

Information for Parents



Forbairt Cáilíocht
Luathbhlianta Náisiúnta
National Early Years
Quality Development



What is Better Start?

Better Start is a national initiative established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to promote and enhance the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from birth to six years, in Ireland. Better Start works in partnership with City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and Voluntary Childcare organisations (VCOs) to bring a coordinated range of quality supports to early years services.

Better Start Quality Development Service

Better Start provides a Quality Development Service to ECEC providers in implementing *Síolta, The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education* and *Aistear, The National Early Years Curriculum Framework*. This is an on-site mentoring service which works with early years managers and staff to plan and implement quality development goals.

What does the Better Start Quality Development Service do?

Better Start Quality Development Service provides qualified and experienced Early Years Specialists to work as mentors and advisors in early years settings (e.g. full day-care or preschools) to support providers to improve the quality of their services to children. The service is free of charge and is flexible and adaptable to work within the demands and constraints of a busy early years service.

Who are Early Years Specialists?

Early Years Specialists are qualified early childhood professionals with a range of skills and experience working in early years settings. They have experience and training in applying quality frameworks (*Síolta and Aistear*) for children from birth to six years.

How does the Quality Development Service work?

The Early Years Specialist will work with the Managers and staff in the early years setting to identify areas of practice, they want to develop. They will work with individual staff, team groups and service managers to develop quality goals and action plans. The Early Years Specialist offers information, guidance and 'tried and tested' solutions, building on the services' knowledge, strengths and experience. The aim is to enhance the quality of service to your children.

How much time will the Early Years Specialist spend with the service?

The Early Years Specialist will visit the service initially to agree a work programme and suitable dates and times. It is likely that the Early Years Specialist will visit the service weekly or fortnightly for a period of around six months. However, the early years provider can decide the frequency and duration of visits and the areas of practice they wish to work on. We will work with the services to ensure the quality development process does not disrupt the service provided to the children. Children's safety, well-being and enjoyment of their setting will always be a top priority.

Will any information on my child or our family be used as part of this process?

The only information recorded will be your child's gender, age and group within the setting (e.g. baby room, preschool etc.). Samples of children's work (e.g. learning stories, artwork, or activities) may be recorded also. The Early Years Specialists will sometimes use photographs or short video recordings to provide feedback to staff. This might include samples of your child's work or activities they are engaged in. Children's or family names will not be used in documentation or reports. Some images may also be used in publications, materials or presentations by Better Start to highlight good practice. They may also be used on the Better Start website at www.betterstart.ie.

Do I have to give consent for my child to be involved?

Parental consent for using personal information (e.g. gender or age), samples of work, or images of children gathered as part of the process must be obtained. The Early Years Specialist will provide the service with a consent form and you will be asked to fill this out prior to any work commencing. Personal information or images of children will only be used for mentoring, training or evaluation purposes. No personal information on children or families will be used or maintained on record by Better Start without consent. Children or families will not be identified in any reports or publications relating to the quality development programme. Better Start complies with all requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003.

What if I decide not to sign the consent form?

If you decide not to sign the consent form we will ensure that no personal information, samples of work or images of your child/children will be recorded by the Early Years Specialist or used as part of the quality development process.

Child Protection and Welfare

Better Start Quality Development Service works within the context of Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children on which Pobal's Child Protection Policy is based. Early Years Specialists have an ethical obligation to promote the safety and welfare of children in ECEC settings. Should concerns arise in relation to the safety or welfare of children in the course of this programme, the Early Years Specialist is obliged to implement standard Child Protection reporting procedures. In the first instance the Early Years Specialist will report their concerns to the Designated Liaison Person for the service. They will also report their concerns to their line manager and Better Start may potentially report concerns directly to the statutory authorities.

Anything else I need to know?

When the programme is completed, a report outlining the areas of practice and quality development actions undertaken will be prepared by the Early Years Specialist for the ECEC Service.

Further information:

Further information on Better Start is available on our website: www.betterstart.ie or through your local County Childcare Committee. You can also contact us on:

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