



**An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige**
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

**Call for Submissions on Regulations and a Quality
Improvement Framework for School-Age Childcare**

May 2019

Call for Submissions

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) invites submissions on future regulations and a quality improvement framework for School-Age Childcare, to inform the work of DCYA in this area.

Background

- The Action Plan on School-Age Childcare (2017) recommended the development of a comprehensive set of quality standards for School-Age Childcare and introduction of a robust quality assurance system for School-Age Childcare services with statutory regulation, similar to that provided by the Tusla EY Inspectorate. The Action Plan proposed that statutory regulation be considered in the longer term.
- Following publication of the Action Plan, a Standards Working Group developed draft National Quality Standards for centre based School-Age Childcare services. This draft document comprises proposals for principles, standards, components, elements and further useful information. It was envisaged that this document would be published and services could work towards these standards during which time regulations would be developed.
- The forthcoming introduction of the National Childcare Scheme necessitated a change in the sequence of actions envisaged in the Action Plan. In order to enable School-Age Childcare services participate in the National Childcare Scheme from the outset, it was necessary to introducing initial Regulations before the opening of the National Childcare Scheme in autumn 2019. Initial Regulations for School-Age Childcare ('Registration Regulations') were therefore introduced and came into force in February 2019.
- DCYA now intends to develop comprehensive regulations (to replace the initial regulations in due course) and a quality improvement framework for the School-Age Childcare sector suitable to the wide range of services that offer SAC, including: both private and community operated services; both centre-based and home-based (childminding) services; services operating both on and off school premises; and both 'stand-alone' school-age services and services that also offer early learning and care. DCYA's work will be informed by submissions received in response to this open call, as well as by an online survey, and a consultation with children conducted in 2016 during preparation of the Action Plan on School-Age Childcare.
- Individuals or organisations with an interest in School-Age Childcare services can make a submission by sending the completed form with relevant attachments to SACQuality@dcya.gov.ie by Friday 5th July at 17:00

What do we mean by School Age Childcare?

School Age Childcare is defined as a service for school-age children from 4 up to 15 years old that operates outside school hours, the **primary purpose** of which is to care for children when their parents are unavailable. The Child Care Act 1991 (as amended by the Childcare Support Act 2018) **excludes** from this definition services that solely provide activities relating to —

1. The Arts.
2. Youth work.
3. Competitive or recreational sport.
4. Tuition.
5. Religious teaching.

Within this legal definition, School Age Childcare services may operate before school hours, after school hours, or during school holidays.

Scope of call for submissions

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) invites submissions from individuals or organisations with an interest in School-Age Childcare in relation to:

1. Future comprehensive regulations for School Age Childcare
2. Development of a national quality framework for School-Age Childcare services

DCYA is particularly interested in seeking views on the following issues and questions. You are not required to answer all questions. Please feel free to answer as many or as few of the questions as you wish.

General

- Do you welcome the move to regulate School-Age Childcare?
- What is your view of the initial regulations that commenced in February 2019?
- Do you think School-Age Childcare should follow the approach taken in Early Learning and Care with a National Quality Framework (Síolta), comprehensive Regulations and a Quality and Regulatory Framework (as guidance to the regulations)?

Regulations

- What components and elements in the Draft Standards documents (available at <http://www.dcy.gov.ie>) should be prescribed in Regulations as **minimum requirements**?
- What do you think the minimum qualification requirements should be for staff working with children in School-Age Childcare?
 - What do you think should be the minimum qualification level?
 - Do you think room leaders should be required to hold a qualification at a higher level than the minimum?
 - What qualifications/disciplines do you think should be accepted to work in School-Age Childcare?
- What do you think should be the minimum/maximum adult-child ratio¹, group size², clear floor space³ and outdoor space?
- Do you think there should be split requirements based on age-ranges of children (e.g. 4-8 yrs., 9-14 yrs.) for certain regulations? If so, which?
- What do you think should be the requirements in relation to premises and the service environment (indoor/outdoor)?
- What, if any, do you think should be the requirement for the provision of food?
 - Before school?
 - After school?
- What policies and procedures do you think service providers should be required to have in place for regulatory compliance? For example:
 - child safeguarding statement
 - policy on behaviour management
 - complaints policy
 - policy on administration of medicine
 - policy on infection control
 - policy on dropping off and collection of children
 - fire safety policy
 - Admissions and fees policy

¹ Current regulations set the adult/child ratio at a minimum of 1:12.

² In Early Learning and Care settings the maximum group size for sessional care is 22 children.

³ In Early Learning and Care settings this is set at 2.3 square metres for the 3-6 years age range.

- homework policy
- HR policy
- mobile phone policy
- anti-bullying policy
- healthy eating policy
- outings policy
- play, recreation and rest policy
- other - please specify

Standards

- What are your views of the content of the Draft Standards published with this call for submissions? (available at <http://www.dcy.gov.ie>)
- What changes do you think might be needed to the Draft Standards for different types of providers, e.g.
 - Centre-based and home-based (childminding) services;
 - Services operating on and off school premises;
 - 'Stand-alone' school-age services and services that also offer early learning and care;
 - Services caring for children before school, after school, and during school holidays?

This is not an exhaustive list of questions but merely to prompt some responses. DCYA welcomes any other information you deem relevant.

The draft standards document and the initial Regulations are available from the DCYA website.

Process

To make a submission please complete the submission form and enclose any relevant materials by email to SACQuality@dcya.gov.ie by Friday 5th July at 17:00.

On your submission please include your name, organisation (if any), address, phone number and email address.

Please keep your submission to a maximum of 1,000 words.

Late submissions will not be considered.

Submissions are subject to Freedom of Information legislation, and may be released in response to Freedom of Information requests.

DCYA may seek to engage with people or organisations on the basis of their submission for further discussion.

By making a submission you agree to DCYA reserving the right to publish your submission in part or in full.