

# The role of early education and childcare in giving children and young people the best start in life

## All Party Group on Early Education and Childcare

Pauline Walmsley

Early Years – the organisation for young children

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# Gordon Brown – Comprehensive Spending Review (July 2004)

“While the 19<sup>th</sup>C was distinguished by the introduction of primary education for all, and the 20<sup>th</sup>C by the introductions of secondary education – the early part of the 21<sup>st</sup>C will be marked by a commitment to high quality pre-school provision for the under 5s and universal childcare services for all” (GB)





“Enrolling children aged 1 in full day care pre-school services has generally become accepted in Sweden. What was once viewed as the privilege of the rich or the institution of the needy or the single parent has become after 70 years of political vision and policy making an unquestionable right of children and families. Parents now expect a holistic form of early childhood care and education which includes healthcare, nurturing and education. (Tagichi & Munkammar 2003)

# Overview

- Children as citizens and holders of rights
- Best interests of the child
- Children's voice and participation
- Non discrimination
- Protection from abuse
- Right to play, leisure and cultural activities
- Right to name and identity
- Right to an education



A summary of the  
**United Nations Convention  
on the Rights of the Child**



Denying  
child rights  
is wrong.  
Put it right.

<p><b>Article 1</b> (definition of the child) Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.</p> <p><b>Article 2</b> (without discrimination) The Convention applies to every child whatever their ethnicity, gender, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, no matter what type of family they come from.</p> <p><b>Article 3</b> (best interests of the child) The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all actions concerning children.</p> <p><b>Article 4</b> (realisation of rights) Governments must do all they can to fulfil the rights of every child.</p> <p><b>Article 5</b> (parental guidance) Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents to guide and advise their child so that, as they grow, they learn to apply their rights properly.</p> <p><b>Article 6</b> (survival and development) Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to ensure that children survive and grow up healthy.</p> <p><b>Article 7</b> (registration, name, nationality, care) Every child has the right to a legally registered name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, be cared for by their parents.</p> <p><b>Article 8</b> (preservation of identity) Governments must respect and protect a child's identity and preserve their name, nationality or family relationships from being changed unlawfully. If a child has been illegally deprived part of their identity, governments must act quickly to protect and assist the child to re-establish their identity.</p> <p><b>Article 9</b> (separation from parents) Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in the best interests of the child for example, in cases of abuse or neglect. A child must be given the chance to express their views when decisions about parental responsibilities are being made. Every child has the right to live in contact with both parents, unless this might harm them.</p> <p><b>Article 10</b> (family reunification) Governments must respond quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents apply to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit both of them.</p> <p><b>Article 11</b> (kidnapping and trafficking) Governments must take steps to prevent children being taken out of their own country (legally or being prevented from returning).</p> <p><b>Article 12</b> (respect for the views of the child) Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.</p> <p><b>Article 13</b> (freedom of expression) Every child must be free to say what they think, and to seek and receive information of any kind as long as it is within the law.</p> <p><b>Article 14</b> (freedom of thought, belief and religion) Every child has the right to think and believe what they want and also to practice their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children guidance about the right.</p> <p><b>Article 15</b> (freedom of association) Every child has the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.</p> <p><b>Article 16</b> (right to privacy) Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life.</p>	<p><b>Article 17</b> (access to information from mass media) Every child has the right to receive information from the mass media. Television, radio, newspapers and other media should provide information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.</p> <p><b>Article 18</b> (parental responsibilities, state assistance) Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must help parents by providing services to support them, especially if the child's parents work.</p> <p><b>Article 19</b> (protection from all forms of violence) Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and mistreatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.</p> <p><b>Article 20</b> (children deprived of a family) If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language.</p> <p><b>Article 21</b> (adoption) If a child is adopted, the best interest must be what is best for the child. The same protection and standards should apply whether the child is adopted in the country where they were born or in another country.</p> <p><b>Article 22</b> (refugee children) If a child is a refugee or seeking refuge, governments must ensure that they have the same rights as any other child. Governments must help in trying to reunite child refugees with their parents. Where this is not possible, the child should be given protection.</p> <p><b>Article 23</b> (children with disabilities) A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life in conditions that promote dignity, independence and an active role in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide free care and assistance to children with disabilities.</p> <p><b>Article 24</b> (health and health services) Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.</p> <p><b>Article 25</b> (review of treatment in care) If a child has been placed away from home in care, hospital or school, for example, they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and conditions of care.</p> <p><b>Article 26</b> (social security) Governments must provide social security for the children of families in need.</p> <p><b>Article 27</b> (adequate standard of living) Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.</p> <p><b>Article 28</b> (right to education) Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available to every child. The public or private must respect children's human dignity. Wealthy countries must help poorer countries achieve this.</p> <p><b>Article 29</b> (goals of education) Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.</p> <p><b>Article 30</b> (children of minorities) Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.</p>	<p><b>Article 31</b> (leisure, play and culture) Every child has the right to relax, play and join in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.</p> <p><b>Article 32</b> (child labour) Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or education.</p> <p><b>Article 33</b> (drug abuse) Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.</p> <p><b>Article 34</b> (sexual exploitation) Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.</p> <p><b>Article 35</b> (trafficking) Governments must ensure that children are not abducted or sold.</p> <p><b>Article 36</b> (other forms of exploitation) Governments must protect children from all other forms of exploitation that might harm them.</p> <p><b>Article 37</b> (detention) No child shall be tortured or suffer other cruel treatment or punishment. A child shall only ever be arrested or put in prison as a last resort and for the shortest possible time. Children must not be put in a prison with adults and they must be able to keep in contact with their family.</p> <p><b>Article 38</b> (war and armed conflicts - see 'Optional protocols') Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces.</p> <p><b>Article 39</b> (rehabilitation of child victims) Children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.</p> <p><b>Article 40</b> (juvenile justice) A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to help from a lawyer and a fair trial that takes account of their age or situation. The child's privacy must be respected at all times.</p> <p><b>Article 41</b> (respect for better national standards) If the laws of a particular country protect children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws must stay.</p> <p><b>Article 42</b> (knowledge of rights) Governments must make the Convention known to children and adults.</p> <p><b>Article 43</b> (The Convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children get all their rights, including:</p> <p><b>Article 44</b> (Article 44 can provide expert advice and assistance on children's rights.</p> <p><b>Optional protocols</b> In 2002, the UN General Assembly adopted two optional additions to strengthen the Convention. One protocol required governments to increase the minimum age for recruitment into the armed forces from 15 years and to ensure that members of the armed forces under the age of 18 do not take a direct part in armed conflict.</p> <p>The other protocol provides detailed requirements for governments to end the sexual exploitation and abuse of children. It also prohibits children from being sold by non-sexual purposes – such as other forms of forced labour, illegal adoption and organ donation.</p>
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## General Comment Number 7, 20 September 2006

- A focus on young children 0-8 as social actors
- Respect for the views and feelings of young children
- A crucial role for parents and primary caregivers
- A positive rights based , multi-sectoral agenda
- A comprehensive policy and programme for early childhood
- Programme standards and professional training
- Access to services especially the most vulnerable
- The right to education beginning at birth recognising the key role of parents , wider family and the community

- Community based programmes within a policy and legislative framework
- The role of the private sector
- Human rights education in early childhood
- Right to play , leisure and cultural activities
- Modern technologies appropriate to the needs and rights of young children
- Young children with vulnerabilities
- Sufficient investment in services, infrastructure and professional development





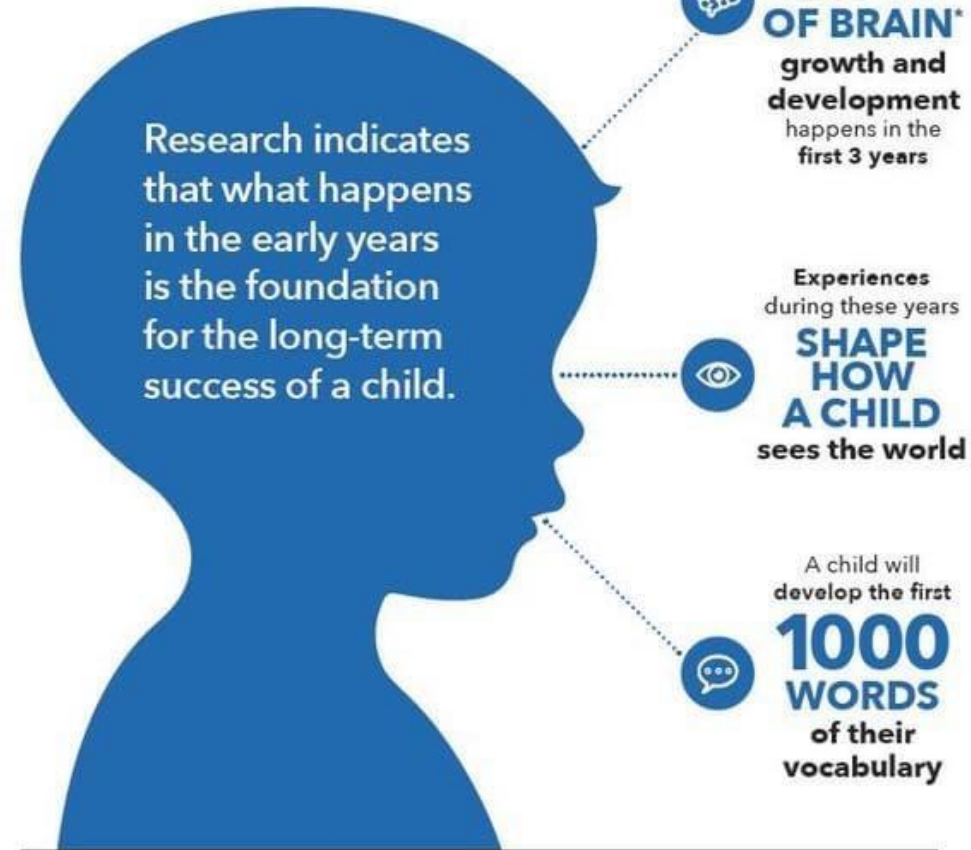
# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS



UN Sustainable Development Goals

# The Importance of Early Learning

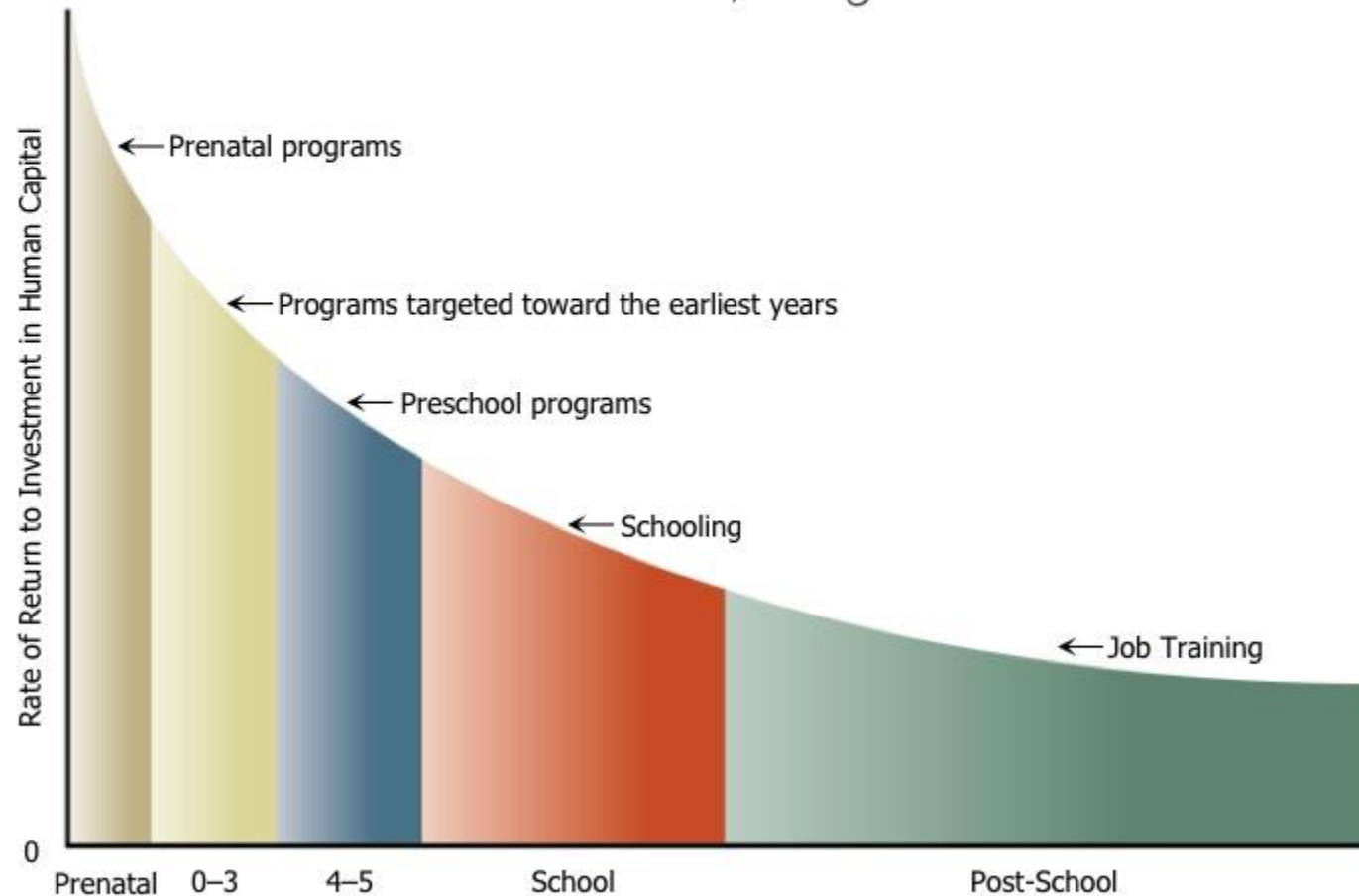
FOR CHILDREN AGES 0 - 3



Children receiving high quality early learning from parents, family and care givers are happier, healthier and more likely to succeed later in life.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IS A **SMART INVESTMENT**

The earlier the investment, the greater the return



Source: James Heckman, Nobel Laureate in Economics



31,028

emergency food parcels allocated for children (of a 78,827 total) in NI by Trussel Trust Apr 20 Mar 21

(approx.) children in NI in relative poverty

100,000

(approx.) children in NI in absolute poverty

75,000

1,479

children aged 0-5 from households accepted as statutorily homeless between Jan-Jun 2021

Child poverty in families where youngest child is under 5 in NI

27%

1,116

children aged 1-4 (of 3,596 children) living in temporary accommodation (at 13/08/21)

children in RoI living in poverty

190,000

Only 15 countries world wide have three basic national policies: parental leave, paid breastfeeding support for six months and two years free pre primary education

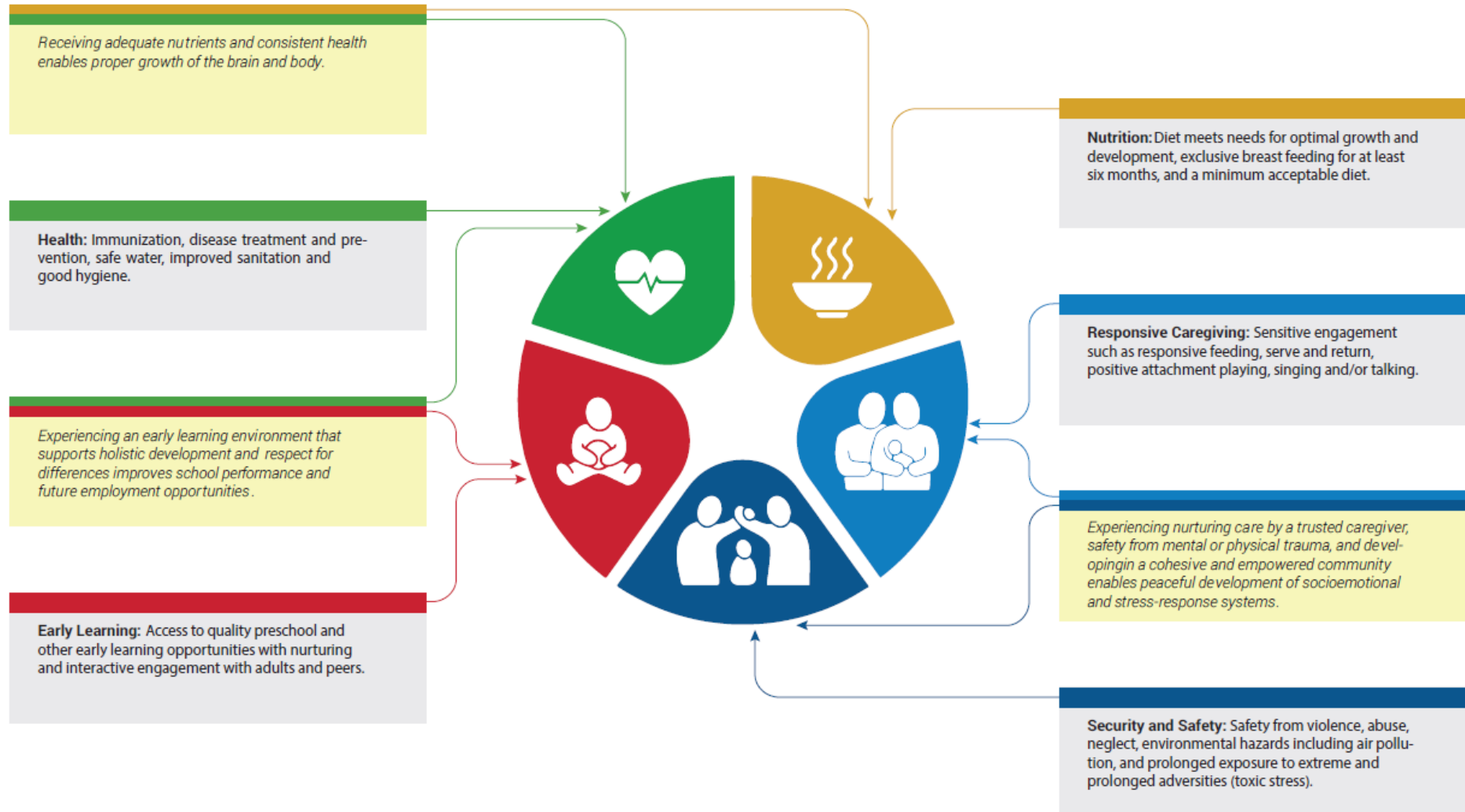
On the island of Ireland we have failed miserably on meeting the Barcelona targets of 33% of under 3s in quality funded provision





'Harrowing Photos From The 30-Year War That Tore Northern Ireland Apart': <https://allthatsinteresting.com/the-troubles>

**FIGURE 1.3.**  
**Domains of the Nurturing Care Framework**





# Key policy developments

- Children (NI) order (1995)
- Sure Start (1998 - )
- Children First (1999 – 2004)
- A Commissioner for Children and Young People (2003 - )
- Children Strategy (2006-16)
- Draft Anti Poverty and Child Poverty measures
- Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership
- Play and Leisure Implementation Plan (2011)
- Minimum Standards for Childminding and Daycare for Children under Age 12 (2012 – updated 2018)
- Towards a Child Care Strategy (2013)
- Learning to Learn - Framework for Early Years Education and Learning (2013)
- Bright Start – Executive Programme for Affordable and Integrated Childcare (2013)
- Draft Ten Year Strategy for Affordable and Integrated Childcare (2015)
- Early Intervention Transformation Programme (2015 - )
- Draft Programme for Government (PfG) (2016) and high level outcomes
- Draft Children and Young People’s Strategy (2016)
- Shared Education Act (Northern Ireland) (2016)
- Play Matters Campaign (2018)
- New Decade New Approach (2020)
- PfG Outcomes Framework (2021)
- ‘A Fair Start’ Expert Panel Report (2021)
- Stakeholder Insight Lab Engagement process (2021 - )



HM Government



Northern Ireland  
Executive

[www.northernireland.gov.uk](http://www.northernireland.gov.uk)



Department of

Education

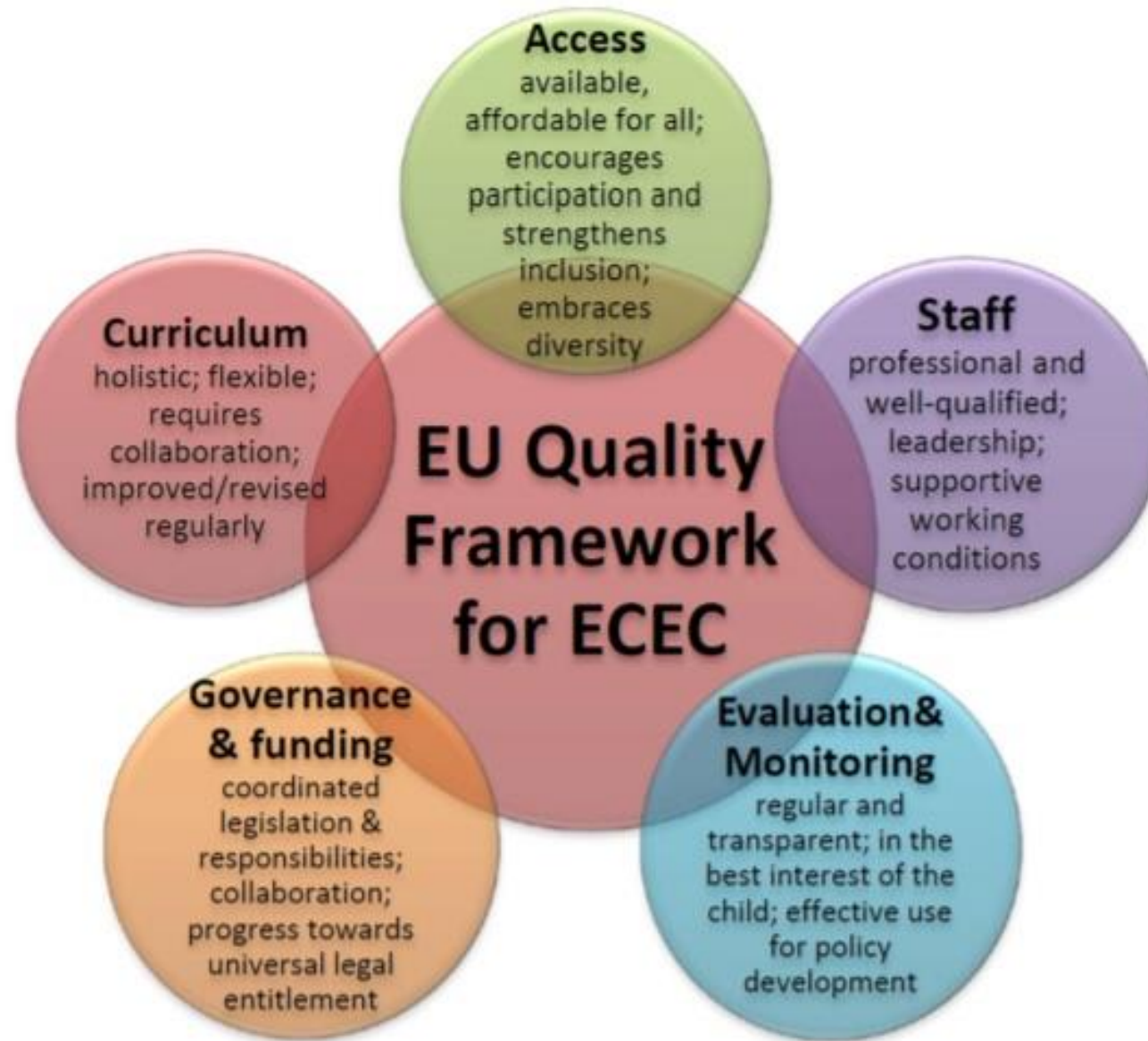


Northern Ireland  
Assembly

early years  
the organisation for young children





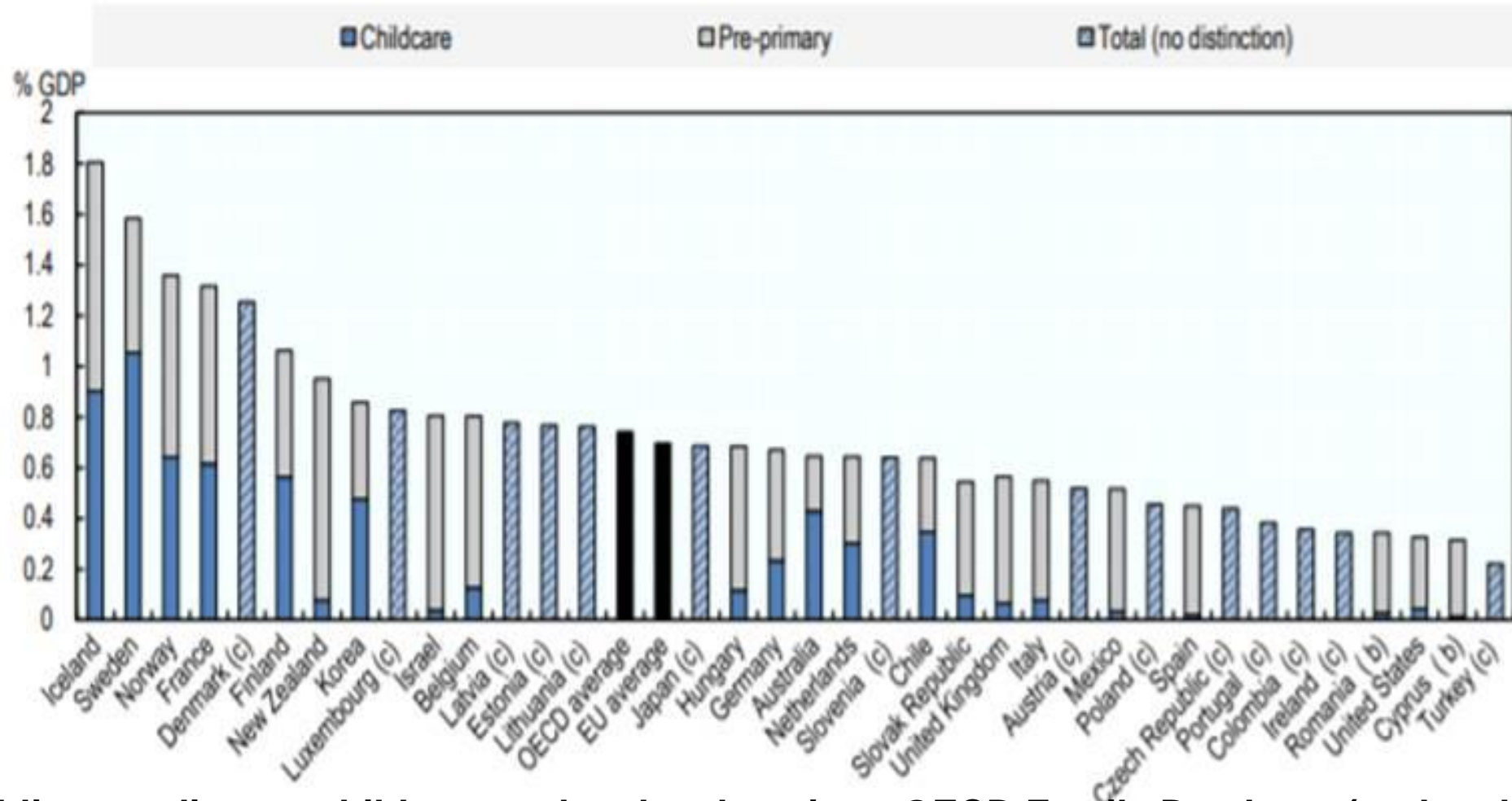






### Chart PF3.1.A. Public spending on early childhood education and care

Public expenditure on childcare and pre-primary education and total public expenditure on early childhood education and care, as a % of GDP, 2017 or latest available <sup>(a)</sup>



Public spending on childcare and early education - OECD Family Database (updated Sept 21)

[https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3\\_1\\_Public\\_spending\\_on\\_childcare\\_and\\_early\\_education.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/PF3_1_Public_spending_on_childcare_and_early_education.pdf)