Early Years – the organisation for young children

Invitation to Tender for MIS Dashboard

April 2026

BACKGROUND

Early Years – the organisation for young children (Early Years) is the largest organisation in Northern Ireland for young children. It is a non-profit making organisation which has been working since 1965 to promote high quality childcare for children aged 0-12 and their families. Early Years is a membership-based organisation, a registered charity, a company limited by guarantee and is governed by a Board of Directors.

Early Years' Values and Behaviours

Early Years is committed to providing an exceptional service to our members and service users. Our values serve not only to define what it looks like to work in Early Years but also demonstrate a high respect culture for all those in this community – children and their parents and carers, members, partners and other users of our services. Behaviours are critical factors that characterise how we work together. These will distinguish what really makes working at Early Years 'distinctive'. We all need support to ensure we have the necessary skills and knowledge to undertake our roles effectively, but the behaviours go beyond this to communicate the 'Early Years way of working'.

Our Mission

To lead and innovate to ensure high quality shared early education and care services that support resilience for children, families and communities.

Our Vision

- Children are strong, competent and visible in their communities
- Children are physically and emotionally healthy
- Children are eager and able to learn
- Children are respectful of difference
- Children grow up in a peaceful, prosperous and shared region

Our Values

- Childhood - in its own right
- Listening to children – and those who care for them
- A strong voice for children
- Play, fun and creativity
- Parents as first educators
- Participation of children and families
- Community involvement and development

- Partnership
- Inclusion and diversity
- Excellence and evidence-based innovation
- Effective stewardship and governance
- A professional, committed and recognised workforce
- Valuing staff, members and their commitment

OUR REQUIREMENTS

The purpose of this specification is to develop a single organisational dashboard that will:

a) Build upon the existing Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme (NICSS) Dashboard and develop additional reporting functionality to support NICSS Management Information Analysis.
b) Define and incorporate the requirements for a new automated reporting system that will enable the organisation to collect, validate, analyse and report key organisational performance data for 2026/27.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

a) Northern Ireland Childcare Subsidy Scheme (NICSS)

Early Years were contracted in August 2024 to develop and implement a solution for the Department of Education to provide financial support to parents of children aged 0-4. Part of this work involved the design and implementation of a new software solution to manage payments for up to 24,000 children, which are submitted monthly from over 1,900 active providers. To date, over 450,000 claims have been submitted and processed, with over £25million in subsidy funding dispersed.

In April 2025, the Department of Education required a reporting solution that could be used to inform current programme delivery and to support decision making for future activities. The implementation of Phase 1 of the NICSS dashboard included:

Headline indicators:

1. Number of providers registered
2. Number of providers with approved claims
3. Number of children registered
4. Number of children with approved claims
5. Number of households registered
6. Number of households with approved claims

7. Number of claims approved
8. Sum of subsidy payments approved
9. Sum of subsidy payments paid out
10. % of claims below the cap

Each indicator has been broken down by month, constituency and provider type.

Additionally, the dashboard also displayed:

- Children registered for the NICSS, by age
- Providers registered by provider type
- Children registered by provider type
- Children registered by constituency area
- Providers registered by constituency area
- Sum of subsidy payments approved, by constituency area
- Average cost of childcare (per child) for parents using the NICSS, by provider type (gross and net of NICSS)
- Average cost of childcare (per household) for parents using the NICSS, by provider type (gross and net of NICSS)
- Distribution of childcare costs (per child) (gross and net of NICSS)
- Distribution of childcare costs (per household) (gross and net of NICSS)
- Claims below the cap (%), by provider type
- Distribution of daily and monthly rates.
- Average cost of provision by constituency
- Children in more than one setting
- Households who have more than one child
- A map that shows the providers across NI

For Phase 2 dashboard development, below are further areas that we would wish to consider:

- Average cost of childcare by provider type
- Filter for 0-4 and School Age Children
- Identification of more than one provider per household
- Provider Fee analysis
- Improvement in the map functionality
- Change to the look and feel around the current views

We will work closely with our funder (The Department of Education) to further develop out phase 2 of the dashboard.

The data used to develop these reports is made available biweekly. The dashboard is currently active and hosted on Azure. All the underlying work, including the SQL queries and data structures, can be reused and will be made available to the successful tenderer. The queries are written in Parquet format, which is open-source and widely supported, allowing the tenderer to build upon this, using their preferred tools or frameworks.

b) Early Years

The current balanced scorecard template (current largely spreadsheet-based) contains a wide range of measures spread across four performance domains: Outcome Focused, Advocacy, Governance, and Pedagogy & People. Measures include numeric KPIs, milestone tracking, status-based delivery reporting, narrative commentary, area-based performance reporting, and annual target monitoring. The new system must replace the balanced scorecard process with a more reliable, timely and auditable solution. The new system must support this mixed reporting model, while reducing manual handling, duplication, and the risk of inconsistent reporting.

- Provide a single source of truth for organisational performance data.
- Automate routine data collection, KPI calculation, and dashboard production wherever possible.
- Support quarterly balanced scorecard reporting to senior management and Board level.
- Enable programme, department and area leads to update progress, narrative and evidence in a controlled way, with full audit trails and version control.
- Improve data quality, auditability, transparency and timeliness.
- Allow EYO to report consistently across organisation-wide activity and place-based direct delivery including Risk and Compliance reporting e.g. risk register, safeguarding reports, Health and Safety, accident & incident and data breach.

The system must support the full reporting cycle from target set-up, through to quarterly review and annual performance summary. It must accommodate the following types of data currently evidenced within the balanced scorecard:

- Corporate objectives, initiatives, actions and KPIs.
- Quarterly actuals against annual targets.
- Progress statuses such as Active, Under Review, Completed and Not Commenced.
- Narrative updates and contextual commentary.
- Percentage-of-target calculations and annual cumulative performance.
- Area or programme level breakdowns, particularly for direct services.

- Evidence attachments or links supporting reported progress.

SPECIFICATION

The purpose of this specification is to develop a single organisational Management Information Dashboard that will incorporate all key organisational functions into a single access controlled dashboard. This work will include:

• **Data Review, Collection & Integration:**

o Review, import, cleanse, and integrate required datasets.
o Integration of existing datasets.
o Accurately aggregate data for the key headline indicators.

• **Report Development:**

o Develop a total of 45 reports, segmented as follows:
30 Simple Reports: Covering straightforward aggregations and visualisations.
15 Moderate Complexity Reports: Including detailed breakdowns, comparative analyses and API integration.
Suppliers should propose the most efficient integration model available. The preferred approach is to automate routine feeds from existing systems where reliable source data exists, while allowing manual completion of narrative and milestone fields.

- Finance system(s), including Sage 200 or any successor platform, for budget, management account and debtor/creditor-related metrics.
- HR and payroll systems, including Natural HR, Moorepay or successors, for workforce, absence, training completion and diversity metrics.
- CRM or membership systems for member numbers, participation, events, applications and related engagement metrics.
- Learning, training or event booking platforms for course delivery and participant numbers.
- IT service desk / cyber / device management tools where operational ICT measures are to be automated.
- Microsoft 365 or equivalent for secure authentication, workflow notifications and document links.

• **Visualisation & Analysis:**

o Review and remodel existing platform to meet changing client requirements
o Create dynamic charts, tables, and graphs for key indicators.
o Provide both numerical and percentage-based metrics, RAG status, trends variance and KPI trajectories

- **GIS Tool Implementation:**
  - o Enhancements of existing GIS tool to map key data indicators.
  - o Ensure the tool is scalable for future integration of additional data components.
  - o Open-source Leaflet map one-level drill-down.
- **Quality Assurance & Testing**
  - o Conduct User Acceptance Testing (UAT) to verify data accuracy and functionality.
  - o Agree formal report signoff process following iterative development processes.
- **Security & Compliance Testing**
  - o Verification of permissions, encryption, evidence handling and audit logs.
  - o Compliance with organisational data governance and retention policies.

In addition to above, the solution should also offer the following:

User defined roles

- System Administrator – manages structures, users, workflows and reporting periods.
- KPI Owner / Data Contributor – enters data, commentary and evidence for allocated KPIs.
- Manager / Reviewer – reviews submissions, challenges data and approves returns.
- Executive / SMT User – views dashboards, consolidated reports and exceptions.
- Board / Read-only User/ External Users – accesses agreed reports and dashboards without edit rights.
- Creation of a user guide.

Non-functional requirements

- The system must be secure, role-based and compliant with UK GDPR and appropriate cyber security standards.
- It must be cloud-based or otherwise accessible without reliance on local spreadsheet files.
- It must provide a clear audit trail and version history.
- It must be easy to use for non-technical staff across multiple departments and programmes.
- It must perform reliably during peak quarterly reporting periods.

- It must support export and retention of data in non-proprietary formats.
- It should be accessible on standard browsers and align with recognised accessibility good practice.

Hosting and Licencing

- The platform should be hosted using a cloud-based solution – with costs incorporated for an initial 15 months of hosting and licensing upon project commencement.

TENDER PERIOD

The tender contract will be awarded on or before **12th June 2026**, with completion no later than **1st October 2026**.

TENDER INFORMATION REQUIRED

Tenders should include information under each of the separate headings numbered 1 to 4:

1. **Organisation Details** – including the structure, size and capacity to undertake the work specified. Details of the project lead, including qualifications and experience should be provided.
2. **Organisational Track Record** – the tender response should include a description of at least two projects that are similar in scope and scale. Early Years may wish to contact the clients where those projects were implemented, so the bid should also include the names and contact details of a senior person in the client business. (Early Years will only contact referees where the other elements of the bid have met criteria.)
3. **Delivery Approach** – the tender response should outline the approach to ensuring delivery of all elements within the "SPECIFICATION" section.

   Early Years has not prescribed how the various plans and tools should be developed. Early Years will identify a small number of key staff to participate in a working group to engage with the successful tenderer to ensure that appropriate feedback is provided as delivery on the contract progresses, and to provide information on business processes to inform the development of procedures and plans. It is up to the tenderer to set out the steps and iterative processes that will be needed in their approach to deliver on the contract.

4. **Tender Price** – The total fee should be quoted inclusive of VAT. Any ancillary costs, including travel, accommodation etc, should be included in the total price. If there is a choice between face-to-face engagement and online engagement both pricing options may be included.

   As an indication, Early Years has an indicative budget of £55,000 for completion of this work.

   NB: Tender proposals should be a maximum of 10 A4 pages, using 1.5-line spacing and size 12 font.

Please ensure that you provide information on each area requested in a clear and concise manner to ensure that this can be reviewed and scored in line with the scoring matrix below.

Queries on the tender specification should be sent by email to tenders@early-years.org. Any queries should be submitted by **Wednesday 13th May at 12 noon GMT**.

Please use Reference: **EY101** when emailing with regards to this tender.

TENDER SUBMISSION

Tender proposals should be submitted by email by **5 pm GMT** on **Wednesday 27th May 2026** to tenders@early-years.org.

Tenders received after the closing date will not be considered.

TENDER EVALUATION

A tender panel will score submitted tenders using the following criteria:

Organisation details & capacity	15%
Organisational Track Record	15%
Approach to delivery of all components	40%
Clear fee structure & Value for Money	30%

The successful organisation will be contacted at the end of the process.