

Ag Soláthar Athrú Sóisialta trí Chúram Leanaí

Delivering Social Change Through Childcare

Samhain | November 2015

Cúlra

Is é Conradh na Gaeilge fóram daonlathach phobal na Gaeilge agus saothraíonn an eagraíocht ar son na teanga ar fud na hÉireann uile agus timpeall na cruinne.

Is í príomhaidhm na heagraíochta an Ghaeilge a athréimniú mar ghnáth-theanga na hÉireann.

Ó bunaíodh é ar 31 Iúil 1893 tá baill an Chonartha gníomhach ag cur chun cinn na Gaeilge i ngach gné de shaol na tíre, ó chúrsaí dlí agus oideachais go forbairt meán cumarsáide agus seirbhísí Gaeilge.

Tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe ag Foras na Gaeilge, an foras uile oileánda ag feidhmiú ar son an dá Rialtas thuaidh agus theas leis an nGaeilge a chur chun cinn, mar cheann de na sé cheanneagraíocht atá maoinithe acu leis an nGaeilge a fhorbairt ar oileán na hÉireann. Go príomha, tá Conradh na Gaeilge roghnaithe le tabhairt faoi chosaint teanga, ionadaíocht agus ardú feasachta ar an Ghaeilge.

Tá 180 craobh agus iomaí ball aonair ag Conradh na Gaeilge, agus bíonn baill uile an Chonartha ag saothrú go dian díograiseach chun úsáid na Gaeilge a chur chun cinn ina gceantair féin. Tá breis eolais faoi obair an Chonartha le fáil ag www.cnag.ie.

Background

Conradh na Gaeilge is a democratic forum for the Irish language community. The organisation works on behalf of the Irish language throughout the island of Ireland and around the world.

The main aim of the organisation is to see Irish used as the ordinary language in Ireland.

From its establishment on the 31st July 1893, members of Conradh na Gaeilge have been active in promoting the Irish language in every aspect of this country's life, from legal matters, to education, to developments in the media and Irish language services.

Conradh na Gaeilge has been appointed by Foras na Gaeilge, the all island body responsible for the promotion of the Irish language, as one of the six lead organisations funded to develop the Irish language across the island. Primarily, the role of Conradh na Gaeilge is to protect the language, to act as representatives and to raise awareness of the language.

There are 180 branches and many individual members of Conradh na Gaeilge. All members of Conradh na Gaeilge work hard to develop the use of Irish in their own areas. More information about the work of Conradh na Gaeilge is available at www.cnag.ie.

Intreoir

Cuireann Conradh na Gaeilge fáilte roimh an deis seo páirt a ghlacadh sa chomhairliúchán seo i dtaca le Straitéis Chúram Leanáí OCALCA. Dar leis an daonáireamh 2011, tá eolas de chineál éigin ag 11% den daonra. Tá níos mó ná 5,000 sa chóras Ghaeloideachais faoi láthair agus tá méadú bliantúil ar an uimhir seo. Tá níos mó gá anois seirbhísí inrochtana d'ardchaighdeán a chur ar fáil do thuismitheoirí trí mheán na Gaeilge agus ba chóir go bhfuil sé seo istigh mar cheann de na spriocanna sa Straitéis. Thar na blianta, tá obair mhór déanta ag pobail seirbhísí chúram leanáí a chur ar fáil trí mheán an Gaeilge ina gceantar féin le riachtanais a chomhlíonadh. Áfach, tá fás na Gaeilge anois comh súnasach sin go bhfuil gá ann machnamh a dhéanamh ar chearta agus ar riachtanais na bpáistí seo ag leibhéal straitéiseach agus gá leis na hacmhainní cuí a chur i dtreo na riachtanais atá ann anois a chomhlíonadh. Tá cosaint ann do chearta páistí sa Choinbhinsiún Náisiún Aontaithe um Chearta an Pháiste (deimhnithe ag rialtas an Ríocht Aontaithe i 1990). Go háirithe:

Alt 2: Cuireann seo cosc ar idirdhealú in éadán páistí bunaithe ar theanga

Alt 3: Ba chóir go ndéantar cinntithe an rialtais ar leas an pháiste

Alt 30: Caomhnaíonn sé seo an ceart atá ag páistí mionlaigh agus dúchasacha foghlaim faoina gcultúr agus a dteanga féin agus na rudaí seo a chleachtadh.

Introduction

Conradh na Gaeilge welcomes this opportunity to take part in the consultation process in relation to the OFMDFM Childcare Strategy. According to the 2011 census, 11% of the population here have some knowledge of the Irish language. Over 5,000 children and young people are currently in Irish-medium education and this number increases each year. There is a growing need for parents to access quality and affordable childcare through Irish and this should be included as one of the objectives of the Strategy. Over the years, local communities have worked to provide childcare through Irish in their own areas to meet growing need. However, the growth of the Irish language community is now so considerable that the rights and needs of these children must be considered at a strategic level and sufficient resources must be directed towards meeting the need which exists. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of a Child (ratified by the UK government in 1990) protects the rights of children to the use of their own language in a variety of ways. Specifically:

Article 2: Prevents discrimination against a child on the basis of language

Article 3: States that decisions should be taken by decision makers in the best interests of a child

Article 30: Protects the rights of minority and indigenous children to learn about and practice their own culture and language

Is é Sprioc 4 den Straitéis le Forbairt na Gaeilge a Fheabhsú agus a Chosaint 2015-2035 atá ag an Roinn Cultúir, Ealaíon agus Fóillíochta ná *“Tacú le méadú i líon na bpáistí atá á dtógáil trí Ghaeilge.”* Tá an gnímh seo le cur i bhfeidhm trí bhealaí éagsúla, mar shampla trí seirbhísí cuí a chur ar fáil do pháistí atá á dtógáil trí Ghaeilge nó go dátheangach, nó trí eolas, thacaíocht agus threoir a chur ar fáil do thuismitheoirí atá nó ar mhaith leo a gcuid bpáistí a tógail mar seo. Cuirfidh an Bille um Sheirbhísí Páistí, a d’éirigh leis dul fríd an Tionól ar na mallaibh, dualgas reachtúla ar RCEF agus OCALCA bheith ag comhoibriú lena chéile le cinntiú go gcuirtear na spriocanna seo i gcrích ar leas na bpáistí a bheas ag baint úsáid as na seirbhísí seo.

An Straitéis

Tá na pointí agus na moltaí seo a leanas bunaithe ar aidhmeanna, spriocanna nó téamaí éagsúla sa Straitéis féin, ina measc:

- Tuismitheoirí a chur ar an eolas agus iad ag déanamh roghanna
- Ag cur eolas ar fáil do thuismitheoirí
- Imeascadh seirbhísí oideachais
- Inrochtaineacht agus Inbhuanaitheacht
- Ceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste
- Éagsúlacht

Objective 4 of the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure Strategy to Enhance and Protect the Development of the Irish Language 2015-235 is *“to support an increase in the numbers of children being reared through Irish.”* This action is to be carried out in a variety of ways which includes the provision of adequate services for children who are being raised through Irish or bilingually, and through providing information, support and guidance for parents who are or would like to raise their children in this way. The Children’s Services Co-operation Bill which recently passed through the Assembly will place a statutory responsibility on DCAL and OFMDFM to work together in order to ensure that these objectives are achieved in the best interests of the children who will avail of these services.

The Strategy

The following points and recommendations are based upon various aims, objectives or themes within the Strategy, including:

- Helping parents to make informed choices
- Making information available to parents
- Integration of education services
- Availability and Sustainability
- Disadvantaged Areas
- Diversity

Eolas do Thuismitheoirí

Tacaíonn Roinn 7.59 agus 7.60 le *“a range of improvements to the Family Support NI website to enhance it as a central source of information on childcare and providers operating at local levels... Ongoing improvements include making information in languages other than English...”* agus *“Other means of communicating information will also be used, such as conventional leafleting and the inclusion of information on childcare in bounty packs. Again, this will be made available in a range of languages.”* Comh mhaith le cinntiú go clúdaíonn an t-eolas seo na buntáistí a bhaineann le dátheangachas go ginearálta, caithfear é a chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge fosta. Tá níos mó agus níos mó tuismitheoirí ag déanamh rogha a bpáistí a tógáil trí Ghaeilge agus oideachas a bheith acu trí Ghaeilge, mar sin ba chóir go mbeadh an teolas agus an treoir seo ar fáil dóibh ina dteanga roghnaithe. Faoi láthair, ní amháin nach bhfuil aon eolas ar fáil ar an suíomh Family Support NI as Gaeilge, ach níl aon eolas maidir leis na buntáistí a bhaineann leis an dátheangachas, nó na háiteanna ina bhfuil tacaíocht ar fáil do thuismitheoirí a dhéanann rogha a bpáistí a thógáil trí Ghaeilge. Caithfear tabhairt faoi na deacrachtaí seo le haidhmeanna na Straitéise a bhaint amach.

Information for Parents

Section 7.59 and 7.60 of the draft strategy supports *“a range of improvements to the Family Support NI website to enhance it as a central source of information on childcare and providers operating at local levels... Ongoing improvements include making information in languages other than English...”* and *“Other means of communicating information will also be used, such as conventional leafleting and the inclusion of information on childcare in bounty packs. Again, this will be made available in a range of languages.”* In addition to ensuring that this information includes information for parents on the benefits of bilingualism generally, it also needs to be available in Irish. More and more parents are now choosing to raise their children through Irish and to have them educated through Irish, and so it is only right that this information and guidance would be available to them in their chosen language. At present, not only is there no information available on the Family Support NI website in Irish, but there is also a complete lack of information on the benefits of bilingualism, or where support is available to parents who choose to raise their children through Irish. These issues need to be addressed in order to meet this aim of the Strategy.

Is iomaí buntáiste fadtéarmach atá ann do pháistí agus do shochaí atá dátheangach, rud atá léirithe go hidirnáisiúnta agus ag lucht acadúla. Tá an Straitéis tiomanta le heolas a chur ar fáil do thuismitheoirí agus iad ag déanamh cinntithe faoin chúram leanaí a bheas ag a bpáistí. Deir Paragraf 7.61 de Straitéis *“We will also consider a promotional campaign highlighting, for parents, the long term, child developmental benefits of quality childcare services.”* Mar sin de, ba chóir go mbeadh na buntáistí cognaíocha a bhaineann leis an dátheangachas aibhsithe ag an phointe seo. Ba chóir go gclúdófar an t-eolas seo maidir le daoine atá ábalta dhá theanga a labhairt, a léamh nó a scríobh:

- Go bhfuil siad níos neamhchlaonta do chultúr eile
- Go bhfuil scileanna réiteach fadhbanna níos láidre acu
- Go bhfuil forbairt cognaíocha feabhsaithe acu
- Go bhfuil cruthaitheacht níos mó acu: ábalta smaoineamh taobh amuigh den bhosca
- Gur féidir leo an tríú nó an ceathrú teanga a fhoghlaim níos fusa
- Go nglacfaidh siad le difríochtaí idir daoine
- Go mbeidh siad ar lorg cairdeas ilchultúrtha

Má tá go leor eolais á thabhairt do thuismitheoirí le cinntithe a dhéanamh maidir le leas a bpáistí i dtaca le cúram leanaí, ní mó go bhfuil an t-eolas seo ar fáil dóibh maidir leis na buntáistí teangeolaíocha, sóisialta agus cognaíocha a bhaineann leis an dátheangachas, agus cé comh tábhachtach agus atá sé go dtosnaíonn tumoideachas a luaithe agus is féidir i bhforbairt an pháistí (tuilleadh eolais thíos).

There are far reaching benefits for both children and societies which are bilingual, which have been endorsed internationally and by academics. The Strategy is committed to ensuring that parents are informed in order to make the choices about the childcare of their children. Paragraph 7.61 of the Strategy states *“We will also consider a promotional campaign highlighting, for parents, the long term, child developmental benefits of quality childcare services.”* Therefore, the cognitive benefits for children that are associated with bilingualism ought to be highlighted for parents at this stage. This information should include that those who speak, read and write in two languages:

- Are open-minded to other cultures
- Possess stronger problem-solving skills
- Have enhanced cognitive development
- Express greater creativity: think outside the box
- Easily learn a third and fourth language
- Embrace differences in people
- Actively seek multicultural friendships¹

If parents are to be given sufficient information to make informed decisions about the wellbeing of their children in relation to childcare, this must include ensuring that information is available to them on the linguistic, social and cognitive benefits of being bilingual, and how important it is that this immersion begins as early in the child’s development as is possible (see more below).

¹ Iontaobhas na Gaelscolaíochta, www.inag.ie

Imeascadh le seirbhísí oideachais

Is é ceann de na spriocanna sa Straitéis ná cúram leanaí a fhorbairt atá imeascaithe: *“Childcare services... that are complementary to, educational and youth services.”* Leis seo a dhéanamh, tá sé riachtanach go bhfuil go leor acmhainní curtha i dtreo phobal na Gaeilge leis na riachtanais atá ag páistí agus ag daoine óga atá sa chóras Gaeloideachais a chomhlíonadh. Tá dualgas reachtúla ar an Roinn Oideachais faoi Alt 89 den Ord Oideachais (Tuaisceart Éireann) 1998 le ‘Gaeloideachas a spreagadh agus a éascú.’ Tá sé ráite i Moladh 2 den Athbhreithniú ar an Ghaeloideachas a rinne an Roinn Oideachais i 2009 ná:

“The existing policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised in light of the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the recognised benefits of pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education, to allow registered, Irish-medium providers with sufficient children to receive funding even where English-medium provision is available in the area.”

Mar sin de, caithfear gnímh ar bith atá le déanamh leis an Straitéis a chur i bhfeidhm cur san áireamh an dualgas reachtúla seo le cinntiú go gcuirtear i bhfeidhm mar is ceart é, agus léiríonn an moladh seo, i bprionsabal, nach leor an fáth é fáil ar seirbhísí chúram leanaí trí mheán an Bhéarla a bheith ann gan seirbhísí a chur ar fáil trí Ghaeilge i gceantair ina bhfuil go leor éilimh ann.

Integrated with education services

One of the objectives of the Strategy is to develop childcare which is integrated: *“Childcare services... that are complementary to, educational and youth services.”* In order to do this, it is essential that sufficient resources are directed towards the Irish language community in order to meet the needs of the children and young people who are currently in Irish-medium education. The Department of Education has a statutory duty under Article 89 of the Education (Northern Ireland) Order 1998 to ‘encourage and facilitate Irish-medium education.’ Recommendation 2 of the Department of Education’s 2009 Review of Irish-medium Education states that:

“The existing policy on funded pre-school provision should be revised in light of the unique combination of the obligations arising from the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, the recognised benefits of pre-school education and the statutory duty to encourage and facilitate Irish-medium Education, to allow registered, Irish-medium providers with sufficient children to receive funding even where English-medium provision is available in the area.”

Therefore, any actions taken in order to implement the Strategy which relate to the formal or informal education sector must take into consideration this statutory duty in order to ensure that it is properly implemented, and this recommendation shows that, in principle, the availability of childcare services through English is an insufficient argument for the failure to provide Irish-medium childcare services in areas where there is sufficient demand.

Déanann paragraf 4.2 den Straitéis argóint láidir do seirbhísí chúram leanaí d'ardchaighdeán a chur ar fáil trí mheán na Gaeilge mar gheall go deir sé gur féidir le cúram leanaí *"prepare children for learning, complementing the opportunities available in the home and in formal education."* Tá na buntáistí a bhaineann le tumoideachas do pháistí, do theaghlaigh agus don tsochaí níos láidre a luaithe agus a thosaíonn tumadh sa dara teanga i bhforbairt an pháiste.² Dá mbeadh OCALCA le haidhm na Straitéis a chomhlíonadh maidir leis na seirbhísí chúram leanaí atá ar fáil a himeascadh leis an chóras oideachais foirmiúla, bheadh air soláthar ceart a dhéanamh don earnáil Ghaeilge atá ag fás. Déanann paragraf 7.18 den Straitéis trácht ar na féidearthachtaí atá ann maidir le infrastruchtúr a thógáil bunaithe ar eastát na scoile, agus tá na féidearthachtaí seo iontach láidir san earnáil Ghaeilge mar gheall gur minic a bhíonn naisc iontach láidir ag na scoileanna seo lena bpobail Gaeilge áitiúla, rud éigin a chuideoidh le seirbhísí chúram leanaí a bunú dá mbeadh na tacaíocht agus treoir ceart ar fáil.

² See: Mc Kendry and Uí Eigearthaigh, *Immersion Education: A Short Introduction for Teachers*, Immersion Education, 2006 Accessible at: <http://www.comhairle.org/english/PDFs/publications/Immersion%20Education-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Teachers.pdf> (10.11.2015)

Paragraph 4.2 of the Strategy makes a strong argument for the provision of quality childcare services through the medium of Irish as it states that childcare should *"prepare children for learning, complementing the opportunities available in the home and in formal education."* The benefits associated with immersion education for children, their families and society are stronger the earlier that immersion in a second language begins in a child's development.³ If OFMDFM is to fulfil the Strategy's aim of integrating available childcare services with the formal education system then it must make adequate provision for the growing Irish-medium sector. Paragraph 7.18 of the Strategy discusses the possibilities which exist in relation to building this infrastructure based on the school estate, and these possibilities are very strong in the Irish-medium sector as these schools are generally have very strong links with their local Irish language communities, something which will help the establishment of childcare services if the correct support and assistance is provided.

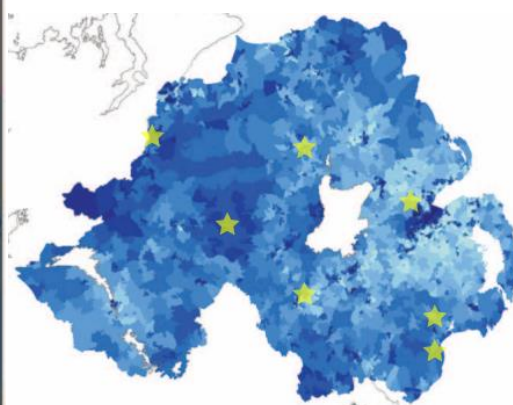
³ See: Mc Kendry and Uí Eigearthaigh, *Immersion Education: A Short Introduction for Teachers*, Immersion Education, 2006 Accessible at: <http://www.comhairle.org/english/PDFs/publications/Immersion%20Education-%20A%20Guide%20for%20Teachers.pdf> (10.11.2015)

Ceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste

Tugann paragraf 4.3 den Stráitéis aird ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le cinntiú a dhéanamh go bhfuil seirbhísí chúram leanaí ar fáil i gceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste. Thíos, tá léarscáileanna ann a léiríonn na suíomhanna ina bhfuil Oifigigh Forbartha Gaeilge maoinithe ag Foras na Gaeilge, aimsithe de ghnáth sna pobal Gaeilge is láidre. Léiríonn an léarscáil seo fosta na leibhéil éagsúla de mhíbhuntáiste atá i gceantair éagsúla (leis an gorm is dorcha sna ceantair is measa agus an gorm éatrom sna ceantair is fearr). Léiríonn na léarscáileanna seo go bhfuil pobail Gaeilge láidre i gceantair atá faoi mhíbhuntáiste, mar sin de, is féidir dul i ngleic leis na deacrachtaí seo ná trí infheistiú a dhéanamh i bpobal na Gaeilge sna ceantair seo. Ar a bharr seo, tá bunús na nGaelscoileanna lonnaithe in áiteanna ina bhfuil leibhéil arda de mhíbhuntáiste.

Areas of Disadvantage

Paragraph 4.3 of the Strategy addresses the importance of ensuring that the childcare services available address the needs of areas which are most disadvantaged. Below are maps showing the locations of Irish Language Development Officers funded by Foras na Gaeilge, usually found in the strongest Irish language communities. The map also shows the levels of disadvantage which areas suffer from (with dark blue being the most disadvantaged areas and light blue the least disadvantaged areas). These maps clearly show that there are strong Irish language communities in disadvantaged areas, therefore one method of addressing the needs of these disadvantaged areas is to invest in the Irish language communities in these areas. Furthermore, the majority of Irish medium primary schools are located in areas suffering from high levels of deprivation.



Seirbhísí Phobalbhunaithe

Déanann paragraf 7.40 trácht ar an tábhacht a bhaineann le seirbhísí chúram leanaí phobalbhunaithe a d'fhás thar thréimhse ama agus a fhaigheann tacaíocht ó ghrúpaí tiomanta agus ó dhaoine aonaracha le scileanna láidre, sóisialta, fiontraíochta. Tá sé seo níos láidre arís i bpobal na Gaeilge, áit ina bhfuil grúpaí agus soláthróirí chúram leanaí áitiúla ag obair go crua leis na bearnaí atá ann i soláthar príomhshruthaithe a chomhlíonadh do pháistí atá á dtógáil trí Ghaeilge nó go dátheangach. Mar atá ráite thuas, is minic a bhíonn naisc iontach láidir ag Gaelscoileanna leanaí i bpobail áitiúla féin. Anois, ba chóir go dtugfar aitheantas don obair agus do thábhacht na hoibre seo i saolta na bpáistí seo a aithint, agus ba chóir go mbeadh cur chuige níos réamh-ghníomhaí ag an Roinn le cinntiú go bhfuil tacaíocht ar fáil do sholáthróirí phobalbhunaithe le leanúint ar aghaidh leis an seirbhís riachtanach seo.

Community based Services

Paragraph 7.40 notes the importance of community based childcare services which have grown over time and have been supported by committed groups and individuals with strong, social entrepreneurial skills. This is particularly true within the Irish language community, where local groups and childcare providers have worked hard to fill the gaps which exists in mainstream provision to provide quality childcare to children being raised through Irish or bilingually. As has already been noted above, Irish-medium schools tend to have very strong links with their local communities. It is now time that this work and the importance of this work in the lives of these children is recognised and that the Department takes a more pro-active approach to ensuring that the community based providers are supported to continue to deliver this essential service.

Inrochtanacht agus Inbhuanaitheacht

Tá eolas atá suas chun dáta maidir le inrochtaineacht soláthróirí chúram leanaí trí mheán na Gaeilge de dhíth le cinntiú go bhfuil fíor-rogha ag tuismitheoirí úsáid a bhaint as na seirbhísí seo. Ba chóir iniúchadh a dhéanamh ar na seirbhísí atá ar fáil le bearnaí i soláthar a aithint i gceantair ina bhfuil éilimh ann ach na bhfuil go leor soláthar ann leis na riachtanais seo a chomhlíonadh. Ba chóir go ndéanfar pleanáil le cinntiú go bhfuil soláthar chúram leanaí ar fáil d'ardchaighdeán, atá inacmhainne agus inbhuanaithe bunaithe i gceantair le riachtanais áitiúla le comhlíonadh. Mar gheall go bhfuil pobal na Gaeilge agus earnáil na Gaelscolaíochta ag fás bliain i ndiaidh bliana, beidh méadú ar an éileamh atá ann do sheirbhísí chúram leanaí trí Ghaeilge sna blianta atá romhainn. Mar sin de, tá infheistíocht i seirbhísí chúram leanaí de dhíth anois le cinntiú gur féidir leis an earnáil riachtanais tuismitheoirí agus pháistí a chomhlíonadh go fadtéarmach.

Availability and Sustainability

Up to date information on the availability of child care providers through the medium of Irish is essential in order to ensure that parents have a genuine option of availing of these services. An audit should be carried out on existing services in order to identify areas where a need for such services exist but where there is insufficient local provision to meet this need. Planning should then be done to ensure that quality, affordable and sustainable childcare provision is then established in that area in order to meet local demand. As the Irish language community and the Irish-medium education sector continue to grow each year, the demand which exists for childcare services through Irish is going to continue increasing in the years to come. Therefore, investment in childcare services through Irish will enable to sector to meet the needs of parents and children on a long-term basis.

Éagsúlacht

Baineann paragraf 6.49 den Straitéis leis an tábacht a bhaineann le héagsúlacht a chur chun tosaigh i sochaí. Má theipeann ar an Straitéis soláthar cuí a dhéanamh do na páistí atá á dtógáil trí Ghaeilge nó go dátheangach, beidh teip láithreach air é seo a dhéanamh mar gheall go mbeadh sé ag déanamh neamhaird ar cuid mhór den tsochaí. Ba chóir go ndéanfar éagsúlacht phobal na Gaeilge a cheiliúradh agus a spreagadh, agus caithfear seo a fheiceáil sna céimeanna a ghlacfar leis an Straitéis a chur i bhfeidhm.

Conclúid

Ba chóir go gcuirtear na dualgais atá ann i dtaca le pobal na Gaeilge san áireamh sna haidhmeanna agus sna spriocanna sa Straitéis. Ní amháin go bhfuil buntáiste ag baint le soláthar seirbhísí chúram leanaí cuí trí Ghaeilge do na páistí a mbaineann úsáid as na seirbhísí seo, ach tá buntáistí an do thuismitheoirí agus don tsochaí fosta trí cheann de na spriocanna is mó sa Straitéis a bhaint amach .i. sochaí a fhorbairt atá éagsúil, measúil agus fulangach.

Diversity

Paragraph 6.49 of the Strategy relates the importance of promoting society's diversity. If the Strategy fails to make sufficient provision for the children who are being raised through Irish or bilingually will immediately fail in this respect as it will have ignored the needs of a large section of society. The diversity of the Irish language community should be celebrated and encouraged and this needs to be reflected in the steps that are taken to implement the Strategy.

Conclusion

The aims and objectives of the Strategy need to fully take into consideration the responsibilities which exist towards the Irish language community. Ensuring that adequate provision is made for childcare services through the medium of Irish doesn't only benefit the children who will avail of these services, but also benefits their parents and the wider community through developing a more diverse, respectful and tolerant society which is one of the main aims of this Strategy.