

September 1st 2020

Re: Inspections in Early Years Services and available support

Dear Provider,

I hope you and your team are well as you progress with the reopening of your service.

As you are aware, to assist registered providers, we have developed guidance which aligns with HSE Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) advice on the safe re-opening and operation of early years services during the COVID-19 period. It is important that you monitor the guidance as it can change in accordance with public health advice. The documents are available for you on our website; <https://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/pre-school-services/>. In addition, we have set up an advice line to support you with your regulatory compliance queries. The advice line team are available to take your call between 9 am to 5 pm Monday to Friday. Contact details are available on the above link.

The Early Years Inspectorate is mandated to ensure compliance with the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, as amended. As such, we recommenced inspections in July. The inspection process has been amended in line with public health guidance regarding infection prevention and control. Full information on the revised inspection process is available on our website; [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/protocol_\(Version_2-16_07_20\).pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/protocol_(Version_2-16_07_20).pdf). We will be reviewing the inspection format over the coming weeks and will revert to you if we make any changes.

In the event a child or staff member testing positive with COVID-19 the first action for you take is to work with your local public health team and follow their guidance. Guidance on actions to be taken with suspected/confirmed cases in your service is set out in the HPSC's "Infection Prevention and Control guidance for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic" available here - [Childcare Guidance - Health Protection Surveillance Centre](#). In accordance with Regulation 31 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016, you are required to notify the Inspectorate within three days of an incidence of COVID 19 in your service. The local Tusla Early Years inspector will liaise with you following receipt of your notification and outline the documents to be submitted, see attached. The COVID-19 notification form is available on our website [https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Early_Years_Inspectorate_COVID-19_Notification_Form_\(Version_2-16_07_20\).pdf](https://www.tusla.ie/uploads/content/Tusla_Early_Years_Inspectorate_COVID-19_Notification_Form_(Version_2-16_07_20).pdf)

For your convenience, I attach a one-page guidance outlining the steps to take in the event of a suspect or a positive case of COVID-19.

Yours sincerely,



Eibhlin O'Leary

Head of Inspection and Assessment

Children's Service Regulation

Guidance in the Event of a Staff Member / Child being Suspected of COVID- 19

1. If you have any concerns regarding a suspect case you should follow the steps laid out by HPSC

[Childcare Guidance - Health Protection Surveillance Centre](#)

Guidance in the Event of a Staff Member / Child being Confirmed with COVID- 19

1. Work with public health, HSE and follow the guidance regarding the identification of all children and staff that were in close contact with the pod or room affected and actions and precautions to be taken.
2. Submit notification form to Tusla Early Years Inspectorate; and gather the following documentation for submission to the Inspectorate. An early years inspector will make contact with you to discuss the next steps in relation to regulatory compliance.

Staffing
Staff roster for the full week (to include allocation of staff to rooms and cover for breaks)
Policies and procedures and records
Completed self-assessment checklist
Infection control policy revised in line with HPSC guidance (including the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cleaning schedules, • Protocol in relation to mouthed toys, • Infection control measures where cots are shared.
Risk management policy
Incident plan
Procedure for handwashing
Procedure for drop off and collection
Procedure for cleaning & infection control
Training

Evidence of staff training on the policies and procedures as outlined above
Communication with parents
Information pack or similar provided to parents (including the following): <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Revised infection control policy• Procedures for dropping off and picking up children• Guidance on none attendance if symptomatic