

Getting Started

2018/2020

An Introductory Guide
to Setting up a Childcare Service



Getting Started

An introductory Guide to Setting up A childcare service

Introduction

You have received this Information Pack because you are considering developing a childcare facility in your area. You may be planning to build new premises or to use, renovate or extend an existing building. Louth County Childcare Committee can provide advice and guidance to you. You must ensure that the service being developed will comply with the legal requirements of the CHILD CARE ACT 1991 (EARLY YEARS SERVICES) REGULATIONS 2016 and From 18 February 2019, childcare services providing care to school age children must register with the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and comply with the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\)\(Registration of School Age Services\) Regulations 2018 \(pdf\)](#).

Louth County Childcare Committee provides ongoing support, advice, information and assistance to all new and existing childcare services in the county. These can be community or privately based childcare services. Louth County Childcare Committee also support childcare staff and management, advise parents and link with other childcare agencies.

Step 1: Market Research

Market Research is essential when considering the viability of your childcare business. It will not only form the basis of your business plan, but it will also have an impact on deciding what type of business you open and the range of childcare services you will offer. Good market research will help a business remain sustainable into the future.

Have you identified your target market?

1. Consider existing childcare services already operating in your area in terms of their target market, their capacity for places and the service they offer.
2. Establish a need for the proposed childcare service by
 - A. Carrying out a local needs analysis i.e. door to door questionnaires
 - B. Check parish register and with local primary schools for birth and enrolments.
 - C. Check with local authority or county council about new housing developments.
 - D. Contact the Central Statistics Office (CSO) for information regarding population, age, in your locality.
 - E. Consult with local development groups, parents' associations etc.
 - F. Consider any new developments planned locally such as factories, shopping centres and schools. Have they a similar service to yours already included in their planning applications?

Are there existing childcare premises in your proposed area?

1. Contact Louth County Childcare Committee to find out about potential purpose built childcare facilities for sale or lease in the county.
2. Consider existing housing developments in your proposed area. Is there a purpose built childcare facility lying dormant or is there a site with planning permission granted for a purpose built childcare facility?

Step 2: What service do I want to provide?

Deciding on the Type of Service

There are two main ways of operating a childcare service

- ◆ One is privately owned and managed by individuals and
- ◆ The second is community run and managed by a voluntary committee made up of local representatives.

Decide on the type of service you plan to provide, (giving consideration to the need in the proposed area).

Definitions of Childcare Services

Pre-school children in Ireland are defined by law as “children under 6 years of age, who are not attending a national school or equivalent”. Pre-school services include preschools, day nurseries, crèches, full day care centre and childminding.

Childminder registered with TUSLA – up to five children

A childminder cares for a small group of children of mixed ages in a ‘home from home’ setting. A childminder registered to TUSLA should look after not more than **five** pre-school children including her/his own pre-school children. It can be an all year-round service, offered in the Childminder’s own home. The hours of childminding may vary from fulltime, part-time or flexible. A childminder provides a safe, caring, stimulating environment for children of all ages.

Childminder NOT registered with TUSLA up to three children

A childminder cares for a small group of children of mixed ages in a ‘home from home’ setting. A childminder who is not registered with TUSLA should look after not more than **three** pre-school children including her/his own pre-school children. It can be an all year round service, offered in the Childminder’s own home. The hours of childminding may vary from fulltime, part-time or flexible. A childminder provides a safe, caring, stimulating environment for children of all ages.

Full Day Care

A full day care facility may also be called a Nursery, or Crèche. A full day care service provides a structured service for more than 5 hours per day. The actual

opening hours may vary from facility to facility. The age range for full Day Care varies from 3 months-14years. Full Day Care may incorporate Sessional and School Age Childcare services. A Full Day care facility must offer nutritious meals, rest periods, an appropriate sleep facility and an age appropriate Early Childhood Curriculum, to ensure compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and

Part-Time Care

Some facilities also offer part time places. Part-Time Care is where a child care service offers structured day care for children for more than 3.5 hours and less than 5 hours per day. Ages range is from 6 months -6 yrs.

Pre-school/ Sessional Services

A Sessional pre-school service has a planned early childhood curriculum for a period of up to 3.5 hours. If the service is operating the Free Pre-school Year in Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) scheme then the service is required to operate 3 hours per day 5 days per week. The curriculum must reflect the principles of Síolta (the national quality framework) and incorporate Aistear (the national framework for early childhood curriculum). See URL link to the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide below. The age range of Sessional Services is usually 2 years 10 months to 5 years. This service can also be provided in a full day care service. Pre-school/Sessional Services may incorporate Aistear and Síolta using a Montessori, High\Scope, Reggio Emilia, Naionra, Froebel, Steiner or play based approach.

If you are offering a Montessori Curriculum you may want to register with the Irish Montessori Education Board (IMEB) www.imetrust.org

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

School Age Childcare

A School Aged Childcare service provides care for children when they are not in school setting e.g. before school, after school, mid-term and during school holidays. School Aged Childcare offers fun and age appropriate activities for the children.

School Aged Childcare Services occur in a variety of ways

- Within childcare services i.e. Crèche/ Full Day Care either privately owned or community based.

- A relative or childminder in their own home.
- Services that are extensions of playgroups or sessional services.
- Purpose built School Age Childcare Services, school based After School Care and community-based projects. School age childcare generally caters for children ages 4-14 years.

The Childcare Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 does not apply to school aged childcare services however from 18 February 2019, childcare services providing care to school age children must register with the Child and Family Agency (Tusla) and comply with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018.

Drop-in Centres

Drop-in Centre is a service where care is provided for pre-school children for not more than 2 hours while parent/guardian is availing of a service or attending an event for example in shopping centres, leisure centres or other establishments, as part of customer service.

The Pre-School Regulations also make specific provisions for **overnight childcare services**, which are provided either by a crèche type service or a childminder. These are services that are provided for more than two hours between 7pm and 6am.

Step 3: Premises

Suitability

In relation to the location and suitability of premises for a childcare facility a number of factors need to be considered.

Consider the following:

- Build or buy a purpose built childcare service
- Adapt an existing privately owned or community building
- Extend an existing building

When considering the suitability of premises you should be looking for:

- Proximity to local schools, housing developments and amenities.
- Adequate space for the type of service you wish to provide (see step 2 above). When choosing a premises pay particular attention to regulation 29

and 30 specifically dealing with premises and the space required to ensure you can cater for the number of children you plan for.

- The safe dropping off and collection of children.
- Staff parking
- Outdoor play –which is an essential factor in the provision of quality childcare.

The [Universal Design Guidelines](#) for Early Learning and Care Settings set out the key Universal Design (UD) considerations and guidance for Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings in Ireland. The guidelines apply to both new-build and retrofit projects and provide a flexible UD framework to ensure that settings are accessible for all children, staff, families and visitors. These [guidelines](#) can be found on the [Access & Inclusion Model](#) website.

The [Childcare Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) and registration of [School Aged Childcare Services Regulation 2018](#) requires Early Learning & Care and School Aged Childcare services to have premises and facilities that support safe and healthy practices. The [Tusla Quality Regulatory Framework \(QRF\)](#) for Early Learning & Care Services aims to uphold the safety of children by ensuring that all items, equipment, furniture, materials and surfacing used in the service are of a standard that is considered safe and provides details on facilities required (such as bathrooms, nappy changing areas, body wash facilities, heating, ventilation, lighting, space ratios, etc.).

It is important to identify and consult an architect, engineer, [local authority planning](#), fire officer on the design, set up and build of your project and it is equally important to share the [Universal Design Guidelines](#), [Childcare Act 1991 \(Early Years\) Regulations 2016](#), the [Tusla Quality Regulatory Framework \(QRF\)](#) and [fire and planning regulations](#) for Early Years Services with these professionals so they can ensure that your Early Learning & Care service meets all the required standards as well as being a functional building that is accessible for all using it.

Step 4: Planning and Fire Safety

It is law that Planning Permission and a Fire Safety Certificate is sought & granted from your County Council when considering the following:

- building a new premises
- extending an existing premises or childcare facility
- renovating/converting a garage or any room of a dwelling
- changing the use of premises for example: from residential to a crèche/full day care, pre-school

When applying for planning include in the application

- nature of the facility
- number and ages of children to be enrolled
- number of staff to be employed
- hours and days of operation
- size of floor space available
- provision and management of outdoor play area
- parking, set-down and turning space available

The County Council planning section strongly recommends that you contact them and request a pre-planning meeting. A planning officer will advise as to the suitability of the location for the building or opening a childcare facility.

It is also advisable at this point to contact the Chief Fire Officer or Building Control Officer in relation to your Fire Safety Certificate. The contact details for the Fire & Building Control Section, Louth County Council are Tel: 0429353153 or Email: Fireoff@louthcoco.ie

The contact number for the County Council Planning Department is 042-9335457 or you can email planning@louthcoco.ie

Step 5: Visit examples of best practice

When designing a service for children, it is recommended that you visit similar services to give you ideas on how to layout your environment. Sometimes what can look good, or what you think may be a good idea, may not work well in practice, therefore it is good to speak to someone in the position who can best advise you. Contact Louth County Childcare Committee to help you organise or arrange a visit of this type.

Step 6: Write a Business Plan

Elements of a Business Plan include:

- Business idea
- Experience and qualifications
- Competitive advantage of the proposed business
- Users of the service
- Market research
- Marketing/promotion of your service
- Employment (i.e. qualified childcare staff required)
- Budget (income and expenditure – see below).

Costing Out your Childcare Facility

<u>Set up costs</u>	<u>Running Costs</u>
Site & Building Costs	Wages
Planning Application fees	Administration costs
County Council Contributions	Rent/ Mortgage
Architect fees	Loans
Fire Safety Certificate Application fee	Bank Charges
Commencement Notice fee	Petty cash
Solicitor fee	Light and Heat
Fixtures & Fittings	Telephone
Equipment for baby, toddler, preschool, school age childcare and sleep room.	Rates & Refuse
Flooring & Décor	Water Rates
	Insurance

Outdoor Play Area	Cleaning
Office Equipment	Postage
Security –Alarms, CCTV	Office Stationary
Phone system	Equipment Maintenance
Kitchen Equipment & White Appliances	Professional fees i.e. Accountant,
Furniture	Solicitor
Office Resources i.e. Enrolment, Accident & Incident logbooks etc	Consumables i.e. dinners, snacks
Marketing Costs	Resources i.e. arts and crafts
Staffing Adverts	
Training	

Please Note: This is a sample list of running costs and expenditure involved in setting up a childcare service. You may find a number of other costs to add to this list.

Sourcing Funding

Finance for your childcare service can come from a number of sources

	Privately Run	Community Run
Income from fees	√	√
Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE Free pre-school year)	√	√
Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSP) up to Oct 2019 only, then NCS (see below)	√	√
Training and Education Childcare Scheme (TEC) up to Oct 2019 only, then NCS (see below)	√	√
The National Childcare Scheme	√	√
Loans from Banks, Credit Unions or lending institutions	√	√

Contact your Local Enterprise Office for business plan support and information on upcoming training and business supports available in your city/county.

Additional items to consider while drafting your business plan that are specific to the Early Learning and Care and School Aged Childcare Services:

- Tusla (Child & Family Agency) staffing requirements & room ratios
- DCYA recognised qualifications
- Insurance Costs (Early Childhood Ireland, Cullen Insurances, Arachas)

Step 7: Contact Louth County Childcare Committee Ltd.

Once you have a clear plan of what you want to do, contact LCCC on 042-9336364 to arrange an appointment with your Childcare Development Officer. They will support you in moving your project forward, providing you with the next steps to take in realising your dream! In addition, when your service is registered with TUSLA, Louth County Childcare will help you access and complete the necessary documentation so that your service is contracted to prove the Government Childcare Funding Streams listed on page 9 of this document.

Step 8: TUSLA Registration

It is a legal requirement for all early years services proposing to operate from the 30th June 2016 to make application under section 58D(2) of The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, at least 3 months before it is intended to commence operation.

All registrations and to set up an account can be completed through the [Tusla online portal](#).

Any queries regarding the [registration of a new Early Learning and Care service](#) can be directed to the registration office at ey.registration@tusla.ie or 061 461700.

Any queries regarding the [registration of a new School Aged Childcare service](#) can be directed to sac.registration@tusla.ie or 061 461700. All school age service providers are required to register their school age service with Tusla by completing the online registration process in order to comply with The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) ([School Aged Childcare Services\) Regulation 2018](#).

The Tusla Registration Application Form (RAF) contains 12 sections plus a section on Documents. You will enter registration information in each of the 12 sections and

you will also need to provide a number of evidence documents. In total, there are 21 evidence documents that you will need to upload prior to submitting a registration application form (RAF). Many of these documents may require some time to acquire and a significant amount of thought and effort before being ready to upload to the TEYIS system for example Garda/Police vetting document/s, Reference documents for Registered Provider/person in charge, Floor Plan, Outdoor Area Floor Plan, Fire Safety & Building Regulations Compliance Document, CRO Registration, Passport/Drivers License ID, Insurance Cover Evidence, Statement of Purpose and Function, Safety Statement, Policy on Managing Behaviour, Complaints Policy, Administration of Medication Policy, Infection Control Policy, Safe Sleep Policy, Planning Permission Certificate.

Your local County Childcare Committee can assist you if you are unsure about the type of documentation required and with resources to help you develop your policies and procedures.

Step 9: Children First

Child Safeguarding Statement

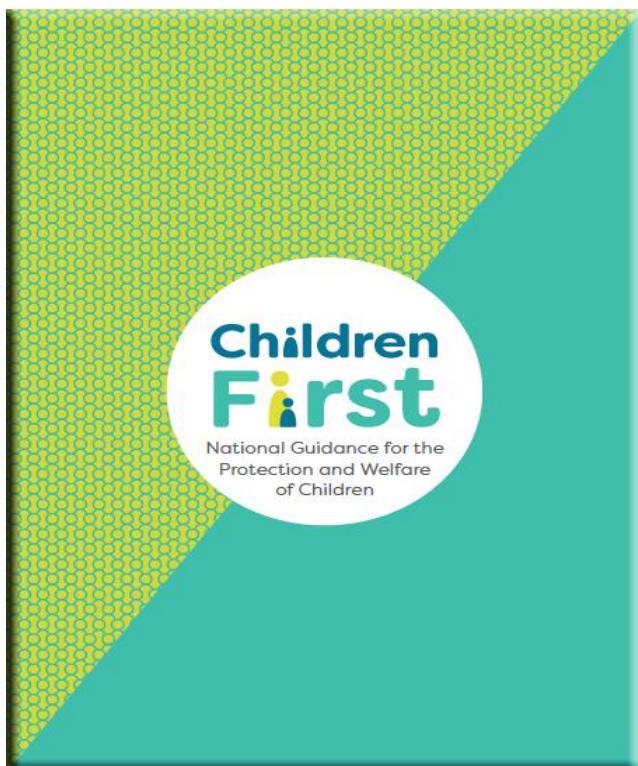
A Child Safeguarding Statement is a written statement that specifies the service being provided and the principles and procedures to be observed in order to ensure, as far as practicable, that a child availing of the service is safe from harm. It includes a risk assessment, measures to manage any risks and a number of mandatory safeguarding policies and procedures. Early years services (including preschools and school age services) who employ at least one other person will have a legal obligation to publish a Child Safeguarding Statement. Services will have 3 months from December 11, 2017 to comply.

If you are a pre-school or a school-age service who employs more than one person you are legally required to have a Child Safeguarding Statement.

New Children First National Guidance

Children First National Guidance for the Protection & Welfare of Children has been updated to include these new provisions and contains important information for professionals working with children and organisations providing services to children. Everyone working in an early years service should read and be familiar with the new Guidance document.

In addition you can download a copy of the Children First National Guidelines 2017



[Children First, National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children](#)

Louth County Childcare Committee can provide you with opportunities for Child Protection Foundation Training and Policy workshops when you are registered as a provider.

Step 10: Running the Business

Areas of Inspection and Compliance

Tusla (Child & Family Agency) is responsible for inspecting pre-schools, play groups, nurseries, creches, day-care and similar services which cater for children aged 0-6, under the [Childcare Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#).

HSE Environmental Health are authorised under the Childcare Act 1991 to carry out inspections of Early Learning and Care services. It is recommended that you contact your local [Environmental Health Officer \(EHO\)](#) for advice.

Consult the [Food Safety Authority](#) for information in relation to setting up a business that offers food and the most up to date [legislation](#).

The [Early Years Education Inspection \(EYEI\)](#) is an announced inspection to Early Learning & Care services who are providing the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The inspection is carried out by the Department of Education and Skills.

Pobal Compliance visits take place for those Early Learning & Care and School Age Childcare services participating in the [ECCE](#), [TEC](#), [CCSP](#) and [NCS](#) programmes.

The [Workplace Relations Commission \(WRC\)](#) provides information on industrial relations & rights and obligations under Irish employment and equality legislation. The Commission's also conducts inspections to determine the level of compliance with relevant employment law.

Management Responsibilities

- Ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation
- Ensuring that there is a clear management structure in place
- Establishing and maintaining
 - (a) Financial systems
 - (b) Administrative procedures
- Acting as an employer
- Devising and implementing policies and procedures
- Monitoring and evaluating the service on an ongoing basis

Legal Status

Depending on whether you are operating as a community based or privately run service, the legal status of the company will be different.

Community based: All community childcare groups who will be availing of funding under the Childcare Subvention Scheme or in receipt of capitation under the Early Childhood Care & Education Scheme (ECCE) will be required to register as a limited company by guarantee. You can become a company limited by guarantee by registering your company with the Revenue Commissions as a Limited Company (TR2 form). Your solicitor should/will register the company with the Companies Registration Office.

Privately owned: Privately owned: There are three basic forms of legal structure for individually managed services:

- ◆ Sole Trader
- ◆ Partnership
- ◆ Limited Liability Company

Legal Obligations on Becoming an Employer.

Self Employed - You need to register as self employed with the Revenue Commissioners by completing a TR1 form available from your local tax office. This form is used to register persons for income tax, VAT, and as an employer for PAYE/PRSI.

Company Limited by Guarantee: Limited Companies need to register by completing a TR2 form available from your local tax office.

Health & Safety Statement: Every business is obliged to prepare and display a Health & Safety statement.

Employment Legislation:

All employers – committees and managers of private services must comply with all employment legislation. For a detailed list of legislation and obligations contact your local County Childcare Committee.

Employment & Staffing Requirements & Responsibilities

The management duties encountered in relation to employing staff include:

- Ensuring that an open and transparent recruitment process is in place
- Ensuring that all new staff engage in a full induction programme.
- Ensuring proper remuneration and deducting and submitting PAYE / PRSI to the revenue commissioners
- Ensuring compliance with employment legislation
- Ensuring that staff have access to ongoing training
- Establishing a system of staff support and supervision

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to ensure that the information in this publication is accurate and up to date. No responsibility for loss or distress occasioned at any person acting or refraining from acting as a result of the material in this publication can be accepted by Louth County Childcare Committee Ltd/or respective servants and/or agents.