



Galway City & County
Childcare Committee

Coiste Cúram Leanaí
Chontae & Chathair na Gaillimhe

Protocol for the Inclusion of Children with Additional Needs in a Childcare Setting

Transforming Ireland

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Introduction

This protocol is a 'how-to' document, which gives guidelines to all parties involved in accommodating a child with additional needs in a childcare setting. It gives a step-by-step guide for parents and services on the processes involved in accommodating a child with additional needs. This protocol is envisioned to be a particularly useful tool in circumstances where there may be a concern about a service's capacity to cater to the child's needs.

In keeping with a service's policies on inclusion, equal opportunity and parental involvement, the objectives of this protocol are to:

- (a) Define the needs of the child
- (b) Explore how the needs of the child can be met within the service
- (c) Explore how any gap in meeting the needs of the child can be addressed.

The role of the Galway City & County Childcare Committee is to assist, advise and support all parties as required at any stage of the process of accommodation.

Inclusion

Inclusion is about accepting human diversity and capacity and providing the necessary support in order that children and their families can participate successfully in services of their choice.

To achieve inclusion there is an urgent need for:

- A commitment to good communication
- Understanding of different roles and responsibilities
- Planning and review
- Staff training
- Accessing whatever resources and supports that are available

Steps for Parents

- Consider in April or May where you might send your child in September
- Contact Galway City and County Childcare Committee for a list of Childcare Services in your area (Sessional, Part-time, Full Day Care, After School and Childminding)
- Arrange a visit and an informal meeting with the Manager or Childminder in a selection of Services. Ask for a copy of their Parent Information Leaflet and registration form.
- Decide on a Service you think best meets your child's needs.
- Complete the Registration Form and make sure it is returned by the closing date.
- The Childcare Service will decide on the allocation of places for September and will offer your child a place.
- In the event that a service is concerned about its ability to accommodate a child with additional needs, you may be invited to attend a support meeting.

Steps for Pre-School Services

- A parent enquires about sending their child to your service
- You supply a Parent Information Leaflet, which includes information on staff, ratios, opening hours, fees, policies and procedures [which includes information on accommodating children with additional needs], curricula and activities and facilities and resources available in the centre/home.
- Having met the child and parent, if you have concerns about your ability to accommodate the child with additional needs, you may wish to arrange a support meeting.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Manager/Childminder is responsible for:

- Organising and convening the support meeting
- The day-to-day running of the childcare service and overseeing the safety, welfare and development of all the children in the Service
- Ensuring the inclusion and active participation of a child.

The Support Meeting

The aim of the Support Meeting is to coordinate a response that best meets the needs of the child and ensures their fullest participation in the Service. The ideal time for this meeting is before the child attends the Service.

The support meeting *may* include the child (according to the age and maturity of the child); the parents/guardians of the child; the Manager/Childminder and, subject to their availability, a member of staff from the Galway City and County Childcare Committee; a member of a support organisation such as the Brothers of Charity etc; a Special Needs Assistant if applicable.

The meeting will be structured around formulating an agreed plan to meet the needs of the child. The information on the registration form will be reviewed and issues regarding the child's support needs will be discussed. If there is any topic a parent/guardian/child would rather not discuss at the support meeting they can meet with the Manager/Childminder in private at another time. All information at the support meeting is confidential.

The Manager/Childminder has responsibility to keep a record of the meeting and will circulate these notes to all who attend the meeting and these will be kept on the child's record. A progress review date will be agreed. Further support meetings may be held as required and at the request of either party.

The Galway City & County Childcare Committee staff is available to assist a parent or service provider at any stage of this process.

Appendix to Registration/Enrolment form
Additional information about your child (optional)

Have you any relevant information specific to the provision of the individual care needs of your child?

Are there any other relevant details that you wish to pass to us regarding your child that will help us adapt our service to meet his/her need?

What changes, if any, need to be to the physical environment so it is not a barrier to your child?

Has your child any previous experience of early childhood service / parent and toddler groups?

Is your child used to mixing and playing with other children and does your child enjoy this?

How does your child respond to situations new to him/her – such as starting in this service?

Does your child have any particular play interest at the moment or particular toys he or she likes to play with?

Please provide us with information on how best to communicate with your child

What language is spoken at home?

What key words does your child use at home?

How do you comfort and reassure your child when he/she is upset?

What would you like your child to achieve during a playgroup session?

How much support from staff does your child need from staff to ensure his/her optimum participation in the playgroup?

If your child has a Special Needs Assistant, what will happen if he/she cannot attend a playgroup session?
