



# Setting up a Childcare Service

Below are the steps and details of relevant agencies that will assist you in making informed decisions when setting up an Early Learning and Care (ELC) / School Age Childcare (SAC) service. The [City/County Childcare Committees](#) are available to provide support in the setting up process and go through the necessary steps in opening an Early Learning Care (ELC) / School Age Childcare (SAC) Service. Contact your local [City/County Childcare Committees](#) to make an appointment.

## Getting Started – Research

Conduct a Needs Analysis:

Be sure to include the following: potential customers, need in the area, identify [existing ELC services](#) and [SAC Services](#), cost of childcare in area, conduct surveys with families and local primary schools, consult demographics and statistics from [Central Statistics Office, Census 2022](#)), link to [Pobal Maps](#), research potential developments with [local authority](#) and consult [Pobal Annual Early Years Sector Profile Report](#) . It is also recommended to visit similar services to get ideas of environment layout and to obtain feedback from other childcare providers of what works well in practice and supports overall accessibility for the children, families, visitors and staff. The results of the needs analysis will help determine the [type of service](#) to consider setting up.

## Determine the legal status of your Early Learning & Care and/or School Age Childcare service

All companies will need to be registered with the [Companies Registration Office](#) (CRO) and your accountant can assist you with this process. Some companies can establish as a private entity or through a voluntary management committee. Community services (with voluntary management committees) may also be eligible to apply for Charity Status with the [Charities Regulator](#).

### Business Plan

Contact your [Local Enterprise Office](#) for business plan support and information on upcoming training and business supports available in your city/county.

Additional items to consider while drafting your business plan that are specific to the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Services:

- [Tusla \(Child & Family Agency\) staffing requirements & room ratios](#)
- [First 5 Practitioners Supports](#)
- [DCEDIY recognised qualifications](#)
- DCEDIY Early Years/SAC Capital funding – contact your local [City/County Childcare Committee](#)
- Insurance Costs ([Early Childhood Ireland](#), [Arachas](#))
- Contracting for DCEDIY Childcare Schemes ([NCS](#) and [ECCE](#))
- [Pobal Managing Better Toolkits](#) Management, Governance and Finance

## Identify and/or Design a Suitable Premises

The [Universal Design Guidelines](#) for Early Learning and Care Settings set out the key Universal Design (UD) considerations and guidance for Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings in Ireland. The guidelines apply to both new-build and retrofit projects and provide a flexible UD framework to ensure that settings are accessible for all children, staff, families and visitors. These guidelines can be found on the [Access & Inclusion Model](#) website.

The [Childcare Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) and registration of [School Age Childcare Services Regulation 2018](#) requires Early Learning & Care and School Age Childcare services to have premises and facilities that support safe and healthy practices. The [Tusla Quality Regulatory Framework \(QRF\)](#) for Early Learning & Care Services aims to uphold the safety of children by ensuring that all items, equipment, furniture, materials and surfacing used in the service are of a standard that is considered safe and provides details on facilities required (such as bathrooms, nappy changing areas, body wash facilities, heating, ventilation, lighting, space ratios, etc.).

The [School Age Childcare Quality Standards](#) are guidelines to assist, guide and inspire school age childcare services to reach beyond the minimum standards set out in regulations.

It is important to identify and consult an architect, engineer, [local authority](#) planning, fire officer on the design, set up and build of your project and it is equally important to share all of the above documents including [fire and planning regulations](#) for Early Years Services with these professionals so they can ensure that your Early Learning & Care and School Age Childcare service meets all the

required standards as well as being a functional building that is accessible for all using it.

Proposals for new buildings, renovations or extensions of existing buildings must comply with current statutory requirements. You may be required to apply for planning permission. Contact your [local authority](#) for planning and fire safety requirements and certificates. You should also contact the Fire Safety Officer to obtain a Fire Safety Certificate before any works commence.

## Register with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency

All registrations and to set up an account can be completed through the [Tusla online portal](#). It is a legal requirement for all childcare services (Early Learning and Care & School Age Childcare) proposing to operate to make an application under section 58D(2) of The Child and Family Agency Act 2013, at least 3 months before it is intended to commence operation.

Any queries regarding the [registration of a new Early Learning and Care service](#) can be directed to 061 440 602. Inspectorate [Q&A document](#).

Any queries regarding the [registration of a new School Aged Childcare service](#) can be directed to 061 440 602.

An additional support for queries relating to the registration of Early Learning and Care & School Age Childcare is available through local [City and County Childcare Committees](#), contact details can be found on [myccc.ie](#).

## Selection and Recruitment of Staff

When considering who you will recruit, please consider the following: job descriptions, qualifications, work experience, salary, recruitment process, contracts of employment and conditions of

employment. Further information on management, governance and recruitment can be found on [Pobal Managing Better Toolkits](#) and [Tusla QRF](#).

## Implementing Quality Childcare Provision

In Ireland there are two early childhood frameworks – Síolta and Aistear. While similar in many ways Síolta is concerned with all aspects of quality in early childhood whilst Aistear focuses specifically on curriculum. The Síolta Aistear [Practice Guide](#) draws the two frameworks together in a practical way and offers suggestions, ideas and examples of how they can be used to develop a curriculum that helps all children to enjoy and progress in their early learning and development.

The [School Age Childcare Quality Standards](#) will assist, guide and inspire school age childcare services to reach beyond the minimum standards set out in regulations. The guidelines give central importance to children's rights, child protection, welfare, equality and diversity and environmentalism.

The [First 5 website](#) provides resources on continued professional development for practitioners. It also gives up to date information as per the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC).

Further training and supports on quality childcare provision are available from your local [City/County Childcare Committee](#), contact details can be found at [myccc.ie/where-is-my-nearest-ccc](http://myccc.ie/where-is-my-nearest-ccc)

## Areas of Compliance and Inspection

- Tusla (Child & Family Agency) is responsible for [inspecting](#) pre-schools, play groups, nurseries, creches, day-care and similar

services which cater for children aged 0-6, under the [Childcare Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#).

- Tusla Early Years Inspectorate has provided regulatory guidance for the registered providers of ELC and SAC services to support and facilitate the safe reopening and operation of the Covid-19 period. A suite of supports are available on the [First 5 website](#).
- [HSE Environmental Health](#) are authorised under the Childcare Act 1991 to carry out inspections of Early Learning and Care services. It is recommended that you contact your local [Environmental Health Officer \(EHO\)](#) for advice. Consult the [Food Safety Authority](#) for information in relation to [setting up a business that offers food](#) and the most up to date [legislation](#).
- The [Early Years Education Inspection \(EYEI\)](#) is an announced inspection to Early Learning & Care services who are providing the Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme (ECCE). The inspection is carried out by the Department of Education and Skills.
- Pobal Compliance visits take place for those Early Learning & Care and School Age Childcare services participating in the [ECCE](#) and [NCS](#) programmes.
- The [Health and Safety Authority](#) has the responsibility for ensuring that workers (employed and self-employed) and those affected by work activity are protected from work related injury and ill-health.
- The [Workplace Relations Commission \(WRC\)](#) provides information on industrial relations & rights and obligations under Irish employment and equality legislation. The Commission's also conducts inspections to determine the level of compliance with relevant employment law.
- [NERA \(National Employment Rights Authority\)](#) is the statutory body appointed to ensure employers compliance with employment legislation in Ireland. It carries out regular inspections to fulfil its obligations and ensure compliance by employers.





- The [Office of the Director of Corporate Enforcement \(ODCE\)](#) is to improve the compliance environment for corporate activity in the Irish economy by encouraging adherence to the requirements of the Companies Acts, and bringing to account those who disregard the law.

