



Barnardos
No child gets left behind

Health and Safety in Childcare:

A Guide for Centre-Based Services



Introduction

Within a childcare service, the health, safety and welfare of children is of paramount importance. A combination of best practice, compliance with legislation and the development and implementation of policies and procedures is key to ensuring health, safety and welfare in childcare services.

The Child Care Act, 1991 is the main piece of legislation governing the care and protection of children in Ireland. In relation to health and safety, the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations, 2006 outline specific requirements on issues including toy safety, safety measures for furniture and outdoor access, food preparation, hygiene, and space provision. These Regulations will come into operation in September 2007.

Equally important is the childcare service's responsibility to provide a safe working environment and work practices for its staff. The primary piece of legislation impacting on childcare services in this regard is the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 2005. This Act, which replaces the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act, 1989, takes a preventative approach to minimising accidents and ill health at work and introduces significant changes in relation to risk assessment and safety statements. It provides for significantly increased fines and penalties aimed at deterring the minority who continue to flout safety and health laws and it also deals with fitness to work, the use of intoxicants, penalties upon conviction and the introduction of on-the-spot fines.

Ensuring health and safety in a childcare service is not just about Regulations that apply to owner/managers and impact on staff, children, parents and visitors. Providing a safe and healthy environment that promotes the wellbeing of all involves a co-operative approach by owners/management, staff, parents, children and visitors. It means involving parents by informing them of policies and encouraging their participation. For staff it can involve, among other things, information, training, consultation and including health and safety as a regular item for discussion at team meetings. For children and young people it means always setting a good example in everyday activities, teaching them how to use equipment properly and making them aware of hazards and emergency procedures in an age-appropriate way.

Health and Safety in Childcare: A Guide for Centre-Based Services aims to provide childcare services with the tools to address this issue within their service. It aims to make them aware of their legal responsibilities, encourage a responsible attitude among staff to health and safety within the service, assist them in developing standards and encourage them to place health and safety on the agenda for the provision of quality childcare.



1

Section One **Safety**



23

Section Two **Fire Safety**



39

Section Four **External Environment**



Section Three

Internal Environment



45

Section Five

Hygiene



53

Section Six

Food Hygiene and Nutrition



61

Section Seven **Child Protection**