

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICERS ASSOCIATION

CUMMANN n'OIFIGEACH SLAINTE COMHSHAOIL



**GUIDELINES
ON
ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH STANDARDS
FOR
FULL-TIME PRESCHOOL SERVICES**

FOREWORD

The Environmental Health Officers Association [E.H.O.A.] Policy document on The Environmental Health Assessment of Full-Time Pre-School Services was researched and drafted by the Eastern Branch Working Committee and was finalised and produced in consultation with the 8 Regional Branches of the E.H.O.A. and the Central Council of the Association.

The Committee was established in response to the increasing demand for information and guidance from Environmental Health Officers, in relation to pre-school facilities. These requests originated from various sources including Local Authority Planning Departments, Proprietors of day-care facilities, parents and a number of voluntary organisations including Barnardos, I.P.P.A. etc.

The Child Care Act 1991, Sections 50 and 52 outline the basic requirement and content for regulations for the assessment and implementation of Environmental Health Standards in pre-school facilities.

These guidelines develop those provisions and outline in a concise and straightforward manner the standards that the E.H.O.A. believes are appropriate, based on wide ranging research and professional experience. The guidelines cover the areas of Environmental Health, Infection Control, Health and Safety and also include proposed documents for the recording and assessment of pre-school facilities.

The documents relating to notification [App. I] were drafted within the parameters of the legislation as it exists. However, while it is essential, that the Regulating Authority is made aware of the pre-school services within its area, little further purpose is served by notification. For the purpose of control and development it is essential that a system of registration form an integral part of future regulations, covering this area.

The Environmental Health Officers Association feels that a system of renewable registration, such as that outlined in Part VIII of The Childcare Act 1991 [Childrens Residential Centres] would be most effective for this purpose.

The main advantages of such a system would include:

- * It allows for the inclusion of registration conditions, to bring about improvements in the childcare facility.
- * It is renewable.
- * It is open to public scrutiny.
- * The system could be partly self-financing, i.e. through the introduction of appropriate application fees.

A formalised and co-ordinated procedure for the emergency closure of a premises is, we believe, also necessary to allow The Health Authority to act quickly in cases where a grave and immediate danger to the Health or Safety or Welfare of the children arises.

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

General:

- a) All premises shall be of sound and suitable structure. Planning permission must be obtained for the proposed usage of the premises. All building regulations must be complied with as required. Adequate provision must be made for rest, play and safety [see Section "Health and Safety in Pre-school Facilities"].
- b) All full-time day care premises must provide the following minimum facilities:
- (i) minimum of two rooms for childrens usage
 - (ii) kitchen facilities, separate from the above
 - (iii) separate sanitary accommodation for staff and children
 - (iv) separate laundry facilities as and if required
 - (v) storage space for equipment, bed linen, food, refuse prior to disposal etc.
 - (vi) garden/outdoor play area or acceptable alternative
 - (vii) telephone
 - (viii) adequate sleeping arrangements
- c) Premises should as far as possible be located in areas where car parking and set down/pick up is available.

Space Requirements:

Kitchen:

No. of children [excl. babies]	Floor Space	[approx]
up to 10	9.5m ² min	[100 ft ²]
11 to 20	9.5m ² - 14m ²	[100-150 ft ²]
21 to 30	14m ² - 18m ²	[150-200 ft ²]
31 to 40	18m ² - 21.5m ²	[200-230 ft ²]

For numbers above 40 consult your local Environmental Health Officer.

The above is the minimum space required for food preparation and food storage. Additional space allowances should be made for bottle/babyfood preparation/sterilisation area [i.e. milk kitchens - see below]. The size of the kitchen must be adequate to cater for the nature and extent of the business to be carried on therein.

Milk Kitchen:

Where possible a separate self-contained area should be provided for the preparation of babies food and milk [babies are considered as 0-18 months].

The Milk Kitchen may require the following:

- a) a sink, serviced with a constant and instantaneous supply of hot and cold water, the cold water supply to be directly from the rising main
- b) a small cooker/hob
- c) a wash hand basin must be located adjacent to this area
- d) bottle/equipment sterilisation facilities

Where adequate and suitable facilities are considered to be provided in the main kitchen this requirement may be waived.

Play Areas, Classrooms etc:

In calculating the following, access/ancillary areas such as hallways, stairs, utility and kitchen areas must not be included. Sleep areas must be considered separately.

Age [years]	Floor Area
0-1	3.72m ²
1-2	2.79m ²
2-5	2.32m ²

Every occupied room, kitchen and bathroom should be not less than 2.4m in height and the height of such a room measured beneath any beam in that room and in any bay window shall be not less than 2.1m. Where such a room is immediately below a roof its height should be not less than 2.4m over an area equal to not less than one half of the area of the room measured on a plane 1.5m above the finished floor level.

Food Safety Requirements:

Structural Surfaces:

Walls:

These are to be constructed and decorated to provide durable, smooth, impervious and easily cleanable surfaces. Acceptable finishes include:

- Ceramic wall tiles with waterproof grouting
- Stainless steel sheeting fixed directly to walls to prevent the formation of voids, and with all joints and fixtures flush and sealed
- Light coloured epoxy resin as coating.

Walls behind sinks, wash hand basins, work surfaces etc. may require a high durability finish to prevent water or impact damage.

Ceilings:

These are to be constructed and decorated to provide durable, smooth, impervious and easily cleanable surfaces. Acceptable finishes include:

- Light coloured non toxic washable paint
- Easily removable panels capable of being adequately cleaned
- Suspended ceilings specially designed for food handling areas

Where suspended ceilings are in place the voids above them must be readily accessible for maintenance.

Wall/ceiling junctions must be coved to facilitate efficient cleaning procedures.

Floors:

These are to be constructed and decorated to provide durable, smooth, impervious and easily cleanable surfaces. Acceptable finishes include:

- Quarry tiles
- Vinyl floor covering [min. thickness 3.2mm]

A non slip and grease resistant floor finish should always be used and coved at the junctions and corners with the walls.

Equipment, Fixtures and Fittings:

Sinks:

Twin stainless steel sinks of a suitable commercial size and design complete with drainers for the cleansing of utensils should be provided. Where a mechanical dishwasher is provided a single serviced sink unit will suffice.

A sink, of suitable commercial size and design, complete with drainers should be provided for food preparation.

Sinks must be provided with an instantaneous supply of hot and cold water, the cold water supply must come directly from the rising mains. They must be connected to trapped waste pipes which are in turn connected to an efficient drainage system. Where excessive amounts of grease or sediment are expected from any process, extra grease traps should be installed to prevent deposits to the foul drainage system. These traps should be located outside the food room.

A separate wash hand basin, with an instantaneous supply of hot and cold water must be provided for the sole purpose of staff hand-washing. Soap and a hand drying facility must be provided in close proximity to the unit. It is recommended that taps to wash-hand basins should be foot or knee operated.

Cupboards and Work Surfaces:

Special consideration should be given, in the design of all kitchen units, to avoid inaccessible cavities and ledges where food debris and dirt can lodge, and harbourage for insects and vermin can be provided. The materials used should provide a finish that is smooth, durable, impervious and easily cleanable.

Food Storage Facilities:

Cool, ventilated accommodation, suitably racked or shelved using durable impervious and easily cleanable materials, for the storage of dry food products, should be provided. The lowest shelf should be at least 225mm above the floor level to facilitate efficient cleaning procedures. No food items should be stored directly on the floor.

A ventilation system communicating directly with the outside air should be installed in the dry goods store and it should be capable of providing approximately two air changes per hour.

Sufficient and suitable refrigerators and freezers should be provided. Refrigerators should operate in the temperature range of 1 to 3 degrees centigrade and the freezers at or below -18 degrees centigrade.

Ventilation:

Suitable and adequate means of ventilation shall be provided. A minimum of 10-15 air changes per hour must be provided in the food preparation area. Mechanically aided extract ventilation directly to the external air must be provided over all steam emitting and cooking appliances by means of an extract canopy incorporating grease filters. The size and type of canopy/extract system to be agreed for each premises dependent on proposed usage.

Lighting:

Suitable and sufficient lighting should be provided to all parts of the kitchen and storage areas to facilitate cleaning and provide safe and satisfactory working conditions.

Area	Lighting Levels: Lux
Floor	100-200
Worktops/Cooking areas	300-500
Sanitary Accommodation	200

Pest Control:

All door and window openings to the food storage and preparation rooms should be effectively screened to prevent the ingress of birds, vermin and airborne insects - max. Pore size: 1.2mm, mesh size 16.

Adequate proofing must be made to the structure to prevent infestations.

Refuse Storage:

Suitable and sufficient containers with close fitting lids must be provided in the kitchen for the temporary storage of refuse. These should be emptied frequently. Only refuse generated in the food rooms should be placed in these bins and no non-food waste from the pre-school facility itself should be brought into the food room.

Refuse awaiting collection must also be stored in containers with close fitting lids. The containers should be sited on a screened, drained, hard standing away from food rooms with facilities provided for washing the containers and hard standing.

Food Workers:

It is recommended that where practical, care workers do not engage in the handling of food. However, where this situation is unavoidable, care workers should change their outer clothing and wash their hands thoroughly prior to handling food.

Food workers must wear clean washable over clothing and head covering. The wearing of jewellery and cosmetics is not acceptable.

Food workers must refrain from any personal habits that may contaminate food or utensils, e.g. smoking, spitting etc.

Cuts, sores and abrasions must be reported to a nominated qualified person, examined, and if not septic, kept covered with a water proof dressing.

Food handlers, suffering from skin disorders, septic discharges, abdominal pains, diarrhoea or other similar symptoms must report to their supervisor.

Staff should not be allowed to take meals in the kitchen or food preparation rooms.

Suitable, sufficient and secure lockers, or other accommodation for clothing and footwear not worn during working hours must be provided for all food workers.

Cleaning Schedules:

Cleaning schedules should be formulated, implemented and maintained to include regular periodical cleansing programmes of risk areas, work surfaces, utensils, equipment, structural surfaces, fixtures and fittings. All cleaning agents should be stored in an areas completely separate from food items and utensils.

Food Hygiene Training:

All staff with responsibility for food handling should undertake the E.H.O.A. Basic course in the Principles and Practices of Food Hygiene. For further information please contact your local Environmental Health office.

Note: In the assessment of kitchen/food preparation facilities the nature, extent of the business must be considered. Without prejudice to the requirement for safe and hygienic preparation and storage of food, professional discretion may be exercised in the implementation of these requirements in individual premises, particularly in the case of existing premises.

Ventilation - General:

Suitable and adequate means of ventilation shall be provided. Occupied areas shall be capable of being ventilated by means of one or more ventilation openings having a total unobstructed sectional area of not less than 4000 sq mm opening directly to the external air, and augmented if necessary by a mechanically aided system of ventilation.

The following standards are guidelines only. Each premises will require individual assessment.

Air Changes per hour	AREA
10-15 air changes per hour	laundry areas etc.
3 air changes per hour	water closet compartments, sluice rooms etc.
2 air changes per hour	lobbies, stairways and other access areas.
3 air changes per hour	play and rest areas.

Sanitary Accommodation:

Suitable, adequate, hygienic and soundly constructed sanitary accommodation must be provided for toilet trained children. A minimum of 1 water closet and 1 wash hand basin must be provided for every 10 children, in a convenient location. Child size water closets or "hop ups" with adequate adult supervision must be provided [See "Health and Safety in Child Care Facilities" Section].

Suitable, separate, adequate, hygienic and soundly constructed sanitary accommodation must be provided for staff. A minimum of 1 water closet and 1 wash hand basin must be provided for every 8 staff.

Potties and a means of sterilising same must be provided for toddlers. Potties while not in use must be stored out of reach of children.

An adequate supply of toilet paper must be provided adjacent to the water closets.

All wash hand basins must be serviced with a constant and instantaneous supply of hot and cold water. Soap and suitable means of hand drying must be provided adjacent to the wash hand basins.

Children of appropriate ages should be encouraged in dental hygiene and must be provided with individual toothbrushes/rinsing mugs which must be readily identifiable and suitably stored when not in use.

A bath, which may be portable or a shower should be provided.

Sanitary accommodation shall not communicate with any room except by means of a hall, corridor or ventilated area.

The sanitary accommodation must be provided with adequate means of ventilation to the external air either by means of an openable window or mechanical ventilation capable of providing a minimum of 3 air changes per hour. Where there is no natural light and mechanical ventilation is installed it should be linked to the lighting system in such a manner as to allow an 'over-run' of at least fifteen minutes.

Nappy Changing Facilities:

The nappy changing facilities should ideally be separate from all other rooms and should contain a wash hand basin and a baby changing area.

The nappy changing area should be provided with an easily cleanable, smooth surface, equipped with a changing mat and a raised edge to prevent accidents.

Soiled disposable nappies must be stored in a leakproof and sealable/airtight container. They must be removed from this area and stored in suitable containers and be removed from the premises daily.

The wash hand basin must be serviced with a constant and instantaneous supply of hot and cold water, a liquid bacteriocidal soap and suitable means of hand drying.

Sluice Facilities:

Sluicing should be kept to a minimum due to the use of disposable nappies. Clothes requiring sluicing should be rinsed in a sink reserved for this purpose. The sink should be cleaned and disinfected immediately after use.

This facility must be inaccessible to children.

Laundry:

Laundering must never be carried out in a food room. Separate facilities must be provided.

Requirements will depend on proposed usage/services provided.

Sleeping Arrangements:

Babies and children under two years must be provided with suitable cots and removed from the general play area. Sofas, bean bags, buggies or prams are not suitable for sleeping purposes.

It is desirable for children to have their own cots but if this is not feasible separate bed linen must be provided for each occupant to prevent the risk of infection etc. [See "Control of Infectious Disease in Child Care Facilities"].

Adequate space must be provided in sleeping rooms to allow safe, unhindered access to each child.

Suitable rest facilities may be required for older children [i.e. over 2 years]. This may be provided in the play area during rest periods.

Outdoor Play Area:

A suitable outdoor play area must be provided. Part of this outdoor area must consist of a suitable all-weather surface.

Drainage:

Drainage to a standard approved by the Local Authority must be provided. Where on-site waste water treatment facilities are installed access to this area by children must be restricted.

Water Supplies:

All drinking water supply points must be connected directly to a public or private water supply via the rising main. All water to these points must comply with the parameters set out in E.C. [Quality of Water intended for Human Consumption] Regulations 1988. In the case of a private water supply, evidence of potability, i.e. microbiological and chemical analysis must be supplied to the local Environmental Health Office, the regularity of sampling to be agreed locally.

Keeping of Animals:

No animals shall be kept in the premises while the premises is occupied except with the permission of the Environmental Health Officer and in accordance with any condition which the Environmental Health Officer may impose.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IN PRE-SCHOOL FACILITIES

Introduction:

Section 52 of the Child Care Act 1991 places a legal obligation on every person carrying on a pre-school service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the health, safety and welfare of pre-school children attending the service and to comply with any regulations made by the Minister for Health.

A pre-school service for the purposes of this Act is deemed to be any pre-school, play group, day nursery, creche, day care or other similar service which caters for pre-school children including those grant aided by health boards.

Environmental Health Officers have an important role to play in the implementation of many Sections of the Child Care Act 1991, and should be involved in the routine inspection of child care facilities to ensure that adequate environmental conditions are available to safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of children attending such child care services.

Children, particularly toddlers, are physically very active and are unaware of the potential dangers that surround them. Therefore, unless their environment is carefully designed and controlled and/or adequate supervision is provided, serious accidents are likely to result. It is imperative therefore that legislation is introduced to protect the safety, health and welfare of children attending such facilities, and Section 52 is a welcome provision of the Child Care Act 1991.

It is important to note that such pre-school children are not specifically covered by other Irish Health and Safety legislation such as the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 1989. Such Department of Labour legislation is primarily concerned with promoting the safety, health and welfare of employees in their workplace.

The following is a sample set of guidelines which could be used as a checklist in assessing the standard of health and safety in a pre-school service.

STANDARDS

Floors:

Floor finishes should be quiet, resilient, non-slip and easy to clean and maintain.

All floor coverings must be flat and close fitting so that there are no tripping hazards. Deep pile carpets are not recommended and neither are scatter rugs, as these are potential trip hazards. In general all floor surfaces should be flat and free from obstruction.

Holes and tears in a floor covering should be reported and repaired promptly and effectively, particularly those on stair floor coverings.

Changes of floor level must be clearly marked, such as with white nosings, grab rails, etc. but floors should as far as possible be on the same level.

Staircases:

Each staircase having three or more steps should be provided with a substantial handrail. Stairs used by children should be provided with an additional handrail at a height of 2 feet [600mm].

Handrails should be provided on both sides of the staircase, if the width of the staircase exceeds 3'3" [1m].

Midrails should be provided as necessary depending on the width of the staircase.

Ideally each staircase should meet the following conditions:

- (a) The tread rise not to exceed 7" [180mm], and the tread rise should not be of the open type.
- (b) The tread going not to exceed 1'2" [350mm].
- (c) Stairway pitch not to exceed 33°.

Balustrades at landings should be a minimum of 3'6" [1100mm] high, and the gap between any two balustrades should not exceed 100mm to prevent falls.

Winding or curved stairs are not acceptable and should be replaced by a landing and straight flights.

Each stairway used by children must be fitted with safety gates of appropriate construction, which are capable of being secured in the closed position at both the head and foot of the stairs where necessary.

Staircases should be effectively and adequately illuminated whenever the premises are occupied. A level of not less than 200 lux when measured at floor level shall be sufficient.

Flooring materials on stairs must be non-slip.

Lighting:

Lighting should consist of both natural and artificial means.

Different lighting standards are necessary for different areas and activities. The artificial lighting should be in accordance with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers Guidance.

Examples of minimum lighting levels to be achieved in various areas are as follows:

AREA	LIGHTING LEVELS.
Hall and Landings	300 lux.
Stairs	200 lux.
Bathroom/Sanitary Conveniences	200 lux.
Corridors	100 lux.
Kitchen	400 lux.
Office	300 lux.
Staff Room	300 lux.
Dining/Play Areas	300 lux.

Windows:

Glazed areas in windows below 1100mm should be protected and patio doors laminated.

Windows at first floor level and above should be fitted with restricted opening safety devices. Any such safety device in use should be agreed with the Fire Officer.

Child proof locks should also be installed where appropriate.

Water and Surface Temperatures:

Heating should preferably be by water filled radiators, oil fired central heating, gas fired central heating, or electric, storage heaters. Portable electric gas or oil heaters, or any form of gas heater with a flame should not be used.

All heaters and any guards in use should be so designed so that nothing can be left on top of them. Open fires should not be used in rooms used by children. Any heating system liable to emit into the premises offensive or harmful gases, fumes or odours should not be used.

All heaters should have a fixed guard or a thermostat.

The heated surfaces of radiators, accessible pipes or panel type convectors should not exceed 50°C.

Hot water heating systems may exceed this surface temperature but only if pipework and radiators are enclosed in an outer cover which prevents prolonged contact with the heated surface.

Domestic hot water available to children should not exceed a temperature of 43oC. The installation of thermostatic mixing valves with lockable temperature controls should be provided.

It is essential that the heating system is properly designed to meet the above requirements whilst still maintaining satisfactory temperature conditions in the preschool facility.

Bathrooms and Water Closets:

All doors to water closet compartments should open inwards and should not be fitted with locks. Partitions between each water closet should be provided to a height of 3'6" [1067mm]. Each cubicle should be a minimum of 2'2" [660mm] wide and 3'7" deep [1100mm].

It is desirable that water closets and wash hand basins should be of a size appropriate to children and installed at low level particularly in purpose built child care facilities.

Fitment	Height of Installation
Water Closet	1' [300mm]
Wash Hand Basin	1'10" [550mm].

Where low level water closets are not provided, adequate modifications, e.g. the provision of hop ups, adapted toilet seats etc. should be made to ensure the safety of the user.

Doors:

Doors to service areas, i.e. kitchen, laundry, storage areas, boiler room, should be fitted with handles at high level, at least 1400mm [4'7"] to prevent unintended access by children.

Where self-closing devices are fitted to doors they should be of low manual effort design, to avoid trapping risks.

Any door opening directly onto a stairway should be kept locked [e.g. doors opening onto stairway leading to cellar etc].

Electrical Safety:

Sufficient sockets, fitted with switches should be provided in each room to accommodate all the appliances likely to be in use at any one time. Sockets should be fitted with neon indicating lamps where non-luminous heating appliances are used.

Sockets not in use should be locked off with safety inserts.

Suitable means must be provided for cutting off the supply of electricity to any electrical equipment and to isolate it. For portable appliances etc. the removal of the plug is sufficient to meet both requirements.

All portable apparatus, including extension leads, should be subject to routine inspection and preventive maintenance.

Flexes should be routinely checked for damage.

All damaged electrical equipment and wiring/flexes should be replaced and not repaired.

All work on electrical equipment must be undertaken by a competent person.

Double adaptors or multi-adaptors should not be used. Sufficient sockets should be installed instead.

Avoid long trailing flexes, by installing sufficient sockets.

All sockets/outlets are prohibited in bathrooms.

No portable electrical appliances are allowed in the bathroom.

All room and water heaters in bathrooms should be permanently fixed, wired by a competent person, and at least 0.8m from the nearest edge of any bath/sink with a pull cord or switch in another room.

Machinery and Equipment:

All equipment and machinery used in the child care service should be safe for use, and subject to approved service and maintenance.

If any equipment breaks down or requires repair, it must be reported immediately to the manager or responsible person and then repaired by a competent person. Signs should be placed on the defective equipment stating that the equipment is "out of order" and must not be used until repaired. Defective equipment for use by children must be removed and only replaced when repaired.

Baby Equipment:

Sleeping Equipment:

Cots should be deep enough to stop the baby from climbing out. There should be at least 50cm between the top of the mattress and the top of the cot.

There should be no footholds in the sides, or cut outs in the ends, which could help the baby climb out, or trap his head, arms or legs.

The bars should not be more than 6cm apart if they are round and not more than 7.5cm apart if they are flat. Otherwise the baby may trap his head.

All cots should be solid and stable.

Cots with drop-down sides should lock automatically, and babies should not be capable of opening such locks.

All bars, fastening mechanisms, and the slats and springs of the mattress base should all be in good condition.

Cot mattresses should fit properly, and there should not be any gaps larger than 4cm anywhere around the mattress.

Care should be taken when positioning the cots, so that no cot is directly adjacent to a heater, curtains or anything that might help the baby to climb out, or near blinds whose cords could cause strangulation.

Open weave blankets should be avoided as they can trap babies fingers.

Continental size quilts should not be used for babies under 12 months.

Pillows should not be used for babies under 12 months.

All mattress covers should fit smoothly.

Very soft foam mattresses should be avoided.

Seating Equipment:

All chairs, high or low should have no sharp edges or finger traps.

High chairs should be avoided where possible but if being used must comply with BS 5799.

Playpens:

Playpens should be at least 60cm high.

The mesh in mesh-sided playpens should be very closely knitted.

Any loops or handles must be firmly attached.

Playpens with padded rims should be covered with good strong fabric.

Playpens with V shaped legs should be avoided.

Safety gates and barriers:

All safety gates should be firmly fixed to adjoining walls.

The gap between the floor and the bottom of the gate should be no greater than 5cm.

Regular checks should be made to ensure that the gate is firmly in position.

Gates should always be kept closed. An open gate can be more dangerous than no gate at all.

Chemical Safety:

One would not expect that chemical safety would be an issue in a pre-school facility, however, when you consider the various types of chemicals that can be used in a child care facility, e.g. cleaning materials, bleaches, disinfectants etc. you will realise that precautions must be taken and staff properly advised and instructed.

The following general advice on the safe handling of chemicals should be observed:

- (a) All chemicals must be kept in their correct, labelled bottles or containers. They must not be decanted into other bottles or containers.
- (b) Chemicals should not be stored in food cupboards.
- (c) All chemicals should be stored in lockable cupboards.
- (d) The manufacturers instructions for the use and storage of chemicals must be followed.

External Play Area:

This area must be fully, securely and safely fenced off.

Any equipment in this area should be properly secured and sited.

Garden and external play areas associated with the premises shall be so fenced with doors and gates, and so secured that a child cannot get out onto the street, roadway or other area of danger.

Dangerous ponds, pits and all poisonous berries and plants should be eliminated.

If a sandpit is provided, it should be covered when not in use and only washed sand should be used in the sandpit.

Ideally the external play area should be directly accessible to the child care facility.

The area should be large enough to accommodate any one group of children at a time but ideally with plenty of space to safely run about.

All sheds, warehouses etc. outdoors, must be securely locked to prevent children gaining access to them.

Adequate precautions should be taken to prevent slippery conditions arising in the external play area, particularly in the winter months.

If animals are kept on the premises, every precaution must be taken to ensure the Safety, Health and Welfare of the children attending the child care facility.

First Aid/Medicines:

A member of staff trained in first aid should always be on the premises.

Adequate and appropriate equipment and facilities to enable first aid to be given, must be provided.

An appointed person, first aider, or owner should be responsible for replenishing the First Aid Box[es] as soon as possible after use, and for keeping records of illnesses and injuries which occur.

All First Aid Equipment and facilities should be located in a readily accessible position.

At least one notice should be conspicuously posted giving details of the location of first aid equipment, facilities and personnel.

All medicines must be stored in a secure and suitable manner.

Accident Reporting:

A record should be kept of all accidents that occur to children in the child care facility.

This record should contain the date and time of the accident, the name of the person affected, and the nature of the injury. It should also contain the place where the accident happened, and a brief description of the circumstances.

Such records of accidents should help to identify likely common occurrences and prevent future accidents.

Other General Health and Safety Precautions:

Smoking should be prohibited in all food rooms and areas to which children have access.

If using more than one floor young children should be on the ground level, to permit easier evacuation in an emergency.

Toddlers require as much space as possible, and all rooms should be safely designed for children who want to run, climb and jump.

In certain circumstances it may be appropriate to install a safety barrier immediately opposite the child care facility entrance to prevent children running straight out into the road.

Childproof locks should be fitted on all external doors/windows.

All equipment should be stored safely and securely.

A storage area for buggies should be provided as they can prove hazardous if left in hallways or exit routes or in any other area accessed by children.

NOTE:

It would be impossible to list every possible cause of accident which could arise in every child care facility, as all such facilities will vary, and even the smallest change of circumstances in any particular child care facility can greatly alter the risk of accident occurrence. The list above is therefore not exhaustive and should only be regarded as a set of guidance notes which can give one an insight into the types of accidents likely to occur in a typical child care facility.

Certain factors related to health and safety in child care facilities have specifically been omitted from this list, namely accidents caused by technical faults in equipment and accidents caused by fire.

Accidents caused by technical faults have been omitted from this list as it would be impossible for any single member of any profession to have the technical expertise required to enable him/her to effectively assess the safe operation of every piece of machinery and equipment installed in the child care facility. For example, Environmental Health Officers could not possibly assess whether electrical installations do, in fact, comply with all the rules of the Electro Technical Council of Ireland Regulations, likewise we cannot be expected to be experts on inspecting lifts for compliance with BS5655 or for inspecting heating system boiler plants to ensure that they comply with the relevant technical specifications etc. etc.

AND

Accidents caused by fire have been omitted from this list due to the fact that fire safety in child care facilities is the responsibility of the Fire Officer and not the Environmental Health Officer



Type B
Type unspecified

Whooping cough
Yellow Fever

Under the above regulations there is a legal obligation on all medical practitioners, whether working in general practice or in an infectious disease hospital/unit to notify the names and addresses of any cases of infectious diseases they encounter to the Medical Officer of Health.

It is felt that if regulations are made under Section 50 of The Child Care Act 1991, they must place a legal obligation on the owner/person in charge of the pre-school facility, on becoming aware of the occurrence of an infectious disease in the premises to notify the Medical Officer of Health and the Environmental Health Officer immediately.

In addition to the above listed schedule diseases, the following diseases also require investigation and action to prevent their spread:

- i) Chicken pox
- ii) Mumps
- iii) Poliomyelitis

It is also felt that outbreaks of common skin infections would also require investigation and subsequent action to prevent their spread. These would certainly include:

- i) Impetigo
- ii) Pediculosis
- iii) Planter warts
- iv) Ringworm of the scalp, body or feet [athlete's foot]
- v) Scabies

The role of the Person carrying on the Pre-School Service:

Section 52 of the Child Care Act 1991 states:

"It shall be the duty of every person carrying on a pre-school service to take all reasonable measures to safeguard the Health, Safety and Welfare of pre-school children attending the service and to comply with regulations made by the Minister under this part."

Similar to the requirement in the Nursing Homes [Care and Welfare] Regulations 1993, regulations made under the Child Care Act 1991, Section 50, must place a legal obligation on the owner/person in charge of a pre-school service to:

"make adequate arrangements for the prevention of infection, infestation, toxic conditions or spread of infection and infestation at a pre-school service."

The role of the Environmental Health Officer:

Article 11 of The Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 reads as follows:

"On becoming aware, whether from a notification or intimation under these regulations or otherwise, of a case or a suspected case of an infectious disease or of a probable source of infection with such disease, a Medical Officer of Health, or a Health Officer on the advice of a Medical Officer of Health, shall make such enquiries and take such steps as are necessary or desirable for investigating the nature and source of such infection, for preventing the spread of such infection and for removing conditions favourable to such infection."

As Environmental Health Officers are authorised officers under The Infectious Diseases Regulations 1981 there is a clear role here for us in relation to the investigation of certain infectious diseases.

While all infectious diseases, either notifiable or not, may have a serious effect on children, some are extremely rare in Ireland and are unlikely to be seen in pre-school services. It is therefore important to look at our role in relation to diseases which are likely to cause disruption in pre-school services and may cause anxiety amongst the children, their parents/guardians and staff.

A clearly definable role for the Environmental Health Officer is the investigation of any food borne infection. Such conditions would certainly include:

- food poisoning [including salmonellosis]
- dysentery
- hepatitis A
- tuberculosis
- diphtheria
- legionnaires disease
- any other food borne/water borne diseases [scheduled or unscheduled]

However, it is felt we should not confine our role to the investigation of these diseases alone. Many infectious diseases are spread by environmental factors, faecal contamination, poor personal hygiene, etc. and these are areas where Environmental Health Officers have certain expertise, e.g. poliomyelitis is transmitted by dust and faecal contact.

It is envisaged that our role in relation to infectious diseases in pre-school facilities, as defined in Article 49 of the Child Care Act 1991, would be two fold:

- A. Preventative measures**
- B. Corrective action should an outbreak occur.**

Preventative Measures:

- i) Structural hygiene
- ii) Operational hygiene
Personal Hygiene [Education in these areas would include the provision of the basic food hygiene courses]
- iii) Education specifically in relation to infectious diseases.

It is envisaged that a possible information document for owners, managers and staff should be devised in relation to the control of infectious diseases in pre-school facilities. The overall aim would be to provide information on infectious diseases, to facilitate communication and action by all those involved in the running of the facility, to quickly contain any outbreak and to outline relevant preventative measures.

E.g. Attached food poisoning fact sheet - Appendix 4

Corrective Action should an Outbreak occur:

It is felt there should be in place a contingency plan in the event of an outbreak of infectious disease in a pre-school facility. Areas of responsibility must be clearly defined and proper channels of communication must be established between all personnel involved.

CHILD CARE ACT - NOTIFICATION

Notification:

The Child Care Act 1991 obliges a person carrying on a pre-school service to give notice to the relevant health board in the prescribed manner. A proposed notification form is outlined.

Note: While outside the area of expertise of the Environmental Health Officer, additional information regarding Fitness of the Proprietor is sought on the notification form, with a recommendation that such a declaration by the proprietor be endorsed by the local Garda Station. This information is sought as it is envisaged that other professionals, e.g. Public Health Nurses and Social Workers etc. will also be advised of such notifications.

The notification form, as proposed will hopefully be amended or superseded by a requirement to register all child care facilities.

HEALTH BOARD

Child Care Act 1991 - Notification to Health Bord of Pre-School Service

Name of Proprietor:

Telephone No:

Address:

Situation and particulars of
Pre-School service:

Type of Pre-School Service:

If the proprietor is or ever has been the proprietor of any other pre-school service,
whether in the district of the health authority or not, give particulars:

Particulars of convictions, if any, of the applicant for contravention of the Child Care Act
1991 and subsequent regulations or Food Hygiene Regulations 1950/89

I hereby declare that the above particulars are correct

Signed

Date

APPENDIX 2

CHILD CARE FACILITY DATA SHEET AND DESK ASSESSMENT FORM

Explanatory Leaflet

Data Sheet:

The data sheet provides a format for collecting and storing standard information, which it is envisaged will be sought as part of the assessment and ultimate registration procedure. Additional information which would be of use to the Officer is also sought including inspection due date, fax number etc.

There is also a Section for indicating what referrals [if any] were made. The data sheet format could also be used, for storage of information on computers. Provision is also made for separate details on registration - not a legal requirement as yet.

Desk Assessment: As part of the initial assessment of a child care facility the desk assessment provides a format for the assessment of plans and a check list for information/documentation required.

The Environmental Health Officer will not be assessing aspects such as "Fitness of the Proprietor" but will seek such documentation for information purposes only - this is indicated on the forThe above documentation should form the basis for a permanent record for each premises.

HEALTH BOARD

CHILD CARE ACT 1991 - CHILD CARE FACILITY DATA SHEET

Name of Child Care Facility

Proprietor

Address

Phone No

Fax

Address of Child Care Facility

Pre-school

Playgroup

Day Nursery

Creche

Day Care

[tick as appropriate]

Max. No. of Children

Min. No. of Staff

Referrals:

Plans

Fire Officer

H. & S.

MOH

Building Regs

S.W.

P.H.N.

Other

E.H.B. Notified [Date]

Report due by

Registered [Date]

Registration Expires _____

Reinspection Due

Registration - Conditions Set:
Yes/No

File Ref.

Appeal to E.H.B.:

None

Current

Decision

Appeal to Court:

None

Current

Decision

Child Care Facility - Initial Desk Assessment

Documentation Submitted	Assessed	Comment
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Scale Plan of Child Care Facility

Statement of Facilities/Amenities

Declaration of Fitness of Proprietor
[Information purposes only]

E.H.B. Notification of
Child Care Facility

Child Care Facility Plans - Desk Assessment

No. of Children

No. of Staff

Total Area available [excluding utility rooms, passageways, external areas

Kitchen

sq/ft/m.

Dining Room

Disabled Access

Staff office

sq/ft

Sleeping Area

sq/ft

Outdoor Play Area

sq/ft

Staff Rest Room/Changing Room

Yes/No

Sanitary Facilities:

WC / Children

Yes/No

WC / each floor

Yes/No

Sluice Facilities

Yes/No

No. of Baby Changing Facilities [work top, sink and WHB]

Notes

Ventilation

Lighting

Heating

Drainage

Other

INSPECTION REPORT FORM

This will provide a format on which to base routine inspections. Officers should not be obliged to use the forms during inspections, but the forms will at least be useful as a guide and should provide a concise record of each inspection. Details such as the name of the proprietor and sections relating to the services and facilities available [e.g. water supply] may only be sought on the first inspection or in the event of a change. Such details may be obtained prior to, or at the commencement of the inspection. Details relating to "Services" and "Facilities" should be descriptive.

Page titled "Rooms" - some details sought, if already on record, may be ignored, e.g. area of rooms.

HEALTH BOARD

CHILD CARE ACT 1991 - INSPECTION REPORT FORM

Name of Child Care Facility

Inspection Date

Name of Owner

Person in Charge

Max. Capacity [children]

Actual No.

Daily attendance Record

Yes/No

No. of Staff Present

SERVICES

Water Supply

Water Heating System
[incl. safety controls]

Space Heating System(s)
[incl. safety controls]

Waste Disposal

FACILITIES

Catering

Utensil Sterilising
Facilities

Sluice Facilities

Outdoor Play Area

Precautions re: risk of
Accidents
General Safety on Site

ROOMS

Room No.

Location

Function

Area

No. of Children

Age Group

Ventilation

Lighting

Room Temp oC

Sanitary Accom.
Provision - Details

Baby Changing Facilities
- details

Floor Surface

Wall Finish

General Condition
of Room.

NOTE: To include playrooms, sleeping rooms, classrooms, dining rooms, staff rooms, reception area etc.

APPENDIX 4

FOOD POISONING FACT SHEET

Infectious Diseases:

Fact Sheet for Owners, Managers and Staff:

Food Poisoning:

Unusual symptoms: Vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain or any combination of these three. Sometimes a high temperature is also associated with food poisoning.

Cause: Food poisoning may result from a variety of causes including bacteria, viruses, protoza, toxins produced by bacteria and chemical toxins from food or water.

Medical Consequences: Often resolves completely in 1-3 days but some cases of food poisoning can be very severe and may require admission to hospital. It can on occasion and particularly in relation to young children, be life threatening.

When a child is accepted into a day care facility a medical case history should be compiled on each individual child and kept on file. This file should be updated as necessary, e.g. when a child receives vaccinations, etc.

Possible Preventative Measures:

- * The pre-school facility should be cleaned daily including disinfecting toilets, hand basins, walls surrounding these areas, feeding areas and table and counter surfaces that children come in contact with.
- * Potties should be individual to each child and should be disinfected daily.
- * Many toys and items of equipment will require regular cleaning and disinfection.
- * Staff should be vigilant in the use of handwashing facilities in particular after nappy changes, toileting children and wiping noses.

Particular care must be taken after nappy changes of children who have recently received vaccinations. Soiled nappies must be double bagged and stored in a leakproof and sealable/airtight container. They must be removed from the premises daily. This procedure must continue for a period of six weeks after the child has been vaccinated.

- * There must be a general commitment to securing the highest standard of hygiene in the kitchen and other food rooms.

Particular attention must be paid to:

- a) The safe preparation of food for children.
- b) Proper cleaning of food rooms, equipment, etc. by the use of proper cleaning schedules.
- c) Maintenance and repair of food rooms.
- d) Monitoring of staff illness, illness reporting and exclusion procedures of food handlers.
- f) Maintenance of high standard of personal hygiene.

Action in the event of an Outbreak:

In the event of, or if there is a strong suspicion of an outbreak of food poisoning the following basic principles should be applied:

1. Ascertain, as far as possible the nature and extent of the problem.
2. Inform the Medical Officer of Health and the Environmental Health Officer immediately. Keep the Medical Officer of Health and the Environmental Health Officer informed as to further cases.
3. Send home children and staff who are directly ill. Advise the parents of affected individuals to seek advice and treatment from their G.P. All parents, whether their child is affected or not, should be advised either by individual letters or a poster in the facility of the occurrence of an outbreak of food poisoning.
4. A record should be kept of the number, age, name and address of children and staff who are ill. Record the type, severity and date and time of onset of each symptom.
5. Until medical clearance is given staff who have any symptoms of vomiting, diarrhoea, etc. should be excluded from work.

Disinfection Procedure [in the event of an outbreak]

1. Water closets, hop ups, wash hand basins, taps, chains and handles of water closets and handles of doors leading to toilet accommodation should be cleaned and disinfected as often as practicable [at least 3 times daily] with suitable disinfectant.
2. The solution should be rinsed off after application.
3. Sanitary convenience walls and floors should be cleaned with a suitable disinfectant as often as necessary and particularly after faecal contamination.

General Procedure [in the event of an outbreak]

1. If a laundry service is provided on site, soiled and fouled clothing should be transported in leakproof bags. An automatic washing machine must be capable of hot wash which will ensure the disinfection of soiled clothing.
 - a
2. Staff who handle soiled articles/clothing must wash their hands thoroughly using suitable bactericidal soap.
 - a
3. In addition to normal good food hygiene practice, the menu should be restricted [as far as possible] to food requiring cooking after preparation and handling and before serving. For instance, cold sandwiches, meats, etc. should be taken off the menu immediately.

Further advice:

E.H.O.

Tel:

M.O.H.

Tel: