

# Laois County Childcare Committee NEWSLETTER | 2011

## INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our newsletter for 2011 which highlights some of the main activities completed throughout the year

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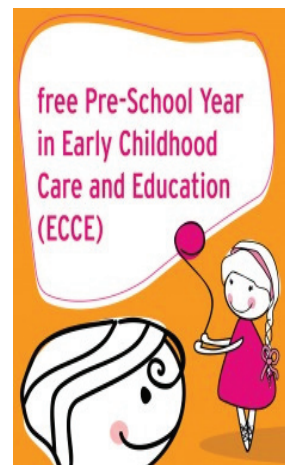
The last number of years has seen a significant investment by the government in Childcare schemes which have seen Laois County Childcare assist both parents and childcare services to ensure maximum participation. The largest of the three nationally funded schemes is the ECCE scheme, which provides all children with one free year of pre-school prior to attending primary school. The scheme which is available in both private and community based childcare services has proven to be a huge success with 80 childcare services offering over two thousand places to children in September 2011. In order to avail of the scheme children must be aged between three years three months and four years six months on the first of September each participating year. Another major scheme, which offers reduced rates in community childcare services to parents who are in receipt of a social welfare payment, is the CCS scheme (Community Childcare Subvention). The scheme is available to people in receipt of a range of payments such as job seekers benefit/assistance,



“ Our aim is to provide a planned and co-ordinated approach to the support and development of high quality childcare in County Laois that responds to the assessed and different needs of communities in the County.

family income supplement, one parent family payment, carers allowance, GP visit/medical card and many more. In order to avail of a place under the scheme a parent must contact their local community childcare service where they will need to complete a parental declaration form. Parents may also be required to provide proof of their entitlements to receive their reduced rates and places on the scheme are always subject to availability in the service. The latest government childcare initiative designed to assist parents to return to education, the CETS scheme (Community Employment and Training Scheme) was launched in 2010. This scheme provides parents participating in some FAS or VEC training programmes with FREE childcare for the duration of their course. In order to avail of a place on the scheme, parents will require a letter from either FAS or the VEC outlining their entitlement, which they will provide to one of the numerous childcare providers offering the scheme. Places on the scheme are subject to availability.

For further information please contact Laois County Childcare.



## TRAINING WITH LAOIS COUNTY CHILDCARE

We alter our training schedule annually to answer the demands of local childcare services, Childminders and Parent & Toddler groups.  
In 2011 we have held

-  3 x First Aid Courses
-  2 x Manual Handling Courses
-  Buntús Start Training
-  Aistear Workshops
-  Siolta Workshops
-  Fire Safety Training



## ACCREDITED TRAINING FETAC LEVEL 5 & 6



In order to support ongoing professional development of the sector and to meet the criteria of the free preschool scheme FETAC Level 5 childcare modules are provided to childcare workers.



Eight Level 5 modules were provided in 2011. Resulting from these modules completed 7 learners gained their Level 5 award with a further 95 component certificates received.



FETAC Level 6 childcare modules were also delivered. This training is primarily aimed at owners, managers or those in a supervisory capacity in a childcare setting. 21 gained a Level 6 Supervision in Childcare award with a further 61 component certificates received.



Pictures taken from LCC presentation nights in 2011

## SIOLTA & AISTEAR



Two of the main developments in the early childhood care and education sector over the last number of years have been the development of Siolta and Aistear.

**Siolta**, the Irish for seed, is the National Quality Framework and was developed by the Centre for early Childhood Development and Education in 2006 following a three year developmental process. For the first time in Ireland the new national quality framework provides a common set of quality standards for children from birth to six years old and across the range of different settings such as full day care, sessional pre-schools, Childminders and infant classes in primary schools. These standards enable childcare providers to reflect upon and improve the quality of care they provide the children in their services.

The second major development in the ECCE sector is **Aistear**, the Irish word for Journey. Aistear is a curriculum framework, developed by the National Council for Curriculum and Development, and is for children from birth until six years old, thus crossing from pre-school into the infant classes in primary schools. Aistear contains information for parents and practitioners that will

help them plan for and provide challenging and enjoyable learning experiences that can enable all children to grow and develop. Aistear uses the four themes of well being, Identity and Belonging, Communicating and Exploring and thinking to outline children’s learning and development. It is then broken down into principles and themes, guidelines for good practice, a user guide, and key messages from research to enable both parents and childcare practitioners to enable children to develop as competent and confident learners.

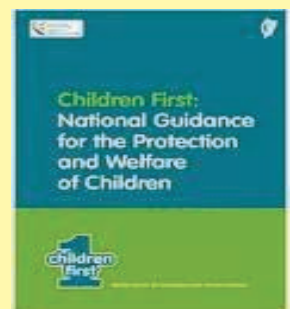


Laois County Childcare Committee has assisted childcare practitioners to engage with both Siolta and Aistear by providing information workshops, with each one centering on a different aspect of the frameworks. Childcare practitioners have supported the introduction of the frameworks with 86 participants attending our workshops during 2011. Workshop attendees were given comprehensive follow up supports by LCCC to enable them to effectively implement the frameworks in their services. The importance of these frameworks is clearly reinforced by the government funded childcare schemes. Pre-school services who wish to participate in the Free Pre-School Year must agree to provide an appropriate educational programme for children, which adhere to the principles of Siolta. Services are supported in meeting this requirement by LCCC.

### **Children First 2011 – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children**

**Ms Frances Fitzgerald TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has launched the revised Children First 2011 – National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children.**

**Children First is National Guidance that promotes the protection of children from abuse and neglect. It states what organisations need to do to keep children safe, and what different bodies, and the general public should do if they are concerned about a child’s safety and welfare. The Guidance sets out specific protocols for HSE social workers, Gardaí and other front line staff in dealing with suspected abuse and neglect. Limited copies are available from our office.**



## FAMILY DAY



Laois County Childcare Committee's annual 'Family Fun Day', held in St Mary's Hall Portlaoise, on Sunday 3rd July was a huge success with over 140 parents and children in attendance.

The day brings together all sides of the community and cultures in Laois in a fun filled environment. It allows parents to communicate their ideas and suggestions to LCCC as well as providing a social forum for LCCC to provide childcare information to parents. There was a wonderful range of games and activities on the day, starting off with Bozo the clown and face painting for all the children.

Younger children were treated to Talking Tots activities, a magician as well as a puppet show while the older kids experienced the rhythm of samba drumming. The day was rounded off with refreshments and a party bag for all the children.



## FATHER AND CHILD DAY

Our annual 'Father & Child Activity Day', held in Portlaoise Leisure Centre on Saturday 14th May 2011, was a huge success with over 50 fathers and their children in attendance. Even the threat of rain on the day couldn't dampen the spirits of the participants. The activities were held with the assistance of Laois GAA and Laois Sports Partnership. The day's events started off with music and dance with the Happy Hearts Club and we had also had sports games with Laois GAA and Buntus Start activities for the younger children. To round off the day we had some athletics games and races before all the fathers and their children relaxed with a picnic in Portlaoise Leisure Centre. Please keep an eye out for next year's event.



## PARENT & TODDLER GROUPS

Parent and Toddler groups are a very important part of communities throughout the county with 19 different groups operating in September 2012. LCCC continue to support groups through their attendance at workshops and training throughout the year such as on Behaviour Management, I.T. Skills, Arts and Crafts and the provision of First Aid training. The most significant support we give to groups is through the administration of the NCIP Parent and Toddler Grants, with groups able to apply for up to €600 annually. The following groups were successful in receiving funding in 2011:

- Kids & Koffee, Ballyroan
- Borris In Ossory Parent and Toddler Group
- Clonaghadoo Parent and Toddler Group
- Colliers Parent and Toddler Group, Portlaoise
- Laois Down Syndrome, Abbeyleix
- Mountmellick Parent and Toddler Initiative
- Mountrath Parent and Toddler Group
- Little Oaks, Durrow
- Emo Parent and Toddler Group
- Parents Together, Portlaoise
- Portarlinton Parent and Toddler Group
- Rosenallis Parent and Toddler Group
- Shanahoe Parent and Toddler Group
- Stradbally Parent and Toddler Group

**CHILDMINDERS SECTION**



LCCC in conjunction with the HSE Childminder Advisory Officer organise information, training and networking to support childminders locally. The local HSE Childminder Advisory Officer visits Childminders in their own home and offers advice, information and support on running quality childminding services. She also assists Childminders to link in with their local childminding initiative, where they can avail of network events (e.g. coffee mornings and information workshops etc.)

**NEW CHILDMINDING IRELAND MEMBERSHIP SCHEME FOR VOLUNTARILY NOTIFIED AND NOTIFIED CHILDMINDERS**

Childminding Ireland is delighted to offer membership to Voluntarily and Statutorily Notified Childminders for an annual subscription fee of €20 in order that they can avail of the Group Insurance Scheme. For further information please contact Fiona McHugh, your local Childminder Adviser Officer on 057 93 70631. "The reduced annual membership fee of €20 entitles participants to (a) access the Childminding Ireland Group Insurance Scheme; (b) be listed on the Childminding Ireland Vacancy Matching Service and (c) Certificate of Membership. Childminding Ireland is a national agency funded by the government and responsible for working with Childminders locally and Nationally.

***Childminder Coffee Mornings***

**Why not come along to our childminder coffee mornings. For more information on the Coffee Mornings contact Fiona on 057 93 70631.**



Childminders Coffee Morning in Roll'n' Bowl

**National Childminding Week 2011 Celebrations!!!!**

National Childminding Week was held 9<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and it aimed to celebrate all Childminders who contribute so much to the lives of the Children they care for, their families and their communities. National Childminding week aims to raise awareness among Childminders of the supports available to them locally through the Childminder Advisory Service and Laois County Childcare Committee. The theme for 2011 was "Learning is fun in a Childminding Setting". A fun morning for Childminders and children in Portlaoise was organized on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> April 2011. 22 Children and 16 Adults enjoyed arts and crafts, story telling and well earned refreshments after all the fun.



**VISIT OUR WEBSITE ..... WWW.LAOISCHILDCARE.IE**



Check out our new and regularly updated website. Our site is packed with information for Providers, Parents, Learners and Childminders. It's your one stop shop for all your childcare queries.



**OUR RESOURCE LIBRARY**



A selection of books from our library

Our library is a valuable source of information for parents, childcare providers and learners. It contains books on a wide list of areas from Child Development, Child Management, Special Needs, Aistear, Siolta, to name but a few. The library has resources on all areas of childcare and provides a number of services for people within the profession. There is an Information Officer dedicated to running the library and is available to answer questions or requests you may have in relation to the library or your information needs. Annual membership is €5. For more information or to join our library please call into our office.



**FETAC – a common awards system for further education and training**



A new national awards system is being introduced for all further education and training. This new system provides awards at level 1-6 of the National Framework of Qualifications. Known as the Common Awards System (CAS) it is informed by best practice and traditions nationally and internationally. It is replacing all FETAC awards over time; existing awards become part of the FETAC legacy, and are referenced against the new Common Awards. Laois County Childcare are currently developing the new programmes for CAS for more information on the common awards please log on to [www.fetac.ie](http://www.fetac.ie)



\*FETAC 2011, FETAC – a common awards system for further education and training: [www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/Common\\_Awards\\_System\\_for\\_FET\\_leaflet.pdf](http://www.fetac.ie/fetac/documents/Common_Awards_System_for_FET_leaflet.pdf)  
 Accessed on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011

## LAOIS COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE CONTACT DETAILS

Co-ordinator

Muriel Dempsey  
057 86 61029  
m.dempsey@laoischildcare.ie

Administrator

Irene Ogbulafor  
057 86 61029  
i.ogbulafor@laoischildcare.ie

Development Worker

Patrick Travers  
057 86 66663  
p.travers@laoischildcare.ie

Information Officer

Sinéad Brophy  
057 86 66663  
s.brophy@laoischildcare.ie

## LAOIS COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE

