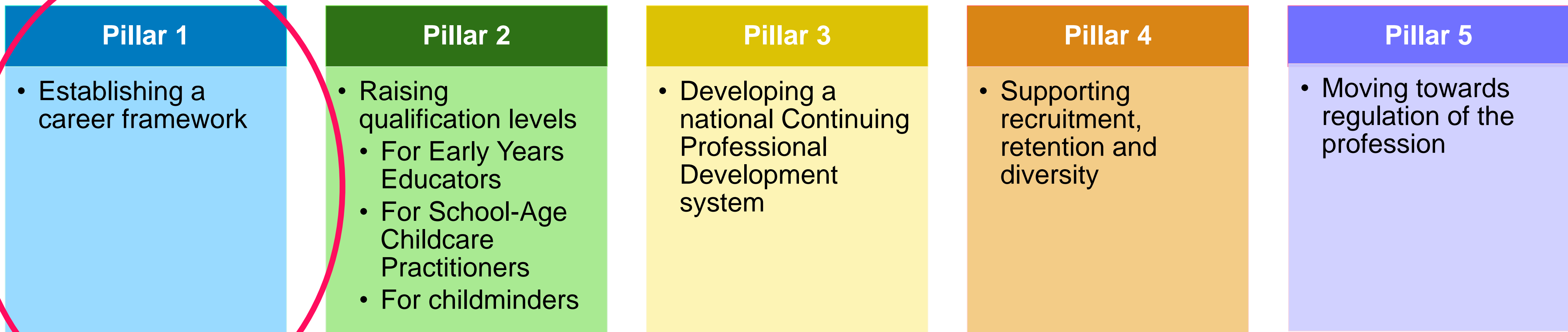


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Nurturing Skills

The Workforce Plan for Early Learning
and Care and School-Age Childcare,
2022-2028

Pillars, enablers and implementation



Monitoring Committee

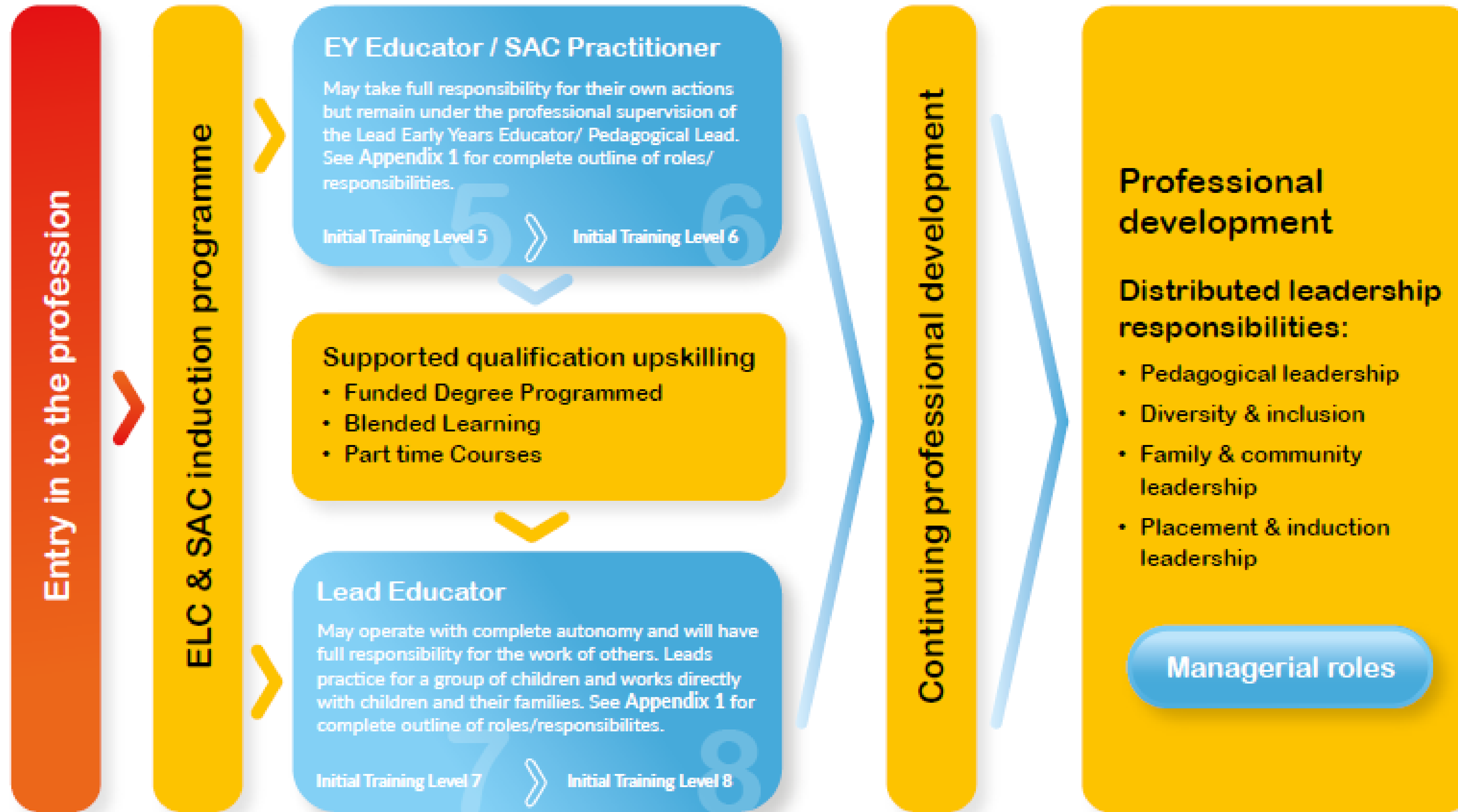


Roles and role profiles



- *Nurturing Skills* sets out role profiles for each of three grades of responsibility:
 - “Early years educator” [i.e. assistant]
 - “Lead educator”, who leads practice with a group of children [i.e. teacher]
 - “Manager”, who has day-to-day charge of the setting [i.e. head of centre]
- The 3 grades are linked to different minimum rates of pay, with funding to support qualifications, but services are private and set own recruitment policies
- *Nurturing Skills* also commits to develop “distributed leadership responsibilities” within settings

Career pathways within ELC & SAC settings



Pillar 1: Establishing a career framework



- Roles and qualification targets established.
- Target: 50% of Early Years Educators to have relevant degrees (level 7+ on NFQ) – including all Lead Educators. 85% with level 6
- **Minimum qualifications for Managers (level 6 ELC, level 5 SAC)**
- Minimum qualification (level 5) for School-Age Childcare Practitioners

Early Years Educators / SAC Practitioners – Level 5 minimum, but rising proportion of Early Years Educators with level 6

Lead Educators (i.e. room leaders) – graduate role for *all* age groups in Early Learning and Care

Managers – qualification requirements to be introduced (by 2028) for first time; training in management skills to be developed

Training & support for “distributed leadership responsibilities” in settings, which may build on AIM Inclusion Coordinator role

Develop and incrementally introduce an induction process for new entrants to profession

Role profiles developed for:

- Early Years Educator
- School-Age Childcare Practitioner
- Lead Educator
- Manager

Manager – role profile



- ❖ Key tasks and responsibilities, including in areas such as:
 - Overall responsibility
 - Quality of practice, curriculum
 - Leading staff team, training
 - Administration; health and safety
- ❖ Skills and knowledge, in the areas of:
 - Child development
 - Play and learning
 - Social environment
 - Safety, health and well-being
 - Personal professional development
 - Leadership, management, communication and administration

Manager – role profile



10.3.4. Manager

Key Tasks and Responsibilities:

- Overall "person in charge" as determined by the regulations.
- Have a good understanding of ELC or SAC (as appropriate).
- Lead and be directly accountable for overall operation and organization of an ELC or SAC setting.
- Have overall responsibility for quality practice at the setting.
- Have overall responsibility for health, safety, maintenance & hygiene.
- Manage the formulation, implementation and evaluation of philosophy, policies and procedures to support quality practice.
- Lead and advocate for inclusive and democratic practice in the context of national guidelines and models.
- Ensure curriculum is developed and evaluated in line with national guidelines.
- Ensure that planning and assessment practices provide quality ELC experiences to and for children.
- Continuously develop quality improvement strategies within a setting to enhance the quality of experience for all children and staff.
- Overall leader of staff team developing, establishing and fostering effective working relationships with all staff.
- Consistently promote a child-centred approach to ELC and SAC in partnership with children promoting children's agency and participation in their ELC or SAC environments.
- Ensure high quality stimulating learning environments indoors & outdoors for children are in place that ensure their safety & security; promote child centred learning & offer engaging and enriching experiences that support and promote their health, wellbeing, identity and belonging & learning & development.
- Lead on building, maintaining and advocate for highly reciprocal, responsive and respectful relationships with babies, toddlers and young children and foster the development of children's peer relationships.
- Ensure the development, implementation and evaluation of specific strategies that support children with a range of communicative needs are implemented appropriately.

- Have overall responsibility for planning, creating and maintaining high quality stimulating environments for children that ensure their safety and security; promote child centred learning and offer engaging and enriching experiences that support and promote their health, wellbeing, learning and development.
- Lead the engagement in regular evaluations of children's environments.
- Take responsibility for the performance of others, (supporting, delegating, monitoring and evaluating).
- Engage in support and supervision practices.
- Be responsible for continuous compliance with statutory regulations, legislation, contractual obligations and practice frameworks relevant to the operation of an ELC or SAC setting.
- Manage a wide range of reports and documentation / resources in line with regulatory requirements and best practice. Model organisation skills for others.
- Work in ongoing partnership with parents, families and guardians in the care and learning of their children.
- Ensure the development and implementation of purposeful

strategies that foster children's sense of identity and belonging are being fostered and implemented appropriately.

- Maintain involvement with outside agencies e.g. County Committees, Regulatory Organisations, National Government Organisations and the local community.
- Liaise with other professionals and institutions to inform quality practice.
- Ensure that the climate, structure and organization of the ELC setting promotes and develops positive professional practice by all staff and supports their own sense of wellbeing.
- Engage in regular continuous professional development (CPD) opportunities to review and improve, knowledge and skills at a personal and professional level including activities such as self-reflection and evaluation.
- Take responsibility for the mentoring and support of all practitioners engaged in professional development in the absence of a student placement mentor.
- Facilitate and support pre-service and in-service education and training of ELC practitioners.
- Have overall responsibility for the induction and probation of staff.

- Have overall responsibility for adherence with all regulations and legislation relevant to the setting as an employer.

- Depending on organisation size may have additional responsibilities; e.g. (financial, HR, marketing).

Skills and knowledge:

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure there is at the ELC Centre personnel with an in-depth knowledge and understanding of a range of child development including e.g. theories related to ELC, the centrality of play; socio-cultural theories to support babies, toddlers and young children to form secure and positive relationships etc.
- Ensure there are personnel at the setting with a comprehensive understanding of the significance to practice, of family, social, cultural and environmental factors on child development, well-being, identity and learning.
- Have some knowledge of the holistic development of children.
- Ensure there is at the centre personnel with an in-depth understanding of the central role of adults in supporting and promoting the holistic development of the child through play.

- Ensure there are personnel at the Setting with an ability to employ highly effective systematic assessment and observation methods to evaluate, form opinions, and progress holistic learning and development for children informed by the National Curriculum Framework.

PLAY AND LEARNING

- Ensure there is capacity at the centre to lead enquiry based pedagogical practice.
- Ensure there is capacity at the centre to lead the development and implementation of a range of play based strategies in the provision of all experiences and activities for babies, toddlers and young children.
- Ensure there is an understanding of the importance of assessment of and for learning in early years' education in line with national guidelines.
- Ensure there is capacity and ability to develop tailored strategies underpinned by theory to support

Manager – role profile



the development of key learning dispositions in babies and young children.

- Ensure pedagogical strategies to support children's emergent language, literacy, (including digital literacy), numeracy, creativity, early science, technology engineering, arts and mathematics (STEAM) are developed and implemented appropriately.
- Ability to lead a team co-ordinating the development, implementation and evaluation of an appropriate curriculum for babies and children (0-6).

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

- Ensure there is an in-depth knowledge of a range of methods available for improving adverse social environmental factors for babies and young children, including knowledge of the public services available locally and nationally and the ability to use these appropriately for the benefit of children.
- Ensure ethical, rights-based, inclusive and participatory practice are consistently promoted ensuring the voice of the child is heard, listened to and acted upon.

SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING

- Ensure that staff have the ability to develop and evaluate a range of activities to support and promote high quality practice in relation to the safety, health hygiene and wellbeing of babies, toddlers and young children ensuring knowledge is relevant and current.
- Ensure overall compliance at the setting for health, safety and hygiene practices for all.

PERSONAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Ensure that professional development opportunities are provided to and enacted by the staff team to ensure abilities to critically review, reflect & evaluate.
- Engage in self- reflection relation to one's own personal and professional development.
- Lead and support professional development of a range of practitioners in ELC settings.
- Ensure there is critical awareness of the value of research in ELC at the ELC Centre.

LEADERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, COMMUNICATION AND ADMINISTRATION

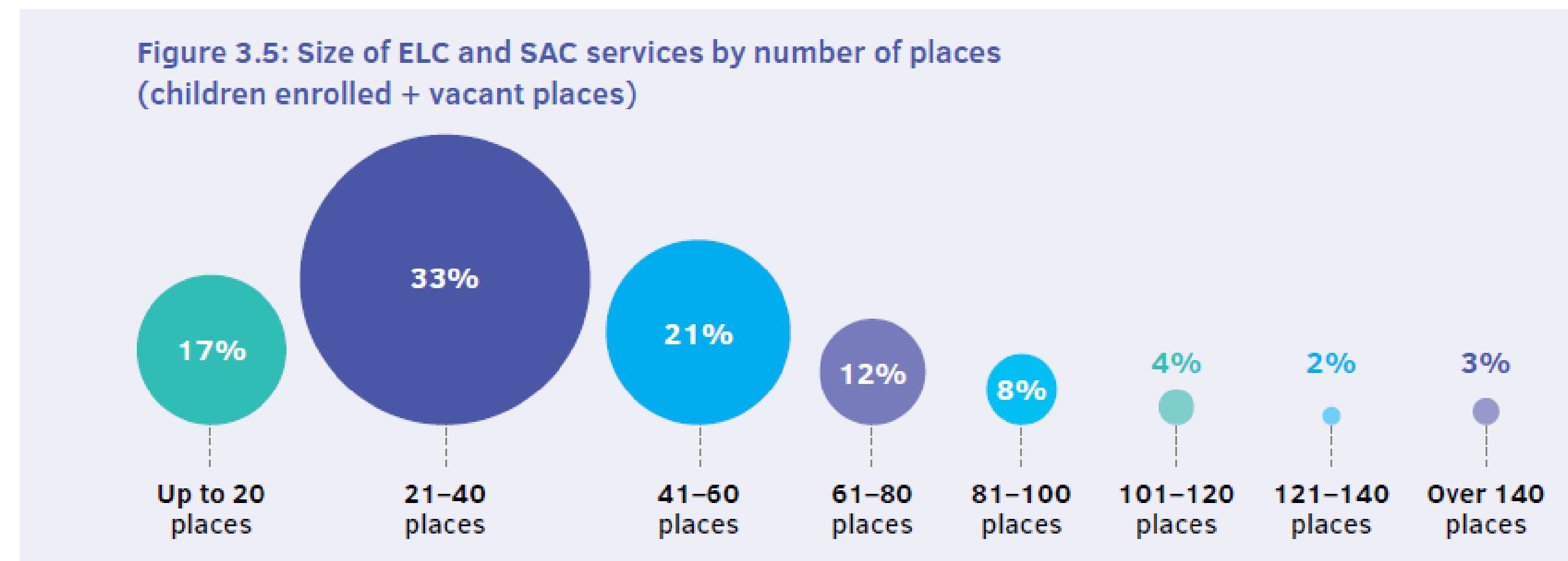
- Ability to lead others.
- Ability to instil a culture of wellbeing across the setting.
- Ability to provide management and communication leadership.
- Ability to provide insightful role modelling for staff.
- Ability to advocate on behalf of others relevant to the ELC context.
- Ability to co-ordinate the effective operation and management of an ELC setting.
- Knowledge and understanding of financial, administrative and human resource theory and practice necessary for the effective operation of an ELC setting.

- Ability to manage and resource flexible ELC services for children and families.
- Ability to develop and implement organisational structures ensuring that lines of authority and accountability are understood by all staff members in a staff team.
- Ability to maintain strong interpersonal, intrapersonal and self-awareness skills in all interactions with a variety of stakeholders, including families, staff and children.
- Demonstrate high level supervisory and mentoring skills that empower and motivate staff at all levels.
- Demonstrate organisational and leadership skills.

Size of settings / organisations



- On average 9.2 staff per setting
- 43% of settings have 1 room only, and 22% have 2 rooms
- 71% of settings single service, 22% settings in chains of 2-5 services, 3% in chains of 6-10 services, 4% in chains of 11+ settings



Distributed leadership responsibilities



Inclusion
Coordinator

Family and
Community
Partnership
Coordinator

Pedagogical
lead

Student
placement and
induction lead

Inclusion Coordinator (INCO)



Roles:

- Lead inclusive practice in the setting, esp. disabilities
- Mentor staff, share learning, model practice
- Promote DEI Guidelines
- Liaise with external specialist support team and other agencies
- Advocate for children in the setting

- Specialist 1-year training programme – LINC (Leadership for INClusion), plus CPD
- Additional funding to services with qualified INCO
- AIM evaluation: 91% of providers report positive impact of INCOs on inclusion, but also time/workload issues esp. in larger settings
- Approx 2/3 of services have an INCO (though more staff are LINC-trained)

Family and community partnership



Roles:

- Lead and support partnership and engagement with families and communities incl. local schools
- Later: pilot delivery of parenting supports through ECEC settings

To be developed through new **Equal Start** programme (launched 20th May 2024)

- Role to be developed, drawing on INCO model and others
- Specialist training to be developed (like LINC)
- Priority initially for settings targeted through Equal Start
- Plan to introduce additional funding for settings
- Could be the same person as INCO or different

Future distributed leadership roles



Pedagogy

- Provide leadership for pedagogical practice within an ELC setting
- Implement curriculum, in line with *Aistear*
- Mentor colleagues
- Develop and lead effective approaches to support children's learning.

“All Lead Educators have responsibilities for pedagogical leadership.”

Student placement and induction

- Support quality learning experiences for students on professional practice placements
- Engage with further and higher education institutions
- Mentor educators going through induction process

Thank you



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