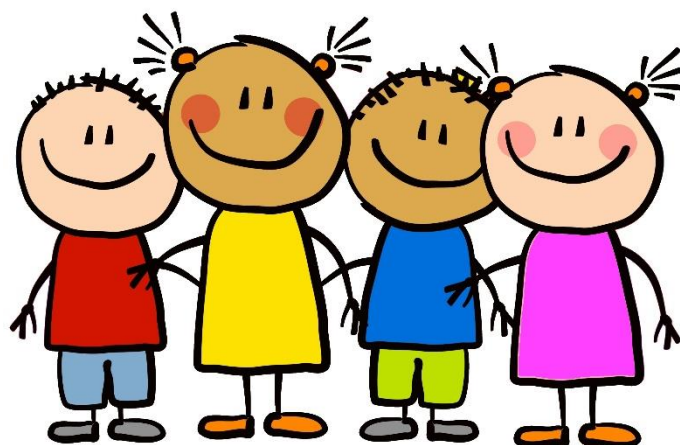


Section 2: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child



Section 2: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child: Policies and Procedures: Sep. 2020

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Section 2: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child

This section contains Policies, Procedures and Statements in relation to the **Health, Welfare and Development of the Child** for **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, as required by regulation under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and to improve the quality and safety of services provided to children in our early childhood setting.

Contents Section 2: Health, Welfare and Development of the Child

#	Policy	Record Templates
7	Settling In and Transitions Policy	
8	Policy on Managing Behaviour	
9	Inclusion Policy (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion)	
10	Policy On Healthy Eating	Healthy Eating Specifications Form
11	Policy On Outdoor Play	Risk Assessment Template for Outdoor Play
12	Policy on the Use of Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices (with Guidance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Staff e-Safety Agreement- Staff e-Conduct Agreement

HWDC Policy #7: Settling In and Transitions Policy (with Guidance)

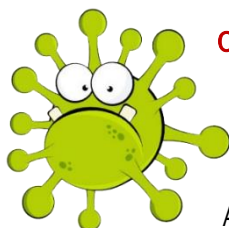
1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

The Settling-In Policy in relation to **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, means the procedures that are in place to facilitate the integration of a child **into** the service, their progression within the service and their transition to primary school.

Transitions also occur as children move **within** settings from one room or area to another or from one type of activity to another (for example, active play to tidy up time to eating time). They also occur as children move **between** settings (for example, from home to the early childhood setting or from the early childhood setting to school).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that there is sensitive planning and management of transitions, consistency in key relationships, liaison within and between settings and the close involvement of parents to ensure positive experiences and continuity for children. It is essential that relationships and routines are consistent, predictable and responsive to support each child's attachments, their sense of trust, security, competency, identity and belonging, their social skills and sense of independence.

Children experiencing social and economic disadvantage, children with English as an additional language (EAL) and children with special educational needs (SEN) require particular supports at the time of transition.



COVID-19 measures and guidance are used in conjunction with the policies and procedures of this service for the duration of the pandemic and beyond where applicable. In particular, Infection Control and Risk Management Policies and Procedures are to be used with the Settling In policy.

All practice will align with HPSC guidance '**COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic**' and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 require that a policy relating to supporting children's transitions and settling in is written and implemented.
- Good practice requires that early childhood services, in partnership with parents, provide transitional information when moving from pre-school to primary school.

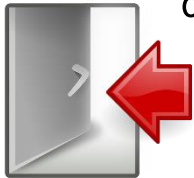
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2. Policy Statement

At **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, we recognise that successful experiences during early transitions can increase a child's ability to adapt to changes in the future and can provide a more secure base for their learning and development. We work to develop strong relationships between the family and the service through frequent communication and sharing of information and goals. We ensure continuity of care through a **Key Person/Worker** approach.

3. Procedures and Practices



On entry INTO the service we:

- Encourage parents/guardians to visit before and after their child is enrolled and include the Key Person/Worker in the meeting (**some restrictions may apply during COVID-19 pandemic**).
- Introduce each child to the environment, the staff, other children and the daily routines.
- Invite parents to take an active role in settling their child into the service (**some restrictions may apply during COVID-19 pandemic**).
- Request information from parents which will help us to get to know their child such as the child's likes and dislikes; their particular needs; who the important people in their lives are; their interests; their ability to communicate; their temperament and their dispositions and importantly, whether they have a special transitional object.
- Post a sign welcoming the child and the parents by name and include photos where possible.
- Empathise with parents' concerns about leaving their child in our care.
- Consider culture in transition practices by honouring family childrearing practices and preferences as much as possible as long as they are in the best interests of the child.

Parents are encouraged to:

- Share information about their child that will help us to get to know them.
- Spend as much time as they can at the *service* at first and gradually shorten the time as the child becomes more comfortable (**some restrictions may apply during COVID-19 pandemic**).
- Develop a goodbye routine or ritual that they can use with their child each day such as giving the child a kiss or a big hug, waving good-bye from the door, or whatever they and their child feel comfortable doing. This way, both the parents and the child will know how to handle the parting.
- Talk with their child's Key Person about bringing items from home that are important to their child, for example, a favourite soft toy or blanket, photos of family members, or a recording of themselves reading a favourite story or singing a familiar song (**some restrictions may apply during COVID-19 pandemic**).

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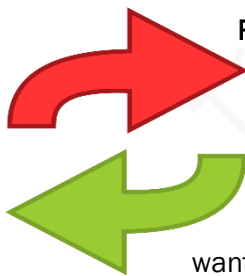
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Staff members will:

- Continue to make parents welcome. Encourage them to spend time when they bring their child in the morning and when they return at the end of the day (**some restrictions may apply during COVID-19 pandemic**).
- Give parents information about their child's experiences each day and invite them to share information about their experiences with their child at home.
- Help the child express their feelings about their parents leaving. Talk with them about their home and family later in the day. Suggest that they call their parents on a real or toy telephone.
- Give the child opportunities to use the skills they know. Sharing tasks like preparing for snacks or putting toys away can also reinforce their feelings of competence.
- Read stories of good-byes and returns.

As far as possible we will provide harmony with each child's home culture:

- Ensure that we use some of the child's home language if it is not English and encourage parents to continue to use the child's first language at home.
- Provide a culturally relevant environment that is familiar and homelike to the child where items familiar to the child are included.
- Understand and respect each family's cultural beliefs and childrearing values (as long as these are in the child's best interests).
- Provide consistency by understanding the home routines of each child.
- Discuss each family's expectations for their child's learning and development and the transition.
- Be aware of our own cultural values, beliefs, and expectations. Acknowledge how these match or differ from the family's expectations and consider differences or potential conflicts.



Routines and transitions WITHIN the daily programme of activities (In-service Transitions)

- Children attend to personal routines, such as going to the toilet, according to their individual body schedules.
- Regular hand washing is embedded in the daily routine
- Children have easy access to their transitional objects when they want or need them
- While balancing the range of activities (active/quiet, small group/large group/individual, indoors/outdoors), routines and transitions are kept to a minimum and managed consistently so that children can develop trust and a sense of security.
- Transitions within the daily routine, although managed consistently, are as flexible as possible to allow for children to follow their interests where possible.
- Transitions that must happen, involving moving from one type of activity to another, are planned so that children who are ready before others have something to do while they wait.
- Children are given advance notice visually [*for example with an interactive visual routine and or large egg timers*] of changes to routines or planned changes within the schedule of activities that will affect them.

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- We consider it important to recognise that some children need to be given more time, support and assistance to cope with changes in activity levels and/or types of activities, than others.
- If the furniture is going to be changed around or major changes made to the environment, this is discussed with the children and explained in advance so that they can be involved and understand why the change is happening.
- Children will be encouraged to help with routines as much as they are able (for example helping to set the table or cleaning up).

Checklist for exchanging information with Parents and Families

Parents and Families are encouraged to share:

- Information about their child's temperament and dispositions.
- Information about what upsets their child and what comforts them.
- How their child reacts to strangers, familiar adults and other children.
- How they handle routines such as eating, toileting and sleeping.
- Relevant information about themselves and their culture.
- Information about their child's previous experiences.
- A brief developmental and medical history of their child – from birth to the present – that includes social, emotional, physical and language development information.
- How parents/guardians prefer to communicate different types of information (for example, in person, by telephone, by notice board or individually in writing).
- How they wish to be involved in the early childhood service/programme of activities.
- How they would like to see the transition period happen.
- Their hopes for their child.

Staff members share with parents/families:

- How we support children to transition into the service/programme.
- Information about programme composition, philosophy, schedules and activities (curriculum).
- Covid-10 restrictions, routines and procedures
- How we generally communicate information to families.
- How families can get involved in the service/programme.
- How planning and individual routines are handled.
- How we observe and report learning and developmental progress.
- How we handle transitions within the programme.
- How we help prepare for transitions out of the service (going to school).

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Transitions FROM the service

At **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, throughout the years before children move to school they are supported to develop the skills and dispositions they will need to transition and settle in well to the school setting.

These skills and dispositions are developed through our quality curriculum, which is informed by Aistear the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework. The curriculum we provide supports children's learning and development under the themes of Wellbeing, Exploring and Thinking, Communication and Identity and Belonging. We specifically aim to encourage independence, confidence, emotional security and language skills to prepare children for change.

Planning Transitions

We consider the following in preparing children for any upcoming transition:

- What can be done early to begin preparing the child for this transition?
- What partnerships need to be formed to ensure continuity and ease the transition?
- What items/resources are available to help ease this child's transition?
- Has a transition report been compiled using the learning themes of Aistear?
- Have we discussed and do we have parental permission to pass on the child's transition report to school?

GUIDANCE: Transition to from Pre-School to Primary School

Transitions to a new education setting involve changes for children and families and can impact the entire family. For both children and families, transitions between settings can lead to great excitement and new possibilities. Transitions can also bring on uncertainty and concerns.



Children may experience loss of familiar people and predictable routines.

Families may have mixed reactions to their child getting older and wonder if they are ready for the next stage. Early childhood professionals can offer support and guidance to help families feel secure and ready to make the move to a new setting.

Both Aistear and Síolta remind us of the important contribution that Educators and early childhood services can make in both reassuring parents and supporting children to cope with change. Essential to this is helping children develop certain dispositions and skills. These include language, communication and social skills as well as positive learning dispositions like independence, curiosity and resilience.

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Below are 3 practical information resources that can be shared with parents. Also, you will find the link to the Mo Scéal Pre-School to Primary School Templates (#4). All are useful for both educators and parents in preparing for Pre-school to Primary School Transitions.

- **Aistear Tipsheet:** Suggested Activities for Pre-Schools to Support Positive Transitions to School underpinned by Aistear.

<https://www.ncca.ie/media/3755/suggested-transition-activities-for-preschools.pdf>

- **'Ambitions for Transitions: A Guide to Support Every Child's Progression from Early Years Services to Primary School'** – is an excellent resource pack that includes suggestions and resources for the family, pre-schools and primary schools in Ireland

<https://www.paulpartnership.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Transition-Report-ABC-Start-Right-Web-.pdf>

- **'Supporting Students with Special Educational Needs to make Successful Transitions'** – is a guide written by the National Council for Special Education and contains Practical Transition Guidelines for Pre-Schools and Schools

<https://www.sess.ie/sites/default/files/inline-files/5-NCSE-2016-Supporting-Students-final-web-27.01.16.pdf>

- Mo Scéal Pre-School to Primary School Transition Templates

<https://www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/mo-sc%C3%A9al/mo-sc%C3%A9al-reporting-templates>

4. Policy Communication Plan for Parents/Guardians and Staff

A copy of this policy will be provided to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents and copies are always available in the policy folder **on display in the main room.**

Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews.

Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates.

Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in line with changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service. We will monitor and implement ongoing guidance during the **COVID-19 Pandemic** in line with updated HPSC guidance: www.hpsc.ie.

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5. Who must observe this Policy?

The Manager and Room Leader/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers, school age children and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices.

6. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

7. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

HWDC Policy #8: Policy on Managing Behaviour (with Guidance)



This policy supports positive behaviour by children attending Tír na nÓg Naíonra and sets our approaches for managing challenging behaviour. This aims to help children manage their behaviour in a way that is appropriate to their age and stage of development. The policy also supports staff to provide a framework of techniques and strategies for promoting positive behaviour and dealing with challenging behaviour.

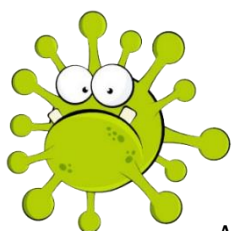
1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

At Tír na nÓg Naíonra we ensure that the emotional, social and general wellbeing of all of the children attending the service is positively supported in a happy, safe, well-planned and controlled environment.

We believe that it is very important for children to be able to: relate well to other children and adults; make friends and get on with others; feel secure and valued; explore and learn confidently and feel good about themselves.

If child abuse or neglect is suspected, it is managed in line with the services Child Protection and Welfare Policy (as recommended at Children First Training Programme).

Staff are offered opportunities to take part in **training and supports on behaviour management** and supporting children's emotional needs as part of our ongoing commitment to training and continuing professional development. Team meetings are also used to discuss and share positive behaviour management techniques and a consistent approach across the staff team.



COVID-19 measures and guidance are used in conjunction with this policy for the duration of the pandemic and beyond where applicable (See Infection Control and Risk Management Policies and Procedures).

All practice will align with HPSC guidance 'COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic' and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 require that a policy relating to supporting children with their behaviour skills is written and implemented.

2. Policy Statement

Our approach to supporting children with their social, emotional and behaviour skills is to ensure as far as possible that children are kept comfortable, relaxed, happy and engaged in play and other activities while the adults model positive ways of relating to them and each other.

We recognise the need to understand children's behaviour as a form of communication and to consider what might be triggering the behaviour and what the child is communicating. Children will be supported to learn how to express their feelings in appropriate ways and helped to learn how to deal positively with conflict.

Staff interactions with children are aimed at promoting their well-being and development. The methods of dealing with challenging, unsafe or disruptive behaviour in this service will be only those that help children to develop self-regulation and are developmentally appropriate.

Corporal punishment is prohibited as are any practices or the threat of any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful. Children are never humiliated, segregated, or have food withheld.

We inform parents/guardians about this policy on enrolment and seek information from families about the behaviour guidance strategies they use at home.

While staff are aware of and respect individual children's and families' backgrounds and beliefs, it may sometimes be necessary to balance these with our knowledge of developmentally appropriate practices and current best practice recommendations from recognised appropriate authorities, in the best interests of the child.

3. Procedures and Practices (with Guidance)

The role of the adult

Our staff aim to be loving, patient, and firm to help children to learn to act in certain ways. Behaviour guidance based on trust, respect, love and consistency helps children to build self-esteem and self-discipline. We help children to avoid inappropriate behaviour by helping them to understand rules and guidelines. When a child does something inappropriate, we help children look at the consequences of their actions and think about what they can do to make things better (appropriate to the child age). We are aware that a child may have some unmet need that is leading to the inappropriate behaviour and use strategies as outlined below, to look at ways to address this in addition to helping the child with managing their behaviour.

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In daily interactions

- Staff interact frequently with the children in a calm, friendly, positive, respectful manner.
- Staff are available and responsive to the children.
- All children regardless of race, religion, family background, culture, gender or ability are treated with respect and consideration.
- Independence in children is encouraged and scaffolded, as they are ready.
- Children's efforts, achievements and feelings are acknowledged and given sincere encouragement leading to growth in self-esteem and self-regulation.
- Children are kept comfortable, relaxed, happy and involved in play and other activities.
- Pro-social behaviours among children are recognised and encouraged.
- Staff expectations for children's social behaviour are developmentally appropriate – children's level of understanding and maturity are taken into account.
- Children are encouraged to verbalise feelings, ideas and interests.
- Staff plan activities and tell stories that help children learn about right and wrong.
- Children are distracted from unwanted behaviour.
- When behaviour is unacceptable, staff explain to the child/children why it is unacceptable in a way they can understand.
- We believe children need movement for their learning and development and are allowed to move freely for a significant part of the day.
- Soft, quiet spaces are provided for children to withdraw comfortably when they are feeling tired or overwhelmed or just want to be alone.



Bullying

We understand that Bullying behaviours can emerge in early childhood. We are vigilant for all bullying behaviour and understand that our practice plays a critical role in determining whether bullying develops and escalates, or whether it is stopped and prevented. Through the implementation of our early childhood curriculum, we nurture dispositions and attitudes to both teach children the skills they need to avoid bullying or respond to bullying.

Positive Behaviour Management Strategies used

Recognising challenging behaviour

We recognise that some of the ways children tell us they are stressed and overwhelmed are when they show the following behaviours on a regular basis. For example, if they:



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- are overactive
- have difficulty focusing on or completing a task
- become easily frustrated
- have difficulty making decisions
- have difficulty following directions
- solve problems by hitting, biting, grabbing or pushing
- have tantrums
- cling to adults
- avoid new tasks
- do not play with other children
- cry frequently and cannot be soothed easily
- do not eat

We always respond supportively to children's distress.

Strategies recommended in Aistear that we use include:

- Anticipating conflict and supporting children in resolving it, coming to the assistance of frustrated children and helping them find solutions.
- Modelling social behaviour when interacting with adults and children, thus helping children to learn from others' social skills such as taking turns, listening, sharing, asking for something, and saying excuse me, sorry, please, and thank you.
- Encouraging children to help each other during their activities, play and routines.
- Helping children share skills and knowledge with each other.
- Encouraging and acknowledging spontaneous co-operative efforts made by the children.
- Talking to children about the time they spend together.
- Encouraging children to play co-operative games.
- Interacting with (play and converse with) children rather than managing (giving instructions and warnings).

Boundary/limit setting and rules

- Any limits are clearly related to the safety, welfare and protection of the child themselves and others around them.
- Limits are communicated in a way that is respectful of all.
- Rules are as few as possible, consistently upheld and within the children's understanding.
- Staff consult with the children in an age appropriate way, regarding the codes of behaviour and rules.
- Clear, reasonable boundaries on behaviour are provided and explained.
- Rules are written positively, e.g. 'we walk inside' rather than 'no running'.
- Children are allowed enough time to respond to requests for them to behave within the rules or codes of behaviour, according to their needs and understanding – young children may take more time than adults to think through what is being asked of them.

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Providing choice

- We encourage negotiating choices between the adult and child to help children take appropriate responsibility and prepare them with positive life skills such as listening and reasoning.
- Whenever there is an opportunity for a real choice to be made, children are given the chance to exercise choice and then follow through on it.
- Younger children are given choices within limits, as appropriate to their level of development, e.g. 'would you like me to put your coat on or will you do it yourself?'

Positive reinforcement and encouragement

- Positive behaviour, however small, is encouraged and affirmed with both words and body language (e.g. nods, smiles).
- When a child is behaving well and when they are trying to stop themselves engaging in negative activities, this is noticed and acknowledged. This builds self-confidence and encourages children to repeat positive behaviour.
- Negative behaviour is ignored when it is judged safe and appropriate to do so.
- Children are encouraged in their activities.
- Encouragement is demonstrated by adults participating with children in their activities, at the children's invitation, taking care not to 'take over'.

Schedules, routines and transitions

- Schedules, routines and transitions serve as a framework from which children gain trust, security and order. These are always flexible, with as few transitions as possible, but they provide clear guidelines about what is expected.
- Any changes to the scheduling within the timetable will be clearly communicated to the children (and their families where necessary), along with clear reasons for the change (see Transitions Policy).

The physical environment

- Physical space is aesthetically pleasing, planned and well organised to diminish the potential for problems.
- Space is sufficient so that children can play and work creatively in a relaxed setting.
- Our outdoor space provides opportunities for children to move freely, be louder without restrictions and become calmer.
- Active, loud and energetic play spaces are balanced with soft, passive, quiet and peaceful areas both indoors and outdoors.

Toys, materials and resources

- Resources for working with children are developmentally appropriate and in good condition.
- Open-ended materials allow for children to use them in whatever way they choose and support engagement in play.
- There are enough easily accessible materials and equipment with enough complexity to keep children engaged for long enough without having to share too much or wait too long.

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The Positive Interventions we use

When managing conflict and resolving an incident we:

- Approach the situation calmly, stopping any hurtful actions.
- Remain neutral rather than taking sides.
- Focus on the behaviour, rather than the child.
- Acknowledge the children's feelings with open statements, e.g. 'You seem upset...' and ask them if they agree with the observation and if so, do they want to talk about it?
- Restate the problem, e.g. 'So you both want to play with the train at the same time ...'
- Ask for ideas for solutions and decide on them together, e.g. 'What can we do to solve this problem?' Encourage the children to think of a solution and check to make sure that the solution is acceptable to the children involved and realistically achievable. Clarify all the feelings with the children involved so that you are aware of anything that remains unresolved for them.
- If a child uses positive problem solving behaviour, reinforce this, for example by saying 'You solved the problem...' then state what they did.
- Stay near the child/children so that you are prepared to give follow up support and clarification.
- Follow through with your decisions but be prepared to change them if they prove inappropriate for the individual needs of the child/children.
- Explain the reasons behind why something cannot happen or why some behaviour is inappropriate.



Losing control

- When a child becomes so angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled, staff remain calm and settle the situation for this child and the others around.
- Staff will stop a child's aggressive or destructive behaviour such as biting, kicking or hitting and give a reason for their action such as 'biting must stop, biting hurts'.
- Staff model positive behaviour to the child and will never mirror the child's behaviour by raising their tone of voice or acting inappropriately.
- When the situation has been diffused, it is important that staff offer support, time and further discussion with the child, to reflect on what happened and to plan an alternative coping strategy in case a similar issue arises again.

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- A positive approach that the child may use in the future is reinforced such as walking away and playing elsewhere or by stating clearly that they don't like what is happening and/or it hurts.

Physical Intervention: holding or restraining a child to prevent harm

Physical holding as an intervention is only used as a last resort. This will only be used **when a member of staff who has been trained and certified in an evidence based method.** For example:

- To prevent an accident such as a child running across a road
- To prevent injury to the child or others, e.g. if a child is having a temper tantrum.
- No matter what age the child is, physical restraint is only ever be used for immediate safety reasons, with the minimum force and for the minimum amount of time. The purpose of this intervention can only be to prevent injury to the child, another child or to an adult, or to prevent serious damage to property.
- Where a child is expressing feelings of anger, anxiety or frustration, in a way which is unsafe for themselves and others and where reasoning has not stopped the behaviour, a staff member may assist the child in re-establishing control by holding them, to contain their feelings safely, as a last resort and for the minimum length of time. This intervention will only be used in an age appropriate way
- No pain should be inflicted on the child
- Great care will be taken when holding a child with particular attention paid to their individual needs.
- The intent of this action is to keep the child and others safe until their self-control is regained and they feel contained, but it will only be used in exceptional and rare circumstances.
- A calm and caring attitude on the part of the adult is critical in ensuring that this is supportive and in no way a punishment
- Parents/Guardians should be informed following an incident and it should be recorded in the incident book.

Note: Staff giving comfort by holding a child when they are distressed is not physical restraint. This should only take place when it is acceptable to all persons concerned.

Time to one side with support of an adult

- In some very rare situations, it may be appropriate to use time to one side with the support of an adult, for short periods of time, to enable a child to calm down. This may follow an incident in which the child may have felt very angry, anxious or frustrated to the extent that they themselves and others have been unsettled.
- Adult support is needed throughout this time and the child can decide when they feel able to continue to participate in the activities.
- A child must never be isolated in any space or room without adult support.
- The use of the 'naughty step' or similar is never used as this can lead to feelings of isolation and stigmatisation of the child.
- Outdoor time will never be taken away as a form of punishment.

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Staff Behaviour

Staff are aware of and understand that their own dispositions, values, attitudes, temperaments, expertise, reactions and responses to children impact on the behaviours that the children learn.

- Staff acknowledge that the emotions experienced by children are significant, e.g. an adult who is not scared of thunder will support a child not to overreact but will not trivialise the fear or anxiety the child expresses.
- Staff respond to and acknowledge children's feelings and emotions such as happiness, anger, pleasure, fear, anxiety, frustration, sadness, and pride and help children to learn to name their feelings and emotions.
- Staff understand that children may not yet have developed the appropriate ways to express emotions due to their age and/or stage of development.
- Staff attitudes and practice demonstrate an understanding and empathy towards children who display behaviours that are not always consistent with their level of development and/or general disposition.
- Staff are committed to nurturing and supporting children by suggesting alternative ways of responding and where possible giving children choice, rather than telling them how to behave.
- An atmosphere which fosters trust, security and comfort is created by giving children time and attention to enable them to talk and express their feelings.
- Children are in an environment that encourages caring and co-operative relationships, which supports them to relate with each other in more positive ways by learning through example from the adults and positive behaviour from their peers
- Staff model appropriate behaviour, so that children can see what to do and learn from positive examples, rather than simply instructing them to do things. An example of this is joining in and encouraging children to clear up toys or paints after a session and making this fun, ending the session in a positive way
- Any limitations to a child's behaviour are phrased in a positive way, focusing on 'what to do' rather than 'what not to do'. By using these positive statements, staff reinforce for children appropriate and desirable ways of communication. It also decreases the likelihood of children responding with resistance or defensiveness.
- Explaining to children the 'why' of behaviour guidance and the limits which help them to internalise and learn the rules of positive social interaction.
- Minor incidents are best ignored. As long as their behaviour is not impacting negatively on others, adults sometimes need to step back, take a breath and decide not to speak or intervene.
- Staff listen to children and respond in a fair and supportive way, this gives them a greater sense of comfort and trust and encourages them to use the adult as a reliable source of advice by demonstrating that what they say is valued.



Prohibited Practices

The following are prohibited practices in this setting:

- Bullying in any form
- Children are never ignored, spoken to sarcastically, humiliated, segregated, or have food withheld.
- Corporal punishment - Any physical force which is used with intent to cause some degree of pain or discomfort, such as hitting, spanking (refers to striking a child with an open hand on the buttocks or extremities with the intention of modifying behaviour without causing physical injury), shaking, slapping, twisting, pulling, pinching, squeezing, or biting is prohibited.
- Practices or the threat of any practices that are disrespectful, degrading, exploitative, intimidating, emotionally or physically harmful or neglectful to the child will not be carried out
- Restraint of children by unapproved methods.



Dealing with Incidents

If a Child Leaves the Service Unaccompanied or has gone **MISSING**

On discovering that a child has gone missing, we will:

- Immediately make a search of the surrounding area.
- Request help from people available

If the search is unsuccessful, we will:

- Contact **An Garda Síochána** providing a description and keep searching the area
- Parents/Guardians will be notified immediately or as soon as is reasonably practical to do so.
- After the event, details of the incident and those involved will be recorded in the incident book and a parent will be asked to sign it.

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Dealing with Serious Behaviour Issues

Serious behaviour issues may include:

- Any repeated pattern of behaviour that interferes with the child's learning or engagement in social interactions with peers and adults such as withdrawal
- Behaviours that are not responsive to the guidance procedures/approaches described above
- Prolonged tantrums, physical and verbal aggression, disruptive behaviour (e.g. screaming, property destruction, self-injury, persistent non-compliance).

When a child's serious behaviour issues are causing disruption and problems for the other children in the group, the following approaches will be considered:

- Reviewing the programme to ensure that it is meeting the child's care, learning and development needs
- Reviewing the service's approaches to addressing the child's behaviour
- Discussing with the child's parents/guardians to help to develop a specific plan for that child. The purpose of the plan will be to help ensure that the reason the child is having difficulty with regulating their behaviour, is identified if possible and addressed. It is also to provide whatever support they need to be able to relate well to other children and adults, make friends, feel secure and valued, explore and learn confidently and feel good about themselves.

An individualised plan that takes a positive, learning approach, will be developed to include:

- Observing and recording the behaviour
- Identifying the triggers for the challenging behaviour (best guesses about why and when the behaviour happens)
- Considering ways to make the events/interactions that the child seems to find difficult, easier to manage (e.g. less difficult, less confusing, more engaging)
- Skills to teach the child to be able to deal with the situation without resorting to the problem behaviour
- Ways in which the adults will respond when the problem behaviour occurs - to ensure a consistent response
- Ways that parents can help the child at home
- Ways to review and evaluate the plan.

Recurring problems are dealt with in an inclusive manner following observations and involving the child's parents/guardians and, where necessary, other appropriate adults (with parents'/guardians' consent).

Discussing a child's behaviour with staff or parents/guardians in front of the child or other children is to be avoided.

Parents/guardians are encouraged to maintain on-going communication with staff on the approaches being implemented.

When all reasonable attempts to support the child whose challenging behaviour is causing the difficulties have failed, it may be necessary to suggest to parents/guardians to seek professional

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advice, such as a psychologist or play therapist. The parent/guardian may then seek the advice or request referral to other professionals.

In partnership with parents, any programme designed for a child by an appropriately qualified specialist will be fully implemented as far as the resources of the service allow.

In exceptional circumstances and following specialised advice and guidance, it may be considered necessary for the child to leave the service to move to a service that can better meet their particular needs.

All staff team members will be provided with support to deal with stressful situations arising from dealing with challenging behaviour. (See Staff Supervision Policy.)



Recording Incidents

Records are kept of significant incidents to include:

- a) The child's name
- b) Time and location of the incident
- c) Events leading up to the incident
- d) The nature of the incident
- e) Injuries sustained
- f) Others involved
- g) Witnesses
- h) How the situation was handled
- i) Whether restraint was used, what form of restraint and the reason for it
- j) Consequences
- k) Parents/guardians signature/s.

4. Related Policies, Procedures and Forms required to support this policy:

- **Settling-In Policy**
- **Policy on Accidents and Incidents**
- **Child Protection Policy (ref: Children First Training)**
- **Complaints Policy**
- **Supervision Policy**

5. Communication Plan for Parents, Guardians and Staff

A copy of this policy will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents in the Policy Folder **on display in the main room.**

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On the early childhood service adopting this policy and procedures, Meantóir shall not be liable in any manner or to any extent for any direct, indirect, special, incidental or consequential damages, losses or expenses arising out of the use of this document.

Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews.

Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates.

Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in light of changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service. **This includes emerging guidance on Covid-19 as stated in our infection control and risk policies.**

6. Who must observe Policies and Procedures?

The Manager and Room Leaders/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices and the additional guidance relating to this policy.

7. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

8. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

HWDC Policy #9: Inclusion Policy (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion)



with Guidance

The Inclusion Policy adopted by **Tír na nÓg Naíonra** specifies the way our service ensures that the needs (including the physical, emotional, cultural and intellectual needs) and the religious beliefs (if any) of all children attending are addressed. **It sets out the equality of access into the service for all children.**

1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

‘Participation in inclusive high-quality early childhood settings enhances all children’s early learning experiences. In an inclusive setting there is an awareness and respect for each child’s individual strengths and areas of difficulty. Inclusive settings engage in meaningful collaboration with parents/guardians and other professionals to ensure access, equality and full participation for all children.’

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016)

All forms of early childhood service provision should be

- ‘...without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his/her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status’.

U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child 2.1

The purpose of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy of this service is to ensure that:

- The service is a place where everyone, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances, feels safe, feels a sense of belonging, is respected and valued and has their individual needs understood and met as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided.
- In line with Aistear and Síolta, the curriculum/programme reflects the identities of all children and recognises their abilities and interests.
- All children are enabled to meaningfully participate in all aspects of the curriculum/programme, and learning is extended to challenge and promote the individual child’s abilities and development.
- That service planning and provision embraces the needs of all children and works to deliver an inclusive and accessible environment for all.

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- Children of all abilities have equal access to culturally and developmentally appropriate play-based educational activities, both indoors and outdoors, which develop their understanding, dispositions, skills and holistic development.
- Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators and experts on their child, and the smooth transitioning from home to the early childhood care and education setting is supported.
- The service works in partnership with parents, families and the wider community to promote equality of opportunity and to oppose all forms of bias, oppressive behaviour, prejudice and discrimination.
- The service provides opportunities that help develop children's sense of personal and group identity so that they can become confident, open to difference, receptive to change and respectful towards other identities.
- The service enables children and staff members to have the confidence and skills to challenge instances of prejudice and discrimination.
- Children and staff members are equipped to understand that reason, logic, respect and sensitivity have to underpin ways and means of resolving arguments and conflicts.
- Equality of opportunity is an integral part of all planning and decision making within the service.
- The service operates inclusive recruitment practices.

Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education (DCYA, 2016)

Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework
- Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016
- U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular Article 2 (UNCRC, 1989)
- Irish Constitution (Bunreacht na hEireann) in particular Articles 40.1, 40.3.1, 40.3.2 and 44.3.3.
- Equal Status Acts 2000-2012
- Disability Act 2005;
- Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015
- Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016.
- Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children, 2017.

1. Policy Statement

The mission of this service is to value the ability, individuality and cultural background of all children by providing each child with the opportunities they need to reach their full potential as active learners within an inclusive ethos/culture. We achieve care and inclusion in education by continually reviewing an anti-bias approach that is implemented by the early childhood service, and by working in partnership with families, children and the early childhood team, both individually through reflective practice, and in consultation with children and their families, so as to ensure that the education and care provided is fully inclusive of all children, families and agencies that attend and use our service.

The ethos of this service will ensure an inclusive culture, recognising that every child is an individual and has their own learning style. We believe that all children are unique, but share many

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similarities, thus promoting equality and diversity throughout the early childhood service. We will promote and nurture the identity of each child attending the service and ensure that their emotional and physical well-being is of paramount importance at all times.

This policy represents the agreed principles and commitments for inclusion, in line with the **Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter 2016**.

2. Procedures and Practices

This service will implement this policy to support and develop an inclusive environment for children and adults within our early childhood service. We aim to support learning and participation that does not hinder or exclude individual children or groups of children. This means that equality of opportunity must be a reality for all children attending the service. This is achieved by using a child-centred equality and diversity approach to create an inclusive learning environment.

The core principles of this strategy are to:

- »Work in partnership with parents.
- »Support children's ability, identity, cultural background and sense of belonging.
- »Support children to become respectful of difference.
- »Foster each child's critical thinking in order to confront bias and discrimination.
- »Implement a curriculum that meets the individual needs and emerging interests of the child under Síolta: The National Quality Framework (2006) and Aistear: The National Curriculum Framework (2009).
- »Respond to children's diverse and individual learning needs and styles through an emerging curriculum and the provision of a learning environment (equipment, materials and resources) that reflect diversity and difference
- »Support continual development for all Early Childhood Educators, so as to ensure that they are trained in an equality and diversity approach to providing care and education to all.

Staff at this service work to ensure the following:

- »Children feel secure and know that their contributions are valued.
- »Children know they belong and are valued as unique individuals.
- »All children's cultural backgrounds are respected and valued.
- »Children feel strong and confident about their identity.
- »Children are taught in groupings that allow them all to experience success.
- »Children use materials that reflect a range of social and cultural backgrounds.
- »Children have a common curriculum experience that allows for a range of different learning styles.

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»Children are encouraged to participate fully, having particular regard for and being cognisant of children with a variety of abilities.

»If a child uses an aid or assistive technology to communicate, that the device is used solely for this purpose.

Working in partnership with parents

As children and families are the most knowledgeable about their background, culture, language, and physical and developmental needs, we will ensure that families are consulted when developing and implementing policy. An effective diversity and equality approach will ensure that ability and diversity are recognised and celebrated, and that discrimination, inequality and exclusion are addressed.

3. Dealing with Discriminatory Incidents

We will deal with incidences of bias and discrimination as follows:

»The first step in handling incidents involving discrimination is to recognise and acknowledge what is happening.

»All children need to know that name-calling or physically hurting someone is unacceptable.

»Discuss with the children in a democratic and sensitive manner that name-calling or physically hurting someone is unacceptable.

»When an incident occurs (hurtful remarks made by one child to another), both children learn from the incident. Refer back to the rules of the service where appropriate.

»Always determine the real reason for incidents involving exclusion or conflict. It may not be a discriminatory incident, so be careful not to make assumptions.

»Some issues may be brought into the early childhood service by the child, arising from comments made by adults outside the setting. Recognise when it is an adult issue, and identify appropriate actions for addressing the issue with the child's parents or guardians.

»An incident should be considered from the perspective of all individuals involved as well as those who witnessed it. Appropriate actions need to be taken, at circle time or in group discussion, in order to address incidents witnessed by children who were not involved. This does not mean singling out children in the group.

»By showing empathy and expressing our feelings, we help children to express their feelings.

»It is important to be aware of how our own attitudes can shape how we respond to a given situation. Be mindful that Educators are role models for the children and the early childhood service.

4. Staff Training

Staff training on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion will be made available as part of our commitment to continuous professional development and training in this area. As part of our ongoing reflective practice, we will review all practices to ensure they are fully inclusive on a regular basis. All staff will be required to participate in these procedures.

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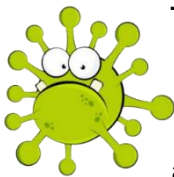
5. The Inclusion Coordinator

The Inclusion Coordinator is a named person **highlighted in the Statement of purpose (Key Roles)**.

6. Communication Plan for Parents, Guardians and Staff

A copy of this policy will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents in the Policy Folder **on display in the main room**. Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews.

Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates. Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in light of changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service.



This includes emerging guidance on Covid-19 as stated in our infection control and risk management policies. All practice will align with HPSC guidance 'COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic' and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

7. Who must observe Policies and Procedures?

The Manager and Room Leaders/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices.

8. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

9. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

HWDC Policy #10: Policy on Healthy Eating (with Guidance)



This policy specifies the way Tír na nÓg Naíonra will ensure that the food and drink provided to the children attending the service is nutritious and complies with the dietary and religious requirements of the child.

This Healthy Eating Policy is developed in line with the Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-School Services (the Department of Health are developing healthy eating guidelines for 1-5 year olds) and the 3 Week Menu Plan - A Resource for Pre-Schools, and the serving size guide for pre-schools where appropriate.

“A child’s early years are important for their future health and well-being, and good nutrition during this time lays a healthy foundation for all of childhood and life.” [Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Pre-school Services 2014.](#)

1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

We believe that the food a child eats in their early years influences their eating habits as they grow and develop. It is important to teach young children about healthy food choices and staying well hydrated, and to help them develop good habits and a healthy relationship with food from an early age.

The interactions relating to healthy eating are also important. Síolta Standard 9 Component 9.4 states that a quality service is proactive in supporting the development of healthy eating habits in children while supporting their enjoyment and appreciation of eating and drinking as a positive social experience.

Aistear states that adults support children’s psychological and physical well-being by helping them to make healthy choices about nutrition, hygiene and exercise (this also applies to hydration). One of Aistear’s learning goals for young children is to “make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine”.

Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- Regulation 10 of the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulations 2016](#) requires that there is a healthy eating policy in place that sets out the way the service ensures that the food and drinks provided to the children attending the service are nutritious, and complies with the dietary or religious requirements of the child.

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- Regulation 22 on Food and Drink requires that the registered provider ensures that all children attending the service receive adequate, suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink, which takes their individual needs into consideration.

2. Policy Statement

This policy is to ensure that all aspects of healthy eating are considered and children's dietary requirements are appropriately met as well as any particular religious' requirements their family may have. Children with allergies and very young children also need this policy to help ensure that they are not put at risk of allergic reactions to food or drink or of choking.

This policy will provide the correct information for parents/guardians about what foods the service will provide and in what ways, and what types of foods they encourage parents/guardians to provide for their child in snack or lunch boxes. Parents will be encouraged to promote healthy eating by providing healthy snacks for children and suggestions of healthy snacks will be made available for parents. Parents will be informed of what snacks or food are not allowed in the childcare service in the interests of child health and well-being.

Sufficient, suitable and nutritious food and drink are available to each child depending on their age, development and needs including:

- specific dietary requirements;
- appropriate serving size;
- the availability of drinking water at all times.

3. Procedures and Practices

We help children to establish healthy eating patterns, with an emphasis on the social and enjoyable aspects of eating together.

We consult with parents regarding their child's special requirements and to identify any support needs that may be necessary.

Through our newsletter or information sent home, we inform parents of appropriate nutritional snacks and food for children, appropriate portion size and positive lunchbox choices.

We ensure that drinking water is freely accessible and available to children throughout the day and encourage children to help themselves.

Milk will be served at snack time provide no one is lactose intolerant and the milk will be full cream and pasteurised.

Suitable portion sizes are provided in line with the serving size guide for pre-schools.

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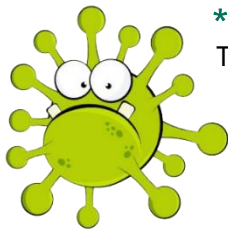
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Flexibility and sensitivity surrounds snack times (when a child is busy or not hungry). Children are not hurried and encouraged to enjoy sack time. Children are not made sit for snack if they do not wish to eat.

Children are involved in the preparation and clearing away of snacks (setting the table, clearing away their own cup, leftovers).

Staff sit with a small group of children to encourage good eating habits, to stimulate conversation and to enhance the quality of interactions when appropriate.

Parents are informed if their child has not eaten well.



****See Appendix attached: 'Healthy Eating Specifications'****

The document attached outlines healthy eating practices unique to our service including approved snacks and how we handle parties and celebrations. **It also includes any specific arrangements in relation to food and snacks due to Covid-19 infection and contamination control.**

All practice will align with HPSC guidance 'COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic' and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

4. GUIDANCE: Special Diets, Allergies and Intolerances

If a child needs a special diet, it is the responsibility of the parent to inform the Manager of this, so that arrangements can be made to accommodate the child's requirements. All individual dietary needs should be met, whether medical, religious or cultural. This information should be documented in the child's personal file and accessible to all staff. Information should be visible in food preparation/storage areas. Children do not have access to foodstuffs to which they are allergic.

If the requirements are more complex parents should provide a copy of the diet sheet prepared for the child by a Dietician and are accommodated where possible.

Allergies and Intolerances

Food sensitivities – food allergies and intolerances, including coeliac disease – are a fact of life in the daily practice of early childhood care and education providers. Food allergies in particular have increased in recent years, especially among young children. Reaction symptoms resemble those of hay fever or an upset stomach. Sometimes however, the symptoms can be more serious, particularly in the case of a severe food allergy where reactions to certain foods can be immediate and life-threatening.

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All food sensitivities are controlled in the same way: making sure the child does not come into contact with the foods they react to. Accommodating food sensitive children in a supportive and safe environment is now a task faced by early childhood service providers for whom the health and welfare of the children in their care is of primary concern. There are two elements to achieving this:

1. Increasing the level of knowledge and awareness of food sensitivities, particularly food allergy, amongst staff members, and
2. Working with the parents/guardian of the child in question to draw up a management plan to ensure the child's safety within the early childhood environment.

It can be difficult and takes a certain amount of skill for staff to meet the needs of individual children with a food allergy or intolerance while serving the needs of the other children in their care at the same time. However, open and ongoing communication between the parents/guardian and staff, being vigilant and planning for emergencies will minimise the potential risks (see Supporting Documents below).

5. Supporting Documents

Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Preschool Services

health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Food-and-Nutrition-Guidelines-for-Pre-School-Services.pdf

What is a Serving Size? – A Guide for Pre-Schools

https://www.safefood.eu/SafeFood/media/SafeFoodLibrary/Documents/Publications_1/G6101-Safefood-App-Port-Control-Guide_single-pages.pdf

Safefood [All About Allergies](#)

<https://www.safefood.eu/Food-safety/Food-Allergies/Allergy-or-intolerance.aspx>

Early Childhood Ireland – Nutrition and Regulation

www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/operating-childcare-service/nutrition/nutrition-and-regulation/

NCN Healthy Ireland Smart Start

www.ncn.ie/index.php/contact-us/2-ncn/201-healthy-ireland-smart-start-nutrition

6. Related Policies and Procedures

- Policy on Managing Behaviour
- Staff Training Policy
- Policy on Administration of Medication
- Risk Management Policy

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7. Communication Plan

A copy of this policy will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents in the Policy Folder **on display in the main room.**

Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews. Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates.

Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in light of changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service. **This includes emerging guidance on Covid-19 as stated in our infection control and risk policies.**

8. Who must observe Policies and Procedures?

The Manager and Room Leaders/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices.

9. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

10. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

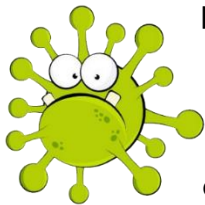
HWDC Policy #11: Policy on Outdoor Play

The Outdoor Play Policy of Tír na nÓg Naíonra specifies how children access outdoor play whether on the premises or at another location and how health and safety is ensured. **This policy is used in conjunction with our revised Infection Control Policy and Risk Management Policy developed in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.**



1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

Our Policy on Outdoor Play acknowledges the importance of play in contributing to the general health and wellbeing of children, extending through childhood and beyond. *The National Guidelines on Physical Activity for Ireland* state that children and young people (aged 2 – 18) should be active, at a moderate to vigorous level, for at least 60 minutes every day and that muscle-strengthening, flexibility and bone-strengthening exercises should be included at least three times a week.



Playing Outdoors – COVID-19 measures for outdoor play used in conjunction with this policy

We appreciate that play as an emotional support for children during and following the Covid-19 pandemic. When playing freely, children can process emotions and ‘play out’ their fears and traumas. We see our role as being to provide the environment, the opportunities and especially the time for this to happen. We see outdoor play as best for this type of play where possible.

All practice will align with HPSC guidance ‘COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic’ and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

We aim to ensure that:

- Time spent outdoors will be maximised where possible.
- The use of the outdoor area will be staggered – one play pod at a time. Two pods may be in the outdoor area at the same time but social distancing will apply.
- Public health guidance will apply to all outings away from the service and **a risk assessment will be carried out**. This includes the use of public play spaces.
- Outdoor play equipment will be **cleaned and disinfected** after each group/play-pod uses the area and a written record will be kept.
- **All staff and children will wash their hands** on re-entering the premises after outdoor play.
- The **cleaning of outdoor play equipment** will be part of the daily cleaning schedule.

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Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- Under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 stipulates that all services shall ensure that— (a) a suitable, safe and secure outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis is provided on the premises, or (b) where no such space is provided, the pre-school children attending the service have access on a daily basis to a suitable outdoor space. The regulations also outline that where outdoor space to which the pre-school children attending the service have access is provided on the premises, services must ensure that the outdoor space is suitable, safe and secure.
- The Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 require that 'where such play is provided' in early childhood settings, there must be a Policy on Outdoor Play.
- Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises the significance of play in the lives of children, acknowledging play as a specific right, in addition to and distinct from the child's right to recreation and leisure.

2. Policy Statement

At **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, a strong emphasis is placed on the importance of children's play, for its own sake and as a critical factor in children's well-being, learning and development. Outdoor play activities are a vital part of childhood experience and an important complement to our indoor activities.

We consider that outdoor play is just as important as the indoor programme **and aim to provide opportunities for outdoor play on a daily basis**. We use measures such as **appropriate clothing, shelter and sun protection** to navigate weather conditions as far as possible.

We aim to provide a safe, stimulating outdoor environment where space is used effectively to enable children to explore a broad and balanced curriculum using a range of interesting and engaging resources suitable to both their individual and group needs.

The outdoor environment is an invaluable place of learning and engagement and has a positive impact on children's physical and mental wellbeing. It provides opportunities for children to explore, discover and develop an understanding of the natural environment around them with unique opportunities for: sensory experiences; physical activities; observations; constructive play with sand, water and mud; socio-dramatic play; art; early science, mathematics, environmental learning and many others. Therefore, the outdoor play environment is planned with the same care and attention as the indoor environment.

The outdoor space is designed to provide:

- Varied, multisensory, challenging, creative and enriching experiences.
- Opportunities for noisy, boisterous, vigorous, physically active play.
- Opportunities for appropriate physical challenge and risk-taking that are inherent in the value of play.
- Different surfaces and opportunities for the development of physical strength, balance and coordination.
- Natural elements and loose materials that children can combine, manipulate, use and adapt in their own way, for their own purposes (open-ended materials).

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- Opportunities to develop language and social skills
- Opportunities for exploration, observation and experimentation
- Different surfaces to facilitate outdoor play all year round.

Safety

Safety is a primary consideration in planning all activities. Appropriate supervision of children while playing outside is paramount.

We aim to ensure that the risk of injury is minimised while allowing children appropriate challenges. Children are given the chance to stretch themselves, and to test and develop their abilities, without exposing them to unacceptable hazards.

Outdoor play equipment will be **cleaned and disinfected** after each group/play-pod uses the area and a written record will be kept.

Risk Assessment – A general safety/risk check is carried out daily to identify any hazards or broken equipment that needs to be removed or cleaned. A regular risk assessment will be carried out as required (see Risk Assessment Template).

3. Procedures and Practices

The outdoor play area is included in all planning for learning at Tír na nÓg Naíonra and we ensure that:

- Time spent outdoors will be maximised where possible.
- Children are enabled to access the outdoors on a daily basis taking appropriate measures to deal with the weather conditions for example wellies, warm clothing and hats or long sleeves and sun protection, are provided.
- The outdoor play area is used as a context and a natural resource for learning and development.
- Children are consulted about their interests, needs and wishes for outdoor play and the outdoor environment.
- Children are given the opportunity to plan and have ownership of their learning in the outdoors,
- The particular strengths and needs of each child is considered.
- A wide variety of challenging, diverse, creative and enriching experiences are planned for to ensure that children's learning and development needs are met under all four themes of Aistear:
 - Wellbeing
 - Communicating
 - Exploring and Thinking
 - Identity and Belonging
- The opportunities for appropriate challenge and risk-taking in play are considered in planning.
- The learning that happens in the outdoor play area is observed, assessed and recorded in the same way as learning indoors.

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Broad Based Play Opportunities

The outdoor play area offers children the opportunity to investigate and explore, problem solve, use their imagination and creativity. Children experience social interactions – being able to choose whether and when to play alone or with others, to negotiate, co-operate, compete and resolve conflicts. Long, uninterrupted periods of time are provided for spontaneous free play. A variety of materials and opportunities are provided to stimulate different kinds of play including risky and challenging play, running, climbing and gardening. **Careful consideration will be given to the use of some resources at different stages of the COVID-19 pandemic as advised by Tusla and www.hpsc.ie**

Usual resources include:

- sand, mud, water, clay, paint, and other open-ended materials for sensory and exploratory play (aligned to HPSC guidance)
- a large supply of blocks and construction toys and materials for cognitive and physical development
- dress-up clothes and props for pretend play (aligned to HPSC guidance)
- balls, hoops, balancing and climbing places
- materials for building dens, making concoctions, using tools
- small world play
- art, writing, modelling and other creative activities
- natural materials for matching, sequencing, measuring, weighing, pouring for learning mathematical concepts.
- Open space is available for running, cycling and general free movement.
- Children are encouraged to manipulate the environment and the materials in their own way, to support their play.
- Activities which test the limits of capabilities such as lifting, balancing and climbing and chase games are included.
- All children, including those with physical impairments/disabilities, have access to play opportunities and are included in play – for children with limited motor abilities and/or health impairments this means that activities may need to be positioned to allow children to relax, to focus attention on the activity and have sufficient controlled movement for independent play.
- Children can enjoy energetic activity and have opportunities to run, jump, scoot, crawl, climb, swing and ride on wheeled toys.
- Children are helped to care for the outdoor environment through gardening in the outdoor play area.
- Children are given opportunities to care for living things (animals and gardening with non-toxic plants).
- Children learn how to use tools safely and effectively and to follow safety rules.

Supervision Procedures

- All staff members must be vigilant in their supervision of the children.
- Appropriate staff ratios must be maintained in the play area at all times (**this includes Play Pod requirements as set out in the Infection Control Policy**).
- It must be ensured that an adult directly supervises the use of each large play structure.

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- Staff members should place themselves strategically around the play area so that all children can be observed and heard and reached quickly, especially when engaging in activities that have a level of challenge/risk, for example:
 - o In all areas with access to water in tubs, buckets, water tables
 - o When children are building and/or climbing high structures
 - o When children are using sharp items such as sticks or tools.

Safety Procedures

- All staff members must be diligent in the inspection of the play areas.
- Each child is assigned to a key person who is responsible for their safety while they are outdoors.
- Children are reminded of basic rules for outdoor play that helps everyone enjoy and stay safe when outside
- All equipment must be maintained to ensure the children's safety.
- New equipment must be installed to the most up to date Safety Standards. Where equipment is installed that has a recommendation for a shock absorbing surface this must be rated and installed as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Visual inspections of the playground and equipment must be carried out on a daily basis before the children go outside to ensure safety is maintained.
- A monthly and seasonal inspection of the playground and equipment must be carried out to determine the need for repairs.
- The use of wheeled toys must be carefully monitored.
- Emergency/first aid kits must be easily accessible.
- It must be ensured that all of the children are clear about the safety rules.

Hygiene Procedures (See Infection Control Policy)

- Hand sanitizer can be used to clean children's hands outdoors if necessary.
- All staff and children will wash their hands on re-entering the premises after outdoor play.
- The cleaning of outdoor play equipment will be part of the daily cleaning schedule.

GUIDANCE: Playground and equipment maintenance

- The use of the outdoor area will be staggered – one play pod at a time. Two pods may be in the outdoor area at the same time but social distancing will apply.
- All staff and children will wash their hands on re-entering the premises after outdoor play.
- The cleaning of outdoor play equipment will be part of the daily cleaning schedule.
- The route the children take from the indoor to the outdoor area is free of hazards –and is checked daily.
- The play area boundary (fence and gate/s) is secure, that no adult can access the area without the knowledge of the staff members in charge and no child can leave the area without supervision.
- Children cannot access the bins, oil tank/gas supply, boiler or pest control bait boxes.
- The area is checked for hazards such as catch points, sharp points, protruding hardware or possible entrapment (bars on equipment must be no less than 6cm apart (round) /7.5cm apart (flat)).

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- The area is checked daily for broken glass, plastic, animal droppings.
- The area is checked for choking hazards where children under three are present.
- Cords, string or skipping ropes tied to slides, or other playground equipment are removed.
- Climbing equipment is not placed near clothes lines or overhead wires.
- The use of climbing structures is restricted if wet.
- Structures are checked for frost and/or ice build-up.
- Ice poses an extreme fall risk and is broken, sanded or salted where appropriate before children are allowed to play in the area.
- Daily checks on equipment are conducted for signs of decay, rust, splinters, sharp protrusions, protruding nuts, rivets or nails.
- Broken equipment is removed or temporarily fenced off.
- The presence of toxic plants is checked
- Risk Assessments are carried out when necessary.

When Outdoor play is not located on our premises

All hygiene practices and safety procedures are followed in the same way when play is off site.

When participating in outdoor play not located on the premises, staff members ensure that the outdoor space being accessed has been risk assessed prior to its use on each occasion. This risk assessment will identify any hazards and how any potential risk of injury/incident from these hazards can be safely managed or eliminated (see Risk Assessment template).

Staff will ensure that children are not at risk from members of the public and are protected from unwanted attention while in an outdoor play area not located on the premises.

We advise our insurance company about outdoor play away from our premises and frequency of access to this area off the premises.

Children will be quickly removed from any situation where they receive unwanted or inappropriate attention from members of the public when in a public outdoor area.

We will implement the Outings Policy, if required.

4. Related Policies, Procedures required under the Early Years Regulations 2016

- Risk Management Policy
- Infection Control Policy
- Outings Policy
- Policy on Administration of Medication
- Policy on Accidents and Incidents
- Safety Statement

5. Communication Plan for Parents, Guardians and Staff

A copy of this policy will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents in the Policy Folder **on display in the main room.**

Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews. Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates.

Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in light of changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service. **This includes emerging guidance on Covid-19 as stated in our infection control and risk policies.**

6. Who must observe Policies and Procedures?

The Manager and Room Leaders/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices.

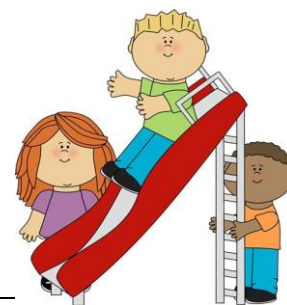
7. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

8. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

Risk Assessment for Outdoor Play (on or off premises)



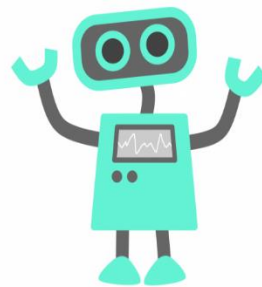
Service Name:		Date:	
Identified Risk:		# of children:	
# of adults:		Age range of children:	

Identified Hazards	Persons at risk	Risk Level – H/Med/Low	Control Measures (currently in place and increased actions)	Risk Level after Control Measures

Additional Information:

Risk Assessor(s):		Date Assessment Completed:		Checked by:		Date:	
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HWDC Policy #12: Policy on the Use of Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices (with Guidance)



1. Rationale and Policy Considerations

Photographs, video and audio recordings are used to document for a variety of activities in **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**. This includes to document children's learning and development, to provide visual displays of children's work, to support quality assurance and to communicate with parents and families.

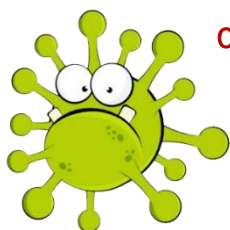
We believe that the benefits of using the internet, photographic and recording devices for young children's learning and development are many and varied. Interactive media – when used safely and appropriately with in our early childhood service – can enhance learning and help to prepare children for positive use of technology.

Among the advantages for parents are that they can view and comment on records of activities and observations shared and can add their own observations and/or videos of their child. They can be more informed and involved in their child's learning and development. In this way 'clear two-way channels of communication are fostered between the early-years setting, parents, families and children.' (EYEI, Department of Education and Skills).

The advantages for service providers of online interactive media in parent involvement include:

- **Providing an effective form of communication with parents.**
- **Linking the children's progress and development from home to the service and vice versa.**
- **Connecting the child's learning and development to Aistear.**

At **Tír na nÓg Naíonra**, we are aware that the many benefits of the use of technology, online interactive media and electronic information sharing need to be balanced with the rights of children, families and staff members to privacy, personal integrity and dignity, and the risks that can be associated with the use of such devices and media. The service has the overall responsibility to ensure that online safety is fully considered. A Data Controller and a deputy Data Controller are assigned within our team to take responsibility for the collection, storage and use of all personal data including images (photos and video). We understand that recognisable images captured by CCTV systems are also personal data and are subject to the provisions of the [Data Protection Act 2018](#) and the [General Data Protection Regulation \(GDPR\) 2018](#).



COVID-19 measures and guidance are used in conjunction with the policies and procedures of this service for the duration of the pandemic and beyond where applicable. In particular, Infection Control and Risk Management Policies and Procedures are to be used with this policy. In particular, the cleaning and disinfection of any shared devices.

All practice will align with HPSC guidance ‘COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control guidance for settings providing childcare during the COVID-19 Pandemic’ and will we keep updated on any changing requirements associated with this from the sites below.

- <https://first5.gov.ie/userfiles/files/download/8be9f2c0575d621e.pdf>
- www.hpsc.ie

Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- Regulation 10 of the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 requires that services have a Policy and Procedures on the Use of the Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices. Regulation 17 requires that parents be provided with information about the service’s policy on the Use of the Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices
- Data Protection Act 2018 and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018
- Children First: this refers to Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2017 and the Children First Act 2015.
- Our Duty to Care: Principles of Good Practice for the Protection of Children and Young People 2002.

2. Definitions

Technology	This refers broadly to both hardware that enables connectivity and devices (including television and handheld devices such as smartphones and tablets), content (including digital media such as apps, games, software and television programming), and assistive technology devices.
Interactive media	This refers to digital and analogue materials, including software programmes, applications (apps), broadcast and streaming media, some children’s television programming, e-books, the Internet, and other forms of content designed to facilitate active and creative use by young children and engagement with other children and adults.
Social media	Websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking.

3. Policy Statement

Tír na nÓg Naíonra uses the internet, photographic and recording devices to support the provision of a quality service for children and families.

Parents/guardians are fully informed where technology is used as part of the curriculum or programme and how the internet is used as a learning tool within the service.

A Parent/Guardian Consent Form is provided by the service and must be completed and signed before any child can access the internet or has their photo or moving images taken or posted anywhere.

Photography and recording of children will only take place:

- When at least one other adult is present [*Except in the case of a sole operator*].
- When the child or group of children agrees to be photographed.

Digital equipment remains in the service at all times (other than during outdoor play). Images are deleted from digital records when children leave the service **after 2 years** in accordance with GDPR requirements (**2 years after the child stops attending is the Tusla recommendation for the Record of Pre-School Child: Regulation 15(4)**).

Photography and recording of children while they are in the service by any parent must only be with the consent of management and other parents.

All use of the internet, photographic and recording devices will be considered within our risk assessment process.

We do our best to ensure that all parents have the same level of access to information shared about their child's learning and development while in the service.

Images and recordings are stored safely and appropriately returned to parents and/or disposed of/deleted when no longer needed for the purpose for which they were taken.

We request that photos or images taken of children while attending the setting are not posted elsewhere by others without the consent of parents/guardians.

Non-staff photographers are never allowed to have unsupervised access to children.

4. Procedures and Practices

Access to the internet by children includes:

- When - During the day in a supervised capacity
- Purpose - to record achievements, artwork or to capture a moment of interest or to research a topic or interest.
- Software is age appropriate and suitable, online filters and adult controls and encryption are applied

Use of photographic and recording devices in the service – who, what and for what purpose?

All Educators/Key Workers employed in the room can photograph or record children. The purposes for which photos and/or recordings may be used include:

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- To document children's learning and development.
- To communicate with families.
- To record evidence in the event of an accident/incident involving a child.
- For security, for example, closed circuit television monitoring of the service (CCTV).
- For safety, for example, group photograph on outings for speedy identification of individuals in the case of any incident.
- To support quality assurance, for example, in the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme.
- Local news or online social media, for example, local newspaper, Facebook etc.

Parent/guardian consent

Signed informed consent must be obtained for each child from their parent/guardian to access the internet, be photographed or recorded in accordance with this policy. The completed Parent/Guardian Consent Forms is retained on the child's individual file.

Children in the care of the State

We understand that children and young people in the care of the State cannot be included in photographs or video footage recorded for publicity purposes by an organisation without the express permissions of Tusla and the court or their birth parents.

Children's agreement

Where possible, in addition to parents' consent, children's agreement is obtained to:

- Take their photograph.
- Record or use their voice and/or activity.
- Display or share their photos or recordings.

Use of personal devices in the service

Staff members, families, contractors and visitors may bring personal devices into the service. However, in order to protect children's and adults' personal and privacy rights, we require that:

- Personal 'smart' devices, such as phones or tablets, will not be used in the presence of children and will be switched off during working hours, except at break time in designated areas.
- Staff members will not take any images, video/audio recording of children or families at the service, on their personal devices.
- Children are not allowed to bring personal 'smart' devices, such as phones or tablets to the service.
- When visiting the service, parents or other visitors may not use personal 'smart' devices, such as phones or tablets, to take photos or videos or engage with children other than their own child.

GUIDANCE: Additional Safeguards

- Appropriate filters are applied to all equipment used by children.
- Computers used by children are located in an open space with the monitor clearly visible.
- Photography and recording including, closed circuit television is not undertaken in areas where children change their clothes, toilet, or have their clothes and/or nappy changed (*where relevant*).

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- Only images of children in suitable clothing are to be taken to reduce the risk of inappropriate use. (Some activities, for example swimming and drama, present a much greater risk of potential misuse.)



Storing images and recordings securely

- Images or video recordings of children are kept securely. Hard copies of images are kept in a *locked filing cabinet/drawer* and electronic images stored in a protected folder with restricted/password protected access.
- Images and recordings will be retained with the child's individual file.
- Images are only stored on encrypted equipment
- Personal equipment is not used to store photos and recordings of children, and only cameras or devices belonging to the service are used.
- Digital equipment must remain within the service environs at all times (this includes appropriate use on outings) and be stored securely when not in use.

GUIDANCE: Staff personal use of social networking sites (SEE CODE OF CONDUCT ATTACHED)

- They have considered the information given about them and images displayed of them available on their sites and are confident that these represent them in a light acceptable to their role in working with children and parents.
- They do not have children in the service as 'friends' on their personal/private sites.
- Comments on their site about the service, work colleagues or children, if published, would not cause hurt or embarrassment to others, risk claims of libel, or harm the children, the reputation of the service or their colleagues.

Related Policies, Procedures and Forms required under the Early Years Regulations 2016.

- Safety Statement
- Risk Management Policy

5. Communication Plan

A copy of this policy will be available during all hours of operation to all staff team members/ students/ volunteers and parents in the Policy Folder **on display in the main room.**

Management and Staff regularly review policies and procedures as part of ongoing team meetings and practice reviews. Parents/guardians and staff members/students/volunteers will receive written notification of any updates.

Reviews to Policies, Procedures and Statements will be carried out in light of changing regulations or legislation, experience, or changing circumstances of the service. **This includes emerging guidance on Covid-19 as stated in our infection control and risk policies.**

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6. Who must observe Policies and Procedures?

The Manager and Room Leaders/Supervisor are responsible for the implementation of policies and procedures where applicable to their role. Management, staff, students, volunteers and parents/guardians should observe all policy and procedural practices.

7. Actions to be followed if Policies and Procedures are not followed

Purposeful non-observation of Policies and Procedures of the service will be addressed by Management. In the case of staff, this may be in the context of the Disciplinary Policy of the service.

8. Signatures:

	Name and position	Signature
Approved by		
Date		

Appendix 1:

Staff e-Safety Use Agreement

In order to support your practice in developing the children's knowledge and understanding about e-safety at Tír na nÓg Naíonra, please read and agree to the following:

- I understand, accept and agree to adhere to the service Policy on the Use of Internet and Photographic and Recording Devices
- I understand it is my responsibility to ensure safe and responsible use of technology within the service
- I understand that technology is primarily intended for educational use and that I will only use the systems for personal and recreational use within the policies and rules set down by the setting
- I will immediately report any illegal, inappropriate or harmful material or incident I become aware of to the Manager/Designated Person
- I will only use chat and social networking sites in accordance with the setting's policies
- I will not engage in any online activities that may compromise my professional responsibilities
- I will only communicate with parents/guardians and other professionals using official systems. Any such communication must be professional in tone and manner
- I understand that if I fail to comply with this agreement could be subject to disciplinary action

I have read and understood the above and agree to use this policy, both in and out of the setting, and my own devices, within these guidelines.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

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Appendix 1:

Staff Conduct Agreement

Tír na nÓg Naíonra acknowledge that staff members will use digital technologies in their personal and social lives, so we require them to sign the following Professional Conduct Agreement to ensure clear boundaries between their home and professional roles.

I agree that through my recreational use of social networking sites or other online technologies I will:

- Not bring the service into disrepute
- Observe confidentiality and refrain from discussing any issues relating to work
- Not share or post in an open forum, any information that I would not want children, parents, guardians, or colleagues to view
- Not to share, tag, post or copy any information from the service social media platform without prior permission from the management
- Set privacy settings to block unauthorised access to my social networking page and to restrict those who can receive updates
- Keep my professional and personal life separate and not accept children and parents/ guardians from the service as 'friends'
- Consider how my social conduct may be perceived by others and how this could affect my own reputation and that of the early childhood service
- Either avoid using a profile photograph or ensure it is an image I would be happy to share with anyone
- To report any known breaches of the above to the designated person for the child safeguarding Policy
- I understand I am in a position of trust and my actions outside of my professional environment could be misinterpreted by others, and I am conscious of this when sharing information publicly with others

Name: _____ Signature: _____ Date: _____

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