



Offaly County Childcare Committee Ltd



Supporting Quality Childcare provision in County Offaly

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Early Year's Service Providers Newsletter

Welcome to Issue Two of the Newsletter for 2015. The information in this newsletter is an attempt to keep the sector in Offaly informed and up to date. I hope you enjoy reading it and if you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the office.

Aistear and Síolta Practice Guide

The long awaited Aistear and Síolta Practice Guide went live on 12th March 2015. It draws together the frameworks in a practical way and offers suggestions, ideas and examples of how they can be used to develop a curriculum that supports children to enjoy and progress in their early learning and development. The guide aims to support practitioners in developing and providing an emergent and inquiry based curriculum that will motivate, engage and appropriately challenge all children as learners and enable them to progress in their individual learning journeys.

The Practice Guide includes Curriculum Foundations and six inter-connected Curriculum Pillars as follows: -

1. Building Partnerships with Parents
2. Creating & Using the Learning Environment
3. Learning through Play
4. Nurturing and Extending Interactions
5. Planning and Assessing using Aistear's Themes
6. Supporting Transitions

The guide is a self evaluation tool. It is advised that Practitioners work on the four elements of Curriculum Foundations before undertaking work on Curriculum Pillars. The elements provide focus for an exploration of the factors, values and principles that significantly impact on and shape the curriculum, which practitioners develop and provide for the children in their setting. There are support materials and activities to complete within each of the four elements and within the curriculum pillars. For further information, you can access the Practice Guide via the following internet link:

<http://www.ncca.ie/en/Practice-Guide/>

Public Consultation on Early Years Education Qualifications

The Minister for Education & Skills launched a public consultation on early years education, as part of a review of early years qualifications. The public consultation consists of specific surveys for childcare practitioners and employers in the sector. To have your say, you can access surveys and further information via the following link:-

<http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/Public-Consultation.html>

The closing date for submissions is **Friday 10th April 2015.**

Aistear Planning

An Aistear Workshop on Planning for Aistear will take place on April 13th & April 20th. The aim of the workshop is to explore means of collecting, documenting, reflecting on and using information, when planning for and assessing learning. It will support services with the process of long, medium and short-term planning using the Aistear guide as a tool. Further details and booking forms can be obtained from Ruth on 057 9135878.

Aistear Environments

When co-constructing their learning environment, children become more engaged and reach a greater depth of learning. On May 11th & 18th an Aistear Environments workshop will explore how children, when given the chance to have their voice heard, can play an integral part in the decision-making process in relation to a change in their environment. Further details and booking forms can be obtained from Ruth on 057 9135878.

After Schools Workshop

A workshop to support After School Workers will be held on May 6th. This workshop will explore homework expectations as well as responsive planning and environments in After School Settings. Further details and booking forms can be obtained from Ruth on 057 9135878.

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Introduction to Support & Development Worker

Ruth Finney commenced work as a Support & Development Worker with Offaly County Childcare Committee in February. Ruth comes to us from Scotland and has many years experience working with children. Initially, Ruth was trained to teach children from 3-12 years and was then promoted to the Early Years Leader and managed a pre-school service. Throughout this time she developed a great passion for early learning and went on to study Early Years Pedagogue at Masters Level in Strathclyde University. Ruth believes strongly in child-centred, play based learning and will be working directly with services to support their development on a needs-led basis. If you would like a support visit for your service, please contact Ruth on 057 9135878.

Designated Liaison Person

In anticipation of the new Child Protection Legislation, every organisation providing services for children or in direct contact with children should have a Designated Liaison Person (DLP) to act as a liaison with outside agencies and as a resource person to any staff member or volunteer who has child protection concerns. The DLP ensures the standard reporting procedure is followed and that suspected cases of child neglect or abuse are referred promptly to the Child and Family Agency Duty Social Worker or in an emergency, where a child is in immediate danger and where the Social Worker cannot be contacted, to An Garda Síochána. The DLP should be knowledgeable about child protection and undertake any training necessary to keep themselves updated on new developments.

In order to access the new DLP Training, which should be available later this year, you must have completed the Child Protection and Welfare Training. Please contact Sheena on 057 9135878 to put your name on a waiting list for the training.

Offaly CCC Website Update

The Offaly CCC website is currently being updated and will be re-launched in the coming weeks. There will be a section on the website, where services can advertise existing vacancies. If you have current or upcoming vacancies, please contact us on 057-9135878 or by email to aine@offalychildcare.com to have your vacancy included.

Social Media

Social Media is the collective name for online communications such as Facebook and Twitter.

Everyday of the week we hear news reports on social media. Social media can be a great tool for promoting services and a simple and effective way to keep parents informed of the work of a service. It also has drawbacks and services should have a Social Media Policy which ensures that all employees and parents of the service are aware of the service's rules regarding the use of Social Media.

This Policy should outline that a service may use social media as an extension of their communication with parents and others in order to advertise or keep people up to date in relation to their service. The use of social media is for professional use, not personal use in the service. It is important to consider how and what information is shared on the internet in order to protect the privacy of children, families, staff and any person associated with the childcare service. There should be a strict confidentiality policy in relation to its staff and service users. Images of individual or groups of children should only be uploaded to a social media site with written permission from parents or guardians.

Key Worker System

In an early years setting, it is good practice to have a Key Worker System in place. Although there is normally a team caring for the children, a "Key Worker" should be designated to each child. Organising in this way, means that one practitioner has primary responsibility for gathering in-depth knowledge of the child, based on observations and interactions. The Key Worker will foster close bonds with a small number of children in a way that large groups cannot easily do. These groups allow the key person to better "tune into" children's play and their conversations, to really get to know the children in their group well. Children feel settled and happy and are more confident to explore and as a result become more capable learners. Parents should be given the opportunity to have brief discussions about their child's development with the key worker and have the opportunity to talk through the child's records. The transition from home to service can be a big step for children of all ages but that transition is made that much easier with the help of a key worker. If you require support about introducing a key worker system please contact the office.

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