

Citizens' Assembly on Gender Equality

Meeting - 13th March 2021 - Care

Catherine Day: Hi everybody, welcome back, I hope you had a bit of a break because we have quite a hectic afternoon ahead of us, we'll be moving between breakout groups and plenary so let me just explain how we're going to work together to finalize and hopefully agree on what goes on the ballot paper in April. On the very important set of issues regarding care and I just want to recall the process that we followed so far so we drafted a first set of recommendations based on the feedback and the notes from your breakout group discussions and your reflection surveys. We sent them to you and I'm very grateful that you responded in large numbers giving us your feedback on that first draft. We then took account of that feedback.

We revised the ballot paper and we sent you a second version, a revised version, on the 5th March. I hope you had time to look at the video that I made explaining where and why we propose to adjust the draft to take your comments on board and I hope that the slides accompanying the video shows you exactly what changes had been made. So what you should concentrate on today is the draft ballot paper that you received in the meeting pack and it's also built into the agenda for the meeting.

As you know, today you're not voting on the recommendations but you will be deciding on what will be on the ballot paper next month. So for this afternoon we're going to divide the discussion on the ballot paper into three sections: First you will have 35 minutes to discuss the four recommendations on carers, then you'll come back to plenary and we'll hear whether there are any questions or suggestions for changes to the wording. Your Roomaxx facilitator will communicate these on behalf of your group, if we do need to change the wording we'll do a quick Zoom poll and once we have agreed on the wording we will then do a series of Zoom poles on each of the options to appear on the ballot paper.

I hope that we will be able to stick roughly to the timing in the Agenda so around 2:10pm we will move on to the two questions on childcare and we follow the same process I've just outlined and depending on the timing of all of this, I hope we'll be able to take a comfort break around 2:30pm.

Lastly we'll cover the three questions, remember these are on older people and persons with disability at about 3pm. One thing that I feel worked well in our February meeting was that you were able to ask questions directly from the breakout groups and where we were able to answer the questions immediately back to you in the groups. I think that helped your discussions, so we do have some experts on hand today to help us get replies quickly to you like last time. If you have questions, your questions will be sent to us by email by the question recorder in your group and where we see the same question coming up in several groups then we may decide to answer them in the plenary session, so that everybody's aware of the question and the answer. I hope that this will work as well as last time. Since time is very precious today and we want you to have the maximum amount of time to discuss with one another, we're going to move you into the breakout groups now and we'll bring you back around 2:20pm to hear your reactions to the first group of questions on carers,

Thanks a lot and see you in a little while.

Catherine Day: Hi everybody, we are seeing a lot of the same questions coming out from the different groups so I thought it was easiest to try and answer your questions collectively. Then everybody hears the same answer at the same time and it's not surprising that there are questions, because this whole

area is quite a complicated set of social welfare payments and tax credits and training and all the rest of it.

So the kind of questions that are being repeated in different groups are:

Q. What does the word disregard mean – **A.** Income disregard - means the limit below which peoples earnings are not affected, or it's as somebody put it in one of the question - is it a kind of a means test and yes it is, training or access to training and professional registration completely funded or subsidised at the expense of the individual. We haven't specified that what we're calling for is that carers should have access to all these accredited programs. In some cases their company may pay for it, in some places they may contribute themselves or in some cases the state may fund their access to the training programs, it depends on what it is.

Then we have the question about the question 1a clarification in relation to the pay structure and benefits: these apply to both public and private sector employees essentially what we're trying to do here is to align those who currently work in the private sector with the pay and conditions of those in the public sector. There is also a question about what is in place for recipients of the Carer's allowance: at the moment they are getting any credits or stamps, Claire from the ESRI can I ask you to reply to that question please?

ESRI – Sure, so basically while people are in receipt of carer's allowance they do get what we call credited stamps which means that when they come to say retirement age, over the years they were caring this would go towards their pension entitlement.

Catherine Day - The word individualized - what does that mean? In the recommendation 'The State should develop an individualized pension solution for carers to ensure they have an adequate income once they reach retirement age. That means anybody over 65 should be getting a personal pension doesn't depend on their marital status.

ESRI - So if you were over 65 and say your partner, husband or wife would be entitled to their pension rather than you getting something under their pension which would be lower. You'd be entitled to a full pension in your own right.

Catherine Day: Thank you - now question 3 does this refer to people who were on carers allowance or is this referring to paid carers by the state.

Sorry correction, recommendation 1 is about paid carers, recommendation 3 would be about people who are not normally classified as paid carers, others who do caring but who should now get a pension in the future, who don't get it at the moment.

Then we have what is the level of support grant mentioned in question 4 that is the carers support grant. It's €1800 at the moment and if carers get respite is it still a procedure that the respite receiver cannot leave the house and why?

Again we are not entering into the detail on that but we are making the point that the respite care should provide access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs so if the person needs to leave the house it should cover that kind of thing but that that will be the detail for the government to put in later. The question of what costs on caring are covered and what is reimbursed? Ursula could you answer this?

Ursula Barry – Could I come back to one other question the care support grant and that's what's used to be a respite grant that's only €1700, it's not, I think we said €1800 at the present time since June 2020. So what was the other question you wanted to ask?

Catherine Day - The costs for caring - what is reimbursed.

Ursula Barry - what we're suggesting there are additional costs that are attached to caring for example if you're caring for somebody with a disability you might have additional heating costs because of their conditions of the disability and there could be additional transport costs and so we're looking at the additional costs associated with care, in this kind of context. We're suggesting heating and transport costs in particular as an example.

Catherine Day - thank you very much Ursula, then another question - can carers be included in professional registration alongside nursing?

I think that would also depend on the course that they are doing, some courses would lead to professional accreditation some shorter ones would not, so again we can't cover every eventuality here but we're just making the general recommendation that anybody who's working as a carer should be able to do training and get their the professional qualifications that go with whatever training they do.

Excuse me a moment while I just check that we haven't missed out on any questions, you'll have to bear with us a little bit this afternoon because we're trying to do things in real time so just give me two minutes please, so I can check we haven't missed out on anything.

Catherine Day - Okay we're back. We have the next question, maybe I think Ursula or Claire (ESRI) may be the ones to answer this. Citizens are wondering about the difference between contributory and non-contributory pensions. What are the consequences and difference in payment for single people or married people?

Ursula Barry - The contributory pension is paid at a higher rate than the non-contributory pension there's a difference of about 28 euro per week at the moment and the thing about it is, we have discussed this in relation to carers but we've also discussed it in relation to welfare generally and that's going to come up in the April meeting. We were looking at maybe not having a distinction between contributing & non-contributory because a lot of the submissions raised that. So we're looking at maybe a universal pension entitlement that would be funded at the same level for every individual that reaches the age to 65, whether they've been a carer or not, they've been in paid employment or whatever their circumstances has been, the State would be a universal pension in that situation.

Catherine Day - The difference between payment for a single person or a married person.

Ursula Barry - At the moment in a household-based pension it's paid at 1.7 so you get a full pension and then a pension for a dependent adult, so that's 1.7 in total. So you get 100% and 70% pension.

Catherine Day - If you're a married person and in most cases the person would be the woman, she gets 0.7 of the pension in addition to the 100% in the house.

Ursula Barry – Yes

Catherine Day – Okay, another this is a very specific question, this is currently the system will not allow a person to claim both the widow's benefit and sick benefit simultaneously they can claim only one, why is this? It seems very unfair!

Ursula Barry - I don't think that this comes within the scope of this Assembly and because it's going down another road of other forms of welfare payments. I'm sure there is unfairness in that but I don't think it's something we've particularly explored in this Assembly.

Catherine Day - There was a suggestion to change the word adequate in question 4b providing adequate access to a range of respite services to meet individual needs. What we meant by the word adequate there - at the moment people can get an amount of money once a year but that may not be sufficient for them to be able to leave the house. Coming back to the previous question, if they're not able to pay for alternative care for the person whom they are caring for so by adequate we wanted to provide for whatever the person needing respite needed. I don't know what we would change it to but that's something I can't explain beyond that.

Ursula Barry - I think that adequate is used in other legislation and in other policy and structures in the system at the moment that's a recognizable word to use.

Catherine Day - Okay let me just check the chat line.

Ursula Barry - There is a suggestion somewhere to have costs that are legitimate costs?

Catherine Day - Yes but I don't think the State would...

Ursula Barry - I think use reasonable and adequate those are both familiar terms.

Catherine Day - okay so it was interesting to see that there were quite a few questions, the same questions coming from different groups and as I said this is a very complex area so I don't think we are ever going to be able to answer all the questions and all the possibilities that arise and as I think we have discussed several times we need to make recommendations that tell the State where you want to see change. We are not writing either tax or social welfare legislation so there will be a point where we have to stop, we can't be spelling out the details too much.

I'd like to get a sense of your mood now whether in the light of the answers that we've been able to give quickly, Is this enough for you or not. So we are going to take a quick Zoom poll now and I'm going to ask you to answer Yes or No to the following question.

The question is - Are you ready to vote now, are you happy in the light of the explanations to vote to take the poll on questions to 1 - 4 or do you want to discuss a bit more in which case we will put you back into the breakout groups for another 10 minutes and then come back and ask you if you're ready to vote.

So the poll will pop up now and if you're not, or you don't feel comfortable about voting now then you should answer No but if you feel that the answers have been enough and that you are happy to vote on the ballot that's proposed to you then click Yes. So take your time and click submit when you're clear that you've clicked the right box because once you click submit you can't change your votes. So take a few minutes to think about it and that way we'll get the mood of the meeting and then we'll follow up whichever is the majority of you.

Catherine Day - So I think everybody who wants to vote has had a chance to vote we have 90 people voting and if we can put the the poll results up on the screen please.

So we have 87% want to vote now 13% no - that's 78 people in favour of Yes and 12 people in favour of No.

So we will now go ahead with the vote, one thing I just want to mention before we actually vote and this is just a technical thing we can only take 25 Zoom polls in any meeting so for this reason as we go through the afternoon sometimes where there's only one option and the questions are straightforward we might put two together so we can save some Zoom polls to do what we've just done now which is to ask you whether you're ready to vote or not or whether you need more time.

For discussion - we're now going to go ahead with the poll on questions 1a and 1b each time we want to make sure that we can put the whole text up on the screen so that's how we're going to be grouping certain things together. So it will come up on the screen now in a moment and remember again you are not being asked to vote now you're being asked to decide that these are the questions that will be on the ballot paper. So now you can see questions 1a and 1b just take your time again now in the light of the discussion and to make sure that you're clear and then I will ask Darren to put up the poll in just a moment? Ok Darren I think we're now ready for the poll.

Catherine Day - So you'll hear me say this a lot this afternoon and in our next meeting so you're being asked to vote Yes or No to put these questions on the ballot paper take your time make sure you've clicked the right box for your opinion and then click submit and remember you can't change once you have clicked submit.

Ok so I think 90 people have voted again so Darren can you give us the results please. So we have for question 1a we have eight 91% in favour 9% no. That translates in terms of number of people - 82 people have voted Yes and 8 people voted No.

On the second question we have 93% in favour and 7% against and that translates into 84 people in favour and six people against.

Ok that's very clear thank you very much so we now have two questions are clear and we will move on now to question 2.

So now we're going to move on to question 2 which has four parts so we have 2 a 2 b 2 c and 2d and to make it more user-friendly we're going to use a separate poll for each part. So Lena could you put up the wording of question 2a please.

This is short and several of you had questions about the level of income disregard but it means, the maximum limit that you can earn, a sort of means test in other language. Ok so could we go to the poll now please Darren?

Ok so same format every time, take your time to click Yes or No depending on what your position is and then when you are sure you've clicked the right box for your position click submit please.

Ok so I think all 90 people have voted so can we see the results please Darren?

Ok so we have 96% in favour and 4% against that's 86 people voting Yes and 4 people voting No. Ok so that's question 2a now we're going to come to question 2b again Lena can you put that up on the screen please again a short question do you agree that this should be included on the ballot paper. Ok can we take the poll now please Darren and again just be sure that your vote is correctly appearing before you click submit.

Ok thank you Darren can we see the results please? OK so here on this one we have 93% in favour 7% against that's 84 people voting Yes and 6 voting No.

Ok then we come to question 2C relating to reform of the carers allowance. Ok and can we go to the poll now please Darren?

Ok so we now have 90 votes, Darren can you show us the results please? 80 people against 10. Ok thanks so here we have 89% in agreement 11% voting no that means 80 people voted Yes and 10 people voted No.

Thank you very much and then we come to question 2d please Lena if you can put it up on the screen. So this is the one about access to state employment and training programs. Ok Darren can we go to the poll now please?

Ok so we have all the results in from the 90 people voting and Darren if you can put the results up please? Thank you, so this time we have 91% in favour of Yes 9% percent in favour of No. That means 82 people voting Yes and eight people voting No. Ok that's question 2 now we come to question 3.

Please Lena if you could put it up on the screen here we have explained that individualized means that the pension would go directly to the person qualifying for it so anybody over 65 would get their own pension.

Darren can we have the poll now please?

I think this time we have 89 people voting I will just give you another few seconds in case the last person does want to vote but if you don't want to vote that's fine.

Ok we still have all 90 voting so Darren can you put up the results please? Ok so here we have 96% in favour 4% against that's 86 people in favour and 4 people against.

Now we come to question 4 Lena if you could put up the slide on question 4 please? Now Darren if we could move to the poll please?

So again voting yes or no and just make sure before you click submit.

Ok we have 89 people have registered their opinion there's one person outstanding and we will just give them another few seconds in case you're having problems connecting or something but if not then, I'll take it that 1 person doesn't want to vote on this.

OK so I'm going to take it that one person is either absent or isn't voting on this so Darren can you show us the results please?

So on this we have 90% in favour and 10% against and that translates obviously if you're good at maths that's 80 people in favour and 9 against. Thank you now we'll come on to question 4b. This is on the question of respite services. Ok Darren can we come to the poll please?

So you'd be sick of hearing me say just check your answers before you click submit but it's important that you can't reverse your vote so please do make sure you're sure before you press submit.

Ok we're just waiting on the last person to vote we have 89 in the system, I will just give you a few more seconds. Yeah ok we're up to 90 now so Darren can you show us the results please?

Thank you very much so 92% in favour and 8% against that translates at 83 people in favour and 7 against.

So that completes questions 1 to 4, now I can see from the chat function that some people are asking can we adjust the questions etc. That's why I asked you to vote on whether you were ready to vote or not. I fully understand that some people would like to refine the wording or that you might have more questions but I need to sense the mood of the majority and to go with that of the majority. So if you want to propose changed wording you need to come very quickly and clearly with that and then we'll have to put that to a Zoom poll to see whether other people are willing to change the wording or not. I know it's a lot to get our heads around but I think despite the refinements that one or two groups would have liked to bring in I think that the wording of the recommendations is clear and will allow those to whom it's addressed, so our public representatives, to understand what the Assembly wants

to achieve and we will not be able to write in all the details anyway. I need to sense the majority and go with the majority.

We are going to put you back to your breakout groups now for 20 minutes to discuss the two questions on childcare so that's questions 5 and 6 and as before if you have any factual questions please email us and if you want to adjust the wording also please email us and then we'll try and find ways of discussing that when we see you again in 20 minutes time.

Catherine Day - Welcome back everybody. Now before we start looking at questions 5 and 6, I'm picking up a certain amount of unhappiness about questions 1 to 4, that some people feel we should have adjusted the wording. I don't think that's the majority of you but you know how keen I am on ownership of this by the whole Assembly so I'm sensitive to that. And what I want to suggest is the following: I'd like to focus now on questions 5 and 6. We have had some suggestions for changes in wording which I will put to you in a Zoom poll and you can decide each time whether you want to take on board the wording changes that have been suggested by the different breakout groups - and I'll explain what they are in a moment. We also have some questions which I think it would be interesting for everybody here to hear the answers to. So, we'll ask our experts to come in on that and then I would like, once we have decided that we are going to change the wording to questions 5 and 6 or we're not going to change the wording to questions 5 and 6, I'd like to take the polls on those questions and then move on to the last ones. At the end of it, so when we've dealt with question 9, in the light of the fact that I am picking up this unhappiness, I'm going to ask you one final time if you are happy with the wording of questions 1 to 4 or if you want to revisit them. And if you want to revisit them we will take them at the beginning of our April session. Now one thing I want you to bear in mind is that you can see that today, dealing with a lot of different subjects and a lot of subjects on which I certainly don't have the expertise and some of you have some expertise but many don't, that we're now getting into complicated areas where we have to find a balance between sending a general message back to the Oireachtas or wanting to get into the detail. I'm here to facilitate what you want so that is up to you but bear in mind that it will take a lot more time to go forwards and backwards with different issues. So, what I'm saying is already for the April session, that we will need the two days and we will need the two full days by my estimation to be able to have enough breakout groups, plenary sessions, adjusting wording etc. All of which we're quite happy to do because that's what we're here for. We have a number of suggested changes which I'm going to come to in a moment and as I said please bear with me because I'm getting requests and advice from all kinds of quarters so if you just give me one minute please. I'll come back to you straight away

Catherine Day – Okay sorry for keeping you waiting everyone. I'm afraid there'll be a bit more of this from now on because we have to work out how to put the questions to you so that you can tell us what you want. That might seem very simple but it's not actually that simple, so there were a couple of questions first of all that came in and I'm going to ask our experts to answer them. There were a couple of wording changes which I will take you through in a moment and before we go to the poll I will then ask very quickly each room facilitator to tell us whether there was anything else relating to questions 5 and 6, we're only going to be on questions 5 and 6 for the moment, if there was anything else that I haven't answered on that you might let me know. So there were two questions that I've picked up so far, 1) was on the non-transferable parental leave - so maybe Ursula are you going to be the expert who will clarify that.

Ursula Barry - There was two issues or questions that arose on that, the first was about non-transferable and non-transferable is a principle that's established at European Union level on the

directive of parental leave and that's translated into National Law in in different Countries and it really refers to the idea that we want to encourage sharing between parents. So for example a woman who has access to a certain amount of leave and a man does also, but the man leave can't be transferred to the woman it's only embedded in him so it's about trying to encourage the sharing of parental leave between all the involved parents.

The other question that was asked about whether we should have the level of parental leave and maternity leave and other on other kinds of payments, whether they should be linked to a person's salary and we reflecting on your views, we felt that it was better to look for increased payment level that would apply to everyone rather than some people getting higher parental leave because they're on a higher salary and others getting lower payments because they were on a lower salary level. So we were looking for an increase of the rate across the board which would be an inclusive approach, we thought, reflecting on your views.

Catherine Day - Thanks very much Ursula and then the second one was a question asking us to clarify publicly funded - does this mean publicly run and there was a suggestion then to change the wording to publicly funded to publicly run and regulated model and I think Helen you're going to explain what these different concepts mean, please.

Helen Russell - The issue is, we think that it's the public funding and public regulation that are the key things here, in most systems across Europe they have a variety of providers so it's not a 100% publicly run in any country, so you can have community providers for example or sometimes there's parent-led centres. So, the key thing here is it's around the funding that is publicly provided and we're a very long way off. There would have to be a massive shift in terms of provision, and the system would simply not be capable of shifting from the system we have now to one that where it was provided fully by the public sector. The idea with this statement is that it's a move towards a publicly funded system. So this is to happen over the next decade, somebody also asked or one group asked whether this meant would it be totally publicly funded, so again this is something that even in the Scandinavian systems there is very often parent contribution and that would be very much subsidized and it would be linked to people's earnings. It's as i say that the way its stated here is that we will move towards a publicly funded model but that's not expected to happen overnight and the regulation I think by default that is the meaning of that is that it's publicly regulated.

Catherine Day – Ok, thank you, so we had some suggestions for changes in wording, we'll put them up on the screen in a moment but just to mention them quickly first. In 5a there was a suggestion that we would add the word accessible so we would talk about moving over the next decade to a publicly funded accessible and regulated model of childcare and secondly in question 5b where we're talking about the percentage of GDP to say to increase it from the current 0.37% of GDP to at least 1% by 2030, instead of saying 'by 2030' to say by 'no later than 2030'. So what I'm going to propose again in a couple of minutes is that we will poll you on whether you want the original text that we sent you on questions 5a and 5b or whether you want to revise them in line with the suggestions that have come from some of the groups. So we'll take a poll on that in just a moment but I just want to check with the facilitators from each group if we have answered all questions. I'm proposing to take three of the wording changes that have come from individual groups and seeing if the majority agree with them or not. Can I just ask the facilitators from each group very quickly and focusing only on questions 5 and 6 to tell me was there anything else that needed to be clarified?

So can we have facilitator from group 1 please?

Facilitator 1 - Thank you, you've addressed the proposed amendments that came from the citizens in room 1 and other questions were answered via the questions recorder.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much can I hear from group 2?

Facilitator 2 - Thank you chair, we've submitted the questions and thank you.

Catherine Day – Did you get answers back?

Facilitator 2 – Yes, we have been getting answers back

Catherine Day - Ok that's fine thank you group 3

Facilitator 3 - One question has been answered - one citizen suggested that, it had been suggested in the documents they received, the current problem was that childcare at the moment was over regulated and that there was a duplication of regulation and so he just felt that he wanted clarification on why a regulated model was included in this and then in respect of both 5a and b they refer to goals for the next decade, would it be possible to include both short-term and long-term goals?

Catherine Day - Thank you group 3 - group 4

Facilitator 4 - Thank you Catherine the questions were answered for group 4 just to reiterate that the question around decade was brought up by one person in the group and whether it could be slightly shorter and the wording for non-transferable just one person in room 4 thought that maybe that was forcing people to take leave.

Catherine Day - Ok I'm going to ask our experts to come back in on some of these questions that don't appear to have been fully answered- group 5 please.

Facilitator 5 - Thank you, group 5 we discussed a lot of the issues that were raised there and we ended up being happy with the wording of the questions as stated so thank you very much.

Catherine Day - Thank you - group 6

Facilitator 6 - Thank you, we had a query over the word publicly funded but we sent the query off, you seem to have answered that. There also maybe a change in the wording of the question itself and move over the next decade to a combined private and publicly funded and State regulated model. They wanted to change the wording of that a bit and we've sent you that so thank you.

Catherine Day - Thank you - group 7

Facilitator 7 - Thank you Chair there was a few questions and comments from group 7. First in question five and the comment was that to move forward with the structured timelines and targets over the next decade and for example not to sit on it for nine years and then be looking to implement it by year 10, so it should be fully implemented by year 10. On question 6 a question arose in relation to this question, as it specified that it related to the first 12 months of a child's life but it wasn't clear to some members of the group whether all of the different proposals in the different sections of question 6 all related only to the first 12 months of the child's life as well.

In relation to subsection c of question 6. It also wasn't clear to some members of the group whether lone parents would receive the same total leave - is this that they would receive essentially twice the leave of what one person would and would get in a married / family or a cohabitation. In that case what exactly is the definition of a lone parent? It seemed to some people that this shouldn't be included because in itself might be unequal, if it was proposed to give some people twice as much

leave. I think that's about it for the questions there were some additional comments but I think that in relation to section 6d there were some that said it wasn't clear. What meant and what they wanted was a guarantee that their position can't be changed and that they'd be reinstated and that there'd be an option to vote for that.

Catherine Day - Thank you - group 8 please

Facilitator 8 - Good afternoon Chair, most of the queries have been addressed, however the only one left would be 6a where it says covered the first year of a child's life and they would like or adoption to be added to that because it doesn't seem to take into consideration an adopted child.

Catherine Day - Ok thank you group 9

Facilitator 9 - Thank you, most of the points were covered just again in relation to question 5a the members of room 9 were keen to see that it was more target date specific so over the next decade becomes for example with the 2030 measure on b and then there was just a general query in relation to 6d in terms of increasing payment levels. A number of members were wondering will these be State funded or would it be private companies expected to fund this as it would be a shared burden of responsibility.

Catherine Day - Ok thank you very much, can I ask our experts now to come in and clarify those various points - Helen can we start with you this time.

Helen Russell - So there was a question about the regulation and whether we have regulation in there, I think regulation is really important in terms of quality of care so we wouldn't want to take that out, but there was some discussion when during this session on childcare about being too many inspections you know from education and health and whatever but I think in discussing that we felt that was too much detail to go into in terms of recommendations so I think that was why we didn't specify that in any more detail there.

Catherine Day - Sorry Helen did you cover the question of adoption or adopted children, I think they are covered in the legislation so we wouldn't need to explain it here, but I'm not sure if you covered that?

Helen Russell - No I didn't know, I think Ursula might be doing that but that was a good question.

Ursula Barry - All of the legislation covers adopted Children in Ireland, all the leave for parents covers adopted children as well so we didn't feel the need to specify that. In terms of covering the first year of a child's life - 6a - paid leave should cover the first year of a child's life and that doesn't apply to all of the different leave systems for example parental leave can be taken at any time up to the child is age eight so we're not trying to limit when a parent can take parental leave but we want to prioritize at the same time the first year of a child's life. That the leave would be extended to cover that first year and other areas of leave cover other options as well in terms of the increasing percentage of the GDP.

I should say that the first 5 which is a Government program on Early Childcare and Learning has already committed to doubling from the 0.3 of GDP. They've already committed to doubling that by 2028. So we were looking to get to the full 1% and the new wording would be, by the latest of 2030. So we're pushing them and they are already making commitments in that in that vein, so we thought that in that sense we didn't need a shorter and longer term because the Government has already committed for 2028. So that's the way we looked at that.

Catherine Day - Have you covered the lone parent point?

Ursula Barry - The lone parent, we did envisage that a lone parent having 1 years leave in the first year of their child's life, that's what we envisaged and again that came up in both the submissions and in the presentations in the care section earlier on.

Catherine Day – On the Question on, I think it was Nóirín Hayes who talked about the over regulation of the private sector Childcare. I think by the wording that we have here, we are intending if it's publicly funded and regulated that there would be one regulatory model whether it's public or private. I think that would take care of that point that she raised.

Ok so there were one or two nuances there but let me try out on you because we're trying to find the best way all the time to reflect your views what I was doing in the last few minutes was trying to look at a revised wording for question 5 and what I have broken it down into is 5a and 5b, so Lena could you put up the revised slide for question 5a please.

Ok so you can see on the top the wording that you have been working on and then you can see on the question, under the heading of revised that we would propose to add the word accessible now. Some people said over the next decade, maybe that's too long, but given that Ireland has the most private sector Childcare in the EU so far, as i remember from the charts that we saw, I think it's not realistic to think that we would complete that move in nine years so I would propose not to change it because I think we want to make ambitious but also practical recommendations as to what can actually be achieved by the State and it will be a massive move to go from where we are today to what we are recommending.

Lena would you put up 5b please just so that we can see it I'll poll you individually on 5a and 5b but i just wanted you to see the two together.

I'm told that the wrong slide was put up that's not helpful but accidents do happen when you're trying to work under pressure and I think Jerry has pointed that out.

You are right, this is what I meant by bearing with us. It's quite difficult to do these things in real time but we'll get there if you bear with us so this is 5b. I hope this is right here we proposed two changes so we would put into at least 1% by no later than 2030. So we will go back in a moment to the correct version of 5a the original and the revised.

Ok so I think we have the correct version now of 5a so the proposal would be to add the word accessible publicly funded, accessible and regulated model of Childcare so what I'm going to ask you now is we'll put this up in the form of a poll could you put that up now please Darren, so here I'm asking you do you prefer the original version or do you prefer the revised version and we will go with the majority view whichever is the preference of both. I hope in the light of the explanations that those changes would reflect the mood of the Assembly sufficiently but let's check it and see. So if you can now click either for your choice, which is either the original text of 5a or the revised text of 5a and then we will draw the conclusions from the result of the poll so again be sure that you're clicking the right one and then press submit please.

Ok thanks very much and we have the result now, so Darren can you put the result up so we have 25% in favour of the original text and 75% in favour of the revised text so that's a very clear outcome and we actually have 91 people voting now there was one person who was in and out because of technical problems but who has now joined us. So just to explain why we have 91 people voting when we had 90 on the previous ones. In terms of numbers of people that's 23 people in favour of the original text and 68 for the revised. So that is very clear we'll come to 5b now please, Darren if you can put up the poll for the revised one here, thank you.

We have 90 answers but we have 91 people so I'm just waiting a few more seconds for the last person if they want to vote or not.

Last one come in? Ok well then we will go with the result of the 90 votes so Darren can you show us that please. So more or less the same again 24% for the original text 76% for the revised text that's 22 people for the original text and 68 for the revised text so clear majority there.

Ok, that's excellent, they will go on the ballot paper now. Now we move to question 6, here we will take 6a and 6b separately we got questions about question 6 but we didn't get any draft suggestions for revised wording so we'll put the slides up for 6a first please Lena if you can put that up, paid leave for parents should cover the first year of a child's life and Darren can we have the poll please?

Ok so straightforward yes or no again make sure before you press submit. Ok we've 89 answers so we just need the last two people maybe to vote or maybe not as they'd prefer okay 90.

Ok so we have 91 votes registered on this, Darren can you show us the results please 82 and 9.

Ok so 90% in favour of 6a and 10% against that's 82 people in favour and 9 against. Thank you and then we come to 6b, thank you Lena, so this reads paid leave for parents should be non-transferable to encourage sharing of child care responsibility between parents. Ok Darren can you put up the poll please. Ok again we'll take your views on this and again be careful before you press submit. Ok so we're at 88 people voting we just need the last one or two, I see somebody wants us to have a 20-second timer but I think that's a little bit too rushed.

Ok so now we have 90 people have voted so we'll close the poll at that, Darren can we see the results please – 66 people for – 24 people against. Ok so on this one we have a more nuanced outcome we have 73% in favour and 27% against that means 66 people voted in favour and 24 against then we move to 6c and 6d that we're going to take together.

Lena can you put the wording up for us please, so do you agree that paid leave for parents should provide lone parents at the same total leave period as a couple and be incentivized by increasing payment levels to encourage increased take-up and then we'll go to the poll please. So here you're voting on two separate recommendations.

Ok we're at 89 again so can I encourage the last one or two people to vote now please.

Ok, I think we'll go ahead with the results of 89 votes on this, Darren can you put up the results please. Ok so we have 81% percent in favour of 6c and 19% against that's 72 people in favour and 17 against. On question 6d 79 people in favour of it being on the ballot paper 21 against and that's 70 people in favour and 19 against. Ok thank you very much now you'll have noticed that we're a little bit behind where we had perhaps optimistically thought we might be, but I think it's important that we take the time that's necessary to get this as right as we possibly can so we're going to put you back in the breakout groups now for 15 minutes to discuss the last three questions which are number 7, 8 & 9 and again I think if you want to propose changes in the wording please be as explicit as possible and email them to us and if you have questions do the same and then we'll do the same next time around we'll poll you on whether you want to revise the wording or not in the light of what's come from the groups and we'll try to answer the questions to the very best of our ability so we'll see you again in 15 minutes which will be at 4:05pm. Thanks.

Catherine Day - Welcome back everyone, like last time we have a couple of wording revisions proposed which I'll run through in a moment and we also have some questions. So I'm going to take

the questions first there was a question about whether we should talk about index linking the home care budget in question 8b rather than putting in what we have in the current wording which is increasing. Emer I'm going to ask you to reply to that question please and explain the difference between index linking and increasing?

Emer Smyth – Yes, we have gone for increasing because in a way it's a higher bar because if you look at the latter half of the sentence it talks about growing demand but also reducing ratings, so index thinking on its own is unlikely to be sufficient to address that. We would need a kind of a boost in overall spend and there was another query on whether we should say reduce waiting lists and waiting times but in fact they're enmeshed so that if you reduce waiting lists anyone on that list will have a reduced time for service so for that reason we're not proposing changing 8b.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much and Ursula can I ask you to reply to the questions - what does person-centred financial support mean in 7b and what does home care packages mean in 8a?

Ursula Barry - They're actually linked together but person-centred in the first instance is the risk the care recipient would get the financial support and they would be able to choose the kind of care supports that they then want to engage with, but it's also based on assessment of needs and there's a principle that the health service would engage in an assessment of individual needs and provide support in a way that's most flexible for the care recipient to use in the way they see fit and in terms of home care packages that's a package of whether you get occupational therapy supports which are supports for equipment that make it easier to live at home in adapted living situations or whether you get home care and personal assistance hours so packages can be designed to fit the individual older person or person with the disabilities needs. It covers what equipment and personnel it might be, if you need 24-hour care or it might be you need just a couple of hours a day and so all of that's assessed and it's converted into home care package for each individual

Catherine Day - Ok and Ursula there is one other question I forgot - what statute regarding 8a and what statutory rights currently exist please?

Ursula Barry - This is very important because at the moment we have a statutory right to nursing care but we don't have a statutory right for home care, although that's been promised in new legislation so we want to encourage that and the thing about it is even though we have a statutory right to nursing care there's a shortage of spaces so there's still a limitation on what's available and what is important at the same time to establish the right to both home care and nursing care which this amendment is intended to do.

Catherine Day - Ok and on the question of whether we say increase our index link I see something going on in the chat line and the group which suggested it had suggested both increasing and index linking but I have the same reaction as Mary Clare in the chat Emer is that to some extent contradictory from what you explained?

Emer Smyth - Well I think that there is a risk that if given the option that the political will might be to index link which at the moment would result in a very small increase and certainly wouldn't be sufficient to meet growing demand and reduce waiting lists so it could cause confusion and perhaps be a hostage to fortune. It might produce the wrong result compared to what citizens are trying to achieve

Catherine Day - Ok so I'm going to just tell you where we would propose to take the suggested wording on board. I'm then going to go to the facilitators to ask them if there's anything that's not covered by the answers we've given and by the wording changes that we propose that the groups want to raise

and then we come to the wording so what I would propose to take out of what you've sent us is in 7c that we would keep the text as it is being able to participate as fully as possible in decisions on their care needs and then add based on principles of fairness, respect, equality and dignity and in 7d which currently reads be facilitated if their choice is to be cared for at home – change this to saying be facilitated as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home.

Now we'll come back to putting that up on the screen for you in a moment when we're asking you to choose, but I just want to hear from the facilitators whether there is anything else that I haven't mentioned or that we haven't clarified and that was raised in the group, so I'll go in the opposite order this time around can I come to group nine first please?

Facilitator 9 - thank you Chair - Ursula has clarified most of what the members in room nine had comments on, there just was one question on 7d care for older persons and persons with disabilities should be facilitated if their choice is to be cared for at home the suggestion amongst the members was that this should be extended to say should be facilitated and resourced if their choice is to be cared from home.

Ursula Barry - We have incorporated that

Catherine Day – Yes, I think I didn't read that out but we're proposing to take that on board as well so that would take care of that thank you.

Facilitator 9 - Just on the point on 8b and the thought process behind having index linking and increasing, in the same, was that the index linking would at least give a protection or a benchmark position.

Catherine Day - Well actually, at the moment it would go negatively, it would mean a reduction because we have the consumer price index is falling and I don't think that's what anybody means to achieve. I think the word increase is better for that reason thank you. Thank you very much group 8 please

Facilitator 8 - Good afternoon chair we note that 3 points that you've raised were points from our room and the wording for 7d they had 'be facilitated if their choices be cared for at home as far as practical, so as much as possible', I think, it's the same thing so well that's everything from Room 8, Thank you Chair.

Catherine Day - Thank you and group 7

Facilitator 7 - Sorry Chair, some technical issues. I think everybody was happy with the contents of the questions and there was one slight comment in relation to one of the questions and that is 'Accessibility in the home should also be supported' but I think it was acknowledged that there is some kind of a provision for that already in there.

Catherine Day - I think so - Ok thanks very much group 7, group 6

Facilitator 6 - Thank you chair, so again, I think you've already answered this - 7d they wanted to add in at the home we asked for clarification on it and the questions has been sent but we also want to add in where possible and if practical just to the end of that sentence and under question 9 at the end of the sentence where it says reapply for support take out the wording when a person turns 18 and put in regardless of age and that's us thank you very much.

Catherine Day - Ok well I think the wording that we're going to propose as much as possible covers that requirement. Thank you. I have to say I don't really see the difference between or the significance of when a person turns 18 that's when all the services in the state change regardless of age is slightly different and I think the point we're trying to get at is when you move from being considered to be a child to being an adult that is the moment when everything falls apart and you have to reapply all the time. So I think we should stick to that, that was the pitch made very passionately by the father of the two adult girls that he has to look after, if you remember back to then.

Facilitator 6 - Ok I think it's where my group were talking about was that when person turns 65 when they come to pensionable age they then go into older person services and just maybe to keep it fairly seamless, that's why they didn't want a particular age number to be put in there but they were very mindful of that when somebody turns 18 that they continue the transfer to adult services seamlessly. So that's where that came from.

Catherine Day - I think in terms of conveying a clear message back to the powers that be it's important to highlight this gulf that seems to open up at age 18.

Facilitator 6 - Ok thank you

Catherine Day - Thank you, group 5 please

Facilitator 5 - Thank you group 5 were happy with the questions we did have some discussion around the same points as the other tables but that the words as fully as possible in part 7c kind of deals with any uncertainty that might exist around part 7d but the group were happy with the questions.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, group 4 please

Facilitator 4 - Catherine group 4, the citizens were happy with the questions, there was just a clarification sought around the word facilitated in 7d it was more a confirmation that it did include - an independent advocate and to make sure that it is people or person focused, maybe non-verbal disabilities and older persons.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much, group 3 please

Facilitator 3 – Yes, the citizens in group 3 were happy with question 7 and 9 in respect to question 8 this is on the assumption that the means testing currently in place would remain in place and also in question 8b a question arose as to why the time limit and they believe this was 2030 was removed from a previous version of this question - this is a question to the Secretariat?

Catherine Day - This is in relation to 8b home care

Facilitator 3 - Yes

Catherine Day - I wonder if there's a confusion between that and the previous question. We will try and get an answer on the chat line to that. Group 2 please?

Facilitator 2 - Thanks Chair 1 question under 7d was in terms of, if there would be any limitations regarding facilitation of an individual care at home so that was a question and in relation to suggestions in terms of wording one of the citizens made a suggestion, instead of the use of older people could the word seniors be used? Then 7a to add at the end of that, 'based on regular ongoing review' the point that was being made was that care wouldn't be based on a moment in time and should be ongoing. After 8a the inclusion of provide a statutory right for and the timely approval of payment for home care packages as well as nursing homes and then add an additional part c under 8a

of which the suggestion being - improve coordination between State Agencies and this should be seamless. So those were the four suggested changes from the citizens at group 2.

Catherine Day - Thank you very much - I think we've clarified back to you that the term older persons is what's widely used in legislation and internationally so I think we'll stick with the widely used term and the other point seemed to me to be descriptive and I can understand the sense behind them but I think now we're getting into too much prescription in the recommendation. I would say that we have to find a balance between having a clear recommendation and writing in so many sub-clauses that the punch of the message gets lost. I think we're taking up the main part of that in the changes that we're proposing. So Group 1 please.

Facilitator 1 - Thank you Chair the citizens in group 1 were broadly happy with the wording subject to the two changes that you mentioned in respect of 7c and 7d

Catherine Day – Ok! Was there one question there that came up we didn't answer?

Mary Clare O'Sullivan - The 2030 question

Catherine Day – Yes, The only reference in the previous recommendations 2030 was in relation to Childcare. We didn't have it in this set of questions. So it hasn't disappeared for any strange reason.

Ok so let's now go through questions 7, 8 & 9 for question 7a and 7b we are not proposing to make any changes so let's put the questions on the screen now please Lena.

Ok so these are the questions that we're going to poll you on now they are not changed from what you have already seen because we've explained centred and that was the only question that came up here so can we move to the poll now please Darren?

Ok so can you now say yes or no to having question 7a and 7b on the ballot paper in April please and again take your time and be sure what you're voting before you submit?

Ok so we have 87 people have voted, I think we have one or two people have had to leave us given the overrun which is understandable. I'll just wait a few seconds longer if somebody else wishes to vote.

Let's see are we at 89 now. Ok so we'll close the vote now at 89 and Darren will you show us the replies please?

Ok that's fairly convincing 98% for 7a which would be 87 people in favour 2 against and for 7b we have 94% in favour 6% against and that translates as 84 people in favour and five against okay so now we're going to come to doing 7c and 7d separately.

Ok so let's have 7c on the screen please Lena

Ok so here you can see the changed wording in c we're proposing to add the words based on principles of Fairness, Respect, Equality and Dignity

Ok so can we now come to the poll please Darren?

Ok, so here as before you have the choice between the revised wording and the original text please vote for one of them do you prefer the original text or the revised text and again think carefully before you press submit

Ok we have 87 votes in, I'm just taking last few seconds if there's anybody else still with us who wants to vote.

So we're going to close the vote with 88 votes can you show us the results Darren?

Ok, so that's very clear 19% for the original text 81% for the revised text that's 17 people for the original text and 71 for the revised one.

Then we'll come to the wording of 7d please Lena and here we have two changes to the original text so we would now add in the revised text be facilitated and the new words would be and resourced as much as possible if their choice is to be cared for at home, so Darren can we go to the poll please?

So same format again do you prefer the original text or the revised text

Ok we're up to 88 again if there are any last votes to come in please make them now

Ok, I think we'll close the poll on 88.

So here we have original text 25%, revised text 75% and that's 22 people for the original text and 66 for the revised so again a clear result and now Lena will come to question 8 please.

So here for the reasons that we explained about not changing the word increasing because we have a hope of getting it increased – the word indexing would actually currently mean a reduction - we're proposing to leave the original text as it is so can we please come to the poll now Darren?

Ok, so here we're asking you to vote together on 8a and 8b again be careful which box you click and then press submit please.

Ok we have 85 replies in at the moment so if there's a few people still making up their minds you have a little bit of time to complete the vote please.

Ok we have 86 votes in so I think we'll close the poll on that, because i'm not sure how many people have had to leave us? So Darren can you show us the results please? Oh that's very clear we have a 100% for 8a which is obviously 86 people and we have 98% for 8b which is 84 people and 2 people against.

I see Liam O'Reilly saying it's our first landslide okay that's an historic moment and now we come to question 9 please Lena if we could put that on the screen?

Ok, so this one has not changed either can I ask you whether you agree or disagree that this question should go on the ballot paper in April, so Darren can we have the poll please?

Ok we have 87 votes in, I think we will close the poll at that! Do you agree question 9 should be on the ballot paper 97% in favour 3% against that means 84 in favour and 3 people against.

Now you think you might be finished voting now but we have one more question to take. I think that again we found the right way to work together and to be able to take your input on board and to hopefully answer the questions that you have. So I would like because the members ownership is so important for all of this to be really the valid view of you all. I'd like to come back to the start of the afternoon and I'm going to take a poll now on whether you want to revisit the wording of questions 1 - 4 or whether overall you're happy with the outcome as you have already indicated earlier today. So Lena could you put the slide up please?

I think this is the only way of doing it, to test the mood of the Assembly each time and then to go with the majority so if we could look at the slide we have put up on the screen now.

Ok, so the question that we would ask you, I think is the clearest way of phrasing it! Do you want to return to the wording of questions 1- 4 at our next meeting or do you want today's agreed wording to go on the ballot paper?

So you'll have a choice of clicking between return to the wording at the next meeting or today's agreed wording to go on the ballot paper and Darren can you put the poll up now please okay so here you have a choice of coming back to the next meeting to look at questions 1 - 4 again or go ahead with what was agreed today so take your time think about it and then click one or the other and then press submit please.

Ok so we have 86 votes in so if there's anybody still there who hasn't voted, I think it's important that you express your opinion now please we'll give you a few more seconds.

Ok so we're going to close the poll on the basis of 86 responses, Darren can you show us the results please? Ok so return to wording at the next meeting 35% agree and stick with what we agreed today 65% and that is 30 people want to go back but 56 want to go ahead.

So I think we have to follow the majority and we will consider the wording of the ballot papers 1 – 4 now closed. If you can bear with me for just a few more minutes I have a couple of other announcements to make. First of all let me thank you all for another excellent day's work, we now have two sets of ballot papers ready for voting on in April the one on the Constitution and the one on Care.

You could see today that it is going to be a little bit more complicated and time consuming because we need to go from breakout groups into plenary look at revised wording and go back again but I think now that we have found a good way to work and we're already working on preparing the draft ballot papers for the next time. We will meet on the 17th and 18th of April again and there's a lot to go through so we've decided to break them into 2 bits of work.

First of all we will send you some draft recommendations on the topics of Leadership, Gender, Norms and Stereotypes and then some cross-cutting recommendations on Equality that would be one block of work.

The second block of work would deal with Work & Social Protection and Gender-based Violence so you'll be getting two packages from us. Our plan is to send you the first draft ballot paper for your feedback on the 19th of March. So just following St Patrick's Day and we'll give you a deadline to get this back to us with your comments and suggestions by the 23rd of March.

You don't need to write all this down we'll send it to you in writing again can I encourage the maximum number of replies, like the last time, it really does help to get the recommendations into reasonably good shape for our final meetings. The more that you contribute to the discussion the better. Then the second ballot paper you will get on the 26th of March with the deadline of the 30th of March and both times we will be using survey monkey to get your comments on that. So when we get your comments back we will revise both sets of ballot papers on the basis of your replies and then we'll send them back to you on the 11th of April and that means that you would have one week before we meet again on the 17th and 18th of April.

Now I know this might seem like a lot of extra work but it really is the final push as we're getting very close to the end of the process now and we won't be sending you any new presentations by video but we will be sending you a couple more videos, one will be on the voting system.

I'm very pleased to say now that we have identified a sound, high quality e-voting system so you will not be voting by Zoom you will be voting by a much more secure system and we will be sending you a video presentation on that and we'll also organize a trial run so that you feel comfortable with how you're actually going to vote when the time comes.

We'll send you the details on that very shortly, the other video, I will do like last time, when we have the revised ballot papers I will do a ballot paper video to explain how we have changed them from the drafts you will have received and particularly why we have taken some comments on board and maybe why we haven't taken some others on board.

So finally, I want to just end this session today and apologize for the fact that it went on a bit longer, but I think it was a productive use of the extra time, I'm glad to say that most of you have stuck with it and I really appreciate that.

I want to thank you for your continued commitment and all the hard work, time and energy that you're putting into this process, it may be hard to believe but we're nearly there, we're nearly at the at the finishing line, one last push on the 17th and 18th of April and we'll be there.

I think we are not only getting there but also agreeing very good recommendations and I hope they will be widely taken up. The closing ceremony that we're proposing now, I think would give more impact to our recommendations than if we're going to be announcing them on a Sunday afternoon. So it only remains for me to thank you all very much for the time and effort you're putting into it for sticking with us today for helping us to find the right way forward.

I'd like to wish you all a very happy St Patrick's Day and we'll see you again on the 17th and 18th of April. Have a good weekend and we'll be in touch electronically and we'll see you again in a month's time.

Thank you so much.