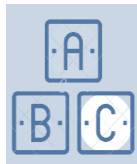


## Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development Community of Practice Meeting Highlights 03 May 2022

### SCENE SETTING



Thandeka Rantsi, ECD Project Manager at BRIDGE welcomed participants to the first hybrid Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development (ECD) Community of Practice (CoP) on behalf of BRIDGE and Penreach. The session covered a presentation from Tshepo Mantje a representative from the Real Reform for ECD Campaign which advocates for the support of municipalities in the sector, a presentation from Esther Sithole, programme manager (Penreach) on Parental Involvement and feedback from practitioners on the application of the BRIDGE ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool.



### PRESENTATIONS: Tshepo Mantje - Real Reform for ECD Campaign

Click [here](#) to view Tshepo's presentation

Tshepo Mantje, Rights for ECD Coordinator representing the Real Reform for ECD Campaign presented on how the ECD sector could better gain support from municipalities to move the sector forward.

The Real Reform Campaign for ECD was formed in 2020 in response to the poorly drafted Children's Amendment Bill. The sector reacted by bringing together multiple stakeholders, e.g. NGOs, academics, legal professionals and ECD practitioners to create the Real Reform for ECD which is a broad-based alliance, made up of multiple organisations forming a steering committee supported by over 200 organisations. Real Reform strives for an enabling legal, policy and regulatory environment for the provision and expansion of ECD services.

#### **Real Reform #MakeLocalGovernmentWorkForECD Campaign:**

The campaign is currently focused on #MakeLocalGovernmentWorkForECD which is about mobilising communities, ECD forums and caregivers to request their ward councillors to include ECD in their Integrated Development Plans (IDPs). The short term goal of the campaign is to empower and support ECD practitioners to help local government better understand:

- the importance of ECD to human development;
- the challenges experienced by the sector and;
- to create champions for ECD in local government.

The long term goal is for municipalities to see the importance of local government policies for the functioning of ECD. When working with ECD centres and local government, Real Reform has found that there is a lack of understanding of what ECD is. Through reeducating people on the importance of ECD and challenges that exist in realising full ECD services, RealReform aims to 'turn' people into advocates of the needs of the sector.

## Why is Real Reform saying local government is the one that will help in providing for ECD?

The constitution gives local government the legislative power to pass legislation and policy relating to child care facilities. In other words, local government does not have to wait for national DBE or DSD to create bylaws that speak to ECD. Knowing this information is what empowers the ECD sector to go to local government and advocate for real change based on municipal competencies.

The NIECDP 2015 puts the responsibility of the sector on local government:

### The Role of Local Government in Providing for Early Childhood Development?

The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy says:

**"Local municipalities must participate in the planning of early childhood development services."**

- They are responsible for **supporting childcare facilities to meet minimum infrastructural health and safety standards;**
- development of **new infrastructure** for ECD services;
- And **identification of available infrastructure** that may be used for the expansion of early learning services and programmes in areas of need.



The policy also states that where there is capacity, the DSD now moved over to DBE, may assign responsibility to local governments to provide (register, regulate and deliver) ECD programmes and services. It goes on to say district, local and metro municipalities are required to establish coordinating structures to support the planning, coordination and monitoring of ECD.

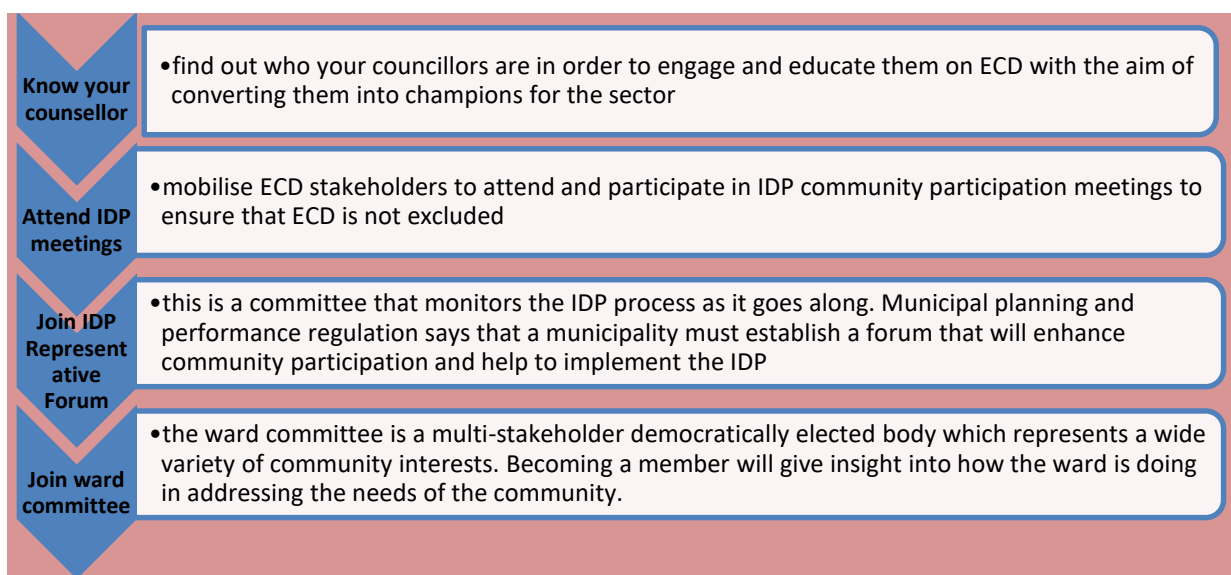
## What is the Integrated Development plan?

The municipal systems act, which is the law that regulates how the municipality works, says that when new municipalities are elected, they have to develop what we call the 'Integrated Development Plan (IDP)'. It is developed by every municipality in the country within their first year or a few months into their term of office. This plan will be what the local government works from in the 5 years of their term in office. IDPs focus on issues in the community and how to better develop it by taking into consideration existing conditions, problems and resources available. The IDP is in essence a tool that the local municipality uses to address development within the community.

### Why is the IDP important?

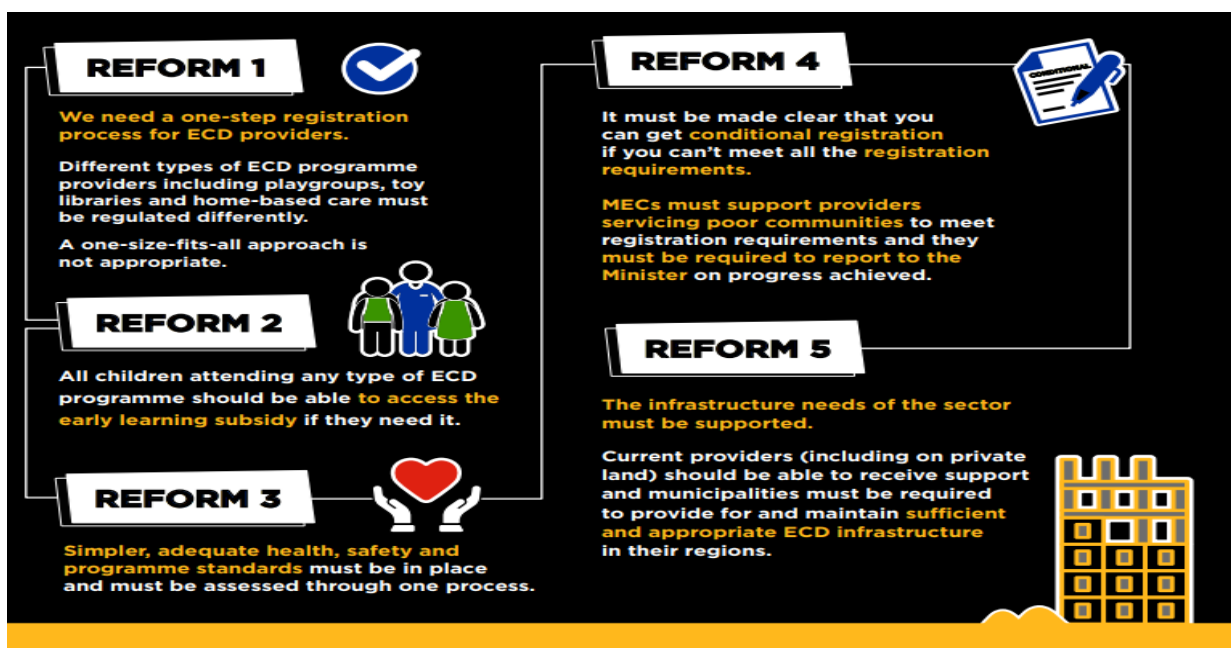
- helps to speed up delivery and coordination between local, provincial and national government;
- It helps attract additional funding like private funders, which can only happen if ECD is covered in the IDP; and
- It strengthens democracy by giving a voice to people within the community on how local government should run.

## How can the ECD sector get involved in the IDP process and practitioners engage directly with local government?



## 5 key opportunities to reform ECD

As a part of the campaign, Real Reform for ECD is calling on DBE to focus on 5 key opportunities within the first 1000 days of the function shift. The first 1000 days have been picked symbolically for what they mean to ECD. This is when the most growth in a child's life happens cognitively and physically. It is a unique and invaluable window of opportunity to ensure both the child's optimal development and a country's positive trajectory.

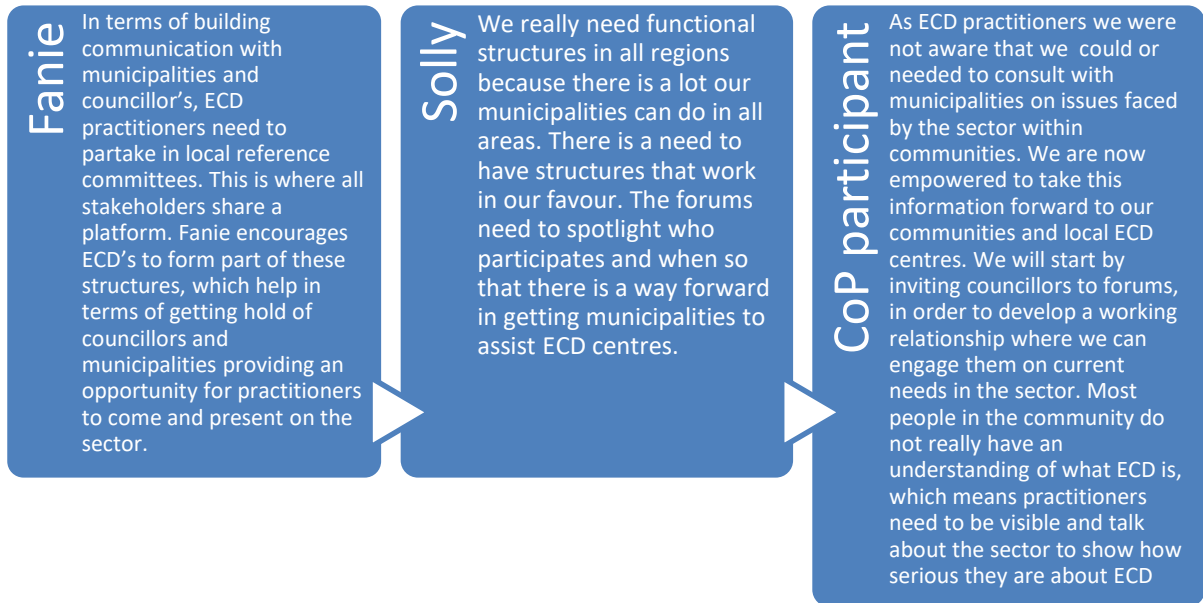


For support and more information contact Tshepo Mantje on 071 233 0744 or email him at [tshepo@equalitycollective.org.za](mailto:tshepo@equalitycollective.org.za)

## Questions & answers

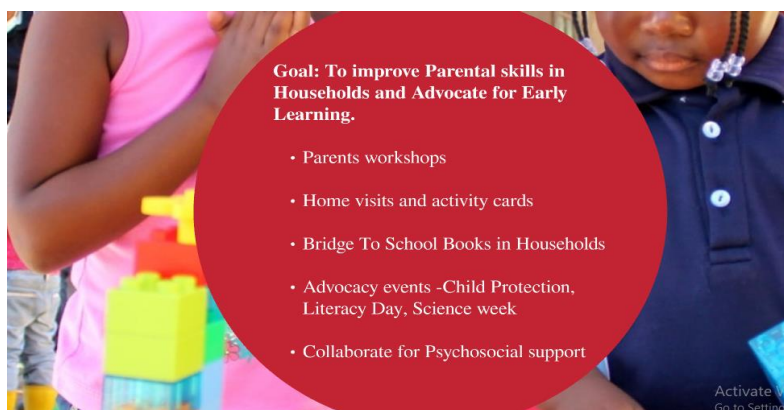
Q	A
Is it possible to inform councillors through departmental structures about meetings that ECD practitioners would like to have with them?	The key or goal is to get your voice heard and to forge a relationship. If you have access through a particular person then they can become your way in. If you do not have a way in, then your local councillor is your first point of contact. Local councillors by law are put in place so that each individual in the community has access to government. Practitioners can use their own local forum to strengthen their voices when engaging local government.
What ideas can you give to help us motivate and engage councillors to help us with ECD?	Keep inviting them and keep track of all the invitations sent, which can be used as evidence later or as direct invitations to the municipal manager/mayor's office where you would present all invitations accumulated that were not honoured. Another way is finding out when your ward councillor's meetings actually are, these are made up of different people in the community and chaired by the local councillor. It is important to have an ECD representative or stakeholder present during the meetings. Always keep going back and keeping records.
	One strong way in which ECD practitioners can strengthen their engagement and communication with local communities is through local ECD forums. When you are part of a forum your voice is so much louder

## Comments



## Esther Sithole: Penreach Good Parenting Programme Overview

Esther Sithole, ECD supportive systems programme manager, took participants through a parental involvement programme. Through the programme, Penreach would like to see communities becoming more aware of the importance of ECD centres and more parental involvement in the lives of children at an early stage.



Children develop much better when there is support from parents. Ever since the global COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an emphasis on parental involvement, to ensure that parents have the necessary skills and knowledge to support their children at home.

### Programme Successes

- Child protection event with more than 200 parents in attendance

- Collaboration with government departments like SAPS, DSD and DBE on parental involvement activities e.g. reinforcing the importance for child protection and early childhood learning during child protection event
- Reached 500 parents during home visits with the use of change agents and YES interns
- Toy library programmes where children access toys through 93 parents working as volunteers and running reading clubs
- Due to Covid-19, training parents moved virtually via Google meets, as a result training 100 parents in one go

### Challenges

- Lack of nutrition in homes. Penreach has partnered with the Lunchbox Fund and Do More Foundation to aid in the provision of nutritious meals in play groups and ECD centres.
- Centre managers concerned about parents not attending meetings.
- Domestic issues at home - received assistance from Lifeline South Africa

### Questions & answers

Q	A
What are the challenges that centre managers are experiencing in relation to parental involvement, what are the most pressing issues in terms of the education of their children?	Parents do not understand what ECD programmes are there to do. It seems parents are taking ECD programmes for granted which in turn makes it difficult to get parents to understand that ECD centres are not places where children go to play and sleep, but that there are programmes in place, which require them to reinforce at home.
What else can be done for parents to understand the value of ECD holistically and what it is about (best practices)?	Save the Children offers a programme in communities which teaches parents about the value of ECD and how to learn through play.
	It might help to take parents through the daily programme and early learning assessments, in that way parents can slowly start to realise that children do not just come and sleep at the centres.
	Penreach has a running slot that will end in November on Voice of Hope FM (a gospel radio station in Mpumalanga, Mbombela). The slot talks through various topics in ECD with the aim of educating parents on the value of ECD



## APPLICATION OF THE ECD QUALITY REFLECTION TOOL

The ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool (QRT) is a self-reflection tool aimed at helping practitioners explore different aspects of quality in ECD in relation to their own practice. The tool is organised into four dimensions of quality linked to a set of questions for each dimension. It's intended use is through a ring binder file so that practitioners can add in their own pages of writing as required. The Tool can be downloaded and freely used and adapted accordingly, with acknowledgement to BRIDGE. Click [here](#) to access the toolkit.

An ECD practitioner gave feedback on the tool citing that she enjoys the 'Teaching and Learning' part of the tool as it helps her improve on elements such as singing, dancing and playing with children. She experiences difficulty when it comes to the reflections because the tool is written in English. This creates gaps in understanding as she misses a lot of information and reflection questions. She would be more comfortable if it were in Siswati, however Penreach is providing assistance where they fall short as practitioners, correcting and giving solutions.

More practitioners requested access to the QRT so they could reflect on their practices as centres and local ECD forums in order evaluate the impact of what they are doing.

Thandeka thanked Sasol and Penreach for their assistance in helping create and disseminate the toolkit.



## UPDATES AND EVENT ANNOUNCEMENTS BY CoP PARTICIPANTS

- Save the Children in partnership with forums and ECD centres in Pienaar (Mpumalanga) will be hosting a World Play Day celebration (Saturday - 28 May 2022) where different games will be played with children in the community, promoting learning through play. Anybody is welcome to join.
- Penreach will also be hosting a celebration for World Play Day on Thursday 26 May 2022 at their playgrounds as the venue for play day with the aim of sharing the importance of play.



## CLOSE OUT

Thandeka closed off the meeting by thanking ECD centre managers for honouring the invite and interacting during the discussions on important topics in ECD. These conversations will help propel government forward by sharing information and good working practice on how ECD provisioning can be achieved in the Mpumalanga province.

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub, as are any other specific knowledge products relevant to ECD. [Here](#) is the link to this.