



Setting up a
Parent &
toddler
Group



Longford CCC

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Are you thinking of setting up a Parent and Toddler Group in your area?

Longford County Childcare Committee is on hand to help, advise and support you with this process.

Think of the following points as guidelines:

- Research possible venues like a Community Hall, Health Centre or Parish Centre. When looking at potential venues you need to consider the following:

- Is it a safe, secure and suitable space for small children to play in?

- Is there place to store the toys?

- What will the rent will be?

- All Parent and Toddler groups must ensure they have Comprehensive Insurance Cover from the outset. For members, Early Childhood Ireland provides access to a specific insurance policy which covers Parent and toddler Groups.

- Promote the group; you can advertise locally in local newsletters, local notes in newspaper, local shops, post office and don't forget social media. You could also link in with your local Public Health Nurse and County Childcare Committee to help you promote the group.

- Source help to run the group, it is advisable that two or three parents share the responsibility of running the group.

Pick a name for your group and a day to meet. Most groups meet for two hour sessions weekly. If you would like help in setting up your Parent and Toddler Group contact:

Longford County Childcare Committee

Phone: 043-3342505

Email: enquiries@longfordchildcare.ie

Website: www.longfordchildcare.ie

Twitter: @Lchildcare

Facebook: LongfordChildcare

For up to date resources and information, please follow and like LCCC on Facebook at:

LongfordChildcare. Alternatively join our weekly newsletter subscription, by entering your email address on our website homepage (at the bottom)

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(Source: Early Childhood Ireland)

1. Decide on how the group is to be organised

This can be as simple as deciding whether one person or a committee takes on the task of organising the group.

The major advantage of a committee is that by sharing the work no one person is left to do it all and it can also provide continuity if a key member leaves. Holding an AGM every January may be a useful way of ensuring the continuity of the group.

2. Location

This can be anywhere you are able to find a suitable space with regular availability, for example, a community centre, room in a health centre, sports hall, band hall or purpose built structure.

You will need adequate space and facilities for the storage of toys and materials.

3. Organise Insurance

If your group has more than 35 children on any given morning and your venue has a floor space of approximately 150 square metres, Early Childhood Ireland can offer the appropriate insurance cover, at a very reasonable rate.

Extra places, up to a ceiling of 40 children, may be insured through Early Childhood Ireland Group Insurance Scheme, provided that the floor space available is increased proportionally.

You need Public Liability Insurance of at least €2,600,000. Check with your Insurer to confirm that all the group's activities are covered, including once-off events.

For more information on this please visit the insurance section of the website.

4. Notify Tusla

You are not obliged to notify the local Tusla office of the existence of your group, but it may be advisable and in your interest to do so.

Notifying the local Tusla office could also provide a useful contact point for new parents in the area.

5. Looking for funding

There are several different bodies and organisations you could contact about the possibility of securing funding, for instance:

- Your regional office of the Department of Social and Family Affairs.
- The National Lottery often provides once-off grants to organisations which offer a range of health related services.
- If there is one, your Partnership or Community Development Group.
- The Community Care department of your local Health Service Executive may be able to help with a Start-up Grant.
- Local shops might also help with donations.

- A number of County Childcare Committees may also provide small grants.
- You could also raise funds directly, for insurance, by organising a Table Quiz, Raffle, Flag-Day, church gate collection, Coffee Morning, Race Night or a Sponsored Walk for Toddlers. (Please be aware that some of these activities require the permission of the Garda Síochána).

6. Toys and Equipment

The general equipment required could include the following:

- suitable chairs and tables for adults and children
- tea and coffee making equipment
- cups and beakers
- changing facilities, in a separate area from the children
- a security gate/barrier to prevent children from leaving the setting
- a tape recorder could be useful

The toys and equipment specific to the various age groups could include:

For Babies	A safe area or baby haven, with soft flooring, soft toys, rattles, coloured bricks and activity centres.
For Crawlers	If the space permits, a larger area could be cordoned off with, for instance, roll-along toys, cars, dolls, cloth books, shape sorters, stacking toys and rocking toys.
For Toddlers and Older Children	Appropriate toys could include dolls, teddies, prams and push-chairs, sit-and-ride toys, a garage with cars, simple jigsaws, building blocks, dress-up clothes such as hats and bags, a toy kitchen, colourful books, playdough, paint, collage and drawing equipment. Sand and water play also provide good developmental opportunities, but require even closer supervision.

7. Introductory information for new parents and carers

Basic introductory information could be provided to newcomers by means of a welcoming letter, including the following pieces of information:

- parents and carers must look after their own children, this is not a day care service
- cost per family (this would usually be about €2.00 per session)
- children must be accompanied to the toilet by the parent or the adult nominated by the parent
- children are not allowed in the tea and coffee area
- parents and carers are asked to play an active role in the group
- a lists of days, times, duration and venues for the meetings of the Parents and Toddler Group
- the telephone number of the secretary or designated contact person
- safety is the responsibility of all the adults attending the session

8. Day-to-day running

Tasks for the day-to-day running of the group could be put on job cards, which would then be distributed to each adult upon their arrival. The cards could include some of the following tasks:

- book and set up premises, unlock doors and lock up again at the end of session
- welcome people and distribute information
- initiate new parents and carers into the group and introduce them to others

- register new members and record the attendance of all children and adults
- collect money and record it in an Accounts Book
- organise drinks and snacks, with tea and coffee in a separate safe area
- supervise each play area
- read at story-time, lead sing-song
- clean and maintain toys and equipment
- clean and tidy up
- advertise the service
- while health and safety is everyone's responsibility, it can be a good idea to have one person with a special interest in it to help raise safety consciousness. That person could also buy and maintain the First Aid Box, arrange fire drills or point out behaviours which might cause or contribute to unsafe situations.

9. Health and Safety

Your Parent, Baby and Toddler Group should identify all health and safety hazards; eliminate them where possible and reduce them if they cannot be eliminated. You need to put in place a simple Health and Safety Plan and make sure that everyone is aware of it. Often the best way of doing this is to:

- walk around the area used by the group
- write down the hazards
- determine how you will eliminate or reduce the hazards
- identify and record who will do this
- decide by when this will be done

You need to check that these steps have been taken and to regularly monitor health and safety. An Accident/Incident Book to record all accidents and near misses is essential.

If you have an employee, a Health and Safety Statement has to be completed under Health and Safety Legislation and you must have Employers Liability Insurance. You should also be aware that you must fulfil all your legal responsibilities as an employer.

Children being transported in cars do so at the invitation of the owner and the insurance situation needs to be clarified with the car insurers. If transporting children in cars or minibuses, it is strongly recommended that the children should always be secured by safety belts and appropriate child seating. Remember – safety in the group is the responsibility of all the members.

10. Fire Safety

Ask your local Fire Officer to check the building you intend to use and to advise you about fire drills and other fire safety issues.

You will need to obtain a copy of “Fire Safety in Pre-Schools”, which you can download from the Environment, Community and Local Government website or you can contact the government publications office directly at the following address:

Government Publications Office,
51 St Stephens Green,
Dublin 2
Tel: 01-6476000

11. Courses, Outings and Parties

- Parents' courses are available from many sources including: Early Childhood Ireland, the Community Care section of the local Health Service Executive, Primary Schools, Partnerships and Community Groups, Family Resource Centres and County Childcare Committees.
- VEC's offer courses for many interests and will often provide special courses for parents and carers if asked to do so.
- talks from experts could be arranged on matters like Nutrition, Child Development, Speech Therapy and the Value of Play.
- the group can provide a focal point for areas of interest to parents and carers, such as hobbies, computer courses and complementary medicine. The group should avail of the expertise of members of the group.
- days out for parents and children to a local amenity can be enjoyable, healthy and popular activities.
- evenings out for parents and carers can provide opportunities to get a well-deserved rest from the children and to develop friendships in a relaxed atmosphere.
- parties for holidays like Christmas or Easter can be great fun. However, extra numbers need to be insured and properly supervised.
- members of the group might form baby-sitting contacts.

12. Advertising

You will probably need regularly to advertise your Parent, Baby and Toddler Group in places such as local Health Centres, Doctors' Surgeries, Shops, Shopping Centres, Libraries, Post Offices, Churches, Pre-schools, Primary Schools, local newspapers and social media. It would also be a good idea to ask your local Public Health Nurse to promote the group.

13. Holidays

Parent, Baby and Toddler Groups normally operate in conjunction with Primary Schools' terms and holidays.

Source: Points 1-13 are Early Childhood Ireland

If you are a member of Early Childhood Ireland, you can login to utilise their library resource.





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