

Pay Rates in the Irish Early Childhood Care and Education Sector



Key Findings from the Research

1. The average rate of pay for an Early Years Educator working in Ireland is €10.27 per hour.
2. Having a third level degree will earn you €1 extra per hour.
3. The county you work in has an impact on the amount you earn, with professionals in some counties earning €1 more per hour than their equivalent in another county.

Background

The Early Childhood Education sector in Ireland includes about 25,000 staff. From September 2016 a regulation will be in place for the first time requiring all staff working in centre-based services (i.e not childminders) to have a minimum qualification. This, together with qualification requirements necessary as part of the funding provided to services operating the Government's Free Pre School Year, or ECCE scheme, and the introduction of a Fund for Learners has seen rapid changes for the sector. Despite these welcome changes, uncertainties remain regarding an infrastructure to support continued professionalisation. There is clearly a need for further professionalisation of the sector as well as the development of infrastructure to support this professionalisation. Specific to this is the absence of a consistent and coherent basis for remuneration of staff.

Higher wages and better working conditions affect people's job satisfaction, work motivation and, indirectly, the quality of their teaching, caring and interactions with children (Huntsman, 2008; Moon and Burbank, 2004). Many countries experience difficulties with retaining the early childhood care and education (ECCE) workforce, with particularly high staff turn-over rates in the child care sector. The factors that lead people to leave the ECCE sector are often the same factors that discourage people from pursuing a career in the ECCE sector: low wages; low social status; heavy workload; and lack of career progression paths.

Research has indicated that where wages are low (refers to the share of workers earning less than two-thirds of median earnings), it *"impacts quality primarily by preventing qualified and committed individuals from considering working in child care or early education in the first place"* (Manlove and Guzell, 1997). Low wages are related to high staff turnover rates (Moon and Burbank, 2004), which influence children's language and socio-emotional development as well as the relationships they form with practitioners (Whitebook 2002; Torquati 2007). Low wages are also correlated with the perception that working in the ECCE sector is not a high-status profession (Ackerman, 2006). Although pay in ECCE-related professions in most OECD countries is not very high, where the incidence of high pay refers to the share of workers earning more than one-and-a-half time median earnings (OECD, 2006), this is not the case in all OECD countries. In Scandinavian countries, for instance, where a bachelor's degree is needed to work as an ECCE teacher, staff receive better pay, and their job has a higher status, than in countries with lower pay. Countries with split systems often have lower educational requirements and lower wages for practitioners working with very young children (up to three years of age) and higher educational requirements and better pay (and better status) for those working with children ages three or four to primary school age.

In light of the evidence outlined above, Early Childhood Ireland is conducting an investigation of remuneration within the Irish ECCE Sector. This investigation is part of a larger body of work which includes the recognition of non-contact time, continuous professional development and the creation of an optional full-year model for providers. Furthermore, this work is being used to ensure that all parties and candidates in the upcoming General Election 2016 are better informed of the challenges that face early childhood education and care. We have clearly



identified low pay in the sector as a major barrier to ensuring that our children benefit from quality early education and care.

Methodology

In January 2016, Early Childhood Ireland invited their members (and many non-members) to take part in an anonymous online survey. Survey participants (n=3036) reported information on their role, highest level of qualification obtained, the county in which they worked and the hourly rate of pay they received. Due to invalid data 20 cases were removed. The final analysis included 3016 responses.

The survey was advertised on Early Childhood Irelands website and shared through the organisation's Facebook and Twitter pages. Frequency data, descriptive data and independent sample t-tests were conducted to describe the data. Data were analysed using SPSS v. 21.0.

Key Findings

Geographical Location

There was a nationally geographical spread of respondents with the largest cities attracting the most responses. Figure 1 below describes the geographical spread of respondents.

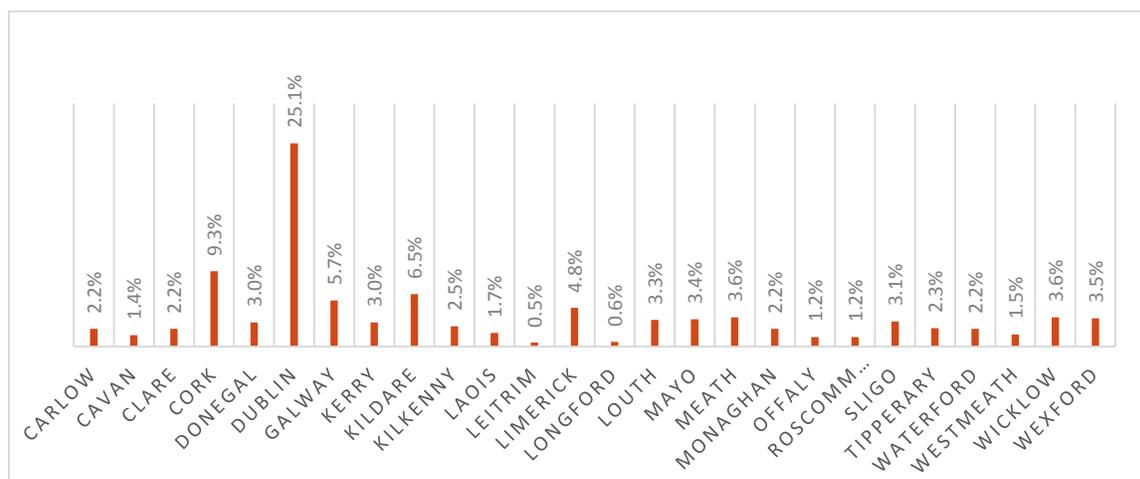


Figure 1 Geographical spread of respondents

Pay Rates and Role

Of those who responded to the survey, 25% were managers, 35% were Room Leaders and 40% were Early Years Educators/ Practitioners. The average rate per hour and the standard deviation (SD) for each role is reported in Table 1. The standard deviation is a measure of how spread out numbers are i.e. the variation around the average. The overall average for the sector is also reported in Table 1.

Table 1 Role and Average Hourly Rate

ROLE	AVERAGE HOURLY RATE (SD)
MANAGER	€13.28 (4.29)
ROOM LEADER	€10.27 (2.27)
EARLY YEARS EDUCATOR/PRACTITIONER	€10.27 (2.27)
OVERALL AVERAGE	€11.27 (3.28)

The analysis of role type and hourly pay rates suggests that there is no difference in pay for a professional working as a Room Leader or an Early Years Educator/ Practitioner, despite the additional responsibility and level of qualification attached to the role of a Room Leader. Managers are paid on average €2.00 more than a Room Leader and Early Years Educator/ Practitioner.

Qualification and Pay Rates

The data suggests that vast majority (99.5%) of survey respondents have attained a Level 5 qualification or higher. The breakdown of respondent's qualifications are reported in Table 2.

Table 2 Breakdown of Respondents Qualifications

QUALIFICATION	% OF RESPONDENTS
LEVEL 4	0.5
LEVEL 5	14.0
LEVEL 6	44.0
LEVEL 7/8	37.6
LEVEL 9	3.5
LEVEL 10	0.4

Similarly, there are few differences between pay rates and level of qualification attained. The data suggests that qualifications do not entitle professionals to a higher rate of pay. The only qualification that demands a marginally higher hourly pay rate is a Level 9 (Masters). Respondents who reported having a Level 9 were earning €13.28 per hour on average. A standard deviation of €6.28 suggests that there is a large variation in this figure. Furthermore, it should be noted that only 3.5% of our respondents had achieved a Level 9 qualification. The breakdown for hourly pay rate and level of qualification is outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 Qualification and Average Hourly Rate

QUALIFICATION	AVERAGE HOURLY RATE (SD)
LEVEL 4	10.54 (3.24)
LEVEL 5	10.28 (3.28)
LEVEL 6	11.27 (2.27)
LEVEL 7/8	11.27 (3.28)
LEVEL 9	13.28 (6.28)
LEVEL 10	11.21 (2.33)



Role, Qualification and Pay Rates

An analysis was conducted to investigate if there were any differences between the hourly rate of pay received by professionals when controlling for role and highest level of qualifications. In line with the findings outlined in Table 1 and Table 3, the only increase in hourly pay rate is attributed to being a manager and having a Level 9 qualification. However, this hourly rate is still low when compared to the average Irish industrial wage of €21.46 per hour.

Table 4 Role, Qualification and Average Hourly Rate

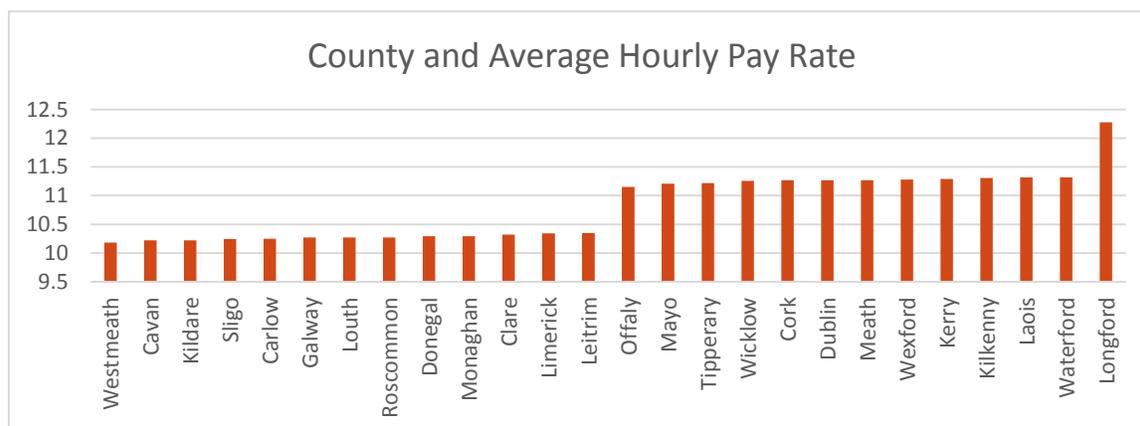
<i>EARLY YEARS EDUCATOR</i>	AVERAGE HOURLY RATE (SD)
LEVEL 4	10.63
LEVEL 5	9.29
LEVEL 6	10.26
LEVEL 7 & 8	10.26
LEVEL 9	12.32
LEVEL 10	10.22
<i>ROOM LEADER</i>	
LEVEL 4	11.50
LEVEL 5	10.26
LEVEL 6	10.28
LEVEL 7 & 8	10.25
LEVEL 9	11.30
LEVEL 10	10.50
<i>MANAGER</i>	
LEVEL 4	10.00
LEVEL 5	12.24
LEVEL 6	13.26
LEVEL 7 & 8	14.32
LEVEL 9	15.21
LEVEL 10	13.00



County and Pay Rates

We investigated the average hourly rate of pay for each county. The data is limited in that differences between urban and rural areas are not reported. The hourly pay rates between counties ranges from €10.18 per hour in Westmeath to €12.28 per hour in Longford¹. The graph below illustrates the differences between counties.

Table 5 County and Average Hourly Pay Rate



Next Steps

This investigation on remuneration is part of a larger piece of work, including research, on professionalisation within the sector. Within this larger study, Early Childhood Ireland will include wider issues such as non-contact time, continuous professional development and the structure of work (e.g. an optional full-year model for providers), in addition to how remuneration might better reflect the level of responsibility borne by childcare staff, and how salary scales might best be structured and recognised. Over the coming months Early Childhood Ireland will advance this work, guided by a specially formed sub-group of our Working Group on Expansion and Reform on the topic of remuneration. This group will discuss how professionals working within the sector are currently rewarded, review potential models to form the basis of a remuneration package and consider the implications of introducing salary scales within the sector.

¹ Longford reported a higher average hourly rate than all other counties. The researchers investigated this and there were no outliers present within the dataset to skew results. Although the hourly rate appears higher, it is still low and falls significantly below the average industrial hourly rate of €21.46.