



NPC

SUPPORTING PARENTS
SUPPORTING CHILDREN



**NATIONAL PARENTS COUNCIL
SUBMISSION**

**Irish language in Early Learning
and Care (ELC) and School Age
Childcare (SAC)**

JULY 2024

www.npc.ie



National Parents Council (NPC) is the representative organisation for parents of children in early, primary and post-primary education. NPC was established as a charitable organisation in 1985, under the programme for Government, as the representative organisation for parents of children attending primary school and has been extended to cover parents with children in early years in 2017 and in post-primary in 2022. NPC received statutory recognition in the Education Act 1998.

NPC Vision

NPC want to see an Ireland where every child has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

NPC Mission

NPC exists to ensure that all parents are supported and empowered to become effective partners in their children's education. NPC will work to increase the capacity and capability of the primary education sector, to achieve true partnership and deliver better outcomes for all children.

NPC's Key Activities are:

- Representing the parents' voice in all aspects of their children's education
- Advocacy
- Building participation
- Service delivery



NPC Service Delivery

NPC services are aimed at empowering parents so that they can support their children in all aspects of their education.

Helpline

The NPC helpline is a national confidential service for parents. Their helpline staff listen, give information and support to parents to help them make the best possible decisions for and with their children.

Training and Development

The NPC Training and Development programme is a national programme of training, development and support for parents. The purpose is to empower parents to play an active part in their child's education at every level.

Website

The NPC's website www.npc.ie aims to provide parents with information regarding Early Years, primary, and post primary education. The site also allows parents an opportunity to give NPC their views regarding education issues.



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INTRODUCTION

The National Parents Council welcomes the opportunity to engage with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) in facilitating parents' input regarding the public consultation on the development of a national plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC). In pursuit of this goal, we have crafted a survey to capture the diverse opinions and perspectives of parents.

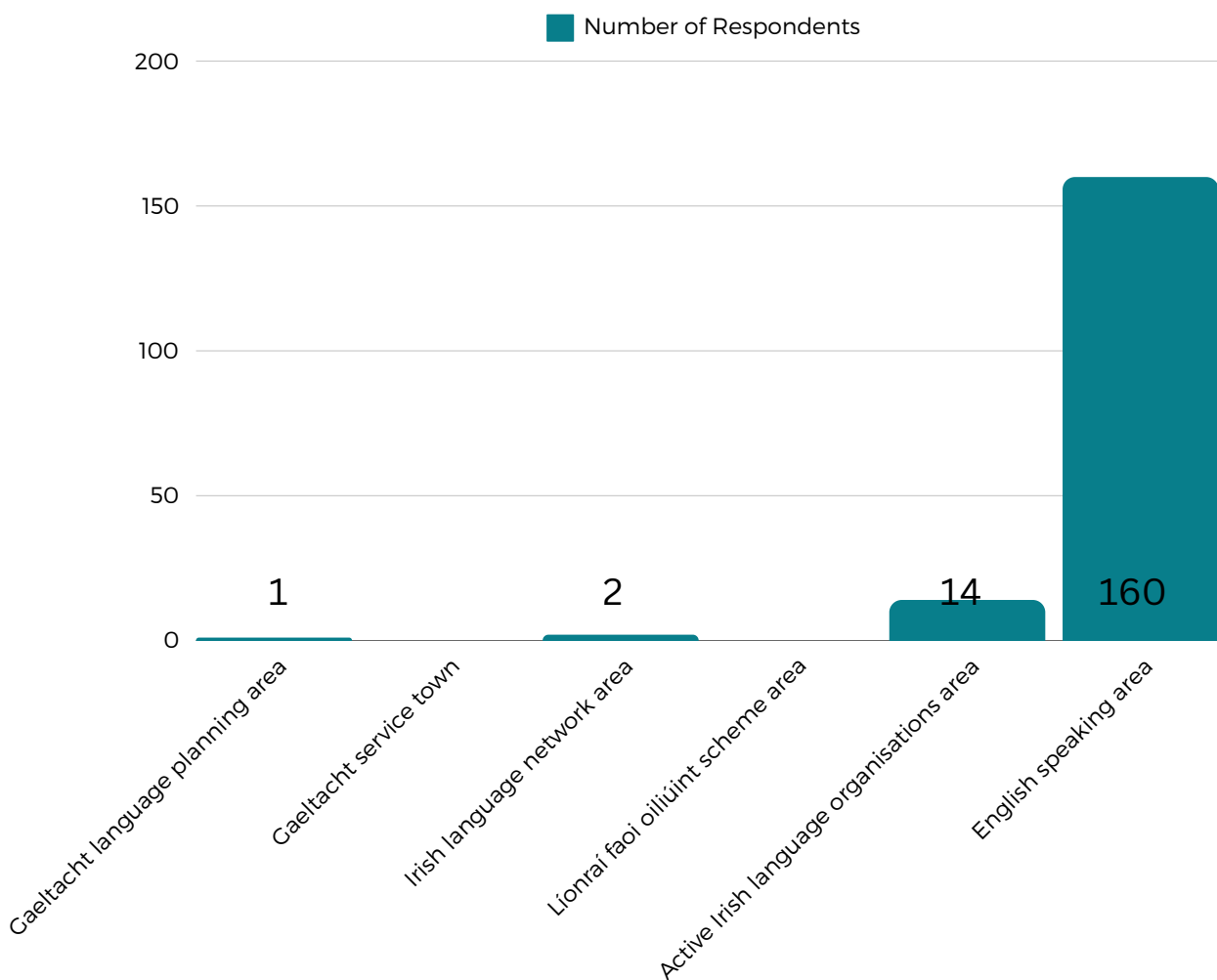
Our survey was open from June 24th until July 3rd, 2024, and received a response rate of 178 parents. Parents had the opportunity to share their opinions and views on early language education in the development of a national plan for Irish language provision. The NPC survey was sent to NPC members and those on the NPC contacts database. Links to the surveys were also displayed on our website (www.npc.ie) and on the NPC social media platforms.

Irish language in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC).

Section 1 – The respondents

The survey on the Irish language in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) elicited feedback from 177 respondents. Respondents were asked if they were providing feedback as parents living in various types of language areas. The results indicated that only 1 parent resided in a Gaeltacht Language Planning Area, while none were from a Gaeltacht Service Town. Two parents identified as living in an Irish Language Network Area, and none were from areas under the Lónraí faoi oiliúint scheme. However, 14 parents, reported living in areas with active Irish language organisations or a cohort of active Irish language speakers. The majority of respondents, 160 parents, were from English-speaking areas (see figure 1).

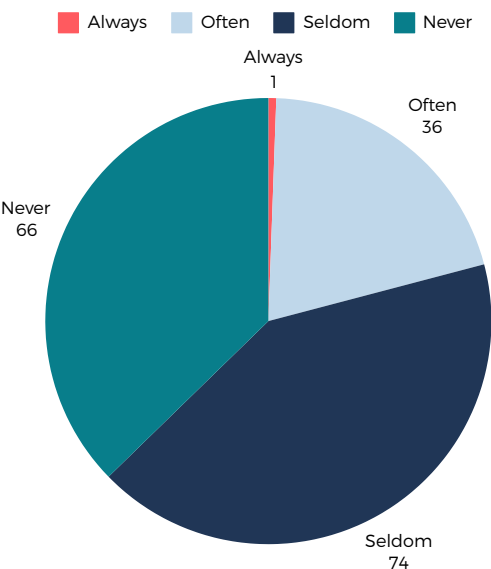
Are you providing feedback as a parent living in a:



(Figure 1)

Section 2: The respondents use of Irish and attendance at Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare.

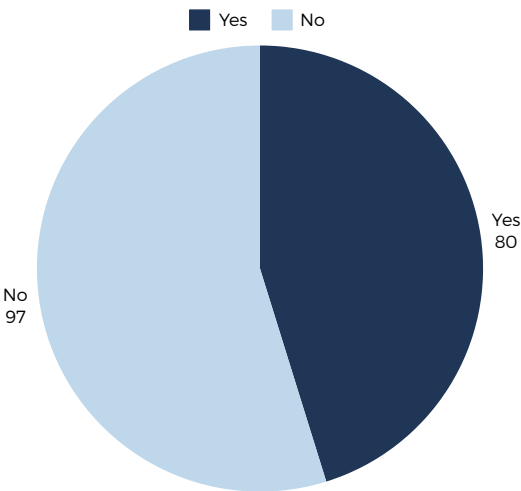
When asked whether the Irish language was spoken in the home environment, responses varied among the 177 parents surveyed. The majority (74) of parents expressed that they seldom speak Irish in their home environment, while 66 parents stated that they never speak Irish. On the other hand, 36 indicated that they often speak Irish in their home and 1 parent stated that they always speak Irish in their home environment (See figure 2).



(Figure 2)

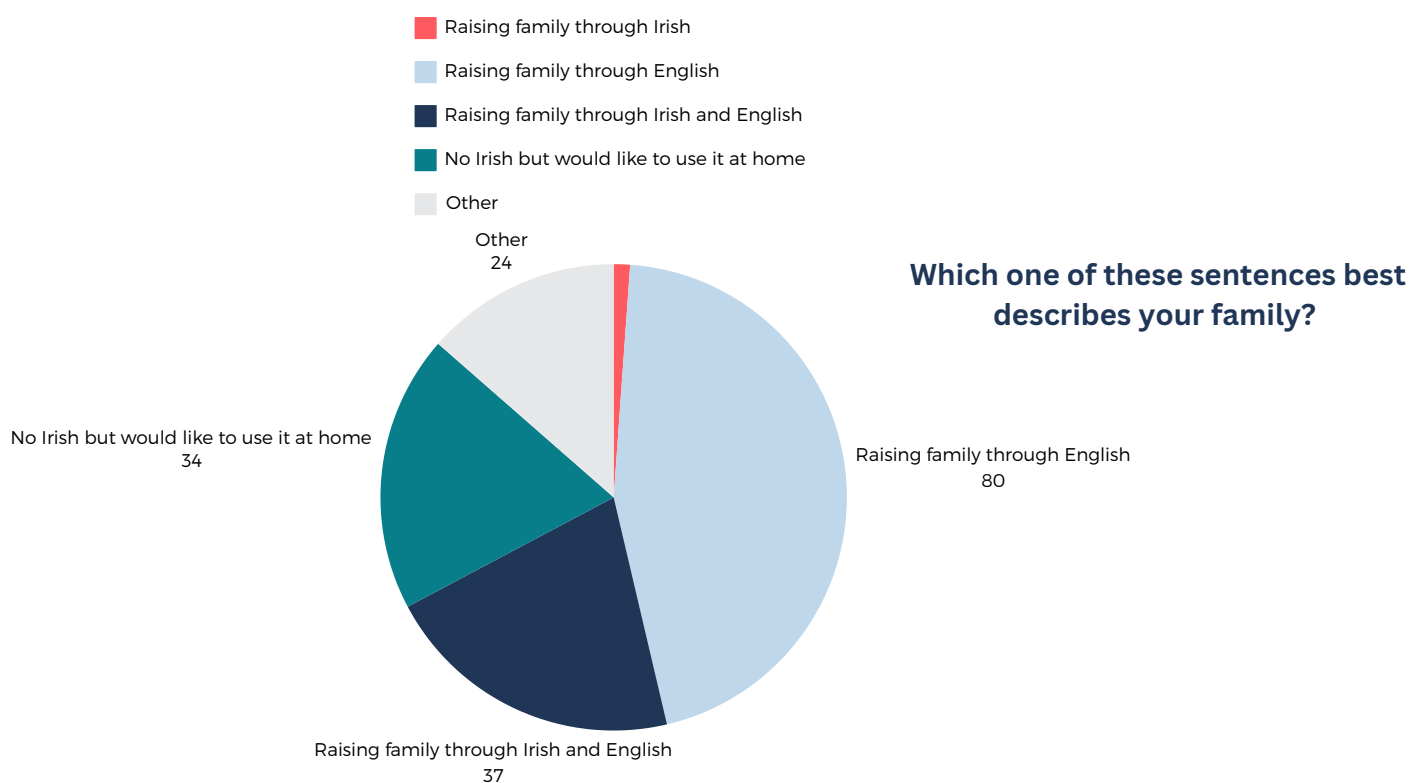
Parents were asked if anyone in the family speaks Irish with their child or children. The majority 55% said no, while 45% said yes (see figure 3).

Do you or anyone else in the family speak Irish with your child/children?



(Figure 3)

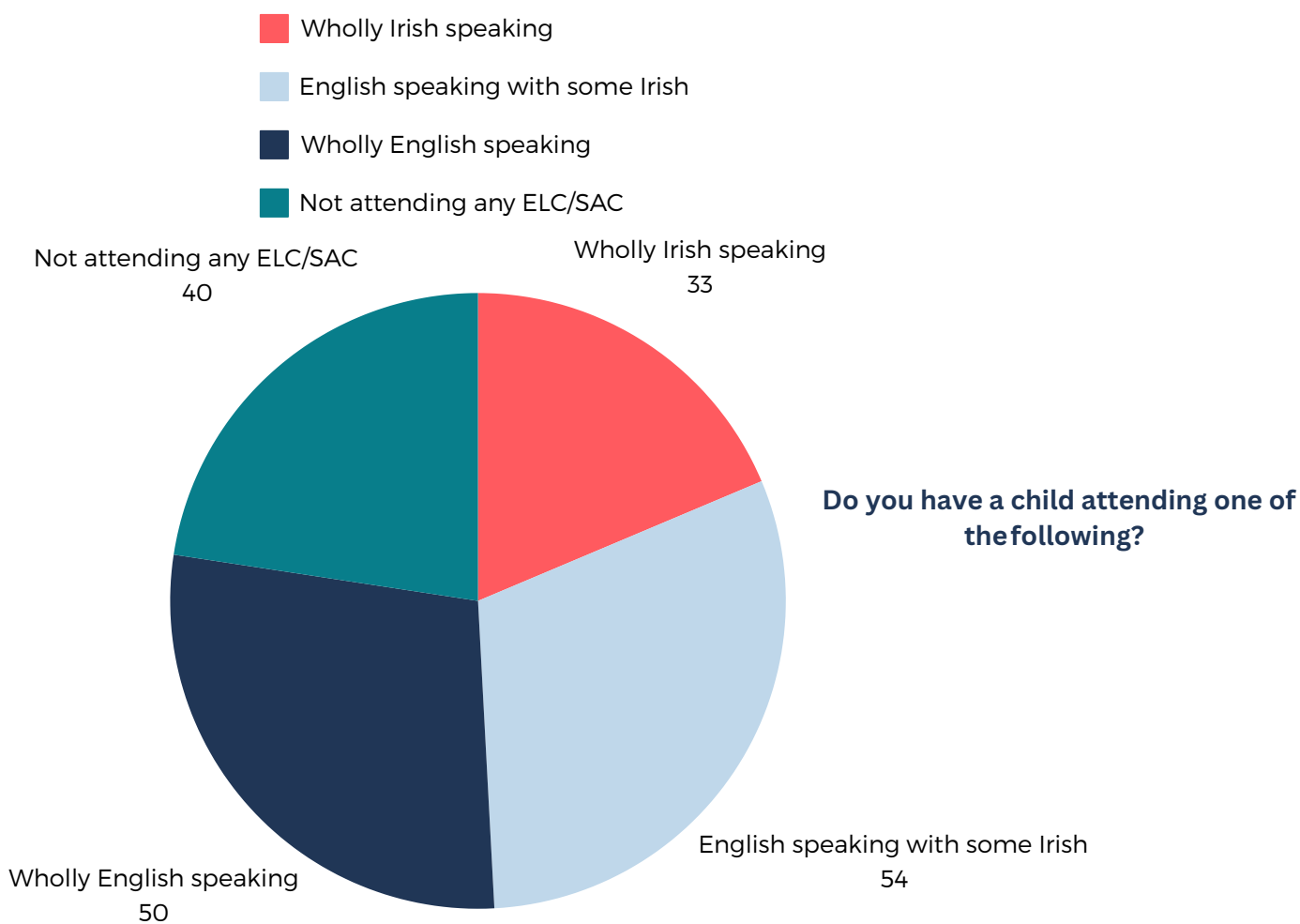
Parents were presented with a range of statements and asked to choose which one best described their family. 177 parents responded outlining different approaches to raising their families in relation to the Irish language. 2 parents are raising their families through Irish, while 80 are incorporating both Irish and English at home. Another 34 parents expressed a desire for their families to use Irish at home, despite not currently doing so. Additionally, 24 parents selected "Other" to describe their family's language use, see appendix 1. Some families use a variety of languages at home, including English, Portuguese, Slovak, Catalan, Polish, Spanish, and German. Many are trying to incorporate Irish into their daily lives through educational courses and the use of social media and online resources (see figure 4).



(Figure 4)

Type of Early Learning and Care or School-Age Childcare attended by children

In response to the survey question about the type of Early Learning and Care or School-Age Childcare setting their child attends, 177 parents responded. 33 respondents indicated that their child attends a wholly Irish-speaking ELC/SAC setting. Meanwhile, 54 respondents reported that their child is in an English-speaking ELC/SAC setting with some use of Irish. Additionally, 50 respondents stated that their child attends a wholly English-speaking ELC/SAC setting. Lastly, 40 respondents mentioned that they do not have a child attending any ELC/SAC setting (see figure 5).



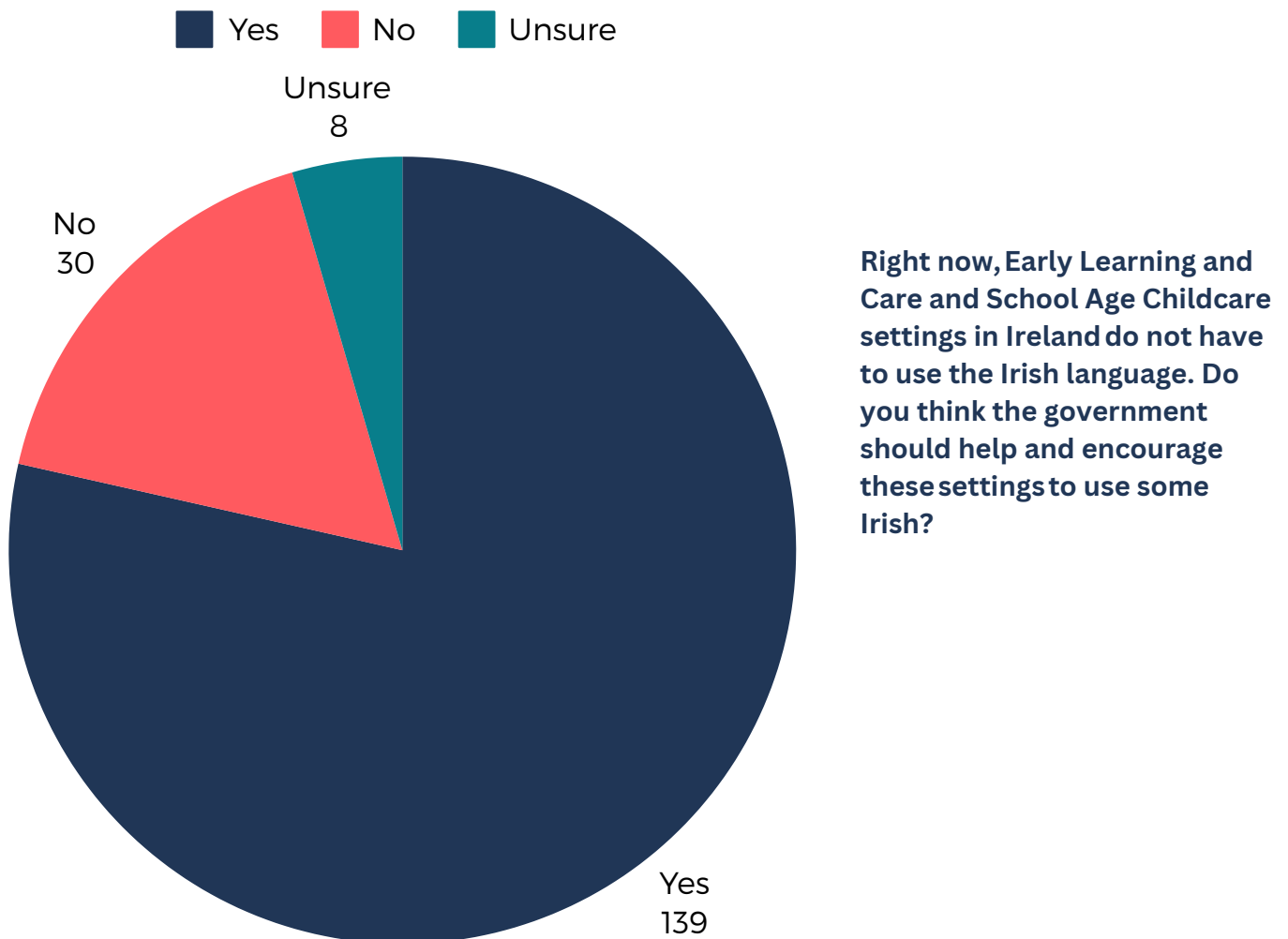
(Figure 5)

Section 3- Aim of the National Plan

Should the government support Early Learning Centres and School Age Childcare to incorporate the Irish language into their settings.

The survey explained that currently Early Learning and Childcare and School-Age Childcare settings operate without requiring the use of the Irish language. Parents were asked whether the government should support Early Learning Centres and School Age Childcare to incorporate the Irish language into their settings. 177 parents responded.

A significant majority, 139 respondents, support the idea of government involvement in encouraging these settings to use the Irish language. On the other hand, 30 respondents do not agree with the government supporting this initiative. Furthermore 8 respondents were unsure whether the government should provide this support (see figure 6).



(Figure 6)

Parents were asked why they thought the government should and should not help and encourage these settings to use some Irish. 135 shared their opinions on why they thought the government should help and encourage these settings to use some Irish. Additionally, 28 parents shared their opinions on why they thought the government should not help and encourage these settings to use some Irish. See appendix 2 and 3.

Parents were asked why do you think the government should help and encourage these settings to use some Irish?

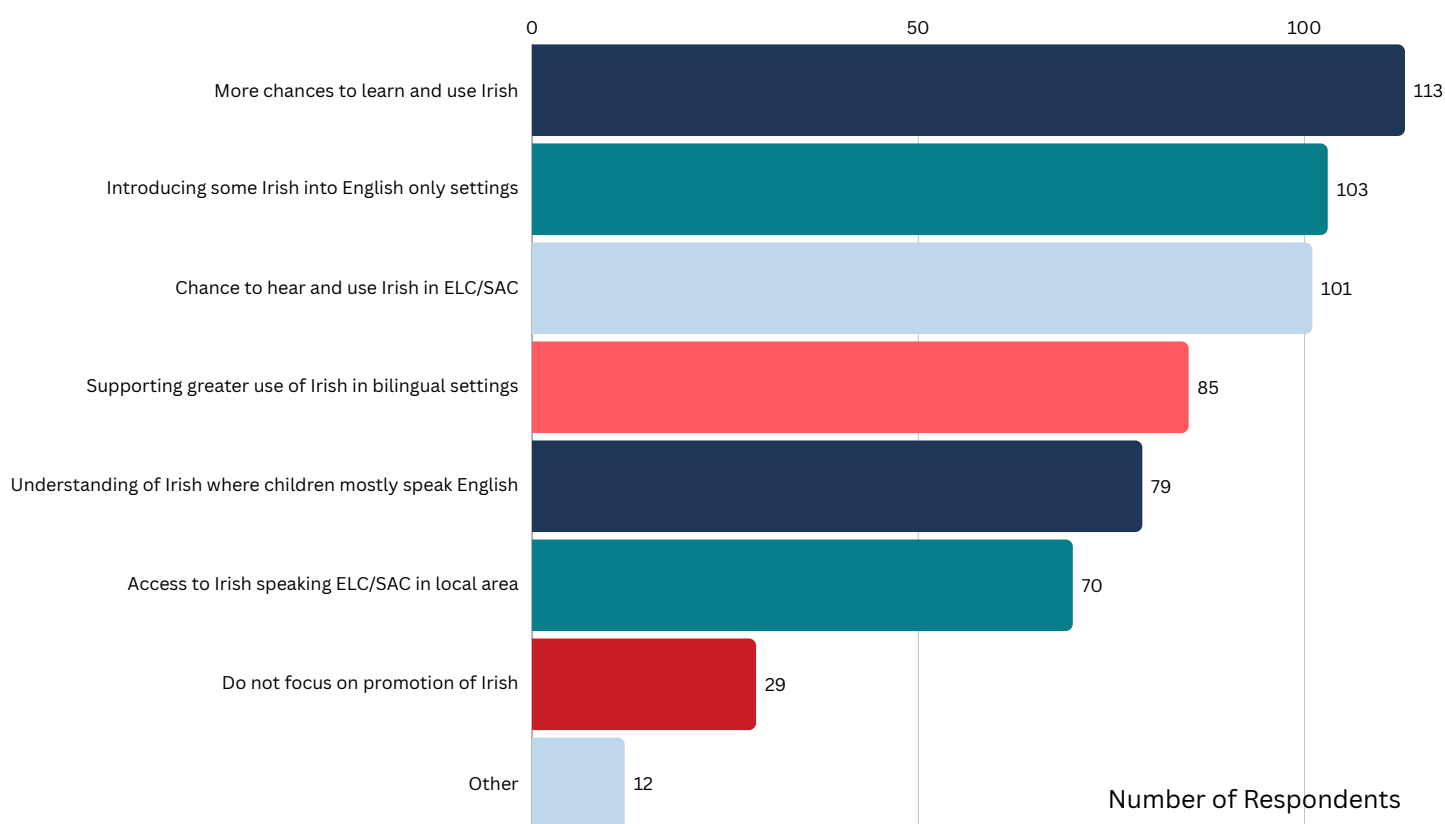
Of the 139 respondents that answered yes 135 shared their opinions on why they thought the government should help and encourage these settings to use some Irish. Parents indicate strong support for incorporating the Irish language into Early Learning and School-Age Childcare settings. Parents expressed pride in Ireland's native language, they emphasised the importance of protecting Irish as a national language and preserving cultural identity. They advocated for its wider use beyond traditional Gaeltacht areas. Many emphasised the benefits of early exposure and believe this is crucial to language development and can support bilingualism. Several parents stated that starting early with Irish facilitates a smoother transition into primary school, where Irish is a subject. Some parents suggested integrating Irish into daily playful activities, making it a natural part of children's lives rather than a formal subject. Parents highlighted the need for government support in providing resources, training, and encouragement for childcare centres to incorporate Irish effectively.

Parents were asked why do you think the government should not help and encourage these settings to use some Irish?

Of the 30 parents who did not agree with government support for the Irish language in ELC and SAC, 28 shared their views. Some of the respondents expressed concern about staffing challenges in ELC and SAC and making Irish a requirement could further impact staff. Many believe languages like French or Spanish are more useful and relevant. It was highlighted that currently there are no European languages taught during the formative early years in Ireland compared to other European cities. Many parents cited a preference for Irish as an option rather than being compulsory. Parents view the current method of teaching Irish as ineffective and worry about the additional burden on children with learning difficulties and children with a different first language that are learning English. There are some strong negative sentiments toward Irish due to past experiences, with some viewing it as a "dead language" unsuitable for non-Gaeltacht areas.

What should the government focus on to promote the Irish language in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings?

Regarding the promotion of the Irish language in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings, parents were presented with a range of statements and asked to choose all that they agreed with, 177 parents responded and indicated support for several initiatives. The most favoured action was giving children more opportunities to learn and use Irish, with 113 respondents supporting this. Introducing some Irish into settings that currently use only English was supported by 103 respondents, while 101 respondents agreed that every child should have the chance to hear and use Irish in their ELC/SAC settings. Supporting greater use of Irish in bilingual settings was favoured by 85 respondents, and ensuring access to Irish-speaking settings in local areas was supported by 70 respondents. Additionally, 79 respondents supported an understanding of the Irish language in predominantly English-speaking settings. A smaller group of 29 respondents did not think the government should focus on promoting the Irish language in these settings, and 12 respondents suggested other approaches, see appendix 12. Some suggested the teaching Irish should be linked to Irish culture, making it more engaging and meaningful for children through cultural activities and nature projects, rather than as a purely academic subject. Another recommendation was free language camps in Irish-speaking areas that would be a more productive and engaging method of learning (see figure 7).

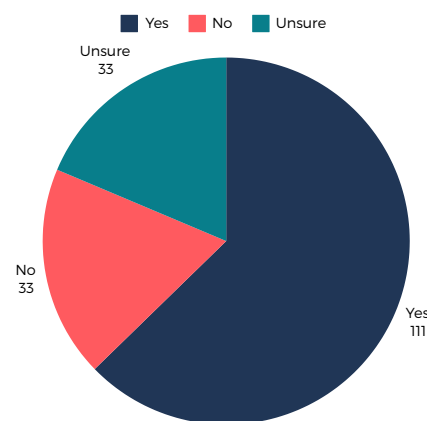


(Figure 7)

Should Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings help parents use Irish at home?

In response to whether Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should help parents use Irish at home, 177 parents responded. 111 of respondents said yes, 33 said no, and 33 were unsure (see figure 8).

Do you think Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should help parents use Irish at home?



(Figure 8)

Parents were asked why they thought Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should and should not help parents use Irish at home. 102 parents shared their views on ELC and SAC helping parents use Irish at home. Additionally, 30 parents shared their views on why they believe that ELC and SAC should not support parents use Irish in the home environment, see appendix 5 and 6.

Why do you think Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should help parents use Irish at home?

Of the 111 respondents that answered yes 102 shared their views on ELC and SAC helping parents use Irish at home. Many believe that it would reinforce learning, assist with homework, and help normalise the use of Irish. Those in favour stated they feel unprepared and lack confidence in speaking Irish. They suggested providing resources and basic phrases and optional lessons to support parents.

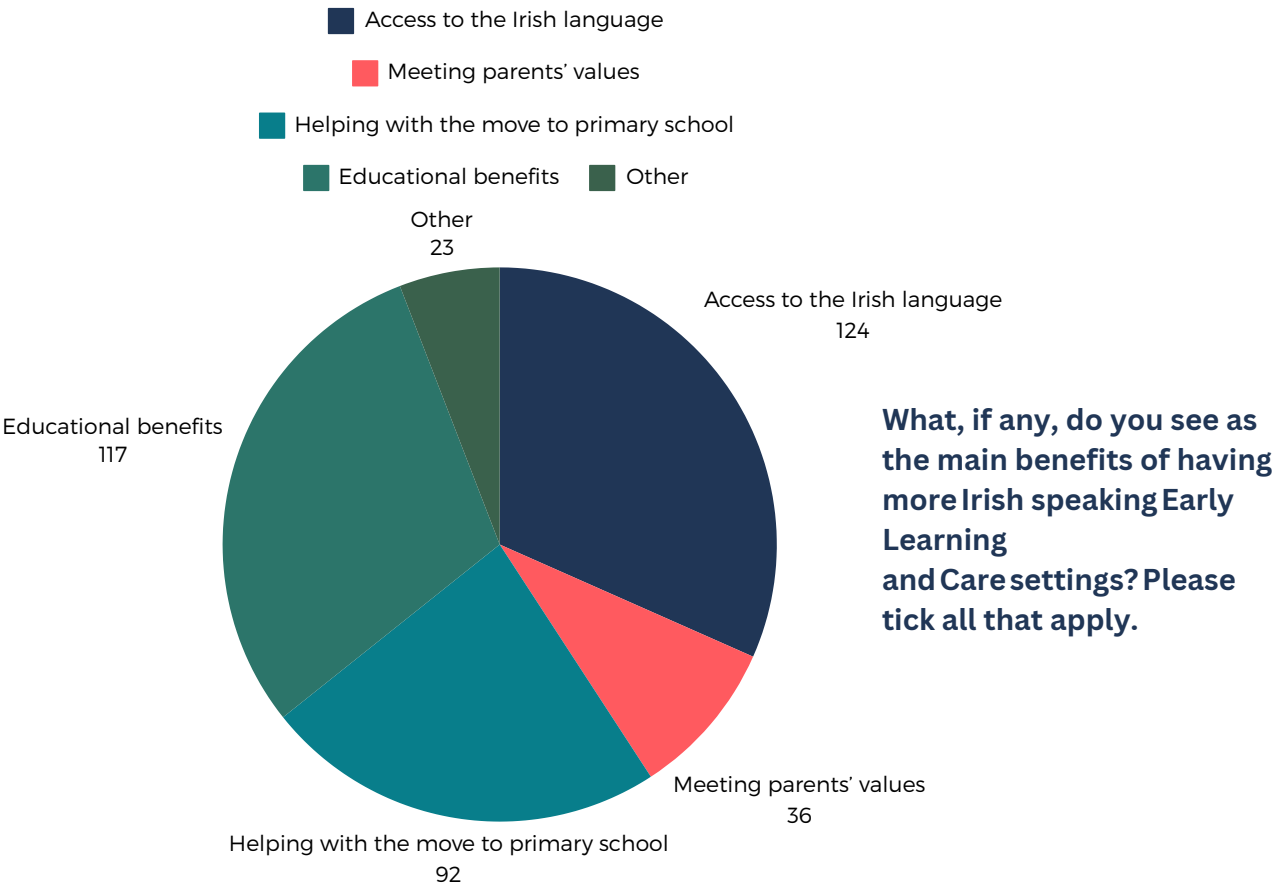
Why do you think Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should not help parents use Irish at home?

Of the 33 respondents that answered no, 30 shared their views on why they believe that ELC and SAC should not support parents use Irish in the home environment. Many feel that the use of Irish at home is a personal choice and should not be influenced by government or educational settings. Some stated that if parents were interested in using Irish at home, they would do so independently. Others express that it is unnecessary and burdensome for non-native speakers, especially in a multicultural society. Additionally, many stated that early years educators have enough responsibility in caring for children in their setting.

Section 4- Benefits of the National Plan

Benefits of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care settings.

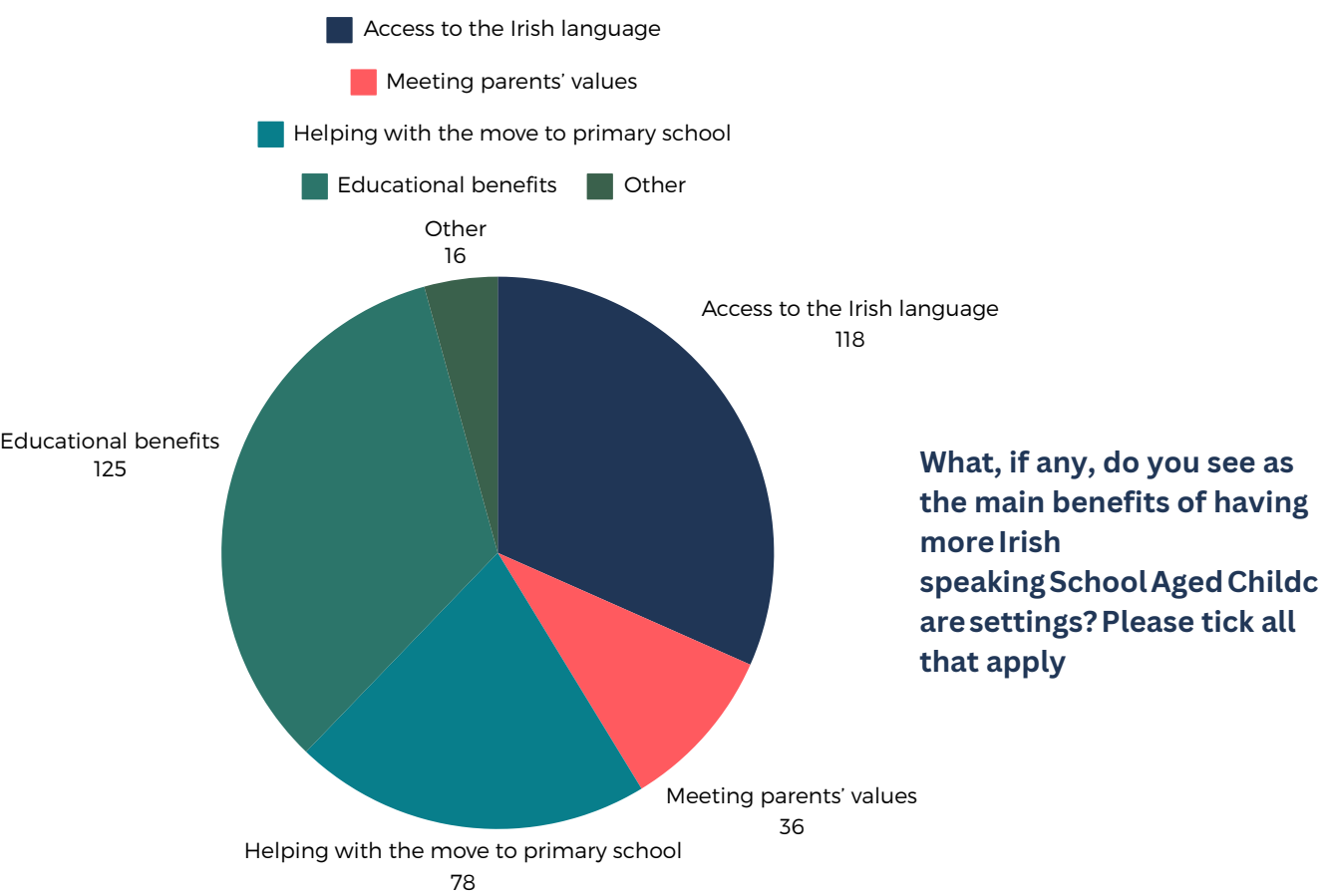
Parents were asked what, if any, do they see as the main benefits of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care settings. Respondents could select multiple options. 168 parents responded and indicated support for several initiatives. Among the 168 respondents, the main perceived benefits of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings include giving all children access to the Irish language (124 responses), providing educational benefits for children (117 responses), and helping children transition to primary school (92 responses). Additionally, 36 respondents believe it meets parents' values, and 23 cited other suggestions, see appendix 7. Some believe that unless a person willingly chooses to learn the language, it won't significantly improve children's fluency. Others articulated a preference for educational resources to focus on European languages instead, considering the promotion of Irish a waste of time and effort since it may not be used in real life. Some suggested that only key words in Irish should be taught at a young age, as they do not see substantial benefits in learning the language (see figure 9).



(Figure 9)

Benefits of having more Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings.

In response to the question what, if any, do you see as the main benefits of having more Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings. Respondents could select multiple options. 166 parents shared their views and indicated support for several initiatives. A significant number of respondents, 125 in total, recognised the educational benefits for children. 118 believe that giving all children access to the Irish language is a primary benefit. Additionally, 78 participants noted that these settings would help children transition more smoothly to primary school. Meeting parents’ values was supported by 36 respondents and lastly, 16 respondents identified other suggestions. Parents' views on the benefits of having more Irish-speaking School Aged Care settings were mixed. Some saw value in promoting general knowledge, cultural background, and bilingualism. Others believed it benefits only those interested in speaking Irish or gives a slight advantage in a required school subject. However, some parents felt it was just extra work, with no benefits, and preferred the focus to be on other European languages (see figure 10).

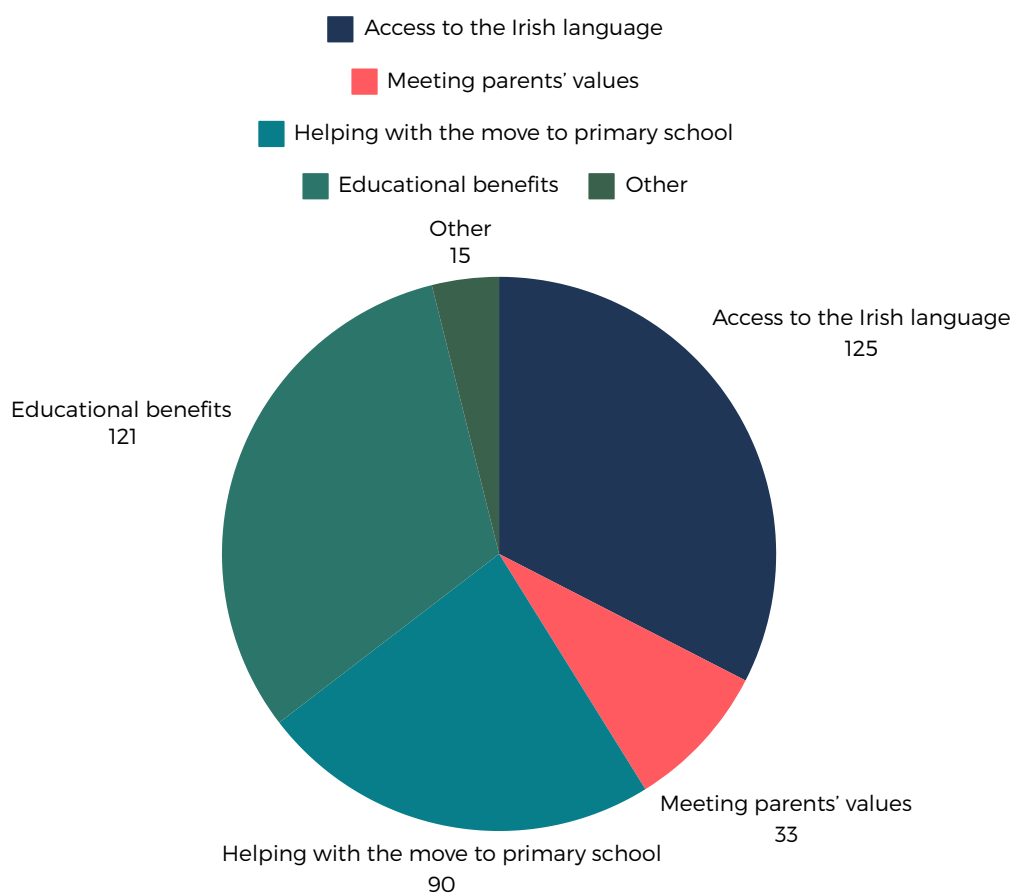


(Figure 10)

Benefits of greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings

Parents were asked what, if any, do you see as the main benefits of greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings. Respondents could select multiple options. 177 parents shared their views and indicated support for several initiatives. A significant majority of respondents, 125, believe that giving all children access to the Irish language is a primary benefit. Additionally, 121 respondents see educational benefits for children as a major benefit. Helping children with the transition to primary school is seen as an important benefit, with 90 respondents agreeing. Meeting parents' values was supported by 33, and 15 respondents identified other benefits not listed in the survey options. Parents highlighted several benefits of Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings, including building a positive relationship with the language, normalising its use, and enhancing cognitive abilities through bilingualism. They also noted it promotes equality for children from immigrant backgrounds. However, some expressed concerns about confusion, extra work, and exhaustion for both children and parents (see figure 11).

What, if any, do you see as the main benefits to greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply.



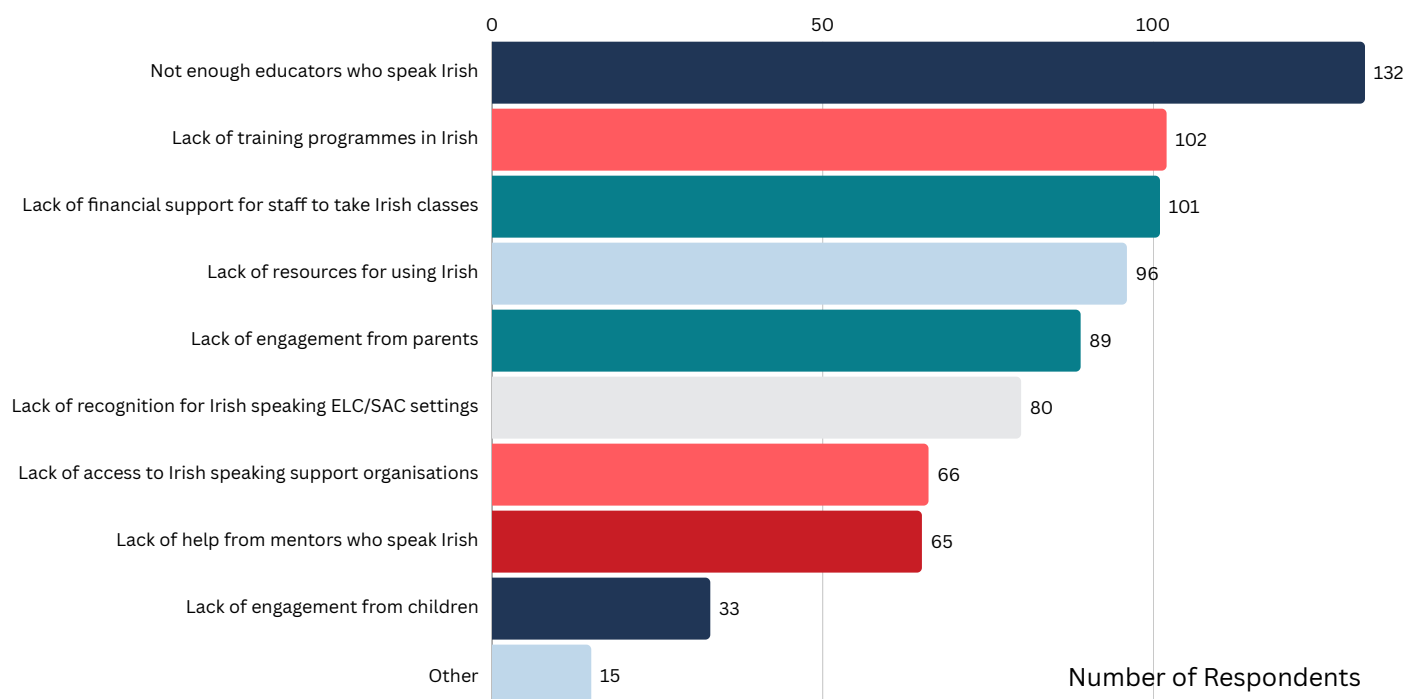
(Figure 11)

Section 5-Barriers and Support for the National Plan

Barriers of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care settings

In response to the question what, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care settings. Respondents could select multiple options; 169 parents shared their views, and many chose several options. The most significant barrier, cited by 132 respondents, was the shortage of teachers who speak Irish. This was closely followed by a lack of training programmes in Irish, noted by 102 participants and insufficient financial support for staff to take Irish classes was mentioned by 101 respondents. Other substantial barriers included a lack of resources for using Irish in ELC settings (96 respondents), inadequate recognition for Irish-speaking ELC/SAC settings (80 respondents), and lack of engagement from parents (89 respondents). Additional concerns included limited access to Irish-speaking support organisations (66 respondents), insufficient mentorship from Irish-speaking mentors (65 respondents), and a lack of engagement from children (33 respondents). A small number of respondents (15) identified other barriers, indicating a range of challenges to be addressed (see figure 12). Parents identified some challenges with Irish-speaking Early Learning and Care settings, including a limited use of the language outside of school. Some questioned the necessity of such programmes and noted a general lack of interest when the language is imposed on children and adults

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more Irish speaking Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply

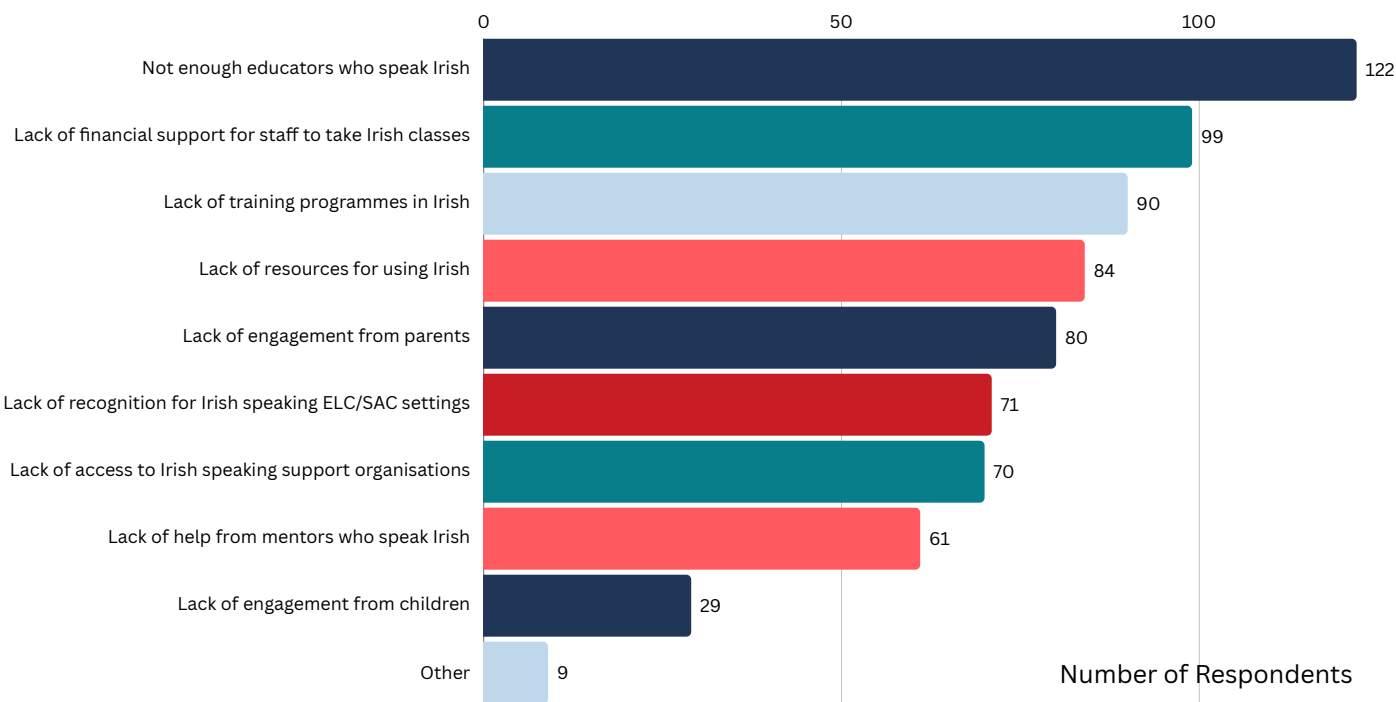


(Figure 12)

Barriers of having more Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings

Parents were asked what, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings. Respondents could select multiple options. 166 parents shared their views, and many chose several options. The most significant barrier identified by 122 respondents, is a shortage of teachers who speak Irish. This is followed by a lack of financial support for staff to take Irish classes (99 respondents) and insufficient training programs in Irish (90 respondents). Other notable barriers include a lack of resources for using Irish in ELC settings (84 respondents), lack of engagement from parents (80 respondents), and lack of recognition for Irish-speaking ELC/SAC settings (71 respondents). Additionally, limited access to Irish-speaking support organisations (70 respondents) and insufficient help from Irish-speaking mentors (61 respondents) were highlighted. A smaller number of respondents noted a lack of engagement from children (29 respondents) and other unspecified barriers (9 respondents). Some respondents queried if Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings are needed (see figure 13).

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more Irish speaking School Aged Childcare settings? Please tick all that apply.

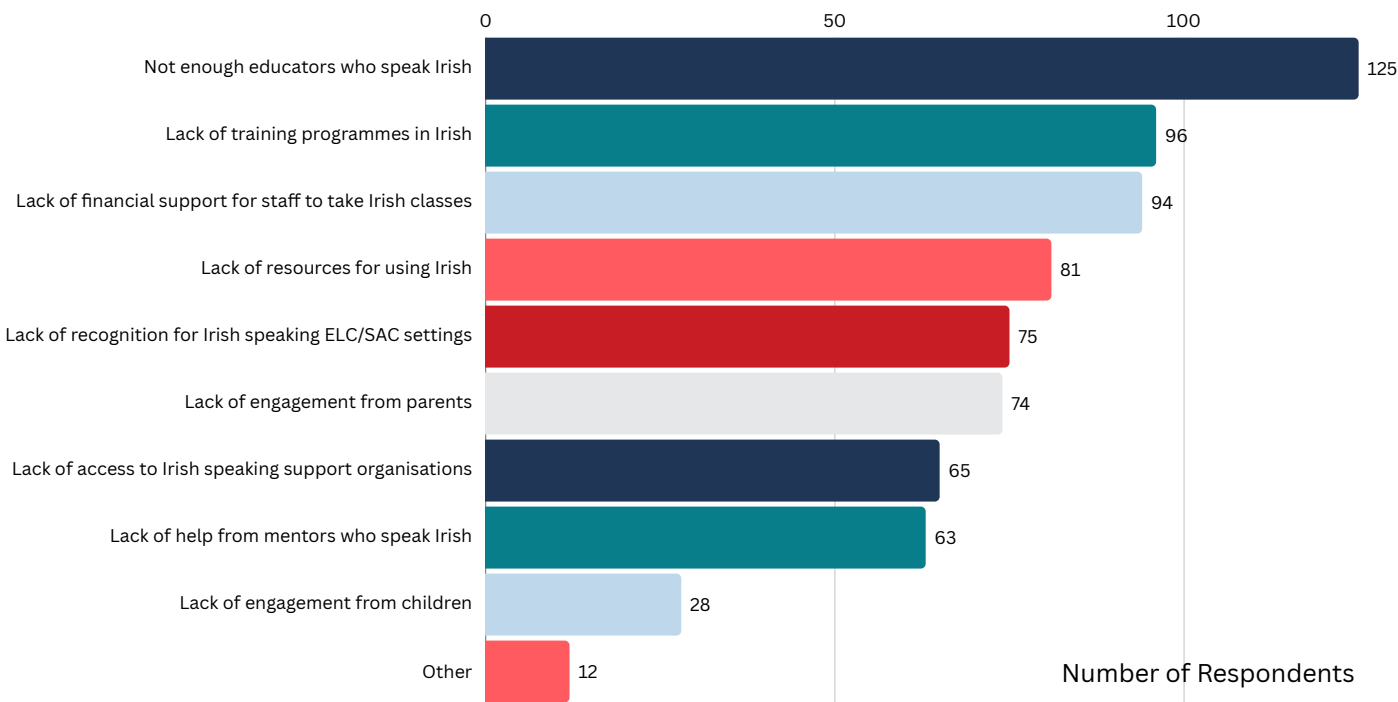


(Figure 13)

Barriers to greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings

In response to the question what, if any, do you see as the main barriers to greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings. Respondents could select multiple options 161 parents shared their views, and many chose several options. The most prominent issue, cited by 125 respondents, is the shortage of teachers who speak Irish. This is followed by a lack of training programmes in Irish (96 respondents) and insufficient financial support for staff to take Irish classes (94 respondents). Additional barriers include a lack of resources for using Irish in ELC settings (81 respondents), lack of recognition for Irish-speaking ELC/SAC settings (75 respondents), and lack of engagement from parents (74 respondents). Further concerns were limited access to Irish-speaking support organisations (65 respondents), insufficient help from Irish-speaking mentors (63 respondents), and lack of engagement from children (28 respondents). A few respondents (12) also noted other unspecified barriers. Parents expressed concerns that the current curriculum discourages interest in the Irish language, with some believing it is unnecessary. They suggested a gradual introduction to build engagement. Additional challenges include a lack of engagement from staff and historically negative attitudes toward the language, often perpetuated by media commentary (see figure 14).

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers to greater use of the Irish language in English speaking Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply

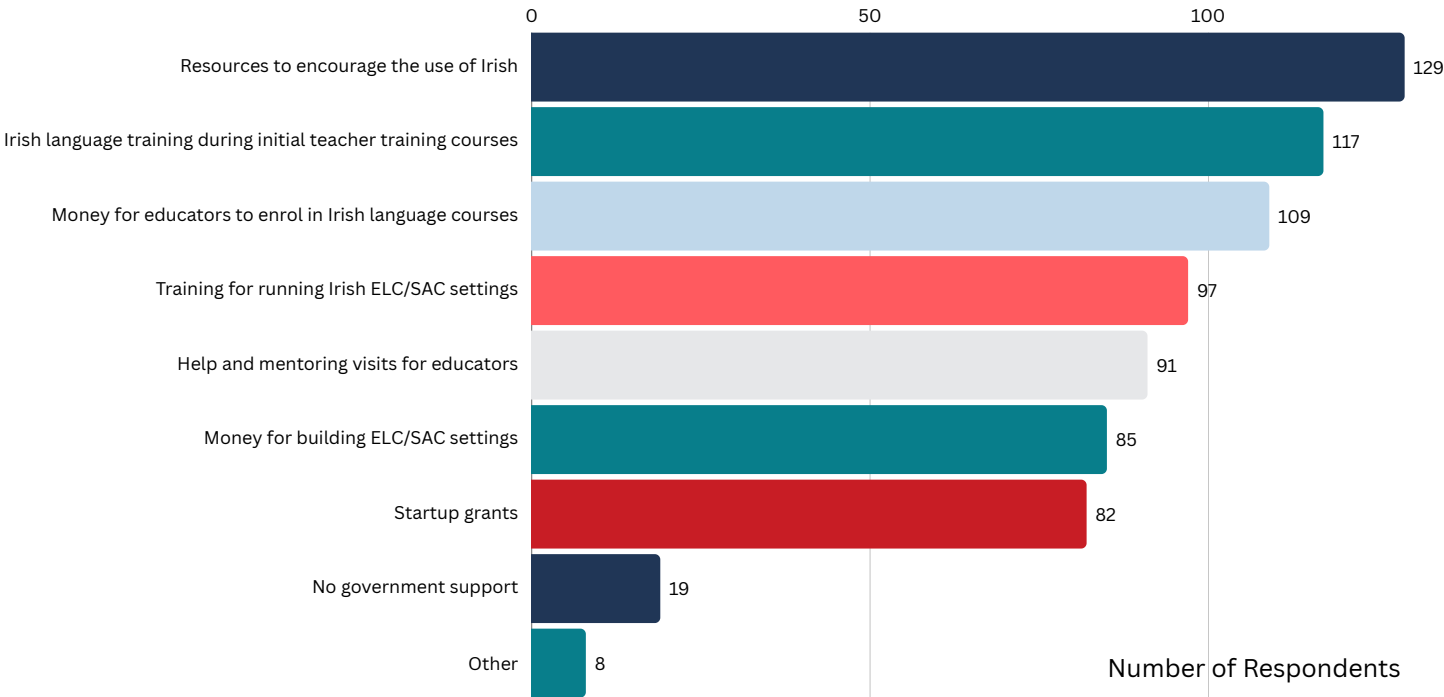


(Figure 14)

How should be the government be supporting Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings

Parents were asked how the government should be supporting Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings. Respondents could select multiple options. 173 parents shared their views, and many chose several options. The top suggestion, supported by 129 respondents, was to provide resources such as songs, rhymes, and stories to encourage the use of the Irish language. Additionally, 117 respondents advocated for including Irish language training in initial teacher training courses. Financial support for teachers to enrol in Irish language courses was also seen as a primary benefit, with 109 respondents in favour. Other significant recommendations included training for running Irish ELC/SAC settings (97 respondents), help and mentoring visits for educators (91 respondents), and money for building ELC/SAC settings (85 respondents). Startup grants were suggested by 82 respondents. 19 respondents did not believe the government should provide any support, while 8 respondents mentioned other unspecified forms of support however, they did not provide any additional information (see figure 15).

How should the government be supporting Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings. Please tick all that apply.

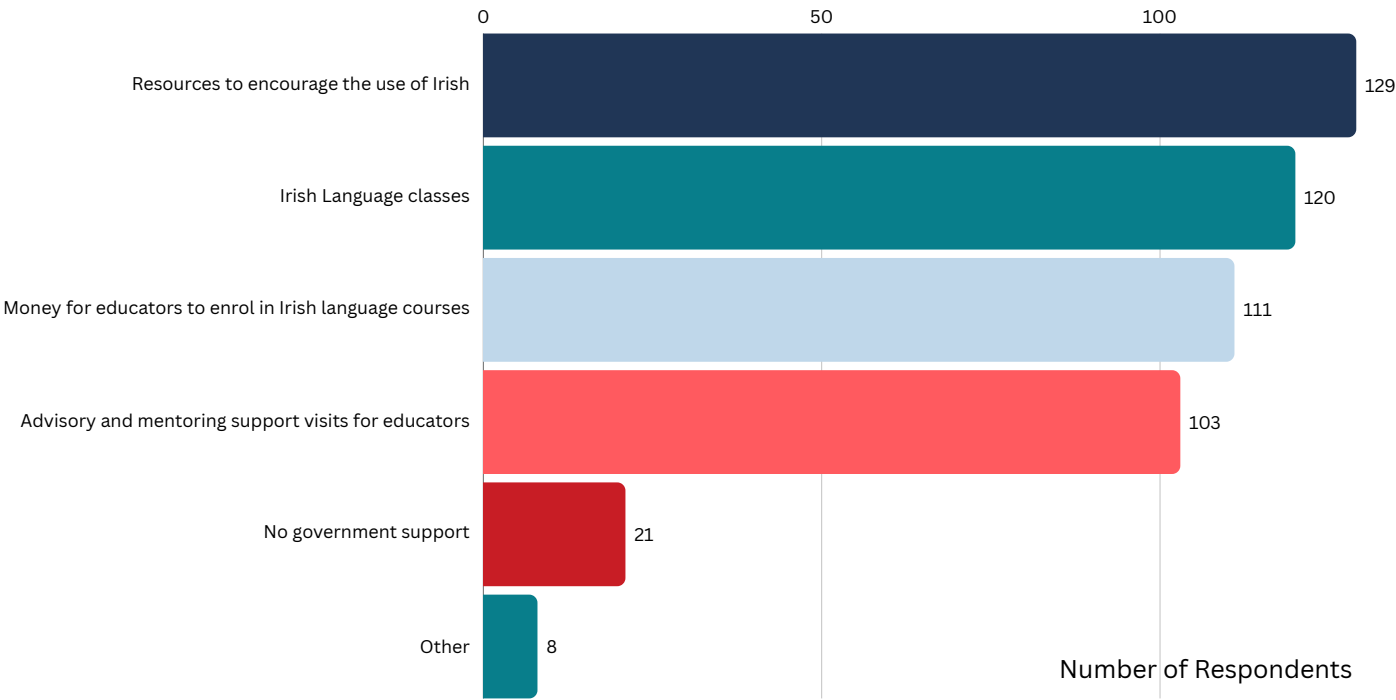


(Figure 15)

How should the government be supporting a greater use of Irish in English speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings

Parents were asked how the government should be supporting a greater use of Irish in English speaking ELC/SAC centres. Respondents could select multiple options. 170 parents shared their views, and many chose several options. The most popular suggestion, with 129 respondents, was to provide resources like songs, rhymes, and stories to encourage the use of the Irish language. This was followed by Irish language classes, supported by 120 respondents, and financial support for teachers to enrol in Irish language courses, favoured by 111 respondents. Advisory and mentoring support visits for teachers were recommended by 103 respondents. A small number of respondents, 21, did not believe the government should provide any support for the greater use of Irish in these settings, and 8 respondents mentioned other forms of support. The recommendations include prioritising increased salaries for ELC staff and offering free beginner Irish classes to educators (see figure 16).

How should the government be supporting a greater use of Irish in English speaking ELC/SAC centres. Please tick all that apply

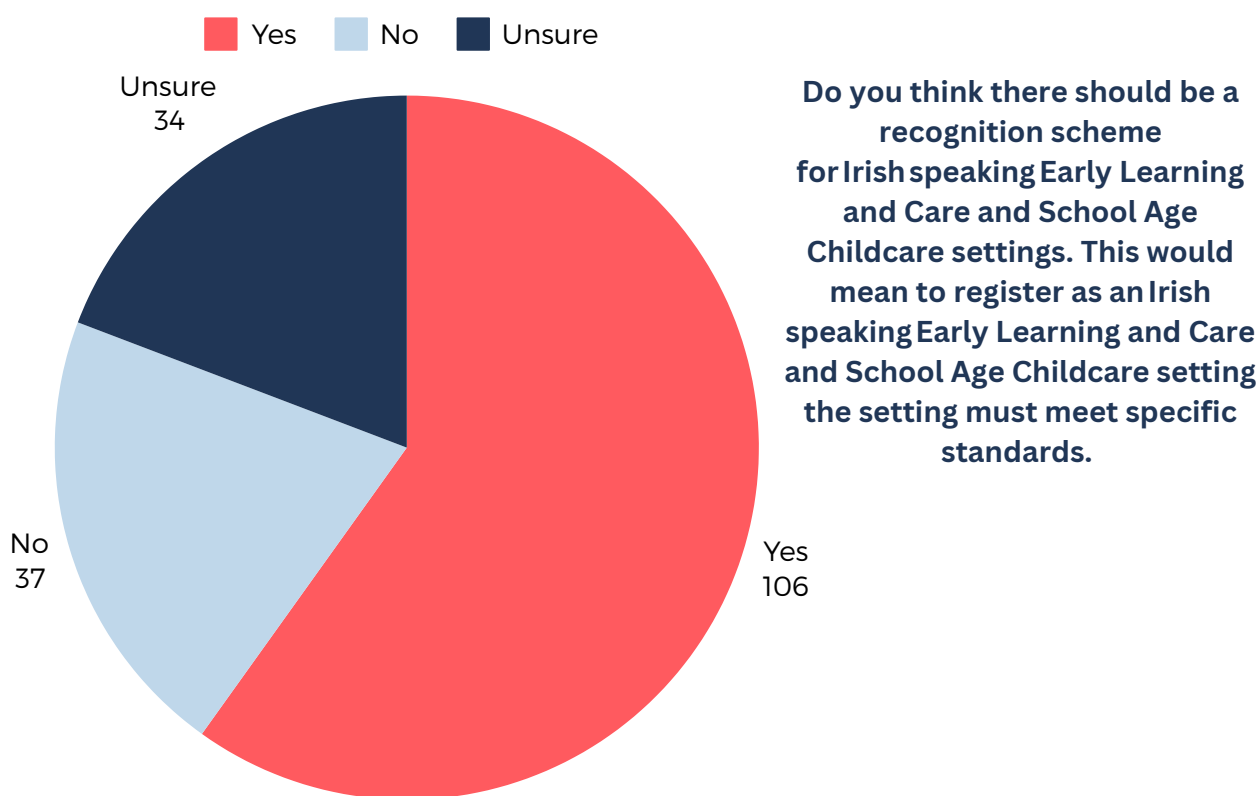


(Figure 16)

Section 6-Barriers and Support for the National Plan

Recognition Scheme for Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings

Parents were asked if they believed there should be a recognition scheme for Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings. 177 parents shared their views. Most respondents supported the establishment of a recognition scheme, with 60% in agreement. On the other hand, 21% expressed their opposition to the proposal and 19% indicated uncertainty on the recognition scheme (see figure 17).

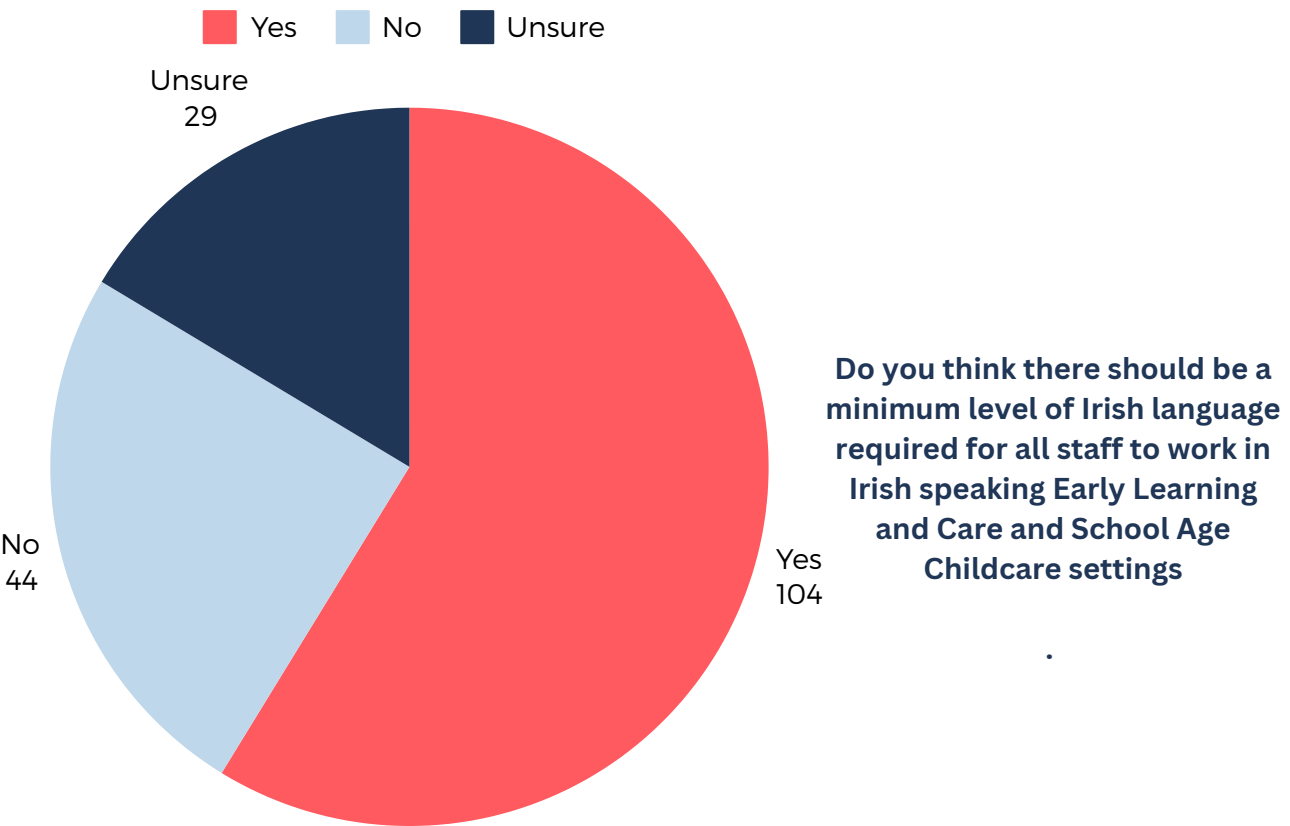


(Figure 17)

Section 7-Minimum requirements

Minimum level of Irish language required for all staff to work in Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings

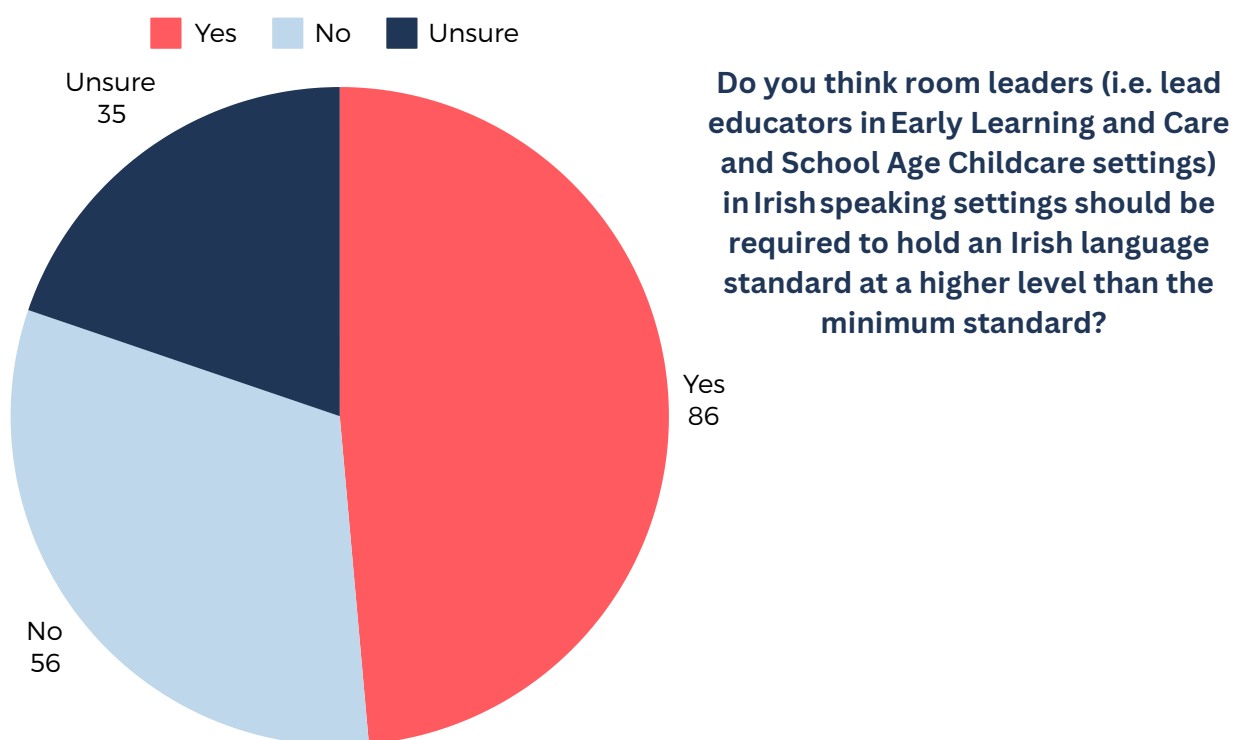
When asked if there should be a minimum level of Irish language required for all staff to work in Irish speaking Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings, 177 parents expressed their opinions. Most parents (59%) agreed that there should be a minimum level of Irish language required for all staff. On the other hand, 25% of parents disagreed with the requirement for a minimum level of Irish for staff. Additionally, 27% indicated uncertainty on a minimum level of Irish language for all staff (see figure 18).



(Figure 18)

Should room leaders in Irish speaking settings be required to hold an Irish language standard at a higher level than the minimum standard

When presented with the question Do you think room leaders (i.e. lead educators in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings) in Irish speaking settings should be required to hold an Irish language standard at a higher level than the minimum standard, 177 parents provided their views. The majority of respondents believe that room leaders in Irish speaking ELC and SAC settings should be required to hold a higher level of Irish language, with 49% in favour. On the other hand, 32% of parents did not agree that room leaders should be required to hold an Irish language standard at a higher level than the minimum standard and 34% indicated they were unsure (see figure 19).

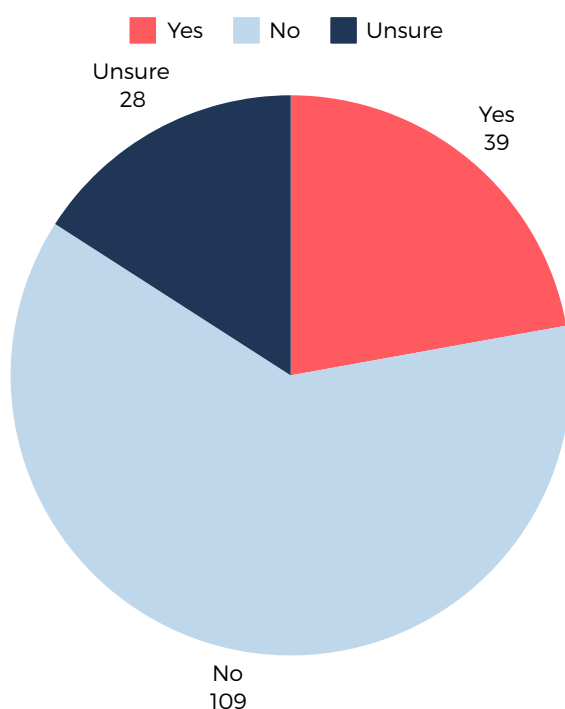


(Figure 19)

Section 8-Further suggestions for inclusion in a National Plan for Irish language provision for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare

Parents were asked if they have any other suggestions for inclusion in a National Plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings in Ireland. 176 parents responded. The majority (109) of parents did not have any other suggestions and 28 indicated they were unsure. 39 respondents said yes, and 35 parents shared their suggestions.

The responses to suggestions for a national plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) in Ireland are diverse with 35 parents sharing their views. Some emphasise the importance of making Irish language education optional rather than mandatory, throughout the Irish education system. Many highlighted the need for a play-based engaging approach to teaching Irish, additional funding for educator training and resources for non-Irish speaking parents to support their children's learning. Parents stated the need for quality, fluent Irish speaking educators, the establishment of more Gaelscoils and Naíonraí, and better support for existing Irish language schools. Concerns were raised about the inclusivity of Irish language requirements for foreign-born educators and the overall impact on staffing were also raised. Finally, it was suggested that any implementation should be thought through, sufficiently funded, and supported by clear communication and resources (see figure 20).



Do you have any other suggestions for inclusion in a National Plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings in Ireland?

(Figure 20)



CONCLUSION

The National Parents Council welcomes the opportunity provided by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth (DCEDIY) to make a submission on development of a national plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC). We look forward to seeing the outcome of DCEDIY's consultation in this area.

Appendix 1

Which one of these sentences best describes your family?

1. We have school level Irish and children in a Gael Scoil, would love to reach fluency
2. English and Portuguese used at home
3. English and Slovak
4. I think Irish is not fundamental for my children
5. We raise our child in English using the odd bit of Irish
6. We are raising our family through English and Catalan
7. Raising our family through English with occasional use of Irish
8. We are rising in Polish and English language, but we're trying to learn Irish through courses to support our children at school and we're trying as well use Irish at home
9. Rasing our family through English with occasional Irish spoken
10. We are raising our family through Spanish and English. Our youngest boy attends an Irish school. Our oldestboy attends Irish summer camps. We would like them to speak Irish fluently.
11. We are raising our family through English and German, but are trying to incorporate Irish songs, books, TV shows etc.
12. I speak a few words/sentences of Irish to my children
13. Attend gaelscoil. One parent fluent. Other has poor irish
14. We are raising our family through English but are increasing irish at home as children attend Gaelscoil
15. Irish is only spoken if helping with homework
16. We have no Irish as we are immigrant, but are happy for the children to learn the language in school.
17. We are raising our family through English and German
18. Use Irish words often in the home with our children to encourage use of the language
19. We are raising our children primarily through English but speak Irish where possible
20. I still use Irish and my father is an Irish teacher, but raise our daughter primarily through English
21. raising through english but would like to use more irishh
22. Cupla focail and we try to use words and phrases at home daily.
23. Serbian/Croatian/Bosnian/Montenegrin/Englishacedonian
24. My child learns Irish at school

Appendix 2

Why do you think the government should do this?

1. To protect and preserve the national language and build pride and early ability
2. Keep our culture alive
3. Early start would make it easier for the children to become familiar
4. It's our national language & we cannot let it die
5. It's our native language and should be encouraged as early as possible in the education system, not just in gaeltacht areas.
6. Because i've witnessed how beneficial it is for the kids. it develops their brains from a young age, i actually only sent my kids to gaelscoil because the 'baptism barrier' meant our choices were limited, but it was the best decision ever!! My son just completed his Junior Cert all through Irish and my daughter starts secondary in the GaelCholaiste in sept....its brilliant for kids
7. Training and support
8. The children get more exposure to Irish and will pick up more. They will also find it normal to hear it spoken outside of school.
9. To keep the language afloat
10. Prepares the child with the language at school and encourage children to speak more than one language
11. Create easy options for encouraging children to engage with Irish
12. The earlier a child starts to develop skills in a second language, the better. Even more so when it's introduced through play. The majority of children in any Irish childcare setting will move on to study Irish in primary school
13. The Irish language is beautiful
14. tá sé tábhachtach ár dteanga náisiúnta a fhoghlaim ó aois óg
15. Children need it to be introduced in a fun, informal way to ease the use in primary school
16. There would continuity from school setting. Child care is most important but even the use of signs on the doors or tables chairs etc in Irish would be great.
17. To keep Irish language going and help kids learn from an early stage
18. It's our national language and heritage. We need to use it or it will be lost
19. Language is important to culture
20. Because children can learn sounds of languages early and then not struggle with them at an older age
21. Better to introduce language in early years care
22. As the national language and the benefits of bilinguality I feel that this would be really beneficial for children
23. Casual approach only would be good
24. To encourage early usage of the language in a fun way
25. To encourage the language
26. It's our language and learning early is much easier for them as it just becomes normal way of speaking, using a mix of Irish and English
27. To provide a foundation for children to continue to use Irish in schools if they wish

28. Bilingualism is an asset and Irish is our responsibility to use and maintain
29. National language. Language skills thought earlier help later for learning further languages
30. Irish is only spoken in small pocket areas in Ireland. In order to encourage people to speak it more activities need to be done in Irish. For example I noticed that since storey telling in our library has incorporated one storey in Irish my 3 years old has picked up some words. So maybe it would be worth while to do the same with early learning. Not everything needs to be done in Irish but some parts can be done in Irish.
31. To promote and normalise spoken Irish
32. Immersion is key to acquisition. we must provide adequate opportunities and resources to do this.
33. Start learning Irish as soon as possible for the children. There should be free courses for parents (eg as the one LMETD which I think are great for beginners)
34. Best time to support language development is in early years
35. Irish is an important part of our history
36. Fun! Lay foundations for love of language through songs and play.
37. Preserve our heritage
38. I believe all Early Learning, Primary and Secondary schools should be bilingual and all children should speak Irish & English
39. To make Irish an everyday normal thing and move it outside the classroom where it is often only seen as a subject with no external application.
40. It is in keeping with the constitutional promotion of Irish. However, as the vast majority of ELC teachers do not speak Irish significant challenges are likely to present themselves.
41. It is important to introduce Irish early so that children are familiar to it when they get to primary school. I try speak a little Irish to my children but it would be good to have it reinforced at an early age
42. To keep the language alive
43. The younger children become familiar with the Irish language the better. Parents would also feel encouraged to speak and learn the Irish language if proper support was provided
44. The earlier children are exposed to a language, the easier it is for them to learn it.
45. I think children learn best through play and this includes learning any language. Irish is a part of our culture which is being lost. Some of the Aistear curriculum could be presented through Irish & English combined
46. A country needs its own language. The standard of Irish in secondary school now deplorable.
47. I believe Irish needs to gradually be reintroduced at every level of our society. Children pick up language so easily and it normalises it for them before starting school if they don't have it spoken at home
48. If the government is going to do this, they need to do it in a way that it is made a natural part of the children's day and is learned through play. I think the primary school is doing it all wrong through rote learning.
49. Learning Irish in early learning will ensure the language remains part of the Irish culture
50. You need to start with cuppa focal as early as possible
51. It is an important part of our cultural heritage and should be valued as part of Irish life

52. Training for staff of these centres
53. Exposure at an early age is important.
54. Easier for young children to progress in Irish in school, it's our national heritage and should be encouraged.
55. We need to preserve our native tongue
56. Irish is taught in Primary school so it should be started I. Early years it would be more beneficial and the young children learn two languages the easier it is.
57. Irish is our National language, early exposure to it normalises the learning and speaking of Irish. My eldest child went through preschool without ever speaking or hearing Irish, my youngest is just finishing ECCE now in a different preschool and here she has learned her colours, to count to 10, clothing items and body parts as gaeilge and every day asks for more words to be taught to her, and speaks cupla focal gach la at home. She has developed an interest in learning more already at the age of her 4, than her 7 year old sister! Every child should have this exposure.
58. It is requested at exams
59. Providing education packs, resources like posters - in a voluntary way
60. I feel my children do not have a love for Irish and the language has declined with each school generation
61. Irish is our national language and early introduction of a language will enhance a child's linguistics. Learning through Irish and English should be the norm for children
62. To help prepare for primary school and promote Irish culture
63. It's our Herman's is a shame that more of us cannot conduct a conversation in our national language
64. Learning the language is mandatory for most students, so every effort should be taken to ensure their success
65. Early learning of languages has better retention and use in later life Important to keep
66. language alive and best to start at a young age
67. So all children in the country understand the heritage & culture of the country including the language.
68. Irish should be valued. Children learn lamh sign language why not a few Irish words. At this stage they should pick it up easier and they are not as self conscious. Especially if it is done in a fun informal way.
69. It's a disgrace to think that Irish people can't speak our own language yet immigrants are fluent in English and their own language
70. Develop children's brains
71. I would love to see the everyday use of Irish more common throughout Ireland
72. The earlier children learn Irish the better as they pick things up quicker
73. As a parent who doesn't have Irish I would like the Irish language normalised as much as possible for my child
74. Children are sponges and it's better to open them to Irish at a young age
75. Native language, part of our identity and important to support the Irish culture especially with many other cultures living here now
76. Help Promote our national language
77. Preserve our national identity and culture
78. Irish is important to learn, and starting young will make the use of it more achievable

79. The language is. Being lost. Kids need early exposure
80. It'd be nice to have a few key words to start with but it's not for everyone unfortunately as I found out as had two children in Naonaraí - one coped and went onto Gaelscoil, the other didn't as had speech difficulties so went to an english speaking school instead and is now exempt from Irish.
81. It's our native language and should be taught to children as young as possible.
82. wellbeing/communication/identity and belonging/exploring , parents should have the choice , its the aistear curriculum
83. Important to keep the Irish language alive
84. Implement certain times or areas that gaelige should be used through schooling system across the country
85. For are Irish and we should all be speaking Irish in this day and age
86. Because it's the national language, and because many will go to gaelscoil, and because the benefits of multilingual learning
87. It's our National language which would be awful to lose. We need more spoken Irish
88. I sent both my children to a Naoinra and would have sent to a Gaelscoil but did not have one in my area - I strongly believe it is better for the brain to be bilingual no matter what the language and helps make learning another language easier - everyone else in Europe is at least bilingual should start with Gaeilge and be proud of the language and enable children to learn more easily other languages etc
89. As kids at this age pick up so much and it may encourage parents to then send their kids to a Gaelscoil
90. To support and ensure that our language survives & thrives
91. I feel it is our native language and while I do not have Irish I would love my children to speak it and enjoy it.
92. So our don't just go to primary school not knowing Irish and having to learn when they go learn Irish in play school and have some thought about Irish before starting
93. Easier transition into primary school and easier access to the Irish curriculum
94. It would make the introduction to irish in primary easier
95. Raising bilingual children myself I understand the importance of learning another language as early as possible. Young children are like sponges, the older they get the harder it becomes. If Irish were to remain a leaving cert core subject more focus needs to put on in, in the early years. More children would enjoy the language and don't feel it is a "chore" or "useless" as most of them will never need it again after they have finished secondary school. The government should either start earlier and invest more money and resources in teaching the Irish language properly or make it optional throughout primary and secondary education.
96. Raise the profile of the language and re-introduce it into daily life
97. Children should be introduced to the language as young as possible
98. To keep the culture and the language alive.
99. Irish is our native language, it is dieing out and needs to be revived
100. I think we should encourage the use of our own Language like other countries
101. We have a beautiful language that is unfortunately lost to English and other languages. We should have more irish in schools and preschool settings
102. Irish is important for ireland, including migrants'families

103. It's our native language and needs to be thought or it will become extinct
104. Regularly using Irish will remove the fear and negativity
105. why not ?
106. Benefit of a second language and to maintain Irish culture, identity and heritage
107. It is our national language.
108. broadens the horizon of children, connects them to their heritage and cultural identity, promotes language learning in the future for additional languages (i.e French, Spanish)
109. Native language - supports children in learning Irish in primary school
110. Ireland - Irish, German-German, Ukraine-Ukrainian language
111. To make children familiar with the language at a young age
112. Easier to learn it early if they will be having it as a subject in school
113. It's our national language, other European countries are fluent in English .
114. To help keep our National language alive in a practical and useful way.
115. Our kids attend a gaelscoil so it would be a great benefit to have someone with Irish to help with homework
116. Starting it early would help
117. It's our native language and great for future support in learning languages
118. I think it is a massive way to keep our native language alive as it has been lost in a lot of ways
119. Because it's our native language, it's dying out. As a SNA I see students hate taking Irish, hating it with a passion. The love of the Irish language should begin in the home and be supported in early learning before getting into any school.
120. Prepare for primary education, establish basic skills in forming words in Irish, nurture love of Irish language
121. It's part of our national identity and culture
122. To ensure the language doesn't die out
123. We should be able to speak Irish it's our 1st language I'm sad I can't teach my child
124. Because Irish is the first and official language of Ireland; to closing the gap between children in gaeltacht and those in English-speaking settings.t/gael scoil and those in English-speaking setting educationa
125. It is our National language and we need to teach it to our kids
126. to preserve and invigorate the Irish language
127. As an adult who studied Irish through primary and secondary but never spoke it, I think the system is flawed. If my kids actually used the language, I feel they would learn more.
128. All other nationalities can speak their own language except Irish people because it is not taught from a young age. A few words across the day would make a huge difference - learning poems in Irish, stories of the Fianna etc, Irish songs and our national anthem would make a huge difference.
129. Irish is part of our culture and we need to protect this part of who we are.
130. Many adults in Ireland learned Irish in school but still cannot speak it. The government should fully fund and support early years educators to learn Irish and introduce it to children at an earlier stage
131. The earlier kids will start to learn Irish the easier it will be for them at school.
132. To keep our language alive and in use
133. Gives the children a good start / foundation

134. Children need to hear their heritage language in the early years - birth to six/seven years. The Aistear Communicating theme Aim 2 states: " In partnership with the adult, children will ..be positive about their home language and know they can use different languages. How can they 'KNOW' Irish if they never hear it? Children also have a right under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
135. It's our language which we should be proud of and encouraged to speak as much as possible and make it easier to learn from a very young age.

Appendix 3

Why do you think the government should not do this?

1. Staffing problems in this sector already. Irish being a requirement will further impact staff numbers
2. The government is already investing a huge amount of taxpayer money to support the language, which in the area where I live is not spoken anyway
3. I think it is a personal choice as not every parent wants their child to learn Irish or maybe some children in the class have an intellectual disability so just getting to grips with the curriculum is enough for them
4. I believe language isn't something you control as such and eventual people end up picking up the "easier way".
5. Would be better to teach a language such as french/spanish
6. I think following a similar approach to other languages would be better i.e. g giving an option to choose the language rather than making it compulsory
7. Because less than 3% of the population actively speaks Irish - this classifies it as a dead language. Equally, my spouse and I do not have any Irish so if Irish is used at school or by our children, we are excluded from the conversation. Let it be an opt in for people who choose to go to Gael Scoil.
8. It shouldn't be compulsory. It should be based on aptitude or desire to learn it.
9. Irish is almost like Latin, Irish people in large majority never speak Irish and I would prefer to have Irish as option in schools, not mandatory
10. European language much more important to support and encourage in these settings. There is currently no spoken European language taught during these formative years in contrast to many other European countries.
11. Children who attend ELC settings often have a different first language than English or Irish and they are already trying to perfect the mother tongue and English at the same time. I think adding Irish to the mix will confuse things further. If you want your child to go to an Irish language ELC setting then send them to one! Even children whose first language is English are still not proficient in it when they are in Pre-school and a child has to learn their first language proficiently first before learning a second language.
12. I detest the Irish language and resent the government shoving it down our throats after 14 years of school. I was born and raised in Ireland and love languages and am bilingual but am allergic to Irish. Enough!
13. I honestly believe my children have enough to be learning as it is
14. Would like them to teach Spanish, more beneficial
15. As sad as it is, the plan back in the 70's to teach Irish in schools to reignite our lost language has ultimately failed. Most kids and adults have their cupla focail (I don't even know how to spell that) but most can't speak it too well, particularly the further away from school age they get. Part of this is probably to do with the absolute state of the Irish curriculum - in primary school in particular. I'm not sure who I'm addressing this to, but have you seen the curriculum in action on an ongoing basis? I have 4 kids and the rubbish they're "taught" is a joke. My 11 year old doesn't know more than 20 Irish words but his teacher is completely

unaware of this because of how poorly it's taught! The basically just have to seek patterns. My own Irish is non existent so I'll say it in English- a question might be "where did Niamh go on Halloween night? And they've to just look for the words "Halloween night" in the text - they do not have to know what it means. The same goes for when they're learning words or phrases. Say they're learning about sports. They'll have a set question like "what sport do you like?" And then the response is "I like....." But it'll all be written up on the board - the question, the response, and all the different sports. And so in this way, when I say to the teacher that my son doesn't know much Irish, he hadn't a clue because all he sees is yes, this kid can ask and answer the stuff that's already written up on the board. My son is in the top 2 and 3% for verbal, numerical and abstract reasoning for his age - he goes to the gifted classes in DCU. Yet he knows f all Irish. It's not this teacher either - he's been fooling them all along that he knows Irish! Anyway, so perhaps it's partly to do with how it's being taught, but also the interest just isn't there for the most part in so many kids and adults. I honestly think the whole thing should just be scrapped (obv not in the Gaeltacht areas though) - I think it should be an optional subject for secondary school kids and just light speaking in primary. By that I mean like "where's your mala scoile?" (As I said, I don't know Irish - that's supposed to be school bag). Or even "ca bhuil (your??) mala scoile?". So like practical words and phrases get spoken in day to day class (like they do already) but no actual formal teaching. I assume this scheme is supposed to be tackling the kind of thing I'm referring to - the lack of interest and low speaking rates etc... and I mean I guess it's worth trying? But I just don't see it helping. If you're going to do something, I think the focus should be more on a complete rehaul of the way it's being taught in primary. Parroting and basic seek and retrieve comprehensions are not what I consider to be useful. I myself did Irish all the way through primary and secondary. I have no Irish. A handful of things here and there. Very little. I know way more french and I only did that for half the time. I think the reason for this is because I did just what my son did through primary - I just copied what I saw and looked for patterns. None of it went in. And then secondary school and BAM - all of a sudden we were supposed to be reading whole poems and books and answering relatively (what is now referred to as peel/pie) questions that aren't just seek and retrieve. I was lost. The gap between my knowledge and what we were now expected to learn and understand was too big. I know a lot has changed between when I was in school and now but clearly nowhere near enough. Anyway, I don't see this - this reaching the younger kids - working out. If it doesn't, then probably try rehaul, and then scrap formal Irish education in primary school altogether, either keeping it compulsory in secondary or as an optional subject. I mean, you DID ask!

16. Children are learning through play. Not formal teaching. nplenty if time for gaeilge in primary school
17. i think there are more important thinhgs for kids to learn, and it learning a second language then a foreign language would be better than irish (which is basically a dead language), but better again would be Sign Language - Lamh to start for young kids, and later ISL
18. Cause nowadays no one speaks Irish only English.
19. Far too many people don't speak Irish
20. Irish language in non Gaeltacht area is not being used
21. Its not going to help unless the way Irish is taught in schools changes.
22. My child is pre verbal so if I could get him to speak English would be good . And as a child growing up with learning Irish I think it should be scrapped unless child had interest

23. It should be optional - for example I would rather my children learn Spanish
24. Science, maths and English are of greater importance
25. how are they going to become qualified to do this. The government does not currently value service providers so how can you expect them to do this if they already can't do it.
26. It is confusing for children using different/other languages than English already. Irish should be optional and practical. The way it is now thought is not going to be productive in early childhood.
27. It's hard enough for young children to learn English let alone Irish as well let it be an option in secondary school
28. Irrelevant language in today's society.

Appendix 4

What do you think the government should focus on to promote the Irish language in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings. Please tick all that apply.

1. See above essay
2. I really wish it was compulsory to supply parents with an A4 sheet listing all the useful terminology that our children use on a daily basis so we can help support them better. I speak Irish but maths and geography terminology I find tricky and every year I have asked for some key word to be supplied so that I can help I do t always get it I was directed to the NCCAs website but 200 pages of the curriculum in Irish wasn't what I needed just keep it simple and useful for parents to help support like divide fractionsdenominator etc
3. Supporting the Irish language competence of teachersto make sure that they speak correct and fluent Irish rather than just a few individual words and phrases.
4. The focus should be on simple Irish rhymes and songs
5. I think the gov should ensure there are enough providers & places for ELC & SAC teaching fully through Irish in Gaeltacht areas and areas where the community have should an interest in having education through Irish in Early Years & schoolGoing age. Eg if a torn has a Gaelscoil they it should also have ELC through Irish & secondary school through Irish. In English speaking schools I'd prefer for Irish to be thought in a fun and engaging way - through cultural activities nature projects etc all thought through Irish and not as an academic subject. I believe the teaching of Irish for English speakers should be intrinsically linked with Irish culture. This would be far more engaging and meaningful for our children.
6. My irish husband is hard of hearing and attended school in Cabra Dublin and never learnt irish language. Why didn't the government focus on the Irish language back then?! Too late now ...
7. if children are not learning Irish in primary school how are they supposed to learn it in an environment where the staff are not qualified
8. I think Irish should be taught better in primary schools in a similar way that other languages are taught at any age
9. More games in Irish and teaching it as a foreign language. I have a son that is in 5th class of primary school and it is ridiculous that even the Irish books from first class they expect you to have some level of Irish. The reality is that outside the Gaeltach very few people speak Irish. I think that if it would be taught as a foreign language the children would learn more of it.
10. Encourage it through play. Don't expect it as part of planning. But a natural integration of the language
11. Change the way irish is thought in school. Even teachers teaching language are limited in their knowldage and contradictory. Organizing language camps (free of charge) in Irish speaking area would be more productive.

12. Put some effort into apps/tools for parents to use with the children. Bearing in mind that most parent have little or no Irish themselves but want to help teach. Our school uses a website at the moment that is very poor.

Appendix 5

Why do you think Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should help parents use Irish at home?

1. It will be easier for kids to learn Irish
2. So they can speak Irish with their children
3. So parents can participate & encourage the children with use of the Irish language
4. So they can encourage their children at home.
5. To encourage parents to engage
6. This reinforces the learning at school and there are quite a few resources already available that parents could be directed to, without too much work for the staff
7. To help consolidate their learning
8. To enable us to assist with homework.
9. Every little helps
10. To help the skills children learn at school
11. Again it provides a basis upon which parents can develop a child's interest in the language
12. Gives children a better chance to learn it if they are hearing it in different environments
13. Maybe for those with no Irish?
14. To help bring Irish out of education and into the rest of children's lives.
15. We should be using Irish, it's our native language
16. To encourage the native language of our country and for school readiness
17. The children's use of the language will encourage parents to take the language more seriously
18. Using Irish should be seen as a value but instead it is unfortunately often seen as unnecessary or a burden.
19. Parents must mirror what happens in education so there is continuity
20. To allow children to hear Irish at home as well as in school/childcare setting.
21. To encourage wider use, cuppa focail goes a long way, help gain confidence
22. It will help bring the kids on and encourage it be spoken more publicly
23. Parents would have learned school Irish and need support to better themselves
24. Even a leaflet of basic phrases would be better for the parents and children than not using any Irish at all
25. Parents should work with ELC and SAC and vice versa in the education of children
26. Practice
27. A lot of parents learned Irish in school many years ago and while we still remember some phrases it would be great to use a more bilingual approach, take the pressure off the way Irish is taught and concentrate more on kids and families speaking the language
28. Some parents may not have Gaelige or confidence to use it
29. Parents should be afforded every opportunity to improve their Irish. It encourages kids to keep learning and provides positive role models. A better understanding of a second language improves learning other foreign languages
30. So we can help our children learn Irish, parents can use Irish words in daily tasks and living, helping our children have a better understanding

Appendix 6

Why do you think Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings should not help parents use Irish at home?

1. Is they were interested they would Do it already
2. If child is living in Gaeltacht area or attending Gael scout parents are most likely already good Irish speakers so it's not needed
3. Again its not binary - has to be optional
4. It's difficult for many parents particularly parents from other countries of origin
5. they don't get paid to do so, the focus should be on primary schools
6. I don't imagine my family ever using Irish to speak at home, we do not feel the need to.
7. It is a personal choice of the parents that shouldn't be influenced by the government
8. Up to each family as to whether they want to put an emphasis on use of Irish as a language
9. I think if you're going to use it in school, the least you can do is provide a glossary to parents of the terms used by the school and not assume a level of knowledge, but equally, it's not up to the schools to try to get parents to participate at home. If they have opted in for their kids to learn Irish then help parents with Irish otherwise leave it be.
10. As I said Irish to me is not fundamental at all
11. Priority should be on promotion of a spoken European language so that our children can speak another active European language. Irish is a nice to have language but of little benefit unless pursuing a job that requires Irish.
12. Primary school is time enough for children to start learning Irish. The government should focus their attention on this being taught correctly in primary and secondary instead.
13. I detest Irish, the sound of it, it's everywhere. I switch it off when I can. I resent having to listen it through my kids. Please accent some parents resent the language as do many of my friends. We were forced it for 14 years and now you continue to force feed through my kids! Disgusting
14. I believe society has changed dramatically, we are all running a rat race, constantly chasing our tails, managing work, home, kids.. family dynamics has also dramatically changed & we have alot of single parent families & working families... theres a huge increase in forgeins nations now living in ireland that can not speak english never mind irish. Majority of irish people cant speak irish. Theres a dramatic increase in the number of additional needs kids that are or should be exempt from irish as they struggle enough at school with their learning disability. I believe irish shud b an option and offer incentives to learn it and shud not b a core subject. Half the reason school leavers head of to the uk or australia to go to college is because they dont need irish there! I know lots of kids went of to the uk to study nursing because they did not get in here cause they failed irish but got enough points to go to the uk. Scrap irish!!
15. It is not used, my children are way better at speaking Spanish after 4 years in secondary school than 12 years of Irish
16. Any parents interested in this can get help themselves. The ELC have enough responsibility to teach and care for the children in their settings

18. same answer as above, plus ireland is a much more multi cultural country now than is as when I was a kid, and some non-native parents struggle with English never mind Irish
19. Its not necessary. If parents want to go it they already will be.
20. Language is too hard for young kids and confusing if learning another language with it
21. Parents should be given help in supporting children with additional learning needs
22. Irrelevant, should not be forced on anyone
23. Because If I do not speak Irish is very difficult for me to know how to use Irish by just helping my son to do this homework. I speak English fluently and my parents don't. Not because I went to a school that teaches English my parents learned to speak English. The government should focus on bringing Irish to the new generations not to try from teach the whole country. That is impossible
24. How would they help? Print resources? It's up to each family if they wish to teach Irish at home. The more it's pushed, the more it will be pushed away
25. Because, this is multi ethnic society. "Newly published EU statistics on immigration show that the proportion of the population of the Irish state who were born overseas reached 22% in 2023."
26. Because not everyone is capable of learning new language skills, particularly at a later stage. If Irish was learned through fun, experience and less through rote learning and the fear of making mistakes, maybe more people would be comfortable to try using it more.
27. Not their responsibility. They would have enough to contend with introducing irish to the children. There are plenty of existing resources that are accessible to anyone who wants to use cupla focal at home
28. I don't need to learn Irish but my child will for school
29. NA
30. Parents choice staff have enough to do

Appendix 7

What, if any, do you see as the main benefits of having more *Irish speaking* Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply.

1. None
2. Normalising the daily use of Irish in our daily interactions
3. Cultural
4. Bilingualism strengthens cognitive abilities - bilingual people tend to be more creative and flexible.
5. Keeping our land alive
6. Additionally one of my children has dyslexia but no issues with Irish and excels in it - Irish should be
7. encouraged for all children
8. Promoting our identity
9. Exposing children to a new world of words boosts their brainpower, vocabulary and self-esteem.
10. This results in better language skills, enhanced thinking and reasoning skills, increased maths ability,
11. higher self-esteem, earlier reading and better cultural understanding.
12. I don't see the need for Irish in ELC when a child will be going to an English speaking school. I think
13. when a parent wishes to send their child to an Irish speaking school then the offer of ELC through
14. Irish should be present within the area.
15. For cultural heritage values, general knowledge
16. I do not see huge benefits of having more spoken Irish unless a person chooses willingly to learn the
17. language
18. Only in that Irish is still required at school so it may help them with that. Should Irish be required is
19. a different (potentially more valid) question.
20. I don't think it will make children anymore fluent..
21. Prefer valuable educational resources be used to promote the learning of a European language.
22. Total waste of time & effort as they will never use their Irish language in real life
23. Other than key words, I wouldn't be spending too long on the Irish language at such a young age.
24. Don't see any benefits of learning Irish
25. equality for children of immigrant parents who do not have Irish background
26. Having an understanding and appreciation of our National language that is dying out
27. The earlier you start the better it is
28. Promotes the use in local areas in children are using it more frequently and building back up to
29. wider use across communities
30. To promote Irish in
31. Promoting Irish language which shouldn't be treated as a dead language by many people

Appendix 8

What, if any, do you see as the main benefits of having more *Irish speaking* School Aged Childcare settings? Please tick all that apply.

1. None
2. Bilingualism strengthens cognitive abilities - bilingual people tend to be more creative and
3. flexible.
4. Adv of being bilingual and acceptance and understanding of additional languages - can help
5. with identity for non nationals
6. I don't approve of the way Irish is currently taught in my children's primary school - I see very
7. little value to it. I would prefer this time to be spent on learning about the environment, or
8. another European language- which I think would be of more benefit to them in adult life. I
9. do (as mentioned in a previous statement) see a HUGE value in teaching Irish culture, Irish
10. crafts, Irish biodiversity ALL through the Irish language, as it gives the language context and
11. reason.
12. General knowledge and cultural background
13. As above
14. Only in that it may give a child a leg up on a required subject at school. Not that it should be
15. required.
16. It benefits only those that wish to speak it.
17. Promotion of a European language more important.
18. None. Just extra work.
19. Some educational benefits but for children with difficulties, it impacts on their confidence at
20. a very early age.
21. No benefit
22. Help with our cultural identity
23. Being able to speak their national language like other children in other countries
24. As above
25. Preservation of Irish Language

Appendix 9

What, if any, do you see as the main benefits to greater use of the Irish language in *English speaking* Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply. _____

1. None
2. Builds on their positive relationship with the language and normalises its use.
3. Cultural
4. Bilingualism strengthens cognitive abilities - bilingual people tend to be more creative and flexible
5. Adv of being bilingual and acceptance and understanding of additional languages - can help with identity for non nationals
6. As above: Introducing our babies, toddlers and young children to heritage language has many benefits across all the developmental domains: cognitive, emotional, social, physical, language, and personal. We need to feed our children's brains with the sounds, rhythms, patterns and structures of the Irish language through simple rhymes and songs.
7. As above
8. Only in that it may give a child a leg up on a required subject at school. Not that it should be required.
9. I don't see the benefit
10. Confusion. Extra work. Exhausted kids & parents.
11. No benefit
12. equality for children of immigrant backgrounds
13. none
14. If Irish is used along side English and thought by speaking it to children I feel there wouldn't be such a fear/hatred of the language in the next generation. I fortunately went to gealscoil for primary school and could speak it fluently as a young child so I love the language. However the way it was thought to my peers in English speaking schools have them a hatred of it. It should be thought through conversation not repeating vocab
15. Introducing at an early age focused on vocabulary and communication is beneficial.

Appendix 10

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more *Irish speaking* Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply.

1. I don't really see a barrier, but neither do I see why you would bother
2. Lack of engagement from staff
3. Historically negative attitude to the language and ongoing e.g. negative commentary from
4. some Media outlets (Newstalk)
5. Fear of parents and educators of Irish language due to their own experience learning Irish
6. I'm not informed in this area so can't respond
7. Lack of interest in the language when it is forced upon children and adults
8. People don't use it outside of the school
9. I don't think it's necessary
10. I don't believe teachers are sufficiently qualified to teach Irish
11. I see a couple of pop up Irish things in our area that are free to attend but when my daughter was in Gaelscoil, the classes they were running were very expensive and people couldn't afford them so they didn't carry on with classes.
12. Do they really need it?
13. I would not have only Irish in a pre school. It needs to be introduced slowly and build it up
14. Lack of support for parents
15. A lot of the time parents have had bad experiences with studying Irish in school & so they don't encourage their children to learn it & don't instill a love or passion for our Irish language. Then there is a lack of engagement from children and an instant automatic hatred for something they haven't even learned about yet.
16. Lack of support / classes for parents

Appendix 11

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers of having more *Irish speaking* School Aged Childcare settings? Please tick all that apply.

1. A different approach to teaching Irish needed. More conversational Irish needs to be developed and less grammar recitation. The grammar will come through fluency.
2. Unsure don't see any really?
3. Lack of engagement from staff
4. Historically negative attitude to the language and ongoing e.g. negative commentary from some Media outlets (Newstalk)
5. I'm not an educator so don't feel I can answer this accurately
6. Lack of support / classes for parents
7. As above
8. Are they actually needed?
9. Do people want more Irish speaking settings? Do they

Appendix 12

What, if any, do you see as the main barriers to greater use of the Irish language in *English speaking* Early Learning and Care settings? Please tick all that apply. _____

1. Entire curriculum
2. Lack of engagement from staff
3. Historically negative attitude to the language and ongoing e.g. negative commentary from some Media outlets (Newstalk)
4. There are resources for English speaking Early Learning and Care settings.
5. It is difficult to move from intermediate to fluency. There is no bridge into becoming a full time educator through Irish unless you grew up fluent in Irish
6. Lack of support / classes for parents
7. As above
8. The current curriculum puts people off the language
9. I don't think it's necessary
10. Do they really need it?
11. I would not have only Irish in a pre school. It needs to be introduced slowly and build it up
12. not catered for children coming from different background. artificially forced language. there is no natural drive for it.

Appendix 13

How should the government be supporting *Irish speaking* Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings. Please tick all that apply.

1. Encourage native guest speakers use of footage from TG4
2. Maybe supply a copy of Bróga Nua 1 - Enjoying Irish with Young Children to all services.
Bróga Nua 1 is a complete guide for non-speakers of the language. It contains a rhyme and song to go with every aspect of life in the home, creche, or playgroup.
3. support / classes for parents
4. when are staff supposed to have time to do this when they are not qualified in Irish
5. My daughters gaelscoil is an amazing little school but 24 years later,, still in prefabs. Many opt NOT to send the children there because of the prefabs so end up attending english speaking local schools instead. Many have left during school years due to the problems in the prefabs and having a lack of a PE hall - sad to see the Gaelscoil not getting support needed when all the local english schools have the best supports.
6. Explaining the benefits of learning the language that is not widely used
7. While I think support should be given I don't think examining children In Irish later in the educational system should be mandatory
8. Afterschool Irish Provision

Appendix 14

How should the government be supporting a greater use of Irish in *English speaking* ELC/SAC centres. Please tick all that apply

1. Irish language training during initial teacher training courses.
2. More salary to ELC first ,free beginner Irish classes,by levels.
3. The training need not be a costly exercise. I have delivered short courses to childcare providers in the past.
4. I think they should have it as optional subject
5. Fund Gaelscoils with proper buildings rather than prefabs and temporary buildings.
Gealscoil Phádraig in Ballybrack, Co Dublin 24 years in prefabs.
6. organising free classes for interested in the language
7. Having educators that can speak Irish. Every school should have 1 day per week that everything is thought in Irish and only Irish is spoken
8. While I think support should be given I don't think examining children In Irish later in the educational system should be mandatory

Appendix 15

Please highlight other suggestions you might have for inclusion in a National Plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings in Ireland?

1. More secondary Irish schools needed. There is no point having a child falling in love with the language, confident using it, and no where to progress. Very frustrating in Co. Offaly that there is no secondary Irish speaking school in Tullamore. Especially with so many feeder schools that could benefit from it.
2. I have spoken earlier about making it compulsory that the primary school provides age appropriate vocabulary list on an A4 sheet to all parents, comprising all necessary vocabulary across the main areas they will cover so we can reinforce their learning while also expanding our own vocabulary.
3. Get the teachers on board first before you announce any new plans and make sure they feel supported first. Give the proper amount of time and money to this project and do it right. Too much money is wasted on poorly executed initiatives.
4. If Irish is brought in to early learning it may raise the standard of what is being taught in our primary school.
5. Our language is our history - we seem afraid to talk about the Chieftains of Ireland, Royal Meath, the Famine, the 1916 Rising - all the social, political and economic factors that contributed to the loss of the language. People don't feel passionate about preserving it because they don't feel connected to it. We need to build the bridge of connection. Be proud of our unique contribution to the world - our ancient language.
6. If a Gaelscoil is established in an area a Naíonra should be established alongside.
7. Signs and posters as Gaeilge, availability of books as Gaeilge, basic Irish introduced and used with children i.e. Dia duit/Dia is Muire duit, go raibh maith agat, Dia linn, everyday words e.g. doras, fuinneog srl.
8. Try every day to speak Irish, cuppa focal gach lá.
9. Look at successful Naíonra's and get expertise from these especially from fluent Gaelgoirs.
10. I know focus is on Irish but it needs to be optional - for example I would rather my kids learnt Spanish and/or German - languages they will use when they travel. I think Irish is fine if parents want to support this but it should be optional.
11. More Gaelscoil's to be built. Higher pay for Gaelscoil teachers to entice more educators to the roles. Higher points available to students in Leaving Cert.
12. Childcare professionals need not be Irish speakers to introduce simple Irish rhymes and songs to young children in English speaking services. It is so easy to learn some simple rhymes and songs to enjoy with the children. The benefits for children are enormous across all the development domains as I have outlined above. Little children acquire languages naturally and rhymes and songs play a critical role in language acquisition - and they are FUN!
13. A realistic understanding of the Irish language level of ELC staff should be appreciated.

14. We are getting to a stage of less and less inclusion of Irish language, with an expansion of other nationalities and languages in our country, I have a fear it may be diluted further, we need to make it more fun and normalise it's use
15. See comments from my earlier responses - Irish culture thought through Irish,
16. it should be promoted, but it needs to start in primary school for all. If this is forced upon early years staff and SAC staff, most will not have the standard required. we are already struggling to get staff this will just put more pressure on services
17. I think the govts approach to the Irish language is turning people away from it. I grew up learning Irish, I studied it through my work and now I feel the govt is forcing it down people's throats which is wholly wrong. Irish taking precedence of English is simply wrong. It is not making the language enticing or exciting for people to learn. Make it a choice like all other languages and people will be far more receptive to it. It should not be compulsory on state examinations either
18. Make it optional all throughout the Irish education system. Then people who are genuinely interested / enthusiastic can engage with it, but it's not forced upon others who do not want to learn it.
19. I don't think there should be a focus on Irish - it excludes many childcare and teaching professionals who might be foreign born and have no knowledge of Irish. As a teen I just wanted to study science and maths at uni, but in order to do that in an NUI university I had to have 3 languages (English, Irish and in my case French) which I had no interest in and which were not my strengths - can we not just create opportunities for people to study areas they excel in and are interested in without forcing some other agenda down their throats?
20. "Yes - Gaelscoils would be far more popular if they had attractive buildings with the proper support in them - most I see are still in Prefabs or using other schools while they wait on permanent buildings.
I did love the gaelscoil my daughter attended but wouldn't recommend to others based on the cold damp prefabs, very bad toilets where children wouldn't go into and no PE / Assembly hall.
It's a shame because many more would enrol children if it was a decent building."
21. If this was to come in there should be classes for parents as well as I am a non Irish speaker and what I can remember from school is very different to what is thought today .
22. I think Irish is needed that little. I think it should be an opt in at secondary school. I think the pressure should not be on young children to speak Irish as some are struggling with English alone
23. I don't think it be forced upon early learning centres .as it is difficult to get staff. But if a preschool setting was interested there should be resources available to them. It just needs to be at a very simple level. Songs, rhymes, games and books and courses available to staff that are interested
24. improve the quality of educators within the ECCE settings, level 8 graduates. with addition of Irish. these educators should be paid the same as primary teachers 4 years honours degree with a language. overall improve the quality output and high standard. thus children starting junior infants have had 2 years plus of the Irish language 6
25. I think it is a great idea & it will stand to each child all the way through their primary education

26. The educators need to have fluent Irish and speak to the children in Irish. Either do this for 1/2 days per week where all lessons are in Irish or at certain times during the day, every day, only Irish is spoken. At preschool this can be done simply by educators repeating what they just said in Irish. I often do this with my own children so they may not speak much Irish yet but they can understand what I'm saying when I speak it
27. I don't think examinations in Irish should be mandatory.
28. Play in Irish! Children learn more and retain more from play-based learning. Irish has long been a 'difficult' thing to teach and learn, is never seen as fun and rarely taught in a playful, open way.
29. There should be a significant focus on building capacity in English speaking ELC and SAC to support at least some parts of the curriculum in Irish given that these are the majority settings
30. "We need to encourage Irish speakers to be more patient and inclusive when people attempt to use the Irish that they have. Currently there is a feeling of superiority amongst a lot of Gaeilgeoirí and so people are embarrassed to use the Irish that they have. People choose to not speak Irish at all rather than risk the embarrassment and mortification of using Irish in the wrong way. We have generations of people who have learned Irish in primary and secondary school and they hold onto their past feelings of utter despair when it comes to using Irish. This continues to be passed onto the new generations. As a parent of children who have been educated in Gaelscoileanna I would say that the attitude of punishing children for speaking English whilst at their school also puts a negative feeling onto the Irish Language. We simply need to give children a love and a pride in being bilingual and create a teaching environment where children want to learn the language. Finally the current leaving cert Irish curriculum needs to be reformed. There is far too much focus on historical elements of the language (poetry, etc) that is not relevant and is off putting to today's teenagers. This is also adding a negative feeling to our native language. We need to look at how English is taught as a second language in mainland Europe and use this model to give back our native Irish language to our children. "
31. "Have a minimum for each class to reach. Basics in the language met."
32. Additional funding to encourage educators to improve their Irish.
33. It should be standard that all children are given the opportunity to learn and encouraged to speak Irish from early years onwards. They will not think of it as a second language just speaking Irish is natural along with English
34. about time
35. "As I was born in other EU country I didn't know Irish language at all. When my children started to go to primary school we were getting information that there is a course organised by LMETB for parents of children speaking other languages. I was happy to have the possibility to attend to them as I learned few words/sentences in Irish and was able to support my children with their homework. Our group was small, but we were people from Poland, France, Morocco, China and there was one lady from Donegal which advised she hated Irish when she was going to primary school, but at home when her child's parents were speaking Irish - she joined the group and she found out that the lessons which she attended will be like the ones we had, she will be fluent in Irish. I think it should be more information provided, with more courses like that for people who would give a try to learn Irish, to try to help their children at school and to keep this beautiful language alive."



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