



## Introduction to Early Years Newsletter

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the first edition of the Early Years Newsletter.

We have developed this newsletter with the aim of adding to and improving our communication with you, the registered provider, and all staff working in your early year's service. It provides us as the regulator of early year's services with an additional opportunity to inform and alert you to areas of interest on current and new developments regarding the regulations and inspections.

We hope it will also be a vehicle for you to ask us questions and to request clarification on any issues you would like addressed. As you are aware we have a wealth of information on our Tusla webpage's at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie) and you can follow the links for the early year's inspectorate. Examples of the kind of information on our webpages include:

A question and answer document on the regulations which details numerous questions previously asked by you seeking clarification.

The different assessment tools and inspection report templates. The assessment tools sets out each of the areas that will be assessed on inspection to assist you in being prepared and knowing what to expect on the inspection.

Many supporting documents and information such as information on Garda vetting, and information on our Consultative Forum its aims, objectives & membership.

The newsletter which will issue a number of times each year will cover topics of interest submitted by you and information we want to communicate to you.

We are aware that the sector is committed to providing high quality services within a culture of learning and service improvement. As regulator, we play an important role to assure the State and ultimately parents that registered services operate in accordance with best practice and the highest standards. Our findings from inspections identifies that the majority of registered providers are compliant with the majority of regulations. This assures the State that children are safe and well cared for within early year's provision.

Thank you for your co operation and engagement with the inspectorate since its commencement. We are satisfied that the majority of services that we have engaged with have worked to rectify the non compliances found on inspection and have assured us that they are committed to leading safe and quality driven early years services. As with all regulatory systems we have had to escalate some issues to ensure a more immediate and sustaining response to areas of concern.

We have included a section on the Quality and Regulatory Framework which will address the questions recently raised to us. Helen Rouine, our Quality and Improvement Manager for the Inspectorate has led the development of the framework. We are now ready to undertake the external consultation which will commence the end of this month. I want to assure you that we have taken the necessary time in its development and we will be taking the necessary time in its implementation.

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs is supporting the framework by developing the necessary support structures before its implementation.

Thank you for taking the time to reading our first newsletter and I look forward to enhancing and developing our relationships as we work together to support children and families.

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## Infection Control

### Conjunctivitis.

#### What is it?

Conjunctivitis is an inflammation of the outer lining of the eye and eyelid.

#### What is the cause?

Most commonly caused by organisms such as bacteria, viruses, or may be due to an allergy (as in hay fever).

#### What are the symptoms?

A sore or itchy red eye with a watery or sticky discharge

#### What is the treatment?

Treatment depends on the cause but is often by eye drops or ointment. Conjunctivitis caused by viral infection or allergies do not respond to antibiotics.

#### Precautions:

Regular hand washing will prevent person to person transmission.

#### What is the recommended period to be kept away from the early year's service?

There is no required recommended period that a child with conjunctivitis should be excluded from a crèche. Exclusion is not generally indicated. (However in circumstances where spread within the nursery is evident or likely to occur (e.g. in the baby room), it may be necessary to recommend exclusion of affected children until they recover, or in the case of bacterial conjunctivitis until they have had antibiotics for 48 hours). Where a child has attended a medical practitioner with conjunctivitis, the medical practitioner will advise as to whether the child is fit to attend the early year's service.

#### What do I do if a number of children in my service have conjunctivitis?

Prevent the spread of infections by ensuring high standards of personal hygiene and practice, particularly hand washing, and maintaining a clean environment.

If an outbreak/cluster occurs, the crèche should consult with their local Public Health Department.

**Hand washing** is one of the most important ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, especially those that cause diarrhoea and vomiting, and respiratory illness. The best method is to use liquid soap, warm water and disposable towels. Always wash hands after using the toilet, before eating or handling food, before and after nappy changing and after handling animals. Cover all cuts and abrasions with waterproof dressings. Display a hand washing message/technique poster by hand washing areas.

For further information and contact details for your local Public Health Department refer to Management of Infectious Disease in Childcare Facilities and Other Childcare Settings available at <http://www.hpsc.ie/a-z/lifestages/childcare/File.13444.en.pdf>



## Q & A Section

### Childminders

#### **Q. How many children can a registered child minder care for?**

A: A childminder can care for no more than five preschool children in his/her home at any given time. This includes the childminders own preschool children, unless the exceptions for childminders apply. No more than two of the five preschool children can be under the age of fifteen months (except where the children are siblings) including the childminders own children.

#### **Q. What are the exemptions in relation to childminders?**

A: The exemptions from provision of Part 12 of the Child and Family Agency Act 2013 are set down under 58L as follows:

1. The care of one or more children undertaken by a relative of the child or children or the spouse of such relative.
2. A person taking care of one or more children of the same family and no other such children (other than the persons own such children) in their own home.
3. A person taking care of no more than three children of different families (other than that person's own preschool children) in that person's home.

## Quality & Regulatory Framework (QRF):

#### **What is the purpose of the Quality and Regulatory Framework?**

It is a document that sets out in a clear and transparent manner the parameters under which the early years inspectorate will assess services for compliance with the regulations.

Each regulation documented is accompanied by a detailed interpretation of the regulations.

This interpretation brings together evidence-based, national and international research and best practice in early years' services which is the benchmark for assessment of compliance.

#### **How will this QRF assist services?**

It will assist services to comply with the relevant regulatory requirements and in doing so demonstrate the quality and safety of service provision provided to early years children.

The document is child-centred with a specific focus on the quality and safety of the care and protection provided to children, on their developmental journey within early years education and care settings.

#### **How is the QRF structured?**

The QRF describes four Key areas:

1. Governance
2. Health, welfare and development of the Child
3. Safety
4. Premises and Facilities.

The regulations applicable to each area are grouped together under each of the four areas.

Where the scope of the regulation is particularly broad, regulations may be divided up into sub-elements.

The intent of each regulation is described and the evidence of regulatory compliance for each regulation is set out.

#### **How is compliance with the 2016 regulations determined?**

Compliance is determined by an assessment of the amalgamated evidence under the four key areas to es-

## Quality & Regulatory Framework (QRF): (Continued)

establish whether:

- The service is well governed.
- The health, welfare and development of each child is supported.
- Children are safe in the service.
- The premises are safe, suitable and appropriate for the care and education of children.

### **When will the sector have an opportunity to consult on the QRF?**

A preliminary consultation on a draft of the QRF with stakeholders took place from January to March 2017 and extensive feedback was received as to:

- How the document should be structured, and formatted.
- The required content
- The required language
- Supporting documents required such as policy guidance and templates
- Identification of training and funding supports

Since March 2017 the Inspectorate have been refining and developing the document further and the revised draft version will be available for consultation with all early years' services in late November 2017.

### **What are the next steps?**

The revised draft will be available on the Tusla website in December 2017 for consultation with the sector.

A draft of the QRF by service type will be available as follows:

- Full Day and Part Time day care
- Childminding
- Sessional
- Drop in & Temporary services

All early years services will be alerted by email when the consultation opens later this month.

We welcome your feedback on the draft QRF and look forward to your participation.

### **When will the QRF be published?**

The Final document will be published when:

- All the feedback has been considered and the QRF finally amended
- The structure and design of the document will then be finalised

The target date is March/April 2018

### **What happens after publication?**

Information sessions from Tusla & training from the support organisations will be scheduled on the published version of the QRF and any accompanying supporting documents such as policy guidance and templates.

### **When will the QRF be implemented?**

At this time no set date has been agreed for implantation of the QRF.

When a date has been agreed it will be advised well in advance to each registered provider, early years services and the sector.

Please visit our website for more information at <http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/pre-school-services/>

If you have anything that you would like included in our next newsletter, please contact the Early