



National Síolta Aistear Initiative Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the Síolta Aistear Newsletter

Welcome to the second edition of the *Síolta Aistear* Newsletter. Here you will find information to keep you up-to-date on the latest developments relating to the national early childhood frameworks, *Síolta* and *Aistear*, and the [Aistear Síolta Practice Guide](#), the online resource designed to help you to use *Aistear* and *Síolta* together.

In this issue, you will find...

- An update on changes to www.aistearsiolta.ie
- A spotlight on transitions
- Information on action planning tools
- "My experience of..." one setting's experience of participating in the new *Síolta Aistear* Introductory workshop
- A list of the settings who have achieved *Síolta* Quality Assurance Programme's (QAP) validation in 2017
- A "What's happening?" section, outlining upcoming professional development opportunities and news.

The newsletter will be published regularly, so keep an eye out for new issues.

Changes to www.aistearsiolta.ie

The *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide will soon have a new look! The website is being revised in the coming weeks, and some practitioners may experience a brief drop in service in mid-November.

As well as all the resources you have come to expect, www.aistearsiolta.ie will soon include a 'what's new' section, a search function and plenty of new materials.

Spotlight on Transitions

It's that time of year again when many children are making the transition into an early childhood setting from home, or on to another room within their setting. Transitions can be an exciting but sometimes stressful experience for children, parents and practitioners. **Standard 13** of *Síolta*, Transitions, highlights the importance of sensitive management of transitions, continuity of care, relationships and experiences for children.



It also stresses the importance of sharing information between all those involved in children's early childhood years including parents, practitioners and where appropriate, relevant professionals. For more information see *Siolta's* [research digest](#) on transitions.

One of the *Aistear Siolta* Practice Guide's pillars is [transitions](#). [On this page](#), you will find videos, templates, action planning templates and a self-evaluation tool. The self-evaluation tool provides prompts to help you reflect on your practice and is divided into four elements;

1. [Moving from home to a day-care/sessional setting](#)
2. [Transitions within the daily routine](#)
3. [Room to room transitions](#)
4. [Transition to primary school.](#)

Please [download, save and edit the entire self-evaluation tool](#), or [click to view a video](#) about one setting's procedure for supporting children to move from one room to another within a setting.

The NCCA has been working with a network of preschools and primary schools in Tipperary, Limerick, Laois and Galway to explore a range of activities that have the potential to support children's transition from preschool to primary school. For example, the use of a variety of reporting templates, mutual visits between the preschool and school, meetings with parents and transitions events. The initiative will also consider how best to share relevant information between preschool and primary school to support each child's transition. The work of the network will conclude in mid-October 2017 and a report will be issued in early 2018. Check out our next newsletter for more information.



General Planning tools

After calls from practitioners and experts, we've listened to your feedback and merged six action planning tools from the Practice Guide into one. The planning tool is provided to help you plan for changes in a particular area of work, for example, learning environments or work with parents.

It can be used for quality development and has connections to *Siolta* standards, *Aistear's* guidelines for good practice and *Aistear Siolta* Practice Guide Pillars.

The updated tool will be available on www.aistearsiolta.ie in the coming weeks.

My experience of...

A new workshop has been developed by the National *Siolta Aistear* Initiative in 2017 entitled '*Siolta, Aistear* and the Practice Guide-An Introduction'. This was made available to *Siolta Aistear* Mentors in May 2017 and delivery of the workshop has begun in a number of areas.

The purpose of the workshop is to increase understanding and awareness of *Siolta, Aistear* and the Practice Guide and to begin to explore the connections between *Siolta* and *Aistear*. Here is some feedback from the team in Stepping Stones Playschool who have recently participated in this workshop with Limerick Childcare Committee:



Bernie O'Keeffe (Manager) and Lisa Kelly (Childcare Practitioner) from Stepping Stones Preschool, Limerick.



We found the new 'Siolta, Aistear and the Practice Guide' Introductory workshop... a good eye-opener and it provided us with a straightforward way to approach Siolta, Aistear and the Aistear Siolta practice guide. The workshop was very beneficial as we heard the opinions of other childcare practitioners; we got to hear about how they implemented Siolta and Aistear and what worked best for them.

The workshop challenged us by... making us self-evaluate and evaluate our setting as a whole. This was difficult because we had to look at our practice from the outside-in and work together to make it better.

How it will help our practice... We are now going to review two Siolta and Aistear principles a month and use the self-evaluation tools from the Practice Guide to monitor our practice and see what we can do to improve.

***Siolta* Quality Assurance Programme Validations**

The *Siolta* Quality Assurance Programme (QAP) is a ten-step process designed to provide structured, supported engagement for early childhood settings who wish to seek external assessment of their provision/practice against the *Siolta* standards and components of quality. A setting must have an assigned *Siolta Aistear* Mentor to take part in the QAP.

Achieving validation under the *Siolta* QAP demonstrates dedication to the delivery of high quality early childhood education for young children and their families. We would like to warmly congratulate the following settings who have been validated so far in 2017:

- Aghada Parish Community Playgroup, Midleton, Co. Cork
- Ardfinnan Community Playschool, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
- Barnardos Brighter Futures, Knocknaheeny, Co. Cork
- Barnardos Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin
- Barnardos Millbrook, Tallaght, Dublin 24
- Barnardos Mulhuddart, Dublin 15
- Cooley Community Playgroup, Carlingford, Co. Louth
- Nurture Childcare, Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
- Spraoi Playschool, Dundrum Road, Tipperary Town
- Stepping Stones, Ballinahown, Athlone, Co. Westmeath

Huge congratulations to all involved, it is a wonderful achievement!



What's happening?

New *Síolta* awareness-raising workshops:

Feedback from *Síolta Aistear* mentors indicated a need to develop new *Síolta* awareness-raising workshops. These replace the original 16 individual workshops which focused on each *Síolta* standard. There are now four workshops, each focusing on connected groups of *Síolta* standards. Please contact your local CCC, NVCO or ABC programme to find out more.

New *Síolta* QAP Resources:

A number of new resources, including a QAP implementation toolkit have been developed for settings who are engaging in the formal *Síolta* Quality Assurance Programme (QAP). These have been informed by the experiences of Mentors and settings who have engaged in the QAP since it began.

New *Síolta* manual

In the last issue of the newsletter we informed you that the *Síolta* manuals were being combined into one. You can now access the manuals online by [clicking on this link](#) or order a hard copy from government publications by calling 01 6476834 or emailing publications@opw.ie to order. The manuals cost five euro per copy (postage is free).

'*Síolta, Aistear* and the Practice Guide'- New Introductory workshop

The National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative has created a new introductory workshop titled '*Síolta, Aistear* and the Practice Guide - An Introduction'. The workshop is the 'first step' for people who want to know more about *Síolta*, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (2006) and *Aistear*: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework (2009). The workshop will also introduce the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide and outline the options for practitioners and settings who wish to know more about implementing either/both of the frameworks. Contact your local CCC or National Voluntary Childcare Organisation or ABC programme for more information.



What's happening?

New *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide resources

New resources have been added to the Practice Guide since our last newsletter was published

Videos recorded with Evelyn Egan Rainy, lecturer in Early Childhood Education in CIT including;

- [The visual arts in an emergent and inquiry based curriculum;](#)
- [Provocations and the learning environment;](#)
- [Three ideas for supporting visual arts in an emergent and inquiry-based curriculum \(Birth-6 years\)](#)

Planning and assessing videos, as Gaeilge:

- [Mo Turas sa Naoínra \(páistí 3-6 bliana\);](#)
- [Síolta agus Aistear sa Naíonra;](#)
- [Grianghraif á gcomhroinnt le tuismitheoirí; Gruaige catach Ag úsáid ábhair suime na bpáistí mar bhonn pleanála \(3-6 bliana\);](#)
- [Bláthanna deasa buí Ag úsáid ábhair suime na bpáistí mar bhonn pleanála \(3-6 bliana\)](#)

A video about sharing photos with parents online; Sharing photos with parents (3-6 years)

A video about how one setting implements *Síolta* in their baby room: My experience of implementing *Síolta* in the baby room

[A new schema tip-sheet is available.](#)



Evaluation of the Aistear Workshops and Coaching Pilot

Between February and June 2017, 400 practitioners from 162 settings took part in the *Aistear* workshops and coaching pilot. Practitioners and managers participated in 10 hours of workshops (5 x two-hour workshops) and 4 hours of coaching per person focusing on Curriculum Foundations and the Planning and Assessing pillar from the **Aistear *Siolta* Practice Guide**.

The pilot has now come to an end and the materials are being evaluated, so be sure to check back on our next newsletter for an update.



Practitioners from Little Turtles, Butterflies Community Playgroup, Griffith Community Playgroup, Glenhill Community Playgroup and MODG Playgroup in Finglas and Glasnevin with their *Aistear* Workshops and Coaching certificates.

Send us your ideas!

As this is a new initiative, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Let us know what you would like to see in future editions of the newsletter by emailing us at

earlychildhood@education.gov.ie.

