

Lenus: Research Repository



National standards for pre-school services

Item Type	Report
Authors	Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
Publisher	Department of Health and Children
Download date	2026-04-19 05:35:19
Link to Item	https://hdl.handle.net/10147/120905

Foreword to the National Standards for Pre-School Services

Introduction

The Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006, which provide the regulatory framework for pre-school services in the State, were made by Brian Lenihan T.D., the then Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and were brought into effect in September 2007.

A Child Care Regulations Implementation Group was established by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) to provide a forum for key stakeholders in the sector during the initial period when the new regulatory requirements were being implemented. Some of the key issues dealt with were the introduction of the requirement for Garda vetting of childcare workers and the introduction of a standardised inspection process for the Pre-School Inspectorate of the Health Service Executive (HSE).

In addition, following a request from the HSE, the Regulations Implementation Group agreed to include the development of National Quality Standards for Pre-School Services within its Terms of Reference. In January 2008, a Standards Working Group, chaired by the OMCYA, was established under the aegis of the Regulations Group. Its membership included representatives of the HSE, the City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs), the National Children's Nurseries Association (NCNA) and Childminding Ireland. The members of the Working Group are listed hereunder. This Standards document is the product of extensive discussions on the part of the Working Group members over the past two and a half years, as well as reflecting the views of primary stakeholders who were consulted during the process.

The Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) was consulted when the Standards Working Group was being established. The Authority, which takes a similar approach to implementing regulatory requirements through a quality-based approach to achieving better outcomes was supportive of the project. The National Quality Standards are intended to provide a clear and easy-to-use tool for Pre-School Inspectors, pre-school service providers and parents using pre-school services. The outcomes and the criteria have been designed to be easy to read and easy to understand, and to support providers to deliver a high quality service and support users in choosing the childcare service best suited to their needs.

In developing this document, a conscious effort was made to ensure that the Standards would encourage providers to deliver a higher level of quality than is strictly required under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations. However, rather than being problematic for service providers, the Standards should provide them with an effective tool which will enable them to achieve quality outcomes for children through encouraging a more holistic and reflective approach to service delivery.

The Standards

There are 20 Standards in all. This document relates primarily to full daycare services, although much of the content will apply equally to other service types. It is intended to publish separate Standards covering sessional services, drop-in services and childminding services in the near future.

The Standards are grouped under four headings:

The group of Standards relating to “**Choosing a Service**” is aimed at parents who are choosing a facility for their children, and contains the information they will need to come to an informed decision in relation to their choice.

The Standards relating to “**Management and Staffing**” are aimed primarily at service providers, and contain information relating to the running and ongoing evaluation of the service.

The Standards in the group “**Quality of Care**” relate to the manner in which the children in the service are cared for. These Standards relate to both the physical and the mental well-being of the children.

The Standards in the group “**Premises and Safety**” relate to the physical environment of the childcare facility.

Each Standard describes a particular quality outcome, and is accompanied by a set of supporting criteria designed to provide information as to how the outcome can be achieved. Some of the criteria refer to requirements under the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006 and service providers are obliged by law to meet these requirements. Other criteria are more flexible, and the service provider may choose to take a different route to that stated, in order to achieve the same outcome.

The Appendices

There are four Appendices to the Standards document.

Appendix A is a service set-up protocol, which is a useful set of steps that should be followed by service providers intending to alter or extend an existing pre-school building, change the use of a domestic setting or community building, or build a new service, to ensure the process goes smoothly.

Appendix B, which is referred to in Standard 14 (Sleep), contains the additional criteria which must be met when overnight services for pre-school children are provided.

Appendix C contains a list of policies, some of which are essential for all pre-school services (these are referred to specifically in the Standards) and others which may or not be applicable to services.

Appendix D contains a list of contact addresses and websites which service providers and users may find useful.

Implementation of the Standards

This document has been approved by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and forwarded to the Chief Executive Officer of the HSE, as the body with legal responsibility for enforcing the Child Care (Pre-School) (No 2) Regulations through its Pre-School Inspectorate. The HSE will determine the precise manner in which these Standards will be taken into account in the course of pre-school inspections.

Evaluation of the Standards

The Standards and the associated criteria will be kept under review, with a view to amending, adding to or subtracting from the document if experience demonstrates this to be necessary or appropriate.

Membership of the Working Group

Mary Hogan, OMCYA (Chair)
Carolyn Keating, OMCYA (Secretary)
Michele Clark (HIQA) – to June 2009
Mary Giblin, CCCs
Teresa Heeney, NCNA
Karen Mahony (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education) – to November 2008
Patricia Murray, Childminding Ireland
Fiona McDonnell, HSE (National Pre-school Resource Officer)
Helen Rouine, HSE (Pre-school Officer)
Ann Spain, HSE (Local Manager, Pre-school Services)
Caitriona Stack, HSE (Senior Environmental Health Officer, Pre-school Services)

National Standards for Pre-School Services
Full day care services

<u>Choosing a Service</u>		<u>Page</u>
1	Information	5
2	Contract	7
3	Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians	8
<u>Management and Staffing</u>		
4	Records	9
5	Organisation and Management	10
6	Evaluation	13
7	Complaints	14
<u>Quality of Care</u>		
8	Care, Play and Learning	15
9	Nurture and Well-Being	17
10	Behaviour	18
11	Child Protection	19
12	Health Care	20
13	Food and Drink	22
14	Sleep	24
15	Children with Disabilities	26
16	Equal Opportunities	27
<u>Premises and Safety</u>		
17	Premises	28
18	Facilities	30
19	Equipment and Materials	32
20	Safety	33
<u>Appendices</u>		
A	Pre-school service set-up protocol	34
B	Overnight pre-school services	36
C	List of Policies for Pre-School Services	38
D	Useful contact addresses and websites	39

Information

1

Outcome

Parents or guardians have sufficient information in order to make an informed choice about the childcare service that they require.

CRITERIA

- 1.1 Sufficient information is made available to parents or guardians to enable them to make an informed decision. This information should ideally be provided by way of an information pack or booklet.
- 1.2 The information for parents or guardians should, in relation to the service provided, include the following:
 - a statement of purpose and function that describes what the service sets out to provide;
 - the key policies and procedures of the service;
 - the numbers and ages of children for whom the service can care, as well as the adult:child ratios, opening hours, fees, and facilities available, including the daily routine;
 - how the special needs of individual children can be catered for;
 - details of the management structure, including the numbers of staff and their qualifications;
 - details of the activities provided for children;
 - details of the written contract between the service and the parents or guardians;
 - details of the records kept in respect of each child;
 - the arrangements for making complaints about the service and details of how complaints will be managed;
 - a copy of the National Childcare Standards, and
 - any other information that the service provider considers to be relevant or appropriate.

- 1.3 Prospective users of the service are afforded an opportunity to visit the service before deciding on whether to use it.

Contract

2

Outcome

Parents or guardians have a written contract with the service provider that has been agreed by both parties.

CRITERIA

- 2.1 The service provider has a written contract, agreed with the parents or guardians, which sets out the expectations of both parties in relation to the care of the child and to business arrangements.
- 2.2 The written contract should include the following:
 - Details of the persons authorised to collect the child;
 - the arrangements in case of the child becoming ill, including contact arrangements;
 - the arrangements in case of an emergency;
 - arrangements for the administration of medicines to the child;
 - details of the child's special requirements (if any), including dietary requirements;
 - details of the service's opening and closing times;
 - details of financial matters, including the policy in relation to deposits, fees, and late collection charges;
 - the arrangements for varying or ending the contract;
 - the arrangements for communication between the service provider and the parents or guardians, including communication of any changes in the service;
 - holiday closure arrangements; and
 - the agreement of the parents or guardians to the service's policies and procedures as set out in the information pack.

Working in Partnership with Parents or Guardians

3

Outcome

Parents or guardians are kept fully informed and involved as partners in their children's activities, achievements and progress.

CRITERIA

- 3.1 Staff develop and maintain a good working relationship with parents or guardians, encourage parental involvement, and respect the parents' or guardian's primary responsibility for the child.
- 3.2 Details concerning the child's activities during the day, and any event or change in their behaviour, are shared with the parents or guardians at the end of the day by the child's key worker.
- 3.3 Any issues or difficulties relating to an individual child are raised with the parents or guardians at an early stage to ensure the maintenance of good relationships.
- 3.4 Confidentiality in relation to children and their families is respected at all times (except where responsibilities arise under child protection procedures).
- 3.5 The wishes of parents or guardians in relation to children's participation in religious practices are respected.
- 3.6 Parents or guardians of children attending the service are free to visit the service at any time (insofar as is practicable).

Records

4

Outcome

A register containing particulars of each child attending the service, as well as a full range of records containing particulars relating to the service, is maintained in accordance with the Regulations.

CRITERIA

- 4.1 The service maintains a register showing details of each pre-school child attending the service, in accordance with Regulation 13.
- 4.2 The service maintains written records of information in relation to the service in accordance with Regulation 14.
- 4.3 Parents or guardians have access to all information and written records relating to the service in accordance with the Regulations.
- 4.4 Parents or guardians have access to all information and written records relating to their own child, except in cases where this would place the child's welfare at risk.
- 4.5 Records about individual children are retained in line with the requirements of the Data Protection Acts.
- 4.6 Records about individual children are kept secure and confidential.
- 4.7 All accidents, injuries and incidents involving a child, however minor, are recorded and are notified to the parents or guardians as soon as practicable following the event. The parents or guardians sign the record to acknowledge that they have been notified of the accident, injury or incident.
- 4.8 All records maintained under the Regulations are updated as required. Records are held within the service unless otherwise agreed with the Health Service Executive.

Organisation and Management

5

Outcome

Parents or guardians and children benefit from a well-organised and well-planned service.

CRITERIA

- 5.1 The service's management structure, reporting relationships, and individual roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and documented.
- 5.2 The service manager has the necessary experience, skills, attributes and competencies.
- 5.3 There is a designated person in charge at all times. Formal arrangements are in place for an individual to deputise in the absence of the designated person in charge. The person in charge at any time has all the knowledge and information required to manage the service.
- 5.4 Adults who are caring for the children possess the necessary experience, skills, attributes and competencies. All staff are recruited in accordance with the best human resource practices. An up-to-date and accurate personnel file is kept for each member of staff that includes the following records:
- proof of identity and that the person is over 18 years of age;
 - proof of satisfactory Garda vetting, and international vetting where required;
 - two validated references, including a reference from the most recent place of employment;
 - verification of qualifications, and
 - investigation of any gaps in employment.
- 5.5 The service provider must inform the Health Service Executive in writing of any change in the ownership or management of the service, in the structure of the premises, in the service provision and of any serious injury or death within the service.
- 5.6 At least 50% of the staff in the service who are caring for children have a qualification appropriate to the care and development of the pre-school child. All others should be working towards achieving one within an agreed timescale.
- 5.7 All trainees, volunteers and students are appropriately mentored and closely supervised at all times.
- 5.8 All staff commence induction training in relation to all the policies and procedures of the service during their first week of employment.

- 5.9 The key policies and procedures of the service are regularly reviewed and up-dated as necessary.
- 5.10 Each staff member receives regular supervision and support in relation to all areas of their work.
- 5.11 The support and training needs of staff are identified to encourage him or her to reflect on the quality of his or her practice.
- 5.12 Regular staff meetings take place, the details of which are recorded, to facilitate effective communication.
- 5.13 The on-going training needs of staff are identified, addressed and provided for on a regular basis. A record of all completed training and development is maintained.
- 5.14 There is a staff roster that indicates the staff who are on duty at all times. The roster demonstrates that there is sufficient cover for early arrivals, late collections, staff breaks, holidays, sick leave, school runs and kitchen duties, and contingency plans are in place for unscheduled staff absences.
- 5.15 A competent and suitable second adult must be available to cope with emergencies.
- 5.16 Adult:child ratios apply in respect of staff working directly with children. The service provider ensures that the required adult/child ratios are met. These are:

Full-time and part-time services

AGE RANGE	ADULT:CHILD RATIO
0-1 year	1:3
1-2 years	1:5
2-3 years	1:6
3-6 years	1:8

Sessional and drop-in services

AGE RANGE	ADULT:CHILD RATIO
0-1 year	1:3
1 - 2½ years	1:5
2½ - 6 years	1:10

The total number of childcare staff in the service, as opposed to the “per room” allocation, should be taken into account, once the immediate safety of the children is not compromised.

Additional staff and management resources are required to undertake management tasks, domestic tasks and other non-childcare work.

- 5.17 Volunteers or students cannot be taken into account for the purpose of complying with the adult:child ratio, except in the case of outings, or in the case of sessional services that operate a rota system for parents to meet the second adult requirement or to cover an emergency staff shortage situation.
- 5.18 The adult:child ratios for pre-school children are not compromised where the service also cares for school-age children.

Evaluation

6

Outcome

An on-going system of reflection and evaluation is in place to continually enhance outcomes for children.

CRITERIA

- 6.1 The manager continuously monitors the service, and supports staff, to:
- ensure that the individual needs of each child are met;
 - facilitate dialogue with parents or guardians;
 - identify strengths, and areas requiring improvement;
 - facilitate short-, medium- and long-term planning;
 - promote reflective practice;
 - ensure best practice in the recruitment, management and on-going professional development of staff; and
 - ensure continued compliance with the Regulations and all other relevant legislation.
- 6.2 The service has a systematic and regular approach to evaluation which involves the children, the staff, the parents/guardians, management and the wider community.
- 6.3 The results of the evaluation are recorded and shared with all participating parties.
- 6.4 The results of the evaluation are used for programme planning for individual children, and the evidence for this is available.
- 6.5 The service fosters effective links with relevant agencies or other supports to ensure access to advice, support and information in relation to developments in national guidelines and best practice.

Complaints

7

Outcome

Parents or guardians are satisfied that their complaints will be listened to, taken seriously and acted upon.

CRITERIA

7.1 The service:

- operates a simple, clear and accessible written complaints procedure;
- ensures that information is provided to the complainant about the complaints procedure;
- ensures that all complaints are dealt with efficiently and effectively, and in a sensitive and (insofar as possible) confidential manner;
- ensures that the complainant is given privacy when making a complaint, and
- ensures that neither the complainant nor any child is penalised in any way as a result of a complaint being made.

7.2 The service keeps an accurate and detailed record of all complaints, including the following information:

- the name of the complainant;
- the nature of the complaint;
- the date and time of the complaint;
- a record of the investigation;
- the outcome of the investigation, and
- the information given to the complainant regarding the outcome of the investigation.

Care, Play and Learning

8

Outcome

Children have the opportunity to engage in a range of activities and experiences that promote their learning and well-being and contribute to the Whole Child Perspective, which places the child at the centre and recognises that the child is an active participant in his or her development.

CRITERIA

- 8.1 The service meets children's individual needs and promotes their well-being. Activities and play opportunities, both indoor and outdoor, are provided to develop children's emotional, physical, social, intellectual, language and creative capabilities.
- 8.2 Sufficient, suitable toys and play materials, appropriate for their purpose, are available to provide stimulating activities and play opportunities for the children in all areas of play, learning and development. These are appropriate for the ages and individual developmental needs of children attending and promote cultural awareness and equal opportunities.
- 8.3 The environment encourages children to be confident and independent and to develop their self-esteem.
- 8.4 The building of positive relationships with children and with their parents or guardians is encouraged, to facilitate a good understanding of individual interests, needs and home circumstances.
- 8.5 Staff listen to and value what children say, talk to them about what they are doing and actively encourage children to explore their full potential.
- 8.6 Staff observe and record, as appropriate, what children do, and use their observations to plan the next steps for the children's play, learning and development.
- 8.7 Children have the opportunity to express their views, exercise choice and, where possible, influence the care programme.
- 8.8 Resources are organised so that they are easily accessible to children, and staff are appropriately deployed to support children's play and learning.
- 8.9 Children have the opportunity to choose activities, be active indoors and outdoors, and to rest if they need to.

- 8.10 The planned care programme is flexible and allows for the different developmental abilities and interests of individual children. It is progressed and reviewed as the children develop and learn.
- 8.11 The care programme provides opportunities for children to be aware of the broader social community and supports cultural diversity.
- 8.12 Children have daily opportunities to learn how to care for themselves and their surroundings.
- 8.13 The movement of children within the service should be promoted so that children do not spend long periods of time in the same area.

Nurture and Well-Being

9

Outcome

Each child is secure, happy and comfortable with his or her carers and in the environment.

CRITERIA

- 9.1 The service promotes the development of warm relationships, security, self-esteem and confidence in children.
- 9.2 Staff and children are relaxed and at ease with one another.
- 9.3 Staff maintain a nurturing approach to children at all times, demonstrating sensitivity, warmth and a positive regard for children and their families.
- 9.4 Children are listened to, communication is positive and eye contact is maintained. Staff respond appropriately to non-verbal cues.
- 9.5 Each child is assigned to a particular member of staff, or "key worker", and every effort is made to ensure consistency of care. The child's key worker is identified to the child's parents or guardians. The key worker has primary responsibility for the child's well-being on a daily basis, and ensures that information concerning the child is shared with the parents or guardians and the service provider.
- 9.6 Sibling interaction, mixed-age and small groupings are facilitated.
- 9.7 The dignity of children is preserved at all times, especially during personal care procedures (i.e. toileting, feeding, dressing, etc.).
- 9.8 Staff do not demonstrate favouritism towards any child.
- 9.9 Suitable seating is provided for staff to allow them to feed or comfort children in a safe and nurturing manner.

Behaviour

10

Outcome

Children receive positive guidance and encouragement towards acceptable behaviour, and are supported in finding positive solutions to problems.

CRITERIA

- 10.1 The service has a written policy on behaviour management that sets out the methods used to support children in managing their own behaviour. The policy is fully understood and implemented by all staff.
- 10.2 Parents or guardians are informed of the service's policy on behaviour management before the child is enrolled in the service.
- 10.3 The room layout and the play equipment and materials provided facilitate the engagement of the children.
- 10.4 In dealing with behaviour issues, staff are consistent and respect the maturity and level of understanding of the individual child.
- 10.5 Physical punishments are never used or threatened. Children are never shaken, smacked, humiliated, shouted at, intimidated or shamed.
- 10.6 Verbal or emotional punishments are never used. These include, for example, punishments that humiliate, frighten or threaten a child.
- 10.7 Children are never excluded, ignored, neglected or isolated.
- 10.8 Staff do not use any form of physical intervention, for example, holding, to manage a child's behaviour unless it is necessary in order to prevent injury to the child, to another child or to an adult, or serious damage to property. Any such incident is recorded and the parents or guardians are informed of the incident on the day.
- 10.9 A record is kept of any on-going behaviour issues displayed by a child. In cases where a particular child is involved in on-going or frequent incidents, the child's behaviour is reviewed with staff and with the child's parents or guardians, and an agreed plan put in place.

Child Protection

11

Outcome

Children are safely cared for within the service. Any concerns coming to the attention of the service which relate to the safety and welfare of those children, either within or outside the service, are responded to in accordance with Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children.

CRITERIA

- 11.1 All adults working in the service, and/or those who have access to children attending the service, have been appropriately vetted in accordance with Regulation 8.
- 11.2 A written child protection policy is in place, and all adults working and looking after children in the service have received induction training on the policy and are familiar with it.
- 11.3 The written child protection policy reflects the requirements of “*Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children*” and clearly outlines arrangements for contact with the local Health Services Executive Child Protection Team (including contact names and telephone numbers).
- 11.4 The policy and procedures clearly set out staff responsibilities for the reporting of suspected child abuse or neglect.
- 11.5 A designated senior member of staff, together with a deputy, has received “Keeping Safe” training in child protection, and is responsible for liaising with the relevant agencies in any child protection situation.
- 11.6 All staff are aware of:
- the vigilance required to remain alert to child protection and welfare needs;
 - the symptoms of children at risk of abuse;
 - their responsibility to report any concerns without delay;
 - their responsibility to report to the designated senior member of staff (or deputy) any other staff member behaving inappropriately towards a child; and
 - the requirement for confidentiality in all such cases.

Health Care

12

Outcome

The health care needs of each child are identified and addressed as appropriate.

CRITERIA

- 12.1 Information regarding each child's health care needs is sought from parents or guardians when the child is enrolled in the service, and written permission is obtained in relation to the seeking of any necessary emergency medical advice or the administration of emergency treatment.
- 12.2 The service has a policy concerning children and staff who are ill or infectious. Parents or guardians are informed of this policy when the child is enrolled in the service.
- 12.3 If the service provider has any concerns in relation to infectious and/or notifiable diseases, he or she should contact their General Practitioner or local HSE Department of Public Health.
- 12.4 The service has a policy, and clear procedures are in place, in relation to the administration of medication, both prescribed and non-prescribed, including the administration of an anti-febrile agent (i.e. temperature-reducing medication). This policy and the procedures are understood and implemented by all staff and are notified to parents or guardians when the child is enrolled in the service.
- 12.5 Every effort is made to contact the parents, guardians or other designated adults if the child becomes ill while attending the service.
- 12.6 Medicines requiring a prescription are not administered to a child unless a doctor has prescribed them for that child.
- 12.7 If the administration of prescribed medicines requires technical or other specialist knowledge, individual training, specific to the individual child concerned, is provided for staff.
- 12.8 All medicines are stored out of the reach of children.
- 12.9 All staff are informed and aware of the importance of good hygiene practice in order to prevent the spread of infection. Staff are informed of and kept up-to-date with hygiene procedures.

- 12.10 Staff promote and model good hand-washing practice at key times and throughout the day.
- 12.11 Parents or guardians are informed of any outbreaks of infectious disease in the service.
- 12.12 Children are encouraged to learn about personal hygiene through the daily routine.
- 12.13 If there are animals or pets on the premises, care is taken to ensure that the health, safety and welfare of the children is not put at risk.
- 12.14 There is a fully-equipped first-aid box on the premises, the contents of which are frequently checked and replaced, as necessary, by a designated member of staff. The first-aid box is readily accessible to staff but stored out of the reach of children. More than one first-aid box should be available in large premises. An additional first-aid box is brought on all outings.
- 12.15 There is always at least one member of staff on the premises who has up-to-date training in first-aid for children. Additional trained personnel are required depending on the size of the service. At least one such person is present on all outings.
- 12.16 There is no smoking on the premises.

Food and drink

13

Outcome

Children are provided with regular drinks and food in adequate quantities for their needs. Food and drink is properly prepared, nutritious and complies with dietary and religious requirements. Meal times are social occasions where children are relaxed and comfortable.

CRITERIA

- 13.1 Facilities are provided for children to sit comfortably and safely at meal times. Age-appropriate tables, chairs, crockery and cutlery are available, and safe and suitable chairs with harnesses are provided for babies.
- 13.2 Meal times are treated as social occasions and children are encouraged to feed themselves, if appropriate, in an unhurried manner. Children are supervised during mealtimes, and assisted as required.
- 13.3 Babies are held while being bottle-fed. Staff feeding very young children maintain eye contact and positive communication with the child throughout.
- 13.4 Children's food preferences are considered when menus are being planned.
- 13.5 Religious and cultural requirements, where specified by parents or guardians, are accommodated where possible.
- 13.6 The service obtains, records and acts upon information from parents or guardians about individual children's food allergies and dietary requirements.
- 13.7 Food is appropriate for the age and stage of development of each child.
- 13.8 Children must always wash their hands prior to meal times.
- 13.9 Table tops are cleaned before and after meal times.
- 13.10 Potable drinking water is available to children at all times.
- 13.11 A weekly menu plan is used to ensure variety from meal to meal and from day to day. Children should have a snack during the early part of the morning and again in the afternoon. A hot meal is provided in the middle of the day and an alternative, such as a nutritious sandwich, is available if a child will not eat the hot meal provided.
- 13.12 Food supplied by the service must be purchased from a supplier registered with one of the Health Service Executive's Environmental Health Departments or other official agency.

- Where food is delivered to the service by an outside catering company, it must be frozen / refrigerated and re-heated in a safe manner.
- Hot meals delivered to the service must be received at a safe temperature and served within two hours.
- Where meals are provided by the service, all food must be purchased, stored, prepared, cooked, re-heated and served in a safe manner so as not to pose a risk to a child.
- Services are encouraged to supply all the hot meals given to children attending the service. Where children bring in a pre-cooked meal to be re-heated, staff must ensure that any perishable foodstuffs are delivered, refrigerated and re-heated in a safe manner.

13.13 Any service that handles and prepares food for children must be registered as a food business with one of the Health Services Executive's Environmental Health Departments. The requirement to register does not apply where the service only refrigerates and serves packed lunches provided by the children's parents or guardians.

Sleep

14

Outcome

Each individual child's need for sleep or rest is facilitated.

CRITERIA

- 14.1 A 'safe sleep' policy is in place, including policy in relation to overnight services where applicable. Additional criteria to be met in relation to overnight services are shown in Appendix B of this document.
- 14.2 The service facilitates each child's individual need for sleep or rest and liaises with parents or guardians in relation to children's sleep patterns / needs. Children are allowed to sleep or rest when they are tired and not just at designated times.
- 14.3 Children are provided with suitable sleeping facilities away from the general play areas.
- 14.4 If the sleep area for babies is accommodated in the baby room, the overall space measurements of the baby room should be 4.2 square metres per child. (The accommodation of the babies' sleep area in the baby room should only be considered when the group size is six babies or fewer.) The sleep area should be away from other activities.
- 14.5 Where reasonably practicable, sleep rooms should have a viewing panel that allows resting or sleeping children to be within the sight of staff at all times.
- 14.6 Lighting via windows or light fixtures should be controlled to maintain a subdued lighting level conducive to sleep while also allowing sleeping children to be monitored.
- 14.7 Children under two years of age should have access to a standard cot. Children over two years of age should have access to sleep mats, stacking beds or suitable alternatives. Linen must not be shared – separate linen must be available for each child.
- 14.8 The temperature of sleep areas should be maintained at between 16°C and 20°C.
- 14.9 Cots, beds etc. should be positioned so that they are not directly adjacent to a heat source, curtains, window blinds or anything else that might pose a risk to the child.
- 14.10 Sufficient space must be allotted to each cot / bed to allow staff unhindered access to each child, and also to reduce the risk of infection.

- 14.11 A sleep log must be maintained for babies and children under two years of age to record the checks made on sleeping children. The log should record times, the person who checked the baby, and his or her signature. Checks should be made every 10 minutes.
- 14.12 A member of staff must be present in the sleep room at all times when the numbers of children sleeping warrant it, or where a particular safety risk is identified.
- 14.13 Sleep facilities must comply with fire safety requirements as set out by the relevant Local Authority.

Children with Disabilities

15

Outcome

The welfare and development of children with disabilities who are attending the service is promoted in partnership with the parents or guardians and other relevant parties.

CRITERIA

- 15.1 All standards apply to all children, including children with special needs.
- 15.2 The service and the parents or guardians work in partnership to enhance the child's experience of the service.
- 15.3 Children with special needs are cared for by staff who have the necessary information and skills to care for them appropriately.
- 15.4 Staffing arrangements and routines are designed to meet the needs of individual children who have special needs, and these arrangements and routines are regularly reviewed.
- 15.5 The physical environment is, insofar as is reasonably practicable, suitable for children with disabilities.
- 15.6 Children with special needs who are attending the service have the same access as other children, where practical, to the facilities, activities and play opportunities provided, in order to promote their welfare and development.
- 15.7 Parents or guardians are consulted in relation to the need for any interventions and/or equipment for the child.
- 15.8 Any programmes of care or interventions that have been devised by a health or education professional for a child with special needs who is attending the service are implemented, in consultation with the child's parents or guardians.

Equal Opportunities

16

Outcome

All children attending the service are treated with equal concern and respect.

CRITERIA

- 16.1 The service promotes positive attitudes to diversity and equality, and all instances of discrimination are appropriately addressed.
- 16.2 Children are encouraged to value and respect one another as individuals.
- 16.3 Regular reviews are carried out to ensure that the care programme, books, posters, toys and other materials positively and accurately reflect society and the children and families using the service.
- 16.4 Any statements or behaviour that are racist or sexist, or that reinforce stereotypes, or that are in any other way derogatory to an individual, are challenged.
- 16.5 Staff and parents or guardians work together to create an environment for children in which diversity is valued.

Premises

17

Outcome

The premises in which the facility is located are of sound and stable structure, are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose, and are welcoming to children and their families

CRITERIA

- 17.1 Careful consideration should be given to deciding on the location of a proposed pre-school service. The expert advice available from the Health Service Executive Pre-School Service, the City and County Childcare Committees, and National Support Agencies should be utilised as part of the decision-making process.
- 17.2 Requirements under planning, building control, fire safety, and health and safety legislation, as well as requirements under all other relevant legislation, are met.
- 17.3 The premises are safe, secure and suitable for their purpose, and adequate space is provided.
- 17.4 The premises are warm and welcoming to children and their families.
- 17.5 Play areas allow sufficient space for activities and scope for free movement. Babies have an uncluttered soft floor space on which to roll, crawl and move freely.
- 17.6 The rooms used in the premises are for the sole use of the childcare facility during the hours of operation.
- 17.7 The premises are maintained in a suitable state of repair and decoration.
- 17.8 The premises are clean and arrangements to maintain a clean environment are in place.
- 17.9 The premises are well-lit with adequate natural lighting, supplemented by artificial lighting. The premises are adequately ventilated.

- 17.10 The indoor playing space provides at least the following minimum per child:

Full time / Part-time services

<u>Age</u>	<u>Floor Area per Child</u>
0-1	3.50 square metres
1-2	2.80 square metres
2-3	2.35 square metres
3-6	2.30 square metres

Sessional services / Drop-in Centres

<u>Age</u>	<u>Floor Area per Child</u>
0-6	2.00 square metres

The space requirement for each age group refers to clear floor space per child, excluding extraneous areas such as kitchens, toilets, sleeping and other ancillary areas.

- 17.11 Continuous overcrowding in one area should be avoided. This does not apply to activities (e.g. concerts, parties, table-top exercises, etc.) where groups of children are brought together for short periods of time.
- 17.12 Children have access to outdoor play facilities. The service's own outdoor play space is safe, secure, well-maintained, and exclusively for the use of the children during operating hours. Where children use public playgrounds or parks, the service provider takes all reasonable steps to ensure the safety of the children.
- 17.13 Reasonable arrangements are in place to ensure that the premises are free from insects and other pests. These arrangements should include:
- Maintaining the building envelope (i.e. the external elements of the building) in a pest-proof condition;
 - Keeping external areas free from materials and waste that will attract and/or provide harborage for pests; and
 - Where applicable, the application of rodent bait and insecticides, or the setting of traps (either as a preventive or a reactive measure), in a manner which does not compromise the safety of children.

Facilities

18

OUTCOME

The facilities provided ensure the welfare and comfort of both children and staff.

CRITERIA

- 18.1 The design, layout and physical environment is conducive to meeting the needs of children. The flow of children and adults in the building should, in particular, ensure easy access to sanitary accommodation and outdoor play space.
- 18.2 All rooms are heated in order to ensure a comfortable temperature. Occupied rooms (except sleep rooms) should be heated to a temperature of between 18-22°C.
- A temperature gauge is provided in all occupied rooms for monitoring purposes;
 - All heat-emitting appliances are in good working order and are serviced regularly. Where the temperature of exposed surfaces which are accessible to children exceed 50°C, a fixed guard must be provided.
- 18.3 Adequate laundry arrangements are in place. Where laundry facilities are provided on-site, children are not allowed access. Laundry facilities must not be situated within the kitchen or food storage area.
- 18.4 A designated, segregated area for sluicing soiled garments should be provided.
- 18.5 Sanitary accommodation must allow for the safe supervision of children using the facilities. The requirements for sanitary facilities are as follows:
- 1 toilet and 1 wash hand basin for every 10 toilet-trained children.
 - Children's toilets and wash hand basins are of a suitable size for the age group catered for, or suitably adapted with hop-ups. Individual cubicles must be provided for privacy.
 - 1 toilet and 1 wash hand basin for every 8 staff members.
 - A wheelchair accessible toilet for children/staff with special needs. (This toilet may be included as part of the staff toilet ratios.)
 - 1 nappy changing unit for every 10 children in nappies.
 - Nappy changing facilities should be in close proximity to the baby / toddler room.

- An adult wash hand basin must be provided in the nappy changing area.
- All wash-hand basins have cold and hot running water. The hot water supply to children's wash-hand basins must be thermostatically-controlled to 43°C or lower.
- Liquid soap and a hygienic means of hand-drying must be available.
- A toilet / nappy changing area must not communicate directly with any occupied room or food room, except by means of a hall, corridor, ventilated lobby or ventilated space.
- A shower / bath / washing facility with thermostatically-controlled hot water is provided. A baby bath will suffice for this purpose.

18.6 A room or area - separate from the areas used by children and separate from the kitchen / food storage area – is available for staff to take breaks, hold staff meetings or meet with parents.

Equipment and Materials

19

Outcome

Children have access to furniture, equipment and toys that are developmentally appropriate, safe, and suitable for their needs.

CRITERIA

- 19.1 Furniture, equipment and toys are of suitable design and condition, in good repair, non-toxic and conform to recognised safety standards. They should be free from rough edges, sharp corners, pinch and crush points, splinters, exposed bolts or nails.
- 19.2 Furniture and equipment are durable and easily cleanable or are manufactured from washable fabrics. All such equipment is maintained in a clean and hygienic condition.
- 19.3 There are sufficient numbers of age-appropriate chairs and tables to allow flexible arrangements for groups of children to play and eat together.
- 19.4 Suitable seating must be provided for staff.
- 19.5 Low-level shelving is provided to ensure that play materials are accessible to children.
- 19.6 Appropriately-positioned storage space or coat hooks are available for children's personal belongings.
- 19.7 An adequate supply of clean bedding, towels, spare clothes, etc., is always available.
- 19.8 Where children use public playgrounds, the service provider ensures that they do not use faulty equipment.

Safety

20

Outcome

Children have their needs met in a safe environment.

CRITERIA

- 20.1 There is a positive health and safety culture within the setting, and all necessary precautions are taken to prevent accidents and incidents.
- 20.2 Children attending the service are supervised at all times.
- 20.3 Staff are familiar with relevant health and safety legislation.
- 20.4 A risk assessment in relation to hazards identified on the premises, both indoors and outdoors, is carried out. Where elimination of any identified hazard is not reasonably practicable, the risk from the hazard must be minimised to a safe level.
- 20.5 The risk assessment is periodically reviewed, with particular reference to the service's incident and accident records, and to any changes in the service or work practices.
- 20.6 The premises and outside play area are secure. Children cannot leave the premises unsupervised. A system is in place for managing access to the premises and a record of visitors is maintained. Unauthorised persons cannot access the premises or the outdoor play area.
- 20.7 The indoor and outdoor play areas should provide opportunities for challenge to facilitate the children's ability to learn about risk and their own capabilities within safe limits.
- 20.8 A written policy is in place in relation to the safe conduct of any outings, to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the participating children.

Pre-school service set-up protocol

Whether you intend to alter/extend an existing pre-school building, change the use of a domestic setting or community building, or build a new service, the following are the steps that you should follow to ensure the process goes smoothly:

1. Contact your local City or County Childcare Committee (CCC) to discuss the geographical need for pre-school services in the area where you intend to establish your service. The CCC is also available for support and can advise you about any funding that may be available.
2. Contact your local HSE Pre-school Service for advice or guidance concerning the plans for your facility. Consultation at an early stage is very beneficial both for prospective service providers and for the Pre-school inspection teams. Further discussions with the Pre-school inspection teams may be necessary during the planning/building process, and an advisory visit by the inspection team may be arranged if required.
3. Ensure you are familiar with the requirements of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No2) Regulations 2006.
4. Contact the Planning Department in your Local Authority to discuss your intentions. They will advise you on how to comply with the planning requirements.
5. Information on the design and layout of a pre-school service can be found on the Health Service Executive website www.hse.ie.
6. A guide to fire safety entitled "Fire Safety in Pre-schools" is available from the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, which contains useful information for both you and your designer.
7. When the plans for your facility have been drawn up, arrange a meeting with your Pre-school inspection team to discuss the layout of your proposed pre-school service.
8. It is your responsibility, and that of your architect/designer and builder, to ensure that all requirements under the Building Regulations are met.
9. Ensure that your plans are submitted to the Fire Officer in your Local Authority.

- 10.** You must notify the HSE Pre-school inspection team 28 days before you intend to open your service, using the Notification Schedule prescribed by the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006.

Overnight pre-school services

Under Regulation 4 of the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 an “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, except where the exemptions provided in Section 58 of the Child Care Act 1991 apply.

In addition to the National Standards for Pre-School Services, the following standards should apply in relation to overnight pre-school services:

1. Child Protection

There should be a written code of conduct / child protection policy specifically relating to overnight services that provides clear guidance for staff in relation to the physical contact considered appropriate for night time routines and when attending to the children’s hygiene needs. This policy should be made available to parents or guardians.

2. Care Policy

Details of the general night time care policy should be documented, including the following:

- Information regarding television or video viewing
- How children’s privacy is respected in relation to personal hygiene, bathing, showering, dressing/undressing and sleeping location in relation to other children or staff
- The arrangements in relation to emergency contacts. (It is recommended that details of two separate contacts are supplied by the parents or guardians.)
- How behaviour is managed when a child fails to settle to sleep or becomes distressed, including procedures regarding bed-wetting, nightmares or general distress
- How sleeping children are monitored
- How children can access a member of staff during the night if needed

3. Sleep Facilities

The sleeping area for overnight care should be separate to play/recreation/living areas

Each child should be provided with a separate and comfortable bed (or cot for under 2's). Bunk beds are not deemed safe for children aged under 8 years.

In general, children aged 6 years and over should sleep in same-gender rooms. However, where the overnight service is catering for more than one child from the same family, the parents or guardians can be consulted as to their preference in this regard.

4. Adult:Child Ratio

The recommended adult:child ratios for overnight services are:

<u>Age</u>	<u>Adult:Child Ratio</u>
0-1 year	1:3
1-6 years	1:5

At least one member of staff should be awake and actively supervising and checking on the children at all times.

5. General

The provider should work closely with parents or guardians in relation to children's needs before, during and after sleep.

The service's insurance policy should provide cover for overnight services.

Separate sleeping accommodation should be provided for staff.

All doors and windows should be appropriately locked, taking fire safety considerations into account. The security system should be working.

Advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified person regarding fire safety in overnight services.

Children should have access to a telephone.

List of policies for pre-school services

The following is a list of policies that may be required by a pre-school service. Some of them are key policies which all services should have. Service providers should examine the list and choose any other policies that may be appropriate to their particular service

Policy relating to:

- Accidents and Incidents
- Administration of Medication
- Admissions
- Arrival and departure
- Audio-visual equipment, use of
- Bullying
- Child Protection
- Children with additional special needs
- Cleaning
- Complaints
- Confidentiality
- Data protection
- Equal Opportunities
- Fees
- Fire evacuation
- Infection control
- Handwashing
- Healthy Eating
- Health and Safety
- Linking with the community
- Nappy changing and toileting
- Outdoor play
- Outings
- Overnight services
- Pest control
- Pets
- Positive behaviour management
- Risk assessment
- Settling-in
- Sickness
- Sleep and rest
- Staff absences
- Staff training
- Students / Volunteers
- Transport
- Working in partnership with parents / guardians

Useful Contact Addresses and Websites**Organisation****Website**

Department of Health and Children

www.dohc.ie

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

www.omcya.ie

Health Service Executive

www.hse.ieDepartment of the Environment, Heritage and
Local Governmentwww.environ.ie

Food Safety Authority of Ireland

www.fsai.ie

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents

www.rosipa.com

Health and Safety Authority

www.hsa.ie

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Innovation

www.deti.ie**Voluntary Childcare Organisations and other relevant organisations**

Barnardos

www.barnardos.ie

Childminding Ireland

www.childminding.ie

Children in Hospital Ireland

www.childreninhospital.ie

Forbairt Naíonraí Teo

www.naionrai.ie

IPPA, the Early Childhood Organisation

www.ippa.ieIrish Society for the Prevention of
Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)www.ispcc.ie

Irish Steiner Waldorf

www.steinerireland.org

National Children's Nurseries Association

www.ncna.ie

St Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland

www.montessoriireland.ie**City and County Childcare Committees:**

Carlow

www.carlowchildcare.com

Cavan

www.cavanccc.ie

Clare

www.clarechildcare.ie

Cork City

www.corkcitychildcare.ie

Cork County	www.corkchildcare.ie
Donegal	www.donegalchildcare.com
Dublin City	www.childcareonline.ie
Dun Laoghaire Rathdown	www.dlrcountychildcare.ie
Fingal	www.fingalcountychildcare.ie
Galway	www.galwaychildcare.com
Kerry	www.kerrycountychildcare.com
Kildare	www.kildarechildcare.ie
Kilkenny	www.kkccc.ie
Laois	www.laoischildcare.ie
Leitrim	www.leitrimchildcare.ie
Limerick City	www.limerickcitychildcare.ie
Limerick County	www.clcc.ie
Longford	www.longfordchildcare.ie
Louth	www.louthchildcare.ie
Mayo	www.mayochildcare.ie
Meath	www.community.meath.ie
Monaghan	www.monaghanchildcare.ie
North Tipperary	www.northtipperarychildcare.ie
Offaly	www.offalychildcare.com
Roscommon	www.roscommonchildcare.ie
Sligo	www.sligochildcare.ie
South Dublin	www.southdublinchildcare.ie
South Tipperary	www.southtippchildcare.ie
Waterford City	www.waterfordcitychildcare.com
Waterford County	www.waterfordcoco.ie
Westmeath	www.westmeathchildcare.ie
Wexford	www.wexfordchildcare.ie
Wicklow	www.wicklowcountychildcare.ie

HSE PRE-SCHOOL OFFICERS

Carlow

Pre-school Officer, Community Care Centre, James Green, Kilkenny Tel 056-7784602

Cavan

Pre-school Officer, Local Health Office, Rooskey, Monaghan Tel 046-30400

Cavan West

Pre-school Services, Markievicz House, Sligo Tel 071 9155100

Clare

Pre-school Inspection & Information Services, River House, Gort Road, Ennis
Tel 065-6863902 Fax 065-6863983

Cork

Pre-school Office, Abbeycourt House, Georges Quay, Cork Tel 021-4923884

North Lee, Pre-school Inspection Team, Abbeycourt House, George's Quay
Tel 021-4923826

South Lee, Pre-school Inspection Team, Abbeycourt House, George's
Quay Tel 021-4923975

North Cork, Pre-school Inspection Team, Gouldshill House, Mallow Tel 022 -
30200

West Cork, Pre-school Inspection Team, Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen Tel 028
40490

Donegal

Pre-school Services, County Clinic, St Conal's Hospital, Letterkenny Tel 074-
9123669

Dublin

Dun Laoghaire, Pre-school officer, Loughlinstown Health Centre,
Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown Tel 01-2822122

Dublin South East and Dublin South West Pre-school Officer, The Maltings
Business Park, 54-55 Marrowbone Lane, Dublin 8 Tel 01 4544733

Dublin South West and West, Pre-school officer, Cherry Orchard Hospital,
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10 Tel 01 6206323

Dublin North West and North Central, Pre-school Officer, Rathdown Road,
Dublin 7 Tel 01-8825164

Dublin North, Pre-school Officer, The Cottage, 2 Church Road, Swords Tel
01-8402835

Galway

Galway Early Child Care Services, 8B Liosbán Industrial Estate, Tuam Road
Tel 091-771928

Kerry

Kerry Pre-school Inspection Team, 19 Derry Street, Tralee, Co. Kerry Tel 066
7184911

Kildare

Kildare Pre-school Officer, Poplar House, Poplar Square, Naas Tel 045-
873241

Kilkenny

Kilkenny Pre-School Officer, Community Care Centre, James Green, Kilkenny
Tel 056-7784602

Leitrim

Leitrim Pre-School Services, Markievicz House, Sligo Tel 071 9155100

Limerick

Limerick Pre-School Inspection & Information Services, 87 O'Connell Street,
Tel 061-483591

Laois

Laois Pre-School Services, Burlington Business Park, Tullamore, Co Offaly
Tel 057-9370631

Longford

Longford Pre-School Services, Marlinstown Business Park, Mullingar, Co.
Westmeath Tel 044-9336070

Louth

Louth Pre-School Officer, The Ramparts, Dundalk, Co. Louth Tel 042
9389625 09:30am - 01:00pm Monday – Wednesday Tel 0429389625
09:30am - 12:00pm Thursday

In the afternoon please contact 042 9389622

Mayo

Mayo Early Child Care Services, Mill Lane, Bridge Street, Castlebar, Co.
Mayo Tel 094-9034776

Meath

Meath Pre-School Officer, Family Resource Centre, Commons Road, Navan
Tel 046-9074431

Monaghan

Monaghan Pre-school Officer, Local Health Office, Rooskey, Monaghan Tel
046-30400

Offaly

Offaly Pre-School Services, Burlington Business Park, Tullamore, Co. Offaly
Tel 057-9370631

Roscommon

Roscommon Early Child Care Services, Abbeytown House, Abbey Street,
Roscommon Tel 09066-26732

Sligo

Sligo Pre-School Services, Markievicz House, Sligo Tel 071 9155100

Tipperary

Tipperary North Pre-School Inspection & Information Services, Annbrook,
Limerick Road, Nenagh Tel 067-38308

Tipperary South Pre-School Officer, 34 Queen Street, Clonmel Tel 052-70931

Waterford

Waterford Pre-School Officer, Community Care Centre, Cork Road Tel 051-842897

Westmeath

Westmeath Pre-School Services Office, Marlinstown Business Park, Mullingar, Co.Westmeath Tel 044-9336070

Wexford

Wexford Pre-School Officer, Local Health Office, Georges Street, Wexford Town Tel 053-9123522

Wicklow

Wicklow East Pre-School Officer, Loughlinstown Health Centre, Loughlinstown Drive, Loughlinstown Co. Dublin Tel 01-2822122 01 - 2821594

Wicklow West Pre-school Officer, Poplar House, Poplar Square, Naas, Co Kildare Tel 045-873241