



## A Word From the Manager

Welcome to the 2nd edition of our 2014 newsletter. This edition is packed full of relevant and useful articles to support childcare providers in their day to day practice. An area that was arising for providers during our Quality Outreach visits was developing strong relationships with parents and we have included an article on communicating sensitively with parents by following some simple strategies and included a recommended reading list.

The new National Standards for Childcare Service due to be announced next month and the impending move from notification to registration of childcare services by the HSE rightly identify parental involvement and collaborative relationships as a key indicator in the provision of Quality indicators. Under the pre-school regulations parents are entitled to certain information and KCCC would recommend that this is provided as part of a parents pack.

In October 2013, the Childminding Advisor for Kildare was redeployed within the HSE. KCCC are waiting some national direction on our role and responsibilities in relation to Childminders in the County but in the interim we will

be delivering a Quality Awareness Programme in Newbridge on 7th June. Please refer to our website for further supports we can offer to Childminders.

Enquiring Minds in Clane received a number of wards for their excellent float in the Clane St. Patrick's day parade and have sent us an excellent article on the place of children in their community. Well done to all at Enquiring Minds, children, staff and parents.

The National Policy framework for children and young children, Better Outcomes: Brighter Futures was launched on 16th April in Dublin Castle by Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Frances Fitzgerald, An Taoiseach Enda Kenny and An Tanaiste Eamonn Gilmore. In their addresses they referred to the Minister Fitzgerald being a champion for children and holding the first senior ministry for children in the



history of the state. Since the establishment of the Department there has been a children's rights referendum, the establishment of the Child and Family Agency - TULSA and the universal pre-school year has been protected. The National Early Years Strategy will follow in the coming months.

*Pictured Above:* Gretta Murphy, Kilkenny Childcare Committee, Julie McNamara Kildare County Childcare Committee, Rose Murphy Waterford Childcare Committee, Karen O'Sullivan, Cork County Childcare Committee, Minister Frances Fitzgerald, Kathryn O'Riordan, Cork City Childcare Committee and Sharon Boles, Sligo Childcare Committee at the launch.



*Our Manager, Julie McNamara has put herself forward as a candidate in the upcoming local elections to be held on 23<sup>rd</sup> May in the Maynooth Electoral Area. The staff and Board of Directors of KCCC would like to wish Julie the very best in her campaign. Julie will be taking some leave for the month of May to concentrate on the elections and our Office Manager Alison Kelly will be acting Manager in her absence.*

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# Communicating Sensitive Issues with Parents

Communication between early childhood providers and parents is a vital element of a high quality early childhood programme. Even if you have a strong bond and open relationship with parents, sharing the care of their young child can often stir up strong feelings. Many things that childcare providers and parents will need to talk about are very sensitive issues. These issues may be related to the child such as behaviour, health problems, developmental concerns, toilet training, nutrition and biting or the parents such as late pick-ups, not following policy and procedures of the setting, child protection concerns or fee payments.

Avoiding or putting off conversations on sensitive issues is not an option – these issues will usually not go away by themselves and if you leave a problem to escalate they will be more difficult to communicate openly and repair at a later stage. Communication is not always easy but by following some simple strategies you can improve your communication skills with parents and manage those difficult situations more sensitively.

## Preparation

**Create time and space.** Schedule a comfortable meeting space and time so you can focus on the conversation without interruptions or rushing.

**Be prepared.** Plan your message in advance, use assessment information to support your discussion and add professional knowledge about the nature of the problem. List the points you wish to discuss. Think about: different wording, possible responses and tone of voice. Prepare solutions to brainstorm with parents. Practice in front of a mirror or colleague. Tell parents the meeting topic so that they can prepare too and allow time to work through any fear, shock and anger they may experience.

**Notice how you are feeling.** Our feelings can be strong on an issue and can impact on the way we communicate. If you are feeling angry, distressed, uncomfortable or unprepared, politely reschedule the meeting. Strong emotions may result in panic and saying something we regret later.

**Confirm confidentiality.** Make sure that parents know that the conversation is private, why you may be requesting information, how it will be used, recorded and stored.

## Speaking and Listening

**Be clear.** Keep your message brief, stick to the topic and avoid unnecessary details that may cause confusion. An important message can disappear in an abundance of words. Give accurate information on what you observe by describing what you see and hear. If you didn't observe a problem yourself, say so. Explain exactly what the issue is and why it may be a concern.

**Avoid using labels and technical terms.** It can be frightening for parents to hear that there may be a concern with their child's development or behaviour and technical terms can raise that level of fear unnecessarily. Also remember as an early educator, you are not an expert on such issues and it is not your job to identify a specific disability or developmental delay.

**Listen, listen, and listen.** Sometimes all people just wish to be heard. Stop what you are doing and face the parent when they are talking. A simple nod or "uh huh" occasionally can communicate to parents that they are being listened to attentively. Listen carefully and try to understand the others point of view. If it is not a good time to listen attentively, be honest with parents and arrange to talk another time so that you can focus on their concerns. Let parents know that you are listening by re-stating what they have said and how they are feeling.

**Watch body language.** The acronym SOLER can help you pay attention to your body language to support effective communication.

Sitting straight conveys "I am here with you."

Open posture conveys openness to listen to what the speaker has to say.

Lean forward conveys an interest in the speaker's words.

Eye contact maintained without staring indicates interest and reassurance to the speaker.

Relaxed posture puts the speaker at ease.

**Use "I" messages.** The "I" message involves talking about how you are feeling about a situation as opposed to what you want a parent to do or reflecting blame. First, describe the situation factually, then how you feel about it and then why you feel that way.

**Ask open-ended questions** to gain additional infor-



mation if you need it. This will encourage parents to expand on “yes” and “no” answers.

**Clarify confusing statements.** If you feel you are not getting or projecting a clear message, clarify, e.g. “did you mean.....?” Or, summarise what has been said to check understanding.

**Be patient.** Parents may take time to find the right words to express themselves. Allowing both yourself and parents time to respond will help you avoid using inappropriate words or responses that may cause upset.

### Partner with Parents

**Ask for the parent’s perspective.** Clarify the parent’s feelings and beliefs on an issue. Do this to learn and not to pass judgement. Ask if they experience similar issues at home and how they respond.

**Take concerns seriously.** After listening, show that concerns are taken seriously and explain how they will be addressed. If it is not possible to accommodate parents’ concerns the way they would like due to policy, procedures and regulation, explain this compassionately and brainstorm with parents a workable

solution.

**Emphasise the positive.** If you only talk with parents about their child’s difficulties you may build a stressful communicative relationship and add to parents possible feelings of guilt and frustration. Maintain balance by also taking about the positives. Even when it comes to speaking about a sensitive situation, focusing on the positives will help keep conversation moving and encourage parents to work with you in finding a solution.

**Be open to parent’s suggestions.** Parents may have really good ideas for moving forward. Seriously, consider parents ideas and how they may work. If suggestions are not appropriate, look for a place to compromise. What can both of you agree on and work on? What are the pros and cons of different ideas?

### Make a plan and keep lines of communication open.

Decide individual responsibilities in trying the solution. Decide how to communicate and record progress. Set a time to talk again to see if the plan is working.

**Thank parents for communicating and sharing their feelings.** It is important to show enthusiasm for any attempts that parents make to communicate with you in helping their child. Show an interest in the parent’s welfare as well as the child. Acknowledge feelings, perspectives and the contribution the parents have made.

**Check in!!** Do not forget to check in with parents and see how things are going. Do not wait for parents to bring up concerns or advise on progress. It is up to you to continue to support children and parents by encouraging ongoing communication.



### Sources:

<https://raisingchildren.net.au/articles/communicating-with-parents-the-basics.html/context/531>  
<http://www.zerotothree.org/early-care-education/family-friend-neighbor-care/effective-communication-with-parents.html>  
<http://www.ianrpubs.unl.edu/sendIt/g2005.pdf>  
<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/providerparent/parent-provider%20relationships/communicatingsensitively.htm>

### Recommended Reading:

Effective communication between families and early childhood staff, KidsMatter, Early Childhood [www.kidsmatter.edu.au](http://www.kidsmatter.edu.au)  
<https://www.extension.purdue.edu/providerparent/parent-provider%20relationships/TalkingAboutDev.htm>  
 Tennis Balls and Slippery Eggs: How to Communicate with Families [www.childcareresourcesinc.org/pdfs/TS576.pdf](http://www.childcareresourcesinc.org/pdfs/TS576.pdf)  
<http://www.extension.org/pages/28228/tips-for-child-care-providers-to-communicate-with-parents-concerns-about-childrens-development#.Uz627b5ONrQ>



# parent involvement

## Quality and Pre School Regulations

Nationally and internationally parent involvement has been identified as one of the indicators of quality in the provision of childcare services.

Research demonstrates the very positive effects that result when parents and teachers work together in the interests of children, and these collaborative relationships have moved to the forefront of education practice and policy initiatives.

### Information for Parents and Records

Under the Pre-School Regulations, parents are entitled to be given information by their childcare provider on the following:

- The name, position, qualifications and experience of the person in charge.
- Details of the maximum number of pre-school children catered for at any one time.
- Details of the type of service and age range group.
- Details of the staff/child ratios in the service.
- The type of care or programme provided in the service.
- The facilities available.
- The opening hours and fees.
- The policies and procedures of the service.

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## An update from the briefing session with Tusla regarding Proposed Registration Model, Proposed standard Based Inspection Model and Garda Vetting:



An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

### The Proposed Registration Model:

Over the coming weeks there will be an online consultation on the Tusla website in relation to the new registration and inspection model. Any of the proposed documents and reports will be made available for people to view and give feedback on. Tusla has said that they will be notifying services directly to let them know when this information will be available online.

Currently the cost of registration hasn't been decided. In the interim those who are already notified to the HSE are deemed registered and there has been no date or specific procedure set for when these services need to re-register.

### The Proposed Standard Based Inspection Model:

It is envisioned that the new system of inspection will be a more holistic model rather than the present system which operates on a one day snapshot of a service. The model will be based on the revised National Standards and proposes that services will submit documents in advance rather than having to produce them on the day. The inspection team will then visit the service. In order to gain a full picture of the service, owners, staff and parents will be invited to give feedback regarding the quality of their experience within the service.

The format of the Standard Based Inspection reports will follow a strengths based approach rather than a deficiency approach. The service will be either Fully Compliant/Partially Compliant or Not Compliant. The evidence of the findings will follow and then a section detailing the actions required for the service to be compliant. Services will also have the opportunity to appeal any decision.

### Garda Vetting Update:

This is an ongoing issue as there are 2 pieces of legislation at odds with one other and it has now been sent to the Attorney General who is expected to make a decision within the coming weeks.



## Childminders Quality Awareness Programme (CMQAP)



The Quality Awareness Programme is an introductory or refresher course designed to provide support concerning the role of the childminder. Participants will be encouraged to regard the course as a stepping-stone to other more comprehensive training programmes. Training will be facilitated by the Kildare County Childcare Committee and is free of charge.

On Saturday the 7th of June Kildare County Childcare Committee will be facilitating a one day Childminding Quality Awareness Programme. The one day Programme will be happening in the Keadeen hotel, Newbridge from 10am to 4pm. If you are interested in coming along please ring KCCC to reserve your place.

Please contact us to book your place on 045 861307.

### Topics of the CMQAP:

Role of Childminders and choosing  
Childminding;  
Child Development;  
Hygiene, Health and Safety;  
Well-being of Children;  
Play;



## Celebrating community with the Clane Parade

The heart of any community is its children, its future generation. While the home is the first place of learning, our children thrive in stimulating, safe and happy communities. In a way, a child's local community is the extended family....

When we take our children to the local shops they learn about produce and commerce. When we visit the café they learn social etiquette. A visit to the doctor helps them to think about their bodies, while popping into the post office teaches them about the world around them and how symbols such as stamps can be used to communicate (much like we learn to write). And when we think our children are *just playing* while at the local park, consider that in addition to the physical play and fun, parks engage children in informal, experiential learning through play and shared experiences with peers, laying the foundations for effective formal education.



At Enquiring Minds we understand the importance of the community in the development of our children, and strive to create a positive community spirit with our families. We love organising trips to the park with the older children, organising events such as the Toddle Waddle, Sports Day in aid of CF and Pyjama Day for the children's hospice. One way that we like to engage with the local community is by entering the Clane Parade every year. The run up to the parade is an exciting time at our school when our children and families rally together to organise costumes, decorations and floats. The children and families enjoy joining in, watching their peers take part or even just looking at the pictures of the parade we post around the school after the big event. We are always amazed and proud by the commitment of our teachers and families on the day of the parade, and marvel at how participation can create an enduring sense of community and togetherness for weeks afterwards. The Clane Parade is a celebration of being Irish, of living in Clane, and of Community.

An old African proverb pronounces that it takes a whole village to raise a child. We think the children of Clane are lucky to be raised by such a remarkable extended family.

