

# Learning Materials

Materials have the potential to draw you in, make you want to stay a while, explore a little (or a lot), try new things, create and wonder. They also have the potential to completely turn you away. In a Reggio-inspired environment, as with many other play-based, child-led environments, the materials are carefully selected for their potential to enhance learning and discovery.

Below we will look at Reggio Inspired Learning Materials.

**Reggio-inspired materials are typically:**

- aesthetically pleasing
- sensory
- open-ended
- authentic (real rather than plastic, or a child's version)
- natural
- interesting
- inviting.

**They are selected to:**

- respond to children's interests
- stimulate thinking
- revisit prior learning
- support creativity
- ignite curiosity
- encourage exploration
- empower
- engage
- test theories

Many materials found in Reggio-inspired environments are easily and cheaply sourced. Visit your local Charity shops for scarves, table clothes, vases, buttons, kitchen utensils, tea sets - all manner of things! Or ask parents to bring in materials from home.

**Think outside as well as in.** Natural materials, such as tree stumps or tree cookies, lend themselves beautifully to creative and imaginative play. Old kitchen utensils can find a new home outdoors:

**Children are experts in seeing the potential in these objects.** With the simple addition of common objects such as corks, bottle caps, material scraps and ceramic tiles to a block area play can flourish:

**A range of different mirrors** can be used as backgrounds, surfaces, loose parts, tiles for clay or other art experiences and investigations:

**Attention is paid to how materials are displayed.** Clear containers, woven baskets and wooden trays all provide a neutral backdrop that doesn't detract from the materials within. Uncluttered, clean and organised storage empowers children to make their own choices:

Source: [www.letthechildrenplay.net](http://www.letthechildrenplay.net)



## Contact Details for Limerick Childcare Committee

Limerick Childcare Committee,  
Lower Ground Floor, Croom Mills, Croom, Co. Limerick  
Tel. 061 600918 Fax. 061 600898  
Email. [info@limerickchildcare.ie](mailto:info@limerickchildcare.ie) [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)

## Join Us on Facebook and Twitter!

Limerick Childcare Committee (LCC)  
is now on Facebook and Twitter. The links can be found on our website  
[www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)

'Like' or 'Follow' LCC to keep up to date on the work of LCC,  
including training and information sessions.



Disclaimer: Opinions expressed in this Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Limerick Childcare Committee  
Publisher: Limerick Childcare Committee  
Editor: Catriona Sheehy  
Designer: AVID Graphic Design



AVID Graphic Design 061 328046



## WINTER NEWSLETTER 2015



- |   |                                      |   |
|---|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1. Budget 2016                            | 7. DES Education Focused Inspections | 13. Professional Development Opportunities (Training) |
| 2. Schemes - ECCE, CCS and TEC            | 8. Love Parenting                    | 14. Outside Play/Nature                               |
| 3. Capital Funding for Limerick           | 9. Language and Interactions         | 15. City Office                                       |
| 4. DCYA List of Recognised Qualifications | 10. Aistear Awards                   | 16. New Website                                       |
| 5. Learner Fund 3                         | 11. Aistear Síolta Practice Guide    | 17. Activity - Learning Materials                     |
| 6. Bursary Fund to Support Training       | 12. Child Protection Training        |   |

Limerick Childcare Committee, Lower Ground Floor, Croom Mills, Croom, Co. Limerick  
Tel. 061 600918 Fax. 061 600898 Email. [info@limerickchildcare.ie](mailto:info@limerickchildcare.ie) [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)



# Budget 2016 Childcare Package

As part of Budget 2016, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr James Reilly announced an €85m Childcare Package. This will include a number of key elements outlined below.

## Expansion of the Free Pre-School Year

Currently, children who are aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months are eligible for 38 weeks’ of free pre-school when they register for the programme. The ECCE programme is aligned with the school year; children register in September.

From September 2016, children will be able to register for free pre-school when they are aged 3, and will be able to remain in pre-school until they make the transition to primary school (provided they are not older 5 years 6 months at the end of the pre-school year i.e. the end of June).

Children will be able to enrol in pre-school at three different points in the year – September, January and April – so that children can begin pre-school shortly after they reach age 3. See table below for eligibility dates for 2015/2016 and 2016/2017 Pre-School Years.

Cavan Childcare Committee have compiled a more detailed table of eligibility for children born in 2012, 2013 and 2014. This can be viewed on [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie) under ‘ECCE Calculator’

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) have produced a ‘Frequently Asked Questions’ document on the Expansion of the Free Pre-School Year. This can be viewed at [www.dcyia.ie](http://www.dcyia.ie) under ‘Childcare’

In line with this expansion of free pre-school, capitation payments to Providers will be fully restored to pre-2012 levels (Standard Capitation of €64.50per week/ Higher Capitation of €75 per week), from 1st September 2016.

This measure will increase current investment in free pre-school (i.e. €172.4 million) by €47 million in 2016.

To be eligible for the Free Pre-School Year from The child must have been born between the dates below (including start and finish date)

September 2014-June 2015	2nd February 2010 and the 30th June 2011
September 2015-June 2016	2nd February 2011 and the 30th June 2012
September 2016-June 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st August 2013
January 2017-June 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st December 2013
April 2017-June 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st March 2014



## Accessible Pre-school for Children with Special Needs

Budget 2016 provides funding to implement a new model of support for children with special needs. The model comprises seven different levels of support – both universal and targeted – to enable children with disabilities to fully benefit from free pre-school. These are outlined below.

1. An Inclusive Culture: includes training dedicated Inclusion Co-ordinators in pre-schools, and a small capitation increase for particular childcare services to support fully inclusive practice;
2. Information for Parents & Providers: includes development of a national website and information packs for parents and providers;
3. A Qualified & Confident Workforce: resourcing formal and informal training for early years practitioners to support more inclusive provision;
4. Expert Educational Advice & Support: enhancing the Better Start Early Years Specialist Service so that practitioners have prompt access to advice and support from experts in early years education for children with disabilities;

5. Equipment, Appliances & Minor Alterations: capital grants to fund specialised equipment, appliances, assistive technology, or minor building alterations so that children with disabilities can participate in pre-school;
6. Therapeutic Intervention: additional resources to enable access to HSE therapeutic services, where these are needed to allow a child enrol, and fully participate in, pre-school.
7. Additional Assistance: where the supports available at levels 1-6 are not sufficient to meet a child’s needs, additional capitation can be made available to childcare providers to support the pre-school leader to ensure children’s full participation. This could include, for example, buying in additional support, or, in particular circumstances, reducing the staff:child ratio.

Funding of €15m has been provided to phase supports in during 2016, with a full year cost of around €33m from 2017 onwards.

## Quality Child Care

Budget 2016 funds a number of measures to build the quality of childcare provision, including:

**An Audit of Childcare Quality:** to provide a solid evidence base on which to build quality. Regular audits over time will measure the impact of investment on higher quality;

**Learner Fund:** further investment in the Learner Fund will help Ireland’s childcare sector to move towards the professionalised workforce that characterises high quality childcare systems;

**Síolta Quality Assurance:** independent accreditation under the Síolta programme provides an objective quality mark. Funding in Budget 2016 will support further roll-out of the quality assurance programme, so that more children benefit from high quality care.

**Enhanced Inspection:** an expanded childcare inspection team to monitor compliance with new childcare regulations to be introduced shortly, and to build the education-focused inspections which DCYA began funding this year.

The funding of €3.5m provided for these quality measures in 2016 will be built upon over coming years.

## Affordable Childcare

Budget 2016 provides two initiatives focused on increasing the affordability of childcare, to lay the foundation for providing more affordable childcare to a broader range of families.

**A Single Affordable Childcare Programme:** Budget 2016 resources a dedicated Project Team to develop a single Affordable Childcare Programme to provide working families with good quality childcare at a cost they can afford. Work on the Affordable Childcare programme will begin immediately, so that it can be in place by 2017. This single programme will replace existing targeted measures Community Childcare Subvention (CCS), along with the Training & Employment Childcare (TEC) programmes, comprising After-School Childcare (ASCC), Childcare Education & Training Support (CETS), and Community Employment Childcare (CEC), providing a new simplified subsidy programme, provided through both community/not-for-profit and private childcare providers. The objective is to make childcare more affordable for more families.

**Community Childcare Subvention:** Under Budget 2016, Dr. James Reilly, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has announced a major package of strategic investment in affordable, quality and accessible childcare. Part of this package involves expansion of the CCS Programme, to be rolled out in the coming months. This expansion will be rolled out in phases:

### Phase 1:

Lifting the Full Time Equivalent Caps within existing CCS services (with effect from October 2015)

### Phase 2:

Expansion of the CCS Programme to Community/Not-for-Profit childcare providers (with effect from November 2015) Only services actively in contract with the DCYA under at least one of the other childcare funding programmes (ECCE and/or TEC) and already have access to the Programmes Implementation Platform (PIP) may submit expressions of interest to join the CCS Programme.

To be eligible for Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) funding, all services must be legally constituted or operate under another legally constituted body. The service shall be a not-for-profit organisation, limited company by guarantee, religious organisation, School Board of Management or State Body.

### Phase 3:

Expansion of the CCS Programme to a targeted number of private childcare providers (with effect from early 2016).

The 2015 CCS Expansion does not apply to private childcare providers. A separate CCS expansion catering for a targeted number of private providers will commence in early 2016. Further details will be made available from December 2015

## After-School Care

A number of measures are included to support the development of more after-school childcare options.

A €3 million capital fund will support childcare providers (both community/not-for-profit and private) who need minor funding to develop after-school services using existing school and other accessible community facilities. Work will also begin on the development of a Quality Framework for After-School provision, along with a consultation with children on their views about after-school childcare.

The DCYA has published a set of ‘Questions and Answers’ on the Budget 2016 Package, which is being updated on an on-going basis. This can be viewed at [www.dcyia.ie](http://www.dcyia.ie) under ‘Childcare’



# Parent's - Are you Eligible for Free or Reduced Rate Childcare?

## Free Pre-school Year ECCE Scheme

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, provides free pre-school for children. Each pre-school year runs from September to June.

To be eligible for the Free Pre-School Commencing	The child must have been born between the dates below (including start and finish date)
September 2014-June 2015	2nd February 2010 and the 30th June 2011
September 2015-June 2016	2nd February 2011 and the 30th June 2012
September 2016-June- 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st August 2013
January 2017-June 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st December 2013
April 2017-June 2017	1st January 2012 and the 31st March 2014

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme, provides free pre-school for children. Each pre-school year runs from September to June.

At present to be eligible to enter the scheme, the child must be aged more than 3 years 2 months and less than 4 years 7 months on the 1st September, in that pre-school year.

From September 2016, the scheme will be extended to allow access to children from the age of 3 years up to the time they commence Primary School. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has set, 3 entry points during each year:

- September for children who turn 3yrs on or before the 31st August
- January for children who turn 3yrs on or before the 31st December
- April for children who turn 3yrs on or before the 31st March

Participation in the ECCE Scheme is available in both community/not-for-profit and private childcare services.

The scheme provides each eligible child with free pre-school for 3hrs per day, 5 days per week.

The service can charge for additional hours and optional extras, such as school tours, but parents are not obliged to avail of these. If a service charges for optional extras they must provide the parent with an 'Optional Extra's' Letter.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) have produced a 'Frequently Asked Questions' document on the Expansion of the Free Pre-School Year. This can be viewed at [www.dcy.a.ie](http://www.dcy.a.ie) under 'Childcare'

### How to Apply?

In general, children enter the scheme during September of each year. Parents contact an Early Year's Service which operates the ECCE Scheme and enrol their child. The service will provide them with a Registration Form. Once this form is completed, the service applies directly to the DCYA for a place for the child using the PIP System (Programme Implementation Platform) which checks the child's date of birth against their PPSN to ensure they are eligible.

Late Entries: Children can enter at any stage during the scheme year which runs from September to June, provided they meet the age criteria set out by the DCYA.

### Transferring to a New Service:

Parents can also transfer their child from one service to another during the year, by giving one month's notice to their Early Year's Service. The first service needs to provide the parent with a Parental Declaration Form (printed frm PIP) and this is given to the new service by the parent.

## Childcare for Low Income Families CCS Scheme

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme is offered in 40 community childcare services in Limerick. The scheme provides access to reduced rate childcare for parents in receipt of social welfare/low incomes.

To access the scheme children must be attending a participating service during the reference week set by the DCYA. In 2015 the reference week was the 5th to 9th October. In general this is the only time a child can join the scheme, there are exceptions, outlined below:

- Where a child in receipt of CCS funding leaves the scheme, the service can reallocate the remaining funding to another child whose parent meet the eligibility criteria
- A parent of an infant aged birth to 12 months unable to apply for CCS subvention before/during the snapshot week may do so at any stage during the CCS year. Certain criteria apply and are available on the DCYA website.

For further information please see

### Hours of Subvention

<b>Full-Day Subvention</b> Child's attendance (hrs per day): <b>Minimum 5hrs+</b>
<b>Part-Time Subvention</b> Child's attendance (hrs per day): <b>Minimum 3hrs 31mins - maximum 5hrs</b>
<b>Sessional Subvention</b> Child's attendance (hrs per day): <b>Minimum 2hrs 16mins - maximum 3hrs 30mins</b>
<b>Half-Session Subvention</b> Child's attendance (hrs per day): <b>Minimum 1hr - maximum 2hrs 15mins</b>

- \* Certain restrictions apply to Parents in receipt of Illness/Injury
- \*\* Benefit, Job Seekers Benefit/Allowance and Supplementary
- \*\*\* Welfare Allowance. For details please see 'Reducing your Childcare Costs - A Guide for Parents' available on [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)

Table 1 - Eligibility Criteria

Band A - Recipients with medical card	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One Parent Family Payment</li><li>• Widows/Widowers Pension</li><li>• Pre-retirement Allowance</li><li>• Farm Assist</li><li>• State Pension</li><li>• Blind Pension</li><li>• Guardian's Payment</li><li>• Illness/Injury Benefit***</li><li>• Disability Allowance</li><li>• Carer's Benefit/Allowance</li><li>• Back to Work Enterprise/Education Allowance</li><li>• Community Employment/Rural Social Scheme</li><li>• Domiciliary Care Allowance</li><li>• Family Income Supplement (FIS)</li><li>• Secondary School students</li><li>• Invalidity Pension</li><li>• Disablement Pension</li><li>• Official Tusla Referrals (no medical card required)</li><li>• HSE Public Health Nurse referrals (no medical card required)</li></ul>	Full-Day Payment €95
	Part-Time Payment €47.50
	Sessional Payment €31.35
	Half Session Payment €15.20
Band AJ - Recipients with medical card*	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Job Seekers Benefit/Allowance</li><li>• Supplementary Welfare Allowance**</li><li>• TÚS</li><li>• Part-time Job Incentive Scheme</li><li>• Gateway</li></ul> <p>Full subvention will apply to parents availing of sessional and half day places, but where the child attends full day care, the maximum subvention is €50 per week.</p>	Full-Day Payment €50.00
	Part-Time Payment €47.50
	Sessional Payment €31.35
	Half Session Payment €15.20
Band B	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Medical Card</li><li>• GP Visit Card (over 6yr+ only)</li><li>• Parents who are in receipt of Social Welfare payments listed under Band A/AJ but have no medical card</li><li>• Parents who no longer qualify for Band A/AJ this year, but who were verified as being on Band A/AJ at the end of the previous school year.</li></ul>	Full-Day Payment €50.00
	Part-Time Payment €25.00
	Sessional Payment €17.00
	Half Session Payment €8.50

For general information on the above Childcare Schemes please see [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie) or contact us on [info@limerickchildcare.ie](mailto:info@limerickchildcare.ie) or 061 600918 if you have a specific enquiry.



# Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Programmes

The TEC Programmes consists of:

## The Childcare Education and Training Support Programme (CETS)

The purpose of the programme, is to support parents on eligible training courses, by providing subsidised childcare places. CETS is administered on behalf of the Department of Education. Places can be full-time, part-time, after-school only or after-school with pick up. ETB/Solas have sole responsibility for deciding who is eligible to avail of the CETS Programme

## The After-school Childcare Programme (ASCC)

The purpose of the programme, is to support low income and unemployed people to take up a job (including JobPlus); increase their days of employment; or take up a place on a DSP Employment Programme. The programme provides subsidised after-school childcare for certain DSP customers, who have children of primary school age. The DSP have sole responsibility for deciding who is eligible to avail of the ASCC Programme.

## The Community Employment Childcare Programme (CEC)

CE Childcare (CEC) Programme, is administered on behalf of the Department of Social Protection (DSP). The programme provides part-time or afterschool care for children up to 13 years of age, where a parent is participating on a CE Scheme. The DSP have sole responsibility for deciding who is eligible to avail of this strand of the CEC Programme.

## How to apply?

To apply for a place the parent must obtain a letter from the relevant agency (ETB, Solas or DSP) and present this to an Early Year's Service participating in TEC. Parents can use the 'Search for Childcare' option on [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie) to search for a childcare place by scheme type, that is CETS, ASCC or CEC

If the service can accommodate the child they make an application on PIP to register the child. To make an application the service will require the parent to provide a letter of eligibility, proof of PPSN for parent and child/children and the parent must complete a Registration Form.

It is important to note that they are a limited number of TEC places available nationally, as such it is possible that a parent who is eligible for one of the TEC strands may not get a place.

**For all Schemes** the Early Year's Service must provide the parent with a copy of the following, which has been stamped 'Approved' by Limerick Childcare Committee.

- Fee Payment Policy for the Service
- A Parent Letter in relation to the Scheme Type
- A Calendar for the Scheme (ECCE, CCS or TEC). This marks the days the service is open

Parents who have queries on the information they have received from the service or who have not received the above, should contact Limerick Childcare Committee.

For general information on the above Childcare Schemes or to download a copy of A Parent's Guide to the National Childcare Funding Programmes 2015 /2016' which provides an overview of the ECCE, CCS and TEC Childcare Programmes, please see 'Schemes' page of [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie) or contact us on [info@limerickchildcare.ie](mailto:info@limerickchildcare.ie) or 061 600918 if you have a specific enquiry.

The DCYA has published an 'Information and Frequently Asked Questions Guide' on the National Schemes. These cover all aspects of each scheme and provide useful information for Early Years Services and Parents. This Guide can be viewed online at [www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie) under Childcare and is entitled 'DCYA Childcare Funding Programmes Information and Frequently Asked Questions'

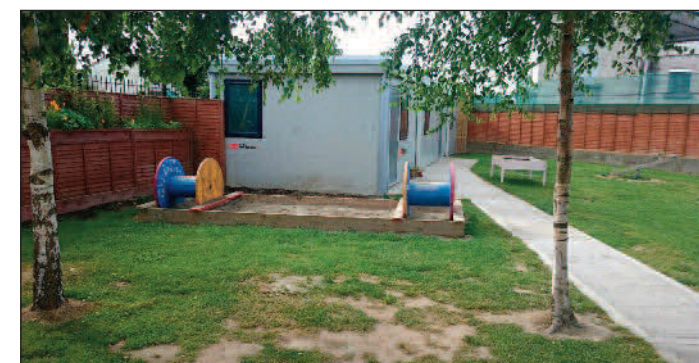
## Capital Funding Approved for Limerick

The Early Years Capital funding for 2015 was announced in July by Minister James Reilly. Just under €7 million has been allocated through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to 2,415 services nationwide. Of these 121 approvals were made in respect of services in Limerick, totaling €643, 320.

The funding was awarded under four strands:

### Strand 1

Croi na nOg, Rathkeale Community Childcare Ltd. has been awarded €415,713. This funding will allow the service to provide a new building for a preschool to replace a temporary portacabin and provide appropriate facilities in which to offer preschool education. It will also provide after-school facilities, which are currently being run from the Rathkeale No 2 School.



### Strand 2 and 3

A total of €177,320 was awarded to 17 services in Limerick under to carry out essential maintenance, quality improvement and sustainability works to improve the Building Energy Rating (BER) of their facilities.

### Strand 4

103 services in Limerick were successful in securing a small scale ICT grant (maximum €500) totaling €50,386.



## DCYA List of Early Years Recognised Qualifications

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has published a list of recognised qualifications, for the purposes of meeting the

- minimum qualification requirement in the pending Early Years Regulations
- contractual requirements for the DCYA Childcare Funding Programmes.

This list will enable employees working in the Early Years sector in Ireland to verify whether the qualifications they hold will be recognised under the pending Early Years Regulations.

It also sets out the qualifications that will be recognized for the purposes of the DCYA Childcare Programmes, in particular, if the qualification they hold meets the requirement for the room leader in the ECCE programme and for a service to receive the ECCE Higher Capitation rate.

Where a qualification is not published on the list of DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications but the holder considers it to be an appropriate Major Award at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or equivalent, the holder can apply to have their qualification assessed for approval.

The list of 'Early Years DCYA Recognised Qualifications' and the 'Qualification Assessment Process' is available on the 'Qualification Requirements' page under the 'Providers' Page of [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)

The list will be converted into a searchable database in the near future and will be updated on a regular basis as other qualifications are approved.

### The Pending Early Years Regulations

Currently Early Years (Childcare Services) operate under the Child Care (Pre-School) Regulations 2006. It is the intention of the DCYA to revoke these regulations and replace them with the Early Years Regulations. The new regulations together with the 'National Standards for Early Years Services' will form the context in which statutory inspections will take place.



### DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications

List of Early Years qualifications recognised for the purposes of meeting the requirements of the Regulations and DCYA Childcare Programmes Contracts.



## Learner Fund 3

In October, Pobal opened the online application process for Learner Fund 3. It will remain open until the middle of December (date not yet confirmed). Learner Fund 3, offers a subsidy towards the cost of training, to support existing Early Years practitioners who wish to continue working directly with children, to attain the minimum qualification, i.e. Level 5, which is required under the revised Pre-School Regulations, due to be published in the coming weeks. Eligible courses must be completed by end of August 2016. Unlike previous rounds of the Learner Fund, applications for Learner Fund 3, may only be submitted by service providers, on behalf of their staff members, with the staff member's authorisation. Also, unlike previously, funding will only be for advanced Level 5 courses. Details of how to apply, can be found on our website [www.limerickchildcare.ie/training/](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie/training/)

### How much will I have to pay towards my course?

- Learner applicants enrolling for a classroom-based course, will contribute €50 per module (up to €400 for a full course) with the Learner Fund contributing €150 per module.
- Learner applicants enrolling for an online or blended course, will contribute €30 per module (up to €240 for a full course) with the Learner Fund contributing €120 per module

### Why should I do a Level 5 course?

It is envisaged that by the end of August 2016, all Early Years practitioners will meet the minimum qualifications necessary, to allow them to remain employed in the sector. If you will not meet the minimum qualifications on the 1st September 2016, you must sign a 'Grandfathering Declaration' stating your intention to retire as an Early Years practitioner before September 2021.

From next September, a service employing a staff member to work directly with children, but who does not satisfy the minimum qualifications criteria and who has not signed a

'Grandfathering Declaration' in their local Childcare Committee office, will be non-compliant with Tusla Pre-School Regulations.

We would advise any Early Years practitioner who may be unsure about their qualifications, to check the DCYA list of Early Years Recognised Qualifications. If your qualification is not published on that list, but you consider it to be an appropriate Major Award at Level 5 on the NFQ or equivalent, you may apply to have the qualification assessed for approval. Completed applications (forms available on [www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie)) can be submitted via email to [eyqualifications@dcya.gov.ie](mailto:eyqualifications@dcya.gov.ie)

### Where can I do this training?

To qualify for funding, the course must be undertaken with an approved training provider. If you are currently undertaking training with an approved training provider, any modules that commenced after the closing date of Learner Fund round 2 (20th November 2014) may be eligible for subsidy. Please check the Approved List of Training Providers on [www.pobal.ie](http://www.pobal.ie).

# TRAINING

## Bursary Fund to Support Training

The Limerick Childcare Committee Bursary Programme, was developed to assist people currently working in the Early Years (Childcare) sector, to access a recognised part-time degree programme in 'Early Childhood Care & Education'. Eligibility was confined to applicants currently employed by a 'TUSLA' registered Early Years Services in Limerick City or County. A limit of 3 applications was allowed from any one Early Years Services.

There was a great response to our initiative from Limerick's early years workers, proving that we have very committed individuals working in this sector who are dedicated to improving the quality of service they offer our youngest citizens.

We received 23 applications for tuition fees. 18 applications were successful, representing 17 childcare services. An average of €555 per student was awarded towards fees for the current academic year. The majority of applicants are pursuing a Level 7 BA in 'Early Childhood Practice' which is offered jointly by Mary Immaculate College and IT Tralee. Other courses being undertaken are NUI Galway's BA in 'Early Childhood Studies & Practice' and a MA in 'Early Childhood Education' at Marino Institute of Education.

We congratulate all the students on their bursary awards and wish them every success with their studies.

## DES Education Focused Inspections



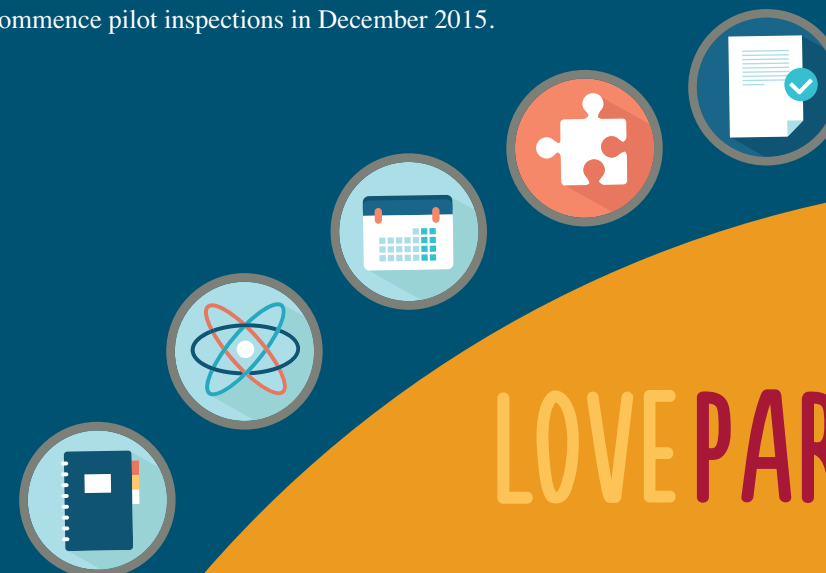
The Early Years Education-focused Inspections will be carried out in ECCE pre-schools by Early Years Inspectors in the Department of Education and Skills Inspectorate. The inspections will monitor the quality of the educational experiences provided for children. They will provide practical advice and recommendations about how provision for children's learning and development in such settings can be improved. The education-focused inspections will complement the regulatory inspections carried out by TUSLA and are one of a range of measures being taken to improve the quality of early years education a "In 2015, we will spend €600,000 on the immediate recruitment of the first ever team of early childhood education inspectors. This consultation will give us the opportunity to make sure that this team will work with the early childhood sector to promote good educational practice." Jan O'Sullivan.

This team were recruited over the summer and will commence pilot inspections in December 2015.

### Early Years Education Inspection Pilot

The DES Inspectorate will conduct a pilot programme of EYEIs during the months of December 2015 and January 2016 in early-years settings participating in the ECCE Scheme. The inspections will be focused on the quality of educational provision for children in the early-years setting. The pilot EYEIs will be conducted in a sample of early-years settings selected from those that expressed interest in participating in the pilot inspections.

Should you have any queries about the pilot programme please email [eyei@education.gov.ie](mailto:eyei@education.gov.ie)



# LOVE PARENTING.IE



Parenting is the most important job in the world, but it is also the most challenging. Nobody can do it by themselves, we all need help from time to time.

'Parenting Limerick' – in conjunction with 'Limerick Children and Young People's Services Committee' and 'Start Right' – officially launched 'loveparenting.ie' earlier this year. This is a new and exciting positive parenting website, acting as a one-stop shop that provides advice, tips and re-assurance about positive parenting.

The website helps parents find their way through the 'Ages & Stages' of their child's development and offers practical advice on building strong relationships through positive interactions. It also has articles covering topics such as bullying, relationships, playing with your child, tips on avoiding and managing tantrums and supporting developmental milestones. It signposts the variety of Limerick-based and national services to parents, as well as providing helpful tips from professionals. There are also lots of downloadable publications about parenting and links to other useful websites. Support is just a click away! Check it out! [www.loveparenting.ie](http://www.loveparenting.ie)

Because being a  
**parent**  
is the most important  
job in the world





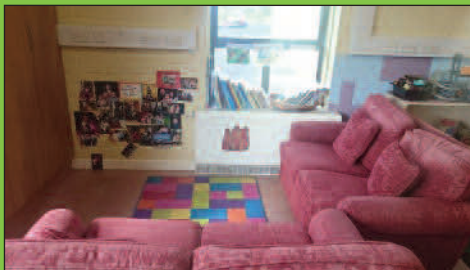
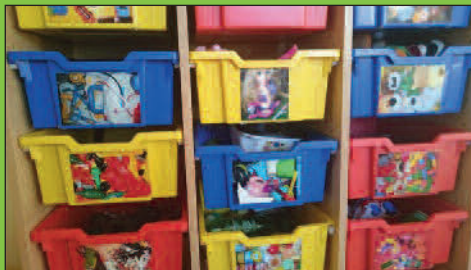
# Interactions and Language Development

‘Aistear’ tells us that children: *‘learn and develop through loving and nurturing relationships with adults and other children, and the quality of these interactions impacts on their learning and development’* (NCCA, 2009, p.9).

In early years settings, through the ordinary and lived experiences of children and adults, interactions occur all day long. There is huge scope for practitioners to transform these interactions into powerful learning opportunities for children. In the busyness of the early years’ environment, it is easy to mistakenly believe we hear what children are trying to tell us, but we can be easily distracted by the surroundings and other draws on our attention. It is worth taking a moment to purposefully tune in to the child - just sit watchfully beside the child and wait for an invitation to play.

Each child needs to know that you are interested in what he/she is doing, saying and thinking – a relaxed attitude will help the child feel at ease and let him/her know you like spending time in his/her company. Creating a safe environment where the child feels confident, will help him/her to be more open and responsive to learning. When you respond to a child, do so respectfully and authentically.

When the opportunity to extend the child’s learning, by stretching his/her knowledge and skills and promoting language and thinking, take it. Talk about many different topics with children – use a wide variety of books and displays to prompt discussion. Talk about feelings – helping children to recognise and name their emotion is a key step towards self-regulation. With babies and children who are learning language in particular, take care to express children’s intentions with words in addition to naming objects and actions. Get into the habit of wondering aloud to gain insight into children’s thinking – (e.g. I wonder what would happen if? ..., I wonder why? ...). Opportunities for pretend play are important for children, as it is often within the safety of play, that they find their voice.



Planning & Documenting | Display at Child’s Level | Organising & Presenting Materials | Defined Interest Areas | Real Life Materials

# Aistear Award Night

On the 15th October, Limerick Childcare Committee (LCC) hosted an awards night to mark the conclusion on the Aistear in Practice Programme which ran from April to July 2015. In total 27 Early Years Services in Limerick City and County participated in the programme, which comprised 5 workshops delivered by Marie Doherty with mentor visits by LCC Development Officers, Marie Therese, Rosie and Catriona.

The workshops, based on Aistear, Siolta and the Aistear Siolta Practice Guide examined the concepts of Reflective Practice, the meaning of Curriculum and the Principles underpinning Siolta and Aistear. The workshop content included

1. An Overview of the Programme and an Introduction to the Frameworks and Practice Guide
2. Principles of Siolta and Aistear
3. Creating and Using the Learning Environment
4. Nurturing and Extending Interactions
5. Planning and Assessing using Aistear

The area of Planning and Documenting was further explored by Pamela XX of Canavan Byrne who delivered a presentation on the topic at the awards night.

Each workshop was followed by a mentor visit, during which LCC Development Officers supported the services and individual staff to reflect on and develop their practice. Much of the changes made by the services were documented at the time on Limerick Childcare Committee’s Facebook page.

The certificates were presented by Chair of Limerick Childcare Committee, Joan Condon who acknowledged the commitment of staff in the 27 services who participated so fully in the programme.

# Aistear Siolta Practice Guide

The purpose of the Practice Guide is to support practitioners in using Aistear and Siolta together to develop the quality of their curriculum and in doing so, to better support children’s learning and development.

The Practice Guide is based on the understanding that settings are compliant with, or are working to become compliant with The Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006.

The Practice Guide includes a range of resources to help practitioners to critically reflect on their curriculum and to identify what works well. Additionally, the resources can help practitioners to identify priorities for development and to plan actions for positive change. In this way, the Practice Guide can be used for on-going review, development and improvement by individual practitioners, practitioners working together and by practitioners supported by a mentor.

The Aistear Siolta Practice Guide is intended to help practitioners in their role as curriculum developer to build, reflect on and extend your curriculum to support babies’, toddlers’ and young children’s early learning and development.

Some resources in the Guide focus on a specific age group- babies and toddlers (birth-3 years) and young children (3-6 years) - while other resources are relevant across the full early childhood period of birth to six years.

Drawing on the early childhood sector’s experiences of using Aistear and Siolta, the Practice Guide includes Curriculum Foundations and six interconnected Curriculum Pillars:

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

Curriculum Foundations comprises an overview and four elements as set out in the table below. Together, the elements provide focus for an exploration of the factors, values and principles that significantly impact on and shape the curriculum which practitioners develop and provide for the children in their setting.

Elements	Purpose
Overview	The overview makes connections between the two frameworks and lists the different resources that are available in Curriculum Foundations.
Element 1: Developing your Curriculum and Curriculum Statement	This element helps practitioners review their current curriculum and develop a more emergent and inquiry-based one.
Element 2: Principles including Rights of the Child and Practitioner Image of the Child	This element looks at the principles of Aistear and Siolta and focuses in particular on the rights of the child and the practitioner’s image of the child. It provides activities to help practitioners embed the principles in their work.
Element 3: Themes of Aistear	This element helps practitioner’s to become familiar with Aistear’s themes so they can use them to support their work with children.
Element 4: Professional Practice	This element looks at the role of the adult and in particular at the concept of pedagogical leadership (developed for June 2015).

Each Curriculum Pillar includes an overview and five categories of resources, see table below. It is important that practitioners work on the four elements of Curriculum Foundations before undertaking work on Curriculum Pillars.

Category of Resource	Purpose
Overview	This provides an outline of the Curriculum Pillar, makes connections with Aistear and Siolta and lists the resources available in this part of the Practice Guide.
Self-evaluation Tools	These tools provide prompts to help practitioners reflect on their work in order to identify successes and challenges and to note changes they would like to make.
Examples and Ideas for Practice	These resources show examples of curriculum from different early childhood settings.
Resources for Sharing	These resources include tip sheets, posters, presentation materials and questionnaires.
Action Planning Tools	Templates are provided to help practitioners plan for changes in a particular area of their work.
Gallery	Photos from a range of early childhood settings offer additional ideas about aspects of curriculum.





# Child Protection Training



## Child Protection and Welfare training for Early Years (Childcare)

Services has been ongoing in Limerick throughout 2015. This training aims to ensure that everyone is alert to the possibility that the children with whom they are in contact with, may be suffering from abuse or neglect.

Good training will give people the confidence to develop good practice, in line with legislation, when confronted with abuse or neglect. Through this training, professionals will be aware of the guiding principles when dealing with these sensitive and important issues.

Early Years (Childcare) Services should be aware that the HSE/TUSLA will not be delivering Child Protection Training going forward for the ECCE sector, this is now the role of the Childcare Committees nationally.

Training in Limerick in 2015	No.
No. of practitioners trained	224
No. of childcare services	88
No. of DLP/deputies trained	66

Limerick Childcare Committee, aims to provide opportunities for all services to avail of Child Protection training in 2016. In order to provide a fair and equitable approach to the delivery of training throughout the County, Limerick Childcare Committee intends to provide training in each of the six Electoral Division (E.D.) areas within the County. This will ensure that participants do not have to travel long distances to the training. The six electoral areas are:

- Newcastle West
- Adare-Rathkeale
- Cappamore-Kilmallock
- Limerick City North
- Limerick City East
- Limerick City West

Those in the role of Designated Liaison Person (DLP)/Deputy DLP will be prioritised. The training schedule will be made available to all services in early 2016.

## Child Protection Policy Workshop

As part of our National Early Years Child Protection and Welfare Training Programme remit, Limerick Childcare Committee will be organising a number of Child Protection Policy Workshops, to support and guide services in this area. Dates will announced in the Spring 2016 training calendar. In order to attend this workshop, participants must have completed the 'Child Protection and Welfare' training.



# Early Years Staff Engage in Professional Development Opportunities



Limerick Childcare Committee delivered an intensive Spring/Summer & Autumn/Winter 2015 Professional Development Programme.

To date 546 places have been booked on these programmes, with a further 84 parents attending Basic First Aid training organised by Limerick Childcare as part of the Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival. This figure does not include those engaged in First Aid, Manual Handling and Food Hygiene Training.

In addition, 224 Early Years Staff completed Child Protection and Welfare Training in 2015.

The programmes offered cover a wide range of topics including Computer training, Supporting Children who have Special Education Needs, Healthy Tots, Risk Assessment, Critical Incident, Fire Safety, Buntus play and Early years learning through creativity with Recreate.

The Limerick Childcare Committee in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Office offered tailor made Business Skills programmes for owner/ managers with 4 topics all delivered in standalone workshops, each module also included a mentor visit. To date 60 providers have booked on to these programmes.

# Outdoor Play/Nature

Playing in an outdoor environment has huge benefits for young children's learning and development. It is great for young children's physical development and, while playing outside, children also learn how to get on with others and manage their feelings. Children also tend to develop a more positive attitude to learning when they are outdoors. They are usually more active, absorbed and involved, and they see a purpose in what they are doing.

There are lots of benefits for young children when they can spend as much time as possible playing outside in interesting outdoor environments. Young children learn through the type of place or environment they are in. When they are outside, children have the freedom to shout and make noise, the space to be more expansive in their physical movements, which sparks their imaginations, and more places to hide in and explore. Children can also be messier outdoors, which encourages them to be more creative and to try things out and experiment.

Play is active learning that brings together the mind, body and spirit. Until at least the age of nine, children learn best when their whole self is involved. Their learning is holistic – they learn many different things at the same time and what they learn is connected to where, how and with whom they learn. Later learning builds on early learning, so young children's learning grows layer on layer from birth, which means that their early learning impacts on what they can learn later. When they are playing, children can relax and this means that they are more open to learning.

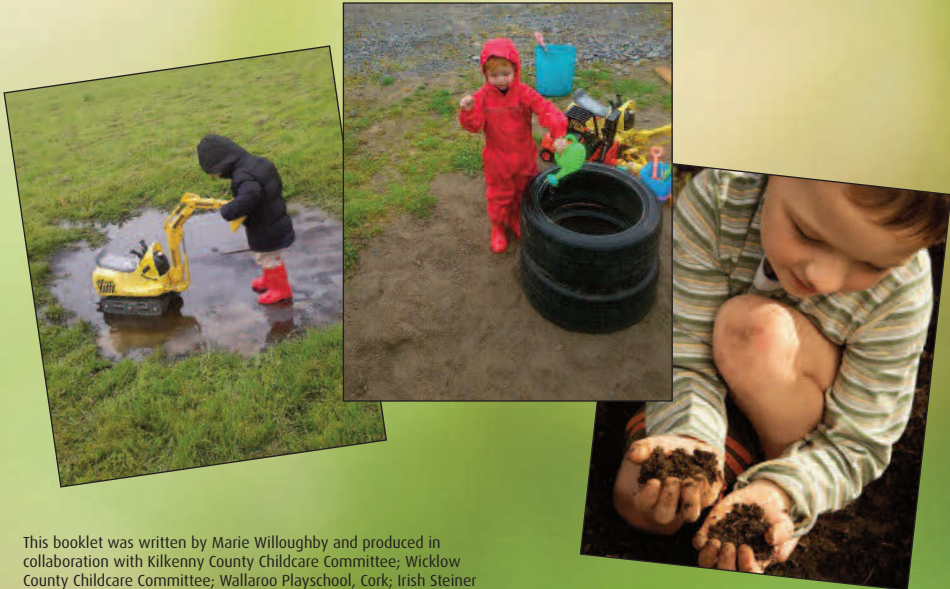
It is common for parents to worry about children playing outside, but exploring, solving problems and testing how far they can go is how children learn. You might sometimes find yourself saying things like "Watch out, you'll fall" or "You'll get dirty" or "That's too high", but children need to experience challenge and if you are doing this constantly, it suggests to your child that you have doubts in their abilities and this can undermine their efforts. Suggesting to a child that they are likely

to fall may even lead to them falling through 'the power of suggestion'. Often too, the amount of risk involved is less than you might think. Simply being told about possible dangers is not enough – children need to see or experience the consequences of not being careful. By engaging in exploration and adventure, taking risks and meeting challenges they can learn what they are able to do as well as the limits of their physical capabilities. Children, therefore, need to be given the chance to 'have a go', to try new things, to test out their own ideas of what they can do and explore a range of outdoor activities. This, at times, may involve getting dirty, trips, falls and some minor cuts and bruises or some tears. However, it is these experiences that are an important part of learning and developing confidence.

You can support your child's enjoyment, learning and development by understanding the benefits that outdoor play – sometimes risky, sometimes messy and sometimes wet or cold – can provide. Being outside in all weathers and in every season gives children the chance to experience ice and snow, sunshine and wind, the changing colour of the leaves in autumn and the appearance of green shoots in spring. Sometimes parents don't like their children going outside to play because they don't want them getting dirty. Dr. Ashok Jansari, a Cognitive Neuropsychologist, says that '...letting your children go out and play and maybe even getting a bit dirty is actually a very good thing'.

The outdoors gives children unique opportunities for:

- Experience with all their senses
- Physical activities
- Observations
- Art, science, mathematics, language
- Developing social skills
- Building and constructing with sand, water and mud
- Dramatic play.



This booklet was written by Marie Willoughby and produced in collaboration with Kilkenny County Childcare Committee; Wicklow County Childcare Committee; Wallaroo Playschool, Cork; Irish Steiner Kindergarten Association; Thanks are due to Grassroots Preschool, Kilkenny and Glen Outdoor Preschool, Letterkenny, Co. Donegal

Reference: Outdoors Play Matters The Benefits of Outdoor Play for Young Children Barnardos 2014



## Limerick Childcare Committee

### Limerick Childcare Committee is staffed by:

Anne Delaney	Manager	anne@limerickchildcare.ie
Elaine Scanlan	Administrator	elaine@limerickchildcare.ie
Niamh Lenihan O'Brien	Assistant Administrator	niamh@limerickchildcare.ie
Marie McElhinney	Information Officer	marie@limerickchildcare.ie
Marie Therese Marry	Childcare Development Officer - Limerick City	marietherese@limerickchildcare.ie
Rosemary Moore	Childcare Development Officer - East Limerick	rosie@limerickchildcare.ie
Catriona Sheehy	Childcare Development Officer - West Limerick	catriona@limerickchildcare.ie



**CROOM**  
Lower Ground Floor, Croom Mills, Croom,  
Co. Limerick  
T. 061 600918 | F. 061 600898

**LIMERICK CITY**  
Limerick Adult Education College,  
Room 31, Presentation Court, Sexton St.

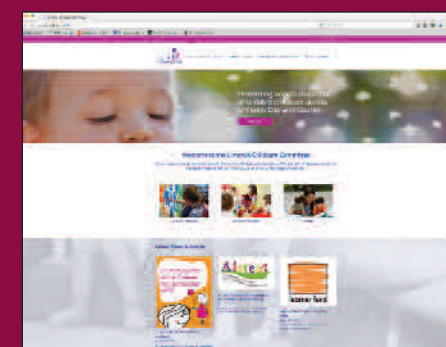
E. [info@limerickchildcare.ie](mailto:info@limerickchildcare.ie) [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)



## Childcare Committee Website

Limerick Childcare Committee would like to invite you to check out our new website, [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie) which provides information on:

- The National Childcare Schemes – ECCE, CCS and TEC.
- A resource section for Childcare Providers and those interested in setting up an Early Years, After-School or Childminding business. It also includes information on the Pre-School Regulations, Child Protection and Welfare, PIP, Health and Safety, Minimum Qualification Requirements as well as Aistear and Siolta.
- A resource section for Parents which provides information on Childcare (Choosing Childcare, Types of Childcare, Inspection Reports for Early Years Services), Parent and Toddler Groups and accessing free or reduced rate childcare under the national Childcare Schemes.
- Information on the services we provide, including Professional Development Opportunities (Training) and our Childcare Resource Library



[www.facebook.com/LimerickChildcareCommittee](https://www.facebook.com/LimerickChildcareCommittee) @LimChildcare

Over the past 13 years Limerick City and County Councils have provided invaluable support to both Limerick City and County Limerick Childcare Committees. *"We would like to acknowledge the support provided by the I.T. Department of Limerick City and County Council, which has been an invaluable contribution to the work of the committee. Working in collaboration with the Councils over the life time of the committees to date has ensured that we have always had an effective web presence."* Joan Condon, Chairperson.

Our aim is that the new website will focus the information we provide and target it appropriately to the audiences we cater for, namely Childcare Providers and Parents.

### Social Media

Please also check out our Facebook and Twitter pages which we use to provide more general information to the sector and to parents. We use social media

- to share ideas from Early Years Services such as room layout, pieces of equipment, ideas for activities
- to advertise vacancies in local services and
- to direct the public to courses to training which may be of interest to the sector.

## Limerick City Office

Limerick Childcare Committee have secured an office space in Limerick City to facilitate meetings with services located in the city. The office will not be manned on a full-time basis but will be available for meetings by appointment only.

The office space is located in the Limerick Adult Education College, in Presentation Court, Sexton St. We are on the first floor, room no. 31.

Access to the building is via the main entrance. There is also access through the car park at the rear of the building.

The main reception in the building will also provide a drop-off and collection service for Limerick Childcare Committee. If you are using the drop-off facility please advise a staff member.

Limerick Childcare Committee will continue to operate from our main base in Croom Mills, Croom. The main office is open 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am to 4pm Friday. The office closes for lunch from 1-2pm each day.

Directions to both Croom Mills and Sexton Street can be found on the 'About Us' page of [www.limerickchildcare.ie](http://www.limerickchildcare.ie)