

An Roinn Coimirce Sóisialaí

Department of Social Protection

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**Officer Information Pack for the Implementation of the New  
Childcare Programme for Community Employment**

**11 April 2014**

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# 1. The Department of Social Protection's Childcare Programme for CE Participants

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## Introduction:

The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing community based work experience and training opportunities. In addition, CE supports long-term unemployed people to re-enter the active workforce by breaking their experience of unemployment through a return to work routine. CE is a unique programme that integrates employment interventions and training for the jobseeker as well as supporting the provision of community services in such areas as childcare and health and social care.

The CE Financial Review 2012 recommended that consideration be given to reviewing CE schemes on the basis of sectoral strands, offering the possibility of a more integrated service, improved synergies and economies of scale. An additional 2,000 places on CE, announced in Budget 2013, support the re-alignment of schemes on the basis of sectoral strands. In particular this initiative provides additional support to the development of relevant career paths for participants and support for the service element of CE with regard to the Childcare sector.

Childcare support in Ireland is delivered through the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Framework. This framework incorporates the Early Childhood Care & Education Programme (free pre-school year), the Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Scheme and the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) Scheme. The Framework is supported by Síolta<sup>1</sup>.

## The New Community Employment Childcare Programme:

The purpose of this document is to outline the new childcare training and development programme for CE participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare.

The Department of Social Protection (DSP) in collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) propose to change and improve the provision of training and work experience for CE participants who wish to pursue a career in childcare. This involves rationalised entry requirements, defined standards of achievement, a career progression path, and a structure for CE workers in Early Years Services. These changes are designed to provide a more tailored and valuable support to the provision of community childcare and achieve greater coherence between participation on CE and the job market.

The objectives of this policy are:

- to ensure that all Community Employment schemes with childcare places will, in the future, operate under the ECCE Framework<sup>2</sup> and use the Síolta standards as a developmental tool (Appendix 1);
- to provide CE participants on childcare places who work directly with children with quality work experience, training, a clear progression path and qualifications in the childcare sector; and

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<sup>1</sup> Síolta is the National Quality Framework for the Childcare Sector.

<sup>2</sup> Early Childhood Care and Education Framework

- to re-align childcare places on CE to reflect the increased demand for quality assurance in the childcare sector as outlined by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

#### **Re-structuring the Childcare Strand on CE:**

- The Department of Social Protection are working to re-align the distribution and management of CE childcare places so that all places come under the management of childcare centres approved under the HSE Inspection System and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA).
- Projects who want to take-on CE childcare participants must ensure that the childcare facility adheres to the principles laid down by Síolta/Aistear (Appendix 1). This applies to all childcare places provided on CE.
- Participants interested in taking up a childcare place on CE will be assessed regarding their suitability for the post. This will be undertaken by the Manager of the childcare facility along with the Supervisor and Sponsor (following a referral from their local DSP/Intreo Office). The assessment of the adult/child relationship will be carried out using the Síolta defined components and undertaken by a person with experience in the sector and knowledge of the requirements of the Síolta Programme.
- CE participants will follow a programme of formal learning while on CE for the duration of their placement leading to a FETAC Level 5 Major Award. The maximum duration of the CE placement will be for 3 years. This will comprise 2 years of formal learning and one year work practice.
- The County Childcare Committees (CCCs) have an important role to play in this new structure. The role of the County Childcare Committees includes advice with regard to quality and standards and with regard to approved childcare training providers in each area. The County Childcare Committees also have a key role in advising on the availability of training courses; and assisting and liaising with CE Sponsors in the co-ordination of training places to achieve efficiencies.

All applicants to the CE Childcare Strand require Garda vetting to work or train to work with children. An application for Garda vetting is made by the CE Childcare Sponsoring Organisation on behalf of the applicant prior to commencement on the programme. No individual may work or train with children pending the outcome of the Garda vetting process.

#### **Progression Path for CE Participants:**

For CE participants who work directly with children (as distinct from other roles i.e. cook or driver), a dedicated programme comprising formal learning and supervised work experience will become a mandatory part of participation. The formal learning programme leads to a FETAC Level 5 Major Award.

The CE Childcare Programme will have three phases as outlined below.

### **Phase 1: Entry to Level 5 Childcare Award (6 Months)**

The successful applicant will start on CE Phase 1 and **commit to achieving a minimum of 2 mandatory component Level 5 Awards within the first 6 months of starting the programme.** These modules will be selected from the component awards of Child Development, Child Health and Well Being, Early Childhood Education and Play, and Early Care and Education Practice (Appendix 2: Level 5 Major Award). During this period of training, the CE participant will spend time on the scheme under supervision. In this way the participant has access to a childcare environment. The FETAC Level 5 Award is the professional qualification required to work with children. Some participants may require additional support/mentoring to start at this level. Where this is the case appropriate support will be provided<sup>3</sup>.

Phase 1 will combine the participant's own-time learning off the scheme with opportunities for supported learning on the scheme. Supported learning on the scheme will include childcare related tasks and such tasks as preparing the room/crèche in the morning and assisting with meal-times. This will enable the participant to observe good practice on the scheme while engaged in training. The manager of the childcare centre will lead, supervise and monitors this learning period. The CE Individual Learner Plan (ILP) captures all learning taking place at this initial stage.

### **Phase 2: Childcare Practitioner**

On entry to Phase 2, the participant will have achieved a minimum of two mandatory component Level 5 Awards and have an ILP in place. During Phase 2, the CE participant will proceed to achieving the full FETAC Level 5 Award and when complete will be categorised as a Basic Practitioner.

The participant will continue to work at all times under the direction and supervision of an experienced Practitioner. Mentoring and learner support are a key feature of Phase 1 and Phase 2. Additional tutoring may also be provided if necessary to support the learner.

The duration of phases 1 and 2 combined is estimated at two years participation on CE.

### **Phase 3: Childcare Practitioner<sup>4</sup> – Work Practice**

At Phase 3 the participant will have a Major Award at Level 5 and be categorised as a qualified **Childcare Practitioner.** During this stage the participant can gain additional experience as a Childcare Practitioner while on CE and provide additional support to the childcare centre. The duration of this phase is up to 1 year maximum participation on CE.

In acknowledgement of the training requirements outlined above participation on a childcare place will be for a maximum of 3 years, subject to the successful participation of the CE participant in the training and work experience programme provided.

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<sup>3</sup> In a small number of cases a participant with low educational attainment may want to start on Phase 1 and commit to achieving 3 mandatory component awards at Level 4 before proceeding to a Level 5 Major Award. This can be accommodated with agreement of DSP locally.

<sup>4</sup> The participant will be categorised as a Basic Practitioner within the occupational profiles set out in the 2002 Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector. The core knowledge areas are detailed in Appendix 3.

It is desirable that the majority of training will be provided by the Education and Training Boards (ETBs). Where there is a cost, either to a private provider or to an ETB, the cost of training provision can be met from the training fund available within each Division.

### **The Benefits of the Proposed Improvements to CE Childcare Provision:**

The re-structured programme is designed to:

- Provide CE participants on ring-fenced childcare places with quality experience and training linked to the National Framework of Qualifications;
- Provide participants with a clear progression path and qualifications in the childcare sector;
- Achieve greater coherence between participation on CE and the job market;
- Re-align ring-fenced childcare places on CE with the increased demand for quality assurance in the childcare sector;
- Allow community childcare providers with early childhood care and education (ECCE) settings to better meet the needs of the young children in their care;
- Provide a more tailored and valuable support to the provision of community childcare;
- Bring activities provided through CE into line with Síolta and Aistear.

### **The Role of the Childcare Sponsoring Organisation:**

The Childcare Sponsoring Organisation will have overall responsibility for the management and co-ordination of all CE childcare places, including recruitment. The role also includes managing the provision of training for all participants. (See Section 2 for more detailed information).

### **Changes in the role of the Supervisor:**

The changes outlined above will also have an impact on the key tasks carried out by the existing CE Supervisor of a scheme. The revised role will focus more on training co-ordination and management of training provision with an emphasis on the skills of coaching, mentoring and advocacy on behalf of the participant to ensure access to qualifications. The Supervisor will also support progression to employment. To this end, the Supervisor as co-ordinator of training will liaise with all CE participants participating in childcare; will be responsible for the ILP for all participants; and will liaise with employers to ensure appropriate progression outcomes. (See Section 3 for more detailed information).

### **Consultation:**

There has been on-going consultation and collaboration with the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. Consultation has taken place with County Childcare Committees, CE Schemes and DSP representatives. Consultation is on-going with CE Sponsors and Trade Union representatives. This new programme is currently being rolled out nationally.

Community Employment, Policy and Development Section, August 2013.

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## Appendix 1: Principles and Quality Standards of ECCE

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The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Framework in Ireland is provided through Síolta which has twelve principles and sixteen quality standards (detailed below). The principles of Síolta are the core values that guide the way providers of childcare work in early childhood care and education services. They guide how services are organised and how services relate to children and families. The standards range from the Rights of the Child, to Legislation and Regulation. Each standard is broken down into components and questions that help service providers improve their service.

The ECCE Framework services two purposes:

1. It guides the way all early childhood care and education services work and develop in Ireland; and
2. It also serves as a self-assessment Quality Assurance Programme. Services participating in this programme work through all 16 standards towards achieving high quality and accreditation.

Community Employment (CE) schemes with childcare places will operate under the ECCE Framework and use the Síolta standards as a developmental tool.

The 12 principles of Síolta agreed in consultation with the early childhood sector:

1. Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.
2. The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.
3. Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.
4. Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the wellbeing, learning and development of the young child.
5. Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.
6. Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.
7. The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her/his well-being, learning and development.
8. The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.
9. The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.
10. The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation, communication and mutual respect.
11. Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education.
12. Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.

The 16 standards of Síolta:

- 1. Rights of the Child**  
Ensuring that each child's rights are met requires that she/he is enabled to exercise choice and to use initiative as an active participant and partner in her/his own development and learning.
- 2. Environments**  
Enriching environments, both indoor and outdoor (including materials and equipment) are well maintained, safe, available, accessible, adaptable, developmentally appropriate, and offer a variety of challenging and stimulating experiences.
- 3. Parents and Families**  
Valuing and involving parents and families requires a proactive partnership approach evidenced by a range of clearly stated, accessible and implemented processes, policies and procedures.
- 4. Consultation**  
Ensuring inclusive decision-making requires consultation that promotes participation and seeks out, listens to and acts upon the views and opinions of children, parents and staff, and other stakeholders, as appropriate.
- 5. Interactions**  
Fostering constructive interactions (child/child, child/adult and adult/adult) requires explicit policies, procedures and practice that emphasise the value of process and are based on mutual respect, equal partnership and sensitivity.
- 6. Play**  
Promoting play requires that each child has ample time to engage in freely available and accessible, developmentally appropriate and well-resourced opportunities for exploration, creativity and 'meaning making' in the company of other children, with participating and supportive adults and alone, where appropriate.
- 7. Curriculum**  
Encouraging each child's holistic development and learning requires the implementation of a verifiable, broad-based, documented and flexible curriculum or programme.
- 8. Planning and Evaluation**  
Enriching and informing all aspects of practice within the setting requires cycles of observation, planning, action and evaluation, undertaken on a regular basis.
- 9. Health and Welfare**  
Promoting the health and welfare of the child requires protection from harm, provision of nutritious food, appropriate opportunities for rest, and secure relationships characterised by trust and respect.
- 10. Organisation**  
Organising and managing resources effectively requires an agreed written



philosophy, supported by clearly communicated policies and procedures to guide and determine practice.

**11. Professional Practice**

Practising in a professional manner requires that individuals have skills, knowledge, values and attitudes appropriate to their role and responsibility within the setting. In addition, it requires regular reflection upon practice and engagement in supported, ongoing professional development.

**12. Communication**

Communicating effectively in the best interests of the child requires policies, procedures and actions that promote the proactive sharing of knowledge and information among appropriate stakeholders, with respect and confidentiality.

**13. Transitions**

Ensuring continuity of experiences for children requires policies, procedures and practice that promote sensitive management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings, the keeping and transfer of relevant information (with parental consent), and the close involvement of parents and, where appropriate, relevant professionals.

**14. Identity and Belonging**

Promoting positive identities and a strong sense of belonging requires clearly defined policies, procedures and practice that empower every child and adult to develop a confident self and group identity, and to have a positive understanding and regard for the identity and rights of others.

**15. Legislation and Regulation**

Being compliant requires that all relevant regulations and legislative requirements are met or exceeded.

**16. Community Involvement**

Promoting community involvement requires the establishment of networks and connections evidenced by policies, procedures and actions which extend and support all adult's and children's engagement with the wider community.

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## Appendix 2: Level 5 Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education

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### Level 5 Major Award in Early Childhood Care and Education

Level 5 Award in Early Childhood Education and Care Support on the National Framework of Qualifications: the total credit value required for this certificate is 120. This will be achieved by completing:

#### All of the following component(s)

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
5N1764	Child Development	5	15
5N1765	Child Health and Well Being	5	15
5N1770	Early Care and Education Practice	5	15
5N1773	Early Childhood Education and Play	5	15

#### A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
5N1356	Work Experience	5	15
5N1433	Work Practice	5	15

#### A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
5N0690	Communications	5	15
5N1367	Teamworking	5	15
5N1390	Personal Effectiveness	5	15
5N0972	Customer Service	5	15

#### A minimum credit value of 15 from the following component(s)

Code	Title	Level	Credit Value
5N1786	Special Needs Assisting	5	15
5N1769	Creative Art for Early Childhood	5	15
5N1279	Human Growth and Development	5	15
5N1370	Social Studies	5	15
5N1394	Legal Practice and Procedures	5	15
5N1763	Approaches to Early Childhood Education	5	15
5N1766	Child-minding Practice	5	15
5N1779	Infant and Toddler Years	5	15
5N1781	School Age Childcare	5	15
5N1775	Equality and Diversity in Childcare	5	15
5N2006	Nutrition	5	15
5N2005	Irish for Preschool Services	5	15
5N1207	Occupational First Aid	5	5
5N2396	Children with Additional Needs	5	15

The remaining credit value of 15 can be obtained by using relevant component(s) from Level 5. A maximum of 15 credits may be used from either Level 4 or Level 6.

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## Appendix 3: Core Knowledge Areas – Basic Practitioner

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Extract from the Model Framework for Education, Training and Professional Development in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector.

### Basic Practitioner Profile

It is understood that the Basic Practitioner will act at all times under the direction and supervision of an experienced practitioner.

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#### Child Development

- Elementary knowledge of the holistic way in which children (0-8) develop
  - Elementary understanding of the importance of holistic development of babies and children (0-8)
  - Ability to perform routine and directed tasks which support babies' and young children's basic developmental needs
  - Ability to report on observations and reflect and share with supervisor and/or team
- 

#### Education and Play

- Elementary knowledge and skill in assisting with providing for opportunities and experiences that promote children's learning, development and well-being
  - Ability to perform routine directed activities with play/educational materials for and with babies and children (0-8)
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#### Social Environment

- Elementary knowledge of how environmental factors impact on children's learning and development
  - Awareness of child protection issues
  - Awareness and understanding of equality issues and different customs, cultures and family structures and child-rearing practices in society
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#### Health Hygiene Nutrition and Safety

- Awareness of the hygiene procedures which need to be followed when working with babies and children (0-8)
  - Ability to perform routine practical tasks in hygiene procedures necessary for babies and children (0-8)
  - Elementary knowledge of principal health needs of babies and children (0-8)
  - Ability to perform routine practical tasks in the care of an ill child
  - Elementary knowledge of the importance of balanced nutrition for babies and young children
  - Ability to prepare and service food hygienically to meet children's needs
  - Elementary knowledge of the safety precautions needed when caring for babies and children (0-8)
  - Ability to perform routine practical tasks to support implementation of safety precautions
- 

#### Personal/Professional Development

- Basic self-awareness and self-management in a working environment
  - Ability to interact with children
  - Ability to identify own learning needs and to plan for oneself
  - Co-operate with others in limited group working situations
  - Awareness of basic professional conduct with regard to children, parents and colleagues
- 

#### Communications Management and Administration

- Ability to communicate with adults and children and have a basic awareness of barriers to this communication
  - Ability to communicate appropriately with families
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#### Supervised Practice

- Supervised practical experience amounting to a minimum of 160-300 hours in an ECCE service.

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## **2. Proposed Structure for CE Childcare Programme (FETAC Level 5)**

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### **Re-alignment of Childcare Places**

1. All CE childcare places will be co-ordinated and managed by a dedicated CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme. There will be no sponsoring organisation involved in childcare who is not a dedicated CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme.
2. CE childcare places will be provided to quality assured Childcare Centres only. Projects taking on CE childcare participants must ensure that the childcare facility adheres to principles of Síolta/Aistear, and is approved under HSE Inspection System and by DCYA.
3. The CE Sponsored Childcare Scheme will be responsible for the co-ordinating of training and the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) for all participants.

### **Supervision**

1. The Childcare Centre Manager is responsible for the day to day organisation of the childcare centre and will ensure high standards of care, education, safety and well-being of the children.
2. The Manager is responsible for staffing and rostering of staff. The Manager will offer support, supervision and direction to the staff team.
3. There will be a CE Supervisor attached to the CE Childcare Sponsor Organisation. The Supervisor is responsible for identifying and supporting learning on the CE Childcare Programme, completing an Individual Learner Plan with each learner and managing each learner's training needs.

The CE Supervisor role involves:

- Managing vacancies on CE;
- Standardising the intake of participants onto training (i.e. planned course intake);
- Quantifying the training needs of CE participants on an annual basis;
- Procuring training to meet these needs;
- Monitoring the provision of training;
- Liaising with Childcare Centres with CE childcare places;
- Promoting progression (linking with employers);
- Following-up on participants following completion of the programme regarding placement and work options.

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### **3. Role of the CE Supervisor (Childcare Schemes)**

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#### **Guideline for Sponsors**

The Supervisor will be required to have a minimum qualification FETAC Level 6 in a related discipline such as HR, Training and Development, Childcare/Early Years Education or Administration; and 3 years work experience in their field. It is desirable that any new Supervisor appointed also has a minimum qualification FETAC Level 6 in a related discipline as outlined above, and 3 years work experience in their field.

Key duties and responsibilities: (see CE Operational Procedures, Role of CE Supervisor)

1. Co-ordinate the intake of CE applicants to the project and ensure vacancies are filled in a timely manner;
2. Identify and agree Individual Learner Plan (ILP) with each participant;
3. Meet participants at regular intervals to plan work and targets, to review, evaluate and report on work in progress and give feedback;
4. Provide back-up tutorial support to participants where needed;
5. Liaise with the Childcare Centre Managers in relation to the work placement of the participant, monitor participation, attendance on courses and learning progression. It is important to note that the CE Supervisor has no role in the day to day supervision and management of the childcare service;
6. Procure and co-ordinate the delivery of quality assured training programmes for CE participants. This will involve working closely with the relevant training providers/organisations locally in the scheduling and delivery of courses. The role will include encouraging and promoting on-going training and development for all participants engaged in the provision of childcare services;
7. Be assured that Childcare Centres who accept CE participants are engaged with the CCC in relation to Sólta and Aistear. This includes that the Centre is providing adequate supervision of participants particularly in the areas of professional practice, legislative and human resource issues;
8. Work collaboratively and link effectively to other agencies (e.g. County Childcare Committees);
9. Have in place a database of employers in the area with a view to the progression of participants. Report on the same to the Sponsoring Organisation, who will make this information available for monitoring to the Department;
10. Provide and support external work experience placements as part of the Exit Plan for participants;
11. Manage the budget effectively for training and materials.

Duties and responsibilities of the post are likely to change with the on-going developments of the childcare sector and the changes taking place in childcare provision. The Supervisor must have a high level of flexibility and a willingness to accept on-going change in work practices and the ability to develop new approaches to their work.

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## **4. Role of the Lead Sponsor**

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The Childcare Sponsor Organisation will ideally be an existing CE Sponsor who agrees to take on the role of managing and delivering the new Childcare Programme. The Childcare Lead Sponsor will:

1. have a good track record of managing a CE programme;
2. be centrally located;
3. have a good track record in delivering accredited training;
4. have experience and knowledge of the Childcare Sector;
5. have a strong progression record i.e. meeting DSP targets; and
6. be compliant with financial monitoring requirements.

The Childcare Sponsor will become the lead organisation for all CE childcare places in the area.

The Supervisor(s) attached to the Lead Sponsor will be required to have a minimum qualification FETAC Level 6 in a related discipline, and relevant work experience (see page 13 on the role of the CE Supervisor).

### **Main Tasks of the Lead Sponsor:**

1. Be responsible for the advertising and recruitment of CE applicants to the scheme through the CE Referral Procedures. All referrals must come through Intreo/Employment Services;
2. Ensure that the CE childcare places are informed by Síolta and Aistear quality requirements as advised by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs;
3. Co-ordinate and procure accredited training in line with the CE Operational Procedures for the procurement of training. This will involve working closely with the relevant training providers/organisations locally;
4. The role will include encouraging and promoting on-going training and development for all participants engaged in the provision of childcare services. A main objective is to ensure that accredited training in line with national standards is provided;
5. Manage the allocated CE budget for training and materials;
6. Manage and support the Supervisor to meet key objectives for learner development, specifically with regard to access to relevant accredited training. Meet the progression KPIs for the scheme;
7. Be responsible for the implementation of the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) with all CE participants on the scheme;
8. Liaise with the Childcare Centres with regard to the work placement of CE participants;
9. Work collaboratively and link effectively with other agencies, including the County Childcare Committees to promote the programme objectives;
10. Monitor the progress of learning of participants;

11. Ensure contact and follow-up with Employers with regard to the employment of participants;
12. Provide annual reports on the implementation and outcomes achieved from the scheme.



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## **5. Proposed Role of County Childcare Committees (CCCs)**

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As part of the overall role of CCCs in the development of community childcare service provision it is envisaged that continued support will be provided to CE schemes which are directly involved in the provision of a childcare career path to jobseekers. This will provide more coherence and consistency across the sector to facilitate further development of this strand on CE.

### **Areas where the County Childcare Committees (CCCs) can make a valuable contribution to CE:**

1. Advise the representatives of the Department of Social Protection in their respective Divisions with regard to approved childcare training providers in each area.
2. Advise on the availability of training courses in the locality with the view to offering places to CE participants.
3. Assist and liaise with the CE sponsor(s) in the co-ordination of training places so that optimum efficiencies are achieved from state funded programmes.
4. Advise the Department of Social Protection in respective divisions of childcare centres that comply fully with the quality assurance requirements of DCYA. (Only those centres are eligible to take on CE participants).
5. Participate on CE Childcare Sponsoring Committees where feasible.
6. Advise on the prioritisation of CE childcare places in communities to local divisions of the Department of Social Protection.

In addition the Department of Social Protection (Policy Section) will participate in joint meetings with Childcare Committee Ireland<sup>5</sup> (CCI) and the DCYA on a bi-annual basis.

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<sup>5</sup> Childcare Committee Ireland is a network of County Childcare Committees.

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## **6. Frequently Asked Questions**

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### **1. How is the Childcare Sponsor Organisation identified?**

The Childcare Sponsor Organisation is an existing CE Sponsor who agrees to take on the role of managing and delivering the new Childcare Programme. The Childcare Sponsor will:

- have a good track record of managing a CE programme;
- be centrally located;
- have a track record in delivering training;
- be childcare focused; and
- have a strong progression record.

The Childcare Sponsor will become the umbrella organisation for all other childcare centres with CE childcare places in the region.

### **2. Can a crèche facility which is not operating under the ECCE Framework<sup>6</sup> participate in the new Childcare Programme?**

All crèche facilities and childcare centres must be operating under the ECCE Framework and be compliant with the Síolta Standards and Principles to participate in the CE Childcare Programme. Any facility operating outside of this framework should not have any CE childcare places.

### **3. Does the Childcare Sponsor Organisation recruit new participants for all childcare vacancies?**

The dedicated Childcare Sponsor is responsible for all childcare participants. Where a childcare vacancy occurs on a CE Scheme, the Scheme Sponsor will be involved in the recruitment and selection process along with the Supervisor and local Childcare Centre Manager. The dedicated Childcare Sponsor should be informed that a vacancy has arisen and be kept informed of the process.

### **4. How will the cost of training of the FETAC Level 5 Major Award be met?**

It is desirable that the majority of training will be provided by the ETB's. Where there is a cost either to a private provider or ETB, the cost of provision can be met from the training fund available within each DSP Division. There is conditionality attached: at least 2 modules must be completed in the first year and the remaining modules in the second year; value for money needs to be demonstrated and the training needs to be scheduled and co-ordinated to achieve this.

### **5. Can a participant pursue a FETAC Level 6 while on the CE Childcare Programme?**

The aim of Community Employment (CE) is to enhance the employability and mobility of disadvantaged and unemployed persons by providing work experience and training opportunities for them within their communities. One of the objectives of the CE Childcare Programme is to provide participants with quality work experience, training, a clear progression path and a FETAC Level 5 Major Award in Childcare.

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<sup>6</sup> The ECCE Framework is the Early Childhood Care and Education Framework and the Síolta standards come under this Framework.

The primary objective of the training provided is to support a participant to achieve the FETAC Level 5 Major award. Where a participant wants to progress to a FETAC Level 6 Award (minor or major) this may be facilitated provided that:

- no other participant is prevented from achieving the FETAC Level 5 Award as a result; and
- the cost of training can be met within the Division.

It is important that each situation is assessed on a case by case basis and approved by DSP.

## **6. Is there any childcare supports for participants while on the CE Childcare Programme?**

There are four national childcare Programmes currently available to CE participants:

1. The Free Pre-School Year or the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme
2. The Community Childcare Subvention (CCS) Programme
3. The Subsidised After-School Childcare (ASCC) Programme
4. The Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) Programme

Following Budget 2014 the Childcare Employment and Training Support (CETS) Programme was expanded from 1 January 2014 to include CE participants. Payment will be at current CETS rates for part-time care – the Parent contribution is €15 per week and the state contribution is €80 per week;

Access to the CETS Programme for CE participants will mean participants can access childcare for the first time in the same way as participants pursuing FAS/VEC training courses. Feedback from CE Sponsors is that lack of access to affordable childcare is a barrier to participation for parents with young children, particularly lone parents; this measure will be an important provision in their engagement. (Further information on CETS can be accessed on the Stór System under Community Employment.)

## **7. Can a participant already on a dedicated childcare place participate on the new CE Childcare Programme?**

There will be a transition period where participants already participating on a dedicated childcare place may want to take up a place on the new childcare programme. In order for a participant to transfer to the new childcare programme from a current CE programme the participant:

- must be working directly with children on their current CE programme; and
- be pursuing training in childcare (at FETAC Level 4 or 5)
- should commit to achieving a full FETAC Level 5 Major Award.

It is important that each participant's situation is assessed individually taking into account their ILP, qualifications achieved to date and time already spent on CE. Where a participant has been on CE for over a year any additional time given to the participant should not exceed 3 years in total and should be given in the context of continuing training and achieving a qualification. The DSP CE Officer will make the final decision regarding participation.

**8. Is own-time learning required of the participant while on the CE Childcare Programme?**

As DSP cover the costs of the FETAC Award, it is expected that own-time learning will form part of the participant's commitment to reaching the required standard of the Childcare Award. Learning requirements should be agreed with the individual Childcare Centres. Given the need for the participant to pursue learning while on the programme and gaining experience in the childcare sector, Childcare Centre Managers are generally very supportive of own-time training. Some participants to date have found study groups work well.

**9. Garda Vetting is slowing down the process of filling childcare vacancies can anything be done to improve this?**

The DSP is aware of the increase in time taken to process Garda vetting applications due to the volume of applications. While this is outside the control of the Department, additional resources have been allocated to the Garda Central Vetting Unit to address this matter. The Department will ensure that once a satisfactory outcome is achieved the applicant can proceed to take up the CE place.

**10. What role can the County Childcare Committees play in the new structure for Childcare?**

There is a key role for County Childcare Committees. The role of the Childcare Committees will include:

- advice with regard to approved childcare training providers in each area;
- advice on the availability of training courses;
- assisting and liaising with CE Sponsors in the co-ordination of training places to achieve efficiencies;
- participating on the CE Childcare Sponsoring Committee where feasible;
- advice to DSP of childcare centres that comply with quality assurance requirements of DCYA.

County Childcare Committees cannot become a sponsoring body of CE.

**11. Are CE participants included in crèche numbers for the purpose of adult: child ratios in crèches?**

The issue of standards of care, quality childcare provision and adult: child ratios are a matter for the Department of Children and Youth Affairs and the HSE; it is not a matter for DSP. Any issues in relation to this should be followed up with the HSE and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

**12. Can applicants from 21 years of age participate on the new childcare programme?**

There are no proposals to amend the age criteria for this new childcare programme. Any change to entry age criteria would have to apply to all of CE and not just the CE childcare sector.

**13. Will there be any change in the participant's contract of employment?**

The participant's contract of employment will not change. In the new structure it will come from the dedicated Childcare Sponsor.

**14. What will happen to the materials budget attached to childcare places?**

DSP funds the CE Sponsors' materials costs per CE place based on actual receipted expenditure. The CE childcare place will come under the responsibility of the nominated Childcare Sponsor Organisation and the materials budget with regard to this place will also transfer to this Childcare Sponsor.

Where re-alignment of CE Scheme places takes place and a scheme is giving a childcare place(s) to a dedicated Childcare Sponsor, provision may be made for the backfilling of CE places in cases where the scheme justifies the need for the place(s); can offer alternative opportunities, and has a good track record on progression. Alternatively DSP locally will seek to amalgamate schemes.

**15. Can an applicant (with a background in childcare) progress from JobBridge onto this Childcare Programme on CE to gain further experience?**

It is acknowledged that jobseekers face difficulties securing employment. CE is aimed at the marginalised and long-term unemployed and is not considered a suitable or valid progression option for JobBridge Interns. There are training programmes and other options available for job-ready people. DSP ES/Intreo Officers (not the Sponsor) will be making decisions on applicants based on a guidance interview and current eligibility criteria will apply.

**16. How important is a good management structure for the new childcare programme to work effectively?**

There needs to be an effective management structure in place from the start. Transparency is vital as well as proper governance and good practice. It is desirable that participating childcare centres be represented on the Sponsoring Committee. The County Childcare Committee should also have representation if requested. The relationship between the sponsoring committee and the childcare centres needs to be clearly defined. The role of the CE Supervisor as co-ordinator should also be clearly understood in terms of recruitment and placement of participants in particular. This is to ensure that there is equal consideration given to all childcare centres requirements and conditions.

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## **7. Procedures for Procuring Training on the CE Childcare Programme**

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The following is the procedure for the procurement of training courses for CE participants on childcare places. It is the responsibility of the Scheme Sponsor to ensure that all training is accredited and quality assured and provides value for money to the Department. The Supervisor, acting on behalf of the Sponsor, must ensure that there is transparency and fairness in the procurement process.

**Training should be procured, in the first instance, from the local Education and Training Boards (ETBs) as part of overall provision at no charge to the Scheme.**

In the case of procurement where fees apply the following rules apply:

<b>Quotations:</b>	
<b>Less than €500</b>	No quote
<b>€500 - €1,000</b>	One written quote
<b>€1,000 - €5,000</b>	Two written quotes
<b>€5,000 or more</b>	Three written quotes

All quotes must be retained for inspection by DSP.

(Reference: CE Operating Procedures *Chapter 4: Training and Development* procedures in relation to training providers, procurement and costs.)

All training courses procured by a CE Sponsor, including non-fee paying training, are subject to the following criteria:

<b>Criteria that applies to the procurement of Training:</b>	
<b>1.</b>	All programmes must be validated and lead to an Award on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). Evidence should be kept on file for audit purposes.
<b>2.</b>	All training must be approved and recorded through the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) process.
<b>3.</b>	Attendance records must be held at scheme level and available for monitoring by DSP.
<b>4.</b>	The signed contract/course booking form must be held at scheme level and available for monitoring by DSP
<b>5.</b>	Invoices should be matched to booking forms and held at scheme level and available for monitoring by DSP.
<b>6.</b>	Evidence of payment should be held at Scheme level and available for monitoring by DSP.
<b>7.</b>	All learner records, including learning outcomes must be recorded on the Individual Learner Plan (ILP) and kept at scheme level for monitoring by DSP.
<b>8.</b>	Accreditation records must be kept at scheme level and available for monitoring by DSP.

#### Situation 1: Procurement of Training using an External Training Provider:

Where a participant(s) on a CE Childcare Programme accesses a training place on a training course, the place is booked and fees paid on a per capita basis in line with current training procedures.

#### Situation 2: The Sponsoring Organisation is an Accredited Training Provider and is not in receipt of funding from any other Department/Agency to provide the proposed training:

- Where training is provided directly by the Sponsoring Organisation, a maximum fee of €160 per module per place applies.
- Where a suitably qualified CE Supervisor is providing the training within the current CE contract hours, no charge for tuition can be paid.
- The provision of in-house training room /facilities by the Sponsoring Organisation for training is not claimable under the training grant.
- Training materials where necessary can be claimed on a reimbursement basis. Receipts will be retained to support claim and will be retained for monitoring purposes.

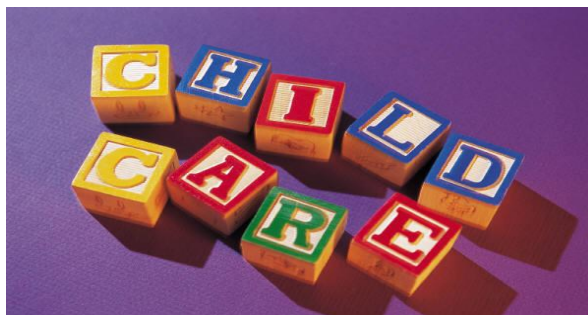
Payment will be made on the submission of an invoice to the CE Sponsor.

The procedure for procuring training will be reviewed at the end of June 2014.

#### Please note:

1. CE participants are exempt from having to pay certification fees associated with an Award at Levels 1-4 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ). If participants have a medical card, they are also exempt from certification fees at Award Levels 5 and 6 on the NFQ.
2. In Situation 2 above - FETAC validation costs are included in the €160, and FETAC certification costs, where they apply, are not included (i.e. certification costs are in addition to the €160).

## **COMMUNITY EMPLOYMENT (CE) CHILDCARE TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (FETAC L5)**



The aim of the new Childcare Training & Development Programme is to provide CE participants interested in pursuing a career in childcare with training and qualifications in the childcare sector, quality experience, and a clear career path.

Garda Vetting is a requirement for this programme.

### **How do I Participate on a CE Childcare Programme?**

You can participate on a childcare programme in Community Employment by calling your local Employment Services Office/local Intreo Office to set up an appointment. Your local Officer will talk to you about the programme and on the basis of an initial interview will put your name forward to the Manager of a Childcare Centre.

The Childcare Centre Manager will interview you and talk to you about your interest in working with children. If you are successful you will be allocated a place on the programme and registered for CE. If you discover that childcare is not for you, you can talk again to your local Employment Services Officer/local Intreo Officer about other options.

### **What will Participation on the Programme Involve?**

The CE Childcare Training and Development Programme has three phases, and is a three year programme.

#### **Phase 1: (6 months)**

On Phase 1 you will spend time on the project under supervision and participating in training – this way you will have access to a childcare environment and be part of a busy crèche. The Project Supervisor will talk to you about the training requirements of the programme and the modules to be followed. The Manager of the Childcare Centre will supervise your work experience and the Supervisor will also support you in your training. Learning on the scheme will include childcare related tasks and such tasks as preparing the room/crèche in the morning and assisting with meal-times.



There will be formal learning provided outside of the work experience by an external provider (for example the VEC). During Phase 1 you will complete at least 2 modules at Level 5. The training will be provided as part of the CE programme.

### **Phase 2: Childcare Practitioner**

At Phase 2 you will have achieved at least 2 mandatory component Level 5 Awards and have an ILP in place. You will proceed to achieving the full FETAC Level 5 Award and be called a Basic Practitioner.

During Phase 2 you will work at all times under the direction and supervision of an experienced Practitioner. Mentoring and learner support will be a key feature of Phase 1 and Phase 2; this will be made available by the manager or supervisor of the childcare centre.

The duration of phases 1 and 2 combined is approximately two years participation on CE.

### **Phase 3: Childcare Practitioner – Work Practice**

At entry to Phase 3 you will have a Major Award at Level 5 and be a qualified Childcare Practitioner. During this stage you can continue to gain experience as a Childcare Practitioner while on CE and provide additional help and support to the childcare centre. The duration of this phase is up to 1 year maximum participation on CE.

Participation on this Childcare Programme is for 3 years.

### **What are the Benefits of Participation on the Childcare Training & Development Programme?**

The Childcare Training and Development Programme will provide you with:

- quality work experience and training linked to the National Framework of Qualifications;
- a clear career path and qualifications in the childcare sector;
- strong links between participation on CE and employment opportunities in the childcare sector.

### **LOCAL OFFICE CONTACT DETAILS**

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

TEL.: \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL: \_\_\_\_\_