



Core Funding Quality Action Plan

Guidance For Completing The Core Funding Quality Action Plan Template



GUIDANCE FOR COMPLETING THE CORE FUNDING QUALITY ACTION PLAN TEMPLATE

Contents

1	Introduction.....	3
2	Developing an individual service Core Funding Quality Action Plan.....	5
2.1	Section One: Choosing an option.....	5
2.2	Section two: Actions	8
2.3	End-of-year reporting - Impact Reflection.....	9
3	APPENDIX I –Supports for Core Funding Quality Action Plan.....	10



1 Introduction

The new funding model offers the opportunity to drive additional levels of quality over and above the basic requirements stipulated through regulations and existing contracts...”
(DCEDIY, Partnership for the Public Good, 2021:64)

Core Funding supports Partner Services with their financial sustainability while enhancing the quality, affordability and accessibility of their services. In accordance with *Partnership for the Public Good*, (DCEDIY 2021) the new Core Funding model commits to drive high-quality service provision. To support this, Core Funding requires all early learning and care (ELC), school-age childcare (SAC) and childminding services that benefit from Core Funding to complete a quality planning template, using tools provided by the Department and their agents to compile their Core Funding Quality Action Plan.

This introduction will go through what is required for the Core Funding Quality Action Plan in year one (2022/2023).

Through the introduction of Core Funding, provision is made for services to identify actions that will enhance the quality of their service provision. Many services are already engaged in quality improvement processes, for example, through their engagement with the Better Start Quality Development Service or through self-evaluation processes supported by the *Aistear-Síolta* Practice Guide. The quality action plan offers a means of systematically capturing and acknowledging this positive work for the first time.

As this is a new process for all partners, any learning from it will inform the development of the process as it evolves in future years. Partner Services will be offered an opportunity to provide feedback on the process. The process, and the feedback received on it, will support the commitment in *First 5* to a renewed emphasis on self-evaluation and development of a revised self-evaluation quality framework.

As quality improvement is an ongoing process, activities that services undertake may change and progress from year to year. Quality reporting requirements under Core Funding will also



evolve in future years to reflect this, based on the learning drawn from this process. Therefore the quality action plan template may change in year two and subsequent years.

The quality planning options for year one are

1. Implement improvements identified in Inspection Reports (either Tusla or Department of Education Inspectorate)
2. Participate in quality engagement actions through the Better Start Quality Development Service
3. Participate in National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI) CPD opportunities
4. Annual review of service and/or review of policies, procedures, statements and care practices
5. Participate in quality improvement activities (workshops, information sessions, communities of practice and / or mentoring) through DCEDIY-funded services e.g. City/County Childcare Committees, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and Better Start.

Further details on the options are provided below.

There will be an opportunity, for those who need it, to amend their identified activities mid-way through the year due to circumstances changing, for example if:

- An Early Years Education Inspection during the year recommends quality actions for a service to undertake, which leads the service to identify new priority actions to progress; or
- The service applies to the Better Start Quality Development Service for mentoring support but support is currently unavailable, pending capacity.

Services will also be required to complete a short reporting template on the quality activities the service has undertaken in summer 2023.

The timeline for the Core Funding Quality Action Plan is as follows:



- By 30th November 2022: Partner Services complete the Core Funding Quality Action Plan template, which will generate a PDF document that will be the Service's Core Funding Quality Action Plan for 2022/23.
- February/March 2023: Midpoint review opportunity if a service wishes to adjust the actions it has identified.
- Summer 2023 (deadline to be confirmed): Partner Services will be required to submit a short Report on actions they have undertaken in accordance with their Plan (sessional services may return at the end of their academic year)

2 Developing an individual service Core Funding Quality Action Plan

Partner Services are required to complete the Core Funding Quality Action Plan template by 30th November 2022. Services can choose from the set of options listed above on page 3, and specify planned activities in relation to their chosen option(s). The template will generate an overall statement (in PDF format) identifying the quality improvement activities the service plans to undertake during 2022/23 (*Core Funding Quality Action Plan*). The plan should cover the period from September 2022 (or the date on which the Partner Service signed the Core Funding contract if later) to either June, July or August 2023 depending on the service's opening weeks.

A copy of the completed template will be automatically shared with the local City/County Childcare Committee. In addition, the service should keep a PDF copy on file in the service.

In summer 2023 a reporting template will be provided to services to report on their Core Funding Quality Action Plan. This will be a short review of the activities they stated they would undertake during the year 2022/23. The template will be provided in sufficient time for services that close for the summer months to report before they close.

2.1 Section One: Choosing an option.

Section one of the planning template provides a list of the five options. Services are asked to select the option that meets their current circumstances. A minimum of one option must be



chosen. However, there is provision to choose more than one. This selection will be the basis for the service's Core Funding Quality Action Plan for the year ahead.

Stand-alone School Age Childcare (SAC) services can choose from options four and five at this time, with quality improvement actions to be undertaken in line with the *National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services (DCEDIY, 2020)*. It is hoped that options for SAC services will be expanded in year two.

There are also options relevant to Childminders. It is hoped that options for childminders will be expanded in year two.

Options available for the 2022/2023 Core Funding Quality Action Plan are:

- **Option One – Inspection Reports**

This option is appropriate if a service's most recent inspection (whether carried out by Tusla or by the Department of Education Inspectorate) highlights aspects of quality to be developed.

The service may wish to report on these actions for their Core Funding Quality Action Plan.

- **Option Two - Better Start Quality Development Service**

Participating in quality engagement actions with Better Start, through the Quality Development Service.

This option is appropriate for services that are either currently working with Better Start, have applied for, or intend to apply this year to participate in Better Start Quality Development Supports.

- **Option Three - National Síolta Aistear Initiative (NSAI).**

This option is appropriate for you:

If you intend to attend any of the NSAI *Síolta Aistear* workshops or CPD delivered by Better Start, your local County/City Childcare Committee (CCC) or a National Voluntary Childcare Organisation (NVCO)

Or



If you intend to build on the NSAI workshops or plan to independently engage in self-evaluation and quality improvement using the *Síolta* Standards or the *Aistear-Síolta* Practice Guide.

- **Option Four - Annual review of service and/or review of policies, procedures, statements and care practices.**

This option may be appropriate if the service wishes to report on their review of their policies and procedures in line with regulatory requirements.

Annual review of a service's quality and safety, including review of its policies and procedures, is a regulatory requirement for ELC services under Regulation 14, which requires that:

at regular intervals, being intervals of not more than one year, a review is carried out in respect of the quality and safety of care provided by the pre-school service to pre-school children attending the service, including a review of the policies, procedures and statements of the service.

To assist in this process the service may use

- The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
- The Tusla Early Years Inspectorate's Quality and Regulatory Framework

SAC services are also required to maintain the policies and statements specified in Schedule 6 of the SAC Regulations.

- **Option Five –Participate in Quality Improvement Activities (Workshops, information sessions, communities of practice and or mentoring)**

The option may be appropriate for ELC services planning to engage in self-evaluation or action planning using the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide, or for SAC services planning to use the '*National Quality Guidelines for School-Age Childcare*'.

The support agencies, City/County Childcare Committees, Voluntary Childcare Organisations (full list in appendix I) and Better Start will be offering information sessions/workshops/communities of practice and/or mentoring linked to one or more of the pillars of practice in the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide or to the National Quality Guidelines for School-Age Childcare. Some of these will be offered on-line to facilitate choice and availability.



2.2 Section two: Actions

Once the option/s has been chosen, there will a request for some more details. This is to identify where supports may be required. This information may be shared with the support agencies to assist them in their planning and meeting the needs of the service.

In this section, services are asked to describe the actions for their 2022/2023 quality action plan in more detail by identifying what the actions are, who will carry them out, and the support agencies they wish to engage with.

This section of the template includes open text boxes. Questions in this section of the template ask services to identify specific actions. Services are reminded they should be realistic about what they have the capacity to achieve during this period. Not all quality actions can be completed in a short term time frame. Services can identify if the planned activities are short, medium or long term.

What is required is that all services that receive Core Funding undertake some quality improvement action that is relevant to their current situation. Services must carry out at least one action.

The purpose of identifying the agencies that services are planning to work with is to assist agencies with planning. Services might access supports from more than one agency, depending on the service's requirements and the capacity of support agencies to respond.



2.3 End-of-year reporting - Impact Reflection

In 2023, there will be a requirement to complete a short end-of-year reporting template. This reporting template provides an opportunity to outline what were the outcomes of the activities a service identified in its Core Funding Quality Action Plan. There will also be a section for services to provide feedback on the year one process; this information will be used to refine the process for year 2 and future years.



3 APPENDIX I – Supports for Core Funding Quality Action Plan

To assist you in the development of quality in your service, there are a number of supports available that can provide you with ongoing support and guidance on quality and improvement.

3.1 Tusla Early Years Inspectorate

The Early Years Provider Resources pages provide access to the Inspectorate’s Quality & Regulatory Framework (QRF), the QRF eLearning programme, a series of webinars and various other guidance documents and publications.

[Early Years Provider Resources Tusla - Child and Family Agency](#)

3.2 Department of Education Early Years Inspectorate

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education have developed a webinar series entitled Insights: Quality in Early Years Education. These webinars are designed to share the findings, ideas and examples of effective practice that have been gathered during inspection visits.

www.gov.ie - [Insights – Quality in Early Years Education \(www.gov.ie\)](#)

3.3 The National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative (NSAI)

The NSAI was established in 2016 to support the coordinated roll-out of *Síolta* and *Aistear*, the national quality and curriculum frameworks for the ELC sector. The initiative is led by the Department of Education (DE) in collaboration with DCEDIY who fund the initiative, Better Start QDS (Quality Development Service) and the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA). An inter-agency Resource Development Group, which reports to the Steering Group, has responsibility for the development and quality assurance of NSAI training and resources including resources for the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide. *Síolta Aistear* Mentors from a range of organisations including Better Start, CCC’s, NVCOS and ABC projects provide a range of CPD, training and mentoring supports to ELC settings within the initiative.

3.4 The *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide

The purpose of the Practice Guide is to support you in using *Aistear* and *Síolta* together to develop the quality of your curriculum and in doing so, to better support children’s learning and development.

The Practice Guide includes a range of resources to help you to critically reflect on your curriculum and to identify what works well. Additionally, the resources can help you to identify priorities for development and to plan actions for positive change. In this way, the Practice Guide can be used for on-going review, development and improvement by individual early years educators, educators working together and by educators supported by a mentor.

www.aistearsiolta.ie



3.5 Better Start National Early Years Quality Development.

The Better Start Early Years Quality Development is a national initiative that is available to all Early Learning and Care (ELC) settings in Ireland to promote inclusive quality practice. It provides quality and professional development to settings catering for children from birth to 6 years. Better Start Early Years Specialists provide mentoring, training and coaching to implement the national frameworks Síolta and Aistear, enhancing quality practice and positive outcomes for children.

www.betterstart.ie

3.6 City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs)

A key role of the City and County Childcare Committees is to facilitate and support the development of quality, accessible early learning and care and school age childcare services for the overall benefit of children and their parents by taking a child-centred and partnership approach. Childcare Committees offer a range of training to enhance the delivery of quality provision. If you are seeking training or other CPD supports, please contact your local Childcare Committee who will discuss the options available to you in your county.

www.myccc.ie

3.7 National Voluntary Childcare Organisations (NVCOs)

NVCOs provide support services to early learning and care and school-age childcare providers nationwide. The type of supports NVCOs provide include training, information, support resources and mentoring on quality practice.

3.7.1 Barnardos

Barnardos provides mentoring, training, information and resources on all aspects of quality practice in early learning and care and school age childcare.

www.barnardos.ie/learning-development

3.7.2 Childminding Ireland (National Childminding Association of Ireland)

Childminding Ireland offers support to childminders so that they can provide best quality childcare in a home-from-home setting for the benefit of children, their families and their communities. www.childminding.ie

3.7.3 Early Childhood Ireland

Early Childhood Ireland's work includes quality enhancement, communications and publications, advocacy, training and support. www.earlychildhoodireland.ie

3.7.4 National Childhood Network

The National Childhood Network works to provide support for the early childhood sector in the areas of quality. www.ncn.ie

3.7.5 Bláthú (Steiner Early Childhood Association)

Bláthú offers support for professional practice, be it online, in person as a mentoring visit, or a coaching conversation. In addition, they offer workshops and CPD. www.blathu.org



3.7.6 St. Nicholas Montessori Society

St. Nicholas Montessori Teachers' Association endeavours to be a professional organization supporting teachers, families and society through policymaking, events, support and mentoring. www.smsi.ie

3.8 First 5

The First 5 website lists a number of free continuing professional development resources for early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners that may suit your particular professional development needs.

[First 5 | Professional Development For Practitioners](#)

3.9 The National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services

The Guidelines, which comprise guidelines, components and elements, are intended to complement the regulations for school-age childcare services. The purpose of these Guidelines is to assist and guide school age childcare service providers and staff to reach beyond and aspire to achieving more than the minimum standards set out in regulations.

[gov.ie - National Quality Guidelines for School Age Childcare Services | Guidelines, Components and Elements \(September 2020\) \(www.gov.ie\)](#)



Resources for practitioners



**Continuing professional
development resources
for practitioners**



**Guidance during COVID-
19**



Support Organisations

It's good to share

