

Spring 2014

Newsletter

Hello everyone



Sligo County
Childcare
Committee

2014 has started out to be a very busy year for the sector, policy development and implementation has commenced with changes to the child protection training as well as the introduction of registration for the sector. Sligo County Childcare Committee continue to attend briefing sessions and engagement with the various departments including DCYA, Pobal and Tusla and changes will be communicated to you as soon as we become aware of them.

Our quality worker Nicola has had the privilege of working with many of you over the past number of months and she will continue with the supports to quality programme over the next number of months. We were fortunate to have received a small amount of funding from the Katherine Howard foundation to support

a programme focussing on the 0-3yrs. We will be working with a number of parent and toddler groups over the coming weeks to look at healthy starts for young children.

Supporting training and mentoring for the sector is a key priority area for 2014, our support and development team is working towards supporting you with all aspects of quality and our Aistear workshops have been well attended.

On the 8th May we are hosting an evening with your local and EU candidates for the upcoming elections this will be your opportunity to discuss the challenges facing the sector locally and to hear the opinions of your prospective representatives. I would encourage you to attend the event which will be from 7:30pm – 9pm in the Sligo Park Hotel.

Sharon

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New Child Protection Training For Early Years Settings 2014

From January 2014, a new standardised child protection course will be available to workers in the Early Years Sector. The first level of training that will be available is Child Protection & Welfare: Basic Level and it will be delivered by the Childcare Committees.

Child Protection & Welfare: Basic Level is a quality assured child protection training course tailored to the needs of the sector. It will be rolled out over 3 years to workers in both services and home-based settings. Training will be available in Irish and English, Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta and Comhar Naíonraí na Gaeltachta will provide the training in Irish.

The new programme has been developed in partnership with the HSE and the roll out is being co-ordinated by the National Early Years Children First Committee, an interagency committee tasked with the implementation of Children First in the Early Years Sector. Children First is Ireland's national guidance for the protection and welfare of children.

This coordinated approach to child protection training aims to provide access to a standardised training module for everyone, at minimum cost, and consistent implementation of child protection policy and procedures across the sector.

The role that Early Years Professionals have in the lives of children and their families means that they are uniquely placed to recognise when

there are concerns about the safety, welfare or well-being of a child. Early Years professionals and services also have a responsibility for safeguarding the children in their care through their policies, procedures and practice.

The one-day accredited training course looks at what constitutes child abuse, roles and responsibilities in reporting child protection and welfare concerns, child protection policy and safe work practices. Many of the participants in the pilot programme reported increased knowledge, skills and confidence in responding to child protection and welfare concerns after attending the course.

Child Protection & Welfare: Basic Level will replace all other HSE accredited training and the 'Keeping Children Safe' Training. This course is aimed at childcare professionals who are currently working in a service, childminders and boards of management. Designated Liaison Person training and an online information resource will be developed for childcare students and will be launched in 2014.

Sligo County Childcare Committee have delivered two training programmes so far this year if you require any further information you can contact us on 0719148860.

Contact Details

Manager
Sharon Boles
Support and
Development Team
Joan McGrath - Viola Craig
Quality Worker - Nicola McCormack
Administrator - Suzanne Cole
Part time Receptionist - Laura Norman,
Barry Sullivan

Contact details:

The Development Centre,
Cleveragh Road, Sligo
Tel: (071) 9148860
Fax: (071) 9148849
Email: sligochildcare@gmail.com

Capital Funding Programme 2014



€2.5 million being made available for community childcare facilities will be directed to two specific purposes:

1. Large scale maintenance works: Grants of up to €50k, for buildings previously in receipt of large-scale Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme (EOCP) or National Childcare Investment Programme (NCIP) capital funding. This would include works to roofs, windows and doors, heating and sanitary systems, building access or safety, replacement of worn fixtures and fittings and essential repairs to outdoor play areas.
2. Quality improvement and sustainability: Grants of up to 50k for buildings previously in receipt of large-scale EOCP or NCIP capital

funding for medium or large scale works to improve Building Energy Rating (BER) to support sustainability.

The Minister also indicated that she hoped to announce details of the next capital funding scheme for the early year's sector before the end of the year, which would commence in early 2015. The Minister said "I am anxious to ensure that grants for capital funding are available to as many applicants as possible and that this is facilitated by an early announcement of a 2015 scheme."

The closing date for applications is 7th May 2014.

For further information please go to the Pobal web site at www.pobal.ie or contact Sligo County Childcare Committee.

Childcare Programmes

On behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA), Sligo County Childcare Committee (SCCC) administers the main childcare funding programmes that subsidise fees for parents in early childhood care & education (ECCE) services locally.

Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Scheme – The Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) Scheme is designed to give children access to a free Pre-School Year (September to June) of appropriate programme-based activities in the year before they start primary school.

This free pre-school year (ECCE Scheme) is available in most Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) services in County Sligo. The ECCE Scheme is designed to give children access to a free pre-school year of appropriate programme-based activities in the year before they start primary school.

Participation in a pre-school programme provides children with their first formal experience of early learning, the starting point of their educational and social development outside the home. Children who avail of pre-school are more likely to be ready for school and a formal learning and social environment. If your child was born between 2nd February 2009 and 30th June 2010, your child is eligible for the ECCE Scheme from September 2014.

Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme – The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) scheme subvents community not-for-profit childcare services, to enable them to charge reduced childcare fees to disadvantaged and low-income parents.

The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme subvents community not-for-profit childcare services, to enable them to charge reduced childcare fees to low income and disadvantaged families. Parents in receipt of social welfare and/or medical card may avail of reduced childcare fees under the CCS Scheme in participating community childcare services.

Please note: In order to avail of the CCS Scheme, your child must be enrolled and attending the community childcare service on the week of the 14th October 2013.

To find a childcare service in your area that offers the CCS Scheme, contact the office.

Information for CCS services

The DCYA website has the most up-to-date information and forms on the CCS Scheme for childcare providers.

CCS payment schedule for the current year

Pobal will be making the following CCS payments for the remainder of the CCS year 2013/14 (26/08/2013 to 24/08/2014):

A) *2nd provisional payment of CCS to cover the month of December. It will be made in the w/e 06/12/2013. This payment will bring services' payments for the CCS year to date to the equivalent payment of 1/3rd of services 2012/13 approval.

B) *3rd Payment will be made by the end of January and will be based on the services actual approval for the CCS year 26/08/2013 to 24/08/2014. The January payment will bring services' payments up to 2/3rd of the actual 2013/14 CCS approval.

C) *4th and final payment of CCS for the year 2013/14 will be made in May 2014 bringing CCS payments up to 100% of your service's 2013/14 approval.

*All payments are reliant on required documents and returns being in place at time of payment.

Childcare Education & Training Support Scheme (CETS)

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) implements a childcare support scheme: the Childcare Education and Training Support (CETS) Scheme on behalf of Solas and the Education & Training Boards (ETB) – (formerly known as the VEC) and the Department of Social Protection (DSP). This scheme offers subsidised childcare fees for parents who are on relevant training and educational programmes with Solas/ETB. As from January 2014, the CETS scheme is also available to CE participants. However, it is important to note that certain criteria apply – contact SCCC for further information.

CETS places are provided to children and their families for the duration of the training course / CE scheme programme.

Allocation of CETS places

The allocation of places under the scheme is managed by the DCYA, via the City & County Childcare Committees, in collaboration with Solan/ETB and the DSP. Early years services do not automatically have CETS places – these are allocated according to parental demand and availability. CETS places are only available in full-day care and after-school services.

Eligibility for CETS

In order to avail of the CETS Scheme, parents must first confirm with Solas/local ETB that the course

that they are undertaking is eligible for the CETS Scheme. Or, if you are currently undertaking a CE programme, or will begin one in 2014, contact your local CE sponsor. Eligible parents will receive a letter of confirmation on headed paper which will include the following information:

The name of the parent
Start date of the course / scheme
End date of the course / scheme
Confirmation that the course / scheme is eligible under the CETS Scheme

The name of the course (DSP / ETB)
The number of weeks of the course (DSP / ETB)
CETS services must ensure that all of the above information is included on the letter. Services should keep a copy of the letter and contact Sligo County Childcare Committee to apply for a CETS place. The CCC will require the following information:

1. A completed CETS Application / Declaration form
2. Proof of parents PPS number
3. Proof of children's PPS number
4. Letter from DSP / ETB / CE sponsor will be on headed paper

If the parent has any questions about whether they are eligible for CETS, remember that it is DSP and the ETBs who decide eligibility. It is up to the parent to contact their local DSP / ETB office or CE sponsor in order to determine their eligibility.

Sign in Sheets for Parents

Once a CETS place has been allocated, parents will have to sign a weekly sign in sheet:

1. This is kept by the service provider to show during compliance visits.

Fees under the CETS scheme

The maximum amount that providers may charge to parents per week on CETS is:

- Full-time: €25 per week
 - Part time: €15 per week
 - After-school: €5 per week
 - After-school with pickup service: €15
- Parents Leaving CETS

If a parent leaves or completes a course, please inform SCCC immediately.

FAQS regarding CE CETS Places

The DCYA & the DSP have issued a document containing frequently asked questions regarding the allocation of CETS places to CE participants.

Healthy Happy Lifestyles

With thanks to the Katherine Howard Foundation we have received funding to start work on our "Healthy, Happy Lifestyles" Initiative with local Parent and Toddler Groups. We are delighted with the response through the "Expression of Interest" forms submitted to us and we are looking forward to working with all of the groups involved. The aim of this initiative is to promote healthy eating and physical activity among local families and within local communities. Visits to local groups will start after Easter and run up until Summer time. The second round of groups will be visited during the period September – December 2014.

Pre-School Inspection

We have been informed that Tusla hope to have their Early Years Officer in place in the Sligo/Leitrim Pre-school Inspection team over the coming weeks. This appointment is welcomed by Sligo County Childcare Committee and we are sure the services providers will also welcome this development. Sligo County Childcare Committee would like to wish the successful candidate well in their new position. Now is a fitting time to thank the Inspectors in Sligo/Leitrim Environmental Health Department for their continued hard work in the absence of an Early Years Officer. We have been in contact with Marian Skelly, Early Years Officer, Donegal, who has highlighted a number of items which may be of interest to services in Sligo.

Due to recent studies on the health of young children, outdoor play areas will play an important role in encouraging healthy lifestyles in Early Childhood. This is an area of importance for the future.

Early Years Officers will be looking for evidence of planning for individual Children's needs and interests being included in curriculum plans. This coincides with "Regulation 5 National Assessment Guide" further details are accessible on the Tusla website:

<http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-pre-school-inspection-services/regulation-5-national-assessment-guide>.

Services in the Sligo/Leitrim area may be contacted in writing over the coming weeks in order to update their notification information. This is to ensure that Tusla have the correct information for each service in the area.

For services that have been inspected recently, it is important to know that you have a right to respond to the inspection reports issued to you. This should occur where possible within 10 days of receiving the report in order to ensure your reply is published online alongside the inspection report.

While we await the new Sligo/Leitrim appointment, Ms. Skelly has kindly advised that services can contact her with any queries they may have in the meantime on 074 9123669 As always Sligo/Leitrim environmental Health Office can also be contacted on 071 965 0362.

Have you heard about ReCreate?

ReCreate is a national social enterprise that takes end of line and surplus stock from businesses and reuses them as arts materials. Our 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.

Distribution of the materials is on a membership basis which is at a nominal cost as ReCreate are looking to drastically reduce the expenditure on arts materials for schools, community groups, preschools and crèches and representative organisations throughout the country. Additionally tonnes of materials will be diverted annually from landfill as well as saving businesses on their disposal costs, everybody wins!

And now we are delighted to introduce our in-house art shop, in which our members can buy the products we have not been able to salvage. We also have a workshop area where our members can visit our resident artist and learn how to transform regular business materials into stunning art pieces, plus we have regular themed workshops.

To date, ReCreate is proving to be a great success in its Warehouse of Wonders in Ballymount Drive in Walkinstown. It continues to salvage unwanted stock from signature businesses such as Avoca, Smurfit Kappa, Bewleys Coffee, Universal Records and many more and turn them into fantastic arts materials. For more information go to www.recreate.ie or find us on Facebook at ReCreate Ireland. Additionally, you call us on 01-4568798 or email us at info@recreate.ie.

The Government has launched 'Better Outcomes Brighter Futures: the National Policy Framework for Children and Young People 2014 - 2020'

Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures' is the first overarching national policy framework for children and young people aged from birth to 24 years and will be implemented by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in collaboration with all Government departments and key State agencies.

The vision of the Framework is to work towards achieving five Outcomes identified as most important for children and young people in Ireland. The Government has committed to working towards these through a series of actions, described as key transformational goals.

Minister Fitzgerald described the Framework as a dynamic new whole of government implementation structure headed by her own Department of Children & Youth Affairs.

This new implementation structure is tasked with ensuring there is 'joined-up-thinking' on children and young people will report to the Cabinet Committee on Social Policy, which is chaired by an Taoiseach. Goals will underpin the implementation of the Framework and will be a key element of its success.

Copy of the national Policy Framework is available at <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=3146&ad=1>

Pobal Compliance Briefing

Following attendance at a meeting with POBAL in relation to compliance visits please see below pointers which we would like to bring to your attention.

CCS Scheme:

As part of the compliance process, all CCS services are required to complete a "CCS FTE Calculator" spreadsheet detailing the service levels accessed by children being sub vented at their service.

This sheet which self calculates in line with the information submitted, was circulated to all CCS services last October and again recently. The sheet should be completed each month, using attendances recorded for a full week of the prior month. It is an important component in determining a provider's compliance under CCS.

This is now a requirement for compliance as part of the CCS compliance visit carried out by POBAL.

Common Non Compliance issues CCS Scheme:

1. Unexplained discrepancies between DCYA approved FTE and FTE enrolled.
2. Parents charged fees under wrong band or parent's overpayment/ underpayment of fees.
3. Fee Payment Policy approved by SCCC not being implemented correctly.

4. Parent letters unsigned or unavailable for inspection.
5. Attendance records not completed correctly or not up to date.

Common Non Compliance issues CETS Scheme:

1. Letter for parents confirming their entitlement to scheme not available for inspection.
2. Fee payment policy approved by SCCC and fees being charged to parents not being in line with each other.
3. Child absent from the service for great lengths as per CETS guidelines and CCC have not been informed.
4. Attendance records not up to date.

Common Non Compliance issues ECCE Scheme:

1. Optional extra not documented correctly in parent letters.
2. Unsigned parent letters or parent letters not available for inspection.
3. Fee payment records not being kept correctly.
4. Attendance records not being recorded correctly or not up to date.
5. Children absent for 4 consecutive weeks and Form 3 not submitted to DCYA
6. Children attending fewer days than was included in the Electric Return and allocated by DCYA.

Association of Childhood Professionals, Sligo.

Dear Colleagues,

We are delighted to inform you ACP Sligo is now well and truly up and running. We are proud to announce that levels of interest and membership from the Sligo area are very high according to ACP Ireland, highlighting that we the professionals in Sligo are ready to stand up and be heard!

About ACP Ireland

Strength in numbers:

Early years and school age care and education is a profession. To ensure that our profession is recognised, respected and valued, we need to stand together as a strong and unified voice. Membership of the Association of Childhood Professionals means that YOUR voice is represented at national level. Join today as together we can make a difference.

Our Mission:

To be the representative body for childhood professionals in Ireland.

Our Aims:

Be the collective identity and represent the voice of childhood professionals.

Promote and engage active membership.

Advocate and seek support for the initial training and continuing professional

development of childhood professionals.

Advocate and campaign for recognition of childhood professionals including their professional status and equitable pay and work conditions.

Raise awareness of the value and contribution made by the childhood professional to the lives of children, families and society as a whole.

Our Values:

Solidarity, equity, equality, democracy, empowerment, honesty, openness, self-responsibility, self-help, social responsibility and caring for others.

ACP Sligo:

As a result of our members meeting on February 26th our seven Council Members were elected and we have now taken on the various council roles. Our appointed Chairperson is Louise Kilbane and we wish her luck in leading us through the exciting times ahead. Sligo ACP Committee is Silvia Gursinki, Michelle Maitland, Claire Devine, Colette Saunders-Jenks, Nicola McCormack and Veronica Muldowney. Sligo ACP has the following dates for your diary. More information will be sent out in the coming weeks

Hands up for International Children's Day: June 1st – we will be asking members

throughout the county to take part in an awareness raising event in their own services on Friday May 30th and Tuesday June 3rd to help ACP Sligo, put their hands up for International Children's day. Information will be sent to all services in the coming weeks.

ACP Conference: June 7th, Little Island, Cork more information to follow soon.

We will be announcing local Road shows in the Autumn months in North Sligo, South Sligo and Sligo town in order to find out what you want us to do for you and to meet and discuss future opportunities together.

We hope to raise our profile by publishing a piece in a local newspaper very soon.

As always you can contact us at sligo@acpireland.com. To become a member you can fill in the online membership form and send it to the Sligo branch at Lollipop Lane Crèche and Montessori, Springvale, Tubbercurry, Co. Sligo, Marked ACP Membership. For the latest news and events, LIKE Association of Childhood Professionals on Facebook or visit the ACP Ireland website for the latest updates on www.acpireland.com

**ACP Sligo
Committee**

Learner Fund

The recent Learner Fund initiative announced by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald was a very welcome one indeed.

It has been introduced as part of a larger initiative to raise quality standards in the Early Years sector nationally. The Fund will provide a subsidy towards the cost of training which will facilitate staff to meet the new qualification requirements which will be effective from September 2014. This will support existing staff in our Early Years services to gain accredited qualifications which will become mandatory. From September 2015 all staff in Early Years Settings will need to have full Level 5 qualifications while all Pre-school (ECCE) Room Leaders will need a full Level 6 qualification.

A panel of approved Training Providers will offer accredited and validated courses to meet the requirements of the Learner Fund.

For those who have applied to the Learner Fund you will be contacted over the coming weeks to progress matters further.

Aistear in Practice

We have continued our series of Aistear training sessions which commenced at the end of 2013 throughout the Spring. We have worked with 21 services in three different groups. Throughout the series we have reviewed each of the themes of Aistear, how they work in practice in the setting and we have linked each of the themes into an area of practice.

We have received very positive feedback from the participants. Some examples are that many now consider their outdoor area in a completely different way, some have made it part of their goal to introduce an element of risk into play experiences for children, while others are now documenting the children's learning through the use of Learning Stories.

The following is a reflection from one of our participants:

"As childcare professionals, we always try to provide the best service for children and their families. This means ensuring that there is fun linked with learning whilst always maintaining the highest levels of health and safety awareness. However, in recent years the Childcare sector has been highly regulated to an extent where many of us find it harder and harder to satisfy all regulations and at the same time provide an environment which is flexible, to encourage children to experiment and to sometimes "let simply happen" and develop organically without the fear of not being compliant with regulations and inspections.

With the Aistear training we were introduced to a philosophy which reminded and enabled us to place the focus again on the children and their natural needs. We learned to employ methods to ensure the child's holistic development whilst being able to comply with regulations. The Aistear training taught us to acknowledge and reinforce the importance of early childhood play, professional childcare and to make us more confident as childcare professionals. This in turn helped make our childcare more child centred and child friendly.

As staff embrace the implementation and practice of Aistear, children become 'competent and confident learners' and this is one of the key messages of Aistear." Bea Schmidt.

We, the staff at Sligo County Childcare Committee are very encouraged at the levels of interest, response and positive feedback that we have received from all of the participating services. It has been an enlightening journey for us also and we would like to sincerely thank all of those participants who have given up their time to attend the training sessions on the many Monday nights and for their full participation in each of the sessions. It is wonderful to have had the privilege of working with so many enthusiastic and interested groups which has most importantly resulted in shared learning, change and positive outcomes for children.

Joan, Nicola, and Viola