Early Childhood Education and Care

"equitable access to quality ECEC can strengthen the foundations of lifelong learning for all children and support the broad educational and social needs of families". (OECD, 2017, p.16).

DISCLAIMER
This information is emanating from trends in areas of development observed through External Reviews performed between 2016 and 2017 and is not intended to replace the current National Standards for Child Day Care Facilities (2006) but rather to serve as focused guidelines to enhance quality in Early Childhood Education and Care.
Support channels...

**ECDAM**
New National Development Association Services
ecdamalta@gmail.com
79604943 / 79639603
79891728

**National School Support Service**
Fra Gaetano Pace Forno Str. Hamrun
2598 3494

**Anti-Bullying Service**
2598 3480/1/2/3/4/5/6/7

**Child Safety Services**
2598 3440, 3473/4/5/6/7/8/9

**Directorate Learning & Assessment Programmes**
Education Officers - Early Years
2598 2902

**Anti-Substance Abuse**
2598 3416, 3456/7/8/9, 3460/1/2

**Foundation for Social Welfare Services**
179.appogg@gov.mt
2295 9000 (Appogg)
179 (Supportline)

**Early Intervention Services**
2598 3404/5/9

**Accreditation Unit**
2598 2345

**Aqra Miegħi/ Read with Me**
2598 2990

**Quality Assurance Department**
2598 2358

**Ministry for Education and Employment**

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Institutions

“We must recognise that the environments we create are shaping children’s memories and their identities about who they are in the world and what they deserve” (Curtis & Carter, 2015).

The Physical Environment, premises and equipment
Irrespective of the setting, the following are the primary required documents. The DQSE reserves the right to request other documents which may be deemed necessary to ensure a functional and safe environment for the learners of the Childcare Centre.
- Executable building permit for a child day care facility issued by the Planning Authority;
- A compliance certificate issued by the Commission for the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD).

Management and Organisation
Centre Managers are required to remain committed and dedicated to support all learners and their parents. To be a successful and meaningful learning community, it is highly recommended that the Centres have a clear manual of policies and procedures as per National Standards (2006) and that these are shared with parents and staff. Furthermore, each Centre needs to have one Centre Manager who is focused on the day-to-day running of the specific Centre, ensuring that the learning programmes are meaningful while guiding and monitoring the Carers consistently. The Legally Responsible Persons in collaboration with the Centre Managers are to ensure that the ratios and group sizes allow members of staff to interact appropriately with children.

Health and Safety of Children
Health and Safety is critical in any environment, particularly so when it is aimed at highly vulnerable young children. It is pivotal that Health & Safety Risk Assessment reports also address the guidelines established in the National Standards (2006). The Health and Safety Risk Assessment Report needs to be followed-up with action and a Health and Safety Compliance Certificate.

Food and Drink
Leading a healthy lifestyle, including a well-balanced diet, increasingly becomes a priority which needs to be fostered also in Childcare Centres. Developing healthy lifestyle habits as a young child creates positive attitudes that are carried into adulthood. The Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Policy issued by the Ministry for Education and Employment in 2015 guides Centres and parents in collaboratively nurturing a healthier society with our youngest generation.

Practitioners

“There is a general consensus, supported by research, that well educated, well-trained professionals are the key factor in providing high-quality ECEC with the most favourable cognitive and social outcomes for children” (Taguma, Litjens, and Makowiecki, 2012).

Suitable Persons
Staff in Childcare Centres need to be adequately qualified or are enrolled in the appropriate course as required by the National Standards (2006). Furthermore, members of staff are to be sensitised in adopting a positive caring attitude towards all children entrusted to them.

The Legally Responsible Person (LRP) is regulated and supported by the DQSE in this aspect through accreditation of practitioners in specific roles. Accreditation may be obtained by applying online through this link: https://edumalta.gov.mt/en/accreditation-application-form.

The current qualifications that make an applicant eligible for the specific role are as follows:
- **Centre Manager** – MQF Level 4 qualification in child caring or accredited Certificate of Competence followed by MQF Level 5 qualification in managing a child day care facility or accredited Certificate of Competence;
- **Childcarer** – MQF Level 4 qualification in child caring or accredited Certificate of Competence.

In both cases one should be in possession of a valid Food Handling certificate and a valid Paediatric First Aid certificate at the date of employment besides having a clean moral conduct.

The LRP is to ensure that all members of staff are well-trained and committed to their work with children. Personnel should be kept abreast with the latest theories and practices in early childhood education and other national policies by having opportunities for upskilling as part of their Continuous Professional Development.

Child Protection
The Legally Responsible Person (LRP) is obliged to employ qualified personnel following regulations listed in Legal Notice (L.N.) 206 of 2016. The LRP is to ensure a ZERO tolerance approach to child abuse and harm for persons accessing the Childcare Centre during operating hours.
Programmes and Experience

“Access is not a guarantee of high-quality ECEC. Therefore, in many countries, the curriculum framework in pre-primary education has recently been extended to enhance ECEC quality and to ensure better transition between pre-primary and primary education”. (OECD, 2017).

Care, Learning and Play

Centres are encouraged to continue equipping themselves with appropriate resources and strive to emphasise a pedagogy of care based on reciprocal relationships to strengthen the bond with children so as to extend learning and development.

The Legally Responsible Persons in collaboration with Centre Managers are to ensure:
- that Carers engage and motivate the children in their learning and development in a respectful, affectionate and caring way;
- secure relationships are fostered between children and their designated Carer;
- to create an environment that reflect the children’s interests and which stimulates curiosity and discovery learning where play is the central medium through which children learn;
- that Carers foster a language-rich environment that supports children’s bilingual development in Maltese and English and positive attitudes towards languages;
- meaningful activities that target specific outcomes and competences;
- that Carers make use of authentic assessment practices that notice, recognise and respond to children’s learning such as portfolios and learning notes/stories/journals. Children achievements are to be creatively displayed and accessible to children and parents.

Working in partnership with parents

Childcare Centres should pursue in their efforts to keep parents informed of the children’s activities and development. Childcare Centres should not only be safe and sanitary but should be accessible and welcome to parents. Parental involvement in children’s educational journey and experience is pivotal for successful learning.

Behaviour Management

Childcare Centres need to deal with behavioural problems in a consistently caring and firm manner. Understanding behaviour in Early Childhood Education is important to cater for the emotional well-being of the child. A child may display actions which are part of simply being a human child growing up, such as the expression of emotion.

Equal opportunities and children with special needs

Childcare Centres are to cultivate an inclusive environment. The Legally Responsible person in collaboration with the Centre Managers are to ensure that all children are treated fairly through activities that promote the appreciation and acceptance of individual differences and minimise barriers that restrict equitable participation.

Pre-operational procedures - THE ACCREDITATION UNIT

The process towards promoting and regulating Child Day Care services in Malta has been gaining steady momentum in recent years so as to meet the needs of both service-users and service-providers.

There are three main settings:
- home-based facility that caters for a maximum number of 6 children;
- centre-based facility that caters for more than 6 children;
- work-based facility that provides early childhood and care services to its employees as part of their family friendly measures.

One may retrieve all the information about the setting up of a child day care facility by accessing:
and by contacting the Accreditation Unit (DQSE).

It is becoming increasingly accepted that early years’ provision is the foundation of learning throughout life. Research is showing that children, who experience high quality learning programmes in early childhood education, perform better in their later years at school, develop better social skills and display fewer behavioural problems. Inclusive and equitable quality educational programmes in Early Childhood Education and Care will nurture a meaningful personal journey of holistic development and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
Following registration, the facility will be subject to periodical reviews, as required, to have the registration renewed.

**Before the external review**

1. The Legally Responsible Person (LRP) receives an email from the Quality Assurance Department (QAD) indicating the month during which the visit will be held. The LRP is asked to upload the following documentation: the latest Health and Safety risk assessment, the latest certificate by an electrical engineer confirming the safety of electrical appliances, the manual of policies and procedures, the list of Carers and Manager/s in employment including their highest relevant qualification and proof of their POMA clearance.
2. The LRP is notified about the week when the visit will be taking place by Friday of the week before.

**During the external review**

3. The review team (normally consisting of two QAD officers) visits the Centre and conducts an interview with the Centre Manager.
4. The review team carries out observations and may converse with the other members of staff.
5. Photos of the premises/equipment (not children) may be taken during the review exercise to collect evidence. The team may ask the Manager to forward electronically or photocopy any other evidence as needed (e.g. of programme of activities, weekly plan).
6. The review team discusses to draw conclusions.
7. The team informs the Manager about the outcomes of the visit.

**After the external review**

8. The LRP receives a report with the outcomes of the review which includes strengths, required actions and recommendations. The report also includes a list of actions that need to be given priority attention.
9. If the report requires any documentation to be submitted as evidence of action taken, the LRP or delegate submits this information to the person indicated in the e-mail sent by Review Leader by the set time-frame.
10. The LRP in collaboration with Centre Managers and members of staff are encouraged to draw up an action plan to show how they will be addressing the required actions identified in the External Review Report.