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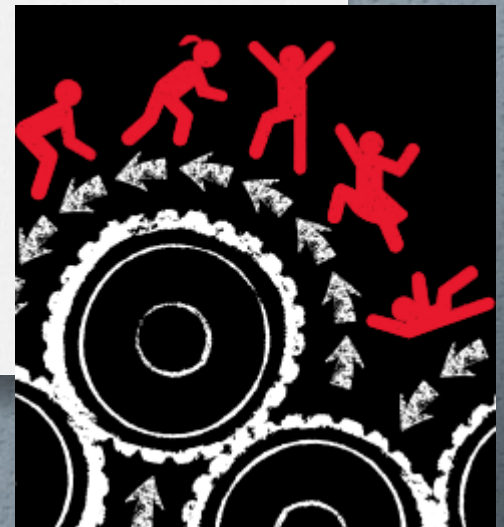
# **From cradle to old age: the precarious working conditions of Early Year's Educators, Third level and Home Care workers in Ireland**

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# Social implications of precarious work project

- PI: James Wickham and researchers: Sinead Pembroke, Alicja Bobek
- Joint project of FEPS (Federation of European Progressive Studies) and TASC.
- Interviewing people aged 18-40 about the implications working on a fixed term, part-time no guaranteed hours and self employed basis on their lives (e.g. housing, relationships, health, financial)



# Childcare sector

- o Mostly female
- o Minimum qualification of FETAC level 5
- o The average rate of pay is 10.27 per hour
- o Most are paid for 15 hours per week for 38 weeks
- o Therefore, many qualified workers on minimum wage
- o 4,500 providers; one third are community providers and two thirds are private



## Unpaid work

“At the end of the year we have to make these books, and I remember one year, my manager told us to write down all the hours that we spent on these books. So, at the end of it I had over 100 hours on these books, and my manager asked us to give the hours to her. And I gave her mine, and she said, I can’t pay for all of that. So she gave me 40 of those over 100 hours. And, she said, you shouldn’t have put that much work in, you’re too much of a perfectionist; that’s what she said.”



## Financial implications

“I used to be on the pill but you have to go back every 6 months to see your doctor again, which is 60 quid. So I’ve come off that. That’s since I started part-time, because it was always, really do I have to pay 60 quid to have a 15 minute conversation”

“I’m so lucky I have my husband; if I was single I don’t even know if I could afford rent, never mind a mortgage! I don’t know how – like my colleague, used to be scraping money together every week, and she was trying to save up to do teaching, which she’s doing at the moment. The only reason she could do it is she moved back home and she’s living with her mam. So she doesn’t have to pay rent.”

# Third level sector

- Tends to be a mixture between males and females
- Minimum qualification of a Masters degree
- However precarity is gendered (Courtois&O'Keefe2015)
- Traditionally associated with well-paid and secure contracts, (although there was also a small percentage of precarious work in the sector)
- Fixed term contracts, and part-time irregular hour contracts on the rise
- There are now teaching only and research only contracts





## Unpaid work

“As a PhD student, you have to do teaching hours if you’re on the scholarship. So 120 hours teaching here, free of charge, supervising undergraduate students from different departments, again free of charge. And there were other admin responsibilities you’re given along with teaching. So you’re not just going along and standing up in front of a class and teaching, you have to mark exam papers, you have to respond to student emails. All this you don’t get paid for because it’s hourly. It went from 16,000 annually to 8,000 annually (that was the one I was on), I think now its 6,000 annually or less”.

## Forced emigration, financial implications and inability to plan for the future

“The main thing I worry about is, I don't know what the chances are of either me or my partner getting a permanent job in Ireland between now and then. So, even though we're probably at a stage in our life where we wouldn't want to move away, if we moved away now because one of us got a permanent job overseas, we'd probably stay there. And I don't think either of us particularly wants to because of our family and friends and we're quite settled here.”

“So I think that, not knowing where we're going to be because we don't know whether we're going to get a job, and also not knowing about having a salary that we could maybe think about buying a house, and also the worry of rent going up.”



# Homecare sector

- o Mostly **female**
- o Minimum qualification of **FETAC Level 5**
- o Rate of pay averages at **10.50** per hour
- o **No guaranteed hours** (if-and-when contracts) in private sector
- o Sector split in 3: public, voluntary and private – homecare workers **aspire to work in public sector** (better working conditions and secure hours)



### Not knowing hours from week to week

“In the private sector, again it’s the hours –I don’t know what I’m working next week. They don’t seem to have protocols in place where rosters are stood by. So say for example, I’m used to working 30 hours I have Mrs Doyle and I know that I do an overnight 4 nights a week with Mrs Doyle, the thing is that for some bizarre reason, I would be due to have a roster on Friday; I might get the roster on the Thursday night, and I might now have Mrs Doyle but I might have another 3 clients as well because somebody else is gone sick.” (Orlagh Fawl, SIPTU).



## Fear

It's got to do with this push down, keeping them down, it isn't exclusive to any particular category or sex or nationality; it's years of conditioning, **they have been conditioned this way**. And how they are kept that way is 2 things: the **relationship with the client is preyed upon**; these people form emotional bonds to their clients, they grieve when that person passes. And "oh Jesus you're not available to do that, **we don't know what hours we have for you next week**". Now, if you're on 10 euro an hour or 11 euro an hour and you're trying to feed a family or you have other responsibilities, by Jesus you're going to try; you are **dependent on your site manager for your hours**. And they are continuing to provide this invaluable service in our economy out of the fact that they're generally very, very good human beings who generally want to do this work" (Orlagh Fawl, SIPTU).

# How is policy driving precarity in childcare?

- State investment into the sector is low by European standards; 0.2% of GDP funds childcare whereas the European average is 0.8%.
- State funding comes through the ECCE scheme
- Fixed term contract for 38 weeks, working part-time 15 hours per week (3 hours per day).
- Community providers were traditionally funded by the childcare subvention scheme (full-time, permanent positions with much higher rates of pay).



# How is policy driving precarity in third level?

- o The Department of Education through the HEA (Higher Education Authority) is the paymaster.
- o Hiring restrictions on employing permanent staff.
- o Reduced State funding to third level.
- o Hired all academic researchers on a fixed term basis – definition of a postdoctoral researcher is accepted as “still in training”.
- o Refused to extend any benefits recommended by Cushe Report to researchers.
- o Becoming over reliant on research funding – only covers a project with a finite objective.

# How is policy driving precarity in homecare

- When a person needs home help, they are allocated a care package.
- This is being changed to care specific packages – the clients family can decide, allowing the private sector access to hours that were naturally allocated to public and voluntary sectors.



# Concluding remarks

- Solutions to improving security and low wages in these sectors lies with the government.
- For childcare they already provided a subvention scheme to community childcare crèches.
- In third level the Department of Education is the paymaster – increase funding back to third level sector, stop the reliance on private funding.
- In homecare – don't divert public money to private homecare companies through homecare packages.