



Newsletter

Fingal County Childcare Committee

March 2021

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Welcome!

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome & introduce to you our newest team member. Eimear Furlong joined the team in early March. Eimear & Jacinta will both be looking after Balbriggan and surrounding areas. Jacinta will be available Monday – Wednesday and Eimear will be available on Thursday & Friday.

Eimear has a BA Hons Degree in Early Years Education and Care and over thirteen years' experience working in the Early Years sector. She has worked in a wide variety of roles including Early Years educator & service manager in the Community sector and as an Early Years Quality Mentor.

Eimear's contact details are listed above.

PIP Announcements

- **Return of all children to ELC, SAC, including childminders on Monday, 29 March 2021**

Dear Provider,

We are writing to you today regarding the return of all children to services from Monday 29 March and to advise you of a revised version of the HSE Infection Prevention and Control Guidance for ELC and SAC settings which was published today. Please see the following from Early Years Division.

Return of all children to Early Learning and Care (ELC), School-Age Childcare (SAC), including childminders on Monday, 29 March 2021

As you are aware, from 29 March, all Early Learning and Care (ELC), School-Age Childcare (SAC) services, including childminders, can operate for all children without restriction.

Children who have been away from settings for a period of time will now return to familiar surroundings, re-join friends, re-establish routines and reap the benefits of engaging in play and learning. The full reopening of the sector will also support families and working parents in particular.

We would like to acknowledge and thank you again, for all your hard work since the onset of Covid-19 and, in particular since January, whether your service was open and providing services to vulnerable children and the children of essential workers; has reopened to ECCE children in March; or was closed but you and your staff continued to engage remotely with the children who usually attend.

Funding

DCEDIY funding arrangements return to normal from 29 March - with funding provided under the ECCE Programme, the NCS and other legacy schemes.

Services also continue to be eligible for the Revenue-operated Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS), which has been extended until 30 June 2021.

It is also open for services to apply for the Covid-19 Impact Support Scheme. This new strand of sustainability funding is available on a rolling basis throughout 2021 for eligible ELC and SAC services that require further financial assistance in addition to current support measures available. Please contact your CCC for information and advice on this new scheme.

Public Health

We would like to take this opportunity to remind services that, while no environment is without risk in relation to Covid-19, your continued effective adherence to the HSE's Infection Prevention and Control guidance for ELC and SAC services has helped to minimise the risk of spread of infection within services and has ensured that the number of positive cases is low compared to other sectors of the economy.

We would also like to advise you that the HSE has today, 25 March, issued a revised version of the public health guidance for services. The revised Guidance can be found at:

<https://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/respiratory/coronavirus/novelcoronavirus/guidance/childcareguidance/Guidance%20for%20services%20providing%20childcare%20services.pdf>

The changes relate to:

Face coverings (p.11): A reminder that staff in ELC and SAC services must wear face coverings when it is not possible to keep a 2m distance from other adults. Staff are also advised to wear a face covering when in close proximity to children if doing so does not pose a barrier to early learning and care. The Guidance specifically notes that it is expected that use of face coverings will generally be practical when attending to school age children. This aligns with the approach in schools.

The assessment of whether the wearing of a face covering is a barrier to early learning and care ((for pre-school children) will need to be made on a case by case basis. However, it will be impacted by factors such as the ages of the children, the types of interaction between the staff member and the child, whether the interaction is happening inside or outside, etc. For example, opportunities to wear face coverings without impacting on early learning and care may be more frequent when working with older (e.g. ECCE children) but less frequent with toddlers or babies.

Ventilation: The Guidance emphasises the importance of ventilation (see pages 10, 11, 14 and 16).

Other: The Guidance also includes the most up to date information on spread of the virus (p.4), sampling and testing (p.5), vaccine roll out (p.6), periods of self-isolation and restricted movements (p.18) and a reminder to staff to minimise contacts inside and outside of work (p.21).

Reopening Guidance videos

Please find below YouTube playlist links to the recently produced reopening guidance videos issued by the Department available in both English and Irish.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM-](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM-DPDizJzY&list=PLjDfnAn8SMMWvIsTGtGuCGt649uxMUWJ2ZQ)

[DPDizJzY&list=PLjDfnAn8SMMWvIsTGtGuCGt649uxMUWJ2ZQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM-DPDizJzY&list=PLjDfnAn8SMMWvIsTGtGuCGt649uxMUWJ2ZQ) (ENGLISH)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1YewSYhUPgg&list=PLjDfnAn8SMMXoPMf3r3v9KON9uexwHOyg> (IRISH)

Providers and their staff are advised to read the revised Guidance closely and update policies and procedures as required.

- **TWSCS resumption of recoupment**

The Department has provided significant financial supports to the Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) sector throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This included the Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS), which supported services by providing funding to top-up staff wages and contribute towards overhead costs. To ensure that funding continued to flow, a number of preliminary payments were made, which in some cases resulted in overpayments.

The overpayment amount will be viewable on your PIP portal in due course. In the meantime, if you have any concerns/issues regarding your overpayment, you can contact the Early Years Provider Centre directly or alternatively raise a service request on the HIVE and select the following options:

- Request type: TWSCS
- Request type detail: TWSCS
- Programme Request: Covid 19 Supports

The recoupment of these overpayments commenced in November 2020 and there was an option to extend the recoupment into 2021 with final payments made by end March 2021. However, in light of new Level 5 restrictions in the post-Christmas period, a decision was made to delay any outstanding recoupments. This decision was made to avoid placing any undue administrative burden on services and financial challenges at a time where there were already additional pressures and uncertainty.

The Department remains committed to its public duty of ensuring that all tax payer money is properly accounted for, and for this reason recoupment will now resume and take place from April until June 2021. Services that have overpayments are now given advance notice to allow them to make arrangements to manage their cashflow in the coming weeks. Recoupment plans already agreed will resume in April and will be completed by the end of June. For all other services, you may either repay Pobal directly or we will spread the recoupment across payments due from April to June in agreement with Pobal.

ELC and SAC services continue to be supported through a number of funding packages such as the extension of the enhanced EWSS until the end of June, and more recently the DCEDIY-led COVID Operating Support Payment (COSP) to ensure that services' ongoing sustainability is maintained.

If for any reason a service does have concerns about sustainability arising from recoupment of TWSCS overpayments, they are advised to contact Pobal. If this arrangement is not viable for the business and an alternative arrangement is needed, this can be arranged. Hence, if you have any concerns or issues, please raise a service Request on the HIVE (see steps above)

Pobal will be available to support any providers who face sustainability issues with resumption of TWSCS recoupment and will work with you to manage re-payments.

The enhanced EWSS, COSP and other Government measures have been designed to support providers to the greatest extent possible. If your service is currently experiencing sustainability issues even after these measures, the Department has asked us to advise you of a new Sustainability Fund in place – COVID19 Impacts Support Fund. This will assist providers (not-for-profit and for-profit) that require further financial assistance in addition to current support measures available to remain viable. The Department encourages providers in such circumstances to contact their CCC to seek advice on applying for this funding which is available from 1 March.

As stated previously, Pobal recognises the pressure that services have been under and is committed to continuing to work with the Department and the sector to support all providers through these exceptionally difficult times.

- **Early Years Hive improvements**

Dear Service Provider,

We are happy to highlight two updates recently made to the Early Years Hive based on service provider feedback. We will continue to work with services on ways to improve the user experience of this portal and will communicate any changes with you here.

Announcements calendar

A new calendar feature has been added to Hive, located under the Announcements menu dropdown. This calendar displays key dates and upcoming deadlines for services on a monthly basis, this should be especially beneficial as we move closer to the summer months and Programme Readiness.

Announcements will continue to be posted on the Announcements page, but this calendar gives a clear visualisation of what's coming up and what actions may need to be taken by services. We advise that you check both this calendar and the announcements page regularly to keep updated.

Note the entries on this calendar are managed by Pobal and cannot be edited or added to by the portal user.

Guidance for the Funding menu

New guidance has been added under the Quick Guides section of the Early Years Hive. This page will help you navigate the Funding menu of Hive and can be accessed by going to [NCS Quick Guides > Payments/funding](#).

Three new training videos are available on this page. These videos show you how to do the following on Hive:

View programme funding via the Contracts page

View payments issued via the Payments Issued page

View allocations via the Allocations page

Please also note that there are further training videos available for [NCS](#) and [ECCE](#) on YouTube.

Thank you,
Early Years Team

- **Covid-19 Impact Support Payment**

This scheme was launched on the 1st March. The purpose of this funding is to assist services that make a loss/deficit in that month. If you feel you may be eligible to apply, please contact the FCCC Development Officer for your area and they will guide you through the process.

- **11th March 2021 -Resumption of Compliance announcement**

Dear Service Provider,

Further to our communication issued on 15 February, when Department announced that compliance checks would resume on a staggered basis, Pobal commenced verification checks on the Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS) on 22 February.

The TWSCS verification checks are being carried out remotely (desk-based) and in full compliance with public health advice. Services will be required to submit relevant documents upon request to Pobal who will then assess them. This may involve additional correspondence where clarifications are sought.

If your service has been selected for a verification check on the TWSCS and you are experiencing difficulties in responding to Pobal's compliance requests, we would urge you to contact Pobal at cvisit@pobal.ie for assistance, as soon as possible. Pobal can discuss possible options to ease any administrative burden of the verification process.

In relation to compliance checks commencing on other Departmental funded schemes, advance notice will be given to allow you to prepare for remote-based checks.

The Department would like to thank you all services for your continued efforts during this exceptional time.

Many thanks

Early Years Team

Tusla – EY Updates

SAC Registration – Final Date for Registration Friday, 16th April 2021

Tusla recently wrote to all providers in relation to registering SAC and combined services. The final deadline for services with open applications is 16th April 2021.

If you are operating a preschool service as well as a school age service (combined), you must register both.

Documents should be submitted through the application portal and all applications must include a Child Safeguarding Statement.

The school age registration team in Tusla are on hand for any assistance you might need in this process or to answer any queries you might have.

Contact details: · Email – sac.registration@tusla.ie · Phone – 061 461715.

Further support guidance

- Documents required for School-Age Childcare Registration is available on the Tusla website at the following link:

<https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/school-age-services/prepare-to-register-your-school-age-setting-on-line/>

- All information in relation to the minimum requirements for required policies is available on the Tusla website at the following link:

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/School_Age_Childcare_Policies_Registration_Checklist_version_1.02.pdf

Webinars

The full list of seminars that were held throughout March 2021, will be available to view online as soon as is practicable after each event through the Tusla website

- School Age Registration & Early Years Re-Registration
- Early Years Inspections during the COVID pandemic
- Parent Feedback Process & Activity Reports (Analysis & Trends and Enforcement Activity)

Early Years Re-Registration

Registration of ELC-only Services: The final deadline for services with open applications is **1 November 2021**.

Tusla Early Years have launched their report on consultations they have had with parents.

https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Early_Years_Inspections-Parents_Consultation.pdf?mc_cid=d750661d37&mc_eid=c039d3d848

ELC and SAC Guidance videos and updated NCS video

Updated National Childcare Scheme 'about' video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IPUZb16ihz0>

Phased reopening (08 March) of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare services

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9UMakysQYbQ>

Dealing with COVID-19 symptoms in ELC/SAC settings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SM-DPDIzJzY>

Important information for adults regarding the use of face coverings in ELC/SAC settings

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GRL_vpQToKY

The importance of play as children return to early learning and childcare settings

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N9FsTwk_WqA

Key messages for childminding settings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL-6fZxgMiA>

Social distancing for adults: information for adults about social distancing in ELC/SAC settings

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wI36iK8h24o>

Helping kids through it: a reminder to us all about supporting children's wellbeing at this time.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ObsiYS3o-fg>

Operating play-pods is key to keeping both children and staff in ELC and SAC settings safe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeNcNgV7m3w>

Fingal County Childcare Committee Child-Minding Information & Updates



The team at Fingal County Childcare Committee recognise that childminders play a central role in the provision of both early learning and care and school-age childcare in Fingal and are committed to supporting childminders. The Development team in Fingal CCC deliver professional development training, mentoring and information on quality practice.

If you are a childminder, thinking of becoming a childminder or require any support or advice in relation to your childminding service you can contact the development team at Fingal CCC by calling our main office on (01) 4851727 or the development officer in your area:

- Mairéad Tucker, Lead Development Officer Swords and Surrounding Areas Ph: 087 7477553
Email: mairead@fingalcountychildcare.ie
- Jacinta Cooke, Development Officer, Balbriggan and Surrounding Areas Ph: 087-7722228
Email jacinta@fingalcountychildcare.ie
- Eimear Furlong, Development Officer, Balbriggan and Surrounding Areas
Ph: 087-1884191 or email eimear@fingalcountychildcare.ie

- Nicola McKernan, Development Officer, Dublin 15, and Surrounding Areas Ph: 087 6025263
Email: nicola@fingalcountychildcare.ie

First 5

DCEDIY are constantly reviewing and updating the First5 website to ensure that the most up to date information is available to the Early Years & School Age sector.

<https://first5.gov.ie/guidance>



COSAINT LEANAÍ - NATIONAL CHILD SAFEGUARDING PROGRAMME – EARLY LEARNING AND CARE

www.childsafeguardelc.ie

As you are all aware there is an embargo on training for the foundation level Children’s First. If services are concerned that their certificate is out of date or will be over the coming weeks, a memo has been sent to all Early Years Inspectors informing them that in this present moment the certificates from the E-Learning module will suffice. If it has been 3 years or more since an employee has completed the E-Learning, then they are advised to complete it again.

The new website <http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/early-learning-care-services/> is a fantastic resource that we should be directing providers to for information and links to documents etc.

The National Child Safeguarding Programme; Early Learning and Care launched their website in October, please see below.

The National Child Safeguarding Programme; Early Learning and Care provides the only Tusla approved sector specific Child Safeguarding Programme in Ireland. Full of Early Learning and Care sector specific child safeguarding training and resources, which were developed in conjunction with Tusla, www.childsafeguardingelc.ie is a ‘one stop shop’ for all Child Safeguarding resources for Early Learning and Care Services in Ireland.

The website can be found at www.childsafeguardingelc.ie and on Twitter at @safeguardingelc

Children First Child Protection revision webinar

This webinar was developed to highlight the key elements of the face-to-face Always Children First Foundation training. Its purpose is to serve as an interim revision resource for Early Years practitioners.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aH_7yLe1ZPI&feature=youtu.be

CHILDREN FIRST REFRESHER RESOURCES

In the absence of a full training strategy from the National Child Safeguarding Programme due to current public health guidelines, there are a full range of Refresher online resources available on www.childsafeguardingelc.ie

- Staff in all services who haven't completed the Tusla eLearning Programme in the last 3 years to do so <https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/children-first-e-learning-programme/>
- Staff in all services can access the Children First Revision Webinar <http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/early-learning-care-services/>
- Staff in all services can access the Garda Vetting webinar <http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/early-learning-care-services/>
- Staff in all services can review and refresh their knowledge by accessing Info Blasts on various topics <http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/category/english/>
- Staff within ELC and SAC services can refresh their knowledge of their own organisation's Child Safeguarding Policy using the resources available at <http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/resources-publications/> and on Tulsa's website <https://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare/> ; [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Child_Safeguarding - A_Guide_for_Policy,_Procedure_and_Practice.pdf/](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_-_Child_Safeguarding_-_A_Guide_for_Policy,_Procedure_and_Practice.pdf/)

Early Learning and Care services are providers of Relevant Services under the Children First Act 2015.

Providers of Relevant Services under the Children First Act are required to have a Child Safeguarding Statement. *A key element of the Child Safeguarding Statement is the risk assessment.*

When completing a risk assessment, an Early Learning and Care service is required to examine all aspects of its service from a safeguarding perspective while children are availing of your service. The risk assessment should establish if there are any practices or features of your service that may potentially put a child at risk of harm.

Remember the risks identified should be in relation to the specific activities of the service with children. It is not in relation to general health and safety risks.

The Children First Act 2015 defines harm as:

Assault, ill-treatment, or neglect of the child in a manner that seriously affects or is likely to seriously affect the child's health, development, or welfare or

Sexual abuse of the child, whether caused by a single act, omission or circumstance or a series or combination of acts, omissions, or circumstances or otherwise.

The risk assessment process is intended to enable your organisation to:

- Identify potential risks.
- Develop policies and procedures to minimize risk by responding in a timely manner to potential risks.
- Review whether adequate precautions have been taken to eliminate or reduce these risks.

All risks that are identified and stated in the risk assessment MUST be accompanied by a list of policies and procedures that are in place to manage that risk. It is imperative that the risks outlined in your risk assessment are unique and individual to your service.

After the Child Safeguarding risk assessment has been completed, the areas of risk identified should be included in the body of Child Safeguarding Statement. The Child Safeguarding Statement should also outline the policies and procedures which are in place to manage the risks that have been identified.

The National Child Safeguarding Programme; Early Learning and Care have developed, in conjunction with Tusla, a Child Safeguarding Statement Template and Information Sheet which provides a detailed template and further information for completing a risk assessment within your Child Safeguarding Statement.

Further information can also be found at the following links:

<http://childsafeguardingelc.ie/resources-publications>

<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/organisations/what-is-a-risk-assessment/>

Online Briefing Sessions

Tusla Children First Information and Advice Officers have developed 2 online briefing sessions (outlined below) on the roles and responsibilities of mandated persons and roles and responsibilities of DLPs. These sessions will be delivered on MS Teams by the CFIAO (Children First Information and Advice Officers) and co-run by a number of CCC's including Fingal CCC.

Session Outlines

- **Online Briefing Session – Mandated Person Tuesday April 20th 3pm -4.30pm**

This session is aimed at **mandated persons in Early Learning and Care services**. The session explains the roles and responsibilities of mandated persons under the Children First Act, 2015, including understanding legal obligations and making reports to Tusla. Priority on this session should be given to mandated persons who may be new to their role or who require a refresher on the roles and responsibilities of mandated persons. This session is not open to SAC practitioners as they are not mandated persons under the Children First Act 2015.

- **Online Briefing Session – Designated Liaison Person (DLP) Thursday April 22nd 6.30pm - 8pm**

This session is aimed at those in the DLP or Deputy DLP roles in **ELC and SAC services**. This session will explore the roles and responsibilities of the DLP/DDLP. **THIS IS NOT DLP TRAINING. IT IS A BRIEFING SESSION ON THE RESPONSIBILITIES ASSOCIATED WITH THE ROLE OF DLP/DDLP.** This session is particularly aimed at those who may be new to the DLP or DDLP role and have been unable to access training since their appointment.

All participants on these sessions must have completed the Tusla Always Children First eLearning programme.

In order to participate in the above on-line briefing sessions, you will need to email info@fingalcountychildcare.ie with the following:

- DCYA Reference Number
- Name of Service
- Briefing session you would like to register for
- Name of Participant
- Email address of participant – the link to the session will be emailed to the participant by FCCC.
- Confirmation that the participant has completed the Tusla Always Children First eLearning programme.

Places are limited to 1 participant per service, if more places become available, we will keep services informed.

Barnardos Resources and Online Training Webinars

Barnardos have produced a free resource offering guidance on how to support children who are experiencing adversity during Covid-19.

‘Supporting Young Children Experiencing Adversity During Covid 19’

https://www.barnardos.ie/media/10658/barnardos-supporting-children-facing-adversity-during-covid-19.pdf?mc_cid=d750661d37&mc_eid=c039d3d848

Training Webinars

Barnardos have a number of new webinar dates for the coming months.

Making the Most of Supervision Webinar (2 ½ day event) 15th April

The aim of this course is to generate a positive relationship between supervisor and supervisee focusing on quality practice and, through this, to inspire and motivate staff in their work.

Book now https://www.barnardos.ie/learning-development/training/training-events-courses/2021/february/webinar-making-the-most-of-supervision-25-days-23rd-february-2021?mc_cid=3865ea4123&mc_eid=d8ebf3db74/

Zoom and Gloom

Prioritising Me Time in the Era of Screen Time



The Parenting Network, in partnership with Tusla, invites you to register for our upcoming 2-part webinar series, promoting the importance of self-care for practitioners who support parents and families.

Tuesday April 20th:

'Staying Well While Helping Others'

Dr. Hugh Kearns, University of Flinders / ThinkWell,
Adelaide

Tuesday April 27th

'Self-care & Well-being in Covid'

Anne McMurray, Anne McMurray Development, Belfast

Please ensure to register for **both** dates.

Both events run from 12pm to 1.30pm and in addition to guest speakers include Q&A, tips from fellow practitioners and ideas for building or bettering your self-care toolkit.

Please register through the below Eventbrite link, Registration closes on Friday 16th of April

Please contact Yvonne.Tuohy@tusla.ie if you have any queries/difficulty with registration.

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/zoom-and-gloom-prioritising-me-time-in-the-era-of-screen-time-tickets-148189688347>



FINGAL COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE – WEBSITE

FCCC website is updated daily with a broad range of information that is relevant to the early years and school age sectors in Fingal. Under LATEST NEWS you will find DCYA Updates, PIP Announcements, On-line Training, Information for parents and other topics that FCCC believes would be of interest to you, your staff, and your parents.

It is of particular importance is that providers regularly read and understand the most up to date FAQ's and PIP Announcements and if clarifications are required please contact FCCC at (01) 4851727 or contact a staff member from the list on Page 1 above.

