

Childcare Strategy



**Isle of Man
Government**
Reiltey Ellan Vannin

Our Island Plan:
Outstanding Lifelong
Learning And Development
Opportunities For All

Glossary

ACEs – Adverse Childhood Experiences

AEN – Additional Educational Needs

CPD - Continued Professional Development

CSWG - Childcare Strategy Working Group

DESC – Department of Education, Sport and Culture

DfE – Department for Enterprise

DHSC R&I – Department of Health and Social Care, Registrations and Inspections Unit

DOI - Department of Infrastructure

ECEC - Early Child Education and Care

EYTS - Early Years Teacher Status

EYTSEN - Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs

GLD - Good Level of Development

Informal Childcare – nannies, au pairs, family, friends and neighbours

Regulated Formal Childcare – registered childminders, nurseries, and child day care centres

SEED - Study of Early Education and Development

SEN – Special Educational Needs

SEND - Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

SSD - Social Security Division

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Ministers' Foreword

Ms Julie Edge MHK

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, SPORT AND CULTURE

The shared vision for the Department of Education, Sport and Culture is to inspire, empower and provide learning, sporting and cultural opportunities that support all children, young people and adults. In striving for excellence, we aim to be a forward thinking, inclusive and nurturing organisation which enables everyone to achieve and enrich our Isle of Man community.

Every child on our Island deserves the best possible start in life in order to build the foundations on which they can develop. During the first five years of a child's life, their experiences and relationships form the basis of their development. This is when the foundations for learning, health, communication and behaviour are built. This strategy aims to provide all children with access to high quality early learning and childcare so that every child has the opportunity to develop and achieve their full potential.

This Childcare Strategy focuses on putting the child first and looks at improving outcomes for all children through access to early years education. It provides childcare professionals with a clear vision for the future of the Island's childcare sector and parents with the clarity and assurance they need to ensure the greatest outcomes for their children. It is an important document that will shape the future principles for such an important provision and ensure that each and every child matters in striving for excellence.

This strategy gives equality of access and a right to quality early education and childcare for all through enhanced supply and new measures to ensure that wherever you live on the Island and whatever the price, children receive quality care and early years education from our childcare providers.

Our Island Plan highlights the Government's commitment to creating a Secure, Vibrant, and Sustainable future, ensuring there are Outstanding Lifelong Learning and Development Opportunities for All. Through the implementation of this Childcare Strategy, and any complementary changes to employment law, we will look to reframe our approach to childcare, early education and working parents, putting our children first and ensuring every parent has a choice.

Dr Alex Allinson MHK

MINISTER FOR ENTERPRISE

The topic of childcare is a complicated one. It crosses a myriad of stages of our lives, has a fundamental role to play in our children's development, and gives people choices in their work/life balance. From a Government point of view, this complexity means it is often split out across various teams and Departments creating a sometimes disparate approach. This strategy aims to bring all of these strands together, looking at the role of childcare for both children and parents, and the longer term impacts that this has across our lifetimes.

For parents it importantly enables choice. For those wanting to return to work but who feel they currently can't due to a lack of childcare provision, lack of local services, or a multitude of other reasons, this strategy looks to remove some of those barriers. Away from formal childcare, the strategy also looks to align equality in parental leave, again giving parents the freedom of choice based on opportunities rather than limitations, and giving women greater flexibility in their return to work.

For childcare providers it offers additional support, exploring options for mitigating staffing pressures and enabling providers to expand their businesses through financial support and regional development.

The wider repercussions to all of this are profound. Better childcare and flexible options don't just enable peace of mind and happiness for children and parents, they also give businesses the chance to access hidden talent, they enable schools and nurseries to better safeguard at risk children, and they encourage our residents to stay on the Island, as well as encourage new families to relocate. It is a fundamental piece in the very framework of our lives here in the Isle of Man and this strategy ensures it is brought together and presents significant, measurable actions to carry forward.

This Strategy is not a completed document. We have been working hard to gather the best research and insight from across Government and the private sector to understand the challenges here and now, and the best solutions to improve the situation going forward. However, we understand that different members of our community have different requirements, so the strategy will be subject to Tynwald debate and a wider Island consultation to ensure that we have incorporated everything we need to deliver a real shift in our approach and a real impact on people's lives.



Background

Following the recommendations of the Social Affairs Policy Review Committee, an interdepartmental working group comprising of representatives from the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, Department of Health and Social Care Registration and Inspection Team, Department for Enterprise, and Treasury, was set up to explore and address the issues raised by the committee. The views of stakeholders were also sought, and the working group presented a paper to Tynwald in July 2019. The agreed recommendations from these reports, as well as how they have been or are being addressed, is available in Appendix 1.

To address these recommendations a wider Childcare Strategy Working Group was formed, and membership was extended to include representatives from the Childcare Sector and the Chamber of Commerce. It also included the appointment of an independent Chair to oversee the work of the group. The formation and further background to this group has been outlined in an update paper which has now informed the development of the Draft Isle of Man Childcare Strategy.

Recently, engagement between the sector and Isle of Man Government has risen, with the aim of supporting providers to deliver services through a comprehensive in-person and online Continuous Professional Development (CPD) programme, advisory visits, regular stakeholder engagement, and the development of an early years learning environment for providers and schools to see good practice in action and to use for training. This has been extremely well-received amongst the sector, who are engaging with the additional CPD available to upskill their staff and share knowledge between themselves, as well as feeding directly into DESC and DHSC R&I on a range of issues including training courses, a child's transitions into school, and in the development of the Childcare Strategy Working Group interim report. Furthermore, relationships between childcare providers and government were strengthened during the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in order to ensure that childcare providers were supported and able to continue providing childcare, in particular for key workers and vulnerable children during this time. The working group will continue under the current administration to oversee the completion of this Draft Strategy, and the final programme that emerges.

Our Island Plan

The Island Plan highlights the need for a Secure, Vibrant, and Sustainable future, ensuring there are Outstanding Lifelong Learning and Development Opportunities for All. It sets out success criteria whereby "our children have the best possible start in life, including equal access to early years education and childcare" through the implementation of this Childcare Strategy and any necessary changes to employment law so that parents can access childcare at various stages and balance home and work commitments.²

[1] Social Affairs Policy Review Committee, The Adequacy of Nursery Place Provision, PP2018/055.

[2] Our Island Plan: Building a Secure, Vibrant and Sustainable Future for our Island, GD No. 2022/0004, p.14

The Importance of Early Years Education

It is widely accepted that access to regulated formal childcare and early years education through providers such as nurseries, playgroups, or childminders, positively impacts the development of a child's cognitive, socio-emotional, and communication skills.³ It exposes the child to a range of new environments and interactions, teaching valuable development skills in social interaction and communication. Additionally, it exposes them to education professionals who can interact and assess a child's development, identifying vulnerable children and those who may have Additional Educational Needs (AEN). Studies have shown that engagement in formal childcare can reduce the proportion of children considered 'at risk' by the time they reach reception class at primary school.⁴

Nevertheless, it is important to recognise the value of parents in particular during the first year of a child's life. Whilst the benefits to the child are clear, it can also support parents in developing secure attachments to their child which is shown to positively impact on the mental health and well-being of both the parent and the child.⁵

Furthermore, it is important to note that each parent has a choice as to whether their child does engage with formal childcare and early years education, and if so the amount, type, and age at which they access it. A number of factors influence this decision, amongst these is the mix of childcare that, in their own opinion, is most beneficial to their child. However, other factors are likely to influence this decision including their own career aspirations or informal childcare support networks such as family members, friends, or neighbours.

However, there are existing barriers which prevent parents from accessing the desired amount, type, or quality of childcare to meet their needs. These barriers to formal childcare can include affordability, availability or convenience of access (including location and hours offered). This creates inequalities, often income-based, from the outset of a child's life which may impede their development throughout education. As such, it is of paramount importance to remove barriers to accessing formal childcare and early years education whilst also facilitating parental choice.

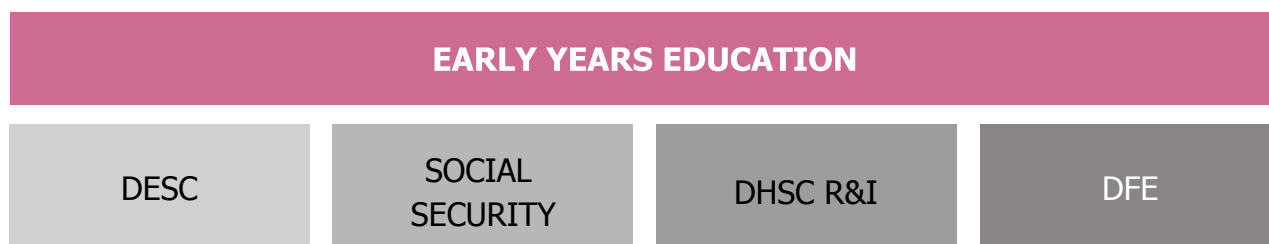
[3] Edward Melhuish, Julian Gardiner & Stephen Morris, Study of Early Education and Development (SEED): Impact Study on Early Education Use and Child Outcomes up to Age Three, Department for Education, November 2017, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1034423/SEED-Age_3_RESEARCH_REPORT.pdf [accessed 17th February 2022].

[4] Pam Sammons and others, The Early Years Transition & Special Educational Needs (EYTSN) Project, Department for Education and Skills, 2003, <https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/18204/1/RR431.pdf> p.7 [accessed 17th February 2022]

[5] Robert Winston and Rebecca Chicot, The importance of early bonding on the long-term mental health and resilience of children, *London Journal of Primary Care*, 2016; 8(1): 12–14.

The Present Situation

Ownership of Early Years on the Isle of Man is, at present, complex. The Department of Education, Sport and Culture, Social Security Division of Treasury, Department of Health and Social Care Registrations and Inspections Team, and the Department for Enterprise all have an interest in delivering early years services and infrastructure, however this creates a complicated landscape for families and childcare providers to navigate.



Evidence from market research carried out on behalf of the Childcare Strategy Working Group in May 2019 identified that there were significant gaps in childcare provision particularly for children under 2, in certain geographical areas of the Island, and outside of the core working week.⁶ Some parents also identified the need for an increase in wraparound and holiday care provision to enable them to successfully return to work. The below table shows the current number of childcare places available in the Island.

	CHILDMINDER	DAY CARE	TOTAL
NORTH	51	250	301
SOUTH	76	165	241
EAST	148	1136	1284
WEST	59	114	173
SOUTH EAST	12	18	30
TOTAL	346	1683	2029

The Childcare Strategy Working Group carried out a survey of providers and an additional post Covid-19 survey was undertaken in Autumn 2021 for parents and employers to determine current trends, needs and issues faced. This reiterated a general shortage of spaces, with approximately 60% citing cost, availability, or location as being the main constricting factor to their child accessing their desired amount of childcare. The full survey results are included in Appendix 2.

It has also highlighted acute problems for those with AEN, with providers unable to accommodate some children due to the nature of their complex, additional or medical needs and insufficient support to access the resources required to meet those needs. This includes funding for equipment, additional staffing, training, and support, which is placing significant pressure on parents and does not enable equality of access for all children.

[6] Tynwald Court, Official Report - Proceedings, (16th July 2019, Vol. 136, No.15) Item 10.

Furthermore, whilst child day care centres are currently inspected on an annual basis against minimum standards under the Regulation of Care Act 2013 there is no combined Care and Education Quality Framework in place to thoroughly assess the quality of the education being offered to children. The implementation of a combined framework would allow for the educational aspect of provision to be inspected in greater depth to bring the Isle of Man in line with the rest of the British Isles.

There are early indications that these challenges may be beginning to have an impact on outcomes for children in the Isle of Man. The proportion of Foundation Stage pupils attaining a Good Level of Development (GLD) in the Island fell from 72% to 41% between 2019-2021. Whilst undoubtedly adversely impacted by restrictions in place due to Covid-19, it is important that all children have access to quality early education to ensure any potential future disruptions to learning are minimised and positive outcomes are achieved.

Additionally, the Isle of Man does not currently legislate for Shared Parental Leave or provide the requirement for Statutory Maternity Pay. This can contribute to gender-based inequalities as it often requires one parent to take time out of their career, limiting their progression opportunities, or restricting parental choice around the provision of childcare.

The current skills shortage on the Island, highlighted by low levels of unemployment and high numbers of vacancies available, presents an exceptional opportunity to support more parents into employment. The 2021 Census found there were well over 2,000 people listed as 'Looks after home or family (solely)'.⁷ The shortages in many sectors are helping to contribute to a culture shift amongst employers to offer flexible working, creating opportunities for parents to balance home and work life.

These factors and others combine to create challenges for those looking to start a family on the Island and wishing to access childcare. This can contribute to preventing or delaying parents returning to work, increasing the economically inactive population and can make the Island less attractive to families with young children seeking to relocate. This may in part explain the Island's falling birth rate which has been observed since 2010. Whilst this trend is consistent across the Western World, it is worth noting that many Nordic countries such as Iceland, Finland, and Norway, all of whom are highly ranked by UNICEF in respect of childcare provision, evidenced a growth in birth rates of between 5-16.5% in 2021.⁸

[7] Statistics Isle of Man, 2021 Isle of Man Census Report Part I, Cabinet Office, January 2022, GD 2022/014

[8] Anna Gromada and Dominic Richardson, Where do Rich Countries Stand on Childcare?, Unicef Office of Research – Innocenti, June 2021, <https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/where-do-rich-countries-stand-on-childcare.pdf> [accessed 14th February].

Jurisdictional Analysis

RANK	COUNTRY	LEAVE	ACCESS	QUALITY	AFFORDABILITY
1	Luxembourg	5	3	12	16
2	Iceland	19	5	1	15
3	Sweden	9	4	17	10
4	Norway	6	12	20	8
5	Germany	13	21	9	4
6	Portugal	12	15	10	12
7	Latvia	16	24	2	7
8	Denmark	27	2	5	17
9	Republic of Korea	4	10	26	14
10	Estonia	3	32	17	8
35	United Kingdom	36	13		35

UNICEF league table - indicators of national childcare policy (June 2021)⁹

A green background indicates a place in the top third of the ranking, pale grey denotes the middle third, and pink the bottom third. The blank cells indicate that there are no up-to-date comparable data available.

The Nordic regions, who rank highest in the UNICEF early years provision league table, focus on supporting families by funding and providing free childcare from an early age which helps bridge the gap between the cessation of maternity allowance and pre-school. Statutory Maternity Leave is broadly comparable across the British Isles, but in a broader context is ranked relatively low at 36th for leave by UNICEF. It is clear, therefore, that there is a gap in support for early years childcare for the period after parental leave ceases and pre-school funding commences which is likely to impact the effect of the UK's (and Isle of Man's) childcare policies.

Currently the Isle of Man grants a universal payment of £3,420 (approximately 15-20 hours per week pro rata) across the year for pre-school placement (age 3-4) whilst others in the British Isles offer between 10-30 free hours per week to help towards pre-school care. Affordability of childcare in the United Kingdom compares unfavourably to comparator jurisdictions, ranking 35th, although this does improve when means-tested contributions are included.

[9] In June 2021, The UNICEF Office of Research ranked national childcare policies, assessing the world's 41 richest countries on leave (both maternity and paternity), access, quality and affordability of childcare. Although the UK placed low on the league table in terms of leave and affordability, it was very much on par with Norway, who were 4th in the table, for access. The Isle of Man was not included in the UNICEF research, however, childcare provision is similar to that of the UK although there are differences in approach across all nations.

Across the British Isles, there is no universal funding of childcare for children under 3 although England and Wales provide 10-15 additional free hours for working families with a combined income of under £100,000 per annum for children aged 0-4.¹⁰ In addition, both Jersey and Guernsey currently offer funding support for 2-3 year olds with AEN or Special Educational Needs (SEN) through a needs-based assessment. Meanwhile, some countries such as Malta, Italy and Chile, offer free universal childcare schemes, starting as early as 3 months old. The Isle of Man's current offer is therefore lagging behind England and Wales and, to an extent, Jersey and Guernsey at a time where attracting key skills and young families is a strategic priority.

Whilst the financial support schemes for childcare businesses starting up or expanding in the Isle of Man compare favourably to those offered further afield, the Island appears less accommodating towards providing operational, day-to-day funding to childcare providers.

The supervision ratios currently in place also do not aid operational efficiency for childcare providers in the Island. In 2013, England introduced Early Years Teacher Status, allowing for enhanced ratios of 1:13 for children aged 3+, compared to 1:8 in the rest of the UK and Isle of Man. For children and babies under 2, the supervision ratio across the British Isles is 1:3, except the Isle of Man which has a ratio of 1:2 if cared for above ground floor level and 1:3 where care is provided at ground floor level. The lower ratios available on the Island compared to other jurisdictions is perhaps the single biggest inhibitor on the viability of nurseries and places and needs reviewing. A full breakdown of supervision ratios, and a greater in-depth comparison with countries in the British Isles and Scandinavia is available in Appendix 3.

Across the British Isles, funding is only available once the child is 3, whereas in countries which UNICEF rank highly for access such as Denmark and Norway, funding is available for children and babies under 2 to access formal childcare although this is typically on a part-time basis.

[10] Wales has committed to expanding free childcare to all 2 year olds within the next three years.

The Future Framework

The Draft Isle of Man Childcare Strategy aims to ensure Every Child has an Opportunity to Access High Quality Childcare and Early Education and Every Parent has the Choice to Access Childcare. Underpinning this vision are two Strategic Pillars focussed on:

- 1. Putting the Child First;**
- 2. Ensuring Every Parent Has a Choice**



PUTTING THE CHILD FIRST

By Putting the Child First, this ensures that the primary focus of any action is on how the benefits to the child can be maximised, by putting their needs at the forefront of decision-making and places the focus on achieving high quality outcomes for all children. It ensures an equality of opportunity and access for all, removing barriers to formal childcare arrangements which currently exist for those with AEN/SEN or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) as well as supporting those on low incomes who would otherwise be unable to access formal childcare settings.



ENSURING EVERY PARENT HAS A CHOICE

Ensuring Every Parent Has a Choice allows for a freedom of selection for parents or carers, not solely based on the type and mix of childcare provision available, but also in other aspects such as work-life balance, affordability, career, and personal economic aspirations. This supports gender and pay equality amongst parents, encouraging a shared approach towards childcare responsibilities whilst balancing their individual career and personal goals. This also serves to maximise the participation of parents and carers in work, which can be built upon by providing support to parents who have been out of the workforce to return to employment which suits them, their career goals, and their desired parenting approach.





Putting the Child First

To ensure Equality of Opportunity and Access for All regardless of socio-economic background and for those who require extra support, it is imperative that issues are recognised and addressed as early as possible. The Study of Early Education and Development (SEED) found that Early Child Education and Care (ECEC) was of particular importance to disadvantaged children, due to the positive benefit on cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes by age 3.¹¹

Furthermore, the Programme for Joint Strategic Needs Assessment identified 'Starting Well and Developing Well' as one of the top priorities for the next 12 months, with ACEs being the key strand arising from this. Contact with regulated formal childcare provision and early years education can provide a greater number of contact points to identify those with ACEs earlier, enabling safeguarding measures to be taken sooner providing a greater benefit to the child.

33%

of an EYTSN Project sample were considered 'at risk' of SEN upon entry to pre-school aged 3, reducing to 21% by the time they began primary school

The importance of regulated formal childcare and early years education is even more pronounced for vulnerable children or those who may be identified as having AEN. The Early Years Transition and Special Educational Needs (EYTSN) Project found that 33% of their sample were considered 'at risk' of SEN upon entry to pre-school aged 3, however by the time they began primary school this had reduced to 21%.¹² This suggests that early engagement with regulated formal childcare and early years education can have a positive outcome for children whilst reducing existing pressure on SEN services. There are a small percentage of children born with complex additional and/or medical needs who will need access to specialist provision and services.

Alongside this, Improving Quality Outcomes for Children in Early Years must be central to the development of the strategy. The key measurable for all forms of childcare provision is to ensure that the best possible outcomes for each individual child are realised. A focus on outcomes ensures providers can work with DESC to ensure high quality educational standards in the Isle of Man. The introduction of a Quality Standards Framework and combined Education and Care Inspection will support the holistic needs of children. We must therefore also look to remove cost and bureaucracy where possible to drive positive viability to these businesses, for example revising and adjusting ratios where possible.

As highlighted on the next page, the themes, aims, deliverables and actions are draft subject to change as the strategy is considered and consulted upon with all relevant stakeholders. The outcomes of this consultation process will be used to inform a final strategy being brought back to Tynwald by July 2022 for Tynwald debate and final approval.

[11] Melhuish and others, Study of Early Education and Development (SEED), p.36.

[12] Sammons and others, The Early Years Transition & Special Educational Needs (EYTSN) Project, p.7.

Timeline	Theme	Aim	Deliverable	Actions	Lead Department
6 months	Equality of Opportunity & Access	Childcare provision is affordable for all	The financial burden of childcare is mitigated	Consult with Treasury on options to make childcare more affordable for all, including additional support for working families and any options to provide flexible or staggered support during early years	Treasury, SSD and DESC
1 year	Equality of Opportunity & Access	Support children with additional needs	Increase access to childcare for those under 4 with SEN/AEN	Investigate the business case for an inclusion fund to allow increased pre-school credit to support children who may require interventions, one-to-one support, access to an outreach team and/or additional resources	DESC
2 years	Equality of Opportunity & Access	Support the needs of low-income and vulnerable families	Raise attendance at childcare settings for those aged 2-3	Investigate how to further enable children of low-income and vulnerable families to access funded childcare from the age of 2	Treasury, SSD and DESC
3 years	Equality of Opportunity & Access	Support children with complex needs	A clear childcare pathway for children with complex needs	Consider the case for the creation of a complex needs nursery with specialist staff	DESC
1 year	Identification of Those with Adverse Childhood Experiences	Early identification and safeguarding of those with ACEs through contact with registered formal childcare providers	Increase the proportion of those with ACEs identified and supported prior to beginning primary school	Work with education and healthcare professionals through Public Health to enable earlier identification and support of children with ACEs	DESC
2 years	Improve Quality Outcomes for Children in Early Years	Provide high quality, safe and stimulating environments	Quality assessment of child day care centres based on Quality Standards Framework	Investigate the creation and implementation of a combined educational and care inspection process using a Quality Standards Framework	DESC / DHSC R&I
3 years	Improve Quality Outcomes for Children in Early Years	To develop an overview of attainment and achievement in Early Education settings	Ability to identify and determine areas in need of improvement in childcare settings	Develop the process to allow reporting to DESC regarding educational quality standards achievement	DESC

- Equality of Opportunity & Access

- Identification of Those with Adverse Childhood Experiences

- Improve Quality Outcomes for Children in Early Years



Ensuring Every Parent Has a Choice

By Ensuring Every Parent Has a Choice, it is recognised that more must be done to Improve Access to Childcare. It is well-documented that many barriers currently exist which prevent access to childcare, including location, type, affordability, flexibility, provision for children with additional needs, and wraparound care.

Further issues exist regarding capacity, and efforts should be made to Facilitate Providers to overcome their current constraints to allow them to expand to meet demand naturally. Central to this must be efforts to Mitigate Staffing Pressures, through increasing the size of the workforce in the childcare sector by making the sector more attractive and supporting staff to deliver the best quality care to children.

Finally, it is important for those parents who wish to return to employment, whether they have been out for six months or six years, that they feel fully supported and have all the information they need to help them make the best decisions for themselves, their children, their employers, and their wider support networks. Key to this is Enabling and Supporting Flexibility, giving parents and carers the confidence to find roles which they can undertake to fit around childcare responsibilities.



Timeline	Theme	Aim	Deliverable	Actions	Lead Department
3 years	Improving Access to Childcare	Childcare provision meets demand in terms of type, location and wraparound care, particularly for under 2's	Parents can access their preferred type of childcare in locations convenient to them at times they need, regardless of the child's age	Investigate the demand for, and specific options to provide, services not currently available in local regions and wraparound hours and develop the business case to resolve these issues	CSWG
6 months	Facilitate Providers	Childcare providers are freely able to expand their offering to meet the needs of the public	Enhanced financial support available to childcare providers	Review the current financial support schemes and consider business case for expanded support	DfE
1 year	Facilitate Providers	Alleviate barriers to capacity for the provision of under 2 spaces	Reduce staffing pressures for those caring for children under 2	Review current staffing ratios for under 2's	DHSC R&I
2 years	Facilitate Providers	Provide the physical infrastructure for childcare providers to grow	Provide space and opportunities for childcare providers to set up in locations where current provision is lacking	Undertake a review of land and premises in regional hubs suitable for childcare provision	DOI
6 months	Mitigate Staffing Pressures	Enhanced apprenticeship opportunities	Appropriate apprenticeship courses available at all levels	Review provision of and funding for childcare apprenticeships starting at age 16 under suitable supervision	DESC
1 year	Mitigate Staffing Pressures	Careers pathways for those working in childcare are clear and progressive	Expand the earning potential of those working in childcare to strengthen career progression routes	Investigate potential to introduce Early Years Teacher Status and enhance ratios to 1:13 for those aged 3+ where an EYT is in post	DESC / DHSC R&I
1 year	Mitigate Staffing Pressures	Access to information regarding careers in childcare is readily accessible to all	Increased numbers of new entrants into the sector	Centrally co-ordinated careers information for the childcare sector	DESC
3 years	Mitigate Staffing Pressures	To address the issue of recruitment and retention of staff in child day care settings	There is a sufficient workforce available in order to meet the needs of the sector	Develop a clear and progressive careers pathway for those working or wishing to work in childcare, considering training and qualification provision	DESC
6 months	Enabling and Supporting Flexibility	Parents can work as, when, and how they want	Full information and support for employment opportunities to work around childcare	Consider options to improve information and support for those with childcare responsibilities	DfE
1 year	Enabling and Supporting Flexibility	Parental Leave is flexible and responsive to individual circumstances	Families can take joint childcare responsibility	Consult on with a view to implementing Shared Parental Leave and other family-friendly flexible working legislation	DfE

- Improving Access to Childcare

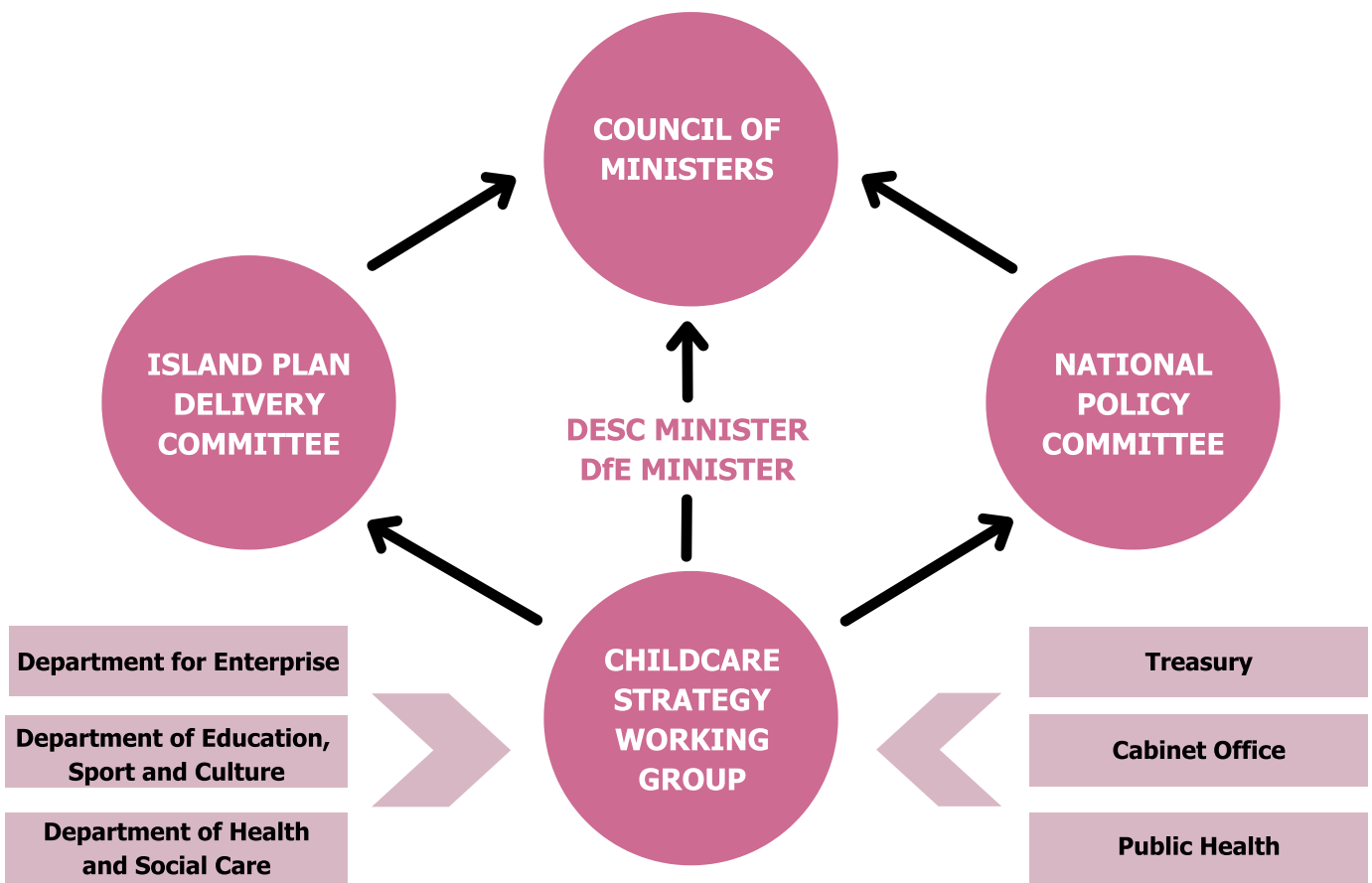
- Facilitate Providers

- Mitigate Staffing Pressures

- Enabling and Supporting Flexibility

Communication Channels

Childcare provision impacts the vast majority of the Island’s population at some point, whether directly or indirectly, therefore it is essential that there are clear communication channels for all to feed in to regarding their concerns, their ideas, and their experiences of the childcare in the Island. Evidently, the amount and variety of objectives in discussion here will not be a simple undertaking, and the large and diverse range of stakeholders involved in these decisions requires a formal governance structure to drive these changes and ensure the development of policies continues to meet the needs of children and families both now and in the future.



The Childcare Strategy Working Group currently consists of a Political Member, representatives from DESC, DfE, DHSC R&I, the Treasury, the Chamber of Commerce, Private, and Third Sectors. However, the recent change of administration provides the opportunity to refresh this group and to strengthen the strategic approach for Early Years and Children.

As part of this strategy, a delivery group with ministerial leadership and political involvement will be designed to ensure development and delivery of the strategy. This will also provide a clear opportunity for stakeholders to provide input which can be debated and implemented quickly.

The intention of this oversight group is to ensure collaboration between departments and to deliver results in terms of policymaking, driven by clear input channels which all may access.

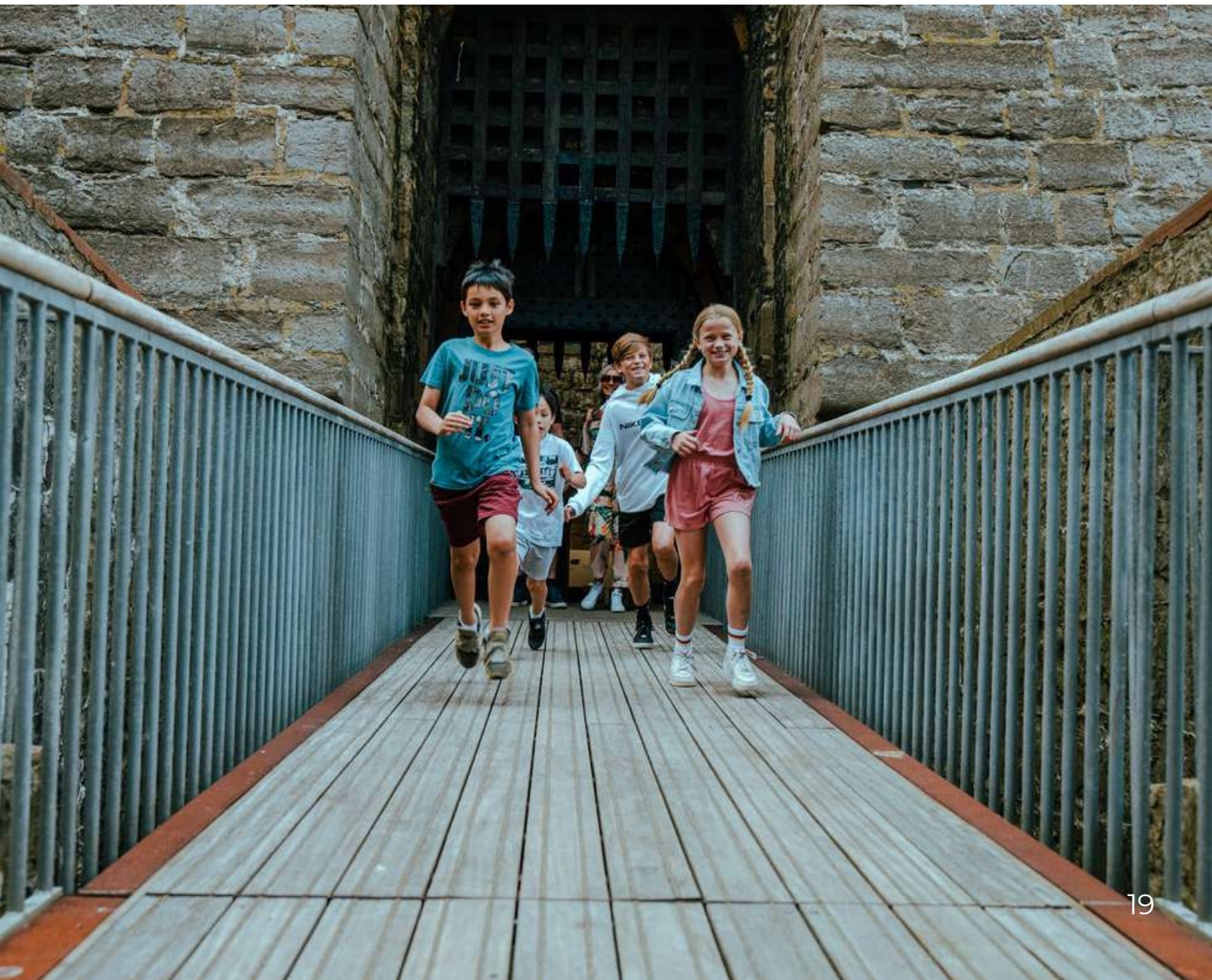
Summary

To summarise, provision of registered formal childcare and early years education is critical to a child’s social, emotional, and cognitive development. However, it must also be recognised that parents may have differing preferences or circumstances which impact their ability, or desire, to access registered formal childcare and early years education. As such, it is of paramount importance that Every Child has an Opportunity to Access High Quality Childcare and Early Education and Every Parent has the Choice to Access it.

The six key themes, grouped into two pillars, provide the framework to achieve the aims set out in this strategy. Multiple policies may sit below each aim, with clear actions to deliver the objectives to benefit children, parents, and the wider Island community.

In order to take this Strategy forward, the following recommendations are being presented:

- Designate an Early Years political representative to lead and provide oversight to a cross-government Early Years Action Group
- Investigate actions and consult on ideas to finalise the strategy and delivery plan by July 2022



Building a Secure, Vibrant and Sustainable Future

Childcare Strategy

Overarching Vision

Ensure every child has an opportunity for high quality early education and childcare and every parent has a choice to access it.

Putting the Child First

Learning – Maximise the opportunity for all children to have stimulation and educational opportunities at a young age. Driving places and availability.

Equality of Opportunity and Access



Support for working families to make childcare affordable for all



Support children with additional needs



Support the needs of low-income and vulnerable families



Support children with complex needs

Adverse Childhood Experiences



Early identification and safeguarding for those with ACEs

Improve Quality Outcomes for Children in Early Years



Provide high quality, safe and stimulating environments



Develop an overview of attainment and achievement in Early Years Settings

Every Parent to Have a Choice

Economic – Maximise the participation of parents and carers in work with support to help them return to work. Ensure strategy is self-funding. Supporting gender equality & pay equality in parents.

Improving Access to Childcare



Ensure childcare provision meets demand

Facilitate Providers



Enable childcare providers to grow to meet the needs of the public



Alleviate barriers to capacity for the provision of under 2's



Provide the physical infrastructure for childcare providers to grow

Mitigate Staffing Pressures



Review provision and funding for childcare apprenticeships



Ensure career pathways for those working in childcare are clear and progressive



Ensure access to information regarding careers in childcare is accessible for all



Address the issue of recruitment and staff retention in child day care settings

Enabling and Supporting Flexibility



Make flexible working opportunities clearer and provide support for parents returning to work after taking time off



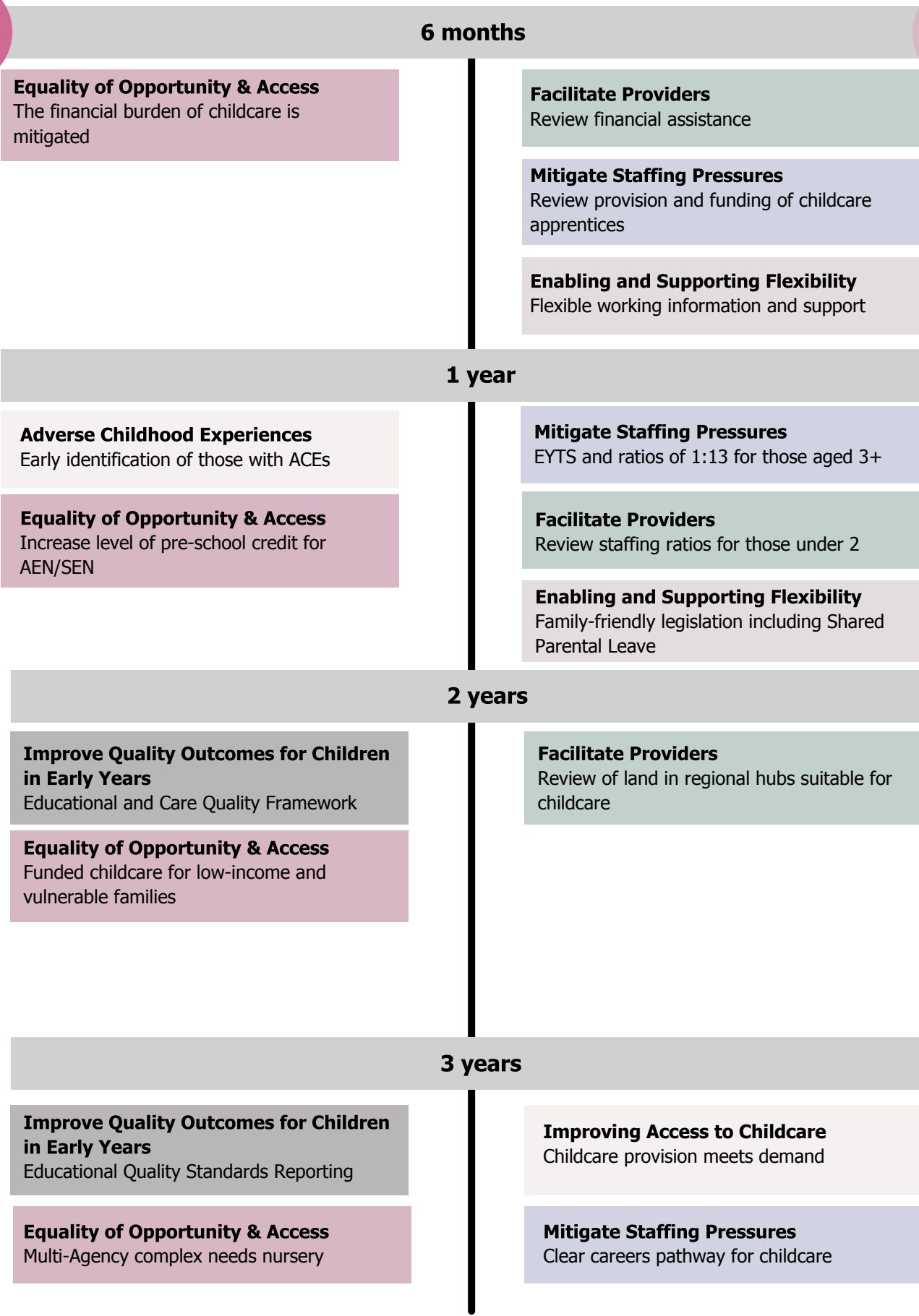
Consult on and implement Shared Parental Leave and other family-friendly flexible working legislation

Timeline of Deliverables



Putting the child first

Ensuring every parent has a choice



Appendices

Appendix 1 - Previous Recommendations

Source	No.	Recommendation	Action to date
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	1	That Tynwald would wish to see a situation where parents throughout the Island have the opportunity to choose the form of childcare, if any, which they want for their children, whether that be nursery or childminding.	The Strategic Pillar of the Draft Childcare Strategy, that Every Parent Has a Choice, aims to provide attainable options to childcare for all.
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	2	That the Treasury should review legislation, policy and practice on parental leave and report to Tynwald with recommendations.	A commitment in the Draft Childcare Strategy to consult on and implement Shared Parental Leave and other family-friendly legislation.
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	3	That advice on the necessity of applying for childcare early be added to the procedures for health visitors attending pre-natal sessions with expectant parents.	Healthcare visitors share information with parents during pre-school health checks. Further signposting currently being developed through an Early Years website
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	4	That Tynwald is of the opinion that a strategic approach is needed to the social and economic issues highlighted by the current shortage of nursery places; that a strategy on working families with very young children (meaning children from 0-5 years) should be developed by the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Enterprise and the Treasury; and that in the development of this strategy the needs of working parents and grandparents, and of employers, should be considered alongside the needs of children.	The Draft Childcare Strategy aims to increase the number of spaces available including wraparound and out-of-hours care.
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	5	That the strategy for working families with very young children (meaning children aged 0-5 years) should be based on a joint strategic needs analysis; and that in developing the strategy Departments should consider, among other things:	
	5.1	parental leave;	A commitment in the Draft Childcare Strategy to consult on and implement Shared Parental Leave and other family-friendly legislation.
	5.2	advice to expectant parents;	Further signposting for expectant parents, including advice around childcare, is due to be made available through an Early Years website
	5.3	possibility of extending to younger children the pre-school credit scheme currently available for children aged 3-4 years;	Targeted funding currently being explored as part of the Draft Childcare Strategy.

Source	No.	Recommendation	Action to date
	5.4	advice, encouragement and financial assistance (including training grants) to private sector providers of care and education to children under five years;	The Department for Enterprise's Financial Assistance Scheme, under Appendix 8, offers enhanced financial support to new childcare providers of up to £15,000 through the Micro Business Grant Scheme.
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	5.5	how to incentivise private sector nursery providers to offer places for children under 2.	The Department for Enterprise's Financial Assistance Scheme, under Appendix 8, offers enhanced financial support to businesses who create at least 40% of its new nursery spaces for under 2 year olds.
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	6	That the strategy on working families with very young children should be co-ordinated and driven forward by an inter-Departmental Working Group including representation from the Department of Education, Sport and Culture, the Department of Health and Social Care, the Department for Enterprise and the Treasury.	The Childcare Strategy Working Group was brought together in July 2019, producing an interim report in January 2022 which has informed this Draft Strategy
Social Affairs Policy Review Committee	7	That the Council of Ministers should appoint a Minister who should lead the development of a strategy for working families with very young children and should report to Tynwald with recommendations by June 2019.	Minister Cregeen led the development of Early Years Childcare in the Isle of Man Report, a predecessor to the Childcare Strategy Working Group.
Tynwald Recommendations	1	To extend the pre-school credit to childminders (no extra cost and improves flexibility) and give consideration to further extension to other registered childcare providers ie: nannies;	Pre-School Credit extended to childminders as of September 2019 .
Tynwald Recommendations	2	To review the employment legislation and suggest enhancements for it to be more family friendly;	A commitment in the Draft Childcare Strategy to consult on and implement Shared Parental Leave and other family-friendly legislation.
Tynwald Recommendations	3	To undertake further work to incentivise Under 2 Childcare provision	The Draft Childcare Strategy seeks to review and improve the current financial support schemes available to childcare providers.
Tynwald Recommendations	4	To investigate ways to change workplace culture to enable more support for parents with young children particularly around flexible working;	Right to request flexible working extended to all employees (aside from agency staff) regardless of service with effect from June 2020

Source	No.	Recommendation	Action to date
Tynwald Recommendations	5	To ensure that those working in childcare or setting up in childcare are not burdened with excessive bureaucracy;	Survey undertaken in Summer 2021 with childcare providers to obtain feedback and ideas to reduce bureaucracy and barriers to setting up and remaining a provider. The implementation of a Quality Standards Framework with one combined inspection would ensure that bureaucracy is kept to a minimum for providers.
Tynwald Recommendations	6	To develop a clear pathway to extend pre-school credit to 2-3 year olds or to improve funding of early years provision by other means.	The Draft Childcare Strategy contains an action to consult with Treasury on options to make childcare more affordable for all.
Tynwald Recommendations	7	To review wraparound care and out of school holiday provision and identify options to increase provision, specifically outside of Douglas;	A commitment in the Draft Childcare Strategy undertake a review of land and premises in regional hubs suitable for childcare provision.
Tynwald Recommendations	8	To complete the development of a Childcare Strategy, in line with Recommendations 4 and 5 of the resolution of 19th June 2018 arising from the Second Report of the Social Policy Affairs Review Committee for the Session 2017-18 (PP2018/0050), to include a plan for how to increase provision in local communities, based on the evidence and research collected to include:	
Tynwald Recommendations	8.1	how DfE can best publicise the extended financial support of childcare providers, prospective childcare providers and childcare users;	Ongoing work with providers to highlight the financial support available.
Tynwald Recommendations	8.2	development of an interdepartmental early years strategy underpinned by a management information system;	The Draft Childcare Strategy commits to develop the process to allow reporting to DESC regarding educational quality standards achievement.
Tynwald Recommendations	8.3	development of a clear early years pathway for children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) extending the remit to include those with AEN and/or ACES	Early Years AEN Code of Practice has been drafted. Furthermore, the Draft Childcare Strategy commits to investigating a complex needs nursery and early identification of ACES.

Appendix 2 - 2021 Chamber of Commerce Survey Results

During 2021, the Isle of Man Chamber of Commerce Legislation Group conducted extensive research, including surveying both parents and employers, on behalf of the Childcare Strategy Working Group.

The final report is available [here](#).

Appendix 3 - Comparative Jurisdiction Analysis

Please see table on next page.

	Isle of Man	England	Scotland	Wales
Childcare Funding				
Universal Funding for 3-4 year olds	Universal childcare credit provided of £3,420 per annum paid monthly, on average around 16 hours per week.	15 hours a week for 38 weeks of the year (570 hours in total).	1140 hours a year (around 30 hours a week in term time). Increased in 2017 from 12.5 hours a week.	10 hours per week during school terms, called the Foundation Phase.
Means Tested Funding for 3-4 year olds	None, except those entitled under Employed Persons Allowance (earning threshold is much lower than means tested additional childcare in other jurisdictions).	Additional 15 hours of free childcare per week for 38 weeks of the year if family are in work, meet certain criteria and earn under £100,000.	None	Additional 20 hours per week if family are in work, meet certain criteria and earn under £100,000.
Funding Available for Under 2's	No universal funding, except those entitled under Employed Persons Allowance (earning threshold is much lower than means tested additional childcare in other jurisdictions).	No universal funding. 15 hours of free childcare a week for 38 weeks a year (570 hours in total) if family in receipt of certain benefits or the child's needs fall into a certain category.	No universal funding. Means tested childcare if family in receipt of certain benefits or the child's needs fall into a certain category.	No universal funding. Certain post codes entitled to claim 12.5 hours a week of free childcare. In Nov 2021 the Government committed to expanding free childcare to all 2 year olds within the next 3 years.
Qualifications required to work in pre-school setting				
Managers, Supervisors and Practitioners	Council for Awards in Care, Health and Education (CACHE) level 3 Diploma in Child Care and Education DCE, or NVQ level 3, minimum of 2 years work experience. NVQ level 4 for management level.	Practitioners level 2 CACHE or equivalent. Childminders must have completed Early Years Foundation Stage training before they can register with Ofsted.	Managers and lead practitioners must hold the Sottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 9. Practitioners must hold SCQF level 7. The period of registration is five years and staff should either maintain or achieve their qualification within this timeframe.	CACHE level 3 Diploma in Childcare or equivalent.
Care Worker/Assistant	Qualifications not needed.	Register with Ofsted and obtain enhanced criminal records check.	SCQF level 6. Registration period is the same as above.	Qualifications not needed.
Ratios				
Under 2	Above Ground Level 1:2 Ground Level 1:3	1:3	1:5	1:3
2 - 3 years old	1:8	1:4	1:5	1:4
3 - 5 years old	1:8	1:13 for EYTs	1:8	1:8
	Trainees less than 17 years old must not be counted in the staffing ratios.	Trainees less than 17 years old must not be counted in the staffing ratios.	Only qualified staff can be included.	Trainees less than 17 years old must not be counted in the staffing ratios.
Statutory Maternity Leave				
	Up to 26 weeks Statutory Maternity Leave. Employees who have 26 weeks service at the beginning of the 14th week before the expected week of childbirth are entitled to take up to 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave.	First 26 weeks Statutory, with another 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave.	First 26 weeks Statutory, with another 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave.	First 26 weeks Statutory, with another 26 weeks Additional Maternity Leave.
Statutory Paternity Leave				
	Paternity leave of 1 or 2 weeks within 56 days of the birth of the baby. There is no requirement on employers to pay employees who are taking paternity leave.	1 or 2 weeks paid paternity leave.	1 or 2 weeks.	1 or 2 weeks.
Statutory Maternity Pay				
	If you are an employee, Maternity Allowance will be paid to you at the rate 90% of your average weekly earnings, up to a maximum of £179.85 a week.	Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks. You get: - 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks - £151.97 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.	Statutory Maternity Pay is paid up to 39 weeks. You get 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first 6 weeks £151.97 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.	Statutory Maternity Pay is paid for up to 39 weeks. You get: - 90% of your average weekly earnings (before tax) for the first six weeks - £151.97 or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower) for the next 33 weeks.
Statutory Paternity Pay				
	Many employees will be eligible for Paternity Allowance at a rate of £179.85 per week.	The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Pay is £151.97, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).	The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Pay is £151.97, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).	The statutory weekly rate of Paternity Pay is £151.97, or 90% of your average weekly earnings (whichever is lower).

Jersey	Guernsey	Malta	Norway	Sweden
30 hours each week for 38 weeks a year under the Nursery Education Fund (NEF).	None	Free kindergarten childcare for all from 3 years old.	Low-income families entitled to 20 hours per week kindergarten free of charge.	525 hours per year (15 hours per week) from the autumn term after they turn 3 years old.
None	15 hours of free pre-school education for 3 to 4 year olds if family income is below £150,000.	N/A	Heavily subsidised kindergarten for working/studying families. Fees paid are capped at either £265 per month or 6% of income with additional discounts for siblings.	Heavily subsidised kindergarten for working/studying families. Capped at 3% of income or £111 per month for 1 child. Cost of a 2nd child capped at 2% of income or £74 per month, 3rd child capped at 1% of gross income or £36 per month, 4th child or more are free.
No universal funding. 10 hours / 3 sessions free for children who have an identified developmental need or have faced or are facing challenges in their family.	No information found.	No universal funding. Free childcare for working/studying families or where the child meets certain criteria. Free childcare hours mirror number of hours worked/studying.	See above, low-income families are also legally entitled to 20 hours per week kindergarten free of charge for children under 2.	See above.
Manager/Co-ordinator: Minimum 2 years relevant experience. CACHE level 3 and 4 or equivalent. Deputy Manager and Team Leader: CACHE level 2 and 3, or equivalent. Qualified practitioner: CACHE level 2 and level 1.	1 year experience working in early years setting. For managers working in childcare a recognised level 2 childcare qualification and in the process of obtaining level 3. If a new manager has a recognised level 3 childcare qualification. Deputy manager; level 2 or level 3.	Experience of working with children, relevant childcare qualification, training in management or administration.	Kindergarten Teacher Education (KTE) is a 3-year bachelor program. This program educates teacher candidates for kindergarten/early childhood education.	Pre-school teacher requires certification. Qualifications for certification include teaching degree, pre-school teaching degree or recreation instructor degree. Must also meet national requirement for language development.
Basic play work course & mandatory training in safeguarding, food hygiene, first aid and fire awareness.	At least 50% of staff must have, or be working towards, a level 2 childcare qualification or equivalent.	Recognised level of training and education.	No information found.	No information found.
1:3	1:3	1:3	1:3	1:5
1:4	1:4	1:5	1:3	1:5
1:8	1:8	1:6	1:6	1:16
Only staff aged 16 or over may be included in ratios.	Only staff aged 18 or over may be included in ratios (trainee staff also not included).		One Pedagogical Leader per 7 children under the age of 3 and per 14 children over the age of 3.	No national requirements for staff-child ratios and they're set at area level. Above figures are taken from 2017 average/national stats.
52 weeks of leave for all parents. Can be taken up to 3 blocks of leave during a 2 year period. Also available to adoptive and intended surrogate parents.	Basic Leave of 12 weeks, and an enhanced period of 26 weeks leave for employees who have worked continuously for the same employer for at least 15 months.	14 Weeks Paid Statutory Leave, 4 weeks unpaid Additional Leave.	Parents are entitled to a combined total of 48 weeks leave in connection with the birth and after the birth. It can be extended to 58 weeks if a lower rate of payment is accepted. Mothers also get the last 3 weeks before the estimated date of delivery. In addition to the first 12 months, each of the parents is entitled to 1 year leave for each birth. This leave must be taken directly after the first year. If you are taking care of the child yourself, you are entitled to both the years. Other people who care for the child may also be entitled to leave.	Parents are entitled to 480 days paid parental leave when a child is born or adopted. Each parent - should there be two - is entitled to 240 of those days. Each parent has 90 days reserved exclusively for him/her. Should he/she decide not to take these they can't be transferred to the partner. A single parent is entitled to a full 480 days.
The family-friendly changes to the Employment Law will give all new parents an entitlement to take up to 52 weeks of Parental Leave (including 6 weeks of paid Paternal Leave for both parents).	The partner of an employee who is entitled to Basic Maternity Leave has a right to take two weeks Maternity Leave.	Fathers are entitled to 5 weeks of Paternity Leave at a rate of 70% of one's regular pay.	The maternal quota is 15 weeks at 100% benefit or 19 weeks at 80% benefit. The amount of paid leave is based on annual income up to 6 times the 'G' amount. At present this is NOK 608,106. Payments made are based on your income from the last 3 months, but this can be assessed if it was significantly less than your typical income.	As above.
For a period of 6 weeks, an employee is; entitled to be paid their normal salary, and entitled to all other usual benefits as set out in their terms and conditions of employment. Currently the contributory benefit system supports a birth mother with a weekly allowance of £222.53 p/week while off work caring for a new baby.	No statutory obligation on employers to provide paid Maternity Leave - it is a decision for the employer. Maternity Grant - paid as a lump sum to the birth mother only. Maternal Health Allowance - a weekly payment to the birth mother, can be claimed from 12 weeks before the due date, if she is not working. 2 weeks after birth the Maternal Health Allowance transfers to become the Newborn Care Allowance - a weekly payment to whichever adoptive parent is caring while not working. This allowance can be transferred between parents.	The employers pays the first 14 weeks of Maternity Leave. Can receive a benefit for the remainder 4 weeks.	The maternal quota is 15 weeks at 100% benefit or 19 weeks at 80% benefit. The amount of paid leave is based on annual income up to six times the 'G' amount. At present this is NOK 608,106. Payments made are based on your income from the last 3 months, but this can be assessed if it was significantly less than your typical income.	80% of your pay for 12 months.
As above.	2 weeks unpaid Paternity Leave.	70% of regular pay.	The parental benefit period is 49 weeks (15 weeks are reserved for each parent) with 100% coverage or 59 weeks weeks (19 weeks are reserved for each parent) with 80% coverage. Parental benefit is calculated in the same way as sickness benefit.	Your employer does not cover the cost of your Parental Leave benefit, instead the Swedish Social Insurance Administration (Försäkringskassan) pays out the benefits.



