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The Housing Agency Essay Prize 2023

Winning Essay

Childcare Provision in New Housing By Killian O'Sullivan



The Housing Agency Essay Prize 2023

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Introduction: sustainable communities for children?

Childcare is a basic, community-based activity that shapes the lives of children and parents, and that many families rely on daily. Childcare does not normally warrant much discussion in housing policy, with only a passing mention in *Housing for All* (Government of Ireland, 2021, p. 54). However, childcare and the needs of children are fundamentally cross-sector policy issues (Government of Ireland, 2019, p. 22). Children need good-quality housing, places, and communities to grow and develop; parents often need accessible and affordable childcare to be able to work; and neighbourhoods need accessible childcare to be communities for families and children. Affordable, accessible, and high-quality childcare is recognised as “an essential requirement for an equitable society, a thriving economy and sustainable communities” in the National Planning Framework (Government of Ireland, 2018, p. 89). As Lewis (2019, pp. 247-51, 259-60) writes, ‘sustainable communities’ encompasses broad aspirations to create high-quality places and meet social and environmental goals, but the concept can be overused and, in housing policy, focussed on tenure mix. However, accessible local services are by any definition crucial to sustainable communities, and childcare is a service that is community-based and part of daily life. Therefore, the provision of childcare in new housing is a question of sustainable communities, of meeting community and social needs through the housing and planning systems – or sometimes, of not meeting them. As the National Planning Framework recognises, “childcare provision in Ireland is reaching capacity and new planning approaches and sustained investment will be required” (Government of Ireland, 2021, p. 89), and Irish childcare stands out internationally for being unaffordable (Gromada and Richardson, 2021, p. 7). This essay will explore and critically review how Irish housing and planning policy require childcare provision¹ in new housing. It will examine how developers and planners assess childcare requirements. It will also examine broader trends and policies in childcare and suggest how provision can be improved or even transformed.

Childcare in housing and planning

Under the Irish planning system, large new housing developments are generally required to deliver one childcare facility (with capacity for 20 children) for every 75 dwellings. This was first set nationally by *Childcare Facilities: Guidelines for Planning Authorities* (Government of Ireland, 2001, p. 3), and is incorporated in local development plans. The guidelines note “an unprecedented demand for childcare services” due to changes “in the traditional roles and structures of Irish society, coupled with the rapid rate of growth in the economy.” These guidelines also require local authorities to set objectives for childcare provision in their development plans. However, the guidelines provide a good deal of flexibility. Requirements for large housing developments should be set “having regard to the existing geographical distribution of childcare facilities and the emerging demographic profile of area” (Government

¹ This essay takes childcare in formal settings as its central focus. Individual childminders and informal care are important and widespread forms of childcare in Ireland, but do not usually feature in housing or planning policy. However, it should be stated from the outset that the social importance of childcare in sustainable communities includes informal and unpaid care.

of Ireland, 2001, p. 14). The benchmark assumes (without reference to any data) that about half of new homes will need childcare (i.e., c. 35 out of 75, with 20 places being “a reasonable starting point”), and “other assumptions may lead to an increase or decrease in this requirement.” Furthermore, “the results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare strategy or carried out as part of a local or action area plan or as part of the development plan... will also contribute to refining the base figure.” One important change has been made since 2001. Reflecting an increased emphasis on apartment building, density, and the build-to-rent sector, the 2018 Apartment Guidelines state that “one-bedroom or studio type units should not generally be considered to contribute to a requirement for any childcare provision and subject to location, this may also apply in part or whole, to units with two or more bedrooms” (Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government, 2018, pp. 22). The Government recently indicated that newly updated Guidelines are being drafted (Business Post, 2022a); it is not yet clear what changes these will make to requirements.

This standard of one facility per 75 dwellings creates several issues in itself. Firstly, there is no stated rationale for it apart from an assumption that half of new homes need childcare (and that just over half of that will be in a formal setting). Furthermore, to the extent that it reflected demographics in 2001, it is most likely quite dated by now. It may also reflect a different kind of development to that prevalent now – assuming new housing will be larger suburban houses traditionally favoured by families, rather than denser apartment buildings. Higher density may require higher construction costs (e.g. requiring ground-floor childcare units in blocks), whereas traditional housing estates can offer flexibility for creches to be built in converted houses. The underlying assumptions have largely not been re-examined since with updated research. Little has been done at local or regional level to refine and tailor requirements through city or county childcare needs analyses, as envisaged by the Guidelines. Instead, development plans generally take the national requirement as given without tailoring to local demographics. This effectively leaves most of the work of tailoring the broad national requirement to local circumstances to private developers on an application-by-application basis. Finally, the more recent omission of one-beds and some two-beds from calculations of need was not based on demographic evidence. While the logic of this may be clear (one-bed flats are usually too small for children), some proportion may in fact house infants or children as time progresses. As one Senior Planner in Dublin City Council noted, “residential stock in the inner city is not typically aimed at families, but families do end up there for one reason or another, and as such will invariably have a demand for childcare provision” (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 31). The 2018 change allowed very large build-to-rent developments (especially in Dublin City) dominated by studios and one-beds to avoid providing childcare facilities. Even if only a small proportion of one-bed flats may house children, in a scheme like Clonliffe College Strategic Housing Development (SHD) in Drumcondra with over 1,100 studios/one-beds, this proportion could be enough to justify provision.

Childcare assessments in the planning system – practice and consequences

As Unique Insights (2022, pp. 29-30) outline, childcare provision in the planning system is primarily developer-led. Large housing development applications typically include a report outlining how the proposal meets childcare requirements. There is no set methodology for these, although consultants tend to follow a certain best-practice. These include an assessment of existing capacity within the ‘surrounding area’ (defined by the consultant or, in some cases, by the development plan – e.g. Dublin City Council, 2022, p. 582). This typically involves identifying all childcare facilities registered with Tusla, and potentially identifying the capacity of each through Tusla inspection reports. Capacity may be verified by contacting each facility directly by phone. A childcare assessment will also estimate the potential number of children in a development. A common method (see e.g., KPMG Future Analytics, 2022, p. 14; Brady Shipman Martin, 2021, p. 11) is to multiply the number of new units (minus one-beds) by the average household size in the last Census for the local area or county, and divide by the proportion of 0-4 year olds. This is then compared to the proposed provision. Finally, childcare assessments may also argue that practical need for new facilities may be lower than national requirements suggest, either because of spare capacity or because of informal childcare options. Consultants frequently (e.g. Downey Planning, 2022, pp. 16-17; McGill Planning, 2019, pp. 9-10) reference Quarterly National Household Survey (QNHS) results from 2016, which indicate only 19% of pre-school children nationally (25% in Dublin) attend a formal childcare facility, compared to 62% cared for by parents/partners and 17% cared for by an unpaid relative or family friend (Central Statistics Office, 2017). This allegedly reduces the actual requirement for new childcare facilities.

There are several issues with this model. Firstly, there is no guidance or standard for these reports. While consultants generally have a kind of best-practice approach, it is difficult to measure an assessment against any standard. There may also be a lack of expertise among decision makers in evaluating these. County and City Childcare Committees do not always comment on applications (in Dublin City they may note current provision but “do not make any judgement about the proposed development as it is not their role to influence the planning process in any way” – Unique Insights, 2022, p. 37). Furthermore, there is a lack of data in key areas. The 2016 Census did not count bedrooms, and cannot be used for a more accurate model of child yield by unit type. Tusla inspection reports on existing facilities state their total capacity, but do not measure spare capacity or waiting lists. Contacting providers individually is time-consuming and does not always get high response rates.²

However, some assumptions underpinning how data is used are also questionable. Applying data on household size/proportion of children in the existing area may not reflect the demographics of newly arriving households, who may be younger or larger than average. While the Census does capture data on households who moved in the previous year, this is difficult and time-consuming to collate and use. Furthermore, applying the 2016 proportion of

² Especially due to closures during COVID-19 – the present author conducted such an audit in May 2020 and found several providers completely uncontactable.

those using formal childcare when forecasting future demand fails to consider latent or unmet need. Ireland's proportion of young children in formal childcare is low by European standards – in 2021, 16.6% of 0-3 year olds were in formal childcare, compared to an EU average of 36.2% and far below countries such as France and the Netherlands (Eurostat, 2023³). Take-up may be driven down by high childcare costs. Ireland has relatively high childcare costs compared to the EU average, especially for those not availing of income-based supports (OECD, 2022, pp. 12-13). The 2016 QHNS found that while 52% of respondents agreed they had access to high-quality childcare in their community (and 20% disagreed), only 28% agreed they had access to *affordable* childcare locally (and only 20% in Dublin). Furthermore, data from the 2016 EU Statistics on Income and Living (EU-SILC) survey found 23.3% low-income Irish households with young children need more formal childcare, but cannot afford it – the highest rate in the EU (OECD, 2020, p. 4). This suggests there is a strong element of unmet need due to high costs – and that recent reductions in costs through increased subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme will increase participation and demand further.

Overall, childcare in new housing is dealt with on a fragmented, application-by-application basis that is not designed to deal with need outside a given scheme, and requirements are outdated. As a result, developers sometimes can avoid building childcare facilities. As the Business Post (2022b) found, a third of all SHDs submitted to An Bord Pleanála in 2021 omitted childcare facilities entirely. In Dublin City, two of the main reasons for omission were high proportions of one-beds in schemes, and that childcare was not viable or there was sufficient local provision (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 30). This suggests the process of providing childcare facilities through the normal planning process is not functioning as originally intended, especially in the context of much greater levels of apartment-building and Build-to-Rent developments. However, this is not simply due to the planning process, but relates to wider issues of viability.

Childcare and viability in new housing

A perennial problem in planning (and of private sector-led development in general) is ensuring social facilities are not only built but also opened. In many cases, a planning authority has no role in operating social or community facilities and must rely on others to do so – leaving the responsibility outside the planning process. Under Ireland's housing system and privatised childcare system, developers must find commercial providers to lease or sell to. For a variety of reasons, new childcare facilities may be built but not operated (an issue recently raised by Government ministers – Business Post, 2022a). The existing Guidelines do not address commercial viability, and the outdated nature of requirements can raise issues. As Unique Insights (2022, p. 48) note on behalf of Dublin City Council, a facility for 20 places per 75 homes can be too small in scale to be financially viable. While it may be possible in larger phased developments to consolidate creches into larger, more viable units (An Bord Pleanála (2022) have allowed this previously – e.g., at Glenheron, Greystones, Co.

³ Note that the survey methodology and definitions used by Eurostat differs from the QNHS, and the two cannot directly be compared.

Wicklow), this is not always possible in smaller developments. As a result, the size and scale of facilities may be too small to attract a commercial operator, and either facilities will end up vacant, or developers will seek to remove or change them.

However, the challenges of delivering new creches in housing developments also reflect the wider challenges in construction and in the childcare sector. Private developers can struggle to make childcare facilities a viable part of a development. This is particularly the case in the context of high and rapidly rising construction costs. As Arigoni et al. (2022) write, Irish construction costs are relatively high by European standards, and have increased substantially following the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine; this in turn is negatively impacting the viability of residential schemes. This inevitably raises costs across a scheme, including childcare facilities. One consequence is that developers compensate by charging high rents beyond what potential childcare providers are willing or able to pay (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 33), a problem exacerbated by the increased prevalence of higher-density, higher-cost apartment schemes. Commercial childcare operators face their own financial pressures, with the sector struggling with high costs and chronic staffing shortages (Crowe, 2020). As a result, the private childcare sector can have little capacity to take on expensive leases in new developments.

Childcare facilities may remain empty after being built. While developers are more likely to try to minimise provision at the planning stage, they may apply to change a vacant facility to another use, often after it has been empty for some time (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 32). For example, one facility in Clare Village, Clare Hall, Dublin City was empty for over ten years without a commercial operator taking it on, despite being part of a development of over 300 homes (McGill Planning, 2018, p. 5). Another application for a change of use in a development of 155 units in Sutton, Dublin argued explicitly that the facility was too small to be viable, found no commercial interest from operators, and that “operator requirements generally seek a childcare facility with a minimum floorspace of 500 square metres” – over five times that of the facility (John Spain Associates, 2022, p. 21). While local authorities generally refuse these applications for change of use, this can simply result in the facility staying empty and derelict, leaving planners with two difficult options and no way of ensuring provision (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 34). Either way, the aim of delivering new childcare (and in turn, a sustainable, child-friendly community) is unlikely to be achieved.

Alternative approaches to assessing need

The planning system currently assesses the need for childcare facilities in a fragmented, case-by-case basis. There is an over-reliance on a potentially outdated or unsuitable national benchmark. Most assessment of need is done by private consultants for developers, with a natural inclination for these to minimise requirements. As a result, there is a lack of certainty. At national level, the Guidelines are being revised, and this can at the very least update national standards. However, local authorities and Childcare Committees could also take on a greater role in assessing need at local level. The 2001 Guidelines clearly intended that “the results of any childcare needs analysis carried out as part of a county childcare

strategy or carried out as part of a local or action area plan or as part of the development plan” would be applied by planners (Government of Ireland, 2001, p. 14), but these have largely not materialised. As a result, there is a lack of public sector planning for childcare needs, including from local Childcare Committees. This contrasts with how school place planning operates, for example – where a single national agency (Department of Education, 2021) has responsibility for projecting demand and planning new school provision. Public plans for areas of major new development (such as local area plans or Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) schemes) could contain more detailed requirements, leading to greater certainty. Local authorities could pool resources for regional child needs analyses given the in-depth research involved or draw on central research support from the Housing Agency or the Local Government Management Agency. This could include exploiting data in new and innovative ways.

The Census contains a range of data that could be used to assess childcare needs more accurately. One is ‘moving households’ – households who lived elsewhere a year previously. Childcare needs assessments often make a questionable assumption that the demographics of new housing developments will be similar to an existing area. However, this is not necessarily the case – older people are less likely to move house, for example. Moving groups data can be complex and may require special access, but if applied in a shared research work it can give a much richer view of new communities. Another key piece of data is bedrooms. In 2022, for the first time, the Census measured the number of bedrooms per household, as distinct from rooms (Central Statistics Office, 2021, p. 2). Once released, this will allow a demographic analysis of housing by unit mix, and of overcrowding or under-occupation (and will also reveal how many one-bedroom flats do in fact house children). This could also enable modelling of child yields based on the unit mix and tenure of a proposed housing development, potentially using a public child yield calculator.

Since 2014, the Greater London Authority has published a Population Yield Calculator, which models the age profile of populations in new housing developments across Greater London (Greater London Authority, 2022). This uses Census data on population by bedrooms and tenure from areas of new housing development, along with data from the planning system; this is used to calculate play space requirements in new housing based on the expected child yield. This data also indicates two interesting characteristics of new housing in London. One-bedroom units are modelled as having children, with between about four to eleven 0–4-year-olds per 100 one-bedroom units. It also shows how social and private housing tenures differ greatly in their population profiles, with more children in social housing, indicating that housing is allocated in very different ways in different tenures. Overall, the use of a common calculator for new developments in London (enforced through a requirement in the London Plan for new play space – Greater London Authority, 2021, p. 227) ensures a level of consistency and simplicity in providing facilities for children, without the need for extra reports. A similar calculator could achieve this in Irish planning. Cork City Council even commissioned consultants to draft a bespoke child yield calculator in 2021,⁴ which the Cork City Development Plan 2022-2028 states will be brought into use over the

⁴ The present author briefly worked on this project.

lifetime of the plan (Cork City Council, 2022, p. 86). This has not yet been published but could partly resolve some of the issues in how the planning system assesses childcare in new housing.

Alternative approaches in new childcare – from creating space to delivering services

There are ways in which data and planning can make the existing system more efficient and less confrontational. However, the more fundamental issue is ensuring that new facilities are opened. Indeed, this has been the stated aim of ministers for newly updated childcare guidelines (Business Post, 2022a). Facilities may sit idle in new developments for complex reasons. Difficulties in both the development sector and the childcare sector contribute to this and create viability challenges. As developers often argue, the planning system does not consider service viability and requires providing childcare facilities that are too small to be financially attractive. Proactive planning by local authorities could address this by consolidating childcare into more financially viable centres (with potentially several developers making a financial contribution to a fund for one – Unique Insights, 2022, p. 51). General action to reduce construction costs could also improve service delivery. High rents charged by developers because of high costs can lead to childcare facilities lying vacant. Public subsidies for building childcare facilities could address this gap, with careful targeting or conditionality. The bulk of capital grant funding in the childcare sector for new premises is directed to the community sector rather than private sector (Crowe, 2020, p. 67), leaving little funding for childcare in new housing. This can effectively leave childcare facilities as a burden or charge for development, without providing planning gain for the public (since Irish childcare is privatised). It should also be noted that this can apply in social housing too, as there is no dedicated state capital scheme for social infrastructure in social housing (Unique Insights, 2022, p. 32). While recent social housing projects have tended to be smaller (falling under the requirement for childcare), this gap may need addressing as construction of larger schemes ramps up, particularly for the Land Development Agency (LDA).

However, the commercial childcare sector faces fundamental challenges of high costs and staffing shortages (Crowe, 2020). Margins can thus be tight, national reforms can be challenging (as emphasised by industry claims that some providers are likely to close from funding shortfalls – Irish Times, 2022), and expansion of the sector difficult to achieve. Indeed, data from Tusla (2020, 2022) indicates that the number of early years services registered with the agency's Early Years Inspectorate declined from 4,483 in Q1 2017 to 4,118 in Q1 2022. This suggests limited capacity in the private sector. The community/non-profit sector also has a major role in childcare provision, operating 26% of childcare services (including school-age childcare – Pobal, 2022). Some non-profit providers can be quite sizable – for example, StartBright (2023) operates seven centres in west Dublin on a non-profit basis. However, many community-based childcare services face considerable challenges (Unique Insights, 2022, pp. 18-19). Community providers can struggle with governance and with recruiting and retaining voluntary directors. Small providers can struggle with increasing administrative and regulatory complexity. Some are based in

marginalised communities and struggle with financial viability and with the complex needs of children in poverty. Some also struggle with finding suitable building space. Furthermore, they also face the same issues of staff shortages, high costs (including insurance), and funding pressures as private providers. While community providers provide a vital part of the current childcare system, their capacity is also limited, and they are likely to play a limited role in new residential areas.

Provision of childcare in new housing can be more reliable if there are capable, well-resourced organisations ready to take on new premises. It is worth exploring the possibility of state-funded bodies taking a greater role. One possibility is the Approved Housing Body (AHB) sector. The largest AHBs have good links to private developers, strong governance and organisational capabilities, and a proven ability to provide non-profit public services in privately-built housing developments. AHBs have a broad range of specialisms and services, and Co-operative Housing Ireland (CHI) has operated creches since 2001 (Pobal, 2023). However, this would be a major change from the core business of most AHBs, which many would be reluctant to undertake by themselves. Indeed, CHI transferred two of its three creches to the non-profit StartBright in 2022, following advice from Pobal. A stronger case can be made for local authorities to step in. County and City Childcare Committees already have a role in providing advice and support to local childcare providers and information to parents (Callanan, 2018, p. 165), but their remit, powers and staffing are very limited and largely advisory. Unique Insights (2022) outline a more active role for local authorities in childcare (albeit as a last resort), building on Dublin City Council's existing activity. They suggest the local authority can act as a tenant of last resort for new facilities, taking on a long-term lease at a favourable rate and sub-letting it to a community provider. The advantages of this approach are that it has already been successful in some cases, it is within the current framework and powers of Irish local government, and it provides more favourable conditions and support for community providers. However, it is also costly and would be restricted by the very limited capacity and funding of Irish councils. As Unique Insights (2022, p. 52) note in Dublin City, "in an environment where chronic underfunding is a key issue and amidst a deepening housing crisis, the City Council simply does not appear to have any spare professional, technical or financial resources that can be applied to community childcare projects." A more active role for local government requires national funding and support, as well as more capacity and financial security for local authorities. However, it is worth considering as part of a more radical shift in Irish childcare, given the scale of reforms and funding increases now being undertaken in the sector.

Transforming the childcare sector – from markets to public services

The underlying feature of Irish childcare is its provision through the private market, which determines many of the issues of reliability and affordability raised in this essay. As Callanan (2018, p. 367) writes, demand for childcare greatly increased in the 1990s with an expanding population, full employment, and increased numbers of women in employment. Governments then opted to leave provision to the market, and "unsurprisingly" demand far exceeded supply and childcare costs remained very high. Reforms since then have tried to

address this outcome without fundamentally altering or questioning privatised provision; indeed, the most recent national review of childcare provision and funding was precluded from suggesting any changes to the market model by its terms of reference (Expert Group on Funding, 2021, p. 23). However, Ireland is a clear international outlier in having virtually no public-provided childcare (Expert Group on Funding, 2021, p. 115; Paull et al., 2021, p. 17). As well as being unusual, a fully marketised childcare system can be problematic, as childcare is not a normal market commodity. Penn (2012) argues that marketised childcare is associated with inequity (i.e., worse provision for lower income groups and areas) and downward pressure on quality, while Sweeney (2021) notes the tendency of private childcare to drive down wages and staff expertise to remain profitable. Indeed, the very nature of demand and competition in childcare markets is problematic since take-up is so heavily determined by labour market structures, social and family norms, and state policies such as subsidies, free allocations, and regulation (Lloyd and Penn, 2010).

Irish childcare does not need to be purely market-driven; public provision could provide more places and drive improvements across the sector. Indeed, despite their terms of reference, the Expert Group on Funding (2021, p. 117) argue that “public provision may be the best way – and possibly the only way – to deal with some gaps/ failures in the sector” and that “a segment of high-quality public provision would allow the State to influence and lead the sector in a way that would be difficult to achieve solely through greater public management.” This follows international best-practice – as the OECD (2006, p. 114) argue, “a public supply-side investment model managed by public authorities brings more uniform quality and superior coverage of childhood populations than parent subsidy models.” Public provision of childcare could address many issues identified in this essay. Where future provision in new housing is identified through planning (such as in local area plans or SDZ schemes), public childcare provision could guarantee at the outset that facilities will be running for new communities. This can in turn provide certainty and guaranteed income for private developers and facilitate state bodies like the LDA in creating sustainable communities. Public provision could be through special-purpose state bodies – for example, *First Five*, the national strategy for young children, commits to piloting ‘Family and Early Childhood Centres’ providing a range of services (Government of Ireland, 2019, p. 71). However, international practice would point to local authorities as obvious childcare providers, as in many European countries (Callanan, 2018, pp. 322-3). Direct provision of childcare by local authorities would complement the existing role of local government in community and social development (including County and City Childcare Committees) and support the planning system to deliver community infrastructure. This would require both a major shift in national policy and a major increase in the capacity and funding of local authorities in Ireland. However, as Callanan (2018, p. 367) argues, the state stepped back from new demands for childcare provision in the 1990s, but as new challenges in society emerge, there is a strong case for local government instead “stepping up” to address needs.

Conclusion: childcare in sustainable communities – from cost to benefit

This essay has argued that childcare is a crucial building block of any form of sustainable community. However, the housing and planning systems in Ireland have struggled to guarantee provision in new housing developments. Several factors contribute to this. There is little in-depth medium- or long-planning at local level for new childcare, and little attention to localised demographic needs. There is instead an over-reliance on benchmarks from outdated national guidelines. Planning can presume that these guidelines will meet needs, despite their silence on viability and their focus on physical buildings rather than operational services. Developers tend to see childcare facilities as a burden on schemes to be avoided if possible. Childcare needs assessments are only carried out at the level of individual schemes by the private sector and tend to play down need. Finally, there is no guarantee that facilities will open when built, and some simply stay empty for lack of commercial interest or viability. Moreover, the heavily privatised childcare sector itself has limited capacity or capability to take on facilities in new areas if commercial profitability cannot be guaranteed.

This essay instead proposes changes that can be made in housing and planning on several levels, with varying degrees of difficulty. Local authorities can carry out childcare needs assessments, which can positively guide applications and development management. Local authorities and the state can make greater use of data, and even introduce standard models for forecasting childcare need in new housing. New and updated guidelines will help guide planners and developers. The housing and planning sectors should also examine how to guarantee new childcare providers are there to take on new facilities. In some cases, commercial or community operators can take on facilities, potentially with some support or encouragement from local authorities. Other non-profit bodies could play a role, including in some cases AHBs. Local authority childcare provision is common internationally and can complement councils' community development and planning roles. While this would require political will, resources, and investment, it could also counter fundamental flaws in Ireland's marketized childcare system such as low wages, staffing shortages, under-provision, and tight profit margins. This could enhance local planning, governance and decision-making – a key part of a meaningful sustainable communities agenda (Lewis, 2019, p. 260). However, the ultimate goal in planning for childcare in new housing must be to provide certainty for parents, communities and developers. Certainty for developers could even improve industry buy-in for building facilities. While developers often see childcare facilities as a risky imposition, by contrast, Redmond et al. (2021, p. 11) found some developers welcomed Part V housing obligations, as they provided some guaranteed income even at reduced profit margins. If childcare provision is more certain, developers could similarly view it as at least guaranteeing a revenue stream. Overall, a fundamental shift in perception is needed on how childcare can be delivered in new housing – not as a costly imposition, but as a basic development gain and a building block for a sustainable community.

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