

# Parent & Toddler

## Support Pack



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*This document was developed by Donegal County Childcare Committee (DCCC). We would like to acknowledge Galway City & County Committee for sharing the information in their Parent & Toddler Pack*

# Introduction to a Parent & Toddler Group



### **What is a Parent and Toddler Group?**

A *Parent and Toddler Group* is an informal group within the local community, which provides an opportunity for young children and their parents/carers to meet. All groups offer opportunities for friendship, learning and play.

### **Who runs the group?**

A voluntary committee of parents/carers is formed, and officers (*members with responsibilities*) are elected/appointed. This committee (*with the support of all the other parents attending the group*), oversee the smooth running of the group.

### **Who uses the group?**

Parents, guardians, grandparents, aunts, uncles, childminders and nannies are welcome to attend the group.

### **How long is a session?**

The groups usually meet one morning a week for approximately two hours. If there is a good up-take and the demand is there, this could be extended to two mornings a week.

### **What fees should we charge?**

A small fee is charged to cover rent, snacks, insurance, toys etc. Usually €2 to €3 per family per session is paid.

### **What does the group offer?**

Some groups have children as their primary focus and provide activities such as painting, play dough, sand and water play, music, books, games, singing, storytelling, jigsaws etc. These activities promote learning through play.

Other groups focus on the parents, and provide adult activities and speakers. Many groups aim to strike a balance between the children's needs and the adults' needs.

The group also provides parents with a safe and supportive place to discuss the challenges and joys of being a parent. For first time parents this support is invaluable. It also challenges isolation, especially for parents on their own, or living in rural areas, who can develop deep and lasting friendships from the group.

All groups strive to provide a secure, friendly, supportive and safe environment for babies, toddlers and young children's needs and the adults' needs.

In a *Parent and Toddler Group* parents/carers stay with their children, and are responsible for them at all times.

## What happens during a Parent and Toddler Session?

- A number of parents will arrive before opening time, to prepare the room and to set up the Play Activities
- All parents and children are welcomed
- New members are welcomed by a designated adult and introduced to a few parents at first, and to the group's routine
- Birthdays are celebrated and other special events and parties are organised
- As the group is also a meeting place for parents, it will give them the opportunity to share parenting experiences etc.
- As well as assisting with the children's activities for the morning, the parents may have a guest speaker invited, for example, a Speech and Language therapist, Public Health Nurse, Child Psychologist, Aromatherapist etc.
- A light snack is made available for children and adults (remember keep hot drinks away from children's reach)
- All parents/carers and children help at "Tidy Up" time



## Venues

Venues are diverse and include church halls, community centres, schools, health centres, sports centres, hotel rooms, and purpose built premises.

Check that the play space is large enough. Make sure there is adequate parking space and that the children do not have direct access to the parking area, once they are inside the venue.

## Donegal County Childcare's Role

Donegal County Childcare (DCCC) support Parent & Toddler (P&T) groups by providing a small grant on behalf of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and provide training which may be of interest via our continuous professional development calendar. Also a staff member of DCCC can visit your P&T group and offer advice and support. You can also keep up-to-date with what's happening in the childcare sector through our website and facebook page.



**D.C.C.C.**

## Parents Role

Without parents and carers these groups could not exist. Each parent/carer is responsible for their child throughout each session. They should ensure their child's safety and encourage interactions for the child to develop socially. Parents also socialise and share experiences with each other during the sessions.

# Getting Started



Once you have established the need for a Parent & Toddler Group in your area, the following items need to be decided upon:

### STEP 1: Choosing Suitable Premises

- Are the premises safe and secure?
- Are the premises well ventilated, with plenty of natural light?
- Are there toilets and wash hand basins, which are also wheelchair accessible?
- Is there hot and cold running water?
- Is access safe for pedestrians?
- Is there adequate play space?
- Is there space for buggies etc?
- Is there secure storage for toys and equipment?
- If other groups use the area, are there separate storage arrangements for each group?
- Are there potential facilities for a nappy changing area?
- What rent has to be paid?
- Is there sufficient space for car parking?
- Is there suitable food preparation area/kitchen?
- A telephone or a mobile phone, is also required in case of an emergency situation.

### STEP 2: Contacting Relevant Agencies

- Donegal County Childcare Committee (DCCC) (074) 91 23442, offer support when starting up and can possibly provide funding to your group.
- HSE North West, Pre-school Inspection Team (074) 91 23669. You are not obliged to notify the local HSE of your group, but it IS advisable and in your interest to do so. They provide a contact point for new parents in the area.

### STEP 3: Visiting Other Groups

All groups have something different to offer so:

- Talk to parents from other groups
- Arrange to attend sessions in other groups
- Note layout, toys and equipment etc.

## STEP 4: Deciding on Opening Hours

- Decide which day of the week to hold the session
- Decide on a morning or afternoon session – morning sessions are usually best when older children are at school
- Decide the number of hours the session will run
- Decide how many weeks of the year the service will be available – many P&T groups take school holidays

## Committee Roles and Responsibilities

### What does a committee do? What is it there for?

- The Committee is elected mainly from the parents/carers of the children attending the Parent and Toddler Group
- The Committee is representative of all the group's members, to deal with the running of the service, and to ensure that the P&T Group runs smoothly and effectively
- All nominees must be proposed and seconded (voted in by 2 different people) and must be willing to be on the Committee
- Officers (those with particular responsibilities) will be elected as well as Committee members.

Donegal County Childcare Committee can support the new Committee in understanding their roles and responsibilities.

## STEP 5: Function of the Committee

**The function of the Committee is to deal with the administration of the group, and to ensure that the Parent and Toddler Group runs smoothly.**

### OFFICERS

#### Chairperson's role:

- To call a meeting
- To put together an agenda for the meeting with the Secretary
- To make sure the agenda is followed
- To make sure the meeting is orderly and that everyone has a chance to speak
- To ensure that all decisions are noted and acted upon.

#### Secretary's role:

- To record minutes of all decisions made at meetings
- To notify all members of all meetings
- To open and answer any correspondence as directed by the Committee
- To write a simple annual report for the Annual General Meeting, outlining the highlights of the year end, also any difficulties / pitfalls



### **Treasurer's role:**

- To open and maintain a Bank Account for the group
- To keep note of expenses
- To keep records of all financial transactions – Income & Expenditure Account
- To ensure that at least two nominated signatures are required for withdrawals
- To pay all bills that are approved by the Committee
- To lodge all money
- To provide the committee with a simple financial report for the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

### **Other Officer Roles**

- Publicity Officer – arranging advertising, posters etc
- Fundraising Officer – to seek funds to provide resources, expand the group, and offer a quality service.

## **STEP 6: Funding for Parent and Toddler Groups**

**Funding is initially required to establish the service and thereafter to ensure that the service is sustainable.**

### **Sources of Funding / Income**

#### **1. Statutory Funding and Grants**

- Parent and Toddler Group Initiative Grants, these grants are funded by the Irish Government and applications can be made through Donegal County Childcare Committee
- Partnership Boards sometimes provide funding to P&T groups (Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC), Údaras na Gaeltachta, Inishowen Development Partnership)

#### **2. Other Sources**

- Fees / Admission
- Fund-raising, for example, sponsored walk, quiz, coffee morning etc.
- The National Lottery Funding
- Local Businesses – Donations.

## STEP 7: Finance

- Open a bank account
- Apply for funding
- Decide how much to charge per session
- Decide whether you will charge per child or per family
- Decide will the charge cover tea/coffee/biscuits and drinks for the children
- Decide if your will fundraise

## STEP 8: Insurance

Before opening the service, comprehensive insurance must be arranged. It must contain the following:

- Public Liability
- Equipment cover
- Cover for Outings
- Cover for Children and Parents.

Please check first with the Committee, as the venues Insurance may cover your group or it may be possible to increase this to cover the P&T group, in which case the P&T group would simply cover this balance. Feel free to contact any insurance company for quotations. *Early Childhood Ireland* (01 4057100) offer specific insurance for Parent & Toddler Groups.

## STEP 9: Promoting/Advertising

Drop flyers in health clinics, doctor's surgery, school notice boards, community centres, shops and anywhere parents/families might go. Also consider providing the basic information in other languages that are relevant to those in the community.

## STEP 10: Training

- A Continuous Professional Development & Training calendar can be obtained from the offices of the Donegal County Childcare Committee or on DCCC website:

[www.donegalchildcare.com](http://www.donegalchildcare.com)



***Good Parent and Toddler Groups are run by all the parents rather than an individual***

# Health

# &



## Code of Practice

The purpose of a code of practice is to provide a guide as to what is good practice in your group, for example what Health and Safety measures are in place. Some of these measures might be:



- Has the group got insurance?
- Is there a telephone on the premises?
- Do you have a “No Smoking Policy”
- Be aware of “No Go” areas within the premises
- Are the premises and toys kept safe and clean?
- Is there an Accident and Incident Book on the premises?
- Is there a procedure in place around “Outings”?
- Is there a fire drill procedure?
- Ensure Fire Exits are clearly marked and keep Fire Exits clear
- Is a register/attendance book kept?
- Is there someone trained in First Aid, present at all sessions?
- Is there a First Aid Kit? (See policies & procedures “contents for a First Aid Box”)
- Is there a disposable unit for soiled nappies?
- Are all electrical sockets fitted with socket protectors
- Encourage hand washing after activities and before snack. Use liquid soap and disposable towels
- Use toys for the ages of the children there.

**Supervise children at all times. Remember parents/carers are responsible for their own children.**

# Your Session



## Organising the Session

- Decisions on the day to day running of the group are made by the Committee, which is open to new member at all times
- Welcome all parents/carers and children to the group
- Parents/carers are responsible for their own children at all times
- Decide on basic rules e.g. rotas for activities, cleaning schedules, setting up, tidying up, making drinks, washing up etc.
- Collecting fees
- Signing in and roll book
- Actively involve other parents in supporting and supervising the children's play
- Decide on activities
- Decide on how much time to spend on each activity
- Decide on a choice of equipment
- Decide on a room layout (*see sample in appendices*)
- Provide a safe area for babies
- Provide a safe area for crawlers
- Provide natural materials to cover sensory exploration.

***Seek support/advice from the staff of the Donegal County Childcare Committee, on speakers, outings, fundraising events, etc.***



## Suggested Speakers/Workshop

- Physical Activity Programme such as “Buntús” available from the Donegal Sports Partnership 074 91 16078
- Contact HSE Health Promotion Services, for Free Community Courses. Telephone number: Ballyshannon 071 98 25000 – Letterkenny 074 91 04693
- Local Public Health Nurse (PHN) Breast feeding/Bottle feeding/Immunisation/Child development etc.
- A talk on Childminding, Donegal County Childcare Committee 074 91 23442
- First Aid for Children. Contact local Red Cross, First Aid Plus, etc.
- Love of Reading/Story Telling. Someone from local library – Central Library 074 91 24950
- A talk on Homeopathy. (*See local papers*)
- Baby Massage. (*See local papers*)
- Post Natal Depression. Speaker from Aware or local PHN
- Representative from one of the Baby Formula Companies, such as Milupa, Cow and Gate etc. They bring loads of goodies!!!!
- Creative activities. Maybe someone from local playgroup
- Messy Play & Creating Lifelong Readers (CLR), Donegal County Childcare Committee
- Dental Hygiene for babies/toddlers/young children. Local dentist/dental hygienist
- Parentstop Letterkenny 074 91 77249
- Lifestart, Newtowncunningham, 074 91 56644

## Some Suggested Activities

- Water play
- Sand play
- Painting
- Play dough
- Story telling
- Singing & Dancing
- Arts and Crafts
- Table top activities, e.g. jigsaws
- Outings, e.g. go to a farm
- Nature Walks
- Playworkers (someone to visit your group and provide activities for the children)
- Active Play

**All activities to be supervised**



# Play & Toys



# Toys, Play & Development

## Toy Safety

- Toys bought should be suitable for the age group intended
- Does it carry the CE mark of safety?
- Soft toy must have well-sewn seams, nose and eyes must be securely fastened
- For children less than 3 years, avoid toys that can fit into the mouth
- Beware of sharp points and rough edges
- Check age suitability on packaging
- Regularly check toys for broken parts. If a toy can't be fixed, discard it
- Store toys safely. Teach children to put toys away safely
- From time to time check toy boxes and shelves for safety
- Wash and clean toys regularly
- Are any hazards well labelled & out of reach?

## Choosing Toys for Children

A toy is something which encourages play, which in itself produces learning.

- Is the toy safe?
- Will the child like the toy?
- Can the toy be used in a variety of ways?
- Is the toy durable?
- Is it appropriate to the age of the child?
- Will the toy capture the child's interest?
- Is it fun?
- Include a range of activities e.g. play dough, painting, sand, water, building blocks etc.
- Does the toy involve playing with others?
- Can it be kept clean easily?
- Always include a range of jigsaws and books
- Provide musical activities

It is important when choosing toys, to be aware of toys that promote multi-cultural awareness and gender equity, which are essential in developing children's sense of respect and moral responsibility.

## Toys Suitable for Different Age Groups

### Infants

Activity centres  
Stacking toys and rings  
Push-pull toys  
Small soft toys for throwing  
Squeaky toys  
Soft mats  
Stuffed animals or dolls  
Music making toys  
Books with rhymes  
Telephone and mirror  
Natural materials & treasure baskets  
Boxes and cups  
Crib mobiles  
Pop-up toys  
Simple picture books  
Blow Bubbles

### Toddlers

Push/pull toys  
Cars (big enough to ride)  
Balls  
Beanbags & Mats  
Outdoor activities like running, hopping, ballgames, slides, climbing etc.  
Mirrors  
Cash register & pretend foods  
Telephone  
Dress up clothes for dolls and children  
Musical instruments  
Puppets  
Big boxes  
Animal toys  
Blocks big & small  
Picture cards  
Floor & tabletop jigsaws, Peg- boards

Shape-sorter  
Books with simple stories  
Tape recorder  
Paints, brushes & paper  
Crayons, chalk, junk material, cardboard boxes etc.  
Play dough  
Sand pit, water tray  
Treasure Baskets (baskets with all sorts of ordinary everyday items inside).



## Pre-schoolers

Push-pull toys

Pedal Toys & Cars (big enough to ride)

Balls & ball games

Beanbags

Dance Music & musical instruments

Jumping sacks & skittles

Climbing/bouncing equipment

Skipping

Encourage outdoor activities like hoops, balancing beams, seesaws stc.

Dolls & Tea-sets

Cash register & pretend food

Telephone

Dress-up clothes (include multi-cultural clothes)

Puppets

Big boxes

Small model vehicles



Cars, buses, fire engines, planes, garage, trains, train sets, boats and trucks

Blocks (big & small)

Books with simple stories (include multi-cultural books)

Plays, concerts, role play

Wall posters & quiet area for reading

Paints, brushes, sponges, paper, crayons, chalk, glue, junk materials, play dough

Sand box and sand toys

Water tray & water toys

Small model figures – farm animals, insects & birds, dinosaurs and people toys

# Appendices

- A. Sample Constitution
- B. Sample Policies & Procedures
- C. Room Layout Tips
- D. Activity Ideas
- E. Sample Accident/Incident Form
- F. Fire Drill Record Template
- G. Sample Chart for Duties & Responsibilities of Parents/Carers
- H. Useful Websites



## A. Sample Constitution for a Parent and Toddler Group, managed by a Voluntary Committee

### 1. Name:

The name of the Parent and Toddler Group is: .....

### 2. Notification:

The group should notify Donegal County Childcare Committee (074 91 23442), to avail of grants, support, information, assistance and to be publicised.

### 3. Aims and Objectives:

#### Aims.

- Our Parent and Toddler Group is an informal group within the local community, which provides an opportunity for young children and their parents/carers to meet
- The group will offer opportunities for friendship, learning and play.

#### Objectives.

- To offer a safe and secure space for children and their families
- To offer opportunities for children to socialise in large groups
- To address isolation and loneliness, experienced by parents/carers, especially in rural areas or those new to an area
- To share information and experiences.

### 4. Powers:

To further the aims of the group the Committee may:

- Rent/Lease premises as may be needed
- Provide equipment as may be needed

- Receive money and make payments on behalf of the group
- Become affiliated to:
  - a) A Childcare Organisation
  - b) A Local or National Network
  - c) The Donegal County Childcare Committee
- Do such things as may benefit the group

## 5. General Meetings:

An Annual General Meeting (AGM) shall be held in \_\_\_\_\_ each year at which the Annual Report and verified accounts for the preceding year will be presented and agreed.

- The AGM will take place at the beginning of the school year
- An extraordinary general meeting (EGM) may be called at any time at the request of the Committee or by quarter of the members
- The secretary will send a note to each member of the date, time and place of any general meeting, with an agenda, at least two weeks before the date of the meeting
- The chairperson will be responsible for bringing together the meeting
- No decisions may be taken at any general meetings if fewer than \_\_\_\_\_ members attend. A new meeting must be called
- The quorum (*minimum number of members necessary to conduct the business of that group*) for meeting will be one quarter of the members. The chairperson will have a second or casting vote (*is a vote given to resolve a deadlock and which can be exercised only when such a deadlock exists*).

## 6. Committee Roles and Responsibilities

- The Committee elected, who will be responsible for the weekly organisation of the group, will run the Parent and Toddler Group
  - The membership of the group will consist of all those parents, carers, and volunteers who attend the group meetings
  - This will be recorded via the attendance register, which is signed at each group session
  - The Parent and Toddler Group will be made up of these members and the Committee
- The Committee will consist of:  
Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer and not less than [four or more \_\_\_\_] other members.
- The Committee is responsible for the running of the group and should meet approximately four-six times per year
  - The Committee will retire each year at the AGM, a member may be elected again only if he/she has been on the Committee for less than three consecutive years. The new committee will be elected by a show of hands or by a written vote

- A member may fill casual vacancies on the Committee until the next AGM
- The Treasurer will keep account of all income and expenditure and will prepare accounts for the AGM
- The Treasurer will open a bank account in the name of the group. All cheques will be signed by two of the three named people. The Chairperson will be sent a duplicate bank statement
- The Treasurer will arrange the collection of the fees in respect of each child attending the group
- In the event of the group deciding that the Parent and Toddler Group can no longer function according to its aim, a general meeting will be called, and any decisions to disband must be carried by more than two thirds of those present
- If there is no AGM for two successive years, and if no members of the Committee make the necessary arrangements any other member may do so
- The Secretary will keep minutes of all Committee, General and Special meetings and will also give notice on good time of all impending meetings
- The Chairperson will be responsible for convening the meeting as per constitution
- The Treasurer will give a written statement of accounts at all General and Committee meetings.

**7. Change of Constitution:**

- This constitution may only be altered at an AGM or EGM with two thirds of members at a meeting voting in favour of change.
- The members of the group approved the constitution.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Chairperson**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Secretary**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Treasurer**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## B. Sample Policies and Procedures for \_\_\_\_\_ Parent & Toddler Group

### Health & Safety Policy



This document is a statement of aims, principles and procedures for ensuring Health and Safety at \_\_\_\_\_ Parent & Toddler Group. It provides a framework for the creation of a safe environment in which to work and play.

Health and safety is primarily the responsibility of the parent/carer.

#### Aims

- To provide adequate control of health and safety risks from the groups activities
- To provide and maintain safe equipment
- To prevent accidents to adults and children
- To maintain a safe and healthy group environment.

#### Responsibilities within the policy

All parents/carers are responsible for....

- Recognising their responsibility for ensuring Health & Safety policy rules are implemented in the group
- Regular monitoring to ensure that a safe and healthy environment is maintained
- Establishing a system for reporting and recording accidents
- Ensuring all members of the group are aware of their own responsibilities
- Reviewing Health & Safety policy and risk assessments and ensuring that the necessary revisions are undertaken
- Taking active steps to ensure that equipment, buildings and grounds are safe, secure and well maintained and that damage is quickly repaired
- Ensuring that there are arrangements for the speedy evacuation of the building in the event of a fire or other emergencies and that fire-fighting equipment is available and annually inspected .



- ALL MEMBERS OF THE GROUP (Leader, Parents, Carers and Children) ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR: Being fully aware of their role in maintaining a safe and healthy environment.

CHILDREN ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- *Develop a growing understanding of Health & Safety Issues*
- *Conduct themselves in an orderly manner*
- *Take growing responsibility for their own safe conduct within the group.*

PARENTS ARE ENCOURAGED TO:

- *Ensuring their children attend in good health*
- *Accept responsibility for the conduct of their children at all times*
- *Ensure the group has an up-to-date contact address and phone numbers in the event of an emergency*
  
- Parents/carers will be present throughout the session and remain responsible for the children they bring with them. This should be explained clearly to parents/carers when they first come to the group
- Ensure all children are accompanied to the toilet. Any arrangements to take children other than one's own should be agreed with the parent/carer
- Parents can make their own private arrangements to take each other's children to the toilets or keep an eye on the children while one parent is busy. Parents should be aware that it is their own responsibility to ensure that such arrangements are satisfactory
- Groups should ensure that babies and crawlers are neither harmed nor over-restricted by play activities and equipment which are provided for older children
- Children should be adequately supervised at all times. Some potentially hazardous activities, such as water play, should be provided only if parents or other responsible adults ensure constant supervision
- Sleeping babies should not be left unattended outside the premises, or out of sight of the group. A suitable space should be found where parents can watch sleeping children
- Children should not have access to any outside play area unless accompanied by an adult

- Children should still be adequately supervised while their parents are talking or participating in adult activities. Groups which provide additional adult activities must ensure the safety of the children
- Groups should take extra care about safety for children with special or additional needs and learning difficulties.

***Although parents remain responsible for their own children, every adult within the group should be safety conscious. Everyone should be encouraged to prevent accidents and remove any hazards.***

## **Health & Safety on the Premises**

***Go through the following check list regularly and see if you need to make changes:***

- Is access safe for both cars and pedestrians? Is there safe parking?
- Can prams and wheelchairs get in without danger of tipping on steps?
- Is there a system to ensure that no child can leave the building while the door is open to admit new arrivals?
- Is there a register or signing-in (and out) system so that in case of emergency you have a complete list of adults and children present?
- Does someone always check that dangerous materials such as ring-pulls, cigarette ends, cleaning materials etc. have not been left behind by previous users? (indoors and outdoors)
- Is the floor safe for crawlers and children with special/additional needs?
- Is heating adequate and are fireguards fitted if necessary?
- Is electrical equipment safe, without open sockets or trailing leads?
- Is there a safe place for prams and buggies?



- Are toilets facilities cleaned?
- Is there somewhere comfortable for pregnant women to sit?
- Are there clearly identified 'No Go' areas for children, such as the kitchen?
- Do you ensure that no child can escape through the entry or exit to the premises
- Are there safety precautions around the provision of refreshments such as tea/coffee?
- Bathrooms, toilets doors must not be lockable
- Are handbags stored safely out of reach of children?
- The kitchen should be kept clean, hygienic and well ventilated. Safety precautions should be observed at all times
- Electrical plugs from kettles and other electrical equipment should not be left dangling
- Groups should ensure that general rules of hygiene are followed when food and drink are being stored, prepared and served
- Tea towels should be kept scrupulously clean and washed after each session.

***While children should not be allowed to carry heavy equipment, they should be actively encouraged to tidy up after themselves.***

**Training courses which can help ensure the health and safety in your group are:**

Fire Safety Training,

Manual Handling,

First Aid Training,

Health & Safety Training,

Child Protection Training

## Equality Policy



\_\_\_\_\_ Parent & Toddler group will establish an ethos which reflects the group's commitment to equality for all members.

The religious beliefs and practices of all members of the group will be respected. The group will comply with all reasonable requests relating to religious observance and practice.

The Art and Craft activities will promote positive attitudes to diversity.

The group has high expectations of all children and aims to ensure that it is inclusive, in which all children have a sense of belonging and security, and feel that their contribution is valued. The group aims to cater for the dietary and dress requirements of religious groups wherever this is possible and reasonable.

## Child Protection Policy



Every Child attending the group has a right to be safe. All members and staff have a responsibility to be aware of, and alert to, children who are suffering or are likely to suffer harm. Our aim is to ensure the safety of children while at the group.

If a member of the group has a concern about child abuse, they should immediately inform the HSE, Duty Social Worker

**Millennium Court Letterkenny Duty Social Worker on 074 91 23770**

**Buncrana, Co Donegal Duty Social Worker on 074 93 20420**

**Donegal Town Duty Social Worker on 074 97 23540**

To ensure the effective management of child protection procedures decide who will maintain records of concerns and ensure that the Child Protection Procedures are followed.

If the concerns involve a member of staff, advice will be sought. In the event of an emergency, the police will be called. Categories of abuse include Neglect, Physical Injury, Sexual Abuse and Emotional Abuse.

Parents should take precautions to ensure that they do not place themselves in vulnerable situations when dealing with children e.g. never being alone with one child.

#### Reasonable Grounds for Reporting

- A disclosure from a child in relation to abuse by an adult or child/adolescent
- An account by a person who witnessed the abuse of a child
- Evidence of an injury or behaviour which indicates abuse, and is unlikely to be caused any other way
- Evidence of injury or behaviour which is consistent with abuse, but also where another or innocent explanation is given, however other factors and indicators are present to support the concern of abuse
- Consistent indication over a period of time, that a child is suffering from emotional or physical neglect or lack of adequate supervision
- A disclosure by an adult that they were abused as a child by someone who now has contact with children.

The following guidelines highlight the most important points to remember in dealing with disclosure of abuse:

- Always accept what the child says no matter how difficult you find it. Remember it has taken a great deal of courage for them to tell you.
- Listen carefully and patiently to the child. Do not press for information as well intentioned questions at this stage could result in the failure of a criminal prosecution
- Record the details of the disclosure and pass the records on to the person you have reported it to. Any comment by the child, or by an adult, about how an injury occurred should be recorded quoting words actually used as soon as possible after the comment has been made
- Record all subsequent events up to the time of the substantive interview with the Social services and the Garda
- Take care of yourself. Make sure you have the opportunity to discuss your feelings with a professional at a later stage.

## Fire Safety Policy



Everyone must sign the attendance register at the beginning of the session (including any visitors). This becomes the role call in the event of an evacuation and is essential. If you leave early and even if you intend to return during that session, please put a tick by your name in the book so that it is clear you have left the premises.

- We have taken advice from the Fire Service about maximum numbers
- Our safety exits are kept clear and unlocked
- Fire-fighting devices, i.e. fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and fire blankets are regularly maintained
- We carry out a fire drill each month and all parents/carers are familiar with procedures in the event of a fire (See appendices for a sample Fire Drill Record)
- It is every adults responsibility to know what role they have in case of an emergency

## Fire Drill

### Raise Alarm

- The appointed person (leader) blows whistle to alert parents and children of fire in the building, or when the fire alarm sounds, collects the register, which is kept near the whistle. (The whistle should never be used for anything else.)



### Evacuate the Building

- Make your way calmly (parents & children) with a second appointed person in front and appointed leader at the rear, to the fire assembly point outside the building. Our meeting point is \_\_\_\_\_. (*Please remember that some people have more than one child, and may need some extra help*)
- The appointed leader checks children and parents present against the register

### Call the Fire Brigade

- The appointed person phones the Fire Brigade from the nearest telephone
- The appointed person stays with the children and parents.

### Putting out the Fire

- If it is safe, without risk to oneself, a member of the committee not needed for children, may tackle the fire, using the appropriate extinguishers, until the fire brigade arrives.

***The safety of you and your children are paramount.***

## First Aid Policy

- Any child who is hurt during the session should be reunited as soon as possible with his/her parent. If first aid is necessary the parent should be consulted about any treatment
- We always have a qualified first-aider present whenever the group is in session
- All accidents and any treatment administered are recorded in an accident book, which is regularly checked to ensure that there are no patterns emerging which give cause for concern
- Groups should review their safety, first aid and emergency procedures regularly and ensure that all adults are aware of these procedures.
- We have a telephone on the premises and also have emergency telephone numbers, including those for medical services is kept in a place which is known to all adults in the group. (*Many groups find it useful to keep such information in the register or accident book*)
- German measles (rubella) is particularly dangerous to unborn babies, so parents should not knowingly bring infected children to the group. Groups should inform parents when cases of German measles have been identified so that women who may be pregnant can take appropriate action
- Planning ensures that the way the group's activities are placed in relation to one another does not create safety risks

- All relevant hygiene precautions are taken: dough is changed frequently, outdoor sand pits are covered; outdoor and indoor surfaces are checked for cleanliness before use; sand is sieved and washed regularly, dressing-up clothes and hats are cleaned regularly



## First Aid Box Contents

- Groups should provide a first aid box. Items that should be included:
- Disposable rubber gloves should be available for clearing spills of bodily fluids
- Sterile Cotton Wool
- Normal Saline (sachets or bottle)
- Sterile Gauze (4cm x 4cm) x 4
- Conforming Bandage x 2 (e.g. 1" cling bandage, 2" crepe bandage)
- Triangular Bandage x 6
- Hypo-Allergic Tape
- Hypoallergenic Plasters (20)
- Sterile Eye Pad x 6
- Scissors
- Thermometer



## C. Room Layout Tips

### Entrance/Cubby Storage

The Cubby Area is a place where equipment can be stored e.g. strollers, prams, coats etc. This is also where you can place the adult's sign-in station.

### Gross Motor Activity

Toddlers are full of energy and need space to be active. This area can include stairs, a tunnel, ride-ons and a slide. It is located near the playground exit for quick transition to the outdoors.



### Quiet/Group Area

The Quiet Area is located in a protected corner. It invites a child to relax and rest. The Hide Away Cube provides the toddler with an opportunity to be alone but still able to observe the activity in the room. This area offers plenty of space for wiggly toddlers to gather at circle time.

### Dramatic Play

The Home Kitchen is age-appropriate and encourages imaginative play.

### Sand & Water/Art Areas

The Sand & Water Table and the art equipment are located near the sink and the Classroom Tables for easy access. A nearby coathook strip for art aprons is helpful for quick and easy cleanup.



### Mealtime Area

This area is conveniently located near the hand washing area. Rectangular tables are functional for mealtimes and art projects.

### Infant Corner/Cube

This area should have soft padding on the floor with play mats, or sponge floor tiles. Use soft toys and baby books, like the *'touch & feel'* books. Have some large bright coloured objects that have rounded, smooth edges and surfaces, stacking cups and music/noise making toys. Insert safety covers on electrical outlets.

## D. Activity Ideas

### Where to Jump

**Materials:** Masking tape

**What to do:**

Toddlers love to jump but usually need help finding out where to do it safely. This activity challenges your child to think before moving. Tape down a square on the floor and encourage jumping just inside of it.

**Extensions**

- Tape down two lines that are 10 to 12 feet apart and challenge your toddler to run back and forth, putting both feet on a line before returning to the other.
- Tape a small square and have your toddler jump inside and outside of it.
- Let your toddler show you where to put 2 pieces of tape for both of you to run between.
- Have your toddler stand inside a larger square and jump up and down or dance with you

### Follow the Leader

**What you need:** Music

**What to do:**

Encourage the children to follow your lead as you exercise together. Try touching toes, running in place, swinging your arms, and stretching to the ceiling. Exercise to music, pass a ball back and forth, or twirl a long ribbon in the air. For a change, let your child be the leader and you follow his example.



### Popcorn Picture

**Materials:** Popped popcorn, Glue stick or white glue, Construction paper, Brown paper bag (optional), Paint powder (optional)

**What to do:**

- Rub the glue stick on a piece of construction paper or spread white glue with a brush.
- Stick popped popcorn onto the construction paper to make a collage.
- For a winter scene, use plain white popcorn.
- For spring blossoms, shake the popcorn in a brown paper bag with powdered paint, then glue the popcorn onto a flower shape cut from construction paper.
- For variety, try using Cheerios or Rice Krispies cereal instead

Activities continues....

## Doodle Bug

**Materials:** Paper, masking tape, crayons or paints

### What to do:

- Tape some big sheets of thick paper onto the floor or a table and let the children doodle to her heart's content. Start off with just a few crayons/paints in primary colours so they doesn't get overwhelmed by choices. (Hint: consider investing in washable crayons.)
- **And don't forget to display their work!**

## Big Mouth Game

**Materials:** Cardboard box, Markers, Scissors, Newspaper or tissue paper for decorating, Glue, Tennis balls or a rolled-up pair of socks

### What to do:

- Draw a happy face on the side of a closed cardboard box. Make sure to draw a big, smiling, open mouth.
- Cut out the mouth. Add hair to the top of the box by gluing strips of newspaper or tissue paper so they hang down the sides.
- Stand back a suitable distance and see how many balls can be thrown into the mouth

## Foot Tracing

**Materials:** Drawing paper, Crayons, markers, or paints

### What to do:

- Have your child stand on a piece of paper while you trace around her feet with a pen or crayon.
- Then trace your own feet and compare sizes.
- Color the feet with crayons, markers, or paints.
- Older children may want to use crayons, markers, or paint to add nail polish and funny rings to the toes.



## E. Accident / Incident Form

<b>Child's Name:</b>			
<b>Address (Home):</b>			
<b>Name of Parent &amp; Toddler Group:</b>			
<b>P&amp;T Group Address:</b>			
<b>Date (of Accident/Incident):</b>		<b>Time (of Accident/Incident):</b>	
<b>Description of Accident/Incident:</b>			
<b>Location:</b>			
<b>Perceived Cause of Accident/Incident:</b>			
<b>What, if any, piece of equipment was involved?</b>			
<b>Who was present at time of above Accident/Incident?</b>			
<b>Other (adults):</b>			
<b>Number of children, if any, in the area:</b>			
<b>What immediate action was taken and by whom?</b>			
<b>Remedial action taken:</b>			
<b>Parent/Guardian (Name):</b>			
<b>Informed by:</b>		<b>On (date):</b>	

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*Parents/Carer of Child*

*P&T Group Leader in charge at time of Accident*



## G. Sample Chart of Duties & Responsibilities of Parents/Carers

\_\_\_ Name of your Group \_\_\_\_\_

Sept / Oct 2012

Week Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> Sept 2012

	Tuesday 11th	Tuesday 18 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup>	Tuesday 2 <sup>nd</sup>	Tuesday 9 <sup>th</sup>
Providing snacks					
Arriving early to set up room					
Preparing snacks					
Tidy Up (children should also join-in with tidy up time)					
Fire officer – designated person to carry out a fire drill monthly/bi-monthly					
Health & Safety checks to be carried out monthly (see policies & procedures)					

*Each parent/adult is responsible for the welfare of their own child/ren. Parents/carers should assist children with play where appropriate to ensure maximum levels of interactions with other children to encourage social development.*

## H. Useful Websites

Department of Children & Youth Affairs

<http://www.dcyva.gov.ie>

Adoption Board

<http://www.adoptionboard.ie>

Adoption Loss

<http://www.adoptionloss.ie>

Children's Rights Alliance

<http://www.childrensrights.ie>

Department of Education and Skills

<http://www.education.ie>

Department of Health and Children

<http://www.dohc.ie>

Department of Social Protection

<http://www.welfare.ie>

End Child Poverty Coalition

<http://www.endchildpoverty.ie>

UNICEF

[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

Bluestack Foundation

[www.bluestackfoundation.com](http://www.bluestackfoundation.com)

The Equal Authority

<http://www.equality.ie>

Early Childhood Ireland

<http://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie>

Irish Foster Care Association

<http://www.ifca.ie>

Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children  
(ISPCC)

<http://www.ispcc.ie>

National Federation of Services for Unmarried Parents and  
their Children

<http://www.treoir.ie>

National Parent's Council Primary

<http://www.npc.ie>

National Youth Council of Ireland (NYCI)

<http://www.youth.ie>

Ombudsman for Children Office

<http://www.oco.ie>

Health Service Executive (HSE)

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

Donegal Down Syndrome Association  
[www.donegaldownsyndrome.com](http://www.donegaldownsyndrome.com)

Pavee Point  
<http://www.paveepoint.ie>

Simply Signing – Sign Language for babies  
<http://www.simplysigning.ie>

UNICEF  
[www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org)

Border Counties Childcare Network  
[www.bccn.ie](http://www.bccn.ie)

Childminding Ireland  
[www.childminding.ie](http://www.childminding.ie)

Donegal County Council  
[www.donegal.ie](http://www.donegal.ie)

Donegal County Childcare Committee  
[www.donegalchildcare.com](http://www.donegalchildcare.com)

**Please note that Donegal County Childcare Committee is not responsible for the content of any external websites.**



**Donegal County Childcare Committee Ltd**

**10/11 St Columba's Terrace**

**High Road, Letterkenny, Co Donegal**

**Tel: (074) 91 23442**

**Fax: (074) 91 23472**

**E-mail: [info@donegalchildcare.com](mailto:info@donegalchildcare.com)**

**Website: [www.donegalchildcare.com](http://www.donegalchildcare.com)**

**Facebook: Donegal Childcare**