



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive



Galway City & County
Childcare Committee

Coiste Cúram Leanaí
Chontae & Chathair na Gaillimhe

Galway City & County Childcare Committee



Choosing Childcare

A Parent's Guide

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Transforming Ireland



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INTRODUCTION

Choosing suitable childcare is a very important decision for all parents.

As parents, you know more about your child than any other person, and when choosing a childcare service, you will want a service which will meet your child's individual needs.

This DVD and accompanying booklet are aimed at helping you to identify the types of childcare services available, and the issues to be aware of when choosing a suitable childcare service for your child. These issues include availability, affordability and most important of all quality.

Being a parent is possibly the most challenging role you will ever have and we are committed to helping you, the primary caregiver, in this task.

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N

CHOICES

There are 6 types of service obliged to notify the Health Service Executive in accordance with CHILD CARE (PRE-SCHOOL SERVICES) (No 2) REGULATIONS 2006 AND CHILD CARE (PRE-SCHOOL SERVICES) (No 2) (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2006.

(i) Sessional Services

“Sessional pre-school service” means a pre-school service offering a planned programme to pre-school children for a total of not more than 3.5 hours per session.

(ii) Part-time day care

“Part-time day care service” means a pre-school service offering a structured day care service for pre-school children for a total of more than 3.5 hours and less than 5 hours per day and which may include a sessional pre-school service for pre-school children not attending the part-time day care service.

(iii) Full-day care

“Full day care service” means a pre-school service offering a structured day care service for pre-school children for more than 5 hours per day and which may include a sessional pre-school service for pre-school children not attending the full day care service.

(iv) Childminding service

“Childminding service” means a pre-school service offered by a person who single-handedly takes care of pre-school children, including the childminder’s own children, in the childminder’s home for a total of more than 2 hours per day. Childminders who are not statutorily obliged to notify should contact the City/County Childcare Committee or the Health Service Executive and avail of the voluntary notification and support system.

(v) Pre-school service in a drop-in centre and in a temporary drop-in centre

“Pre-school service in a drop-in centre” means a pre-school service offering day care which is used exclusively on an intermittent basis.

“Pre-school service in a temporary drop-in centre” means a pre-school service offering day care exclusively on a temporary basis.

(vi) Overnight pre-school service

“Overnight pre-school service” means a service in which pre-school children are taken care of for a total of more than 2 hours between the hours of 7pm and 6am.

Other Services available include:

- Childminders who provide care for 3 or fewer children in a home setting are encouraged to Voluntarily Notify the Galway City & County Childcare Committee.
- School-age Childcare – services providing out of school care for school-age children outside school hours.

Contact HSE West Pre-school Services at 091 771928 or Galway City & County Childcare Committee at 091 752039 for a list of childcare services in your area.

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N.

HAPPY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENT

A happy and safe environment will take into account the number of children attending the service, their age and the amount of time they spend in the service.

Some points to consider:

- Does the service feel welcoming to both you and your child?
- Does the atmosphere seem to be warm and caring?
- Is there good interaction between staff and children?
- Are the premises clean, bright, well lit where possible by natural light and well ventilated?
- Does the equipment and furniture appear safe, appropriate and well maintained?
- Is everything clean and well looked after?
- Are the rest/sleep areas well ventilated and clean?
- Do the children have their own bed linen?
- Is the kitchen area clean and hygienic?
- Are the premises safe and secure?
- Is there space for the children to play inside and outside?
- Are there enough toilets and washing facilities for the children?
- Is there a suitable and hygienic nappy changing area for babies and young children?
- Is there a security system?
- Is the outdoor play area secure and hazard free?
- Are you asked if your child has any special or additional needs?
- Are the fire extinguishers and fire exits clearly marked and visible?

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY (I)

Through play children learn about their world by observing, exploring and making discoveries. Play reduces the tension that often comes with needing to learn and having to achieve, as play is stimulating, rewarding and fun.

Each area of a child's development can be promoted through the following play activities;

It is important to remember that children learn through experiences, this is why providing new experiences is so essential in their early years.

Creative and Sensory Play: Painting, playdough, sand, water, crayons, chalk, junk material, nature activities, etc.

This type of play promotes creativity and sensory awareness, and an understanding of the properties of various materials,

Imaginative Play: Dressing up, role play, puppets, cardboard box, tea set, telephone, cash register, dolls, etc.

This type of play promotes children's social, emotional ,communication and language skills.

Manipulative and Constructive Play: Wooden puzzles with knobs, jigsaws, floor and table top activities, threading, beading, animals, cars, straws, train set , etc.

This type of play promotes fine motor control, problem solving skills and helps children to visualise and plan.

Books, Songs, Musical Instruments, (Circle-Time): These activities promote communication and language development. Children learn how to express themselves through verbal and non-verbal interactions.

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY (II)

Outdoor play: Playing outdoors provides a change of environment and space for children to get physical exercise, strengthen their muscles and release their energy in a positive way. This includes planting, jumping, running, cycling, etc.

Exploratory Play: At the infant stage children are gaining strength, agility and co-ordination as they begin to control their heads and limbs. Children explore the world around them by using their senses: sound, smell, touch and taste. Therefore, it is essential that children at this age are given the time, space and stimuli to explore and learn, within a safe and secure environment.

It is important to remember that children like adults learn by experiencing. This is why providing new experiences is so essential in the early years.

Some points to consider:

- Is there plenty of equipment and resources available for the children?
- Are the children free to choose their activities?
- Are there lots of examples of children's work displayed?
- Are the toys, equipment and activities suitable for the different age groups?
- Are the children properly supervised but still allowed to experience activities that are challenging and exciting?
- Are the children happy and engaged in the activities?
- Are there written programmes, outlining the children's activities?

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N.

LAYOUT OF ROOM

The layout of the room should be child centred to promote choice and independence.

Some points to consider:

- Does the room look interesting and welcoming to you and your child?
- Are there plenty of activities to choose from?
- Are the play areas bright and cheerful?
- Is there a quiet area if your child wants to relax?
- Is it too hot or too cold?
- Are the resources accessible to the children and at child level?
- Is there enough space in the room for children to move around easily?
- Is the children's art work displayed at child height?
- Are there different types of activities going on? – construction, sand, water, painting, etc?
- Is the room divided into different play areas?
 - Arts and Crafts Area
 - Constructive and Manipulative Play Area
 - Water and Sand Play Area
 - Books/ Quiet Area
 - Imaginative Play Area (Home Corner)

(See "Importance of Play" for further information on the different play areas)

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N.

DAILY ROUTINE

A daily routine needs to be flexible and child centred, in order to meet the individual and group needs of all the children attending the service.

Some points to consider:

- Is there a written daily/weekly programme displayed for parents?
- Has the staff discussed their daily programme with you?
- Is the daily routine/programme flexible?
- Does the routine suit both your needs and those of your child?
- Is the daily routine able to take into account any special or additional needs you or your child may have?
- Are you happy with how the setting is organised?
- Does the daily routine allow enough time for children to engage in and extend activities?
- If your child wishes to change from the routine can they do this?
- Are you and your child taken through the daily routine when you visit?

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N

RELATIONSHIPS

Good practice for a caring environment depends on the quality of interaction between staff, children and parents.

Some points to consider

- Are there enough adults to provide individual attention to your child if he/she needs it?
- Do the staff have a good understanding about child development and working with children?
- Do the staff interact well with the children?
- Do the staff play with the children?
- Are the staff aware of each child's needs, likes and dislikes?
- Do the staff listen to the children and help the children understand and express their feelings?
- Are the children treated with respect and empathy?
- Are you consulted about how to deal with your child should he/she become ill, distressed or angry?
- Do the staff talk to children about their behaviour and explain what is right or wrong?
- Do the staff know when to engage with the children and when to observe?
- Do the children interact well with other children?
- Does your child appear isolated?
- Can you talk to a staff member easily at any time about your child?
- Can you visit any time?
- Do you feel comfortable to talk with a staff member, regarding the service?
- What happens if staff are ill or on holidays and who replaces them?

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N

ENERGY

The atmosphere of a pre-school service should be a welcoming, interesting and an exciting place where children feel free to express and develop their skills in a child friendly environment.

Some points to consider:

- Is your first impression good?
- Are the staff welcoming and approachable?
- Are the children involved and interested in what they are doing?
- Do the staff interact well and support the children?
- Do the children appear to be enjoying themselves?
- Would you feel happy and confident about leaving your child?
- Do staff involve children in what they are doing or planning?
- Is there a respectful approach towards diversity, where each child's individuality and sense of identity is valued?

C.H.I.L.D.R.E.N.

NOW IT IS UP TO YOU

Before making your decision here are some points to consider.

- Contact the HSE West Pre-School Services Office or the Galway City & County Childcare Committee for a list of childcare services in your area. (See page 10 for contact numbers).
- Visit a few childcare services if possible before making your final decision
- If you have friends or know of parents who have used the childcare service, ask them about the service.

Questions to ask the childcare service provider.

- Has your service notified the HSE West or have you been in touch with the Galway City and County Childcare Committee?
- Are you fully insured, and does your Insurance cover outings and collecting children from school?
- What happens if my child has an accident or becomes ill?
- How do you deal with children's challenging behaviour?
- Are all staff trained and experienced?
- Do you provide a wide range of interesting and imaginative activities for the children?
- Are there any other adults besides the staff present on the premises and what contact will they have with my child?
- Is a member of staff trained in first aid and are they present at all times?
- Have you a policy on child protection?
- How much do you charge? Do I pay when my child is sick or on holidays?
- Can I visit anytime?
- If I have a concern, who do I contact?
- What are the adult/child ratios and do they comply with the regulations?
- Do you provide meals for the children, or do they bring their own?

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Galway City & County Childcare Committee

9B Liosban Retail Centre, Tuam Road, Galway
Tel: 091 752039 www.galwaychildcare.com

HSE West Pre-school Services

8B Liosban Retail Centre, Tuam Road, Galway
Tel: 091 771928 www.hse.ie

HSE West Community Care Services

25 Newcastle Road, Galway
Tel: 091 523122 www.hse.ie

Office of the Minister for Children

Hawkins House, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 6354000 www.omc.gov.ie

Department of Social and Family Affairs

Hynes Building, Augustine House, Merchants Road, Galway
Tel: 091 500800 www.welfare.ie

Forbairt Naíonraí Teoranta

7 Merrion Square, Dublin 2
Tel: 01 477 3151 www.naionrai.ie

Childminding Ireland

9 Bulford Business Campus, Kilcoole, Co Wicklow
Tel: 01 287 8466 www.childminding.ie

National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA)

Unit 12c, Bluebell Business Park, Old Naas Road, Bluebell, Dublin 12
Tel: 01 460 1138 www.ncna.net

Irish Pre-school Playgroups Association (IPPA)

Unit 4, Broomhill Business Complex, Broomhill Road, Dublin 24
Tel: 01 4630010 www.ippa.ie

