

26<sup>th</sup> June 2020

**Re: COVID -19 inspections**

Dear Provider,

As we enter the third phase of the Government's Roadmap for Reopening Society & Business and as services are finalising preparations to re-open, I am writing to advise you how the Early Years Inspectorate will be approaching regulatory inspections.

I would like to start by acknowledging the challenges facing the sector following the uncertainty of recent months. Our role as a regulatory agency is to protect children by working with providers to raise compliance and to enforce regulations in the small minority of services that neglect their responsibilities and put children at risk. Whilst inspections can be challenging, we strive always to fulfil our regulatory responsibility in a fair, proportionate and responsive manner and limit additional demands to the greatest extent possible. To achieve this, we have examined our inspection process and have made a considerable number of temporary changes that will serve to protect the health and safety of children, early years staff and our inspectorate as the pandemic continues.

In July, August and September this year our inspections will be focused COVID-19 inspections. The details of how the inspections will take place and the regulations to be examined are outlined in the attached documents:

- **Tusla Early Years Inspectorate COVID-19 Inspection Tool,**
- **Tusla Early Years COVID-19 inspection protocol for registered providers,**
- **Pre-Inspection Documentation Request.**

All planned inspections will be announced and scheduled with the registered provider. In a very small number of cases, it may be necessary to carry out unplanned inspections where significant or urgent concerns are raised about a service (e.g. unsolicited information, significant non-compliance not addressed). The Early Years Inspectorate is committed to adherence to public health guidance in the discharge of our duties and the inspection process has been amended to minimise the amount of time that inspectors spend in the service. Onsite activity will commence from the 13<sup>th</sup> of July.

To support your service reopening we published a suite of guidance and opened a dedicated COVID-19 helpline on the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, details are available on our website at the following

link:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/pre-school-services/>

We look forward to working with you and we will keep under review the implementation of these new inspections and processes over the summer months. I wish you every success as you resume your important role nurturing and caring for our nation's early years children.

Yours sincerely,



Eibhlin O'Leary

**Head of Inspection and Assessment**

**Children's Service Regulation**