

## **Ministerial Meeting of the Early Years Policy Work Sector Tŷ Hywel Cardiff, 4 October 2019**

### **Communiqué**

The British-Irish Council<sup>1</sup> (BIC) held an Early Years Policy Ministerial meeting today, hosted in Tŷ Hywel, Cardiff by the Welsh Government. Ministers approved the Forward Work Plan of the sector.

The meeting was chaired by Julie Morgan AM, Deputy Minister for Health & Social Services in the Welsh Government. Deputy Minister Morgan welcomed Ministers and Officials from across the eight Member Administrations of BIC to Cardiff, emphasising the critical importance of successful early years policy to providing children with the best start in life.

The Irish Government was represented by Dr Katherine Zappone TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. The Scottish Government was represented by Maree Todd MSP, Minister for Children and Young People. The Isle of Man Government was represented by Hon. Graham Cregeen MHK, Minister for Education, Sport and Culture. The Government of Guernsey was represented by Deputy Rhian Tooley, Member of the Committee for Education, Sport and Culture. The Government of Jersey was represented by Senator Tracey Vallois,

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<sup>1</sup> The BIC, established under the Agreement reached in the Multi-Party Negotiation in Belfast on Good Friday 1998 is a forum for its eight Member Administrations to exchange information, discuss, consult, and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on policy areas of mutual interest.

Minister of Education. Officials attended on behalf of the United Kingdom Government and the Northern Ireland Executive.

The BIC Ministers discussed and reviewed the work sector report, '*Early Years – Sharing Policy and Practice Across the Administrations of the British-Irish Council*', which outlined the breadth of the official engagement undertaken over recent years, and demonstrated the significant benefit gained by Members Administrations from collective participation in the BIC Early Years Policy work sector. Ministers agreed that the report should be made available on the BIC website for the benefit of interested stakeholders.

BIC Ministers also discussed the Future Work Programme of the work sector. Ministers acknowledged the challenges for the sector in the coming years and agreed that the focus should be on four main themes:

- the Early Years workforce with outcomes focusing on issues of recruitment and retention; qualifications and professional registration;
- narrowing the gap between disadvantaged and advantaged children with a focus on the policy approaches to secure such an outcome;
- the use of language, communication and early literacy skills in children's early years; and

- the quality agenda of the early years offer with an outcomes focus on the benefits of outdoor play and learning.

Ministers thanked the work sector officials in each of the Administrations for their active engagement in the preparation of the report and the briefing and looked forward to receiving regular updates on the progress. The Ministers endorsed the Forward Work Plan for the BIC Early Years Policy work sector and Deputy Minister Morgan closed the meeting, thanking all participants for their contributions to the discussion.

**BIC Secretariat**  
**4 October 2019**