

Guidelines for Setting up a Childcare Service



Wicklow County Childcare Committee
SUPPORTING QUALITY EARLY YEARS EDUCATION & CARE IN CO. WICKLOW

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WCCC was formed in 2001 and is funded by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) to improve the quality of childcare in Co. Wicklow. We act as the local 'one stop shop' for early childhood services, childminders and parents looking for support with quality development, HR, governance, financial sustainability and continuing professional development.

Note to readers:

This information booklet sets out to provide the user with guidelines on establishing a service and information on available supports within the geographical area covered by Wicklow County Childcare Committee. It is designed as a basic guide and information tool for stakeholders concerned with setting up a new childcare service. This booklet is not intended to be a fully comprehensive source of information and is not, nor is it a recommendation of any of the services listed.

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Introduction

This information booklet sets out to provide the user with introductory guidelines on establishing a childcare service in the geographical area covered by the Wicklow County Childcare Committee. We hope you find this reference tool a useful guide for accessing information on how to set up a childcare service. Most of the information required can be found online while we here at the WCCC are also available to answer any queries you may have.

Service Types

Classification of Childcare Service Types

There are many types of childcare services, some distinguished simply by the opening hours or management structures, others by the curriculum of education that they use. The type of service you decide to offer depend on your training and the training of your staff as well as the market in which you are operating. The following is a broad categorization of types of childcare services.

Sessional Care

“Sessional pre-school service” means a pre-school service offering a planned programme to pre-school children for a total of not more than 3.5 hours per session. Services covered by the above definition may include preschools, playgroups, crèches, Montessori schools, Naíonraí, notifiable childminders or similar services which generally cater for pre-school children in the 0-6 year age bracket.

Part Time Care

“Part- time day care services” means a pre-school offering a structured day care service for pre-school children for a total of more than 3.5 hours and less than 5 hours per day and which may not include a sessional pre-school service for pre-school children not attending the part-time day care service.

The service must provide the same physical environment, including rest, play and sanitary facilities, as for full day care.

Full Day Care

“Full day care service” means a pre-school offering a structured day care service for pre-school children for more than 5 hours per day and which may include a sessional pre-school service for pre-school children not attending the full day care service. Services such as those currently described as day nurseries and crèches are included in this definition. Where a full day care service also caters for children who do not attend on a full day basis, the adult/child ratio and group size for sessional services should apply.

Childminding Service

A childminder is a person that looks after not more than 5 pre-school children including their own children. No more than 2 children under 15 months.

Overnight Pre-School

Overnight pre-school service means a service in which pre-school children are taken care of for a total of more than 2 hours between the hours of 7pm and 6am, except where the exemptions provided in Section 58 of the Child Care Act 1991 apply.

Overnight pre-school services involve pre-school children being cared for overnight in a crèche type or childminding service to facilitate the working arrangements of parents/guardians. Different ratios apply for overnight preschool depending on whether the service is provided in a crèche or in a childminding service.

Drop In

“Pre-school service in a drop-in centre” means a pre-school service offering day care, which is used exclusively on an intermittent basis. Generally, this is for a maximum of two hours. Examples of Drop-in childcare facilities are frequently found in

shopping centres and leisure centres.

Parent & Toddler Groups

A group of parents / guardians/ carers and children who come together for supervised play and companionship for their children. Parent & Toddler Groups are not regulated by the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and are the responsibility of the parents running the group.

School Age Childcare

A School Age Child is defined as a child who attends a school which teaches the National Curriculum. A service for school going children could include out of school (e.g. summer camp), after school, during term holidays or before school care, where they may have homework supervision, planned activities and a nutritious meal.

School Age Childcare is not regulated by the Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

The variety of services can be provided on a public and private basis. Supports are available for each sector.

Curricula

Montessori

The principal of the Montessori Method is that every child is treated with respect, given freedom within the limits of a carefully structured environment and allowed to develop naturally at his/her own pace.

High/Scope

In High/Scope children are encouraged to make choices about materials and activities throughout the day and thereby learn actively through experience and reflection. This is based on shared control between the child and the adult.

Steiner

Steiner Warldorf early childhood education takes an unhurried approach to childhood by providing a safe and secure environment in an increasingly fragmented world. Each stage of childhood development has unique qualities to impart to the child and should be experienced fully before embarking on to the next stage.

Naíonraí

Naíonraí are nursery schools or playschools operating as Gaeilge.

Regulations

Pre-School Regulations & Childcare

When planning a new childcare service or extending an existing one you must ensure that your proposed project complies with all statutory requirements as set down in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 (Article 58G). You will also require the appropriate Planning Permission to run a childcare service; the premises must comply with the most recent Building Regulations and Fire Safety.

The Early Years Inspectorate as a regulator of pre-schools does not undertake advisory visits to early years services. Information regarding registration of pre-school services and inspection processes under the 2016 regulations are available on the early years inspectorate webpage of Tusla: -

<http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services>.

Additional information and support may be sourced from the WCCC and other agencies and supportive organisations in the early year's sector.

Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016

The Child Care Act 1991 is the most important piece of legislation in relation to the delivery of a pre-school service. The Act sets out the main provisions in relation to pre-school services in part VII. If you are planning to open a childcare service, you must notify Tusla 3 months prior to opening. The WCCC recommends a minimum of 6 months notification to Tusla to ensure you do not encounter any delays to your proposed opening date. Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 a person who proposes to provide a pre-school service other than a temporary pre-school service shall make an application under section 58D (2) of the Child Care Regulations 2016 in respect of the pre-school service at least 3

months prior to doing so. The Early Year's Inspectorate carries out a fit for purpose visit prior to commencement.

Regular inspections of childcare services are necessary to ensure that the person providing the service is taking all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of the pre-school children attending.

The regulations vary depending on the type of childcare service you are providing however some common to all types include the need for:

- ✓ Adequate Insurance Cover
- ✓ Adequate Fire Safety Precautions
- ✓ Provisions in place for medical and other emergencies
- ✓ Policies and Procedures and statements as set out in the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and Pobal.
- ✓ The necessary register and records for staff and children attending.
- ✓ Adequate Adult Child Ratios as set out in the Child Care Act (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

Policies, procedures and statements

Policies and Procedures

A Policies and Procedures manual will provide important information to your staff and parents of the children in your care on how the service works, what is acceptable and what is not – how you will respond to various situations and what roles all those involved will perform. A carefully thought out Policies and Procedures manual will contribute greatly to the quality of the service you provide and is vital to the efficient running of your business. It is recommended to consult with parents and staff in the development of your Policies and Procedures and to ensure that

Policies and Procedures are implemented and reviewed regularly.

Policy

A policy is a statement of agreed beliefs proposed/adopted by the organisation/individual on a range of topics related to the childcare service provided.

Procedure

A procedure is a course of action being adopted/implemented by a service. It details the action to be taken to address the stated policy. It facilitates decision-making, provides consistency and autonomy and helps ensure that the service is managed effectively.

All services must have the following Policies and Procedures in place as set out in Schedule 5 of the Child Care Act (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 as a minimum:-

1. (a) statement of purpose and function;
- (b) complaints policy;
- (c) policy on administration of medication; (d) policy on infection control;
- (e) policy on managing behaviour;
- (f) policy on safe sleep;
- (g) fire safety policy;
- (h) inclusion policy;
- (i) outings policy where children attending the service are brought on such outings;
- (j) policy on accidents and incidents;
- (k) policy on authorisation to collect children;

- (l) policy on healthy eating;
- (m) policy on outdoor play where such play is provided to children attending the service;
- (n) policy on overnight services where the service is an overnight pre-school service;
- (o) policy on staff absences;
- (p) policy on the use of the internet and photographic and recording devices;
- (q) recruitment policy;
- (r) risk management policy;
- (s) settling-in policy;
- (t) staff training policy;
- (u) supervision policy.

2. In this Schedule—

“fire safety policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying—

(a) the manner in which the registered provider shall ensure that all employees, unpaid workers and contractors are—

(i) aware of and trained in the procedures to be followed in case of fire in the service, and

(ii) familiar with the location of any firefighting equipment and trained in the use of such equipment,

(b) the frequency and timing of fire drills to be carried out in the service, and

(c) the manner in which the record in writing referred to in Regulation 26 is to be maintained;

"inclusion policy", in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the manner in which it is ensured that the needs (including the physical, emotional and intellectual needs and the religious beliefs (if any)) of all pre-school children attending the service are addressed in the service;

"outings policy", in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the measures to be taken to ensure the safety and welfare of pre-school children attending the service when under the control of the service but not on the premises of the service;

"policy on accidents and incidents", in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying—

(a) the measures to be taken in the service to prevent accidents and incidents,

(b) the procedures to be followed when an accident or incident involving a pre-school child occurs while the child is attending the service, including the steps that are to be taken to contact the parent or guardian of the child or the emergency services if necessary,

(c) the manner in which a record of the accident or incident should be kept, and

(d) the manner in which a record should be shared with the parent or guardian of the child to whom it relates;

"policy on administration of medication", in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the procedure to be followed in the service to ensure the safe storage of medication in the service and administration of medication to a pre-school child attending the service;

“policy on authorisation to collect children”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the protocols of the service in relation to the collection from the service of pre-school children attending the service;

“policy on healthy eating”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the manner in which the service shall ensure that the food and drink provided to the pre-school children attending the service is nutritious and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of such a child;

“policy on infection control”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the procedure to be followed in the service to protect persons working in the service and pre-school children attending the service from the transmission of infections;

“policy on managing behaviour”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy that—

(a) supports positive behaviour by the pre-school children attending the service, and

(b) specifies approaches for managing challenging behaviour by a pre-school child attending the service and assisting the child to manage his or her behaviour as appropriate to the age and stage of development of the child;

“policy on outdoor play”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying—

(a) the manner in which and the times at which pre-school children attending the service have access to outdoor play, whether on the premises or in another location, and

(b) the manner in which the health and safety of the pre-school children attending the service while engaged in outdoor play is to be ensured;

“policy on overnight services”, in relation to a pre-school service, means the procedures in place in the service to ensure the safety and welfare of pre-school children attending

the service overnight, including in relation to the supervision of such children, sleeping arrangements, bedtime routine and the preservation of the privacy of such children;

“policy on safe sleep”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the manner in which safe and suitable sleeping arrangements are to be provided in the service for pre-school children attending the service;

“policy on staff absences”, in relation to a pre-school service, means the arrangements in place in the service to ensure that the required adult: child ratios specified in Regulation 11 can be met when an employee working directly with children attending the service is absent from the service;

“recruitment policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the procedure to be followed by the registered provider when hiring employees and unpaid workers, including the steps to be taken to check and verify references, qualifications and vetting documentation;

“risk management policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy on the manner in which the registered provider assesses any potential risks to the safety of the pre-school children attending the service, and the steps taken to either eliminate those risks or mitigate them;

“settling-in policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means the procedures in place in the service to facilitate the integration in the service of a pre-school child when he or she first attends the service, his or her progression within the service and his or her transition to primary school;

“staff training policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the manner in which the registered provider shall identify and address the training needs of employees and unpaid workers;

“statement of purpose and function”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a description of the service, including—

- (a) who the service is aimed at,
- (b) the class of service provided,
- (c) the hours of the service,
- (d) the age range of the children catered for in the service, and (e) the number of children that can be catered for in the service;

“supervision policy”, in relation to a pre-school service, means a policy specifying the manner in which employees, unpaid workers and contractors are supervised and supported in the service in relation to their work practices.

The Necessary Register and Records must include

The Name, Position, Qualification and Experience of all Staff

Maximum Number of Children Catered for

Type of Service and Age Range Staff/Child Ratios

The following must be completed prior to commencement: -

Application Form for Registration of Pre-School Service

Part VIA of the Child Care Act 1991 as inserted by Section 92 of the Child & Family Agency Act 2013.

Information to be enclosed with application form

- Garda vetting/Police vetting for proposed registered provider and person in charge if different
- Two references in respect of the proposed registered provider, and in respect of the person in charge if different

- Floor plan of the interior design of the centre giving details of the dimensions of all rooms intended for children’s use, also indicating owner’s/staff rooms
- Plan of any outdoor area available for children’s use
- Evidence of registration from Companies Registration Office, where applicable
- Proof of identity of the proposed registered provider (copy of passport or driving licence are the only acceptable documents)
- Copy of the Certificate of Insurance or written confirmation of insurance cover
- Copy of Statement of Purpose and Function of Safety Statement
- Copy of Policy on Managing Behaviour
- Copy of Complaints Policy
- Copy of Policy on Administration of Medication of Policy on Infection Control
- Copy of Policy on Safe Sleep
- Application Fee Due

Please note that only fully completed application forms will be accepted. All information must be accurate and comprehensive

1. General Details

Is the person completing this application form over 18 years of age?

Yes No

Class of Service:

Full day care service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Part-time day care service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sessional pre-school service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-school service in a drop-in centre	<input type="checkbox"/>
Childminding service	<input type="checkbox"/>

Overnight service	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Name of the Pre-School Service.....

Address of the Pre-School Service.....

Telephone no. of Pre-School Service Land Line.....

Mobile..... Email address.....

Website..... When do you propose to commence the Service? How many children will the Service accommodate? What is the age profile of the children the Service will accommodate?

2. Proposed Registered Provider(s) of Pre-School Service

Please indicate whether the proposed registered provider is a: Sole Trader

Partnership

Limited Company

Designated Activity Company

Other (Please give details)

2(a) Details of Proposed Registered Provider(s) (sole traders or partnerships)

2(b) If the proposed registered provider is not a sole trader or partnership, please provide the following details

Name of Organisation:

Address of

Organisation:

Landline No: Mobile No: E-mail
 address: Name of person
 acting on behalf of Organisation: Position in
 Organisation:

Address (if different from
 above):

Landline No: Mobile No:

E-mail address*: (*The Agency
 will use this e-mail address for correspondence purposes)

2(c) Please provide the following details in the case of Registered Companies only

Name of Company:

Address of Registered

Office:

Company Secretary Name: Company
 Registration Number:

2(d) Is the Service part or proposed to be part of DCYA’s Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) funding Programme?

Yes No

2(e) If yes, please provide the date on which the service commenced the ECCE service, and the DCYA Reference No:

3. Management structure

3(a) Person in Charge (Name to be entered on register as person in charge if different from Proposed Registered Provider)

Particulars of the Person in Charge of the Pre-School Service

Full Name Date of
 Birth

Home

Address

Tel. No.

3(b) Details of Qualifications of Proposed Registered Provider (or Person in Charge, if different)

Awarding Body	Country of Qualification	Qualification	Duration of course	Date Awarded

3(c) Details of the Employment Record of the Proposed Registered Provider (or Person in Charge, if different)

Please include details of present and past employers, including the name, address, and nature of business, the dates of employment and details of posts held.

Employer's name and address	Nature of business	Post held	Dates of employment		Reason for Leaving
			From	To	

4. Professional Registration details of Proposed Registered Provider (or Person in Charge, if different)

4(a) Is, or was, the proposed registered provider (or person in charge, if different) registered with any health, or allied health professional registration body?

Yes No

4(b) If yes, please provide the following details:

Name of registration body	Contact Details	Registration Number

4(c) If yes, please indicate the registration status

Full Associate Student

4(d) If yes, please indicate the expiration date of the current or most recent registration:

4(e) Has the proposed registered provider (or person in charge, if different) ever been subject to any disciplinary process pursued by the registration body?

Yes No

If yes give details

.....

5.Previous Registration/notification history

5(a) Were you or was any service operated by your organisation previously registered with or notified to the HSE or Tusla?

Yes No

If yes, provide timeframes and details.

.....
.....

5(b) Have you or has any service operated by your organisation been registered as a provider of other social care services e.g. nursing home, supported accommodation or residential children’s home?

Yes No

If yes, provide timeframes and details:

.....
.....

5(c) Have you or has any service operated by your organisation been registered in another jurisdiction either as an Early Years Service or as another Social Service?

Yes No

If yes, provide timeframes and details:

.....
.....

5(d) Have you or has any service operated by your organisation been prosecuted under the Child Care Act 1991?

Yes No

If yes, provide timeframes and details:

.....
.....

6. Staffing of Pre-School Service

6(a) Proposed Number of Staff to be employed in the Preschool Service

6(b) Proposed number of students, interns, or volunteers and other unremunerated staff (if any)

7. Premises

7(a) Do the premises have a certificate of planning permission?

Yes No

If no, please state why not

7(b) Date of construction

7(c) Do you have sole use of the premises?

Yes No If no, what other services/individuals do you share the premises with?

.....
.....

7(d) Are the proposed premises ready for a pre- registration visit?

Yes No

If no, please state when the proposed premises will be ready for a pre- registration visit:

.....

7(e) Are the premises that you are planning to use as a Pre-School Service:

A domestic dwelling	<input type="checkbox"/>
Purpose-built as a childcare facility	<input type="checkbox"/>
A refurbished/change of use of an existing building	<input type="checkbox"/>
Currently being used as a Pre-School Service	<input type="checkbox"/>
Located in a building where activities other than childcare take place Please specify the nature of the other activities (e.g. primary school, community hall, older people’s daycare, bridge club etc.).	<input type="checkbox"/>

7(f) Please list all the rooms available to the pre-school service together with their function and size

7(g) Please give details of the outdoor play area available to the pre-school children

Details of Outdoor Play Area	Size (m2)

8. Insurance Arrangements

8(a) Name of Insurance Company 8(b)

Address of Insurance Company

8(c) Categories of insurance cover for the pre-school service

Public liability

Fire & theft

Motor insurance

Building Insurance Outings Insurance Other

8(d) Number of children covered by insurance 8(e)

Date of Insurance Cover From To

9. Opening Days/Hours

Please provide details of the proposed opening days and opening hours of the Pre-School Service:

10. Directions to your Pre-School Service

Please provide easy-to-follow-directions to the location of the proposed pre- school service:

.....

11. Fees

Please indicate on the following table the appropriate fee due in respect of your application:

	Class of Service	Fee
	Full day care service	€80
	Part-time day care service	€80
	Sessional pre-school service	€40
	Pre-school service in a drop-in centre	€80
	Temporary pre-school service	€80
	Childminding Service	€40
	Overnight pre-school service	€80

12. Declaration

I consent to the Child and Family Agency carrying out checks and using information provided in this application form when assessing my suitability to register a Pre-School Service.

I agree to notify the Child and Family Agency of any changes to the information on this form.

I declare that I have attached all documentation required to progress my application as set out in this form, including the relevant application fee.

I declare that all the information I have given on the application form is true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

The name below is that of the proposed registered provider.

Name: Signed on behalf
of the proposed registered provider:

..... Status of

Signatory (for example Individual, director, chairperson):

Date

Food and Nutrition

What meals and snacks am I required to provide under the Childcare Regulations 2016?

According to the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006 pre-school providers must ensure that children are given regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs, in consultation with parents where concerns exist.

Childcare Regulations 2016 – Food and drink

A registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service.

The food and drink supplied must be nutritious and should take account of the Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services as prepared by the Department of Health & Children. These guidelines advise as the following:

Children in day care for more than 5 hours per session (full day care) -

Offer at least two meals (one hot) and two snacks, for example – breakfast, snack, lunch and snack. If children are there for a long day, an evening meal may also need to be provided.

Children in day care for up to 5 hours maximum per session (part-time day care) -

Offer at least two meals and one snack, for example – breakfast, snack and lunch. It is not necessary to have a hot meal; however, the meal should include at least one serving from each food shelf on the food pyramid.

Children in day care for up to 3.5 hours per session (sessional pre-school service) -

Offer one meal and one snack – for example snack and lunch or breakfast and snack.

Portable drinking water should be available to children at all time

Options for providing food in a childcare service -

- The service prepares meals for the children on the premise
- The service employs a registered company to provide meals for the children
- Parents provide a meal for the children while attending the childcare service

Check out the HSE's 3 Week Healthy Eating Plan for ideas.

If you need further information on Food Hygiene, Allergies & Intolerances or Healthy Eating, visit the Little Bites Online Food & Nutrition Hub.

Childcare Staff

Requirement that all staff, students and volunteers in preschool services will be appropriately vetted once procedures are in place to facilitate this.

All staff must hold a minimum qualification of Level 5 and Level 6 for room leaders.

Market research

Market Research / Undertaking A Needs Analysis

Market research is essential in creating a sustainable childcare service and it will not only form the basis of your funding/grant applications and your business plan, it will also be important with regard to building considerations and staffing issues. The purpose of conducting market research is to highlight the demand for your childcare service. Identifying a strong demand is essential if your childcare service is to be viable. You need to be aware of the level of demand for childcare (and type of childcare) in your area, the existing and projected population and the local economic and employment trends in order to develop a high quality, flexible, accessible early years service for children and families. WCCC are happy to help you if you require

assistance.

In conducting your market research, it can be helpful to carry out a SWOT analysis. A Swot analysis helps you identify the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats of your proposed childcare service. SWOT is a tool of strategic analysis and has two elements: an external analysis of Opportunities and Threats, and an internal analysis of Strengths and Weaknesses. The following are some pointers questions that may help you with your SWOT analysis.

Strengths:

What advantages does your proposed childcare service have?

What do you do better than anyone else?

What unique or lowest-cost resources do you have access to?

What do people in your market see as your strengths?

Weaknesses:

What could you improve?

What should you avoid?

What are people in your market likely to see as weaknesses?

Opportunities:

Where are the good opportunities facing you? What are the interesting trends you are aware of?

Threats:

What obstacles do you face?

What is your competition doing?

Are the required specifications for your job, products or services changing?

Do you have bad debt or cash-flow problems?

Could any of your weaknesses seriously threaten your childcare service?

Planning Permission

If you are starting a childcare service it will be necessary to identify appropriate premises which are suitable for childcare provision indoors/ outdoors, in conjunction with the Pre-school Regulations 2016. It is also necessary for providers to familiarise themselves with their local County Council requirements, particularly planning permission, rates and fire safety.

Generally, planning permission is required for the development of any childcare facility except for the use of a house for childminding. The Pre-School Regulations 2016 define a childminder as minding no more than five pre-school children including their own.

The development of a childcare facility by means of the provision of purpose built structures or changing the use of any existing structures requires full planning permission to comply with building legislation. Planning applications and guidance notes on the process are available from the planning section of your local County Council. In general, the Department of Environment and Local Government considers that the following are appropriate locations for a childcare service:

- New Communities / Larger New Housing Developments
- Near large centres of employment e.g. business parks, industrial estates etc.,
- In the vicinity of schools
- Neighbourhood, District and Town Centres
- Adjacent to Public Transport Corridors

For further in depth information have a look at the Department of the Environment Guidelines for Planning Authorities.

Water rates

All consumers of mains water, apart from for the moment domestic consumers are liable for this charge. This means that a charge is payable on all business premises, on agricultural supplies, on schools, crèches, preschools and on churches. Consumers pay either on the basis of actual usage (metered supplies) or, in cases where usage is minimal, on a flat charge (fixed accounts). For further information on water charges contact the water charges section at your local county council.

Commercial Rates

Commercial rates are local property taxes that are levied by local authorities on commercial properties rateable under the Valuation Act 2001. Local authorities are under a statutory obligation to levy rates on any property used for commercial purposes in accordance with the details entered on the valuation lists prepared by the independent Commissioner of Valuation. The determination of the annual rate on valuation, which is applied to property valuations to calculate rates, is a decision taken locally by the elected members of a local authority in their annual budget.

Fire Safety

All ECCE facilities must comply with fire safety standards – whether you own the premises or are leasing the premises as the ECCE provider it is your duty of care to ensure that all fire safety requirements are in place.

Fire Certification

If you are leasing a premises or setting up a business in a fully serviced premises the Fire Certification may already be in place – you should check with your landlord or the purchaser regarding this. If this is not in place you will need to go through a Fire Certification Process – this is usually carried out with an application for planning permission. A Fire Safety Certificate is a statement made by the Fire Authority stating that the building is constructed in accordance with the submitted plans and documents and it will need to meet the requirements of nationally accepted fire safety standards. To obtain a Fire Safety Certificate an application Form (similarly to planning permission) must be made to the Fire Authority – this should be available from your local County Council Office. You do not need to put a notice in the paper in relation to this (unlike with planning permission), however you will need full plans for your service. Your architect can assist you with this. You will also need to have a copy of the [Fire Safety In Preschools](#) booklet on the premises.

Fire Safety Management

Fire Safety Management of your service will involve the following: Putting together a Fire Safety Register which should include the: -

- Name of the service and person in charge in relation to Fire Safety
- Procedures for calling out the Fire Brigade
- Management of fire drills and records of same

- Details of emergency procedures
- Details of Staff training in fire prevention and fire safety
- A maintenance schedule for the fire protection equipment on the system.

You can address these issues under your fire policy.

Business Plan & Business Information

A business plan is vital for the successful running of any business or community enterprise no matter how big or small. A business plan helps to communicate your intentions for the childcare service and raise finance / grants. It can also act as a useful tool against which further performance can be assessed.

Top tips for preparing a business plan are as follows:

- Start off with a good executive summary.
- Be realistic; do not be over optimistic in your projections.
- Provide detailed market research including a competitive overview.
- Describe organisation structure.
- Make the plan your own.

Suggested structure of a business plan –

Executive Summary

- Description of service
- Industry analysis and trends
- Marketing plan
- Financial details

Business Description

- Short description of service
- Mission, ethos, business aims and objectives
- Details of your competitive edge

Organisational Structure and Management Team

- Ownership information
- Human resources
- Advisors/ professional services
- Management team profiles

Operational Plan

- Location details
- Opening hours
- Type of service

Market Research

- Details of demand for your service
- SWOT analysis
-

Marketing Plan

- Target markets
- Market research information
- P's Information (Product, Place, Price & Product)

Funding & Finance

- Income projection
- Cash flow projection
- Projected balance sheet
- Base figures on realistic expectations

Business Information

Legal Structure

There is a difference between legal structure and legal status. Legal status is necessary in order to act through the legal system and an organisation without legal status is not recognised by the courts. For example, a community group that only has a constitution is not recognised by the courts. When an organisation becomes incorporated as a company the company has a separate legal status. It can now carry out activities such as employing staff and acquiring property in its own right and its members are protected against certain liabilities. In addition, many funding organisations require a group to have formal legal status.

The legal structure of your business will affect the way that the business is taxed and the accounting records required by the Revenue Commissioners.

Different obligations, levels of risk and liability are associated with each other.

These are three formal structures in which you could provide childcare services:

- As a sole trader
- As a partner in a partnership
- As a shareholder in limited company

Sole Trader

A sole trader is a business that is owned and run by one person. Setting up as a sole trader needs very little by way of legal formality, apart from registering with the Register of Business names of the Companies Registration Office (www.cro.ie). An advantage of being a sole trader is that apart from normal tax returns, which every taxable person must pay, a sole trader is not required to make public any information about the business.

Partnership

A Partnership is an extension of a sole trader model, joining two or more people together in a business relationship. Up to 20 people can be partners in a business venture, some of whom can be simply 'sleeping partners' contributing capital but without any say in the running of the business.

Although there is no legal requirement, business partnerships often start by the writing of a formal agreement, a Deed of Partnership, which sets out in legal terms the working of the business, the profit sharing arrangements and stipulations resignation, retirement and death.

Limited Company

A Limited Company is a legal entity in its own right, separate from its owners, who are shareholders, and from its directors, who run the business. The owners are free from personal responsibility for the debts of a limited company – they are liable to lose only the share capital that they invested in the business. The shareholders are liable in the event of the business not being able to pay its debts for any amount outstanding on their subscribed shareholdings.

There are 4 different types of limited companies to suit different types of organisations. For Example, a Company Limited by Guarantee not having Share Capital is the general legal structure used by Not for Profit Groups.

Other types of limited companies include: A private company limited by shares, A company limited by guarantee having a share capital, A public limited company.

Information regarding setting up a limited company is available from the Company Registration Office (www.cro.ie). It is worthwhile taking advice from a solicitor or an accountant as to whether an incorporated company is the best way for you to operate your business, as directors now take on huge responsibility under company law.

Further Information

Industrial and Provident Society

This structure gives legal status to an organisation. It is used by co-operatives. The organisation that becomes an Industrial and Provident Society must carry on a trade, industry or business.

Charitable Status

When an organisation has charitable status, it means that it is recognised by the Revenue Commissioners for tax purposes. Groups can apply to the Revenue Commissioners for exemption from certain taxes and the Valuation office for exemption from rates on buildings. Most funding organisations for voluntary and community groups require the organisation to have charitable status.

It does not give legal status to an organisation. A group can have charitable status without having legal status and vice versa.

Registration of Business Name

Whether a sole trader, a partnership or a limited company, if you use a name for the business that is different from your own name, you should register it with the Company Registration Office. Such a registration enables the public to find out about the people behind a trading name and doesn't confer any legal protection or propriety rights on that name. Full details of how to register your business are available from the Companies Registration Office www.cro.ie.

Taxation & PRSI

Comprehensive guides in respect of all aspects of business taxation including 'Starting in Business' guide can be obtained from your local tax office at (01) 8780100 or the Revenue website www.revenue.ie

For information on all aspects of PRSI contact your local Social Welfare Office.

Accountant

For information and/or advice on accounting or taxation matters you are advised to contact your accountant.

Solicitors

You will need a solicitor to -

- Check out any lease, loan agreement or contract you may be asked to sign
- Advise you on relevant legislation
- Act as a final step in your credit control process
- Act for you if you are being sued

Marketing Plan - 4P's

It is very important to prepare a marketing strategy for your childcare service. The following are the key elements that need to be included in your marketing plan:

Product

Who are your customers, what are they looking for in terms of childcare service types. What are you offering the children in your service?

Place

Relates to the location of the business and how people are going to access the childcare service.

Price

This refers to your pricing strategy for the type of service you wish to offer particularly when compared to that of competitors? Will your service be a budget or upmarket service? Price is a balance between what your customers are willing to pay and what profit you would like to gain for private providers

Promotion

Promoting your childcare service is very important. In this section you will identify how you are going to advertise your service.

What on-going market research will be undertaken to measure such things as customer satisfaction, the effectiveness of the advertising and promotion, and changing consumer wants?

Finance & Funding

The financial element of a business plan is fundamental and the backbone of any plan. Projected financial statements will be included in this section, which represent what your business will look like in the future based on a set of assumptions.

Financial Plans normally show the projected income and expenditure over a specified period 3 – 5 years.

Budgeting

In order to be successful in securing grants, funding or loans, the most important documentation will be your projected budget with its breakdown of estimated income and expenditure. It is also very important to write up a complete budget so that you can see what is required for your childcare service to be financially viable.

Balance Sheet

It is important to include a balance sheet when preparing your financial plan.

Fees

Fees must be high enough to ensure that the service is sustainable and at the same time affordable to the local community. Community Childcare Services may need to source additional grants, as often income from fees is not sufficient to cover all overheads.

The following factors should be considered when deciding the cost of the service (fees):

- The cost of overheads, such as staff, wages, premises, equipment and insurance.

- Actual cost per childcare place. (Total cost of running the childcare facility divided by the number of children.)
- Grants available from funding agencies.

Expenditure might be broken down into the following headings:

Set up costs – fixtures and fittings, equipment, architectural design fees etc.

Salaries including employers PRSI

Insurance – building, contents, employee and so forth

Recruitment costs

Premises – rent, rates, electricity, heating, phone

Furniture and equipment – from desks to soap

Administration costs – stationary, payroll, software

Staff – uniforms, training

Marketing costs – signage,

Consumables – stationery, arts and crafts materials, etc.

Capital Funding

Please call the WCCC to discuss any current capital funding available.

Human Resources & Organisational Management

When employing staff, consideration should be given to the qualifications, training and experience of staff, as this will greatly influence the quality of service you provide. All childcare staff should have a minimum of a FETAC Level 5 qualification in childcare or an equivalent. You will need to identify the particular roles and organisational structure needed to run a childcare service.

In addition, you will need to work through the following list of procedures when recruiting staff (this list is not exhaustive):

- Employment Legislation (visit www.entemp.ie)
- Role Descriptions
- Advertisements
- Short Listings
- Interview Procedures (Including score sheets)
- Reference checking and Garda Clearance
- Record Keeping
- Contracts of Employment & Staff Handbook Volunteers / Student

Good management of your service is critical. There are several possible management structures that your childcare service could have.

For example:

A committee managed service such as voluntary organisation, registered charity, parents co-operative, and community business.

A private business that is individually or partnership managed.

The difference lies in the way in which the roles and responsibilities are allocated between the two types. Privately Owned or Non Committee Managed Childcare.

A Manager's Tasks Includes

- Complete overall managerial responsibility for the service
- Responsibility for the delegation of tasks
- Appraisal of team members at regular intervals Inductions
- Arranging and chairing of staff meetings

- Responsible for HR matters
- Staff Training & Development
- Financial Management
- Record Keeping

Management Committee

A Management Committee's Task Includes:

The committee will carry out all tasks of a manager or supervise a manager in the implementation of these tasks. Tasks are normally divided out amongst officers and committee members. The managing committee (may also be known as Board of Trustees, an Executive Committee, a Council or a Board of Director) is the governing body of a voluntary organisation. It is important that the management committee be a representative of all sectors of the local community.

Overall Role of the Committee

- Managing childcare service
- Agreeing constitution (or memorandum & articles of association) and ensuring adequate Policies and Procedures are in place.
- Responsibility for financial, legal and official matters
- Responsibility for the employment of staff. (N.B it is advisable for the management committees to set up as companies limited by guarantee if employing staff.

It is up to each individual childcare service to decide on their committee structure and officer roles but generally, it is laid out as follows:

Chairperson

Call meetings & draw up agenda in co-operation with secretary

Chair meetings

Ensure that minutes are recorded, if previous minutes, check for accuracy and correct if necessary

Ensure all decisions are minuted

Chair should encourage participation & ensure meetings stick to agreed time and agenda.

Secretary

Ensure requirements of the Companies Office are fulfilled (if a limited company)

Ensure rules outlined in Articles of Association/Constitution are kept

Take minutes and maintain records of minutes

Notify members of all meetings both general and committee

Treasurer

Keep records of all financial transactions

Ensure that all cheques are signed by 2 out of 3 nominated signatories

Pay all bills and expenses that are approved by the committee

Lodge money into appropriate a/c

Inform the committee of its financial position at every meeting

Quality

The importance of high quality practices to children's development and learning in childcare services is well established. It is equally important to reflect on the fact that the poor quality provision may be detrimental to children and even put them at risk.

To support the childcare sector towards the improvement and enrichment of young children's early life experiences, The Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education produced Síolta, the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education 2006.

The content of each manual includes principles, standards, Components of Quality and Signposts for Reflection. The Ultimate objective of these materials is to promote a holistic approach to quality provision and practice.

Disclaimer

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