

Sessional Services

Key Messages:

A Sessional Pre-School Service is an Early Learning and Care Service offering a planned programme to children for not more than 3.5 hours per session, including those sessions offering the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme.

- A requirement of the ECCE Programme is that each child must receive a full 3-hour session per day during term-time.
- Social distancing is not a requirement for children of any age in early learning and care or school-age childcare settings.

Play-pods:

As an alternative to social distancing, early learning and care (sessional) services will introduce play-pods. For further information please see the tip-sheet on play-pods.

- There is no evidence base to define a maximum play-pod size. They should be kept as small as is reasonably practical.
- Play-pods may contain one or two adults, sometimes three e.g. where required to assist a child with additional needs.
- Services should continue to operate within regulatory adult-child ratios. For Sessional services, the ratio is 1 to 11. In this context a practical pod size would be 12 (1 adult and 11 children) or 24 (2 adults and 22 children).
- Keep play-pods separate. If space permits, there may be more than one pod in a room with partitions.

For further information see the tip sheet on play-pods.

Examples

(other scenarios can apply)

Little Beginners;

is a sessional service catering for 22 children aged 3-6 years.

The setting has two playrooms (play pods) with 1 adult and 11 children in each play-pod. An additional staff member provides relief for breaks and assists with drop offs and collections.

The setting has placed removable fencing in the outdoor space to create two play areas while not restricting use of the whole outdoor space when needed.

New sheltered spaces using sails, willow and timber structures have been placed throughout the outdoor space. A pergola has been added to connect the playrooms to the outdoor space creating a transitional space to play, where outdoor clothing/ footwear is kept, as well as providing shelter and shade.

To support regular hand washing outdoor sinks have been added one is plumbed for hot water and others use a water butt. All changes support the use of the outdoor space regardless of weather.



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Infection prevention and control:

Where a service operates morning and afternoon sessions they should ensure:

- Rooms and toys/equipment/materials should be cleaned between sessions. A deep clean is not required but do pay particular attention to frequently touched surfaces.
- The sharing of toys should be avoided between play-pods and morning and afternoon sessions.
- The sharing of food by children should be discouraged.
- Procedures for how children bring snacks and food from home and for their safe storage in the service should be established.
- Water should be freely available to the children. Water jugs, if used, should be covered/have lids.

Face coverings are not required for children in settings or for adults while they are caring for children. Face coverings should be worn by adults (staff, parents, visitors) when not caring for children and where social distancing is not possible.

Outdoor spaces:

Outdoor activities in early years settings should be encouraged as much as possible.

- Trips to nearby parks and amenities can be managed with a low risk of infection if physical distance from other people is maintained.



Examples

(other scenarios can apply)

Room to Grow;

is a sessional Montessori setting, operating a morning service only, with space for 22 children and 2 adults. There is an extra adult available for relief who assists with breaks and drop off and departures.

The service operates from one large room and this is classified as the play-pod.

The entrance to the setting has a one-way system in place, direction arrows 2m apart direct parents to the entrance door and they leave via a separate marked area, which is divided by Perspex, floor to 2 metres in height. Parents are requested not to congregate in large numbers and to only position themselves in the child friendly marked areas. One staff member is on hand to support social distancing arrangements until parents are familiar with the system.

Clever Clogs playgroup;

is a sessional setting catering for 22 children aged 3-6 years.

The setting has one play-pod and operates a morning and an afternoon session. Each session has 11 children and one adult. An AIM worker is present in both sessions to support children with additional needs.

The setting has a long narrow entrance passage, which is covered in and marked out with a minimum of 2 metres between each line. Staggered drop off and collection times are managed by allocating 5- minute intervals for groups of 3 parents at a time upon arrival and departure. Parents are requested to position themselves at the child friendly social distanced markers, and only approach the entrance door when called to collect or drop off their child.