

Sessional Childcare

Introduction

Sessional Childcare Services are the second most common form of childcare services availed of by parents in Ireland, after childminding.

Sessional Services include playgroups, crèches, montessori groups, Naionrai, Community run services and playschools. Sessional pre-school services offer a planned programme consisting of up to 3.5 hours per session (i.e., a morning, afternoon, etc). Generally, children catered for, include those in the 2-6 years age bracket. Younger children may also be catered for. There can be from 10 – 20 children in one room on a sessional basis. A second adult must be available at all times. In order to provide a sessional childcare service a recognised childcare qualification is required. There are many full-time, part-time and distance learning courses available throughout Ireland to enable you to receive such qualifications. If you intend to open a professional childcare facility, of interest may be the Guidelines for Planning Authorities on Childcare Facilities published by the Department of the Environment, 2001.

Marketing your service

In order to fill vacancies you will need to market your childcare service prior to and beyond its opening. You can promote your service through articles or adverts in local newspapers, local radio, open days, leaflets and posters. Target places that parents will visit, such as schools, doctor's surgeries, supermarkets and libraries; remember to ask permission about displaying leaflets and posters. Once you've established a service that provides good quality, affordable accessible childcare, news will travel fast by word of mouth. There is an increasing demand for quality childcare services in Ireland and if there is not a sessional type of childcare service already in your area, then this may be an ideal opportunity for you. With an increase in government funding in the childcare sector, the outlook for employment in this sector is expected to continue to grow.

Requirements

How do I set up a Sessional Service?

If you decide to set up your own sessional service as well as holding the relevant qualification, there are also a number of physical and legal requirements to be met:

- Facilities must provide a safe, healthy, caring environment for children.
- One adult for every ten children and there must be another adult present at all times.
- Floor area of 2 sq. metres per child.
- Adequate ventilation and sanitary facilities.
- Food needs to be nutritious and varied.
- Insurance: each pre-school child must be insured against injury while attending the service (should cover : public liability, employers liability, fire and theft)
- Pre-school care providers are required to notify their local health board.
- After notification inspection and regulation of pre-school childcare services will be carried out by your local Health Service Executive (HSE) officer to ensure that the pre-school provider meets the requirements of the Childcare Act. (See www.hse.ie for more details).



Fact Sheet No. 43 May 2006

This is one of a series of fact sheets on potential income generating activities.

All fact sheets are available in the Advisory Section of the Teagasc Website www.teagasc.ie

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Teagasc Fact Sheets present a brief overview of a topic. Further detailed advice should always be sought from relevant sources.

Do I need qualifications?

There is a myriad of training courses available throughout Ireland leading to qualifications in child care. Some of the following links may be of use:

www.ippa.ie The Early Childhood Organisation run courses in Dublin, Kildare and Meath. If there is a demand for courses in other areas these may also be facilitated (01) – 4630010 E-mail: info@ippa.ie
www.progressivecollege.com – courses offered include full time, part time, distance learning and montessori (01) 488 4300 E-mail: info@practicalchildcare.com
www.portobelloschool.ie - offer full time and part time childcare courses (01) 8721277 E-mail: info@progressivecollege.com
www.ucc.ie - offer three year degree courses in Early Childhood studies (021) 4902289 E-mail: ddaly@reg.ucc.ie
www.naionraí.ie - offers courses to individuals who want to provide children with pre-schooling through the Irish language (01) 639 8442

Some courses are funded under the Equal Opportunities Childcare Programme 2000 – 2006.

Fás also offers care courses, including childcare, which are funded under a Competency Development Programme. These courses are open to employees or self-employed people. Contact your local Fás office for more details. www.fas.ie

Information on many types of childcare courses can also be found at www.childcare.ie and www.childcareonline.ie

What will I earn providing a sessional childcare service?

Pay depends on the educational attainment of the worker and the type of establishment. More education usually means higher earnings. Naturally, experience in this type of service will also determine earning potential.

How much does it cost to set up a sessional childcare service?

Costs will vary significantly depending on the type of service you plan to set up, the number of childcare places you plan to offer, the type and current status of your premises and location. When calculating expenditure include staff salaries, legal costs, baby essentials, food and other provisions, registration/inspection fees, insurance, phone, utilities, furniture, play equipment, rent and maintenance.

Are there any grants available to help set up?

Grant aid is available from a number of sources for start-up childcare enterprises meeting specific criteria. Capital Grants are available for self-employed childcare providers to establish/upgrade childcare facilities/services. For more information & application forms contact:

Childcare Directorate, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform,
3rd Floor, 72-76 St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2

Lo-call: 1890 20 90 30 /E-mail: Childcare_Mail@justice.ie

A business plan will be essential when setting up a new childcare service. It should set out the aims and objectives of the childcare provision, legal status/management structure, the childcare services you plan to provide, how much it will cost and projected income.

It is also advisable to adopt a business plan approach when applying for funding. Grants are available through several different avenues. These include: Statutory bodies, Health Boards, Partnerships, Leader, Co. Enterprise Boards, Peace and Reconciliation in Border areas etc. Fundraising is also another option. Contact your local childcare committee for more details on funding.

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