

Free Pre-School
from 3 years old!*

YOUR CHILDS ELIGIBILITY FOR THE ECCE PROGRAMME

Children Born in 2012

Birth	ECCE 2015	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2015-2016 pre-school year	ECCE 2016	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2016-2017 pre-school year	Total Eligible Weeks	School Start Year	School Start Age
Jan-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.8
Feb-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.7
Mar-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.6
Apr-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.5
May-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.4
Jun-12	YES	Sep-15	38	YES	Sep-16	38	76	Sep-17	5.3
Jul-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	5.2
Aug-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	5.1
Sep-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	5
Oct-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	4.11
Nov-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	4.10
Dec-12	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-16	38	38	Sep-17	4.9

Children Born in 2013

Birth	ECCE 2016	ECCE 2017	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2016-2017 pre-school year	ECCE 2017	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2017-2018 pre-school year	Total Eligible Weeks	School Start Year	School Start Age
Jan-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.8
Feb-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.7
Mar-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.6
Apr-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.5
May-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.4
Jun-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.3
Jul-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.2
Aug-13	NO	YES	Sep-16	38	YES	Sep-17	38	76	Sep-18	5.1
Sep-13	NO	YES	Jan-17	23	YES	Sep-17	38	61	Sep-18	5
Oct-13	NO	YES	Jan-17	23	YES	Sep-17	38	61	Sep-18	4.11
Nov-13	NO	YES	Jan-17	23	YES	Sep-17	38	61	Sep-18	4.10
Dec-13	NO	YES	Jan-17	23	YES	Sep-17	38	61	Sep-18	4.9

Children Born in 2014

Birth	ECCE 2016	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2016-2017 pre-school year	ECCE 2017	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2017-2018 pre-school year	ECCE 2018	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2018-2019 pre-school year	Total Eligible Weeks	Start School Year	Start School Age
Jan-14	YES	Apr-17	12	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	88	Sep-19	5.8
Feb-14	YES	Apr-17	12	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	88	Sep-19	5.7
Mar-14	YES	Apr-17	12	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	88	Sep-19	5.6
Apr-14	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	76	Sep-19	5.5
May-14	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	76	Sep-19	5.4
Jun-14	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	76	Sep-19	5.3
Jul-14	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	76	Sep-19	5.2
Aug-14	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-17	38	YES	Sep-18	38	76	Sep-19	5.1
Sep-14	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-18	23	YES	Sep-18	38	61	Sep-19	5
Oct-14	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-18	23	YES	Sep-18	38	61	Sep-19	4.11
Nov-14	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-18	23	YES	Sep-18	38	61	Sep-19	4.10
Dec-14	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-18	23	YES	Sep-18	38	61	Sep-19	4.9

Children Born in 2015

Birth	ECCE 2017	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2017-2018 pre-school year	ECCE 2018	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2018-2019 pre-school year	ECCE 2019	Entry Point	No. Of Weeks for 2019-2020 pre-school year	Total Eligible Weeks	Start School Year	Start School Age
Jan-15	YES	Apr-18	12	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	88	Sep-20	5.8
Feb-15	YES	Apr-18	12	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	88	Sep-20	5.7
Mar-15	YES	Apr-18	12	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	88	Sep-20	5.6
Apr-15	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	76	Sep-20	5.5
May-15	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	76	Sep-20	5.4
Jun-15	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	76	Sep-20	5.3
Jul-15	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	76	Sep-20	5.2
Aug-15	NO	-	0	YES	Sep-18	38	YES	Sep-19	38	76	Sep-20	5.1
Sep-15	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-19	23	YES	Sep-19	38	61	Sep-20	5
Oct-15	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-19	23	YES	Sep-19	38	61	Sep-20	4.11
Nov-15	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-19	23	YES	Sep-19	38	61	Sep-20	4.10
Dec-15	NO	-	0	YES	Jan-19	23	YES	Sep-19	38	61	Sep-20	4.9

*Free pre-school from 3 years old effective from September 2016.



SUMMER NEWSLETTER 2016

- Building Blocks Project
- Early Childhood Environment
- Healthy Ireland Awards
- Childcare Regulations
- Qualification Requirements
- Childcare Schemes
- Christmas Network Event
- Access to ECCE for Children with Disability
- Visit to ReCreate
- Síolta Validation for Limerick Social Service Council
- ECCE Capitation
- Drawing in Early Years
- LCC supports Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival
- Hopscotch
- ECCE Eligibility

Building Blocks Project

In 2015, Childcare Development Officers from 9 Childcare Committees, including Limerick, came together to develop a training programme to support the implementation of the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide, by Early Years Services.

The programme, entitled 'Building Blocks Project – Laying the foundations for change in preparing to use the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide' will include workshops and mentor visits.

It is designed to support services to look at the concept of change and how best to support change within the staff team. By building core aspects of positive change such as trust, communication and shared decision making, services are better positioned to implement more long term sustainable changes which support high quality practice. In this way it will prepare services to start engaging with the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide.

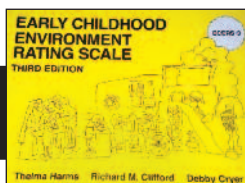
The project aims to support services to develop and implement an effective action plan for engaging with the Curriculum Foundations of the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. The initial workshop will comprise:

1. Introduction and Context
2. Responses to Change
3. Change Management
4. Introduction to the Curriculum Foundations of the Practice Guide

The programme will also include mentoring (by phone and on site) to support services to plan for and implement change.

In May 2016, Limerick Childcare Committee began piloting the project with 6-8 Early Years Services. It is envisaged that, following completion of the Building Blocks Project, the services will participate in the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) workshop 'Introducing the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide'.

The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide is an online tool, to support practitioners and services in using Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009a) and Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (2006) together to develop the quality of their curriculum and in doing so, to better support children's learning and development. For further information please see www.ncca.ie/en/Practice-Guide



Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales (ECERS) are a set of standardised tools for measuring and improving the quality of early years provision. They offer a structured approach to quality improvement and self-evaluation.

The Environment Rating Scales were developed with assistance and feedback from hundreds of researchers and practitioners around the world, and are now used in many countries for research, self-assessment and quality improvement.

Both ECERS-3 and ITERS-R provide an orderly and precise means of evaluating the quality of early years environments, identifying strengths and areas for development using research-validated observational assessment tools to provide a framework of quality improvement.

Limerick Childcare Committee aims to use ECERS-3 and ITERS-R as a tool to support the work of our Development Officers in measuring and improving the quality of early years services through observations. This will help to ensure a fundamental approach to measure outcomes in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.

The Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – Third Edition (ECERS-3) is available for evaluating quality in centre-based early years settings for the 3-5 age range.

The Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R) is the partner scale for the 0-2½ age range.

Both the ECERS-3 and ITERS-R contain a wide range of statements or 'indicators' with which to evaluate the quality of the early years environment in its broadest sense. These indicators 'stack up' like building blocks to celebrate strengths and provide signposts to improvement. They also provide a rigorous means of measuring quality - and improvement in quality - over time.

If you would like your service to be considered for evaluation under ECERS-3 or ITERS-R, please contact your Development Officer. The evaluation process takes approximately 3 hours per room in your service.

The ECERS-3 and ITERS-R evaluate 7 aspects of quality:

1. Space and furnishings, e.g. room layout, accessibility of resources, display.
2. Personal care routines, e.g. welfare requirements such as health & safety and provision for sleeping.
3. Language and reasoning, e.g. supporting children's communication, language and literacy development; critical thinking.
4. Activities, e.g. provision of an exciting and accessible learning environment, resources to support specific types of play.
5. Interaction, e.g. supervision, support for social interactions.
6. Programme structure, e.g. opportunities for children to access their own curriculum; planning schedules/routines to meet children's needs.
7. Provision for parents and staff, e.g. partnership with parents, staff training and development.

Limerick Pre-Schools among first in Ireland to receive Healthy Ireland Award

Management and staff from pre-schools across Limerick attended the Healthy Ireland Pre-School Award Ceremony in Athlone Institute of Technology on 2nd April, 2016 to receive their Healthy Ireland Award. The award recognises pre-school services who participated in the HSE's Healthy Ireland Pre-School Programme – Smart Start, run by the National Childhood Network (NCN). This is the first award of its kind for the pre-school sector, acknowledging the role and influence the pre-school setting has in promoting children's health.

The Healthy Ireland Pre-School Programme, which is built upon the Government's Healthy Ireland strategic framework, supports pre-schools to achieve many of the Síolta standards and requirements of Aistear. Its focus is building the capacity of staff in the pre-school sector to encourage the adoption of positive health behaviours in children from as early an age as possible. The Healthy Ireland Pre-School Programme is specifically designed for pre-school children aged between 3-5 years of age and encompasses all aspects of a healthy lifestyle: nutrition & healthy eating, oral health, physical activity, emotional well-being and literacy, as well as health and safety. To date, the programme has been delivered to over 500 pre-school services nationally.

The programme provides:

- Information and resources for pre-school staff, children, parents/carers
- 21 hours of training for pre-school staff
- External assessment of health promoting practices within participating services
- Opportunity for pre-school services involved to become publicly recognised as Healthy Ireland Pre-school services
- Ongoing support from NCN

The Limerick services who received awards are:

Clanmaurice Playgroup, Ennis Road

Happy Faces, Askeaton

Lios na Sí, Broadford

Little Wonders, Newcastle West

Step by Step Montessori, Patrickswell

Teddy's Community Play-School, Dromcollogher

Whitethorns Montessori, Dooradoyle.

A further 9 Limerick services are currently participating in the programme and will, hopefully, receive their awards next spring.



BIR: Marie McGrath, Mag Roche.

FIR: Jennifer Leahy, Eleanor O'Sullivan, Cathriona Fitzgerald, Anne Lordan, Deirdre Lehane, Eadaoin O'Kelly.



The programme is open to all pre-schools and registered childminders. For more information, visit www.ncn.ie

Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

The long awaited childcare regulations, the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, were signed by Minister Reilly on the 4th May 2016 and will come into effect on a phased basis from 30th June 2016. The new Regulations provide for pre-school services, that is, those services catering for children under the age of 6 who are not attending primary school.

The revised Regulations were prepared following the amendments to the Child Care Act 1991 which were made under the Child and Family Agency Act 2013, and which were required to underpin a number of key reforms to the sector to improve quality standards. The new Regulations revoke the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 (S.I. No. 604 of 2006).

The Regulations cover the following areas:

- Registration of services
- Management and staff
- Information and records
- Care of children in the service
- Safety
- Premises and space requirements
- Notifications and complaints
- Inspection and enforcement

Tusla, in association with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and other relevant organisations, will provide information sessions to service providers before embarking on any new inspection process. Minister Reilly stated that

“the Quality and Regulatory Framework that will be used by Tusla for inspections will be the subject of consultation with stakeholders before it is finalised later in the year, and will be made available to service providers so that they are aware of what will be expected of them.”

Qualification Requirements

Childcare Providers – will you comply with the minimum qualification requirement next January?

The recently published Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 state that each employee working directly with children in pre-school services must hold at least a major award in Early Childhood Care and Education at Level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), or a qualification deemed by the Minister to be equivalent. This will come into effect after 31st December 2016 in respect of services registered on or before 30th June 2016, and on or after the date of registration in respect of all other services. The only exception to this requirement is where a staff member has signed a ‘grandfathering declaration’ by the 30th June 2016, declaring his/her intention to retire from the service before 1st September 2021. For staff in Limerick early years services, the declaration must be signed in Limerick Childcare Committee’s office. The employee will receive a letter from the Minister confirming his/her exemption from the minimum qualification up to 31st August 2021.

The minimum qualification for all pre-school leaders, delivering the ECCE programme, will increase to Level 6 on the NFQ from 31st December 2016. A ‘grandfathering declaration’ cannot be used for exemption from this requirement.

DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications

The DCYA has published a list of recognised qualifications for the early years sector. Employees and those considering working in the early years sector in Ireland can check whether the qualifications they hold are recognised. Early years practitioners can check if their qualifications meet the requirement for the room leader in the ECCE programme and whether their qualifications are eligible for the ECCE higher capitation payment.

Where a qualification is not on the published list, but the holder considers it to be an appropriate major award at Level 5 on the NFQ, or equivalent, the holder can apply to have the qualification assessed for approval.

The ‘DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications’ and the ‘Qualifications Recognition Application Process’ are available on www.limerickchildcare.ie/providers/qualification-requirements/. The list is updated periodically as other qualifications are approved.

What do childcare managers need to do now?

To ensure compliance with minimum qualification requirements from 1st January 2017, providers/managers are strongly advised to check the qualifications of all staff [who work directly with children] against the ‘DCYA Early Years Recognised Qualifications’ (current version published April 2016).

- If the qualification is not on the list, apply to the DCYA (application process above) to have the qualification assessed for approval.
- If the qualification does not receive DCYA recognition, the staff member should contact Limerick Childcare Committee to make an appointment to sign a ‘grandfathering declaration’ before 30th June 2016. The staff member can still choose to acquire the minimum qualification after that date and subsequently cancel the ‘grandfathering declaration’ if the full award is achieved before 1st September 2021.
- If a staff member is currently working towards achieving a QQI Level 5 major award and has some modules already completed, check with the training provider that any **modules** already completed may be used towards the major award, as some older modules are no longer recognised for this purpose.
- If a staff member is currently undertaking a Level 6 course (or higher), without having achieved a Level 5 major award, that course must result in a full award for the staff member by 31st December this year.

Parents - Are you Eligible for Free or Reduced Rate Childcare?



The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides free pre-school for children.

From September 2016, the scheme will 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 3 years on or before the 31st August
- January, for children who turn 3 years on or before the 31st December
- April, for children who turn 3 years on or before the 31st March

The maximum number of weeks funding is dependent on a child’s date of birth and primary school starting age.

To be eligible for free pre-school in the year beginning:

September 2016-June 2017
January 2017-June 2017
April 2017-June 2017
September 2017-June 2018

The child must have been born between:

1st January 2012 and 31st August 2013
1st January 2012 and 31st December 2013
1st January 2012 and 31st March 2014
1st January 2013 and 31st August 2014

For eligibility for a child born after 31st August 2014 please refer to the ‘ECCE Calculator’ on our website.

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 3 hours 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 Extras’ letter.

How to Apply

Parents contact an Early Years Service (full list on www.limerickchildcare.ie) which operates the ECCE Scheme to 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.

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 Years Service. The first service needs to provide the parent with a Parental Declaration Form (printed from PIP) and this is given to the new service by the parent.

Childcare for Low Income Families (CCS & CCSP 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 CCS Scheme, children must be attending a participating service during the reference week set by the DCYA. In 2015 the reference, or 'snap-shot' week

was the 5th to 9th October. In general, this is the only time a child can join the scheme. There are some exceptions – please contact your community childcare provider or Limerick Childcare Committee for further details.

The Community Childcare Subvention (Private) (CCSP) Scheme is available since March 2016 in a limited number of privately owned childcare services.

There is no 'snap-shot' week, with eligibility based on the date of registration in the scheme.

Based on the eligibility criteria below, if you qualify for CCS/CCSP, the subvention amount is taken off the full price of your childcare and you pay the balance.

Eligibility for both CCS and CCSP is set out below.

Band	Eligibility	Subvention	Hours per Day
A	Recipients of social welfare with a medical card: One Parent Family Payment Widows/Widowers Pension Pre-retirement Allowance Farm Assist State Pension Blind Pension Guardian's Payment Illness/Injury Benefit Disability Allowance Carer's Benefit/ Allowance Back to Work Enterprise/Education Allowance Community Employment/Rural Social Scheme Domiciliary Care Allowance Family Income Supplement (FIS) Secondary School students Invalidity Pension Disablement Pension Official Tusla referrals (no medical card required) HSE Public Health Nurse referrals (no medical card required)	Full day - €95 Part time - €47.50 Sessional - €31.35 Half session - €15.20	Full-day is taken to be >5 hours Part-time is taken to be between 3 hours 31 minutes and 5 hours Sessional is taken to be between 2 hours 16 minutes and 3 hours 30 minutes Half Session is taken to be between 1 hour and 2 hours 15 minutes
AJ	Medical Card holders plus: Recipients of Job Seekers Benefit/Allowance Supplementary Welfare Allowance TÚS Part-time Job Incentive Scheme Gateway	Full time - €50 Part time - €47.50 Sessional - €31.35 Half session - €15.20	As above
B	Medical Card, GP Visit Card (over 6 years only), Recipients of Social Welfare payments listed in Band A but have no medical card, 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.	Full time - €50 Part time - €25 Sessional - €17 Half session - €8.50	As above

Training and Employment Childcare (TEC) Programme

The TEC Programme 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.

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 Years Service participating in TEC. Parents can use the 'Search for Childcare' option on www.limerickchildcare.ie to search for a childcare place by scheme type, i.e. 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 there 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.

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 must confirm eligibility for this 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 after-school care for children up to 13 years of age, where a parent is participating on a CE Scheme. The CE sponsor must confirm eligibility for this programme.

For all Schemes the Early Years 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 Scheme Calendar (ECCE, CCS or TEC). This marks the days the service is open

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 www.limerickchildcare.ie/parents/information-for-parents/, or contact us on info@limerickchildcare.ie or 061 600918 if you have a specific enquiry.

The DCYA has published 'DCYA Programmes Information and Frequently Asked Questions' with information on all the above funded programmes, which is available to download on www.limerickchildcare.ie/schemes/.

Christmas Network Event

The venue for our Christmas Network Event last December was Adare Manor. We were delighted to welcome 100 childcare providers who braved the elements and made the journey after their day's work. Our guest speaker on the night was Dr. David J. Carey, psychologist and author of the widely acclaimed 'The Essential Guide to Special Education in Ireland' who presented 'Understanding Challenging Behaviour'. Afterwards, while enjoying some refreshments, our guests had the opportunity to catch up and share experiences with fellow childcare professionals. A good night was had by all! Our Summer Network Event takes place on Thursday, 2nd June.



1 Catriona Sheehy, Marie Thérèse Marry, Marie McElhinney, Anne Delaney, David Carey, Rosie Moore, Niamh Lenihan O'Brien, Joan Condon, Elaine Scanlan
2 Amanda Jordan, Sharon Doran, Natalie Finn

3 Patricia Kiely, Maeve Daly
4 Josephine Peters, Bernie Cleary
5 Catherine Noonan, Mairead Fitzgerald, Noelle Leahy
6 Anne McNamara, Steve Goode, Donna Murphy

7 Joanna O'Neill, Margo O'Dwyer, Dyney Ryan
8 Elaine Scanlan, Niamh Lenihan O'Brien
9 Gillian Durack, Sinead Fitzgerald

10 Miriam Hickey, Eleanor O'Sullivan, Louise Lynch, Eadaoin O'Kelly
11 Felicity Elliott, Eilis Madden, Deirdre Dore
12 Debbie Cronin, Clare Mullane, Mary O'Connor

13 Brid Nealon, Marie McElhinney, Aine Donovan
14 Katie Fitzgerald, Claire Fitzgerald, Ciara Nolan, Helena O'Neill, Anne O'Neill
15 Siobhan Finn, Breda O'Riordan, Majella Behan, Natalie Finn

Supporting Access to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme for Children with a Disability

In November 2015 Minister James Reilly announced a new model of supports to enable children with a disability to attend and participate to the fullest extent in ECCE programme. Implementation will cost €17m approx. in 2016, rising to €40m annually from 2020.

A Model to Support Access to the ECCE Programme



There are 7 Levels of Support, as illustrated above, from universal to targeted supports towards levels of needs ranging from non-complex to complex.

Level 1

aims to ensure an Inclusive Culture is fostered and embedded, with the identification of Inclusion Coordinators in ECCE settings who will receive specific training for this role. In April 2016, a new Special Purpose Award for Early Years Practitioners was announced which will be certified at Level 6 and will attract higher capitation. The contract for the training has been awarded to a consortium led by Mary Immaculate College, in partnership with National University of Ireland, Maynooth and Early Childhood Ireland and will be offered on a flexible and part-time basis. It is expected that the application process will be announced shortly.

Level 2

aims to provide clear and consistent information for both Parents & Providers, and the development of a national website is underway.

Level 3

aims to continue to develop a qualified workforce with both formal and informal training. A national survey of early years practitioners was disseminated in April with a view to establishing a picture of training and supports currently available and to identifying further training requirements so that a standardised national approach can be planned for.

Level 4

aims to enhance the Early Years Specialist Services with the recruitment of Access and Inclusion Specialists who will be available to advise and support early years practitioners. Recruitment for these posts began in April.

Level 5

aims to develop a scheme for provision of equipment, appliances and minor alterations through capital grants.

Level 6

aims to provide additional therapy services with the recruitment of 50 therapists (Speech and Language, Occupational and Psychology)

Level 7

aims to provide an additional capitation fee to early years providers in order to cater for children with needs outside Levels 1-6. As the diagram illustrates, it is estimated that the percentage of children in this category lies between 1 and 1.5% and resources for this level have been allocated accordingly.



Visit to ReCreate

On Saturday 5th December, Limerick Childcare Committee (LCC) went on a site visit to ReCreate, Dublin. We left Limerick at 7.00 a.m. on a cold winter's morning with 14 childcare practitioners from 10 Limerick Early Years Services, and 4 staff from LCC, to take part in a follow-on workshop and to stock up on materials. All the party had previously attended ReCreate Workshops organised by LCC in Limerick.

We took advantage of ReCreate's late opening to make a stop in Ikea, where a number of the party purchased items for their pre-schools, crèches and childminding facilities. Needless to say, we picked up a few bits and pieces for home too; sure it would have been a shame not to take advantage of the opportunity, especially when we had the big bus !!

ReCreate is a national social enterprise that collects, sorts and displays end-of-line and surplus materials from businesses at their store house in Ballymount Drive, Walkinstown. The warehouse is full to the brim with all types of fantastic arts materials such as paper, wool, plastics, fabric, tubing, foam and many other unusual and unexpected surprises. On the day each service who attended was provided with a sack to fill with materials to take back to their childcare settings.

We were delighted to facilitate this site visit, and wish to thank all the services involved for giving up a Saturday to attend, and thanks to ReCreate for having us!



"This is a robot that the full-day children made from the wide variety of recyclable materials acquired during our trip to ReCreate with Limerick Childcare Committee. The trip was a wonderful experience for us as childcare practitioners to network and view the centre. We came back with so many open-ended materials, and much of the children's play has been enhanced from our haul! Definitely a worthwhile trip and I would love to go again." Amanda Jordan, Manager, Banogue Community Crèche.



Limerick Social Service Council Early Years Service is first in Limerick to achieve Síolta Validation

We extend our heartiest congratulations to the staff and management of Limerick Social Services Council on the occasion of their recent Síolta validation. This is a great achievement which would not have been possible without the commitment of a dedicated team of staff. Our thanks to the Early Years Manager, Linda O'Donnell, for giving us this account of her service's Síolta experience.

"In January 2015, we set a goal at the Early Years Service in the Limerick Social Services Council (LSSC). That goal was to complete our Síolta portfolio and submit it for validation by the end of April. As a Service Manager within the LSSC, ensuring quality in provision is at the fore of all our work. This is crucial not only because we see how quality childcare affects the everyday experiences of children but also because we know how it impacts on longer-term outcomes, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Our General Manager, Brian Ryan, has given particular encouragement in our efforts to achieve the Síolta validation. The LSSC is one of the largest community services in the country and has provided services in Limerick for nearly 50 years. During these years, the LSSC has committed to providing quality childcare services through its purpose-built facility at the LSSC Centre. In his support for our work with the Síolta validation, Mr Ryan acknowledged that the standard of a facility alone is not sufficient to ensure high quality experiences for children and that it is equally important to invest in staff as part of their professional development. With this support and with the commitment by our staff, the process towards accreditation commenced.

Although our staff had previously received training in reflective practice, we decided to review our strategy with a revised plan. We firstly met with our Síolta mentor who made valuable suggestions in devising our work schedule. Time planning was an important feature in the overall process and our greatest challenge. As everyone working in the childcare area can appreciate, the difficulties of finding uninterrupted time for reflection on practice while still maintaining the delivery of a quality service was enormous. To maximise our time, we reviewed each of the 16 standards and then allocated a number of standards to individual staff members for more intensive work. As the Manager, I took responsibility for the preparation of the portfolio.

Recognising our time concerns, our General Manager allocated staff from other areas of the organisation to assist us in our work. This proved to be invaluable not only by freeing staff up but also by strengthening staff morale in their belief that what we were doing was really important within the organisation. With additional support, we were also better placed to explore

new and more relevant techniques to evidence our work e.g. using video evidence instead of photographs, etc.

Support from our mentor was also important in the process. During visits, as positive aspects of our work were highlighted, we were able to reflect on all we were doing well. We found that this was an added encouragement to staff morale and team building. Our mentor also highlighted areas for improvement and things we needed to work on. While we sought to address many of these areas, we were challenged at times by suggested improvements regarding the facility itself. This was concerning at a time when community services do not have large resources or budgets available. With the assistance from our General Manager, we managed to access additional resources for the service and recommended improvements were made.

By the end of the process when our portfolio was submitted, I cannot express how positive the sense of achievement was for all the staff. The validation visit which followed was very thorough and lasted an entire day. The validators were very approachable and understanding, and met me throughout the day to clarify questions on our portfolio. The final feedback session was positive overall during which the validators offered suggestions and provided us with opportunities to explain various aspects of our practice.

In conclusion, while the process required significant work, we found it made a very positive impact on our service and on our team. This was particularly evident in how staff were motivated to pool their talents together and perform at their best individually and as team players. Most importantly, we believe that through the Síolta accreditation, we can take pride in knowing that our Early Years Service is now providing high quality care for our children, based on the best available evidence."



Anne Delaney, Manager, Limerick Childcare Committee presenting Early Years Manager, Linda O'Donnell with Síolta Validation Certificate, with LSSC staff and children looking on.



Linda O'Donnell, Early Years Manager receiving Síolta Validation Certificate from Anne Delaney, Manager, Limerick Childcare Committee. Also in photo Kate Hayes, Speech and Language Therapist, ABC Start Right; Jean Currid, Síolta Coordinator, Barnardos; Martin Golden, Chair Limerick Social Services Council; Fr. Paul Finnerty, Board Member; Brian Ryan, General Manager and staff of the Early Years Service.



ECCE Capitation

Payment under the ECCE programme is by way of capitation fees which are paid directly to the pre-school provider. A capitation fee is payable in respect of each eligible child enrolled in the free pre-school year. From September, ECCE providers will receive a standard capitation rate of €64.50 per child per week, or a higher capitation rate of €75 per child per week.

The standard rate is paid where all staff working with children in the service are qualified to at least Level 5 (or equivalent) on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ), and where the pre-school leader is qualified to at least NFQ Level 6 (or equivalent). The higher rate is paid where all pre-school assistants in the service are qualified to at least Level 5 on the NFQ, and where the pre-school leader is qualified to at least NFQ level 7 (or equivalent), as recognised by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

It should be noted that the 'grandfathering declaration' (see 'Qualifications' article) will not be accepted for the purposes of pre-school assistants working in the ECCE pre-school room where a service is in receipt of the higher capitation rate. All such pre-school assistants must hold a Level 5 qualification. This has always been, and remains, a criterion for receipt of the higher capitation rate. The ECCE higher capitation rate must be applied for on an annual basis.

Change to eligibility for Higher Capitation payment

From September 2016, in ECCE services, higher capitation will be paid to individual ECCE sessions (or rooms) which are led by Early Years professionals with a relevant Level 7 (or higher) qualification.

This changes the current model where the higher capitation rate is only paid if all sessions/rooms in the service are led by staff qualified at level 7 or higher. Services with multiple ECCE rooms, but only one with the necessary higher capitation qualification, will be able to avail of this higher funding for part of their service.

The higher rate will be passed on to services, based on the number of children allowed to participate in the qualifying higher capitation room. This move is to encourage an increase in the number of ECCE places available to meet increased demand from September 2016.

Drawing in Early Years – more than ‘colouring in’!

Falling under the broad Aistear theme of Communication, Aistear aims to have children ‘express themselves through the visual arts using skills such as cutting, drawing, gluing, sticking, painting, building, printing, sculpting, and sewing.’

The process of drawing and talking about drawing helps children in their cognitive development. As they grow, children acquire and use knowledge about their world – their drawings offer us insight into their thinking and understanding.

For very young children drawing is a sensory experience – examining the properties of the materials such as the texture, smell and taste. As they gain motor control, children make connections between their actions and the marks that end up on the page. Opportunities for mark making are vital at this stage.

Pre-school children in particular, draw what they perceive to be the important details of the subject. However, they rarely plan what they will draw before they begin – the adult should resist the temptation to ask the child what they intend to draw.



Drawing for children has many positives – it helps them to make their thoughts and intentions known. Drawing is an important memory aid - the adult can play an important role in helping children to acquire the language they need to describe their intention after the fact.

Providing opportunities for drawing encourages flexibility in children's thinking – giving them a concrete way to express what they know or have learned. In the words of Robert Alexander (1985): ‘All of life's bewildering chaos is transformed into harmony and truth. In the art of creation children are truly free’.

Limerick Childcare Committee supports Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival

We were delighted to support the 6th year of this festival, which ran across Limerick City and County from 16th to 22nd April, by providing free ‘Basic First Aid for Parents’ in 6 different venues during the festival. Workshops covered Heartsaver CPR/AER training for infants, CPR for children and adults, choking and recovery position. They proved very popular with parents in the Limerick area, with most workshops fully booked in advance. A festival prize of a family pass to King John's Castle was won by Carmel Moynihan at the Caherconlish workshop.



Carmel Moynihan being presented with a festival prize by Marion Morrissey of Safe Aid Training Ltd.



Hopscotch

The Aistear theme of Well Being is about children being confident, happy and healthy. A simple game of hopscotch provides so many opportunities for learning:

Physical development

Hopping on one foot is one of the most complex movements the human body can perform – requiring one side of the body to be still while the other side moves. Not hopping on the lines requires body control. Hopscotch challenges children's sense of balance and orientation. Fine motor skills are challenged when the child is required to pick up the stone.

Linguistic

Hopping gives children the opportunity to practice rhythm which underscores language acquisition – children tune into speech patterns which in turn aid memory.

Hopscotch encourages numeracy, including recognising numbers, counting, recognising shapes, and using positional language - up and down, forward and backwards, inside and outside.

Intellectual

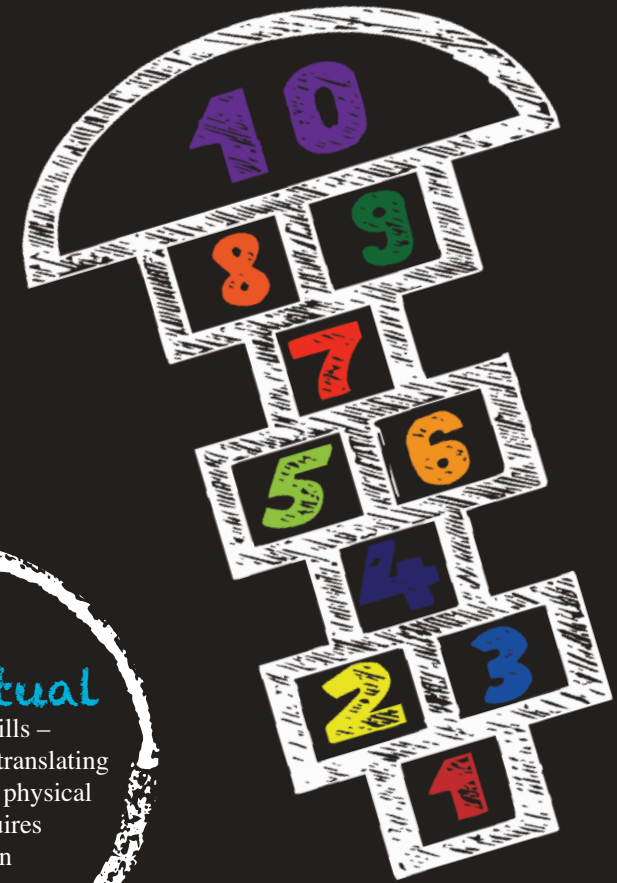
Visual motor skills – seeing the target and translating that knowledge to a physical movement requires concentration and skill.

Social

Social development is encouraged through turn taking. The simple rules of hopscotch make it easy for children to police themselves.

Emotional

It is challenging – struggle is an important feature of early learning. Children need opportunities to learn frustration tolerance when things don't go the way they want. Care should be taken to ensure that children get enough practice to gain the dexterity they need to enjoy what they have learnt.



Contact Details:

Lower Ground Floor, Croom Mills,
Croom, Co. Limerick.
Tel. 061 600918 Fax. 061 600898
Email. info@limerickchildcare.ie
www.limerickchildcare.ie

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