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## **Report on State Supported Day Nurseries in Ireland**

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## General Picture of Day Facilities for Pre-School Children in Ireland

Recorded in the 1971 Census of Population were 315,655 children aged under 5 years. It is estimated that this number will grow to between 401,600 and 492,200 by 1986.<sup>1</sup> At present, day facilities for these children, other than State and private schools, are not registered with any State authority and no legislation covers standards or personnel. Consequently, there are no statistics on these facilities and it is not even possible to make estimates without considerable investigation. Dr. McKenna<sup>2</sup> gave an outline of the main kinds of group facilities for young children in Ireland today, and the following general picture of facilities for the under fives draws extensively from her work. We will consider these facilities under five categories: infant classes, nursery schools, playgroups, day-care nurseries and baby-minders.

1. Infant Classes: Almost 70 per cent of four-year old children are already in attendance at State and private schools. In national schools these classes range in size from thirty to fifty children and the day extends for some five hours. It is probably true to say that such infant classes are considered a downward extension of, and a preparation for, primary school and are more academic in orientation than private nursery schools. Teachers in infant classes are trained national teachers having taken a two-year course in one of the three national colleges of education.

2. Nursery schools or kindergartens are generally private fee-paying schools for children between the ages of three and six years. As there is no legislation or State registration of such schools or their staff, it is difficult to estimate the number. The Montessori Training College and the Irish Montessori Society have a list of schools which they recommend. These number 26, and cater for about 814 children, but these are the schools they know about and which co-operate with taking on trainee teachers.

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1. National Economic and Social Council, Report No. 5. Population and Employment Projections 1971-86.
  2. Dr. Anne McKenna, Training Pre-School Personnel, Irish Committee of OMEP. Dr. McKenna covers the first four categories outlined here.

It is not known how many additional ones exist and the quality of nursery schools may vary to a much greater extent than that of infant national schools, because of the lack of State supervision. Where staff are trained, it is likely to be in a Froebel or Montessori system. Numbers tend to be smaller than those for national infant classes, ranging from around 15, and rarely exceeding 30 children. These schools are sometimes found as downward extensions of private fee-paying primary schools. The St. Nicholas Montessori Society say that they have bookings beyond what they can cope with.

A pre-school project in Rutland Street, Dublin, sanctioned by the Department of Education with funds from the Van Leer Foundation of The Netherlands, is a school providing early compensatory education. 180 three-and four year-olds are taught by six qualified teachers, plus three classroom assistants, with a supporting staff of social workers who maintain a link with the children's homes. The school is research-oriented and intended to produce guidelines for further development in compensatory education in Ireland.

There are also community pre-school classes where parents are required to pay a small weekly contribution. Pre-schools for itinerant children have been established to look after the educational and social needs of travelling people. Teachers in these schools are often Montessori trained.

3. Playgroups: These are relative newcomers on the pre-school scene. They may be defined as groups of three-to-five year old children who have regular play sessions, usually in a home, and where the emphasis is on play, and learning through play, rather than on formal teaching. The great majority of these playgroups are initiated and run by parents themselves and a small charge may be made. The Irish Pre-school Playgroups' Association (IPPA) has 264 registered playgroups run by their members and 38 Community Playgroups, with at least 10 more Community Playgroups starting in September 1975. Numbers of children per group range from 10 to 25, so that the total number of children catered for will be over 5,000 by the end of 1975.

Moreover, the playgroups registered with the IPPA are probably only a fraction of the total number in the country. Also, a number of bilingual playgroups sprang up in the past five or six years, where the emphasis is on the fostering of the Irish language in the child's early years through the means of play activities. No standards are laid down for play groups but the IPPA issues a code of standards to their members and runs a series of lectures and workshops for playgroup supervisors.

Some children's hospitals provide playrooms, equipment and paid staff for young hospitalised children.

4. Day-care nurseries will take children aged 0 to 4½ years for the full day all year round. Those partly maintained by the State (which pays 65% or more of their running costs) have come about mainly as a result of pressing demands from the community and, in particular, from the needs of the less-privileged groups within the community. There are approximately 15 of these, catering for 478 children. In fact, very few babies are catered for. It is with these day nurseries that the major part of this report is concerned.

In addition, there is an unknown number of private day-care nurseries. Some are run by the universities for their students and staff, a few others can be located in the classified telephone directory or newspaper advertisements. The ones in Dublin that are known about (about six) have personnel with qualifications of some kind. There are no factory creches operating at present; one did exist but closed down when the factory closed down.

Baby-minders: These usually consist of a woman taking in one or more babies to her home while their mother is working. The fee charged varies considerably. There is no information on the number of these and not a great deal is known about their general standard according to the Superintendent of Child Welfare. The 800 Public Health Nurses (one for each 4,000 of the population) are aware of many baby minders and exercise unofficial supervision, which is welcomed. If they are unsatisfied for



reasons of risk to health, of moral irregularity, or cruelty, they can prosecute under the Children's Act 1908. There have been no cases. However, nine years ago the author did chance upon a baby minder who had one room on the top floor of an old house. There were several disturbing aspects, in particular the steamy atmosphere owing to wet nappies being dried on a clothes horse in front of a gas fire. Overcrowding, inadequate supervision while the minder tries to get on with her own chores, are the usual quoted misgivings. However, unsatisfactory minders are probably the exception. It is easy for bad rumours to spread when there is virtually no information on a matter.

Section A: Details of State-Supported Day Nurseries

Part 1: Government Policy and Trends in Government Thinking

15 partly maintained day-nurseries/<sup>are</sup>provided as a service by some of the Regional Health Boards. There is, according to the Department of Health, no legislation, permissive or mandatory, concerning provision of pre-school facilities by Health Boards. Section 65 of the 1953 Health Act authorises them to "give assistance. . . . to any body which provides or proposes to provide a service similar, or ancillary to, a service which the Health Authority may provide".

While this is not very specific the general rule of thumb would appear to be that day-nursery facilities can be provided for children of deprived families:

- whose mothers have to work
- in single parent families
- whose mothers are in need of psychiatric treatment
- from broken homes.

A certain amount of discretion/<sup>is</sup>exercised by Health Boards. One Health Board insists on parental involvement, for example. The Eastern Health Board, which is comparatively active in the day-nursery field, quotes the 1970 Health Act Section 61 (1) (C):

"A Health Board may make arrangements to assist in the maintenance at home of a person who, but for the provision of a service for him under this section, would require to be maintained otherwise than at home".

The Eastern Health Board describes the purpose of its day-nurseries as follows:

- "1. To provide an alternative to residential care for young children (mainly pre-school) whose parents cannot care for them during the day
2. To provide day care for children whose development may be gravely at risk due to illness, physical or mental, in the family, or general cultural risk "

and its policy is defined:

"It will be the policy of the Community Care Programme to continue to foster the provision of Day Nurseries in the areas of need by suitable community-based voluntary bodies. This will be done by making available grants towards running costs. In the absence of a suitable voluntary body in an area of need, it may be necessary to provide the facility and run it with Health Board staff".

The action of the Eastern Health Board reflects the initiative of its members.

Local Authorities have, so far, not been involved in day-nursery provision, though Dublin Corporation is beginning to be involved with playgroups.

Their interest lies in the Community development aspect of playgroups. Section 56 of the 1966 Housing Act enables a housing authority to provide services which

"will, in the opinion of the authority, serve a beneficial purpose either in connection with the requirements of the persons for whom the dwellings are provided, or in connection with the requirements of those persons and of other persons".

Local Authorities would be willing, say Dublin Corporation, to take on nursery provision wherever local communities indicate a definite need.

Government thinking on the form of day care facilities may be undergoing some changes. At a recent seminar on Health Services in Ireland held under the auspices of the Minister for Health, the working group on Community Services made the following points concerning the provision of day-care for children aged 2½ to 5 years :-

- They stressed the importance of this service because of its preventive nature
- They would like to see more nurseries established, or more opportunities for groups to set them up, with positive encouragement by Health Boards
- They want clarified the definition of "children of deprived families"
- They noted that in some regions a very restricted definition was applied
- They felt that such facilities should not be restricted to one social class
- If nurseries are set up, these should not be in isolation: there must be community and parental involvement
- Finally, there must be provision for trained personnel to run these facilities

There is, at present, a Task Force investigating the whole area of deprived children. In particular, in a research project conducted jointly by the Task Force and Irish Association of Social Workers, a survey is gathering information from social workers on all cases of child deprivation coming to their notice during a specified period. For each case, the social workers are asked whether day-care is appropriate for this child; if the answer is "yes" they are asked what type of day care is appropriate and whether it is available at present. The results of this survey should provide guidelines for the Task Force's policy recommendations. By definition the Task Force is concerned with children with pressing social needs, and while it will probably recommend the extension of present facilities, it is unlikely to recommend provision of day facilities for women who want to work, or for all on demand. The Task Force would probably consider that the resources could be better spent elsewhere. Women who want to work, like teachers and doctors, etc. do not have to give up their careers when they have children because they can use private facilities or employ someone in their homes. Therefore, it is maintained that State nurseries are not needed by these people. It is possible that the Task Force will recommend that baby minders be licensed. The main difficulty lies in the large resources required for inspection and supervision.

In general, therefore, it is not yet possible to summarise "government policy" on day-nurseries, as policy is not yet formulated. A request for the establishment of a day-nursery was made to the Government, as employer, by an organisation of Civil Servants, the Administrative Officers' Association. This occurred subsequent to the recent removal of the bar on the employment of married women in the Civil Service. The request was considered, but turned down on account of there being other, more urgent, requirements. There did not seem to be any objection on principle. However, there is a widespread opinion in Government circles that the best person to look after the pre-school child is the mother. It follows then that the nursery is mainly thought of as a mother substitute if, for some reason, the mother cannot fully care for the child without help.

Section A: Details of State-Supported Nurseries

Part 2: An Analysis of Supply and Demand, At Present, and Expected

A survey<sup>1</sup> of 5,000 women conducted between March and May 1971 asked women who were not working to give their reasons for not working. Of those married or widowed women (non-farm) with children in the age groups 0-3 years inclusive, 12% said that they did not work because there were "no suitable facilities available for use by mothers with young children". This represents over 13,000 mothers in this category in the country. Responses to the question "what do you think about leaving young children in day-nurseries while their mothers are working" indicate that 10,900 of the 13,000 have no objection to, or would express approval of, day nurseries. The majority of the remainder would disapprove of nurseries, feeling they should be used "only if necessary". A small number, about 1½%, would strongly disapprove. A large number gave no answer to the question on how much use they would make of day-nurseries, possibly because many had not even considered the matter before, 37% would use them all year, the remainder would use them for parts of the year. Counting the latter at half-time suggests a stated 5,500 day-nursery places would have been used in 1971, given that the mothers could get jobs, etc. While these figures might have a large confidence interval<sup>2</sup>, they do not take account of the following facts: that some of these mothers have more than one child under the age of four, that the sample covers non-farm women only, that it under-represented women in the 20-24 years age group, and, for technical reasons in these tabulations, it excludes all women in the 15-19 years age group. So these 5,500 are a minimum.

The real figure would be more closely related to the 10,900 mothers not objecting to day-nurseries.

This, so far, only views day-nursery demand from the angle of women who might have gone to work. In the same survey, 22½% of married or widowed working women had one or more 0-3 year old children, and there is some information on the

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1. B. W. Walsh assisted by A. O'Toole. Women and Employment in Ireland: Results of a National Survey. The information which follows comes from a special tabulation of their data. 2157 women in the non-farm sample were married or widowed, aged 20-44 inclusive and not gainfully occupied. These formed the basis for grossing up the figures, along with data from the Census of Population 1966 Vol.V, Table 7 and Census of Population 1971, Bulletin 39, p.10, from which the national total for the same category of women is approximately 201,000 women. 2. 95% C.I. is 4,300 to 7,000 places.

arrangements made for child care while they were working, as follows:

Table 1 Arrangements for Child Care While the Mother was Working	
Arrangements for Child Care	Per cent of married and widowed working women (with children aged 0-3 years inclusive)
No special arrangement	55.9
Paid help (living in)	7.9
Paid help (not living in)	8.6
Unpaid help (relative living in)	11.8
Take children to neighbours, etc.	7.2
Paid day-care centre	4.0
Take children to work	1.3
No Answer	3.3
Total per cent	100
N	152

42% of married working women with 0-3 year old children worked at home<sup>1</sup>, hence the high number who made "no special arrangement". The total number in the country of married or widowed working women with one or more children aged 0-3 years would be in the region of twelve thousand<sup>2</sup>, with perhaps seven thousand working away from home. The average number of hours worked per week by non-farm married working women with 0-3 year old children was just under 27 hours, and over a quarter of these women worked 35 hours and over. Unfortunately, there is no information on whether or not these women felt satisfied with the arrangements made for their children, and it is not possible to estimate how many working mothers would like to change to using day nurseries, if these were available and of a high standard.

There are several other indicators of demand for day-nurseries. There are the comments made by people whose attitudes<sup>3</sup> to the present policies on day-nursery provision were sought. The overwhelming response was that there was a very serious shortage of day-nursery facilities, especially for the children most in need. Meanwhile, the Health Board for the Eastern region was fairly confident that it would be able to cope with the children falling into the categories they provided for, namely children for whom the

1. B. Walsh, p.103 2. 95% C.I. is 9,500 to 14,660, of which 5,500 to 8,500 work outside home.  
3. Part 3 for opinions. and Appendix A for list of people contacted

alternative would be residential care, or for children whose development may be gravely at risk. However, several of the Health Board nurseries stated that they were operating to capacity and could fill double their present facilities.

Another rough indicator of demand for day nursery facilities was obtained by contacting private nurseries and asking them whether they were receiving many enquiries from parents wishing to place their children. These would be charging up to £6.00 per week per child. Six nurseries taking children from 0 years onwards were found through the Classified Telephone Directory, newspapers and universities. The university nurseries were restricted to children of staff and students and managed so far to keep pace with demand, which had been increasing each year. Another nursery had started operating four months previously and was not experiencing any difficulties establishing itself. One nursery said they never have empty places and receive about two enquiries per week. One said they could fill another nursery. Finally, one nursery which co-operated by keeping a check of enquiries during May 1975 said they received three enquiries per day for babies, many not then born, and about two enquiries per week for 1 to 2 year olds. The experience of the private nurseries gives only part of the picture because if a facility is not known to exist, the demand does not make itself felt. For example, the interior of one of the university nurseries is easily visible to people passing in the street outside. The supervisor said that she could fill six times her present accommodation from the enquiries received from people outside the university. Meanwhile, another nursery tucked away out of public sight only received requests from people who would be supplied with information on it. So, while this sketchy survey indicates that existing nurseries are not satisfying demands, it is probably true to say that there is a much larger demand not making itself felt.

Another indicator of demand for day nursery facilities would be the number of single-parent families with pre-school children. Single parents have a very heavy task in physical, emotional and financial terms, and day-nursery facilities should be available to them. Associations dealing with single parent families stress the lack of nursery facilities as one of the main problems for their members. Unfortunately, it

is not possible to put a figure on the number of single parent families, let alone those with pre-school children. A few current guidelines from different sources are given by the following figures:

- There are 28,000 widows, with children aged 0-18 years, who are in receipt of payment in the form of benefit or assistance from the Department of Social Welfare. The 1971 Census of Population gives 920 widows and widowers aged 14-34 years, another 1,222 aged 35-39 years, and 2,795 aged 40-44 years.
- About 1,800 children are born outside family units each year. Of these, probably 70% are adopted at present (some perhaps because the mother cannot avail of facilities such as day nurseries). There are 2,500 unmarried mothers receiving social assistance for children aged 0-18 years.
- There are an estimated 4,000-7,000 deserted wives. 3,993 receive benefit or assistance. These have 4,600 children aged 0-18 years.
- There are 140 prisoners' wives receiving assistance. The husband's sentence must exceed six months for this payment to be made. These prisoners' wives have three children each on average.

Excluded from the Department of Social Welfare figures are the widows and deserted wives for whom contribution conditions were not satisfied on the wife's or husband's insurance. Also excluded are the wives whose weekly means are more than £17 in the case of there being one child, and over £20 in the case of two children, etc. From this information one can guess that there are between 3,000 and 4,000 0-3 year old children in single parent families. This would be 1% to 1.6% of the population of children of this age, which appears reasonable. As mentioned, however, this does not include all of those who are excluded from social welfare payments.

A summary of the results of these attempts to quantify demand can be stated (very roughly):



- 10,900 women, not working in 1971, might have gone to work and used nursery facilities if they were available.<sup>1</sup>
- 7,000 women in 1971 were working outside the home and had one or more 0 to 3 year old children.
- 500 children might be turned away by private nurseries in Dublin each year.
- 4,000 0-3 year old children, at least, are in single parent families.

It is impossible to put a figure on total overall present demand for day-nursery facilities because all these indicators overlap in their coverage. Neither can one accurately give present total supply, but there is no doubt that demand outstrips supply and this cuts across all income levels. It may be wondered why the private sector has not responded to demand. This may be partly due to the fact that this is a growth area and that the facilities have not caught up yet. It may also be a lack of initiative, for there are people willing to pay much more than £6 per week per child for good attractive facilities, trained staff and high staff-child ratio. That private operators do not raise prices in response to the current upsurge in demand may be partly attributed to social conscience. They would not want to price out some of their current customers, many of whom are single parents.<sup>2</sup>

As to future supply of facilities in relation to future demand, it seems likely that the State-supported sector will expand to cover more of the needy cases. It seems also likely that the private sector will slowly respond if the shortage of nurseries is more widely known about.

Trends in future demand will be largely determined by the growth in the number of married women going out to work. The long-term trend of married and widowed women going to work is given by the following Table.<sup>3</sup>

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1. In 1974, a survey to assess labour supply in selected areas conducted by the Department of Labour found that of the 2,503 women who said they would be available for work, 13.2% wanted care for their children.
  2. One private nursery mentioned that one third of its children, another said the majority, came from single parent families
  3. Census of population 1951 and 1971 Bulletin No.39.

Table 2 Participation in the Labour Force of Married and Widowed Women

	1951	1961	1966	1971
Gainfully occupied women:				
Married	22,026	24,288	25,834	39,214
Widowed	37,922	33,068	27,907	25,000
Participation rate (%)				
Married	4.7	5.2	5.3	7.5
Widowed	29.5	26.2	22.2	19.3

There is a marked decline in the numbers and participation rates of widowed women. This decline is possibly explained by the increasing average age of widows, the higher widows' pensions, and the decline in the agricultural population. Meanwhile, the participation rate of young widows is actually increasing as the following table shows:

Table 3 Participation Rates<sup>1</sup> of Married and Widowed Women by Age Group (%)

		Age Group (years)				
		20-24	25-29	30-34	35-40	40-44
Married Women:	1961	7.7	5.6	4.2	4.3	5.2
	1971	15.2	10.5	7.2	6.7	6.8
Widowed Women:	1961	39.4	40.0	46.5	49.2	50.2
	1971	43.8	47.3	43.0	46.5	46.7

The tables also show that there is a considerable upsurge in the participation rate of married women and especially young married women. This rise was commented on by B. Walsh<sup>2</sup> in 1971. "Virtually all of the growth of the female population is now occurring among married females, who traditionally contribute very

1. Census Population 1971, Bulletin No.39
2. Journal of the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland 1970-71; B. Walsh, Aspects of Labour Supply and Demand with special reference to the employment of women in Ireland.

little to the labour force as it is measured by our Census of Population. On the other hand, there is every reason to expect the demand for female labour to continue to expand, especially in the commercial and service sectors of the economy.....

A rise in labour force participation, especially among married women, is the most likely labour market adjustment to the situation now facing Ireland".

## Section A. Details of State-Sponsored Day Nurseries

### Part 3: Attitudes of Pressure Groups to the Present Situation

In Ireland, where Day Nurseries are in an early stage of development, the attitudes of pressure groups to the present situation could be an important guide to how the situation might develop. Therefore, considerable attention was paid to finding out people's attitudes. Although a proper survey was not within our scope, at least 25 organisations which might have an interest in the subject of nurseries, or might influence public opinion, were contacted. These organisations<sup>1</sup> include various women's associations, welfare organisations, political parties, religious associations and newspapers. Several people were contacted who are often interviewed or quoted, who can be considered 'educators' in the broad sense of the word. In the case of associations, the secretary of a committee member was contacted. In other cases it was the person who might have an interest in the subject, such as journalists who write on family affairs. Some of these people sent a written statement<sup>2</sup> of the organisation's agreed policy, others gave their own personal opinions because the issue had not been sufficiently investigated, or other members' opinions had not been gathered. However, as the respondents were prominent in their organisations, they can be considered sufficiently influential for their opinions to be quoted, though their organisation is not named alongside what they said.

People were asked what they thought of the present situation and of present Government policy of providing day nursery facilities mainly for children at risk, did they think nurseries should be provided for other categories as well, or for everyone 'on demand'? Who did they think should provide them, and where? Who should pay for them, and did they have any strong views on whether the 0-3 year old child should be at home with his or her mother?

Among those contacted, all those with direct experience of the current situation expressed concern at the shortage of nursery facilities. A frequent

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1. List in Appendix A.
  2. Written statements of agreed policy are given in Appendix B.

response was that the current situation was very serious indeed. Mention was made by a social worker of the big need for day-care nurseries for mothers ill in hospital. Other needs cited were for the mother who has to go to work for financial reasons, for widows who have to work for financial and sometimes therapeutic reasons, for unmarried mothers and for deserted wives. The Irish Pre-School Playgroups Association, for example, receive numerous enquiries from single parents who are trying to keep their babies, but the Association cannot deal with babies, and there is practically nothing they can recommend.

As is to be expected, this virtual unanimity does not carry over to suggestions on extensions of the present policy. While most people agreed that there were other categories which could equally be said to be at risk, who might not qualify for a place in the existing State-supported day nurseries, some people were uncertain about supply for all on demand. Several respondents were definitely against the provision of maintained or partly-maintained day facilities for women who did not have to go to work. The majority however were, on principle, in favour of provision for all, but many felt it was somewhat unrealistic to expect the State to bear these costs, given that "we are a poor country" and there is not yet enough provision for those whose needs are more "urgent". Professional associations, and the like, it was said, could afford to look after their own women members if they were concerned at the wastage of qualified women. In spite of this, several people were adamant that facilities like these should be all-community, so as not to have segregation. For example, a representative of an association which was concerned with widows considered it unsatisfactory that, on using existing facilities, the widows' children were mixing exclusively with children at risk.

As to whether these extended facilities should be wholly State provided, or paid for by the parents or employers, nearly everyone thought that parents should contribute something. Several people added that while this was at variance with their principles, experience, in some cases in their work, had shown them that a free service is assumed to be inferior, "like a dole". People feel "stigmatised"

and don't feel they are pulling their weight or have the authority to make suggestions on the running of the facility. Only one person thought that employers should pay for the facilities, another thought that the employers should contribute. It should be noted that in the survey<sup>1</sup> conducted in 1971 for "Women and Employment in Ireland", of those women who approved of day centres, 49.1% thought that the State should run them, 20.7% thought they should be privately run and 14.4% thought that employers should run them. Women who gave the absence of day-care facilities as the reason that they were not working, were asked how much they would be willing to pay for such facilities. 25% "didn't know" and 11% thought it should depend on the parents' income. Of those giving a quantified estimate of the amount they thought would be fair, the average was £1.76 per week<sup>2</sup>, with a standard deviation of £1.03. The averages given by those mentioning the different types of arrangements possible ranged from £1.74 for those saying "State," to £1.83 for those saying "private."

Meanwhile, most people spoken to felt very strongly that there should be overall State control. The care of children in nurseries requires a certain amount of professionalism and well-meaning amateurs can do a great deal of harm. In addition, a registration and inspection system of private babysitters and nurseries was considered essential. While this might require an "army of investigators" the point was made several times that the possibility of being inspected, along with clearly specified standards, in themselves would raise standards a little. One illustration given was that the Factories Act had had this effect. The Irish committee for OMEP<sup>3</sup> were already tackling one aspect of standards in outlining the training that should be given to people who look after pre-school children. Another drawback of the introduction of a registration and inspection system might be that some existing child-minders would be closed down. The closure might cause worse effects than those caused by the unsatisfactory standards. The approach of the Northern Ireland Department of Health and Social Services could be adopted here. They suggest that by giving advice and later, if

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1. B. M. Walsh, op.cit.
  2. These fees were given between March and May 1971. Applying the rise in the Consumer Price Index gives an average of £2.65 per week at March 1975 prices.
  3. Anne McKenna: "Training Pre-school Personnel" OMEP (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education).

necessary, by imposing requirements over a reasonable period, existing provision would be raised to the standard suggested. They continue " area boards should not be too rigid in their application of the suggested standards as some deficiencies may be more than compensated for by other advantages".

The siting of day-nursery facilities had already been carefully considered by a few people. Four possible locations arose, namely, near where people are living, in a community centre, at the place of work, or at the schools where other children in the family attend. One person suggested the last explaining that if parents already had to go to the school to transport the older children, they need only make the one journey. Several people favoured the place of work because this would give the parents ease of mind if they were able to check on the baby during breaks. However, the major weight of opinion came down in favour of siting day-nursery facilities near to where people are living, or in the community centre. In one area, apparently, part of the community centre premises was lying idle during the daytime and it seemed rational to use it. With the nursery close to home the child would have the minimum of transportation, and the mother would not be carrying and pushing shopping and babies over long distances. Another reason, given by a trade unionist, was that if nurseries were on the job, then if the mother lost or changed her job she would have to lose or change her nursery. Changes of milieus are unfavourable to a child. While the child's proximity during work might be a good argument in some cases, it would have the effect of making the parent responsible for the child insofar as access means responsibility for a parent. Furthermore, even if the mother is granted extra breaks to be with her child, she needs the breaks as breaks from work altogether. The argument that the mother may wish to breast-feed her baby could generally be overcome by the provision of adequate maternity leave.

Some people held strong views on whether or not the mother should be at home looking after her 0-3 year old child. Considerable polarisation emerged. One side can be summarised as "Every woman should have the choice, and I emphasise the word choice"<sup>1</sup>. Elaborations of this view were that the mother who has to go out

1. Dr. Hazel Boland, Member of National Council for Jewish Women and Member of Women's Representative Council.

to work has no choice, the mother who has to go out to work should no longer exist<sup>1</sup>, she should have a real choice by receiving adequate children's allowances, which she does not at present. <sup>On the other side</sup> /statements ran: if a mother must go out to work then there should be facilities for her, but ideally she should be at home during the formative years. The child needs the mother and a steady routine during the early years and placing a baby in a nursery runs the risk of cross-infection.

In particular, those questioned who might be able to draw from a wider observation of the maternal deprivation issue through their work, that is, the psychologists and social welfare workers, also showed a diversity of views. Some thought that it was generally accepted, not just in Irish academic circles, that the very young child whose mother stayed at home had a better chance. Therefore, the State should do far more to support the mother who wishes to be with her child at home.<sup>2</sup> In the centre of the spectrum of opinions there was the cautious view that there existed to date no strong evidence as to whether the mother should be at home.<sup>3</sup> A psychologist speaking at a recent conference<sup>4</sup> stated that it was a misconception to imply from Bowlby's<sup>5</sup>

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1. Mr. J. Lynch, Leader of the Opposition, speaking on "The legal status of women in Ireland", 26 April 1975, argues that in view of the Constitution's guarantee of support to the mother in the home (Article 41.2) women who need to work out of financial necessity might sue the State.
  2. This contrasts with another argument which stated that the mother should be at home, but that the State should provide nurseries for mothers who have to work for financial reasons; but that the State should not pay allowances to those who stay at home because that is what those mothers want to do anyway. To pay them would be an abuse of the sanctity of marriage.
  3. A sub-committee of the Council for Social Welfare is currently examining the effects on family life of the mother working. The only other research in Ireland touching this field, but for an older group of children, is by I. Hart, Economic and Social Review, Vol.6 No. 3, April 1975. Hart shows that while a high proportion of absentees from school had working mothers, "the theory that maternal employment causes deviance was, however, strongly questioned by a significant association between being a "chronic" (absentee) and not having a working mother".
  4. Dr. Dermot Walsh: Conference on "The Unmarried Parent and Child in Irish Society" Cherish, October 1974.
  5. J. Bowlby (1952) Maternal Care and Mental Health, Geneva, WHO.



work that working mothers should be opposed and "that a mother must be there twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and that the use of day creches and day-nurseries has a damaging effect on children" ; and, quoting from Rutter,<sup>1</sup> mothering should include "a stable, but not necessarily an unbroken relationship". Others again stated that a mother who is able to get out and about and is part of the social system might well be a better mother; the hours spent with the children are more productive. It is not the quantity of time spent, but the quality of the mother-child relationship that counts. An isolated frustrated mother creates a lot of problems for her children.

Quite a few spontaneous comments were added which should be mentioned here, since the issue of day-nurseries cannot be examined in isolation. Concern was expressed by trade union representatives that there must be protective legislation for women. Even with the provision of nurseries, a working mother still has to carry out most of the work in the home. Another respondent said that most trade unions would be on strike if they had to endure the conditions of the young mother, considering her financial and legal status in this country. This respondent, having received 52 replies from young mothers (with much higher qualifications than those needed) within hours of advertising for a part-time typist, could but conclude that there was a large pool of frustrated mothers. It is paradoxical that the Constitution states

In particular, the State recognises that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved (Article 41.2.1).

Yet in practical terms, society accords a rather low status to women and motherhood. Not only does this apply to property rights and so on, but even in the everyday matters there is a remarkably inadequate provision of requisites in the shops for expectant or nursing mothers, for example, and town planning and house design have in the past

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1. M. Rutter (1972) *Maternal Deprivation Re-assessed*. Penguin.

taken little account of children's needs. In essence, this cannot be described as a mother-oriented society. Of course, this is the case because there are so few women in the mainstream of public life.

Cutting across all shades of opinion among respondents was the frequently held view that the mother must have some relief from her children. The logical extension of this was that the mother who chooses to stay at home should also be able to avail of day-nurseries as a support facility. Some respondents, though convinced that the mother should be at home with the 0-3 year old child, emphasised that there was need for some separation too: "separation can be a safety valve".

Other spontaneous comments concerned the standards of nurseries. These, it was emphasised, must be well-administered, with trained staff whose interests extended well beyond just the hygiene and physical care of children.

Summary:

It is difficult to formulate a policy acceptable to all from the views given above. The issue of mothers working is a live one: it was reported by some respondents that working mothers were being made to feel guilty for leaving their rightful place, while other respondents reported that mothers looking after their children at home were being made to feel stupid. In spite of these wide differences of attitude, there is clearly a growing body of opinion which considers that women should be able to choose whether or not they go out to work. As stated by a member of the commission which submitted the report on the status of women in 1972, there has been a considerable change in attitudes since the report was written. At that time, replies to the survey question<sup>1</sup>:

"What do you think about leaving young children in day-care centres (nurseries playgroups) while their mothers are working? Do you approve or disapprove?" showed that 48.9% of respondents gave strong disapproval or disapproval, and 46.1%

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1. B. Walsh, op.cit.

gave approval or strong approval. "At that time nursery provision was not such an issue<sup>†</sup> - that there is a need is now obvious. Women are beginning to think differently and are noticing that there is nursery provision in other European countries" said the member of the Commission.

The policy that would be most consistent with respondents' statements would be to give allowances to all those mothers who at present have to work for financial reasons. This allowance would then enable them to stay at home. Of course mothers currently at home and coping on an inadequate income would also qualify. (How "have to work" and "inadequate income" are defined is a different matter). Payment of this allowance would also satisfy those who hold the view that mothers should have the choice whether or not to work, since those mothers who wished to go out to work could spend the allowances on day-nursery facilities. Then these facilities, if not State-run, would be State-supervised, or else there would be private baby minders, also State-supervised. So as not to have segregation or means tests, all mothers would receive these allowances which would then be taxed so that it is the lower income groups who have the greatest net gain. Low income mothers might also use private nurseries. Segregation by income is not built into the system.

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1. It should be noted that the report stated:

(Paragraph 310) In dealing with the question of the provision of day-care facilities for babies and young children, we wish to stress that we are unanimous in the opinion that very young children, at least up to 3 years of age, should, if at all possible, be cared for by the mother at home and that as far as re-entry to employment is concerned, the provision of daycare for such children must be viewed as a solution to the problems of the mother who has particularly strong reasons to resume employment.

and (Paragraph 313) We do consider, however, that where new housing schemes are being erected, provision should be made for the building of creches or day-nurseries in the schemes and we recommend that the provision of facilities of this nature should be a condition for the grant of planning permission for such schemes where many women may have an economic necessity to take up part-time work.

### Estimated Cost of Policy Consistent With Respondents' Statements

This is an ideal. It is worthwhile trying to cost it. It is not known what level of allowances would be needed to remove the financial pressure to work.

The difference in financial terms between working and not working varies considerably depending on the mother's circumstance. A widow or deserted wife on social assistance, with one child, would add only £3 to £6 to her weekly means if she received the average pay of women in manufacturing industries and of clerical assistants, respectively.<sup>1</sup> The figures would be lower if there were more children. Meanwhile, the difference between working and not working for mothers who have a pension or a husband bringing in a wage, etc. would be close to £20 to £25 per week. Instead, let us cost a level of £6 child allowance per week, for which the only justification is that it is close to the weekly costs per child in a day-nursery.<sup>2</sup> Mothers could spend this on day-nurseries if they wished. With a quarter of a million 0-3 year old children in the country, these £6 weekly allowances would cost the State £78m. per year. Net of income tax this cost might be £61½m. and subtracting the current monthly children's allowances paid to this age group leaves a net cost of about £50½m. A further reduction of the cost at the expense of well-off parents could be achieved by removing the tax free allowances for children in this age group, leaving a Government cost of about £40m. per year, or nearly 3% of total Government expenditure. If these allowances were not paid to women working inside or outside the home, and the number of such women did not decrease, the cost to the Government might be reduced to £37½m. We have, in fact, omitted the proportion of 4 year olds who currently do not attend school. Their inclusion in the £6 weekly allowance scheme would add about 7% to the Government cost.

Like most ideals it is expensive. However, £6 per week or £312 per year is not high for an activity which society holds in high esteem and which society wishes to see performed to a high standard. It is also not high in relation to similar

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1. No allowance has been made for costs incurred by working.  
2. See Table 9 Total Day Nursery Costs Per Child

schemes abroad. In France, up to £5.40 is payable to mothers staying at home. In Hungary the mother receives half the starting salary of a teacher.

There would be more chance of the scheme to keep mothers at home succeeding if there were day-nurseries available. When a person is alone with children, all activities other than direct interaction with the child can only be at a medium-to-low level of concentration. A child is very demanding of attention and mothers rightly feel they must, and do, respond to these demands. The moments in a child's day when it is possible for the mother to carry out an activity requiring sustained concentration are rare and unpredictable. Mothers are likely to seek ways to overcome this through employing help with the children or using a day-nursery, part-time perhaps. There would be little additional State funds needed for the establishment of day-nurseries, that is if women were to be allowed to spend the allowances on day care, because £6 per week pays most of the child's way. The Government would only be required to respond to demand by possibly administering, and certainly supervising, the establishment and running of nurseries.

A system of registration and supervision might be set up in the near future in any case. This part of the paper is an attempt to outline a course of action more or less consistent with respondents' recommendations, and to cost it. It is not a proposal.

Section A. Details of State-Supported Day-Nurseries

Part 4: Government Legislation Governing the  
Setting Up and Running of Day-Nurseries

The present policy in relation to day-nursery facilities has been for Health Boards to foster their provision by suitable community-based voluntary bodies. This "suitable" body would by definition be deemed qualified to manage a nursery. In practice these would initially have been members of religious orders who were aware of the need and had wide experience of child-care and perhaps had worked abroad in this field. The supervisory staff usually have qualifications such as Montessori diplomas, NNEB or SRN qualifications. So there are no formal guidelines for the setting up of day-nurseries nor for any other aspect of their operation except that during the planning stages the Public Health Nurse, the Planning Authorities and the Fire Authorities would automatically be involved or consulted. If the establishment of day-care facilities were extended, then guidelines would obviously be laid down, taking into account experience gained in other countries.

## Section B      Statistics of State-Supported Day-Nurseries

The usual administrative area for pre-school facilities is the Health Board region, as it is mainly the Health Boards which to date have contributed funds and often encouraged the setting up of facilities. Health Board regions comprise two or more counties.<sup>1</sup> Local Authorities, however, may become involved with day-nursery provision, as they are authorised (Section A, Part I) to provide community facilities where a definite need makes itself felt.

The pre-school population consists mainly of children aged 0 to 3 years inclusive. These number 252,874 or just over a quarter of a million. Although the compulsory school attendance age is 6 years, 70% of four year olds are already at school, some before their 4th birthday if their birthday occurs mid-term. The pre-school population is taken here as the 0 to 3 year olds. The inclusion of the four year olds not attending school would add on another 19,000 children, or about 7%.

The table below gives for each Health Board region the population of 0 to 3 year olds and the total population. It can be seen from the third column that 0 to 3 year olds represent nearly 9% of the population in the Eastern region; and at the other extreme, only 7½% in the North Western and Western regions. Participation in the labour force of all women aged 14 years and over, is given in the fourth column.<sup>2</sup> This gives a rough indication of where day-nursery demand might be most intense. Again, it is the Eastern region which has the highest figure. One might suspect that the Eastern and North Eastern regions would have high day-nursery requirements from women working at present, the Southern and Mid-Western also, though less so, as the proportion of infants is less. The regions with low participation rates - the South Eastern, Midland, North-Western and Western - may have low demand, unless the lack of facilities or unavailability of help has contributed to the low participation rate. These indications would need to be investigated in depth.

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1. Details of counties contained in Health Board regions are given in The Administrative Yearbook and Diary, IPA, Dublin.
  2. The participation rate of women who are married or widowed will be available in Vol. IV of the 1971 Census of Population. The participation rate for non-agricultural occupations follows the pattern of that for all occupations given here.

Table 4 Children aged 0-3 years inclusive, Total Population, and Women's Participation in the Labour Force, by Health Board Regions

Health Board Region	Children aged 0-3 years incl.	Total Population	0-3 year olds as % of Total Pop.	Participation Rate of Women (%) 14 yrs. and over
Midland	15,386	178,908	8.60	23.11
Mid-Western	22,637	269,804	8.39	23.96
North Eastern	21,421	245,540	8.72	27.11
North Western	14,116	186,979	7.55	23.55
South Eastern	28,514	328,604	8.68	23.85
Southern	38,659	465,655	8.30	24.68
Western	23,370	312,267	7.48	21.40
Eastern	88,771	990,491	8.96	33.44
Total	252,874	2,978,248	8.49	27.27

Details of State-supported day-nurseries are given below for each region. Only State-supported nurseries providing full-day care all year round are included.

Midlands: There is one day nursery, for "necessitous" cases, with 25 places. The occupancy rate is in the region of 80%. Other children may attend on a temporary basis, for £1.00 per day, if their parents are ill or for some similar reason. There is no waiting list and the nursery is managing to supply all the demand from necessitous cases - The Health Board paid about 47% of costs in 1973/4, parents paid 9% and a convent paid the remainder.

Mid-Western: There are no day-nurseries as yet. One may emerge out of current plans for a play-school, which are being discussed.

North-Eastern The Health Board makes a contribution towards maintaining 15 under-privileged children at a private day-nursery. Practically all of these children's parents are at work.

North Western: There is one day-nursery which started operating in October 1974. It can take up to 30 children; it began with 8 on the register and now has 16 children. The Health Board paid at least 70% of



the running costs and 20% to date towards the capital costs.

Parents and voluntary bodies paid the remainder.

South Eastern: A residential home takes children on a day basis from nearby group homes in the area. The Health Board pays 50p per day for each child. Only 3 or 4 other children attend daily from the area.

Southern: The Health Board has made a priority of playgroups for 3-5 year olds. The Board wants to cater more fully for children who are in special need in this age group before extending into the field of day-nurseries.

Western: Two day-nurseries were established towards the end of 1974, offering 44 places between them. There are forty children on the registers, and 4 on a waiting list. The occupancy rate is 95%. The Board pays 55% of costs, and parents pay the remainder. Another day nursery is due to start in September 1975.

Eastern: The number of day-nurseries in Dublin grew from 6 in 1970 to 11 in 1975. The corresponding number of places offered was 199 and 364. The Eastern Health Board also pays two residential homes to take some children on a day basis. Numbers and places offered by supported day-nurseries for each year are approximately as follows:

Table 5 Nos. of State-supported Day-Nurseries and Nos. of Places offered in the Eastern Region

	1970	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975
No. of Day-Nurseries	6	7	9	9	9	11
No. of Places	199	229	299	299	299	364
Average Places per Nursery	33	33	33	33	33	33

By 1976 there are likely to be three more day-nurseries which, until now, have only provided part day-care, adding an extra 70 places. Another day nursery is to be built, now in the final planning stage, which will be combined with a playgroup and will offer up to 50 places. The Eastern Health Board is planning to

establish day-nurseries on two other housing estates, and on a further two in the long-term. A great deal hinges on the financial situation.

Details of occupancy rates of day-nurseries are not available. However, they are said to be high in general, except for outbreaks of contagious illnesses. Waiting lists vary and some nurseries do not keep waiting lists as such.

## Summary

In 1975, in the country as a whole, there were 15 day-nurseries, offering 463 places. This is 4.1 places per thousand children aged 0 to 3 years in the Eastern Region, and 0.6 per thousand in the other regions combined. For the entire country the number of places per 1,000 children aged 0-3 years is 1.8.<sup>1</sup> It must, however, be stressed that these facilities are provided for children at risk and not for the public at large. A fairer picture of their coverage as present policy stands would be the ratio of places to number of children at risk. This, of course, is not a figure that can easily be calculated.

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1. Or 1.5 per thousand children aged under 5.

Section C. Cost Aspects of State-Supported Day Nurseries

Given here are some details of costs of day nurseries that are partly State-maintained. Items covered are:

Capital Costs:	Building Costs
	Equipment Costs
Running Costs:	Staffing Costs
	Food, repairs and other
	Costs to the Government and sources of finance
	Costs per child

These figures refer to 1974 and to Dublin, as it is only the Eastern Health Board which has a sufficient number of day-nurseries to enable them to generalise about costs. Unfortunately, it is not possible to give any indication of the differences in costs between Dublin and other regions. Very few babies are admitted at present. In fact, there is only one nursery in Dublin which takes babies. The following information refers to both this present situation and the possible situation where the children admitted have a cross-section of ages from, say, 3 months to 4½ years.

Capital Costs: Building Costs

A traditionally built nursery building to accommodate 30-40 children, aged 1½ to 4½ years costs approximately £30,000. If a fair proportion of babies were to be included this building might cater for only 30 children, say, on average. If nurseries were set up in existing buildings, such as ordinary houses, or in separate areas of factories, the costs of the building might be lower. However, necessary alterations would include partitions, safety precautions, extra lavatories and washing facilities, and the final price might not be much lower. There is another possibility, as yet largely untried, of providing pre-fabricated buildings such as those currently used by schools. Suppliers of such buildings give estimates ranging from £9,000 to £11,000 for a day-nursery building<sup>1</sup> for up to 40 children aged 0-4 years. This excludes

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1. With specifications drawn from the British "Standards for School Premises Regulations, 1959" Part IV, Nursery Schools and Nursery Classes.

the costs of the site, site development, and the provision of services. Estimates of the length of life range from 15 to 50 years, partly depending on the maintenance undertaken each year. There is wide disagreement as to whether savings can be effected by the use of these buildings when everything is taken into account. However, in areas where there is small risk of vandalism and where the site fits certain specifications, pre-fabricated buildings should be given consideration.

#### Capital Costs: Equipment Costs

The initial furniture and equipment bill to provide for 30 to 40 children amounts to between £1,500 and £2,000. This covers small tables, chairs, baby-chairs, cots, fittings such as shelves, sand-pit, cupboards, and so on, baby-changing facilities, cooking, washing and sterilising facilities, floor coverings, curtains, toys and stimulating equipment.

#### Current Costs: Staffing Costs

In the average day-nursery supported by the Eastern Health Board, the staff required to look after 30 to 35 children consists of:

- 1 Supervisor
- 1 Trained Assistant
- 1 Untrained Assistant
- 1 Part-time cook

Trained staff usually hold the National Nursery Examination Board qualification, or a diploma such as a Montessori Diploma. The wages and salaries total £4,500 per nursery, on average. In fact, these staff would probably earn £6,200 if they were paid at 1974 market rates, but as the nurseries are run by voluntary bodies with dedicated personnel, lower rates prevail. If a higher proportion of babies were admitted, a higher staff-child ratio would be necessary, with one member of staff to four or five babies. So there would need to be an extra trained assistant and an extra untrained assistant, say. Total staff costs could then amount to about £9,800 at market rates for 30 to 35 children.

Current Costs: Food, Repairs and Other Running Costs

The food bill for the nursery with 30 to 35 children amounts to £1,200 per year. This provides the children with a proper cooked lunch and snacks. Insurance, repairs, maintenance, heating, lighting, cleaning, stationery, telephone, postage, and other running costs add another £300 per year.<sup>1</sup>

Total annual running costs for the nursery catering for 30 to 35 children are summarised in the following table. The first column includes present rates of pay and children in the present age group, that is 1½ to 4½ years. The second column includes full market rates of pay. The third column includes full market rates of pay and allows for the admission of a fair proportion of babies.

Table 6 Total Annual Running Costs of Day-Nurseries Catering for 30 to 35 children (£, 1974 prices)

Current Item	Nursery catering for:		
	Present Age-Group (1½ to 4½ years)	Present Age-Group (1½ to 4½ years)	More Babies (3 mths. to 4½ yrs)
	Paying Staff at present rates	Paying Staff at market rates	Paying Staff at market rates
Staffing Costs	4,500	6,200	9,500
Food	1,200	1,200	1,200
Insurance, repairs and other running costs	300	300	300
Total Running Costs	6,000	7,700	11,000

Cost to the Government

The Eastern Health Board supports its nurseries by paying 65% of their annual costs or their deficit, if the deficit is the lower figure. Parents are asked to pay £2 per week per child. When parents are unable to afford this amount, the difference is paid to the nursery by the Health Board on the parents' behalf. With some nurseries, the Eastern Health Board is in practise paying 90% of their annual costs.

1. This appears low, but is the figure supplied

The nursery is sometimes required to pay interest on loans outstanding for the building. This expenditure would be included in the annual costs or deficits which qualify for Health Board support. In a number of cases a nursery is virtually given a building by a community-based organisation.

The Health Boards, in turn, receive about 90% of their income from the central Government. At the beginning of each year the Health Boards submit new proposals to the Department of Health and these proposals are examined from a health point of view, in relation to the amount of money available. The Department of Finance has the final say on the amount of money available but leaves the decisions on how this money is to be spent to the Health Authorities.

#### Costs per child

Capital costs per child are given for the present situation, and for a higher proportion of babies in the following table. An imputed annual rent of capital is also given, although State-aided nurseries do not pay this amount, as their capital requirements are largely provided by other bodies. This imputed annual cost is calculated on the assumption that the building lasts 50 years, the equipment lasts 10 years, and these items are depreciated over their lives at a rate of 12% interest.

Table 7 Day-Nursery Capital Costs Per Child (£, 1974 prices)

Item of Capital	Average building	
	Accommodating 30-40 children in the present age group (i.e. 1½ to 4½ years)	Accommodating 30 children including more babies (i.e. 3mths to 4½ years)
Building	857	1,000
Furniture & Equipment	50	58
Total Capital Cost per child	907	1,058
Imputed Annual Cost of capital	76	99

Annual running costs per child are given in the following table.

Current item	Nursery Catering For:		
	The present age group (1½ to 4½ years) and paying staff at present rates	Paying staff at market rates	More Babies (3mths. to 4½ years) Paying staff at market rates
Staff	141	194	297
Food	38	38	38
Insurance, Repairs and other running costs	9	9	9
Total Annual Running Costs per Child	188	241	344

Combining the running costs and the imputed annual rent gives the total cost per child. Annual, weekly and daily costs are given<sup>1</sup> in the table below. A 50 week year is assumed.

	Nursery catering for:		
	The present age-group (1½ - 4½ years) Paying Staff at present rates	Paying Staff at market rates	More Babies (3 mths.-4½ years) Paying staff at market rates
Cost per year	264	317	443
Cost per week	5.28	6.34	8.86
Cost per day	1.06	1.27	1.77

Total costs per child at present are £5.28 per week. Local voluntary bodies might be supplying the capital part, £1.50 say, as well as supplying some of the personnel who work for less than market rates of pay. Parents pay from £0 to £2 per week and Health Boards pay the balance, that would be £1.78 to £3.78 per child per week.

1. It is worth noting that the fee charged per child in private nurseries in 1974 ranged from £5 to £6 per week.



The Health Board would be paying more if it were helping the nursery to pay off its capital costs.

If there were to be a large-scale increase in the number of day-nurseries, there might not be enough voluntary resources available to maintain these low costs. The weekly cost per child could be expected to rise to £6.34 per week and £8.86 per week if facilities were also to cater for babies. The difference in these two costs is mainly accounted for by different staff child ratio, being one full-time staff member to 11 children in the present case, and 1 to 8 when there are more babies, averaging over all the children in the day nursery.

If there were any scope for choice among areas of expenditure, priority would probably be given to improving the staff-child ratio and the maintenance of high quality staff. The recommendations in "Training Pre-school Personnel" emphasise the importance of high quality staff above all else.

## Summary, Recommendations and Conclusion

There is a number of factors inhibiting the setting up of day nurseries in Ireland. In the first place, demand for day-nursery facilities is not making itself felt. Mothers tolerate inadequate care or no care because there is no alternative, or because they are ignorant of the effects of environment on the young child's development. A mother in need of day-nursery facilities is, almost by definition, hard-pressed, and is unlikely to have the time or energy, or to be sufficiently articulate, to organise or support a pressure group. Mothers with high incomes usually make private arrangements<sup>1</sup> for help with children or home duties.

In the second place, many people, in fact 30.5% of non-farm women not working,<sup>2</sup> think that a "mother should not work if there are young children". One of the main reasons given by married women for disapproving of married women working was that it had a "generally bad effect on children". However, only a few people contacted during the writing of this report quoted actual evidence one way or another and, in particular, would talk of working mothers or day-nurseries in terms of their repercussions on society as a whole. Some people's concern was for the child, others' was for the mother. It is a rare person who thinks in terms of both the "rights" of the child and "rights" of the mother and also in terms of the effects on society of having more women in the mainstream of activity. The anti-child environment mentioned by some respondents in section B might be improved if more mothers were working. Other important repercussions concern the relationship between husband and wife and the required extra help with home duties from the father. None of these aspects can be taken in isolation, though to a large extent they are. This might be the result of there being little public discussion of day-nurseries and little information on the subject until now.

There is also the assumption that if day-nurseries were generally available, there would be an upsurge of mothers taking jobs, conforming to a fashionable trend and ceding to the pressures to raise material living standards by means of a second family income. This is considered undesirable. Then there is the concern

1. A nanny or an au pair girl cost up to £26 and £15 per week respectively including, say, £8 board  
2. B. Walsh, op. cit. Tables 3.15 and 4.6

that mothers will leave their children and go off to play golf or bingo.

While no one wishes to deny a mother an interest or hobby, they would see that there were higher priorities making claims on public services. Naturally, where a mother pursues her pleasures all the time, her child might be at risk if not placed in a day-nursery. Here, in fact, the concern is not with day-nurseries at all, but with the quality of mothering. There are other courses of action which might alleviate this problem. For example, the education system might impart some of the, by now well-established, knowledge of the importance of the early years and the environment for a young child, and the implications of this for intending parents. This knowledge could be part of the syllabus taught to all ten year olds. Another course of action would be for parents to decide and have only the number of children they want and think they can cope with.

However, the over-riding factor inhibiting the development of day-nursery facilities is the lack of finance and the existence of other priority areas for public spending. For example, 14.8% of people living in private households<sup>1</sup> are living two or more persons to a room, 19% of private dwellings have no sanitary facilities and an estimated minimum of 21% of children<sup>2</sup> could be classified as living in poverty. These are but a few areas of desperate need. Day nurseries would be low down on the list of priorities at present, although their provision could alleviate some of these problems.

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1. Census of Population 1971 Bulletin No. 39. The term "room" includes all rooms except kitchenette, scullery, toilet, consulting room or shop.
  2. Seamus O Cinneide, Social Studies, August 1972

Recommendations:

1. That there be inspection and registration of all day-care facilities.

This should cover baby-minders as well and should be carried out with sensitivity.

Places should not be closed down if the alternative for the children is even less satisfactory; rather, better standards should be encouraged by positive action.

Registration will help fill in the serious gap in our information on day-care.

2. That there be a thorough analysis of day-care demand. This must include an investigation of working mothers' level of satisfaction with present arrangements that they make for their children. It must also take into account a possible rise in demand for day-care after the current economic recession. As stated by Sjølund<sup>1</sup>: the absence of day-nurseries has not kept mothers at home but has merely led to poorer child care arrangements. Worry about her children's care puts strain on the mother and there is evidence<sup>2</sup> that this is not good for her children. This applies to strain be it when the mother is working or is not working.

3. That current unsatisfied demand for day-nursery places from the more urgent cases be provided for as soon as possible.

Supervisors of existing private and State-supported day-nurseries and officials of single parent associations, etc., who receive the enquiries for day care, would have an idea of where and who some of these cases might be. The capital cost per 1,000 nursery places is £1,058,000. The annual current running costs £344,000 (1974 prices).

4. That the recommendations of the Irish Council of OMEP be carried out as a matter of the utmost urgency. They advocate "the setting up of a well-planned adequately-financed and well-administered training programme for pre-school personnel"<sup>3</sup>.

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1. A. Sjølund: The Effect of Day-Care Institutions on Children's Development. An analysis of International Research. The Danish National Institute of Social Research.
2. L. W. Hoffman & F. I. Nye, Working Mothers. Jossey Bass. 1974
3. Training Pre-School Personnel, op.cit.

5. That an informed<sup>1</sup> public debate on the issue of day-care be initiated so that people and government are aware of the issues and so that possible alternatives are thoroughly discussed. Some of these alternatives are as follows:

- To pay mothers to stay at home. This is costly (see Section A, part 3, end) and also requires measures to facilitate the mother's subsequent return to the labour force if she wishes to return.
- To encourage a system whereby mothers are paid to mind other people's children while they are out at work. This could be accompanied by courses<sup>2</sup> which would enhance the minding mother's ability to keep the children constructively occupied. Minding mothers could also be encouraged to benefit from the results of research on young babies and children.<sup>3</sup> Payment might, or might not, be according to ability to pay.

If women are to be able to exercise choice as to whether or not they do go out to work (choice was strongly advocated by respondents in section A, Part 3), then a combination of these alternatives would be necessary. This list of possibilities is far from exhaustive.

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1. People wishing to read up the subject could consult the previous two footnote references and M. Rutter, *op.cit.* p. 20; M. Fogarty et al, *Sex, Career and Family*, Allen & Unwin 1971; M. Kellmer Pringle, *Caring for Children*, Longman 1969. These are some recent works bearing on the discussion and reflecting various shades of opinion, and which can be consulted for references to earlier important works.
  2. e.g. Courses run by Irish Pre-School Playgroups Association.
  3. e.g. Extra-Mural Course at University College, Dublin, on Child Development. 1974/75

## Conclusion

It is not possible to make firmer recommendations on the basis of so little appraisal of the subject and very poor knowledge of current circumstances in Ireland. The information on people's attitudes to day-care (section A) was neither randomly collected nor exhaustive in the coverage of the issues. However, the indisputable facts are:

1. Women with children aged 0-3 inclusive were employed outside the home to the tune of about 7,000 in 1971.
2. There is no information on whether or not day-care arrangements were satisfactory, from mother's or child's point of view.
3. Between 10,000 and 16,000 women aged 20-44 with children aged 0-3 years inclusive would say that the reason that they are not working is that there are no suitable facilities for children.
4. Day-nurseries are not satisfying current demand.

Appendix A

List of pressure groups, women's organisations, etc. whose attitudes to the present policy were sought.

<u>Pressure group, women's organisation, etc.</u>	<u>Persons contacted</u>
ADAPT - Association for Deserted and Alone Parents	Ursula Keane
AIM - Association interested in Marriage and Family law	Mrs. Lynch
CARE - Campaign for the care of Deprived children	S. O Cinneide
CHERISH - Association of Unmarried Parents	N. Feric
Cork Federation of Women's Organisations	Mrs. M. Maguire
Council for Social Welfare	Miss M. Burns
Council for the Status of Women	Mrs. Delap M. Barnes
Economic and Social Research Institute	Ian Hart (Psychologist)
Education Research Centre, St. Patrick's College	Peter Archer
Federation of Services for the Single Parent & Child	G. Rowley
Fianna Fail (Political Opposition Party)	Frank Dunlop, PRO
Irish Association of Social Workers	F. Hishon M. Rowntree
Irish Housewives' Association	Mrs. M. Guiney Mrs. Hackett
Irish Independent	J. Martin
Irish Pre-school Playgroups' Association	Mrs. McDonagh
Irish Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children	Miss C. Delaney
Irish Times	M. Maher C. Murphy
Irish Transport & General Workers' Union	D. McDermott
Irish Women's Aid (Association involved with battered wives)	N. Fennell
Labour Women's National Council	Senator E. Owens
Irish Widows' Association	Mrs. M. McGoff Mrs. Proctor
National Council of Jewish Women	Dr. H. Boland (also WRC)
OMEP (World Organisation for Early Childhood Education)	Dr. A. McKenna
Women's Advisory Committee of the Irish Congress of T.U.	P. Redlitch
Women's Political Association	G. Hussey
Women's Representative Committee	Mrs. E. Desmond Miss K. O'Higgins Dr. H. Boland

Appendix B

Written statements of policy on day-nursery facilities from pressure groups, women's associations, etc.

1. CARE (Campaign for the Care of Deprived Children) S. O Cinneide

"CARE recommend:

1. The provision of day nurseries among other day-care facilities to provide alternative care for children who are deprived of proper care.
2. The protection of children who have been placed in day-care privately. There must be concern for children of women who go to work regardless of why the woman goes to work. It is important to see that adequate facilities exist".

CARE Memorandum: Children Deprived p.29:

"Preventive services are particularly lacking in Ireland. The services we have usually come into play at crisis point; there are no widespread services to prevent crises in families and give them special support and encouragement through difficult times. There is excessive reliance on residential services as distinct from domiciliary services, putting children into homes rather than keeping them in their own families or in substitute families".

2. IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS, Delegate Conference 1975.

Motion proposed by the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staffs .." this Conference instructs the Executive Council.....

3. To demand that the proposed legislation pertaining to the principle of equality of treatment between men and women under no circumstances be allowed to bring in its wake, or be accompanied by, any relaxation of protective legislation pertaining to women. On the contrary, the



Executive Council must demand that the proposed legislation must include the extension of the present protective legislation with a view to adequately reconciling the double role of women as mothers and workers. This means making the following demands:-

... (b) Provision of State-controlled creches and day-care facilities with adequately trained staffs and facilities".

3. IRISH TRANSPORT AND GENERAL WORKERS' UNION, Resolutions passed at the Annual Delegate Conference 1975.

Resolution (33)(f) submitted by Dublin No.7 Branch:

"Conference calls on the Irish Congress of Trade Unions to campaign for the following Charter of Rights for Working Women.....

Provision of creches and day-nurseries by local authorities and by employers at places of work".

Resolution (35)(d)(e) submitted by National Executive Council

"Conference approves an appropriate action programme by the National Executive Council to influence the government to have included in this social and economic charter inter alia:

the provision of day nurseries with adequate trained staff plus related facilities;

4. Labour Party, Administrative Council Policy Statement on the status of women in society, recommendation 17- Nursery Schools - creches.

"Recognising the need for nursery schools and creches, particularly in large housing areas, the Labour Party will seek in future that local authority schemes providing dwellings for young families should make provision, at the planning stage, for the provision of a building suitable for use as a creche and/or nursery school. Where possible this building should be situated close to schools. A survey of existing housing schemes should be carried out to assess the need in established areas, and appropriate action should be taken. A

government grant should be made available towards the cost of building and operational costs. Regulations governing the running of creches and nursery schools should be introduced immediately and a register of all such places should be kept by the appropriate local authority. Regular inspections should be carried out by officers of the authority to ensure that the regulations are enforced and that fire safety precautions are adequate."

5. Report of the COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN, December 1972.  
Summary of Recommendations (17)(i)

"Where new housing schemes are being erected, provision should be made for the building of creches or day-nurseries and the provision of facilities of this nature should be a condition for the grant of planning permission for such schemes where many women may have an economic necessity to take up part-time work".

