

Jigsaw Service, Offaly

This information may be relevant to some Afterschool Facilities in the county.

Jigsaw is a service for 12-25 year olds in County Offaly. The aim of the Jigsaw projects is to make sure every young person has somewhere to turn to and someone to talk to. It's a free and confidential service.

The service provides one to one sessions for young people with a Clinician. Young people and their parents can call Jigsaw for information and to make an appointment. They can also be referred by the GP, school etc.

Jigsaw also provides training to those who work with young people in a professional and voluntary capacity.

These courses are
Level 1 Understanding Youth Mental Health
Level 2 Minding Youth Mental Health

If you know of anyone wishing to participate in these courses, please contact the Offaly Service on 05793 52871 or 086 8362376.

Better Start (National Early Years Quality Development)

On May 5th, Better Start National Early Years Quality Development changed their allocation criteria to allow smaller full day care services to request support.

The new criteria is as follows:

1. Services catering for 40+ children on a full day care basis
2. Services catering for 25+ children on a full day care basis with 50+ children in total
3. Group/chain providers within a County area
4. Service for which special consideration is requested based on for e.g. inspection issues, significant support needs or areas / services where access to quality support has been very limited (e.g. no mentors or quality development options available), significant staff turnover. These will be considered on a case by case basis.

If you would like to engage with the National Early Years Quality Development Service, please contact the office and a referral will be made.



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Early Year's Service Providers Newsletter

Welcome to Issue Three 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.

DCYA Postpones Minimum Qualification Requirements

On Wednesday 10th June 2015, the Department of Children and Youth Affairs announced the postponement of the minimum qualification requirements in early childhood settings for another 12 months, giving learners working in existing settings up to September 2016 to complete their qualifications. This decision was made after a number of challenges were identified with the timeframe. These issues included:

- Some staff who availed of the Learner Fund will not have completed their training by September 2015 and would not, therefore, meet the qualification requirement. (It is acknowledged that the completion of the eight components required to achieve a major award, at the same time as working in a fulltime job in childcare, is not easy. It is also acknowledged that many people found it difficult to access the necessary training in their local areas.)
- The Department has been alerted to the fact that a number of staff did not avail of the Learner Fund because they assumed – or were incorrectly advised – that they already met the qualification requirement.
- More established professions have regulators who hold lists of approved qualifications. The absence of an official list of approved qualifications for Early Years means that staff – and their employers – cannot easily obtain assurance that the qualifications that they hold will meet the minimum requirements.
- The absence of this list would also create difficulties for the Early Years Inspectorate who will be charged with inspection of services under the new Childcare Regulations, including staff qualifications.
- Some community-based services rely on Community Employment workers as core staff within the service staff : child ratios, and these services would face issues of sustainability if these workers were to become supernumerary and they needed to employ more qualified staff.

The Department has commenced discussions with the Department of Education and Skills and with Pobal regarding the development of a database of recognised qualifications, for use by the sector and by the Inspectorate and aim to have this ready by the end of the year.

Pre-school Regulations

The new Childcare Regulations which are being prepared will include the minimum qualification requirements as mandatory for all new services seeking to register with the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) following the commencement of the Regulations, but will provide for a 12 month postponement of the requirements for existing services.

ECCE Contracts

The ECCE contracts for all new settings commencing in September 2015, must comply with the minimum mandatory requirements and all existing settings will have a 12 month postponement of these requirements, although the setting will need to have evidence that:

- The pre-school leader is enrolled and engaged in training to meet the Level 6 qualification
- The pre-school assistants are enrolled and engaged in training to meet the Level 5 qualification or hold a signed grandfathering declaration form

Further to this announcement, the DCYA stated they will work closely with community providers and the Department of Social Protection to agree a plan for Community Employment.

The DCYA have apologised about the announcement at this time however believe it is necessary to ensure all staff in the sector are clear on the requirements and achieve the necessary qualifications.

Offaly CCC Open Day

On September 17th, Offaly CCC will host an 'Open Day' for Services, Childminders and Parent and Toddler Groups. Service Providers, Early Years Workers, Childminders, Students and Parents are cordially invited to attend the open day from 10.00am to 1.00pm and 4.00pm to 8.00pm. The 'Open Day' will be an informal opportunity to talk to staff and to visit the Tracey Buckley Resource Library and borrow resources. Story Sacks and Topic Boxes will be available to view on the day. Refreshments will be served throughout the day and your own children are very welcome to attend.

Support Visits

Offaly County Childcare Committee offers support visits to services on a range of topics. If you would like a support visit regarding policies & procedures, curriculum, room layout, environment, finances, committee skills, record keeping, Aistear, Siolta, behaviour management, or any issues you may be experiencing, please feel free to contact the office on 05791 35878

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**Check out our new revised website
on www.offalychildcare.com**



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Offaly CCC News & Calendar of Events

Please see the enclosed calendar of events for details of upcoming activities and workshops organised by Offaly County Childcare Committee. Please display the calendar in a prominent place in your service so that all early years workers may have the opportunity to attend events. Booking forms for all courses and events are available from the office on 057 9135878. The following is a brief summary of the activities and events we have on offer.

Music & Movement

This workshop is being developed in order to highlight the importance of music and movement within daily routines. It also aims to draw attention to a comprehensive learning resource for the Early Years Practitioner. The music and movement songs within the resource will help children work towards the learning goals set out in Aistear.

Young children learn best by doing. Music and movement promotes active involvement in developing vocabulary and mastering a wealth of skills and concepts. This will be an interactive workshop so please wear comfortable clothes and shoes.

If services require one to one support after the workshop, this will be facilitated and a staff member from Offaly CCC will visit the service to assist with implementing the planning process.

Topic Boxes

Offaly County Childcare Committee are in the process of building resource boxes linked to themes in order to support planning from children's interest.

The collection of fun and exciting Topic Boxes will support service providers in delivering creative, investigative and heuristic play opportunities. They can be borrowed from the Tracey Buckley Resource Library at short notice to provide easy, no-preparation resources to follow interests such as Minibeasts, Dinosaurs, Seasons and many more.

Each topic box will be linked to Aistear and provide some activity ideas as well as some display materials. There will be an initial workshop introducing the topic boxes. Services that attend the workshop will be given priority when borrowing them from the library.

National Concert Hall

Pre-School CPD Course - Musical Play: Teacher Training for Early Years Music

This course will run from 6th to 10th July, 2015 in the NCH and will provide early years educators with the confidence and musical tools to teach music effectively and with ease. The course will develop your skill set using a variety of engaging techniques, so that you have a solid foundation on which to build a deep understanding to pass on to the children in your care. Learn to use your voice effectively, revisit (or meet for the first time) the cornerstones of music education in a creative and active way through movement, play and song.

A return bus has been organised for those interested which will pick up in Birr, Tullamore and Edenderry if required and will drop to the NCH. The cost of the course is €70. This and the bus cost has been subsidised by Offaly CCC and will cost €50 per participant.

Please contact the office as soon as possible to confirm your place, as places are limited to fifteen.

Additional Needs Seminar

Additional Needs within service settings is one of enormous variety and is ever-changing. Offaly County Childcare Committee hope to support practitioners in developing practical skills and knowledge for a wide range of behaviours and abilities.

An Additional Needs Seminar is currently being organised for services to support them with their referring concerns and to provide them with strategies when working with children with additional needs and supporting children and families. This has been identified as an area of need for many services and we aim to have a number of speakers from a range of different agencies. These will include but are not limited to Speech and Language Therapy, Early Years Intervention Team, Inclusion Ireland, Parent's Perspectives, SENO and Sports Inclusion.

The seminar will take place in the Tullamore Court Hotel on 14th November 2015.

Booking forms are available from the office.

Management & Leadership Training

Managing an early years setting has become a daunting task. Excellent communication and leadership skills are required to deal with the needs of parents, staff, children and external agencies such as TUSLA, Pobal etc.

As a support to services, Offaly CCC will organise a Management & Leadership programme for Managers and Leaders of services, commencing on September 21st and finishing on November 16th. The programme will run over an eight week period. The main purpose of the "Management and Leadership" Programme is to assist Managers face the challenges associated with effectively managing an early years service in an ever-changing, diverse and complex environment.

This programme focuses completely on the "personal development and improvement" aspects of management rather than policy and procedure implementation. The overarching purpose of the programme is to develop more confident, assertive and competent managers in the ECCE sector. Canavan & Byrne will deliver this programme in a very practical manner using real scenarios, exercises and case studies and it will be highly relevant.

The programme will consist of 8 x 3 hour sessions under four broad topics

- Leadership
- Communication
- Supervision
- Motivation

The programme is aimed at early year's workers who have a role in leading and managing their service. The cost of the programme is €50 per participant. A minimum of fifteen participants is needed for the programme to go ahead. Booking forms are available from the office.

Child Protection Training

Two dates for Child Protection Courses have been set for the second half of the year (see dates in calendar). The training will be offered in the first instance to Designated Liaison Persons who have not completed CP training in the past three years. All DLP's must have undertaken the basic one day training course in order to do the specific training for DLP's, which should be available later in the year.

If you need a place on one of the courses please contact the office for a booking form.

Aistear Cluster Group Meetings

The Aistear Cluster Groups have looked at Planning and Environments within an emergent and inquiry based curriculum linked to the Aistear and Síolta Practice Guide. The main message within these workshops has been to improve the quality of your service by ensuring that planning and the environment incorporates children's voices. Through listening, staff can use their knowledge about the child to provide learning environments that responds to children's interests and needs, extend their learning and support their development.

The Practice Guide encourages practitioners to develop a long term, medium term and short term plan linked to Aistear. The long term plan provides a very brief overview of what might be covered in the year and links loosely to the themes of Aistear. A medium term plan provides details of learning activities and opportunities for each week of the topic and links to Aistear's aims. The short term plan records the most recent activities and child initiated changes linked to the learning goals. You should begin to collate children's assessments such as photos, observations, children's work and interactions with an individual portfolio which can then be shared with parents.

The Practice Guide also encourages services to continuously self-evaluate their environments. People, resources, layout, ethos, space, outdoors and safety should all be considered within an Aistear environment. The environment should be co-constructed along with the children, with the practitioner acting as a facilitator. There should be adequate accessible resources which are changed regularly and promote inquiry, spontaneity and interest. Real and natural resources should be promoted both indoors and outdoors. A positive ethos which promotes independence and play is at the forefront of Aistear.

The cluster groups will continue in September so please check calendars for dates. The theme will focus on building relationships, facilitating learning, organising the environment to support quality interactions and directing the learning. If you require any support with Aistear or Síolta, please contact the office to arrange a support visit.

Behaviour Management

This workshop will consider practical approaches to promoting positive behaviour. It aims to consider factors influencing behaviour, setting behaviour standards, strategies in practice and addressing incidents of challenging behaviour. It will be presented in conjunction with the Triple P Co-ordinators for the Midlands.

If services require one to one support after the workshop this will be facilitated and a staff member from OCCC will visit the service to assist with implementing the planning process.