

Staff development handbook for childcare providers

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Introoduction

The purpose of this handbook is to provide childcare providers with an overview of the purpose, process and value of staff development. Staff development is the process by which staff members and teams develop their capacity to undertake their roles, thus contributing to the development of the service. It is achieved through a combination of supervision, appraisals, team meetings, training and mentoring/coaching.

The handbook should be viewed as a set of guidelines within which childcare providers in the private, community and statutory sectors can best contribute to the development of individual staff members and the staff team. While staff development programmes will enhance the ability and competencies of team members and contribute to the development of the organisation,

the ultimate benefit will be to children and families who will avail of enhanced services. It is this principle of improved service to children and their families that forms the basis for the handbook.

Organisations and management have a duty to ensure that there is a constant development within the organisation to meet the current and evolving needs of children and their families. Individual staff members have a responsibility to participate in, and contribute to, their own professional development.

This handbook is set in the context of ongoing developments within the Irish childcare sector; both legislative and best practice. Such developments place greater demands on organisations and staff to meet specific standards in a wide variety of areas. A greater degree of accountability is required of childcare services, thus increasing individual accountability.

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The NESF report *Early Childhood Care and Education* (2005) has provided a welcome framework for the future of early childhood care and education. In addition, under the National Childcare Strategy announced by the Minister for Children in 2006, there is a target of 17,000 additional qualified childcare workers by the end of 2010. This is an exciting time to be involved in childcare and staff development is an important component in ensuring quality child-centered childcare services.

In section one the handbook gives a brief overview of what staff development is. This overview relates to both individual staff members and teams and it outlines the areas that development programmes aim to enhance.

Section two continues by outlining the value of staff development to the organisation, to management committees,

to managers and to individual staff members. This section also outlines the responsibility of all these groups in providing and participating in staff development exercises.

Section three of this handbook outlines the various ways that staff development can be undertaken. Among the processes described are supervision, appraisals, team meetings, training and mentoring/coaching.

The final section outlines areas relevant to childcare services in relation to drafting and implementing a policy on staff development.

Given the wide nature of childcare services, ranging from childminders to community childcare services and private crèches, it is likely that sections of this handbook will be of greater relevance to some organisations. However, the fact that a person works alone in their home rather

than in a team managed by a voluntary management committee does not imply that they have lesser developmental needs but that these needs might be met differently. In this respect the handbook is not prescriptive regarding the details of the exact nature of staff development programmes, e.g. regularity, length, how they are sourced, etc. This will vary from service to service and person to person depending on their stage of professional development.

Within any childcare setting there may be a number of different roles, i.e. manager, childcare worker, catering staff, administration staff, bus driver. The principles of staff development are relevant to all of these roles. The principles are also applicable to staff employed through FÁS Community Employment and Jobs Initiative schemes, even though there are specific training programmes for participants of these programmes.

The handbook addresses each of the issues relevant to staff development individually for the purposes of clarity. However, they do not exist in isolation. A genuine value and commitment to staff development by a manager or management committee will impact on the commitment of staff members to participate in such programmes. Effective supervision structures will enhance the capacity of the team to make decisions at regular team meetings. There is an ongoing inter-relationship between various aspects of staff development and the childcare practice undertaken.

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Section one

WHAT IS STAFF DEVELOPMENT?

In Brief

Essentially staff development encourages and facilitates the development of people and the service through skill development, information sharing and critical thinking. It is about creating an atmosphere of understanding rather than just knowing. Staff development relates to individual staff and staff teams.

Staff development programmes provide individuals and teams with the opportunity to reflect on their practice collectively and as individuals. Staff development provides chances for greater knowledge, improved skill and better understanding, not as an end in itself but as a means to develop and improve the level of service to children and their families. The value of on-the-job learning through a person's own experiences as well as modelling by other staff cannot be understated. To be effective, an opportunity must be created

for the worker and team to reflect on this informal learning.

Some staff may only have the experience of attending team meetings or meeting their manager when there is a crisis. This may create a negative perception of team interaction and at times seem as if such meetings are punitive or monitoring rather than developmental or positive. Staff development is not an exercise in control, it is an exercise in progression.

Individual Staff Development

There are three attributes required to undertake any role:

- Skills
- Information
- Attitude and Values

The skills, information and attitudes/values will vary from role to role and between

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various organisations. The skills required to run an after school programme for primary school children will be different from those required to undertake childminding in your own home. The information required by an administrator will vary from that required by a childcare worker. Attitudes and values will vary from one organisation to another; e.g. the degree to which parents are included in the work of the programme.

It is natural that the skills, information and attitudes for any role will change over time. The introduction of new legislation as well as a developing body of knowledge about the needs of children will lead to changes in practice. A staff development programme is an acknowledgement of this natural change. It is a confident statement by an organisation that they will embrace and encourage change in order to continually improve the quality of service

to children and their families. A staff development programme also indicates that the change that takes place in an organisation will be planned rather than always responding to crisis.

Team Development

The attributes of effective teams include:

- Clarity of goals of the service
- Clarity of roles within the service
- Commitment to the service goals
- Effective communication
- Consistent practice
- Leadership

Team development programmes aim to enhance and develop these attributes. Team development programmes complement individual staff development programmes and staff members can also develop their skills, information and values within a team setting.

For team development programmes to be effective there must be commitment from all team members to participate rather than just attend. Participation can include:

- Listening
- Understanding
- Speaking
- Questioning
- Clarifying
- Risk taking

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Section two

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF STAFF DEVELOPMENT?

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Staff development is not just for the benefit of individual staff or the team. It is ultimately about children and their families and therefore should relate to the goals of the organisation. All staff development exercises should relate to the objectives – both long and short term – of the organisation. It is through critical thinking and reflection that individuals and teams can consider the changing needs and where necessary affirm, amend and extend the goals of the organisation.

A staff development programme also provides an additional incentive and reward for staff who are interested in developing their potential. In many industries additional wages or other financial incentives are often used to motivate or reward staff. This is generally not possible in the childcare sector and a commitment to resourcing and supporting a staff development programme could be viewed as an added benefit to employees. Effective staff development programmes are likely to increase employee satisfaction and staff retention.

Management Committees and Staff Development

In the context of staff development,

management committees of childcare services have a series of responsibilities. These include:

- **Legal and employer responsibilities:** Responsibilities that all employers have towards their employees, regardless of the nature of the service. Some of these responsibilities are governed by legislation e.g. minimum wage, annual leave. Other responsibilities are based on standards that have evolved within the childcare sector e.g. provision of training opportunities.
- **Best practice responsibilities:** These responsibilities are not prescribed by legislation but relate to accepted standards within which childcare services operate e.g. the degree of involvement by parents in the service or range and diversity of programmes/activities offered. Best practice is constantly evolving and much of what was considered appropriate twenty years ago would no longer be considered so.

Ultimately the management committee has a responsibility to the service users.

The primary resource that management committees have in ensuring a quality

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and effective service is the staff team. The more skilled and competent the staff team is, the greater the opportunity to meet the needs of the children and families using the service, both current and emerging needs. It is a generally accepted principle that employers have a duty of care to employees. This duty of care extends to ensuring that health and safety guidelines are operational, providing appropriate remuneration and ensuring support and development opportunities for staff. The opportunity for staff support and development is not an end in itself but an opportunity for improving the service to children and families. Staff development will require a number of resources, primarily a budget and allocated time. Management committees need to ensure that these are factored into the annual workplan.

It is also helpful if the management committee meets with staff to discuss the development of the service. On an ongoing basis this communication is likely to be between the manager and a designated committee member e.g. chairperson or staff liaison officer. However, a meeting between all staff and management committee members to review recent work and identify the future

direction of the project may also contribute to a shared vision and understanding within the service. This future direction may include changing the focus of the work or affirming the current focus. This meeting would also provide everyone involved in the organisation with the opportunity to consider all that needs to be done to meet the needs of the children. Such a meeting is likely to take place on a twice-yearly or annual basis. A more cohesive organisation will emerge.

Managers and Staff Development

A manager may be reporting to a voluntary management committee or may be the manager of a privately run childcare service. In this instance they may be reporting to the owner of the service or may be the owner/manager of the service. Regardless of the management structure/ownership of the service, managers have responsibility for assisting the development and implementing organisation policy and ensuring the effective operation of the service. To do this they have the dual responsibility of:

- Managing the work
- Managing the staff team

These responsibilities are best achieved by a combination of:

- Motivating the staff team
- Supporting the staff team
- Facilitating the decision making – not making all the decisions
- Providing options and directions to the team, through challenge and reflection
- Encouraging best practice
- Promoting discussion and a culture of shared responsibility
- Assisting the team to prioritise their work
- Liaising with, and informing the management committee/senior management

Staff development programmes are central to the effective management of a service. The manager has a responsibility for identifying additional/alternative ways of ensuring staff development. The manager has a duty and responsibility for identifying the particular development needs of individual staff members in consultation with them and ensuring that they are met.

Identifying the staff development needs can be done through a combination of individual and team discussions, observations and requests. Staff development needs should be considered in relation to the aims of the service.

The manager of the service has a key responsibility in creating a culture where staff development is valued and engaged in. In practice this means that, through their own behaviour, the manager should model what is expected of other staff members, e.g. through providing and encouraging feedback, participation in team meetings, engaging in training. Such modelling supports the view that staff development is a positive aspect of the work rather than negative or controlling.

Managers report a number of obstacles in establishing and maintaining staff development programmes. These include:

- Time limitations due to staff shortages and demands of the service
- Their own competence to establish and guide programmes
- The value they attach to staff development

Managers report that they do not have the time for supervision or team meetings because of the need to respond instantly

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to situations that arise. However, regular scheduling of team meetings and supervision presents the opportunity to consider patterns of issues arising in the service and to address these. Staff development also provides the opportunity for staff to develop their skills, which may result in greater delegation of authority to individuals within the team. Moving from a reactive way of working to a greater emphasis on developmental aspects of the work will create a more positive working environment for everyone.

In order to ensure that staff development programmes are delivered consistently it may be necessary to close the service occasionally, e.g. annual planning/review days or to hold some meetings out of hours. Meetings held out of hours may require staff to take time off in lieu. Supervision with individual staff members might be scheduled for quiet periods during the day, e.g. nap time. Such scheduling should be included in the annual/monthly workplan so that parents and staff can make necessary arrangements.

Many managers in the childcare sector do not have formal qualifications/previous

experience in management. The capacity required for a manager to undertake and support staff development can be acquired through learning in their own training and supervision. Engaging in this learning and development is part of the professional development of a manager:

As well as ensuring that staff development needs are identified and met the manager, as an employee, will also have development needs. These should be met in the same way as with other employees, as outlined in more detail in section three.

Staff Members and Development

Staff members have a right to develop their skills and competencies. Staff members also have a responsibility to develop their skills and competencies. At various times in their career staff may place more emphasis on specific aspects of their development e.g. information update, critical reflection or skill enhancement and development.

In a learning and developing organisation staff need to take responsibility for identifying their own development needs, in conjunction with their line manager and colleagues. The benefits of professional

development for a staff member are increased competencies relating to their job, possibly career progression, and greater employability.

While the supports – e.g. budget and time required to undertake professional development – will vary, depending on organisational policy, the commitment to participating in programmes lies primarily with the worker. It is essential that staff see their recruitment as the start or continuation of a process of professional development rather than the end. Recruitment of an individual may be based on the person's potential to develop all the skills required rather than that they already possess all of the attributes required for the role. Where a person has the prerequisite qualifications for a role they will need the opportunity to explore how this learning applies in a practical way. Similarly, a person with a range of qualifications and experience will need support at the outset of a new role to understand how this role/organisation varies from previous roles. Where a person has a range of experience but no qualifications they may be provided with the opportunity to undertake formal training. Individuals may use staff development programmes to consider and prepare for future career paths.

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Section three

HOW IS STAFF DEVELOPMENT ACHIEVED?

In Brief

Staff development is a process that relates to teams as well as individual staff members but the ultimate benefit is to the children and families using the service. There are a number of ways of contributing to this development. These processes complement each other rather than being discrete. Some of these processes are ongoing and regular while others are more intermittent. At various points in a person's career there may be an emphasis on one form and greater gain from this. Similarly, at various points in an organisation's development there may be a greater emphasis on certain aspects of staff development. The five primary processes which contribute to staff development are:

- Supervision
- Appraisals
- Team Meetings
- Training
- Mentoring/Coaching

Supervision

The purpose of supervision is to promote and provide:

- Accountability
- Decision making

- Support
- Development of the work
- Development of the staff member

There are a number of types of supervision:

- **Individual supervision:** Individual supervision is an ongoing series of one-to-one meetings between the manager/supervisor and staff members.
- **Peer supervision:** Peer supervision is a process by which colleagues or those employed in similar roles in different organisations meet to discuss their work and provide support. This form of supervision is often used where a person works in isolation, in the absence of supports, within an organisation or where the role is very specialised and the person would benefit from exploring their work practice with someone else in a similar role.
- **Group supervision:** Group supervision has many of the same attributes as peer supervision but includes a larger number of people, perhaps 4/5. Group supervision can take place within a team/organisational setting and meet some of the support needs of teams. Group supervision may involve a facilitator:

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- **External supervision:** External supervision, sometimes referred to as role consultation, is a process where a person meets with an external supervisor to reflect on his/her work. Examples of people who avail of external supervision are those who operate in isolated roles or work alone, managers of services where the management committee do not have the capacity to provide such a service, as well as managers of services where there is no further line of command, i.e. within the private sector;

It is important to note that the latter three forms of supervision do not generally have an accountability component though that does not imply that staff who avail of these forms of supervision are not accountable to someone for their work practice. It is likely that a person who is involved in a peer supervision programme will also be availing of individual supervision with their line manager. Similarly a manager of a voluntary service availing of external supervision will have a reporting relationship with the board of management.

The first form of supervision i.e. individual supervision, will be the focus of the remainder of this section, though many

of the principles of individual supervision can be readily applied to peer; group and external supervision.

In order to ensure effectiveness, individual supervision has a number of prerequisites. These are:

- **It is the responsibility of both supervisor and supervisee and a two way process between supervisee and supervisor:** While a manager/supervisor has a greater degree of responsibility within the organisation, for supervision to be at its most effective it must involve the active participation of both individuals. This involves both people arriving prepared for the meeting and participating in the meeting. It is important to develop a culture of commitment rather than compliance to supervision. Both people need to feel comfortable giving and receiving feedback and should develop skills in these areas.
- **It should be regular and consistent:** The regularity may vary from one organisation to another but the key to its effectiveness is that the agreed regularity is maintained. Very often when organisations/individuals are experiencing a calm and positive period, supervision

can lapse because people view supervision as a response to a crisis. It may well be that there is a calm positive atmosphere precisely because people are communicating effectively. The length of the supervision session needs to be consistent as do the practical boundaries.

Many organisations consider that monthly supervision for one hour is effective though this is a general guideline and in some organisations/roles supervision needs to be more regular. It is helpful to have supervision in a quiet space with no interruptions. Regardless of the agreed minimum regularity, a manager or staff member has the right to request more regular supervision where the need arises.

- **There should be an agreed agenda:**

There are likely to be a number of standing items on the agenda for supervision. In a childcare role these items would usually include:

- Work with and needs of groups
- Work with and needs of individual children
- Contact and work with families
- Networking with other organisations
- Training needs
- Team work

Other standard items may feature on the agenda depending on the specific role, e.g. administrator, family support worker. There should be flexibility to raise any other relevant issues needing discussion. Not all of the standard items are likely to be raised during every supervision session, e.g. training, but making an item a standard item places value on it. Over a period of time the focus of supervision should be on the core aspects of a person's role, e.g. direct work with children and families.

- **There should be clarity about mutual expectations:**

There needs to be agreement between the supervisor and supervisee as to what supervision is and also what it is not. There is a difference between supervision and counselling/therapy. The mutual expectations of the supervisor and supervisee need to be discussed, clarified and agreed. This can be done during the staff member's induction, during the training at the introduction of a staff supervision system or at the beginning of the supervision relationship.

- **There should be clarity about confidentiality boundaries:**

The boundaries of confidentiality need to be established at the beginning. While a

about what can be decided in this setting and what needs to be decided at a team meeting.

By introducing a supervision programme it may be helpful to discuss with the staff team what their needs, understanding, hopes and fears about supervision are. Such an exploration is likely to alleviate concerns staff may have. Where a supervision programme is in place it should be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is effective. Such a review could be factored into annual team reviews, supervision sessions and appraisals.

Appraisals

A staff appraisal is a process by which the work and development of the worker are reviewed. This process contributes to future planning and goal setting. Appraisals are about a person's previous performance as well as future development. The appraisal should consider the worker's achievements, their expectations and development needs. An appraisal should assist the worker in affirming their strengths and identifying areas where they would benefit from development.

Features of a staff appraisal include:

- **Staff member and supervisor/manager should be present and involved.** The appraisal should not be done in the absence of the staff member or exclude the person who is the regular supervisor/line manager.
- **Both individuals should prepare in advance for the appraisal under agreed headings.** There are likely to be standard headings for appraisals of specific roles and each person should take responsibility for considering their views before the meeting.

Questions that may be helpful in preparing for and conducting an appraisal include:

- What have been your achievements during the last year?
- How do these relate to the goals you had at the beginning of the year?
- How do these relate to the organisation's goals?
- What situations/issues have you been challenged by?
- What factors do you consider have contributed to effective work?
- What factors do you consider have been obstacles to effective work?
- What learning has happened as a result of your work?

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- What do you feel your strengths are in the work?
 - What do you consider you contribute to the team/organisation?
 - What would you like to change/develop about your practice?
 - What can you do to contribute to this development?
 - What would you like the organisation/manager/colleagues to do to contribute to this development?
 - What goals would you like to set for the coming year?
- **Appraisals should be regular and consistent.** Appraisals are generally annual though an initial appraisal may be held sooner, e.g. six months after recruitment. The time scale should be adhered to. If appraisals are annual then eighteen months should not be allowed to lapse before undertaking one.
- **Appraisals should relate to a person's job description and focus on areas of performance relevant to the person's role.** It is possible that the appraisal will identify future areas of responsibility or duties, but these should not be the basis of the current appraisal, e.g. a person who works with toddlers may have taken on responsibility for the pre-school

group in the absence of a colleague, but this should not form part of the appraisal. The appraisal should be undertaken with reference to agreed standards/behaviours within the service rather than arbitrary standards.

- **Appraisals should relate to the staff supervision process.** Where there is regular staff supervision the outcomes of these sessions and the feedback shared here should form a significant basis for discussion. Where there is no regular supervision there should be no surprises for the manager and staff members in terms of the general content of the appraisal.
- **Appraisals should be recorded.** A standard recording form should be used for all roles within the team. It should include the issues discussed, the views of both individuals, decisions made and goals set.

Appraisals have a number of possible outcomes. They allow for setting new goals and also contribute to identifying training/development needs of staff for the future. Goals and training/development needs for the worker should be agreed in the context of the goals of the organisation.

An appraisal differs from a probation review. A probation review within the first six months relates to a person's ability and suitability for the role. A probation review allows both the supervisor and manager to consider the progress of the staff member and identify any areas of work that may need to change. The review allows the supervisor and staff member to identify additional supports required for the person to improve their performance. The supervisor can direct the worker to avail of certain supports or to commit to a certain course of action.

Managers and supervisors undertaking appraisals should be supported in this role through the provision of training. This training may include:

- The purpose of appraisals
- Expectations of managers
- Recording outcomes
- Dealing with difficult situations

Team Meetings

Team meetings are an integral part of team and individual development as well as being core to communication within the team. Team meetings can have a number of different functions including:

- Information sharing
- Decision making

- Debriefing and support
- Review, evaluation and planning
- Skill development

Not every team meeting will focus on all of these functions though there may be elements of each. The effect of each of the meetings should be to improve the quality of service. As well as dealing with important and immediate practical issues, team meetings provide the opportunity to restate the culture and values of the team and reinforce positive behaviours within the team. Who attends the team meetings is critical to their effectiveness, as is their regularity and consistency. Sometimes certain staff, e.g. drivers, kitchen staff, CE staff are excluded from meetings, yet they have very effective contributions to make to the service and important information to share. As with supervision, team meetings are sometimes postponed or cancelled when the service appears to be operating effectively. Again, it is likely that the reason that the service is in a positive cycle is because there is effective communication and critical thinking.

As important as the agenda or focus of the meeting is the manner in which the meeting is conducted. Therefore, even where the meeting is primarily about

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some of the incidental details of the service, the openness with which people participate and deal with difference provides an opportunity for people to support their colleagues and affirm the behaviours which the service would aspire to work within. A culture that encourages exploration of topics where there is difference provides chances for staff to practice skills which might be helpful in dealing with difficult situations with other groups or individuals.

All team meetings conducted, and decisions made, should be underpinned by what is in the best interests of children and their families. Therefore, the aims of the service should be central to all discussions.

Because of the demands on childcare services and often tight staffing levels, teams may struggle to achieve all that they need and want to in the allocated time for meetings. It might be helpful to consider conducting different styles of meetings, some of which will be more regular; some more intermittent though planned, while others may be convened as a response to a specific situation.

Examples of meeting styles that may be appropriate to childcare services include:

- **Planning and review meetings:** These

meetings, which may be held in conjunction with management committee members, are an opportunity to consider the goals of the service, whether these are still compatible with the needs of the service users, what has worked well in the service, what needs to be retained and what needs to be developed. Meetings of this nature are likely to require at least a full day and while they can be chaired or facilitated by a person from within the team, many teams prefer to engage an external person to facilitate these meetings as it frees up everyone to participate. Engaging an external facilitator does not always require expenditure. In larger organisations or in organisations with strong links to other groups it may be possible to ask a person linked to these other teams/groups to facilitate the session, a service which may be returned at a later time. Teams often use these planning sessions to hold a social event or fun based team event, e.g. bowling, a meal out.

- **Team development meetings:** Specific meetings with the team that allow the team to reflect on certain aspects of how they work. These aspects might include goals of the team, communication styles, dealing with conflict, team

behaviours, and consistency of practice. The expected outcome of such meetings would be increased clarity among the team as well as a greater understanding of why certain approaches are appropriate. Such meetings provide the team with the opportunity to reflect on their own motivations and values and consider them in relation to their appropriateness to their role. Ideally, these meetings should be held on a regular basis in order to support the belief that the organisation is a learning and developing one. The more regularly they are held the shorter they need be. If the meetings are held annually then a full day is likely to be necessary though this takes away the chance to review the learning. If the meetings are held monthly they could be scheduled for shorter periods and allow for greater continuity between issues.

- **Business/house keeping meetings:** These meetings allow for teams to plan for the daily/weekly work of the team, e.g. rotas, menus, budgets, transport, activities, shopping lists, health and safety. The primary aim of these meetings is to ensure the effective daily running of the service, to anticipate problems that might arise and identify ways of dealing with

them. It is likely that the work of any childcare facility will vary its programmes at various times of the year i.e. school holidays and term time, winter and summer time and these meetings provide the team with the chance to respond to the variation in service.

- **Case meetings:** The nature of these meetings will vary depending on the type of service offered. Where the childcare facility is group based the case discussion is likely to be based on the work within the group, while a facility that has a strong emphasis on individual work will need to consider the needs of individual children. These meetings provide staff members with the opportunity to explore the work they are undertaking, to clarify their goals and with their colleagues' assistance to reflect on whether these goals are being achieved.

This meeting style serves a number of functions:

- It provides staff members with an opportunity to reflect.
- It improves communication within the team.
- It maximises the outcomes for children.
- It provides learning opportunities for staff.

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- It develops a team approach to the work even where one person takes the lead or responsibility in a certain area, e.g. toddler or wobbler group.
- It allows teams to identify emerging needs.

Case meetings should not be seen as a substitute for supervision but as complementing it.

All meeting types are interrelated. The outcomes of the case meetings are likely to inform the annual review and planning meeting. Effective team development meetings will enhance the discussion within case management meetings. Each will have the effect of improving the quality of service to children. Meetings occupy an increasing amount of people's time. There is often an assumption that because people attend meetings in so many different aspects of their lives, they are skilled in this area. This assumption is not always correct and it is probable that there is nothing more frustrating for a worker than to attend a meeting that appears to have no purpose, direction and clear outcome.

Elements of an effective team meeting structure include:

- **Agenda:** There should be an agreed

agenda. Some teams have standing agendas for each team meeting style. Others agree the agenda at the beginning of the meeting though this process should not in itself be time consuming or create further discussion. Each person on the team should have the right to contribute to the agenda.

- **Timeframe:** When attending a meeting people should be aware of how long it is scheduled for. This will assist the team in focusing the discussion and also in managing other aspects of their work.
- **Minutes:** Minutes of team meetings should be maintained. This can be done on a rotation basis which has the effect of sharing responsibility as well as providing team members with the chance to develop another skill. It is important that teams use a consistent format in recording minutes. The format should include a list of those present, the issues discussed, the decisions made, including any actions required, and the timeframes/people responsible for these actions. There is no necessity to record the details of the discussion. Staff members who are not present for a team meeting are then responsible for reading the minutes of the meeting. The minutes of previous meetings should be

read at the start of the next meeting to clarify if decisions have been followed up/acted upon.

- **Chairperson:** The role of chairperson is to ensure that the meeting keeps to the agenda, stays within its timeframe, that decisions are made and that discussion is encouraged. In many teams the most senior person, i.e. the manager, chairs the meeting. S/he may have a lot of information to share with the group including feedback from the management committee, parents and other organisations. The use of a rotating chairperson can be an effective way again of sharing responsibility within the team and providing staff with the opportunity to develop another skill. Another alternative is that one staff member is designated the role of chairperson on a long-term basis. Regardless of who is the designated chairperson, the meeting will be at its most effective when all team members contribute, participate and respect the role of the chairperson.
- **Discussion and reflection:** All team meetings provide the team with the opportunity to reflect on their practice and service. This does not mean that every item on the agenda needs a detailed and passionate discussion, but

that people have the chance to consider different options before making a decision.

Training

Training in the formal and traditional sense is a key part of staff development. Formal training can focus on the development of skills, information and values/attitudes. Training can be undertaken by individuals or full teams. Formal training can range from one day training sessions to longer term training courses including graduate and post-graduate. Because of the introduction of certain standards for childcare services, both private sector and community based, there is likely to be a need for staff to undertake regular training to update themselves on these changes. Any training undertaken, which is supported by the organisation, should be relevant to a person's role. Formal training should be integrated with and complement other learning and development opportunities e.g. supervision, team development.

Historically many crèches and childcare facilities have depended on staff without formal qualifications. Agencies have a responsibility to ensure that staff are provided with the opportunity to undertake training appropriate to their role. Training relevant to childcare

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is provided by a large number of organisations, both private and public sector. This training can include one day training sessions on specific topics, FETAC accredited training in childcare and postgraduate courses in child protection and welfare. Training can be availed of by attendance at colleges but training can also be provided 'in-house' on specific topics and to certain levels of certification where it is relevant to all team members. Training can also be provided by arrangement with City/County Childcare Committees which may suit the needs of smaller services.

Ongoing areas of training relevant to childcare services are likely to include, though are not limited, to:

- Child protection and welfare
- Developing new areas of work, e.g. outdoor activities, sensory play, arts based work
- Legislation
- Health and safety including food safety
- First aid
- Child development
- Programme planning, evaluation and review
- Communication skills

An effective approach to the delivery and support of training is to develop a training plan for a specific period, usually an annual

plan. A training plan should be based on the needs of the service as well as the needs and current strengths of the team. The components of an effective training plan will include:

- **Identifying training needs:** Identifying training needs of staff, or a training needs assessment, should be undertaken in consultation with staff members. A training needs assessment can be undertaken through a combination of one-to-one discussion, team discussion, questionnaires and an audit of the current training/skills of the team. A training needs assessment considers the needs of the service, the nature of the roles within the service, accepted best practice standards within the sector, the current qualifications and skills of the staff as well as planned developments within the service. The training needs assessment is likely to be driven by the manager and/or training officer.
- **Implementing training:** Based on the training needs that have been identified, a plan to meet these should be drawn up. The plan should include individual training plans for staff members as well as training for the team. A training plan will include reference to resources available for training, e.g. funding and time. It may be possible to meet some

of the training needs internally through existing expertise, while other training may be sourced externally. The training plan resulting from the training needs assessment will outline how the gaps in skills and information will be met. During any given training plan there may be a greater emphasis on certain aspects of training, e.g. individual or team training. Similarly, some staff members may avail of more training than others because of their particular need or role. Training can be availed of:

- Individually by team members by attendance at seminars
- Individually by participation in accredited courses
- Through tailor-made training programmes relevant to the whole team, e.g. FETAC accredited training, which might be delivered 'in house'
- Through coaching or mentoring programmes, which will be outlined further in the next section.

Before undertaking any training programme, staff should be encouraged to think about what outcomes they are hoping for from the training, e.g. increased skills, up-to-date information.

- **Evaluating training:** The nature of the evaluation of the training will vary depending on the training programme. If the training is for the whole team and delivered 'in house' then the evaluation should involve the whole team as well as the trainer(s). Where a person undertakes training individually, an opportunity should be created during supervision/team meetings to reflect on the benefit and value of the training. The evaluation should be undertaken in reference to the outcomes that people wanted from the training. An evaluation of training should include consideration of what, if any, additional training is required.
- **Transferring the learning:** Because of the range of training available and appropriate to childcare services, it will not be possible for all staff to undertake all training. Therefore it is important that when one person participates in training, regardless of its duration, there is an opportunity for this person to feed back learning to the rest of the team. The length of time allocated to feed back will vary depending on the course. Training materials, e.g. handouts from courses, should be available to all staff perhaps through a training file. Learning from formal training can also be incorporated into supervision sessions.

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- **Administering training:** The role of administering training should be allocated to specific individual(s). In larger organisations there may be a designated training officer. In the absence of a training officer this role may be taken up by the manager; a member of the management committee or senior worker. This role may include sourcing and organising training, agreeing training budgets, evaluating training and ensuring feedback from training is shared with the team. The administrator is likely to have an involvement in the practical organisation of training.

Because of the range of roles within any organisation it is important to consider the training needs of staff who are not in childcare roles. Administrators may require training in computer skills or finance/payroll. Managers and supervisors may require training in supervision skills, managing conflict, financial management or writing funding proposals. These specific roles are key to the effective operation of the team and the development of staff in such roles should be acknowledged.

Mentoring and Coaching

The processes of mentoring and coaching are evolving in an Irish context. The terms are often used interchangeably but are two distinct processes though both aim to increase the skill and competency of staff members through individual support. One of the key differences between mentoring and coaching is that mentoring focuses on the person while coaching focuses on the performance.

Mentoring is the process by which a staff member avails of guidance, support and advice from a senior colleague. Formal mentoring programmes are now a feature of many large organisations, where senior staff members are enlisted to act as mentors to new or junior colleagues. A mentor does not have a line management responsibility for the person they are mentoring. The role of the mentor is to provide the staff member with the opportunity to reflect on their work experience and learn from this. A mentoring role is often compared to that of an advisor, where the mentor shares their experience within the organisation or sector. Where formal mentoring programmes are not in place

a person may decide to ask a more experienced person to act as their mentor. This does not have to be someone working for the same organisation but a person with a level of expertise who is happy to share their learning and encourage that of another person. A mentoring programme is not action driven, it is about generating greater understanding. The agenda is generally set by the mentee rather than mentor.

Coaching programmes are more action driven. The coach assumes the role of tutor and their role relates more to work practice and involves observation of the staff member in their work and feedback on this. The role of coach can be filled by a range of individuals within an organisation including colleagues and managers. The coaching relationship is more directive than mentoring and the coach would suggest options for improving practice and skills to the staff member.

When establishing a mentoring or coaching programme in your organisation it is important to provide support and training to mentors or coaches. Such training should include:

- Purpose and boundaries of mentoring and coaching
- Time allocated for programmes
- Relationship to line management
- Mentors' and coaches' expectations of the programme
- Establishing mentee/staff member expectations.

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Section four

WHAT SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN A STAFF
DEVELOPMENT POLICY?

The development of a staff development policy is an important statement by an organisation. Such a policy should outline the organisation's understanding of and commitment to staff development. It should outline what the organisation will provide in terms of staff development and what the organisation expects of staff participation in their professional development. The implementation of the policy is as critical as its drafting and development.

The development of a policy outlining expectations and responsibilities should be drafted following consultation between management and staff. As with all policies, it will need to be updated as the organisation and individual needs develop. The benefit of having a staff development policy is that it reduces the degree of arbitrary decision making and it outlines what is expected of various sections of the organisation with regard to staff

development. Staff should be informed about the staff development policy during their induction or at an early stage in their employment.

A staff development policy will be specific to each organisation but is likely to include reference to the following:

- **A statement of commitment by the agency to staff development:** This statement should outline the commitment of the organisation to the principle of staff development. This statement could include the primary purpose and benefit of staff development programmes i.e. to develop and improve the quality of services to children and their families.
- **A statement regarding the responsibility of staff in terms of their participation in their own professional development:** This section of the policy complements the organisation's statement of its commitment

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and responsibility. The responsibility of staff to participate in and be responsible for their professional development is clarified here.

- **The nature of staff development**

programmes: A range of staff development programmes provided by the organisation – likely to include those described in the previous section of this handbook – should be outlined. This section clarifies what staff can expect of the organisation in terms of their professional development.

- **Guidelines as to how programmes will**

be delivered: This section will be more specific and outline how the programmes will be delivered, e.g. weekly team meetings, monthly supervision, annual review, six month or annual appraisals. This section will also outline who will be responsible for the implementation of staff development programmes, e.g. training officer (in larger organisations),

manager; management committee.

Responsibility may also be shared across an organisation, e.g. management committee takes responsibility for annual team review and undertaking supervision/appraisals with the project manager; while the manager is responsible for staff supervision and team meetings.

- **The resources available for staff development programmes:**

An outline of the time allocated for staff development programmes and the budget available, where appropriate, should be included here. The policy might outline a general time allocation for team development sessions annually, as well as time for staff to engage in training collectively and individually. The agreed training budget for a team or per person should be outlined here. Many organisations will allocate a certain budget annually that every staff member can avail of individually to undertake

training. This budget is likely to enable staff to attend short seminars and workshops. Organisations might also allocate some of the annual budget for staff who wish to undertake more long term training courses which would involve a greater time and financial commitment.

- **How staff can apply for support and resources to undertake further training and development:** It needs to be clarified how staff can apply for support to undertake additional training and development. This might include how an application for funding is made, the advance notice required for this funding and a commitment by the staff member to remain with the organisation for a specified period following completion of a course. This section should also outline who makes the decision regarding applications for support, e.g. management committee, manager, etc.

Sources of further information

The following organisations provide a combination of information, support and training on issues related to staff development. Barnardos does not endorse any external agency listed below and they are listed for information purposes only.

Barnardos' National Children's Resource Centres

www.barnardos.ie

Athlone: River Court, Golden Island,
Athlone, Co. Westmeath
T: 090 647 9584 E: nrcr@athlone.barnardos.ie

Cork: Bowling Green, White Street, Cork
T: 021 431 0591 E: nrcr@cork.barnardos.ie

Dublin: Christchurch Square, Dublin 8
T: 01 453 0355 E: nrcr@barnardos.ie

Limerick: 10 Sarsfield Street, Limerick
T: 061 208680 E: nrcr@midwest.barnardos.ie

Border Counties Childcare Network

Unit 10d, M:TEK Building, Knockaconny,
Armagh Road, Monaghan
T: 047 72469 E: bcn@eircom.net www.bcn.ie

Chartered Institute of Personnel Development

7/8 Upper Mount Street, Dublin 2
T: 01 676655 E: info@cipd.ie www.cipd.ie

Childminding Ireland

Wicklow Enterprise Centre,
The Murrrough, Wicklow
T: 0404 64007 E: info@childminding.ie
www.childminding.ie

City/County Childcare Committees

Carlow: 16 Dublin Road, Carlow
T: 059 914 0244 E: carlowccc@eircom.net
www.carlowccc.com

Cavan: Railway Station, Belturbet, Co. Cavan
T: 049 952 9882 E: cavanccc@oceanfree.net
www.cavanccc.ie

Clare: 1 Kilrush Road, Ennis, Co. Clare
T: 065 686 4862 E: info@clarechildcare.ie
www.clarechildcare.ie

Cork City: 29 Penrose Wharf, Cork
T: 021 450 7942 E: corkcitychildcare1@eircom.net
www.corkcitychildcare.ie

Cork County: Floor 2, The Mill,
Castletownroche, Co. Cork
T: 022 26648 E: corkchildcare@eircom.net

Dun Laoghaire Rathdown: 5a Woodpark,
Sallynoggin, Co. Dublin
T: 01 236 8030 E: dlrccc1@eircom.net
www.dlrccountychildcare.ie

Donegal: Glenview Business Park, 1st Floor,
Donegal Road, Ballybofey, Co. Donegal
T: 074 913 2416 E: info@donegalchildcare.com
www.donegalchildcare.com

Dublin City: Block 4, Floor 1, Dublin City Council, Civic Offices, Woodquay, Dublin 8
T: 01 222 3073 E: nuala.nicgiobuin@dublincity.ie
www.dublincitychildcare.ie

Fingal: Mainscourt, 23 Main Street, Swords, Co. Dublin
T: 01 890 5027 E: info@fingalcountychildcare.ie
www.fingalcountychildcare.ie

Galway: 9B Liosban Retail Centre, Tuam Road, Galway
T: 091 752039 E: mail@galwaychildcare.com
www.galwaychildcare.com

Kerry: 1 Powers Court, Boherbee, Tralee, Co. Kerry
T: 066 718 1582 E: kccot@eircom.net
www.kerrycountychildcare.ie

Kildare: The Woods, Clane, Co. Kildare
T: 045 861 307 E: info@kildarechildcare.ie
www.kildarechildcare.ie

Kilkenny: Rear Choill Mhuire, Glendine Road, Kilkenny
T: 056 7752 865 E: kkccc@eircom.net

Laois: 6 Lismard Court, Portlaoise, Co. Laois
T: 0502 61029 E: laoischildcare@eircom.net
www.laoischildcare.ie

Leitrim: Laird House, Church Street, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim
T: 071 964 0870 E: leitrimcountychildcare@eircom.net

Limerick City: City Hall, Merchants Quay, Limerick
T: 061 407 427 E: childcare@limerickcity.ie
www.limerickcitydb.ie/childcare

Limerick County: 32 Main Street, Croom, Co. Limerick
T: 061 600 918 E: clcc@eircom.net www.clcc.ie

Longford: Unit 17, Longford Shopping Centre, Longford
T: 043 42505 E: lechildcare@eircom.net
www.longfordchildcare.ie

Louth: Unit 9 Ardee Business Park, Hale Street Ardee, Co. Louth
T: 041 685 9912 E: info@louthchildcare.ie
www.louthchildcare.ie

Mayo: 2nd Floor, Mill Lane, Bridge Street, Castlebar, Co. Mayo
T: 094 903 4778 E: jpowers@mayococo.ie
www.mayocdb.ie

Meath: 11 Watergate Street, Navan, Co. Meath
T: 046 907 3010 E: meathchildcare@eircom.net
www.community.meath.ie

Monaghan: 7 The Grange, Plantation Walk, Monaghan
T: 047 72896 E: monaghanccc@eircom.net

North Tipperary: North Tipperary County Council, Civic Offices, Limerick Road, Nenagh, Co. Tipperary
T: 067 44886 E: childcare@northtippcoco.ie
www.northtipperarychildcare.ie

Offaly: St Joseph's Community Centre, Kilcormac, Birr, Co. Offaly
T: 0509 35878 E: offalychildcare@eircom.net

Roscommon: Antogher Road, Roscommon, Co. Roscommon
T: 090 662 8669 E: roschildcare@eircom.net

Sligo: 50 The Mall, Sligo
T: 071 91 48860 E: sccc@eircom.net
www.sligochildcare.ie

South Dublin: Block D, Bawnogue Enterprise Centre, Bawnogue, Dublin 22
T: 01 457 0122 E: southdublinchildcare@eircom.net
www.southdublinchildcare.ie

South Tipperary: 1 O'Connell Street, Clonmel, Co. Tipperary
T: 052 82274 E: ccadministrator@eircom.net
www.southtippccc.ie

Waterford City: Unit 15, Tycor Business Centre, Tycor, Waterford
T: 051 860 444
E: waterfordcitychildcarecom@eircom.net

Waterford County: Youth Resource Centre,
Friary Street, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
T: 058 43601 E: waterfordcochildcare@eircom.net
www.waterfordcoco.ie

Westmeath: 6 St John's Terrace, Blackhall,
Mullingar, Co. Westmeath
T: 044 35454
E: westmeathcountychildcare@eircom.net
www.westmeathchildcare.ie

Wexford: 11 Weaver Street,
Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford
T: 054 37156 E: Lindacountychildcare@eircom.net
www.wexfordchildcare.ie

Wicklow: Kilmantin Hill, Wicklow
T: 0404 64455 E: jeremywccc@eircom.net

Comhairle

7th Floor, Hume House, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
T: 01 605 9000 E: info@comhairle.ie
www.comhairle.ie

FÁS

PO Box 456, 27-33 Upper Baggot Street, Dublin 4
T: 01 6070500 E: info@fas.ie www.fas.ie

FETAC

East Point Plaza, East Point Business Park, Dublin 3
T: 01 865 9500 E: information@fetac.ie
www.ibec.ie

Forbairt Naíonraí Teo

7 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, Baile Átha Cliath 2
T: 01 639 8442 E: forbairtnaoinrai@eircom.net
www.naionrai.ie

Institute of Public Administration (IPA)

57-61 Lansdowne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
T: 01 240 3600 E: information@ipa.ie
www.ipa.ie

IPPA- The Early Childhood Organisation

Unit 4, Broomhill Business Complex,
Broomhill Road, Tallaght, Dublin 24
T: 01 6719245 E: info@ippa.ie www.ippa.ie

Irish Business & Employer Confederation

(IBEC): Confederation House,
84/86 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2
(note: IBEC also have regional offices)
T: 01 605 1500 E: info@ibec.ie www.ibec.ie

Irish Management Institute (IMI)

Sandyford Road, Dublin 16
T: 01 207 8400 E: reception@imi.ie www.imi.ie

Irish Small & Medium Enterprises Assoc.

17 Kildare Street, Dublin 2
T: 01 662 2755 E: info@ismie.ie www.ismie.ie

Irish Steiner Waldorf Early Childhood Assoc.

Cappaduff, Mountshannon, Co. Clare
T: 061 927944 E: info@steinerireland.org
www.steinerireland.org

National Children's Nurseries Assoc.(NCNA)

12C Bluebell Business Park, Old Naas Road,
Bluebell, Dublin 12
T: 01 460 1138 E: info@ncna.net www.ncna.net

National College of Ireland (NCI)

Mayor Street, IFSC, Dublin 1
T: 01 4498500 E: info@ncirl.ie www.ncirl.ie

Pobal (formerly ADM)

Holbrook House, Holles Street, Dublin 2
T: 01 240 0700 E: enquiries@pobal.ie
www.pobal.ie

St. Nicholas Montessori Society of Ireland

Ground Floor, 29 Patrick Street,
Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin
T: 01280 5705 E: snmta@eircom.net
www.montessorireland.ie

Small Firms Association (SFA)

84 Lower Baggot St., Dublin 2
T: 01 605 1611 E: info@sfa.ie www.sfa.ie