



Parent and Toddler Information Pack



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Introduction to Pack

This pack was developed in 2008 to support Parent, Baby and Toddler Groups. This version has been updated in 2013.

County Childcare Committees

Laois and Offaly County Childcare Committees support Parent, Baby & Toddler Groups by administering grants and by providing advice and support to groups.

Acknowledgement:

This pack was developed by Offaly CCC in conjunction with Laois CCC. We would like to acknowledge Galway City & County Childcare Committee for sharing the information in their Parent & Toddler Pack.

Disclaimer:

The contents of this Pack are intended to act as a conduit for the exchange of information and are intended for information purposes only. While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the contained information Offaly and Laois County Childcare Committees cannot accept any responsibility for mistakes, omissions or loss caused to any person acting or not acting as a result of any information published throughout the Parent and Toddler Information Pack.

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Section 1:

Getting Started



INTRODUCTION TO PARENT, BABY AND TODDLER GROUPS

What is a Parent, Baby & Toddler Group?

A parent, baby and toddler group is an informal group within the local community, which provides an opportunity for young children and their parents/carers to meet. All groups offer opportunities for friendship, learning, and play.

Who Runs the Group?

They are usually run by the parents, for parents/guardians, grandparents and carers to attend together with their children.

Where do they Meet?

Venues for parent, baby and toddler groups are diverse and include church halls, community centres, schools, health centres, sports centres, hotel rooms, and purpose built premises.

Before choosing a venue the group needs to check that the play space is large enough and also that there is a safe outdoor play area.

Make sure there is adequate parking space and that the children do not have direct access to the parking area, once they are inside the venue.

How often do they meet?

Groups usually meet one morning a week for approximately two hours.

Is there a fee?

There is usually a small charge, which helps to pay for the toys, rent, insurance, craft activities and refreshments. Usually €2 to €3 per family per week is paid.

How Old Can My Child Be Before They Can Attend?

You can attend a Parent & Toddler Group with a new born baby, a baby who has just learnt to sit, a toddler and a pre-schooler, or a combination of the above. The earlier you attend, the more likely you are to establish long term friendships with other parents, you are able to share the expertise of other parents - if you feel you are on your own, struggling with your baby's demands or feel isolated, or just want to make friends who are interested and enthusiastic about your baby too - then Parent & Toddler Group is perhaps the place to find them.

What does it Offer My Child?

Children get to interact with other children, while their parents/guardians/carers are close by. This helps to build the confidence of the children and social skills. Parent and toddler Groups are a great stepping stone in preparing children for playgroup/pre-school.

What Does it Offer Me?

Parent and toddler groups are a great way to meet other parents/guardians/carers in the locality where you can share experiences and establish friendships. Social contact with other adults as Parent & Toddler Groups may be the only

social contact for some parents/guardians/carers. Helps prevent isolation. Parent & Toddler Groups can be a great social network and can be especially helpful to parents who do not have family support close by.

General Aims of Parent & Toddler Groups

- To provide a safe and stimulating environment.
- To provide a social outlet for parents/guardians/carers and their children to meet with each other.
- To provide children with opportunities which may not be available at home such as messy play, creative play, songs and stories.

What Happens During a Parent, Baby & Toddler Group Session?

- The appointed parents arrive before opening time, to prepare the room and to set up the Play Activities.
- All parents, carers, guardians and children are welcomed.
- New members are welcomed by a designated adult, and then introduced to the group, and it's routine.
- A programme of activities will be in place for the children.
- Birthdays and other special events and parties are organised and celebrated.
- As the group is also a meeting place for parents, it will give them the opportunity to share parenting experiences etc.
- As well as assisting with the children's activities for the morning, the parents may have a guest speaker invited, for example a Speech and Language therapist, Public Health Nurse, Child Psychologist, Aromatherapist etc.
- A light snack is made available for children and adults.
- All adults and children help at "Tidy Up" time.
- All parents/carers are responsible for their own children, at all times.

SETTING UP A PARENT & TODDLER GROUP

Guidelines for Setting up a Parent & Toddler Group

- Get support from wherever possible, Offaly CCC, Laois CCC, other Parent, Baby & Toddler Groups
- Form a committee and elect officers
- Decide on the premises
- Ask the local fire officer to check the building
- Organise insurance
- Open a Bank Account
- Decide on an opening date
- Decide on and set down the operating rules of the group
- Decide on a draft action for three months
- Apply for funding
- Decide how much to charge per session.
- Decide whether you will charge per child or per family.

- Decide whether there will be a membership fee.
- Decide will the charge cover tea/coffee/biscuits and drinks for the children.
- Decide how you will fundraise

Provide a Safe and Happy Environment

- Ensure ground rules are drawn up by members and that all new members are made aware of these rules.
- Make sure that each parent/guardian/carer signs in and pays subscription.
- Groups may have a registration form for each member in order to have details at hand.
- This form may also have a request on it for permission for the taking of photographs and for publishing of same.
- It is important to review rules on an annual basis.

Involve All Members

- While each group has a committee it is not their parent and toddler group, it is everybody's group.
- Try to get everybody including the children involved in setting up and tidying up thereby learning to take care of the environment.
- While the committee may do the running of the group all the members should be involved.
- Parents are encouraged to be involved in:
 - Setting up and putting away equipment
 - Making drinks, crafts, music and story time
 - Fund raising needs to have everybody involved
- Some parents may be shy; however they may have a talent that they can bring to the group.
- Parents who are involved feel ownership of a group.

New Members

- Parents/Guardian/Carers with Pre-School children are all welcome to attend.
- In order to give everybody equal status in the group each group could have a welcome letter where it gives out all the details of the group.
- Walking into a group for the first time can be very daunting so if necessary make sure that one person is in charge of welcoming newcomers.
- If you have a letter about running the group and a sign in form, then these may be given on arrival
- Make sure and show them where all the facilities are. E.g.: Toilet, Kitchen, Coat-room.

OPERATING A PARENT, BABY & TODDLER GROUP

Sample Ground Rules for Operating a Parent & Toddler Group

- We treat each other with respect.
- No name-calling, stereotyping, cheap shots, or joke at someone else's expense
- Bullying will not be tolerated
- Child's safety and behaviour is each Parent/Guardian/Carers responsibility
- We strive to recognize and celebrate individual and team accomplishments
- As team members, we will pitch in to help where necessary
- Confidentiality is vital among the group
- Equality is vital amongst members of the group
- All snacks and drinks will be healthy, promoting healthy eating habits to young children
- Take care with drinks, buggies and your belongings.
- Behaviour will be managed positively
- Contact Lists: Think about how to stay in contact with everyone. It is no fun starting a toddler group only to have nobody show up. This could be done by issuing all Parents/Guardians/Carers with a list of the Committee Members contact details.

Day to Day Running

- Block book premises.
- Ensure someone is responsible for opening up and closing of session.
- Welcome Parents/Guardian/Carers and get them to sign in.
- Register new parents and record them in the register and accounts book.
- Keep records of all the group activities, especially the financial transactions
- If you have a letter about running the group and a sign in form, then these may be given on arrival
- Be aware of children or Parents/Guardian/Carers with disabilities and also language difficulties.
- Walking into a group for the first time can be very daunting so if necessary make sure that one person is in charge of welcoming newcomers.
- Introduce newcomers to another member
- Make sure that everybody knows where the toilets etc. are
- Follow up after a few weeks if they stop coming as they may just need that extra invitation
- The equipment needs to be put out and tidied up afterwards.
- Depending on the age group of children the equipment may be allocated to different areas of the venue.
- Supervise the play activities.
- Organise drinks and snacks in a separate area.
- Advertise the Group in your local newspapers, parish newsletter, posters in shops.

FUNDING

Funding is initially required to establish the service and thereafter to ensure that the service is sustainable.

Sources of Funding

1. Statutory Funding and Grants

- Parent and Toddler Group Initiative Grants, funded by the Irish Government and apply through the Offaly County Childcare Committee
- Partnership Boards
- Health Service Executive

2. Other Sources

- Fees: Membership and Admission
- Fund-raising
- The National Lottery
- Local Businesses
- Local Banks
- Local Credit Unions

INSURANCE

It is important that all groups have a valid insurance policy that provides adequate cover for the operation of the group prior to setting up. The insurance policy should be renewed annually thereafter.

Your insurance should cover not only your weekly meetings but also once-off events and any outings which your group may go on.

Ensure your equipment is covered in the event that the premises the group are using becomes damaged, your equipment may not be covered under the owners insurance.

Please read the terms and conditions of your insurance policy and abide by these terms i.e.: if your insurance has a limit on the number of users in your group it is important not to operate over and above this number as the group will not be covered.

Early Childhood Ireland (ECI) provides group insurance cover for members. Some groups operate from community halls and may be told by the owners or landlord of the premises they use that they are covered by their insurance, the group should always ask for a copy of the policy in order to check their position to ensure they are adequately covered.

Any insurance scheme chosen by the group may contain the following types of cover:

- Public liability insurance. Groups need Public Liability Insurance of at least €2,600,000
- Personal accident insurance.
- Equipment and contents insurance.
- Group's money cover.
- Employer's liability insurance (only applicable if the group employs staff).

Contact insurance company for quotations. Royal and Sun Alliance underwrite insurance for parent & toddler groups and the broker is Alan B. Kidd & Co., Ltd.

CHOOSING EQUIPMENT FOR YOUR PARENT, BABY & TODDLER GROUP

- Suitable chairs and tables for adults
- Tea making equipment
- Cups and beakers
- Plates
- Cutlery
- Changing facilities
- A secure gate/barrier to prevent the children leaving the building or accessing areas which could present a danger e.g. kitchen, stairs etc.
- Floor mats for younger children to roll on
- Storage boxes

CHOOSING TOYS FOR CHILDREN IN YOUR PARENT, BABY & TODDLER GROUP

- A toy is something, which encourages play which in itself produces learning.
- When choosing toys consider the following:
- Is the toy safe?
- Will the child like the toy?
- Can the toy be used in a variety of ways?
- Is the toy durable?
- Is it appropriate to the age of the child?
- Will the toy capture the child's interest?
- Is it fun?
- Is it too mature / immature for a child?
- Does it involve interaction with others?
- Can it be kept clean easily?

It is important when choosing toys, to be aware of toys that promote multicultural awareness and gender equity, which are essential in developing children's sense of respect and moral responsibility.

TOYS

For Babies:

- Soft toys
- Rattles
- Coloured bricks
- Ball pool
- Activity centres



For Crawlers:

If space permits cordon off a separate area with:

- roll along toys
- stacking toys
- coloured bricks
- cars
- dolls
- cloth books

For Toddlers:

- Dolls, teddies, prams and push chairs
- Sit and ride toys
- Garage and cars
- Jigsaws
- Building blocks
- Dress up clothes
- A toy kitchen
- Coloured hard backed books
- Play dough
- Paint and paper
- Arts and crafts materials
- If space permits sand and water play provide good development opportunities for toddlers but needs to be closely supervised.

A SELECTION OF TOYS AND ACTIVITIES TO PROMOTE DEVELOPMENT

INFANTS

Physical Development	Activity Centres, stacking toys and rings, push-pull toys, small soft toys for throwing, squeaky toys, and large plastic strings of beads, soft mat. Outdoor activities.
Emotional and Social Development	Stuffed animals or dolls, music making toys, books with rhymes, simple picture books, telephone, and mirror.
Cognitive (Problem-solving) Development	Stacking toys, boxes and cups, crib mobiles, squeaky toys.
Communication and Language Development	Books with rhymes, simple picture books, music making toys.
Creative Development	If the children are participating in more sensory and creative activities, for example; play dough, finger painting, sand and water play there needs to be complete supervision at all times during the activity.

TODDLERS

Physical Development	Push/ pull toys, pedal toys, cars (Big enough to ride), balls, beanbags, and mat. Outdoor activities. Running, hopping, ballgames etc.
Emotional and Social Development	Mirror, dolls, tea set, cash register, pretend food, telephone, dress up clothes for the dolls and children, musical instruments, puppets, big boxes. Animals.
Cognitive (Problem-solving) Development	Blocks big and small, Picture cards, floor and table top jigsaws, peg boards, shape sorters.
Communication and Language Development	Books with simple stories, tape recorder, telephone, puppets, musical instruments
Creative Development	Paints and brushes, paper, crayons, chalk, play dough, junk materials, cardboard box etc. Sand play and sand play toys, water play.

PRE-SCHOOLERS

Physical Development	Push / pull toys, pedal toys, cars (Big enough to ride), balls, beanbags, mat. Encourage outdoor activities. Skipping, ballgames etc.
Emotional and Social Development	Mirror, dolls, tea set, cash register, pretend food, telephone, dress up clothes, musical instruments, puppets, big boxes, Small model vehicles: cars, buses, fire engines, planes, garage, trains, train set, boats and trucks. Small model figures: safari set, farm animals, insect and birds, dinosaurs and people. Dress up clothes – different occupations, old clothes, multicultural clothes.
Cognitive (Problem-solving) Development	Blocks big and small, Picture cards, peg boards, jigsaws floor and Table - top jigsaws, shape sorters. Sand and water play.
Communication and Language Development	Big and small books with simple stories, tape recorder, telephone, puppets, musical instruments. Plays, concerts, role-play etc.
Creative Development	Paints, paintbrushes, paint sponges, paper, crayons, chalk, glue, play dough. Junk materials – cotton wool, cardboard box etc. Sand play and sand play toys, Water play and water play toys.

PROMOTION OF PLAY

What Is Play?

There are many definitions of play.

Play is defined as a process encompassing children's behaviour, which is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated.

“Freely Chosen” means that the children choose when and which play activity to undertake and as such, it is not part of a set programme and does not have any steps that need to be completed.

“Personally Directed” means that children themselves agree the roles or rules of the activity; they decide the outcomes, if there are to be any.

“Intrinsically Motivated” means that it is done for its own sake, and not for any externally provided reward, certificate, or status.

The importance of play was recognised in the The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 31 states that:

States Parties recognise the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

It is difficult to define play, yet whatever the definition of play might be, children learn and acquire a lot through play.

- Play is key to every child's well being
- It is a natural instinct that needs to be nurtured.
- Through play, children practice the roles, which will be part of their adult life.
- Play is a fundamental right and is important in its own right.
- It encourages healthy, emotional, physical and mental development.
- Play encourages children to be creative, and to develop ideas, understanding and language.
- It assists in the development of relationships.
- Children express and work out emotional aspects of everyday experiences through play.
- Play can be co-operative, solitary, competitive, creative destructive, messy, structured, and spontaneous.

Section 2:

Administration



SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS 1

Dear Parents

Welcome to Anytown Parent, Baby and Toddler Group.

The group meets on Mondays from 10.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m. during the school term. We do not meet during school holidays.

The weekly fee per family is €3.

We plan activities on a monthly basis and the schedule of activities is available from Claire Jones, our Chairperson.

A light snack consisting of crackers, toasts, cheese, ham etc. is provided for adults and children. Refreshments of tea and coffee for the adults and diluted juice and water are provided for the children.

Anytown Parent, Baby and Toddler Group has a set of rules which all parents / carers / guardians are expected to agree to. The rules are available from Claire Jones, our Chairperson. There are two main rules:

1. Each Parent/Guardian/Carer is responsible for their own child/children
2. Each Parent/Guardian/Carer is expected to participate in the running of the group which includes setting up and putting away equipment, organising activities and supporting fund raising.

The Committee members for this year are:

Chairperson:	Claire Jones	Phone Number:	089 12345678
Secretary:	Amy Hardy	Phone Number:	087 12345678
Treasurer:	Laura Ryan	Phone Number:	086 12345678
Treasurer:	Philip Dalton	Phone Number:	083 12345678
PRO:	Kate O'Hara	Phone Number:	085 12345678

We look forward to you joining the group.

Yours sincerely

Amy Hardy

Secretary

SAMPLE INTRODUCTION LETTER TO PARENTS 2

Dear Parent.

We are really pleased you have joined the Anytown Parent & Toddler Group.

I'm Claire Jones, The Chairperson, and together with the rest of the team I would like to welcome you. We will do all we can to help you feel part of our happy group.

For your information, we meet every Tuesday from 9.30 am to 11.30 am. (Please note that the group opens during school term time only). You are free to call in any time which suits you best. We have a weekly fee of €3 per family which is put towards costs such as rent, materials and shopping.

We like to keep the entrance hall free for everyone's safety. Please leave your prams, buggies or other large items in the room on the right hand side of the hall when you arrive. There is an additional fire exit at the end of the hall: this is only for use in emergency, so please do not leave by that exit.

It is important that every member of the group feels relaxed, supported, safe and secure – and has fun – while they are here. For that reason we have a maximum number limit of 25 adults and children. As Chairperson I am responsible for ensuring that we do not go over the maximum.

When you join our group you are agreeing to follow a few simple ground rules that will help us all enjoy our time together.

Your child's safety, the way s/he relates to and plays with other children, are your responsibility.

If another parent expresses concern about an action of yours or your child's, listen graciously. Explore each other's point of view, even if you don't agree, or feel you have been misunderstood. Stay friends!

Look after, and encourage your children to look after, the room, the equipment and each other, and take care with drinks, buggies and belongings.

Please remember to sign the register each morning on arrival and place the weekly fee in the cup provided.

To help with the running of the group we ask parents to put themselves forward for activities such as art and crafts, storytelling and songs, if you feel you could help out please add your name to sheet which is always on the table beside the register book each week.

If you must leave the room for any reason please ensure you do not leave your child unattended – ask another parent to watch your child for the brief time you are out of the room.

We do value your comments on the group, and would also like to know if you have any concerns or suggestions about how we can do things differently.

Please let me, or any of the committee members have your feedback. We are all part of The Group and The Committee Members always welcome input from members. We also welcome any questions you have about Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group. If you need to speak to me outside of Group hours, feel free to call me on 089 12345678

Claire Jones, Chairperson

SAMPLE REGISTRATION FORM 1

Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group

Registration Form

Parent / Carer /
Guardian's Name:

Phone Number:

Name of Child:

Birth date of Child:

Address:

Permission to take Photographs:

Yes

No

Permission to publish Photographs

Yes

No

Do you or your child have any dietary requirements:

Yes

No

If yes what are they: _____

SAMPLE REGISTRATION FORM 2

Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group

Registration Form

Parent/Guardian/Carer Name: _____

Child's Name: _____

Child's Age: _____

Child's Date of Birth: _____

Contact Address: _____

Contact Telephone Number: _____

Registration Date: _____

Medical Conditions: _____

(E.g. allergies, asthma)

Special Needs: _____

Permission to Take Photographs: Yes No

Permission to Publish Photographs: Yes No

Signature of Parent/Guardian/Carer: _____

Date: _____

Data protection declaration:

Please note that the information given will not be used for any other purpose other than for the purpose of contacting you. This form will be stored by the secretary of the group at all times.

SAMPLE WEEKLY ROTA / JOBS BAG

Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group

Weekly Jobs List

The weekly jobs list will depend on the size of the group. Smaller groups may not need as many jobs to be done.

'Jobs'	Name Number of Adults Details	Number of adults	Name
Set Up	Turn on heat (if necessary) Set out tables & Chairs Set out toys Set up Snacks	3	
Meet & Greet	Greet adults & children as they arrive, especially new adults & children. Ensure everyone signs in.	1	
Collection of Fees	Collect fees from parents as they arrive. Total the fees collected in the petty cash. Ensure the treasurer knows how much was taken in so a record can be made in the finance book.	1	
Activity	Prepare activity & set up	2	
Snack Time	Purchase snacks (remember to keep receipts) Prepare snacks for adult & children.	2	
Circle Time	Decide on activity, ensure resources are available	2	
Tidy Up	Tidy Away Equipment. All adults assist. One adult is in charge.	1	

The group should decide their rota in line with their activity schedule. If the activity schedule is for 4 weeks then the rota should also be for 4 weeks.

Section 3:

Sample Policies



ADMISSIONS POLICY

It is our intention to make our Parent, Baby & Toddler genuinely accessible to children and families from all sections of the local community. In order to accomplish this, we will:

- Ensure that the existence of the group is widely known in the local communities. We will place notices advertising the group in places where all sections of the community can see them.
- describe the group and its practices in terms which make it clear that it welcomes both fathers and mothers, grandparents and other carers, including childminders, and people from all cultural, ethnic, religious and social groups, with and without disabilities
- continue to consult local parents to ensure that the group goes on meeting the changing needs of the local community

BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT POLICY

Children and adults flourish best in an ordered environment in which everyone knows what is expected of them and children are free to develop their play and learning without fear of being hurt or hindered by anyone else. We aim to work towards a situation in which children can develop self-discipline and self-esteem in an atmosphere of mutual respect and encouragement.

In order to achieve this:

- All adults will try to provide a positive model for the children with regard to friendliness, care and courtesy and to offer strategies for handling any conflict
- Rules governing the conduct of the group and the behaviour of the children will be discussed and agreed within the group and explained to all newcomers, both children and adults
- All adults in the group will ensure that the rules are applied consistently, so that children have the security of knowing what to expect and can build up useful habits of behaviour
- Adults in the group will praise and endorse desirable behaviour such as kindness and willingness to share
- We will take positive steps to avoid a situation in which children receive adult attention only in return for undesirable behaviour

When children behave in unacceptable ways:

- Children will never be sent out of the room by themselves.
- Physical punishment, such as smacking or shaking, will be neither used nor threatened.

- Techniques intended to single out and humiliate individual children such as the “naughty chair” will not be used.
- Adults will not shout, or raise their voices in a threatening way.
- Any behaviour problems will be handled by the parent in a developmentally appropriate fashion, respecting individual children’s level of understanding and maturity.
- Should a parent see any unacceptable behaviour from another child, please try and talk to the parent of that child in a calm and respectful manner. Listen carefully; try to clear up the situation but above all stay friends as the children are watching!
- Adults will be aware that some kinds of behaviour may arise from a child’s special needs.

CHILD PROTECTION POLICY

Statement of intent

All adults attending the Parent, Baby & Toddler Group will work with each other to ensure the safety of children.

The key commitments of the Parent, Baby & Toddler Group policy for child protection are:

- Parents are responsible for their own child / children at all times
- Collectively the group is responsible for the safety of all children attending
- Parents sign in and sign out of the group every session
- Visitors to the group sign in and sign out of the group
- All adults in the group, both parents and visitors, will be aware of and respect the group’s safety policies.
- No child will be left alone with volunteers in a one to one situation without being visible to others
- Volunteers or visitors to the group do not work unsupervised.
- A culture of mutual respect between children and adults will be encouraged, with adults modelling good practice.
- Good practice includes valuing and respecting children as individuals, and the adult depicting appropriate conduct, which will always exclude bullying, shouting, racism, inappropriate language or sexism.
- Likewise inappropriate behaviour or language by the children will not go unchallenged.
- There should be no unnecessary physical contact between an adult and a child. Physical contact should only be in response to the needs of the child and should be appropriate to the age and the level of development of the child.

- Photographs or videos of children may not be taken without the expressed consent of the parent
- The reason for taking photographs and the use of such photographs should be explained clearly
- All members of the group will adhere to the group's policy on the use of photographs on social media sites

DATA PROTECTION POLICY

It is the group's policy to request a registration form from parents when they join the group. This information will be placed in the group file and kept securely.

FOOD AND DRINK POLICY

The sharing of refreshments can play an important part in the social life of the group as well as reinforcing children's understanding of the importance of healthy eating. The group will ensure that:

- All meals and snacks provided will be nutritious and pay due attention to children's particular dietary requirements.
- All snacks provided will avoid large quantities of fat, sugar, salt, additives, preservatives and colourings
- The dietary needs of children and parents will be met e.g. if a child has a nut allergy or is a coeliac this will be taken into consideration when preparing snacks. Also religious groups and vegetarians/vegans needs will be met in appropriate ways
- Water will be constantly available, upon request.
- Tea & Coffee will be provided for the parent/carer, these are only consumed in the designated area. Care should be taken with hot drinks around children.

MANAGEMENT OF THE GROUP POLICY

- A sign in book will be available at each session for parents to sign in when they arrive and to sign out when they leave.
- A book will be available at each session for the reporting of any accident/incidents.
- Regular safety monitoring will include checking of the accident record as a basis for risk assessment.
- All adults, including parents and other carers, will be aware of the system(s) in operation for children's arrivals and departures and an adult will be at the door during these periods.

- We operate a rota system, for opening up and closing up, for preparing drinks, setting up and clearing away. Each parent/carer will be placed on a rota for at least one of these, each week to ensure the work load is spread evenly. We cannot run the group without everyone doing their fair share, so please try and be as supportive as possible.
- Each adult will take responsibility for an action during the session; this will be decided on through the drawing up of a five week rota.
- We have lots of fun activities for the children to participate in; therefore, it is recommended children do not bring their own toys to the group. A lost or broken toy often causes distress and lots of tears!
- Arts and Crafts and messy play will be available for the children, so please do not bring them to toddler group in their best clothes!

SUPERVISION POLICY

- Children remain the responsibility of the parent/carer AT ALL TIMES. Please ensure the safety of the children at all times and that specific care is taken around the baby area.
- Some of the arts & crafts have small pieces, so please ensure your child is directly supervised AT ALL TIMES, in this area.
- All children will be supervised by adults at all times and will always be within sight of an adult.
- Children must be accompanied to the toilet.
- Children will leave the group only with authorised adults.
- Children will not have unsupervised access to kitchens, cookers or any cupboards storing hazardous materials including matches.
- On outings, the adult:child ratio will be at least one to two.
- Children who are sleeping will be checked regularly.

HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Insurance

The group will never operate without adequate insurance.

Smoking

There will be no smoking in the building. Adults are requested not to smoke during group time. If an adult must smoke during group time, he / she must do so in the designated smoking area and dispose of the cigarette responsibly.

If an adult must smoke during group time, they must ensure that another adult is responsible for their child in their absence from the group.

The Premises

All entrances and exits will be secured and nobody can enter without the knowledge of the group and that no child can wander out.

Systems will be in place to ensure that no child can leave the premises unattended.

Safety checks on the premises, both outdoors and indoors, will be made before every session.

If the main entrance has to be locked, there will be a key close by at adults' level.

Low-level glass will be covered, or replaced by safety glass.

Outdoor space will be securely fenced.

Public space used for outdoor play will be checked for litter and other dangers.

Internal safety gates/barriers will be used as necessary.

The layout will allow children and adults to move safely and freely between activities

Access to dangerous areas such as stairways will be physically restricted and closely supervised.

Systems will be in place to ensure that children are not at risk from swinging doors.

Equipment

Equipment will be checked regularly and any dangerous items repaired/ discarded.

Large equipment will be erected with care and checked regularly.

Equipment offered to children will be developmentally appropriate, recognising that materials suitable for an older child may pose a risk to younger/less mature children.

Age Range

Adults will be aware of the mixed age groups that attend the session. A small protected area for small babies and crawling children will be made available.

Fire Safety

There will be adequate systems and equipment for the detection and control of fire.

Fire doors will never be obstructed and fire exits will be easily identifiable. A record will be kept of any checks by the Fire Safety Officer and also of fire drills and servicing of fire safety equipment. Any recommendations by the Fire Safety Officer will be carried out.

Fires/heaters/electric points/wires and leads will be adequately guarded. Fire extinguishers will be checked annually and adults will know how to use them.

Fire drills will be held at least twice a term.

Fire Drill

Raise the Alarm:

Appointed person blows whistle (3 blasts) to alert parents and children of fire in the building, and collects the register, which is kept near the whistle. (The whistle never used for anything else).

Evacuate the Building:

With a parent in front and the appointed person at the rear, children and parents go to fire assembly point outside the building.

Appointed person checks children and parents present against the register.

Call the Fire Brigade:

The appointed person phones the Fire Brigade from the nearest telephone. The appointed leader stays with the children and parents.

Putting out the fire:

If it is safe, without risk to oneself, a member of the committee not needed for the children, may tackle the fire, using the appropriate extinguishers, until the fire brigade arrives.

First Aid

A trained First Aider will be present at all group sessions
A correctly stocked first aid box will be available at all times.

First Aid Box for Parent, Baby & Toddler Group

Disposable Gloves x 3 pairs
Sterile Cotton Wool
Normal Saline (Sachets or Bottle)
Sterile Gauze (4cm x 4cm) x 4
Conforming Bandage x 2 (e.g. 1" Cling Bandage, 2" Crepe Bandage)
Triangular Bandage x 6
Hypo-Allergic Tape
Hypoallergenic Plasters (20)
Sterile Eye Pad x 6
Scissors
Thermometer

Nappy Changing

Proper nappy changing facilities are available in the bathroom.
A changing mat is available for safe changing of nappies.
Parents will use the disposable unit for soiled nappies.

Illness

Parents are asked to keep their children at home if they have any infection.
Parents are asked not to bring into the group any child who has been vomiting or had diarrhoea until at least 24 hours has elapsed since the last attack.
Cuts or open sores, whether on adults or children, will be covered with sticking plaster or other dressing

Hygiene

To prevent the spread of all infection, we will ensure that the following good practices are observed
Hands will be washed after using the toilet and before handling food
Children will be encouraged to blow and wipe their noses when necessary and to dispose of soiled tissues hygienically
Paper towels will be used and disposed of appropriately.

Cleaning and Clearing

Any spills of blood, vomit or excrement wiped up and flushed away down the toilet.

Rubber gloves always used when cleaning up spills of body fluids.

Floors and other affected surfaces disinfected using chlorine or iodine bleach diluted according to the manufacturer's instructions.

All surfaces cleaned with an appropriate cleaner

Special considerations

Some areas and activities pose particular hazards. All parents will be aware of these:

All dangerous materials, including medicines and cleaning materials, will be stored out of reach of children.

Children playing with or near water will be continuously supervised.

There will be safe surfaces beneath and around all climbing equipment and such activities will be appropriately supervised.

In shared premises, stored equipment belonging to other organisations will be checked for potential hazards.

OUTDOOR PLAY POLICY

Children will be actively encouraged to play outside throughout the year, in our securely fenced garden.

OUTINGS POLICY

The safety and well-being of the children and adults involved in the parent, baby and toddler group will be of upmost importance when planning and undertaking outings.

Parents / carers / guardians are encouraged to take an active part in the planning, preparation and undertaking of outings.

Prior information about proposed outings is given to all parents / carers / guardians and an outing is chosen based on popularity and safety considerations.

There must always be at least one adult to every two children. In cases of families with more than two children an additional adult must be brought along on the outing (grandparent, family friend).

The insurance company is contacted prior to the outing to confirm that the event is covered by the service's insurance policy.

If using busses for outings they must be fitted with appropriate seat belts.

Each parent / carer / guardian is responsible for their own child / children for the duration of the outing.

SELECTING PLAY EQUIPMENT AND TOYS POLICY

The toys and equipment in group provide opportunities for children, with adult help, to develop new skills and concepts in the course of their play and exploration.

The equipment provided will:

- Be appropriate for the ages and stages of the children
- Offer challenges to developing physical, social, personal and intellectual skills
- Feature positive images of people, both male and female, from a range of ethnic and cultural groups, with and without disabilities
- Include a range of raw materials which can be used in a variety of ways and encourages an open-ended approach to creativity and problem-solving
- Will enable children, with adult support, to develop individual potential and move towards required learning goals
- Conform to all relevant safety regulations and is sound and well-made.

Section 4:

The Committee



COMMITTEES

A committee is usually made up of a:

- Chairperson
- Vice Chairperson
- Treasurers x 2
- Secretary
- Two to four committee other members

The Role of the Committee is:

- To represent the interest of members of the Parent, Baby & Toddler Group (the Group)
- To be open and accountable to the members
- To ensure the Group operates within its rules and within the law
- To decide which organisations, if any, the Group will affiliate to
- To decide who should be co-opted members of the committee
- To ensure that information is passed to all members of the Group so that they understand how the Group works, and what decisions have been taken
- To conduct their affairs to the highest standard
- To ensure the Group has an Annual General Meeting which follows the procedures
- To ensure a code of conduct is being adhered to

The Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is the standards of behaviour, which members of the committee of the Parent, Baby & Toddler Group must adhere to. Members of the committee want their work to be respected, and they need to handle matters in a business-like way to secure the best possible level of service for everyone, and avoid any action which might bring the group into disrepute. A Code of Conduct applies to all members of the group as well as the committee members.

ROLE OF THE CHAIR

The role of the Chairperson is to guide the Parent, Baby & Toddler Group towards achieving their aims.

The following are key activities for a Chairperson:

In meetings

- Chairing meetings, welcoming newcomers
- Signing the approved minutes of the last meeting
- Keeping the meetings to the agenda and timescales given
- Ensuring that the meeting is orderly and keeps to the group's own rules
- To assist in finding common ground in discussions
- To ensure that everyone gets the chance to take part in any discussions, tactfully keeping to the time limits
- To summarise the discussion and clarify decisions taken between meetings if required.

Outside meetings

- Prepare the agenda for the meetings with the secretary
- Be kept informed of all activities being carried out on the Group's behalf.
- Encourage all providers to be more involved for example via newsletters
- Ensure all action identified at meetings is carried out and feed back to the Group

DUTIES OF THE CHAIR

- Make sure that all the facts are presented at meetings
- Make people aware of the rules, where necessary
- Make sure everybody gets a chance to express their views – only one person speaking at a time
- Encourages people to join in discussions
- Acts fairly and ensures order is maintained
- Ensures that when decisions are made that everyone understands
- Assists in preparing the agenda
- Checks minutes for accuracy before distribution
- Opens the meetings and ensures the agenda is kept to
- Keeps overall control of the meetings

ROLE OF THE VICE CHAIR

The vice-Chairperson is the person who chairs the meeting when the Chairperson cannot attend. It is important that they understand the Chairperson's role so that they can step in when needed. The vice-chairperson must be kept up-to-date on the Group's activities and should attend meetings regularly.

Outside meetings, the vice-chairperson should be prepared to act in the same supportive role as the Chairperson.

ROLE OF THE SECRETARY

The Secretary plays a crucial role in the smooth running of the group. The role may be divided between two or more people and the Group can decide this. The Group may decide to nominate a person whose sole role is to take minutes (notes) at meetings.

In meetings:

- To ensure a record of who attends a meeting is taken
- To take the minutes of the meeting
- To ensure all correspondence received by the Group is report at the meeting

Outside meetings:

- Ensure people are aware of the next meeting
- Preparing the agenda for the next meeting and distribute with the minutes of the previous meeting
- Ensure the venue is booked
- Invite guest speakers if required
- Writing and receiving letters on behalf of the group
- Keeping a record of addresses and telephone numbers of group members
- Assist in producing newsletters/flyers/posters promoting the group along with the other committee members.
- Arranging and promoting social events for the group as agreed by the group

DUTIES OF THE SECRETARY:

- To keep safe all the information relevant to the group

- To deal with correspondence to the group
- To write and send letters on behalf of the group always keeping a file copy for the group to refer to
- To file and keep safe correspondence received once the information has been passed on at the meetings
- To prepare the agenda for the next meeting with the chair and send it out with any additional information if required
- To take minutes at the meeting, noting who attends, what decisions are taken and who agreed to take on the follow up work required
- To check minutes, with the chair, for accuracy prior to distribution
- To copy and circulate minutes of meetings to all members
- To assist the Chair in follow-up work between meetings
- To ensure that the right number of meetings take place according to the groups constitution.

ROLE OF THE TREASURERS

The Treasurers are the people with overall responsibility for the group's finances. Where finances are concerned it is always advisable to have two Treasurers.

- Open and maintain a bank or building society account in the name of the Group ensuring there are three signatories
- Keep accurate records of all the group's financial transactions (for example receipts, cheques made out, invoices paid, cheques/cash received)
- Prepare a regular financial report for the meetings
- Allow any member of the group to inspect the account books
- Prepare the books for the annual audit/examination
- Bank any monies received, make payments and write receipts
- Ensure any petty cash held by the group is kept in a secure place

Duties of the Treasurer:

- Report at all meetings the bank balance along with recent transactions which haven't already been reported on.
- Distribute copies of the report to all committee members
- Complete annual grant application and provide relevant supporting documentation
- Ensure all expenditure is approved by the group before cheques are written or money is spent

AGENDAS

An agenda lets everyone know what is going to be discussed at the meeting and in what order. Ideally it should be circulated in advance of the meeting. The agenda should be headed with the name of the group and give the time, date and place of the meeting. It may be useful to have a timetable for items, particularly if there is to be a guest speaker.

An agenda usually contains a number of standard items:

- Apologies for absence
- Minutes of the last meeting
- Matters Arising from the previous meeting
- Correspondence
- Treasurer's Report
- Any Other Business
- Date, time and place of the next meeting

'Minutes of the last meeting' gives everyone a chance to check that an accurate record was taken of the previous meeting. The group should agree that the minutes are an accurate record and this would be minuted.

'Matters Arising from the last meeting' gives everyone a chance to check that decisions made last time have been acted on and feedback to the group can be given if the subject is not an agenda item.

'Any other business' gives anyone a chance to raise an issue which has not already been covered in the meeting which may be of interest to the group. If the group decides that a further discussion is required at the next meeting the issue can be put on the next agenda as an item.

SAMPLE AGENDA

Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group
Rahan Mhor
Co. Offaly

Thursday 1st January 2012, 7.00pm

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the last meeting
3. Matters Arising from the last meeting
4. Correspondence
5. Treasurers Report
6. Any Other Business
7. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

MINUTE TAKING

Minutes are the official record of what took place at a meeting.

They should record:

- The names of the people present
- Information under each agenda item (for example under apologies the names of people who gave apologies for not attending should be listed here in the minutes.
- Decisions reached and action to be taken and by whom

The minutes should be distributed just a few days after the meeting so that people who agree to take action are reminded of what is required. Minutes are also a way of letting everyone within the group know what you are up to. It is up to the group to decide how widely distributed the minutes agree e.g. to all Managers or just to members of the Group.

Handy hints for minute takers:

- At the top of the minutes it should state the name of the group along with the date of the meeting.
- Minutes should be laid out according to the agenda, item by item
- You don't need to record all the details of the discussions. A brief summing-up will do.

- Record any important information given during the meeting and always be precise about money
- It may be useful to have an action column down the right hand side of each page. There you can put the names of the people who have agreed to do something, alongside the decision they have agreed to carry out.

SAMPLE MINUTES

Anytown Parent, Baby & Toddler Group
Rahan Mhor
Co. Offaly

Minutes of the Meeting from Thursday 1st January 2012, 7.00pm

Present: Claire Jones (Chairperson), Amy Hardy (Secretary), Laura Ryan (Treasurer), Kate O'Hara (PRO), Dermot O'Reilly, Reid Makin, Avril Hand, Clare Smith

Apologies: Philip Dalton (Treasurer), Joseph Ludlow

1. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes were agreed as a true record and accurate record of the last meeting

Proposed: Amy Hardy Seconded: Laura Ryan

2. Matters Arising from the last meeting

The new welcome leaflet was printed by Offaly CCC for the group
 The Grant application for the Parent & Toddler fund was submitted prior to the deadline.

3. Correspondence

A list of correspondence was distributed and discussed:
 Offaly CCC's recent conference flier and save the date was discussed and it was agreed to pay for two members to attend.

Proposed: Claire Jones Seconded: Reid Makin

4. Treasurers Report

Amy presented the financial report:

At the end of December the bank balance was €379.83. All cheques had cleared by the year end. The bank had applied their charges of €7.59.

Copies of the report were distributed:

Proposed: Laura Ryan Seconded: Clare Smith

5. Any Other Business

It was agreed to have a fundraising cake sale after the 12 noon Mass on March 27th. Dermot and Amy to organise and to liaise with Parish Council.

6. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

Tuesday 15th March, Tullamore Dew at 7pm

TREASURERS REPORT

It is important that the treasurer gives a report at each meeting so that everyone on the committee understands the current state of the finances. Decisions about future spending can be taken more easily and more effectively if everyone is aware how much the group has and all the committee take responsibility for how much is spent and how much effort needs to go into raising more. Each year, at the Annual General meeting a full account of the year's expenditure and income should be available and reported on.

Each treasurer's report should contain:

- How much money the group had at the beginning of the period
- How much has been received
- How much has been spent, and on what
- How much is left

How to write the report:

- Use the bank statement to check balances
- Look on the bank statement for all cheques written that month to see if they have been presented (cash)
- Check that all money paid in is shown on the bank statement
- Try to keep figures in neat columns so that it is easier for others to read.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETINGS

Each group should hold an annual general meeting. The date, time and venue must be advertised prior to the event.

At the AGM the following should be standard items on the agenda:

- Chair's annual report
- Treasurer's annual report
- Stand down of officers
- Nominations for officers
- Voting of officers
- Election of officers

Chairs Annual Report

This would contain information about the group over the last twelve months. For example, achievements of the group and on-going issues.

Treasurers Annual Report

This would be similar to the monthly report but would contain the end balance of the previous year's report. All expenditure during the year and all income received during the year.

Stand Down of Officers

All officers must retire from their current roles enabling a fair nomination procedure to take place. All officers can be nominated for following year.

Nominations of Officers

Anyone can nominate a person or people for each committee role in accordance with the constitution. It is up to the group to decide whether the nominations have to be received prior to the AGM and in writing and also whether nominations will also be accepted at the AGM. A group may decide to take nominations verbally at the AGM. Any person nominated must be asked if they are will to take up the role if successfully elected.

Voting Of Officers

If more than one nomination is received for an officer's post the group must have a vote. The group can decide whether the vote is a show of hands or written.

Election of Officers

An independent person must count the votes with a witness present. Once the votes are counted the results must be read to the group and confirm the elected officer.

All the above procedures must be minuted

Section 5:

Activity Planning

ACTIVITIES

Most groups have a planned programme of activities which varies from week to week.

In order to plan activities it is important to look at the equipment available. Equipment such as jig-saws, drawing, duplo, train set, trucks etc. can all be arranged together in one section.

Crafts such as playdough, cutting and sticking, painting may be messy, so these should be kept separate from the equipment to ensure health and safety.

Some activities such as balls, ride-ons and the parachute require a large space. This space may also be used for music and movement.

Music and movement will need a certain amount of musical instruments and also space to move around. Nursery rhymes can also be introduced in this section.

Books should always be available and parents should be encouraged to read books to the children.

Group should make use of local resources such as the local library, playgrounds etc.

PARENT AND TODDLER GROUP

Sample Schedule for Six Weeks

MONTH	SCHEDULE	EQUIPMENT REQUIRED FOR ACTIVITY
1 st MAY	SET UP FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: PLAYDOUGH CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	PLAY DOUGH RECIPE Flour, salt, water, cooking oil, paints, bowl, wooden spoon
8 th MAY	SET UP FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: STORY TELLING CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	Story Books Puppets Stories on CD or tape
15 th MAY	FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: NURSERY RHYMES/SONGS CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	Nursery Rhymes books/CD/tapes Action songs on tape/CD Musical Instruments to accompany songs SET UP
22 nd MAY	SET UP FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: ART N CRAFTS CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	Suggestions for your art n craft box: Paints, coloured paper, glue, paint brushes, paper plates, cupcake holders, crayons, kitchen roll holders, egg cartons, empty cereal boxes etc.
29 th MAY	SET UP FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: COOKING SESSION CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	Suggestions: Rice Krispie buns
5 th JUNE	SET UP FREE PLAY SNACK ACTIVITY: GAMES CIRCLE TIME TIDY UP	Suggested games: Action games on CD/Tape Suggested Games: Traffic Lights, Musical Mats, Ring a Ring A Rosie, Leap Frog
11 th JUNE	DAY TRIP TO PET FARM	

Storytelling



Story Telling/ Reading

The most important thing to promote is that reading is fun and enjoyable for both adult and child. Depending on the age of the child, five minutes may be all he / she will listen for.

Because parent, baby and toddler groups can be a noisy place, it is important to find a quiet place so there are no distractions.

Reading stories with children is not about not teaching the child to read. It is about fostering a love of books and stories and is a wonderful way to help a child's language and imagination develop.

Use books that parents or children have at home which links home to the group.

Storytelling and reading aloud have all the same benefits.

They improve language skills such as:

- vocabulary
- prediction skills
- sequencing,
- comprehension
- story structure and recall

The difference between storytelling and reading aloud is that story telling is always inventive.

Tips for Reading Stories Aloud:

- Choose a book that lends itself to reading aloud.
- Choose books that will invite the children to get involved
- Try to read the book completely before, so you are familiar with the story. This allows you to read with more expression and anticipation.
- Tell the children the name of the book and the author if there is one.
- Show the pictures while you read
- Read with expression. Don't be shy, try and change your voice, make it louder or softer, make it funny, make it silly. This will grab the children's attention and make them more interested in the activity.

Benefits of Reading

- Teaches children about communication
- introduces concepts such as numbers, letters, colours, and shapes in a fun way
- builds listening, memory, and vocabulary skills
- gives children information about the world around them
- Increases a child's vocabulary
- Offers entertainment as an alternative to television
- Stimulates the imagination
- Nurtures emotional and cognitive development and improves self-esteem.



Books for Babies

It's good to remember that even the youngest babies can enjoy books, those with crinkly pages and bright bold images are perfect for newborns with developing eyesight, whilst older babies will love books with lots of touch and feels to explore as you read to them.

Books for Toddlers

By 18 months your baby will have become a toddler and reading together is a great way to expand his / her vocabulary. Toddlers will soon be able to name colours, animals, vehicles, household objects and lots more. Toddlers really enjoy books with lots of flaps to lift and noisy books with sounds to listen to. For toddlers having new experiences, such as a sibling about to arrive or the beginning of potty training, sharing reassuring stories together can help support them.

Books for Pre-schoolers

From 3 years children are beginning to understand more about the world around them. They are becoming increasingly independent, love to be told stories and can identify with characters. They will most probably be starting nursery or preschool so reading reassuring stories with your child can help support them through this big step in their childhood.

Barnardos Guide to Books for 0 to 5 year olds is included in your pack for reference.

Arts & Crafts

CRAYON ACTIVITIES

Giant Crayons

Take 3 or 4 of the children's crayons, and tape them together with Sellotape to make one BIG crayon. As the children draw, they will produce 3 or 4 lines with different colours, and their swirls and scribbles will make fabulous designs.



Grated Crayons

Give the children a cheese grater, and help them grate different coloured crayons on to a piece of plain white paper (photocopy paper is perfect). Place a second piece of paper over the top and iron the picture with an iron on low heat. The wax will slowly melt and move together, creating a slightly transparent look. Tape the pictures to a window, and as the sun shines through the coloured wax looks like stained glass.

Scratch Art

Have the children completely colour a piece of paper with different coloured crayons, so that no white space is showing, then paint over the top with black poster paint. When the paint is dry, the children can use a pencil to scratch out a picture which will show in all the crayon colours they used underneath. Colouring an entire piece of paper can be tedious and quite hard on a little hand muscles, so give them a smallish piece of paper and make it a project they can do over time. If they have had enough of colouring (rather than drawing), put the paper away for another day.

Crayon Transfers

Another way you can use a completely coloured piece of paper, is to make crayon transfers. Have the children colour a piece of paper as above, and then turn the picture upside down on to a clean piece of paper. Using a pen or pencil, the children can draw a picture on the back of your coloured sheet. The picture will transfer to their clean page in multi-colour.

Crayon and Paint

Give the children thick paper to draw on, and then use watered down paint to brush over the top. The crayon will resist being coloured, and the background will become nicely washed.

Crayon Rubbings

Go hunting with the children to find all sorts of treasures you can use to make patterns – leaves, coins, twigs, and even a patch on your driveway! Lay the paper over the top of your treasure, and have the children lightly rub the crayon over the top. The patterns and textures on your treasure will show through like magic.

Rainbow Crayons

Instead of throwing away your small broken crayons, make new multi-coloured ones in your oven. Simply put all your broken crayons into muffin tins and bake at 175°C until they are all melted together. Remove the tray from the oven, and the crayons will simply pop out when cold.



Remember you don't have to constantly provide special craft activities; good old drawing has enormous value. Simply have heaps of paper on hand, and put your crayons in a container where the children can choose colours easily. Encourage the children to draw often, and don't be disheartened if they seem to race through the paper with apparent scribbles. Scribbling is an important part of their development which leads onto pre-writing skills. The more they scribble, the closer the next stage becomes.

Article *Crayon Crafts for Young Children* Published July 2007, Kerri Tilby

PAINTING ACTIVITIES

Experimenting with Marbles

Cut a piece of paper so that it is the same height as a Pringles tin or baby food tin. Roll the paper up (like you are making a telescope), and put the paper inside the tin. The paper will start to unroll, and sit up tight against the sides of the can. Drop 2-3 marbles into saucers of different coloured paint, and then drop the marbles into the tin can. Put on the lid and have your kids shake the can about. The marbles leave 'snail prints' all over the paper and your child loves being allowed to make lots of noise!

Experiment with Brushes

Instead of giving the children standard brushes, let them experiment with a range of different brushes or tools. Educational toy stores sell lots of different painting tools including sponge brushes, fan brushes, rollers and scrapers, or let them explore household objects as a way to apply the paint.

Experimenting with String

Make string prints by laying a piece of string in a saucer of paint, making sure it is well coated. Carefully pull the string out of the dish and arrange it on a piece of paper, then lie a clean piece of paper on top. Press down firmly with your top piece to make a cool string print. Repeating the process with more pieces of string, and different coloured paint will let the children create some truly amazing designs.

Experimenting with Bubbles

Bubble printing is a fun way to use paint, and it is a great way to teach children about sucking and blowing. Start by filling a bowl with water up to about the 2/3 mark, then add a good squirt of dishwashing liquid and splash it around. Add a tablespoon or two of water based paint and mix it until it is all dissolved. Using a straw, have the children blow bubbles in the bowl, until the mixture rises right to the top. Lay a piece of paper over the top of the bowl, and the coloured bubbles make incredible bubble prints.



Experimenting with Colours

Teach children about mixing colours by making blotter bugs. Fold a piece of paper in half, and then open it to make a line down the centre. Ask them to put a splodge of one colour paint on one half, then a splodge of a second colour paint on the other. Fold the paper in half again, and press it down to mix the colours. Once the paint is dry, children can use a black marker to add details and turn the blot into a bug.

Experimenting with Powder Paint

Brush water onto a thick piece of paper so that the whole page is completely damp. Have the children flick dry powder paint onto the page, and watch the magic appear. The powder paint mixes with the water on the page and creates amazing Monet like paintings. These paintings always look incredible, but can get a bit messy if the children get carried away with the flicking.



Experimenting with Everyday Items

Put small amounts of paint into saucers and give children feathers, toothpicks and cotton buds to use. Other great tools for them to explore with are plastic forks, sponges, corrugated cardboard, hair combs, and cotton wool.

REMEMBER, PAINTING IS ALL ABOUT HAVING FUN.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE END PRODUCT SO MUCH; LET THE CHILDREN ENJOY THE PROCESS. YOU WILL BE SURPRISED BY WHAT THEY COME UP WITH.

CRAFTS ON A BUDGET

Sourcing Materials

Most shops will carry art and craft items. However, it pays to shop around; prices vary greatly from one shop to another. Discount stores generally have a range of basic materials such as paper, glue, paper plates etc. You will also find much better deals online for bulk items such as pipe cleaners, wiggly eyes etc.; best of all you can price the items and have them delivered to the person responsible for making the order own home.



Money Saving Tips

Keep a close eye out in discount stores for bargains. Materials can be expensive so watch out for the following:

- Cheap rolls of greaseproof paper which can be used for many projects such as tracing, using with crayons and play dough.
- Large boxes of crayons or makers can be excellent value.
- Odd rolls of wallpaper are excellent for drawing on as a group. You could cut out patterns from the paper for collage work or use lining paper which you can paint for rubbings.

The Great Outdoors

Why not look to nature for materials to use in your art and crafts. You are surrounded by items perfect for low cost crafts outdoors. Plan your crafts around the seasons when materials will be plentiful and free. If you walk to your parent, baby and toddler group or are out on a family walk why not bring keep an eye out for inspiring items to use in your groups crafts. Look out for the following depending on the season:

- Pine cones, leaves and twigs. Dip these materials in paint or use for rubbings for stunning results. Leaves can be used as collage materials or you could make bug shapes by adding legs to a leaf glued onto a sheet.
- Feathers can be used as an alternative to a paintbrush. They can be used on collages or cut out shapes such as Easter chicks.
- Pebbles and shells gathered up from the beach are excellent to have in your craft box. Plain pebbles can be painted to create a pet or a funny character. You can cover the pebbles in PVA glue once completed to make waterproof.

Everyday Household Items

- **Dried pasta** is excellent for making jewellery and picture frames.
- **Rice, dried peas and beans** are excellent for musical instruments.
- **Fruit and vegetables** make super stamps for decorating pages or just having fun.
- **Left over tea and coffee** can be used for a wash background on projects, just paint on and let dry before letting the children loose with their paint.

Reduce, Reuse and Recycle

Household items can easily be used as craft materials rather than dumping in the bin. Keep a box in your group especially for recycled items, alternatively if you know a number of weeks in advance a project which will need a large number of the same item get each member to gather up items and bring in on the morning of the craft. Things to keep in your box include:

- Cereal packets
- Plastic cartons and pots
- Egg boxes
- Cardboard roll
- Corks
- Packing materials e.g. polystyrene chips, bubble wrap and corrugated card.



PLAY DOUGH RECIPE

Materials

- 1 cup plain flour
- 1/4 cup salt
- 1 tablespoon cooking oil
- A few drops of food colouring
- 1/2 cup water

Directions

1. Mix the flour and salt together in a large bowl.
2. Make a well in the centre of the dry ingredients and pour in the oil.
3. Add a few drops of food colouring to the 1/2 cup water and mix to combine.
4. Add the coloured liquid, a little at a time, to the flour and oil.
5. Knead until the mixture is smooth and has the consistency of scone dough. If the mixture is too dry, add more water. Likewise, if the mixture is too sticky, add more flour.

IDEAS FOR CRAFTS

There are lot of website with ideas for fun arts and crafts activities with children. The following is a sample:

www.spoonful.com/crafts

www.artfulparent.com

www.enchantedlearning.com

www.fun.familyeducation.com

www.things2make.com

www.channel4.com/4homes/how-to/craft/crafts-for-kids

www.kidspot.com.au/kids-activities-and-games/craft-activities+1.htm

Games and Activities

Group activities will be enjoyed by the children and will enhance their co-ordination, their listening skills, their comprehension and their gross motor skills.

Ribbon Rings

All toddlers are entranced by bubbles! Blow bubbles and watch the children chase them, catch them and pop them.

Freeze Dance

Use the CD player and have somebody to switch down the volume of the music. Encourage the children to dance to the music and when the music stops they have to freeze. This encourages listening and movement, social skills and balance.

Toddler Basketball

Use a few medium sized balls and a large container for example a laundry basket, cardboard box or a plastic basin.

Encourage the very young children to drop the balls into the container.

Encourage the older toddlers to stand back and throw the balls into the container.

This activity improves hand eye co-ordination, gross motor skills, and spatial awareness.

Ball play

Most toddlers are able to throw a ball before they can catch it. Start by rolling a ball to the younger toddlers. With the older toddlers a slightly deflated beach ball makes it easier for them to catch when it is thrown.

Magnify Matters

Enhance children's curiosity with a magnifying glass. All the group needs is a magnifying glass, pine cones, a stuffed toy, fingers and toes. Children learn about size, distance, proportion from this type of play.

Magnet Magic

Children are always fascinated with magnets. Gather several items, some with magnetic properties and others without magnetic properties. Place the items in a container and cover them with sand or rice or dried beans (or a mixture of all three). Let the children explore the container with the magnets pulling out the items with magnetic properties. Children will learn the power of magnetism.



Walking the Line

Children love to balance and walk on a low wall. The group can create a walk the line by using duct tape on the floor and the children encouraged to balance as they walk on the line.



Bean Bag Bowling

Throwing bean bags can be a great activity that encourages children to take turn and learn cause and effect. This activity is easier for young children if they are sitting down. This activity can be created with large lightweight bottles and bean bags or soft ball, even pin cushions without the pins!

Footstep Fun

As toddlers grow they love to step onto squares. Create footsteps by cutting out the shape of children shoes in different coloured paper (red, yellow and blue) as this can encourage the learning of colours too. Then paste the footprints onto squares of heavy duty cardboard and use them to create a path for children to follow.

Up, Up and Away

Using a large piece of fabric, voile, light blanket or a small parachute and a beach ball, encourage the children to hold on to the edges and toss the ball up in the air and try to catch it in the fabric.

Jump on Target

Jumping is a huge accomplishment for toddlers. Children can be encouraged to jump on a target. The target can be made from a chalk mark on the floor or the ground. Children can also be encouraged to jump onto a large bean bag.



Songs & Nursery Rhymes

The importance of singing songs and nursery rhymes with children cannot be underestimated. In her book, *Reading Magic*, acclaimed Australian author, Mem Fox states that “Experts in literacy and child development have discovered that if children know eight nursery rhymes by heart by the time they’re four years old, they’re usually among the best readers by the time they’re eight.”



Learning nursery rhymes by heart helps children to engage in social routines that encourage skills like turn-taking and listening, which are vital for the development of conversation. Children learn to predict and anticipate what’s coming next. Nursery rhymes give children great opportunities to develop their vocabulary, and to build memory and comprehension.”

CIRCLE SONGS

Ring, A Ring A Rosy

Ring a ring a rosy
A pocket full of posies
A tishoo, a tishoo
We all fall down
Mummy in the teapot (remain seated in floor)
Daddy in the cup (pretend to drink)
One, two, three (clap hands together)
And we all jump up! (Jump up quickly)

The Mulberry Bush

Here we go around the mulberry bush
The mulberry bush, the mulberry bush
Here we go around the mulberry bush
On a cold and frosty morning

This is the way we clap our hands...
This is the way we stamp our feet...
This is the way we turn around...
This is the way we reach and stretch...
This is the way we sit right down...
This is the way we jump back up...

The Farmer's in his Den

The farmer's in his den, the farmer's in his den
Ee-i, ee-i, the farmer's in his den

The farmer wants a wife, the farmers wants a wife
Ee-i, ee-i, the farmer wants a wife

The wife wants a child, the wife wants a child
Ee-i, ee-i, the wife wants a child

The child wants a nurse, the child wants a nurse
Ee-i, ee-i, the child wants a nurse

The nurse wants a dog, the nurse wants a dog
Ee-i, ee-i, the nurse wants a dog

The dog wants a bone, the dog wants a bone
Ee-i, ee-i, the dog wants a bone

We all pat the bone, we all pat the bone
Ee-i, ee-i, we all pat the bone

ACTION SONGS

Teddy Bear, Teddy Bear

Teddy bear, teddy bear, turn around
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch the ground
Teddy bear, teddy bear, touch your shoe
Teddy bear, teddy bear, crawl right through (have children crawl through a tunnel of chairs)

The Wheels on the Bus

The wheels on the bus go round and round
Round and round
Round and round
The wheels on the bus go round and round
All day long!

The bell on the bus goes 'Ding, Ding, Ding!'
'Ding, Ding, Ding!'
'Ding, Ding, Ding!'
The bell on the bus goes 'Ding, Ding, Ding!'
All day long!

The wipers on the bus go 'Swish, Swish, Swish!'
'Swish, Swish, Swish!'
'Swish, Swish, Swish!'
The wipers on the bus go 'Swish, Swish, Swish!'
All day long!

The driver on the bus says, 'Any more fares?'
'Any more fares?'
'Any more fares?'
The driver on the bus says, 'Any more fares?'
All day long!
All day long!

Heads and Shoulders

Heads, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
Heads, shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes
And eyes and ears, and mouth and nose
Heads and shoulders, knees and toes, knees and toes

The Bear Went Over The Mountain

The bear went over the mountain
The bear went over the mountain
The bear went over the mountain
To see what he could see

To see what he could see,
To see what he could see

The bear went over the mountain
The bear went over the mountain
The bear went over the mountain
To see what he could see

If You're Happy and You Know It

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it
and you really want to show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands

If you're happy and you know it, stamp your feet.....
If you're happy and you know it, nod your head.....
If you're happy and you know it, shout 'WE ARE'.....

If you're happy and you know it, do all four
Clap your hands, stamp your feet, nod your head and shout 'WE ARE'.
If you're happy and you know it, do all four
Clap your hands, stamp your feet, nod your head and shout 'WE ARE'.
If you're happy and you know it
and you really want to show it
If you're happy and you know it, do all four

Clap your hands, stamp your feet, nod your head and shout 'WE ARE'.

Bears are Sleeping *(to the tune of "Frere Jacques")*

Bears are sleeping
Bears are sleeping
In their caves, in their caves
Waiting for the springtime
Waiting for the springtime
Shh! Shh! Shh!
Shh! Shh! Shh!

Row, Row, Row Your Boat

Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily
Life is but a dream

Row, row, row your boat
Gently up the stream
If you see a little crocodile
Don't forget to scream!

Pat A Cake

Pat a cake, Pat a cake, baker's man
Bake me a cake as fast as you can
Pat it and prick it and mark it with a 'B'
And put it in the oven for Baby and me
For baby and me
For baby and me
Put it in the oven for Baby and me

Old MacDonald

Old MacDonald had a farm
Ee i ee i oh!
And on that farm he had some chickens
Ee i ee i oh!
With a cluck-cluck here
And a cluck-cluck there
Here a cluck, there a cluck
Everywhere a cluck-cluck
Old MacDonald had a farm
Ee i ee i oh!
Old MacDonald had a farm
Ee i ee i oh!
And on that farm he had some ducks, dogs, cows, sheep.....

COUNTING SONGS

Five Little Speckled Frogs

Five little speckled frogs
Sat on a speckled log
Eating some most delicious bugs
Yum Yum!
One jumped into the pool
Where it was nice and cool
Then there were four speckled frogs
Glug Glug!

Four little speckled frogs.....
Three little speckled frogs.....
Two little speckled frogs.....
One little speckled frog.....

One 1, Two 2, Three 3, Four 4, Five 5

One, two, three, four, five
Once I caught a fish alive
Six, seven, eight, nine, ten
Then I let it go again
Why did I let it go?
Because it bit my finger so
Which finger did it bite?
The little one upon the right

NURSERY RHYMES

Baa Baa Black Sheep

Baa baa black sheep, have you any wool?
Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full!
One for the master, one for the dame,
And one for the little boy who lives down the lane.

Hey Diddle Diddle

Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle
The cow jumped over the moon
The little dog laughed to see such fun
And the dish ran away with the spoon!

Incy Wincy Spider

Incy Wincy spider climbing up the spout
Down came the rain and washed the spider out
Out came the sunshine and dried up all the rain
And Incy Wincy spider climbed up the spout again

Jack And Jill Went Up The Hill

Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after
Up Jack got, and home did trot
As fast as he could caper
He went to bed to mend his head
With vinegar and brown paper

Little Bo Peep

Little Bo-Peep has lost her sheep
And can't tell where to find them
Leave them alone, And they'll come home
Wagging their tails behind them

Mary Had A Little Lamb

Mary had a little lamb,
Its fleece was white as snow
And everywhere that Mary went
The lamb was sure to go
He followed her to school one day
Which was against the rule
It made the children laugh and play
To see a lamb at school

Old King Cole

Old King Cole
Was a merry old soul
And a merry old soul was he
He called for his pipe
And he called for his bowl
And he called for his fiddlers three!
And every fiddler, he had a fine fiddle
And a very fine fiddle had he
"Twee tweedle dee, tweedle dee, went the fiddlers
Oh, there's none so rare
As can compare
With King Cole and his fiddlers three

Pop Goes The Weasel

Half a pound of tuppenny rice
Half a pound of treacle
That's the way the money goes
Pop! goes the weasel
Up and down the City road
In and out the Eagle
That's the way the money goes
Pop! goes the weasel

Section 6:

Aistear for Parents



Aistear is the Irish early childhood curriculum framework for children from birth to six years. The aim of the Aistear curriculum is to expose your child to meaningful and appropriate learning experiences and opportunities. Aistear will help your child to grow and develop as a competent and confident learner through relationships, communication, exploration and play.

Learning opportunities are planned and organised under the following four themes:

- **Well-being**
- **Identity and Belonging**
- **Communicating**
- **Exploring and Thinking**

The theme of **well-being** is about providing play and learning experiences that enable your child to be confident, happy and healthy.

The theme of **identity and belonging** promotes your child's sense of who they are so that they feel valued and respected as a unique individual.

The theme of **communicating** involves your child learning to communicate and share his/her experiences, thoughts and ideas with others in a variety of ways. The theme of **exploring and thinking** enables your child to make sense of what he/she sees, feels and experiences in the world by thinking, questioning, experimenting, discussing and through practical hands-on experiences.

By experiencing learning opportunities organised under Aistear's four learning themes, your child will learn and develop: dispositions, skills, attitudes, knowledge and understanding

Why are dispositions important?

Through the use of Aistear, the early childhood service will nurture your child's learning dispositions so that they are ready, willing and able to learn. Positive dispositions such as confidence, curiosity, imagination, concentration, responsibility and independence will be nurtured, developed and strengthened through caring and responsive relationships with adults in the setting. Positive dispositions enable your child to deal with challenges, take risks, set realistic expectations, develop positive relationships with others and can have an impact on their lifelong learning.

What skills will my child learn?

Through playing games and interactions with others, your child will develop skills such as turn-taking, sharing, listening, language and communication, problem-solving and negotiating.

These are important for building relationships and social skills.

Play will also enable your child to practice and refine physical skills, for example, hopping, balancing and manipulating objects and materials.

What knowledge and understanding will my child develop?

Play is your child's way of exploring ideas and investigating how the world works. An engaging play environment both, indoors and outdoors, will provide your child with developmentally appropriate opportunities and resources to extend his/her sense of wonder, discovery and imagination. Your child will learn to express his/her feelings and thoughts through story-telling, music, drama and art. Your child will use books for enjoyment, as a source of information and to develop early reading skills (e.g. predicting the story from the pictures, turning pages, reading from left to right and from top to bottom). Your child will develop an awareness and understanding of numbers, size, shape, pattern and colour through matching, sequencing and sorting activities.

See the following tip sheets from the NCCA:

- **Tip-sheet for parents of babies (birth—18 months)**
- **Tip-sheet for parents of toddlers (12 months—3 years)**
- **Tip-sheet for parents of young children (2½—6 years)**

