

TÚSLA
An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach

EARLY YEARS

INSPECTORATE

Developing Policies, Procedures and Statements in Early Childhood Education and Care Services

A Practical Guide



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Foreword

In June 2018, Tusla's Early Years Inspectorate (EYI) published its Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF). This framework was developed in consultation with the early childhood education and care (ECEC) sector, and informed by national and international best practice. It sets out the EYI's interpretation of the Early Years Regulations 2016 and the conditions under which the EYI will assess services to see that they comply with these regulations.

The QRF promotes greater consistency in how we carry out inspections. It also serves as a valuable resource to show service providers what they need to do to comply with the Early Years Regulations 2016.

A significant challenge under the Early Years Regulations 2016 is that all service providers must develop and put in place a broad range of policies, procedures and statements specific to their service.

Against this backdrop, we are committed to providing specific and targeted help and training to make sure services are able to comply with the Regulations. To accomplish this, EYI has the support of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. We will also work and collaborate with our ECEC stakeholders in this area.

Mindful of this, the EYI, in partnership with Barnardos, has developed this document as a practical guide to help services to develop and write the various policies required. Samples and templates for policies, procedures and statements have also been developed and are available online.

These are available at:

- » www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and
- » www.barnardos.ie/earlyyearsolicies

If you provide a pre-school service, you need to read this guide and the online policy samples and templates along with the QRF that relates to the type of service that you provide.

The ECEC sector is evolving quickly. We expect that the QRF will intensify our efforts to improve the quality and safety of services provided to children in early years settings.

Enhanced regulation has already improved standards across the sector. Nevertheless, we share a responsibility to build on these improvements to ensure that children enjoy a safe, happy, fulfilling childhood in all settings. We hope that this guide will be a practical and supportive reference resource as we all work to achieve these outcomes.

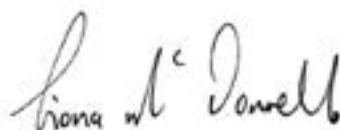
We would like to thank Marie Willoughby and Sinead Lawton, from Barnardos, for their significant work in developing this guide and the online samples and template documents. We also want to thank Helen Rouine, our Quality Improvement Manager in Tusla, for her work in supporting the development of this guide.

The interagency co-operation that has led to this guide demonstrates how effective a partnership approach can be. It has helped us to develop a comprehensive suite of guidance documents that are appropriate and supportive and which identify where a reasonable level of flexibility is essential.

The EYI looks forward to further collaborations with the sector and stakeholders to build the supports needed to provide learning which will have a positive impact on children's experiences in the settings we inspect.



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About this guide

This guide will help you when you need to develop new or revise existing policies, procedures and statements for your early years service.

This guide outlines why good policies are important. It also tells you:

- » What policies are required;
- » What needs to be considered;
- » Who should be involved;
- » Where to go for information and resources;
- » How to format and structure policies and procedures;
- » Who to share them with; and
- » How best to do this.

It also suggests a process you can use to review your current policies.

Using this guide will help you to develop a comprehensive set of detailed policies, procedures and statements. This guide supports meeting the core requirements for the policies, procedures and statements set out under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. These are set out in Tusla's Quality and Regulatory Framework.

Not all settings need the same number of policies or the same amount of detail. The type of policies, procedures and statements you need for your particular service depends on the size, type and context of the early years service you provide. Your policies must be appropriate to your setting and the service you provide.

Sample policies and templates

This guide is accompanied by a set of samples and templates for policies, procedures and statements to help you develop them for your service. You can access these online at:

- » www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and
- » www.barnardos.ie/earlyyearsolicies

They are provided to help you to develop good quality and consistent policies to both meet the regulatory requirements and to support quality service provision.

Each sample policy includes an explanation of why you need it and all of the things you must consider when creating your own policy. Each sample also includes:

- » A list of the relevant regulatory and quality frameworks;
- » Suggested content for your policy statements and associated procedures; and
- » Procedures for communicating your policies.

Please treat the sample policies as just that – samples. You need to adapt them to meet your particular service requirements.

This guide, and the associated samples and templates for policies, procedures and statements have been written to support you in reflecting on your practice. They show how you can develop a comprehensive set of policies, procedures and statements to meet the regulatory requirements and to support you to provide a quality service.

Section 1



**Your responsibilities
under the law and the
regulations**

As an early childhood education and care provider, you offer an essential service to children, to their families and to society. Quality services are provided in partnership with parents who are, of course, their children's first and most important guardians, carers and educators.

Your role and responsibility when you provide these services is to work alongside parents and guardians to meet the care, education and development needs of society's youngest citizens at the stage in life where their experiences and opportunities are crucially important and can impact most on their lives.

Providers of early childhood education and care services in Ireland operate in an increasingly professionalised sector. There are many and varied responsibilities, legal requirements and challenges to plan and be prepared for.

On 4 May 2016, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs published the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Amendments) Regulations 2016 were published on the 20 December 2016. These Regulations together are known as the Early Years Regulations 2016.

Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act, 2013 defines an early years service as a service providing a pre-school service, or a school-age service. A pre-school service, according to the Act, means any pre-school, play group, day nursery, crèche, day-care or other similar service which caters for pre-school children. The Act defines a pre-school child as a child under the age of six years who is not attending a recognised school.

The Quality and Regulatory Framework (QRF) only applies to registered early years services provided for children under the age of six.

Under the law, Tusla – the Child and Family Agency – is charged with ensuring the health, safety and welfare of children attending early years services, both large and small. To carry out that responsibility, Tusla inspectors regularly inspect service providers. The Early Years Regulations 2016 are the most relevant Regulations applied during these inspections.

Policies, procedures and statements required by regulation

The policies, procedures and statements required for all early years services under Regulation 10 of the Early Years Regulations 2016 are set out in Schedule 5 of the Regulations. There are 21 of these. The first is the statement of purpose and function. Then there are 20 areas where you must have policies in place.

These are:

- » Complaints;
- » Administration of medication;
- » Infection control;
- » Managing behaviour;
- » Safe sleep;
- » Fire safety;
- » Inclusion;
- » Outings where children attending the service are brought on such outings;
- » Accidents and incidents;
- » Authorisation to collect children;
- » Healthy eating;
- » Outdoor play;
- » Overnight services where the service is an overnight pre-school service;
- » Staff absences;
- » The use of the internet and photographic and recording devices;
- » Recruitment;
- » Risk management;
- » Settling-in;
- » Staff training; and
- » Supervision.

Important

Under Regulation 6, services must have a Safety Statement before they can register with Tusla.

Core regulatory requirements

The Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework sets (QRF) out the core regulatory requirements for providers of early years services. It helps you to understand:

- » how the Early Years Regulations 2016 are interpreted in practice by the Early Years Inspectorate; and
- » how to comply with the Regulations.

Guidance in this book should be used together with the QRF.

Other legislative and regulatory requirements

As well as knowing and complying with the Early Years Regulations 2016, there are other important requirements in law and other regulations that you must apply. These include:

- » Child safeguarding;
- » Employment and human resources;
- » Health and safety;
- » Food hygiene;
- » Data protection;
- » Building;
- » Planning and environment;
- » Finance;
- » Management and governance; and
- » Equality.

As a service provider, it is your responsibility to keep up to date with all relevant legislation, regulation and quality frameworks and guidelines. You must also ensure that these are reflected accurately in your policies, procedures and statements.

The Early Years Regulations 2016 make you responsible for developing and implementing good quality policies, procedures and statements. Also, as an early years service provider, you are increasingly being encouraged and supported to engage in more reflective practice. Reflection on practice is an important part of quality practice, policy development and policy implementation.

Consider the broader context

As well as meeting the regulatory requirements, you must, as an early years service provider, consider the broader context in which your service operates. Doing this is particularly important when you are developing policies, procedures and statements.

You should consider the range of national support resources available like:

- » Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education;
- » Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework;
- » The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide; and
- » Better Start.

You should also consider the many other quality resources and supports available from City and County Childcare Committees and the relevant Voluntary Organisations. All of these resources and supports keep the child at the centre of quality practice and recognise the importance of quality early childhood experiences.

It is essential that you remain aware of all developments in the early years sector when you are developing policies, procedures and statements. Good quality policies will reflect all of the most up-to-date developments, knowledge and information.

Section 2

**The importance of
policies, procedures and
statements for
quality practice**

Developing child-centred policies, procedures and statements

Regulation 19 of the Early Years Regulations 2016 requires that service providers take responsibility for the health, welfare and development of the child. You achieve this by putting in place an appropriate programme and care practices that support the learning, development and wellbeing of each child. It should take each child's individual interests and needs into consideration. Implementation of such a programme is supported by good policies, procedures and statements.

It is important to have a comprehensive set of policies with detailed procedures. These provide a guide to quality practice for everybody involved in providing your service. This is not just for meeting regulatory requirements, but for ensuring consistent and good quality provision in any early years setting.

Providing a good quality service for young children is hugely important for their wellbeing, learning and development; not only while they attend the service, but for the rest of their lives. "Every childhood lasts a lifetime" (Barnardos) and this is particularly true of early childhood.

The time from birth until six years of age is a very significant time in a child's life. Research shows that these early years are critically important for brain development. The brain develops more rapidly during these years than at any later period. We know that this development is significantly affected by the child's early environment and experiences. This is one of the main reasons why good quality practice is so essential in any early years setting and that practice is supported by good policies, procedures and statements.

The quality of children's care and early learning is essential to their happiness and wellbeing 'here and now' as well as creating foundations for their future.

The needs and rights of each child must be your first and most important consideration in the early childhood education and care that you provide. It is essential that all early years services are child-centred in their:

- » Ethos;
- » Policies;
- » Practices;
- » Care;
- » Curriculum;
- » Premises; and
- » The environment.

This must include the attitudes, values and vision of those responsible for provision.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3.1 states that the best interests of the child must be the primary consideration throughout all of the policies that concern children.

It is important that all registered providers of services are familiar with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Ireland signed up to the UNCRC in 1992 and you can get more information about it from both of the following: www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and www.barnardos.ie/earlyyearsolicies

Why policies, procedures and statements matter

Your service's policies, procedures and statements are some of the most important tools to use to convert:

- » your principles (based on evidence);
- » your agreed values; and
- » the requirements of legislation and regulations

into good quality practice.

Policy

A policy is a statement of principles, values or intent that guides decisions and actions, or (more usually) determines the decisions and actions to achieve a service's goals.

Policies help to ensure that you adopt a consistent approach – in line with the service's principles and values – throughout the service. They provide you with a basis for agreed, consistent and well-thought-through decisions.

Procedures

Procedures spell out precisely what action is to be taken, in line with the relevant policy. They also outline the steps to be followed, or the way that a task is to be performed, to implement the policy.

Clear written procedures can pre-empt issues that may arise. This can help to reduce the need to make decisions under pressure or to wait for a decision to be made by management when an issue arises. This is because the basis for decisions is made clear. You will have already made decisions when the policy was being developed – in consultation with all relevant people. Clear procedures provide for consistency and allow everyone to know what is likely to happen in a given situation.

Statements

As well as the requirements for policies and procedures, the Early Years Regulations 2016 require early years services to have two statements:

- » A Statement of Purpose and Function; and
- » A Safety Statement.

Having clear, well-informed written policies, procedures and statements:

- » Establishes the service as a professional and effective service;
- » Provides for consistency;
- » Makes everything clearer for both those who use your service and your staff team; and
- » Supports and promotes efficient and effective service delivery.

When written and implemented, they minimise misunderstandings and allow for all stakeholders to predict how situations will be viewed and dealt with.

Stakeholders

Your service's stakeholders are those people who are affected by, or can affect, the service's actions, objectives and policies.

The key stakeholders in an early childhood education and care service who play a part in policy development are:

- » Service managers and/or the owners or management committees;
- » The early years staff members;
- » Parents and guardians who use the service; and
- » The children.

Other stakeholders can have a part to play directly or indirectly in the development of your service's policies. These include:

- » The local community;
- » Regulatory agencies such as Tusla and the HSE;
- » Relevant support or funding agencies including -
 - City and County Childcare Committees,
 - the Early Years Education Policy Unit (EYEPU),
 - the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA),
 - the Department of Education and Skills (DES),
 - Pobal; and

- » Other support agencies and organisations in contact with your service, including –
 - representative organisations,
 - national statutory organisations, and
 - national voluntary organisations for children.

The policies of your service will reflect its philosophy and ethos. They will provide clear, agreed and consistent ways of doing things.

Clear policies also help effective planning and decision making. When you effectively implement good quality policies, your service's beliefs, values and decisions are open and transparent to all those who are affected by or who affect the service provision (all stakeholders).

Writing down clear policies and procedures and referring to them when planning or making decisions about the service will help you to maintain effective management and operational practices. This will have a significant impact at all levels and in every aspect of the quality of the service that you provide. This is true of all settings, but especially true in larger settings where it can sometimes be difficult to ensure a consistent approach across all parts of the service.

It is important to make sure that your early years service's policies:

- » Meet or exceed all legislative and regulatory requirements;
- » Are fit for the purpose for which they were intended;
- » Make sense to everyone who is affected by them, especially staff team members (as they are responsible for implementing them) and parents and guardians;
- » Can be put into practice;
- » Provide guidance and tools for implementing policies and rules;
- » Are accurate and reflect current understandings of quality in practice; and
- » Are in a format that is easy to update and accessible.

Section 3



**Factors that
influence policies**

Your policies reflect the philosophy of the service that you provide. They set down clear, agreed and consistent ways of doing things. They make your service's requirements, beliefs, values and decisions open and transparent to all.

Being able to refer to clear, written policies and procedures when planning or making decisions helps maintain effective practices. This has a significant impact on the quality of service that you provide.

There are many factors that influence how you develop and implement your service's policies, procedures and statements. These are outlined below.

Custom and practice

Where there are no written policies and procedures, or where policies are unclear, customs or norms tend to develop. These customs become the practice of the service – “it's the way we've always done it” – and they may or may not provide the most informed appropriate or even acceptable approach.

It is important that you take current practice into account when considering if a policy needs to be amended or clarified or whether or not you need to develop a new policy. See Section 6 on Reviewing Policies.

Values

Everyone's values, written or not, influence how we behave. Your service's agreed values provide a thread that runs through every aspect of how it conducts its work.

Values are reflected in what your service stands for – “how we do and don't do things around here” – and can be seen, for example, in:

- » How your service treats and respects children and their families;
- » How team members treat and respect colleagues; and
- » The style of management.

Such values may include, for example, honesty, openness, involving and consulting with the team, genuinely listening and taking others' views into account.

Values are also reflected in what your service team views as the most important features of the service you provide for children and families. These should include:

- » Protecting children's rights;
- » Professional practice and high standards;

- » Ensuring children’s emotional, social and physical wellbeing;
- » Providing creative and enriching play and learning experiences and opportunities for children;
- » Partnership with parents and guardians;
- » Good two-way communication;
- » Positive interactions;
- » A sense of identity and belonging; and
- » Good governance and planning.

The worksheet in Appendix 1 will help you to identify both your individual and shared team values.

Philosophy, ethos and vision

The philosophy of your service is a statement of the values and beliefs that guide how it operates. It is unique to each service. It underpins the decisions and daily practices of everybody involved in planning, implementing and evaluating quality experiences. It underpins your service’s policies and procedures.

Your service’s philosophy needs to reflect a shared understanding of the role the service plays in the lives of children, families and community.

The ethos or culture of your service can be difficult to define but is generally very apparent to all service users and visitors. It encompasses the atmosphere of a service that is based on the philosophy, the set of beliefs, attitudes and values that guide your work.

This is reflected in the adult-adult interactions, the adult-child interactions, the children’s interactions with each other and the children’s behaviour. It is reflected in each child’s emotional response to their surroundings. It reveals itself in the attention given to detail, the general décor and physical environment of your building and other such easily observable features of your service.

The vision is what your service sees for itself in the future if it is successful in its mission (see below).

You are not required to have a vision statement. If you do decide to write one, it should focus on your service’s core beliefs and ideals. It should be short, simple and aim high. It should also be realistic, achievable and in keeping with your service values.

Mission statement

The regulations do not say you have to produce a mission statement. However, a good service mission statement focuses your service team members on achieving a common goal and communicates your service's core principles. It sets out what your service does, how it does it, and for whom.

A mission statement is like a compass that guides the way your service carries out its work. When referred to or considered regularly, it helps to shape the goals and the decisions that you make about your service. By defining values that generally do not change, it provides direction for practices that may change over time. It is a convenient way to inform visitors to your service of your team's commitment to the care, education, wellbeing and development of the children in your care.

Your mission statement must reflect the uniqueness of your service and will have a special meaning within that setting that goes far beyond the meaning it would have in another service.

It is best to keep your mission statement simple. It should be something everyone understands and will remember. When team members are well aware of the values included in the mission statement, they can make decisions that are in keeping with your service's agreed mission, including its values.

When developing or reviewing policies it is important that you consider if and how the team is operating the service in accordance with its own mission statement.

| A service's mission statement incorporates the following | |
|--|--|
| Purpose | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What is the purpose of the service? » What needs will the service address? |
| Process | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What will the service do to address these needs? |
| People | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Who will benefit when the service carries out its purpose? |
| Values | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » What principles or beliefs will guide the work of the service? » What are the group's and the service's values? |

Principles

| Principles |
|---|
| A principle is a fundamental belief or proposition that is accepted as true and that serves as the foundation for the way in which something is done. |

Some of the principles relevant to the early years sector in Ireland are the well-established and research-informed principles of Síolta and Aistear. See 'Sources of Further Information' for information on how to access these.

Other factors that influence policies and procedures

Your service's choice of curriculum will have a significant influence on the service policies. For example, whether the curriculum is informed by Aistear – the National Early Childhood Curriculum Framework; is a HighScope, a Montessori or a Steiner curriculum; or is influenced by any other nationally or internationally recognised approaches such as Reggio Emilia or Te Whariki will be reflected in your policies.

There are other general considerations that should underpin how you develop your service's policies and procedures including:

- » Adopting a child-centred approach;
- » Participation of all stakeholders including the children and their parents and guardians;
- » A commitment to evidence-informed practice and implementing quality standards;
- » The profile of families in the locality;
- » The type of service – private or community;
- » Any future developments or plans for the service;
- » Identifying and sourcing quality information; and
- » The location of the service.
- » You should also think about inclusion and consider:
 - Ethnicity;
 - Gender balance;
 - Additional needs;
 - Socio-economic background;
 - Religious diversity;
 - Linguistic diversity;
 - Cultural diversity;
 - Children's and families' mobility – Travellers, refugees, asylum seekers; and
 - Diverse family structures.

Equality and inclusion

The Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015 and Equal Status Acts 2000-2015 prohibit discrimination in employment, in the provision of goods and services, in the provision of accommodation and in provision by educational establishments on nine grounds:

- » Gender;
- » Marital status;
- » Family status;
- » Sexual orientation;
- » Religion;
- » Age;
- » Disability;
- » Race; and
- » Membership of the Traveller community.

Equality should be a key feature of all service policies. You need to consider all service policies in light of the legislation as well as your service's own Inclusion Policy. For example, in your Admissions Policy, do you operate a 'first-come first-served' approach? If you do, you may inadvertently discriminate against people who have recently moved into the area or do not have the literacy or language skills or information they need to access your service.

For further information see *Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*. It includes guidance on how to develop and implement an Inclusion Policy. See also the guidance for developing an Inclusion Policy available online at: www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and www.barnardos.ie/earlyyearspolicies

Section 4



**Planning and process
for policy development**

To produce a quality set of policies, procedures and statements that meet regulatory requirements and are effective in supporting quality practice, you need to take a planned approach to how you will develop them.

Responsibility for policies

Registered provider or management committee

The registered provider is responsible for ensuring that appropriate policies, procedures and statements are developed and, most importantly, implemented and reviewed.

In a private service, this will usually be the owner.

In a voluntary agency or organisation, the management committee is the governing body and it has overall managerial responsibility.

In the case of a community service the committee has overall managerial responsibility. Therefore, it is the committee's responsibility to ensure that policies and procedures are developed to make sure they deliver an effective, efficient, quality service. In practice, the committee generally delegates this responsibility to the service manager, but the registered provider remains responsible for overseeing and signing off on the policy development. The committee is also ultimately responsible for ensuring that policies are implemented and reviewed. In practice, this key responsibility is also usually delegated to the manager.

The registered provider (owner or committee) is accountable to:

- » The users of the service – children and their families;
- » Regulatory authorities – Tusla and the HSE and other relevant state agencies;
- » The service's funders – State and any private funders; and
- » The community in which the service is located.

Person in charge

The registered provider or designated person or person in charge (usually the service manager) is responsible for making sure that all policies are:

- » Up-to-date;
- » Fit for purpose; and
- » Meet all legislative and regulatory requirements.

They must make sure that policies and procedures are clear, well-presented and are shared appropriately with all staff team members, with parents and guardians.

The registered provider or person in charge is also responsible for making sure that, where necessary, staff members have adequate training. This is to make sure they can properly implement policies, especially in areas of practice such as child safeguarding, first aid, manual handling and inclusion.

Staff members

All staff members are responsible for implementing the service policies as appropriate to their roles.

Parents and guardians

Parents and guardians should make themselves aware of the parts of policies and procedures that apply directly to them. Some policies require parents and guardians to take some specific action. For example, they might be required to provide:

- » A healthy lunch for their child, in keeping with the service's healthy eating policy; or
- » Sun cream and a hat for their child, in keeping with the health and safety requirements of the service.

Parents and guardians also need to make themselves aware of the service's approach to supporting the development of children's social, emotional and behaviour skills. This will allow parents and guardians to work in partnership with the service and ensure consistency for their child.

Required policies, procedures and statements

Developing a comprehensive set of policies can be a significant task. It is important to draw up a list of priority policies which are to be developed first. The first ones on the list must be those that are required of all early years service providers under legislation and regulation. The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 sets out the following list of required policies.

Governance

- » Statement of purpose and function;
- » Complaints;
- » Recruitment;
- » Staff absences;
- » Staff training; and
- » Supervision.

Health, welfare and development

- » Settling-in;
- » Managing behaviour;
- » Inclusion;
- » Healthy eating;
- » Outdoor play; and
- » The use of the internet and photographic and recording devices.

Safety

- » Administration of medication;
- » Accidents and incidents;
- » Infection control;
- » Safe sleep;
- » Risk management – to include a safety statement;
- » Authorisation to collect children;
- » Fire safety; and
- » Outings.

Other policies may be required in areas governed by other legislation or regulation, for example, employment, health and safety and data protection. It is a registered provider's responsibility to make sure that they meet all such requirements.

Child Safeguarding Statement

A Child Safeguarding Statement is also essential to ensure that the service provider's responsibility to safeguard the welfare of children is acted on appropriately.

Desirable policies and procedures

There are other policies and procedures that, while they are not required under the Early Years Regulations 2016, are desirable. A fully comprehensive set of policies, procedures and statements, specific to your service type, will include those that are required, as well as some others that, although not required under the Early Years Regulations 2016, are desirable for higher quality practice.

Some of the required policies above can be stand-alone policies or incorporated within broader policies. For example, a Settling-in Policy can be included in a wider Transitions Policy. Inclusion can be included within a broader Identity and Belonging Policy (Síolta Standard 14).

If you include required policies within other policies, you must include the core regulatory requirements detailed in the relevant appendix of the QRF (Quality and Regulatory Framework).

There are other suggested policies that will support a high quality practice and service operation and cover some of the areas of practice identified above.

These include:

- » Partnership with Parents Policy (Síolta);
- » Interactions Policy (Síolta);
- » Admissions Policy;
- » Transitions Policy (Síolta);
- » Identity and Belonging Policy (Síolta);
- » Consultation and Decision-Making Policy;
- » Communication Policy (Síolta);
- » Planning and Development Policy;
- » Record Keeping Policy;
- » Confidentiality Policy; and
- » Financial Procedures Policy.

This additional list is not exhaustive and other specific policies and procedures may help you to further support quality provision in any particular setting.

Consultation – who to involve in developing policies

When you develop policies you should include everyone involved in a service (all of the stakeholders): children; parents and guardians; staff team members; the registered provider; management and your management committee. It is also important to consult with and get information from outside agencies like one or more of the following:

- » Your local City or County Childcare Committee; and
- » National voluntary organisations like:
 - Barnardos,
 - Early Childhood Ireland (ECI),
 - Childminding Ireland,
 - Gaelscoileanna Teo, and
 - National Childhood Network (NCN).

(See ‘Sources of Further Information’ at the end of this document.)

They can help you to make sure your policies are in line with current legislation and regulation and reflect best practice standards.

Clear roles are important

In a large service setting, we recommend that you identify a member of staff who will lead the policy development or the review of policies. Ideally, this should be the manager or person in charge. The manager will lead policy implementation.

In smaller services, the person taking this lead role will usually be the owner or manager, but you could delegate this work or parts of it to a suitably qualified member of the team where there is more than one staff member.

Where possible, in larger settings, it is recommended that you form a small working group of no more than five people. Make sure that all those taking part understand the process and have enough time for the task.

Policy development and review takes time, so it is useful to break the task into manageable pieces that can be worked on by the lead person (owner/manager) in a smaller service or by the working group in a larger service and referred back to others for feedback. This will need to be well planned and managed by the lead person.

The leader or leader group should always refer back to others on the team for feedback. The process will need to be well planned.

Although not essential, it is good practice to establish a reference or advisory group of stakeholders to inform the process when you are either developing a new set of policies from scratch or reviewing existing policies. It is good to be open to alternative perspectives and innovative or new ideas. This can be done by both private and community providers, small and large.

Representatives

Try to include representatives from:

- » Parents and guardians;
- » Staff members;
- » Management; and
- » A support agency that has specialist knowledge of early years education and care. (see 'Sources of Further Information')

This representative group does not necessarily have to come together – you can contact each of them individually for comment or feedback. Even in a one- or two-person service you can consult with a group made up of parent representatives or others you may know who can provide constructive feedback – like members of a local provider network.

Invite opinions

Invite opinions and ideas from parents, guardians and other community members about the service’s policies and procedures. You can do this through:

- » Everyday conversations;
- » Individual family information sessions;
- » An interactive parent notice board;
- » Information evenings;
- » A suggestions box;
- » Emails; or
- » Newsletters.

Consult the children

Consider different ways in which you can check with the children how a policy might directly impact on them. For example, the policy that deals with supporting children’s behaviour skills.

Factors to consider for each policy

There are a number of questions you must consider when developing new policies or are thinking of adopting or adapting sample policies. Considering these questions as a team can be a useful way of involving and consulting the whole team (small or large) in the policy development process.

When your team members are aware of the thought and consideration that went into developing a policy, it helps to make sure that it will be implemented. The questions to consider include the following:

- » What is the rationale for the policy?
- » What are the external requirements?
 - Legislation and regulation – what legislation or regulations apply to this policy?
 - Guidelines – are there any national guidelines in relation to this area of practice?
 - Quality practice – where can other information be sourced on the quality standards for practice in relation to this policy area?

- » What do children need from this policy? It is important here to remind everybody involved in developing policy that:
 - The needs and rights of each child must be the first and primary consideration in all services for children;
 - All early years provision should be child-centred in its ethos, policies, practices, curriculum, premises, attitudes and environment;
 - Play is one of the essential experiences of childhood – central to all aspects of young children’s development and learning; and
 - Education and care are inextricably linked in a child’s holistic development – this reality must be reflected in the ethos and programme of all early childhood education and care services.
- » What do parents and guardians need this policy to achieve?
- » What do staff team members need from this policy?
- » What does the registered provider or management need the outcome of implementing this policy to be?

Also consider

In addition to the questions above, consider the following questions when developing policies.

- » How is the ethos and philosophy of your service maintained and translated into practice?
- » What does the environment say about how your service values its staff members and those who use the service?
- » How is your service integrated into the community and what does that say about how it is valued and accepted?
- » Are there adequate policies and procedures to meet the needs of your service?
- » Do they reflect any plans for the development of your service?
- » Are your policies forward-thinking, anticipating any given situation, or are they undeveloped as events or issues have not yet arisen to warrant their development?

Remember, good quality policies, procedures and statements will:

- » Comply with legal requirements;
- » Be in keeping with quality principles and standards (see, for example, Síolta);
- » Consider all stakeholders (the children in particular, also parents and guardians, staff members and management);

- » Be reasonable and practical;
- » Provide guidance and tools for implementation as well as rules; and
- » Be in a format that is easy to update and is accessible.

The policy development process

Policy development process for a large service

The chart below gives an overview of a suggested policy development process for a large service.

Suggested policy development process for a large service

Convene a policy group

This group should have representatives from parents and guardians, staff team and management of the service – a group of no more than five if possible.

Identify priority policy areas and collect relevant information on policy topics

The information may include sample policies or templates such as those available online at www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and www.barnardos.ie/earlyyears/policies

Determine and write the rationale and considerations

See samples of these included in the policies online.

Develop Draft 1 of the policy statements and related procedures

Circulate Draft 1 to all relevant people

With a request for feedback by a set date.

Reconvene the group to agree and make any necessary amendments

Have Draft 2 of policy signed off by the owner/management committee (registered provider)

Develop a specific implementation action plan once signed off

Communicate to all relevant people

Induct the staff team to the policy – plan training if necessary

Set up a review process

The policy development process for a small service

In a smaller service, or if you are a sole operator, you may not need to have the kind of formal process described above. Even so, following the order of the tasks as suggested may be helpful. You should consult widely on the content of policies to ensure that you cover all the necessary considerations.

How to format a policy

Having a standard structure on all of your policies is important. The template below can be used as a guide on how to structure policies.

Policy title and number: pick a suitably simple and descriptive name and give each policy a number.

- 1. Rationale and policy considerations:** Outline the reason for the policy. Include any relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, children's needs, families' needs, staff needs and management needs. Identify relevant national quality frameworks.
- 2. Definitions:** Provide definitions of terms that you use which are not in everyday use, or for terms that have a specific meaning in the context of the particular policy. For example, terms such as 'curriculum', 'pedagogy', 'holistic', 'open-ended' may need explanation for some stakeholders.
- 3. Policy statement:** The Policy Statement outlines the principles, values and the purpose of the policy. It will generally be quite short. The Policy Statement can be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook.
- 4. Procedures and practices:** Outline the specific steps and/or guidance to be followed in order to implement the policy.
- 5. Communication plan:** Outline how you will inform all stakeholders about the content of the policy.
- 6. Related policies, procedures and forms:** List all the related documents. For example, your Medications Policy will have related recording forms and will be related to other policies such as your Outings Policy.
- 7. References, supporting documents and related legislation:** List any relevant legislation and quality guides referred to in drafting the policy – this is useful for when you come to reviewing a policy.
- 8. Who must observe this policy:** State clearly who has a role in implementing the policy.
- 9. Actions to be followed if the policy is not implemented.** State clearly the actions that will be taken if people do not comply with the policy.

- 10. Contact information:** Who in your service to contact for more information on any particular policy.
- 11. Policy created:** Date.
- 12. Signatures:** Registered providers, owners and managers who approved the policy and procedures should sign.
- 13. Review date:** When the policies will be reviewed and who will do this.

Section 5



**How to communicate
policies and make sure
they are consistently
implemented**

Having the most professional and comprehensive policy manual is of no use if the policies it contains are not being implemented. A manual that stays on a shelf and is not referred to on a regular basis by the staff members in the service is of no value.

Every person, from the registered provider or person in charge to the least experienced member of the staff team should be aware that policies are important. Students or volunteers, parents and guardians should know this too.

Everyone within your service needs to be fully informed, and to understand how important it is for policies to be implemented consistently.

Policy statements are a key part of formal communication in any early years service. Communication about policies, procedures and statements needs to be clear, accurate and two-way.

Owners must follow their own stated policies. In teams, all staff team members must read and implement all relevant policies, procedures and statements. In all services, whether large or small, parents and guardians should be encouraged to read, and become familiar with, your service's policies, procedures and statements.

Everyone involved must be encouraged and given the opportunity to comment both formally and informally on your service's policies and to participate in decision-making.

A structured strategy for communicating policies will help you to make sure that accurate information is available to all stakeholders. In any service, there will be stakeholders with a wide range of interests, abilities and levels of understanding. It can be challenging to meet all of these.

Communicating policies to staff team members

In both small and large services, all staff are key players in implementing policies.

Where there is a staff team, all team members should have input into developing policies to make sure they are clearly understood. This will also help to support the staff team as they go about implementing the requirements of the service. When the staff team or the individual staff member is actively involved in the development of the policies, they are more likely to take ownership of the process. They will then fully support it and understand why it is important.

You may need to provide training to some or all staff members so that they can fully implement some policies. The registered provider is responsible for making sure that necessary training is available.

You need to hold regular meetings with staff members to discuss changes to policies. This is a good opportunity to talk about how and who will implement any changes proposed and any perceived challenges.

Opportunities to check the meanings of any changes and to openly discuss their implications will help to avoid misunderstandings. These discussions may also highlight any issue that management may have overlooked. This involvement in policy review and development is key to ensuring policies actually work.

You can highlight policies within the service and at both staff team and supervision meetings.

- » **Make policy review a standard agenda item for meetings** and review a different policy at each meeting. Use this agenda item to either discuss a policy that is up for review, or to remind everyone about a policy that they need to particularly focus on. This might be because of the time of year or because of recurring issues related to the policy.
- » **Draw attention to specific policy requirements** by placing a copy of the relevant policy next to a task related to that policy. For example, display a copy of your policy on health and hygiene and nappy changing procedures in the nappy changing area. This will remind staff to make sure that when they change nappies, they must follow the required procedures.
- » **Confirm certain practices at the service** by displaying the relevant policy in the appropriate area. For example, the Healthy Eating Policy is displayed next to the menu, or the Outings Policy is put up next to details about a forthcoming outing.
- » **Draw attention to a new policy or change in policy** in a larger service team by setting up a space on the staff noticeboard headed 'New Policies'. Refer staff members to the board whenever you display new information there. Provide a plain sheet of paper for team members to add their comments.
- » **Trial the introduction of new policies and procedures.** Ask for feedback from staff and parents and guardians before you introduce the changes.

Supporting policy implementation in a team

Try to create an environment that implements policy and policy changes in a consistent way. Provide support for staff members who have to put the policies in place.¹

- » **Induct new staff members to service policies.** It is important to ensure that new staff members are carefully introduced to the service's policies and procedures during the induction process. In a large service, it will help if you provide a mentor or buddy to support the new staff member. This person should be available to answer questions or clarify standard procedures and role model best practice. This will help the new staff member to become familiar with service policies and help to ensure that they implement them consistently.
- » **Set achievable tasks and realistic workloads.** It is important to give clear explanations about new policies or procedures and to make sure that staff members have enough time and the skills they need to implement the policies effectively. Ongoing monitoring and supportive supervision will provide staff members with clear expectations, immediate and honest feedback, and positive encouragement as they work to implement any changes.
- » **Ensure policies and procedures are clearly written.** Policies and procedures are the guide to how all aspects of the work of your service will be conducted. Make sure that you have clearly written procedures that all team members fully understand. This will support them as they consistently implement the service policies.
- » **Provide clear roles and responsibilities.** Be clear about who will take responsibility for what, and who staff members should report to. This is essential because lack of clarity in the scope and responsibility of the job and the expectations of others can lead to confusion. Clearly state roles and responsibilities, especially in a large team. This will help staff to see where they fit into the day-to-day running of the service and to know who is responsible for each aspect of policy implementation.
- » **Encourage staff to raise questions about how they should implement policies.** Do this through non-threatening and inclusive interactions. Encourage staff to support each other to implement best practice standards.

¹ List adapted from: Policy Tip Sheet: Ensuring policies are consistently implemented. NCAC Policy Development Guide for Services accessed from www.ecrh.edu.au/docs/default-source/resources/ipsp/ensuring-policies-are-consistently-implemented-policy-tip-sheet.pdf?sfvrsn=6

- » **Make sure that you provide opportunities for ongoing feedback and two-way communication between management and staff.** This is essential as it will help both management and individual staff members when they feel they need to raise any issues or concerns about how a policy is to be implemented. Staff members are in the best position to provide feedback to management about any challenges or issues that policy implementation may create.
- » **Plan professional development opportunities for staff to learn about current best practice in specific areas of practice.** Support new ideas and encourage the staff to research their understanding of different practices. A well-trained staff team gains the expertise and knowledge to identify when poor practice occurs. They also have the confidence to support their colleagues to value best practice. Staff members may need specialist training to implement some policies. For example, child safeguarding, manual handling, and administering medications.
- » **Provide relevant resource materials to support policy implementation.** Provide additional resources that back up and support policies. Give staff members enough information to implement policies successfully. This will encourage them to implement them consistently.

Communicating your policies to parents and guardians

Before a child is enrolled with your service, you must provide the child's parents and guardians with the information they will need. This includes the facts they need to decide whether or not to choose your service and to understand how they are expected to engage in partnership with the service to meet their child's needs. It is good practice to share this information in the form of a handbook for parents and guardians.

Make sure that the policy statements that are particularly relevant to parents and guardians are made easily accessible both to them and to all staff members.

Information you need to share with parents and guardians

- » Your service's vision and mission.
- » The principles that inform the service you provide.
- » Contact information.
- » Information on staffing – including your staff ratio and staff members' names and qualifications.

- » The type of services you provide and the age range of the children you provide for.
- » Information about your curriculum approach (for example, information on Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework).
- » Policy statements (summaries) of policies that are directly relevant to parents and guardians, including, in particular, your policies on:
 - Statement of purpose and function;
 - Complaints;
 - Administration of medication;
 - Infection control;
 - Managing behaviour;
 - Safe sleep;
 - Inclusion;
 - Outings where children attending the service are brought on such outings;
 - Accidents and incidents;
 - Authorisation to collect children;
 - Healthy eating;
 - Outdoor play;
 - The use of the internet and photographic and recording devices; and
 - Settling-in.

Managing expectations

It is helpful for parents and guardians if you also provide information on the following:

- » The routines and the types of activities provided for the children.
- » What parents or guardians should bring with them.
- » What the children should and should not bring with them from home.
- » Information about the 'key-person' system and the system for the regular exchange of information about the child between parents/guardians and the staff.
- » A diagram of the centre layout (this is useful in the case of a large building).
- » The hours and days of opening.
- » Costs and charges or fees (if applicable).
- » Information about the management structure.

- » A statement to confirm that the service is registered with Tusla and where to access the most recent inspection report.
- » A statement on whether or not the service is inspected by the Department of Education and Skills Early Years Inspectorate and where to access the inspection report.
- » Information on the service's level of engagement with Síolta – the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education (if any).
- » Information about how the service engages with other relevant organisations or agencies and links in the local community.
- » Record keeping and arrangements for parents and guardians to have access to their child's records.

Consider what information is important and useful for each parent or guardian to have and to know, and also what parents or guardians are expected to do with the information.

Keep it accessible

You need to provide the information about your service in a range of formats so that it is accessible to everybody. This may mean presenting some simple, brief messages that are attractively presented. When providing information, you need to consider the cultural, language and literacy needs of families in the community.

Remember that not all parents and guardians will be able to easily access your standard written communications.

NALA materials are useful

NALA, the National Adult Literacy Agency, provides tips to make your materials easier to read and understand, especially for adults with literacy difficulties www.nala.ie/resources/writing-and-design-tips

NALA also provides a Plain English editing service. Plain English is a way of presenting information that helps someone understand it the first time they read or hear it. See www.simplyput.ie/plain-english-editing for more information.

NDA provides accessibility resources

The National Disability Authority (NDA) also provides resources to help with making information accessible to all. This is available at nda.ie/Resources/Accessibility-toolkit/Make-your-information-more-accessible/

You may need to sit down with some parents or guardians and talk them through the main policy statements (the ones that are included in your handbook for parents and guardians in particular). Encourage them to ask questions. You could also consider having some of your key policy statements recorded as a podcast for parents and guardians.

Policy folder or manual

You need to keep your policy folder or manual in an accessible place. This can be in hard copy or electronic format. A hard copy should be easily available. If you use an electronic version, make sure that is easily accessible online.

All those who use, work in or manage the service must know where to find your policy folder and be able to freely consult it at any time. You will need to update your manual from time to time. Whenever you need to do this, make the changes formally through your service's formal policy review process.

Below is a suggested structure for your policy manual

- » A cover page with the service's mission statement.
- » A contents page.
- » The Statement of Purpose and Function.
- » Staffing information (including team members' names and roles).
- » The policies, procedures and statements documents (all with a standard format and layout) and ordered under:
 - Governance policies,
 - Health, welfare and development policies, and
 - Safety policies.
- » A list of all policies with the date of most recent update and planned next review dates.

Below is a template for recording a list of all service policies and dates for their review.

Service policies and their dates for review

| Policy area | Procedures and forms | Date written | Review date |
|-------------|----------------------|--------------|-------------|
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

Section 6



Reviewing policies

Regulation 14 of the Early Years Regulations 2016 requires that the registered provider makes sure that the quality and safety of the care and service provided to children is reviewed **at least once a year**. This review is a formal assessment of the service and includes its policies, procedures and statements.

You must keep a record of the review for three years.

The purpose of reviewing policies is to ensure that they continue to adequately meet the needs of your service and of the children and families who use it. To do this, it must reflect the most up-to-date legislation, regulation and quality standards.

Tusla Early Years Inspectors will want to know the following things about your service.

- » It has the policies required under the Early Years Regulations 2016, and under any amendments.
- » It has policies that set out clearly what is required (clear procedures).
- » It makes sure that staff members can easily access the required policies.
- » It makes sure that staff members have had any training they need to put policy in place and that their training is updated when it needs to be.
- » It makes sure that each team member knows their own and others' roles and responsibilities.
- » Each staff member knows what they must do to implement the policies at all times.
- » It has policies that reflect up-to-date quality practice.
- » It involves the staff team in policy reviews.

How to review policies

Each policy should be continually monitored. To do this you need to collect evidence about how effective your policies are. Use this evidence to make any necessary changes to the policy or the way it is put into practice.

Encourage staff team members and parents or guardians to comment both formally and informally on the service's policies. Staff team members and parents/guardians should be encouraged to comment on how policies and procedures work. They should also be able to share in the decisions that management takes about making changes to policies and procedures.

When you review policies and procedures, this gives all involved the chance to challenge each other and to use this exchange of ideas to improve practice. It also gives you a chance to use reflective questions to help your team to identify problems and critically reflect on the effectiveness of their current daily and professional practice.

Here are some of the questions you should think about.

- » Is the current practice effective?
- » Have any concerns or issues been raised about the practice?
- » What is the thinking behind the way we do that?
- » How does the practice affect children, families and other stakeholders?
- » Is the practice described in the procedures relevant to the service as a whole and to individual staff members, families and management?
- » Does it reflect our service approach (our vision, mission, and principles)?
- » Is the practice consistent with our beliefs, values and philosophy?
- » Have we always done it that way?
- » Does the practice meet the needs of all the children and families?
- » What happens in other services? Why do they do that?
- » Is the information sourced for the policy and practice still relevant?
- » Is there recent research information, trends, legislation or regulations that need to be added to the policy regarding the practice?
- » What should continue or be extended and what might be changed?
- » If we change our policy, when and how should we review and evaluate the change?

The person in charge must also provide opportunities for parents and guardians to give feedback on their opinion about the quality and safety of the service you provide.

Staff members are in daily contact with families and parents/guardians and they can provide feedback on any difficulties your service's policy or procedures may be creating for families. Staff members can also encourage and help families to raise their concerns with you personally.

Key questions to consider in a review of policies

- » Is the policy fit for the purpose for which it was intended?
- » Is the policy being implemented effectively?
- » Is it consistent with current service requirements?
- » Does the policy meet or exceed current legislation, regulations and guidelines, in particular the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016?
- » Does the policy reflect accepted quality practice standards such as the national Síolta Quality Standards?
- » Does it meet the current needs of children, parents/guardians, staff and management?

The Policy Review Worksheet in Appendix 2 will support your service in the policy review process, while the suggested agenda given in Appendix 3 is an optional tool which may help you plan Policy Review Team Meetings.

You need to have a set of quality policies and procedures in place to run an efficient, effective and professional early years service. We hope that this guide helps you to develop these sound service policies. In particular, we hope that it helps you and others to:

- » Identify the priority policies;
- » Consider all stakeholders' needs;
- » Involve all those who can contribute positively to the process;
- » Make sure that they have the necessary information and resources;
- » Write clear policies and procedures;
- » Put them together in a well-presented manual; and
- » Make sure that everybody who needs to know about the policies does know and also knows how to apply them effectively – this includes monitoring and reviewing them as needed.

This guide is accompanied by samples and templates for policies, procedures and statements online. These are resources designed to support you as you develop the required policies for your service.

The sample policies provided are, in some cases, broader than what is required but include directly related areas of practice. They are offered as an information resource. The samples and templates provide information, guidance and suggested wording to use when writing policies, procedures and statements that are particular to each service and setting. You can access samples and templates at: www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/ and www.barnardos.ie/earlyyears/policies

Appendices



Appendix 1: Identifying values worksheet

Values give meaning and purpose to what we do so your values will underpin every aspect of the service. Use the worksheet below to help you to identify both individual and team values.

Follow the steps below:

1. Review the values listed – notice the blank spaces at the end, these are for you to add any that you think are important but are not listed.
2. Put a star next to all of the values that are important to you for your group or service, including any extra that you have added. This will be your personal list of values.
3. Take two to three minutes to narrow the list to eight by crossing off the less important ones or circling the most important ones.
4. Then narrow the list to five.
5. And lastly choose your top three core values.
6. Discuss all chosen values as a team and agree team values.

| Values list | | |
|---------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| Belonging | Health | Responsibility |
| Care | Emotional well-being | Rights |
| Challenge | Family | Risk |
| Change | Identity | Safety |
| Choice | Independence | Security |
| Community | Individuality | Sensitivity |
| Consistency | Interests | Spirituality |
| Communication | Knowledge | Standards |
| Co-operation | Learning | Strength |
| Creativity | Language | Thinking |
| Dependability | Nature | Trust |
| Development | Needs | Variety |
| Discipline | Nurture | Physical well-being |
| Education | Opportunity | Work |
| Enjoyment | Partnership | Others: |
| Equality | Play | |
| Excellence | Possibilities | |
| Exploration | Potential | |
| Family | Protection | |
| Fun | Quality | |
| Growth | Relationship | |
| Happiness | Respect | |

Appendix 2: Policy review worksheet

The Policy Review Worksheet below will support your service as you review policies.

1. Review each of your existing policies by considering the following:

Does the policy achieve its purpose?

Have there been any changes to the services provided that impact on the policy?

What new information is available on quality practice? (see 'Sources of Further Information' at the end of this document) Does it impact on the policy?

Have there been any changes in legislation, regulation or guidelines that impact on the policy?

Are the outcomes focused mainly on the needs of the children and families who use the service?

Do the policies also meet the needs of staff members and management?

Is there a consistent format used throughout the service's policies manual/folder?

Are people clear on their roles and responsibilities in relation to the requirements of the policy?

Are the related procedures and/or forms consistent with the policy and adequate to ensure full and effective implementation?

Is the policy consistent with the service's stated mission statement, its objectives and values?

Have there been any changes to the management or staffing structure that impact on the policy?

Is the language used up-to-date?

Is the policy being implemented appropriately?

When you have reviewed the policies in light of the above questions, continue as follows:

2. Take notes of the review.

Include:

- » Recommendations for amendments if necessary
or
- » A more comprehensive review and a revision of the policy if warranted.

Include a deadline for comments from the stakeholder advisory group

3. Add the note 'Policy under Review' to the existing policies while the process is taking place.

4. Record the 'Review date' and 'Signatures' on approved policies with a 'Date for next review'.

5. Draft amendments to policies as necessary.

Present these to the reference group for comment. When amendments are agreed, write the final version marked with 'Review date', 'Signatures' and 'Date for next review'. The registered provider, usually the management committee chair in a community service or the owner in a private service, must sign off on any amendments.

6. When policies are in need of a more comprehensive review:

- » In a large service, assign the work of drafting a new version of the policy to a working group or an individual with the necessary skill, knowledge and information.
- » Review the existing policy to decide on which parts (if any) you want to keep.
- » Write up a first draft of the new policy and circulate for comment to:
 - the management committee in a community service;
 - the registered provider or manager in a private service; and to
 - the stakeholder advisory group (if any).
- » Make any necessary changes then present the final draft to the registered provider – which might be a management committee or service owner – for sign-off.
- » Assign a date for the next review to the policy.

7. When the policies are agreed, make sure that they are promoted.

Communicate them to everyone involved in the whole service. Include them in your induction plan.

8. Produce an action plan to support the implementation of the policies.**9. Consider the training and development implications for staff members and management. Ensure that they receive appropriate training and support.****10. Keep a list of all policies and associated procedures, forms and other related documents with dates they were written and proposed review dates.****11. You may also need to revise the contents of the handbook for parents and guardians to reflect any changes in policies or procedures.****12. Make sure that the most up-to-date versions of policies are available and that older versions are kept in a safe and accessible place so that there is no confusion about which versions are in use.**

Appendix 3: Policy review team meetings

The suggested agenda below can be used for policy review team meetings in larger services (adapted from Child Australia, 2012).

First meeting – getting started

1. Decide on the team members and arrange the first meeting.
2. Put together all the documents you need, including your current policies, regulations and quality practice guides (in particular the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework and the Síolta manual).
3. Brainstorm the headings and sections for including or updating in the policy folder.
4. Decide what to include. Compare your current policies with new requirements and identify any gaps.
5. Develop an action plan and set realistic timeframes to develop or review policies so that these gaps are addressed.
6. Divide the workload among team members.
7. Agree what forms need to be updated and assign responsibility.
8. Agree a schedule of meetings.
9. Decide who else needs to be involved. Consider bringing in some ‘outside’ expertise.

Second meeting – reviewing draft policies

1. Provide the team with draft policies before the meeting for their comments and feedback.
2. Discuss and agree changes to be made.
3. If appropriate, test out or role play scenarios to visualise how procedures would work in practice.
4. Invite feedback on the first draft from members of the reference group.
5. Decide if and or where to display the draft policies for comments from the staff, families and other relevant stakeholders.
6. Review and agree on changes to the forms and other material updated
7. Confirm the next steps.

Further meetings – ongoing continuous improvement

1. Provide the final draft before the meeting.
2. Agree final changes.
3. Sign off on updated forms.
4. Follow the policy sign-off process for your service. Plan how the policy will be distributed, for example, hard copies displayed on notice boards, pdf emailed to families and parent handbooks. Develop implementation guidelines and an evaluation process.

Sources of further information

Barnardos

Christchurch Square, Dublin 8

T: 01 454 9699

E: resources@barnardos.ie

or training@barnardos.ie

www.barnardos.ie

Better Start

25-28 Adelaide Road,

Dublin 2

T: 01 5117888

E: enquiries@betterstart.ie

www.pobal.ie/BetterStart/Pages/Home.aspx

Childminding Ireland

1st Floor, 39 Wexford Road

Arklow, Co Wicklow

T: 01 287 8466

E: support@childminding.ie

www.childminding.ie

Department of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

43-49 Mespil Road, Dublin 4

T: 01 647 3000

E: contact@dcya.gov.ie

www.dcy.gov.ie

Early Childhood Ireland

Hainault House, Belgard Square,

Tallaght, Dublin 24

T: 01 4057100

E: info@earlychildhoodireland.ie

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/about/

Early Years Education and Policy Unit

43-49 Mespil Rd, Dublin 4

T: 01 647 3050 / 647 3250

E: earlychildhood@education.gov.ie

www.education.ie/en/The-Department/Management-Organisation/Early-Years-Education-Policy-Unit.html

Gaelscoileanna Teo

Halla Naomh Pádraig

Institiúid Oideachais Marino

Ascaill Uí Ghríofa, Baile Átha Cliath 9.

T: +353 (0)1 853 5195

E: oifig@gaelscoileanna.ie

www.gaelscoileanna.ie/en/

Health and Safety Authority

The Metropolitan Building,

James Joyce Street, Dublin 1

T: 1890 289 389 (between 9am
and 12.30pm, Mon to Fri)

E: wcu@hsa.ie www.hsa.ie

National Childhood Network

Unit 10D, M-TEK 1

Knockaconny, Monaghan

Co. Monaghan

T: 047 72469

E: info@ncn.ie www.ncn.ie

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA)

35 Fitzwilliam Square, Dublin 2

T: 01 661 7177

E: info@ncca.ie www.ncca.ie

**Tusla - Child and Family Agency
Early Years Inspectorate**

E: info@tusla.ie www.tusla.ie

Contact details for the Early Years Inspector in your area can be found at www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-inspectors/

City or County Childcare Committees

Contact details for City or County

Childcare committees can be found on

www.pobal.ie/FundingProgrammes/EarlyEducationandChildcare/Pages/CCCs.aspx

Other useful websites

- » Síolta - siolta.ie/
- » Aistear - ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/aistear
- » Aistear Síolta Practice Guide - aistearsiolta.ie/en/
- » The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) - nala.ie/
- » The National Disability Authority (NDA) - nda.ie/

