



Association of Childhood Professionals
The Professional Body Representing Practitioners in
Early Years and School Age Care & Education

Mentoring Proposal

The following was forwarded to Minister Fitzgerald on 19th October 2013. We are inviting submissions from all childhood professionals to inform our next submission which will deal with the reality of how the mentoring service will work in early years centres across Ireland.

INTRODUCTION

The Association of Childhood Professionals (ACP) welcomes the Department's planned creation of a mentoring service for Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE) centres. We believe that an established relationship that is based on mutual trust, knowledge and respect is essential for a mentoring system to work. The ACP would like to propose the following to ensure the success of this new and long-awaited development within our sector:

MENTOR QUALIFICATIONS

- Minimum Level 8 Degree in ECCE
- Minimum 5 years experience working in an ECCE centre.
- Specific qualification relevant to area of mentoring i.e. Play based, Montessori, High Scope, etc.
- In-depth knowledge of the implementation of Síolta and Aistear
- Relevant training in the mentoring of professional adults.
- A local knowledge of the requirements of individual ECCE centres.

STRUCTURE OF MENTORING TEAMS

We suggest that a dedicated unit within the Dept. Of Children and Youth Affairs would oversee this mentoring service with established local services organising and implementing the mentoring programme. (Local services include County Childcare Committees, CCCs and National Voluntary Childcare Organisations, NVCOs). The mentoring teams would be answerable to the coordinator of the relevant County Childcare Committee to ensure that all development workers are collaborating in supporting quality services for children and parents. The local mentoring team would also collaborate with local HSE inspection teams to ensure that there is uniformity of understanding within both teams and to raise the quality of provision in all centres.

RATIONALE

This suggestion is based on the existing relationship, between local support services and the personnel within the ECCE centres, that continues to work effectively, as it has for many years. 94% of CCCs already have staff with ECCE qualifications. CCCs and NVCOs (with locally based support teams) have the advantage of expertise combined with extensive knowledge of the requirements and needs of each individual setting within their locality. Based on the existing trust that our members place in their CCC and NVCO (where locally established) we feel that this mentoring would be an extension of their existing commitment to supporting the sector. The money allocated to developing the mentoring service would be used to augment supports that are already in place and thus enhance the benefits from this initial investment.