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Working in the Early Childhood Care and Education Sector

In this chapter

- Work organisations: types (public, private and the voluntary sector), structures and roles
- Personal work/career opportunities in the early childhood care and education (ECCE), education and social care sectors
- Childcare qualifications
- Síolta's principles and links to practice
- Aistear's themes and links to practice

BACKGROUND

It is useful for those working in early childhood care and education (ECCE) to have some knowledge of the historical context of the childcare sector to enable them to understand the context of childcare provision today.

Private, public and voluntary childcare services

Childcare services in Ireland have historically been provided by the private profit-making sector. The introduction of the ECCE scheme in January 2010 was very important as it provided universal provision of childcare placements for children in playschool. The ECCE scheme provides a one-year placement for pre-school children and is not means tested. Services in the childcare sector are mainly provided by private ECCE services that are operated as a business, and this affects the costing, budgeting and resource allocations in an early childhood service.

The state does provide some public childcare services, including early intervention programmes such as Early Start, HighScope and community pre-schools and crèches. These, however, represent a very small component of service provision in Ireland and are not available in all areas of the country.

Do some research to find out more about Early Start, HighScope and community crèches.

In the past, childcare in Ireland was usually provided by family members or by childminders. Today families and childminders are still significant providers of childcare services in Ireland, along with crèches, sessional services, naíonraí, after-school facilities and specialised services such as the Forest Schools (outdoor playschools). Public funding for childcare is extremely limited and is primarily oriented towards the development of childcare facilities in designated geographical areas of disadvantage.

Households with lower incomes rely on publicly subsidised childcare, which is limited and, depending on where they live, may not be available. Middle- and high-income families pay high costs in the private marketplace. Public provision for pre-school childcare is only available to a very small proportion of pre-school children – around 4% of the total number of children accessing childcare in Ireland.

DIFFERENT TYPES OF CHILDCARE SERVICE

There are a number of different services currently provided in Ireland today in the ECCE sector. They include the following.

Full day care

This is a structured care service where children attend for more than 3.5 hours per day. Providers typically care for children from 3 months to 6 years. Some services may also include an after-school facility, typically for children from 4 to 12 years of age. In full day care, sleeping arrangements and food preparation must meet standards laid down by the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006. Providers include day nurseries and crèches.

Sessional services

Sessional services provide planned programmes of up to 3.5 hours per session (such as a morning or an afternoon). In general these sessions cater for children between 2.5 years and 6 years of age, but they can also be provided for younger children. In order to provide a sessional childcare service, a recognised childcare qualification is required by staff working in the service. Sessional services include:

- ▶ **Montessori groups:** focus on individualised education, teaching social skills and maximising children's development. They cater to children up to the age of 6 in an ECCE setting.
- ▶ **Parent and toddler groups:** a group of parents, guardians or carers and children come together for supervised play and companionship for their parents.

- ▶ **Naíonraí:** nursery schools or playschools operating through the medium of Irish.
- ▶ **Playschools:** give children an opportunity to play with other children of a similar age, learn to share and take turns and to understand the rules of the classroom, such as listening.

The curricula offered in ECCE services include Froebel, Steiner Waldorf, HighScope, Reggio Emilia and Forest Schools. (These can all be explored in the Early Childhood Award FETAC Level 5 or Early Childhood Curriculum FETAC Level 6, awarded by QQI.)

Childminders

Childminders care for children in the minder's own home or in the child's home. A childminder can care for up to five children under 6 years of age (including the childminder's own child or children). The service is usually offered for a full working day or for different periods during the day. Parents and childminders arrange their own terms and conditions.

Advantages

- ▶ The child is typically one of a small group, which should mean more one-to-one attention.
- ▶ The childminder can look after children of different ages, which replicates a family situation.
- ▶ Childminders often look after children from when they are very young until they go to secondary school. This allows the child to build a relationship with the childminder and provides the child with security and consistency of care.
- ▶ Taking your child to a childminder can be a very good substitute for home care. The childminder may even be located near to the family home or may work in the child's or children's own home.
- ▶ Typically, childminders are more flexible about pick-up and drop-off times.

Disadvantages

- ▶ There may not be a back-up childcare service for when the childminder is sick or on holiday.
- ▶ A childminder does not need to register, so they are unregulated and may not have any specific childcare training.
- ▶ A childminder may pay more attention to their own children than to the other children in their care.

Au pairs

An au pair is typically a young person who is treated as a family member in exchange for certain services, such as light housework or helping to mind the children. It is a voluntary arrangement between a private household and a private individual. The objective of the arrangement is to enable the au pair to experience a different culture and improve his or her foreign language skills.

There is no specific regulatory framework, and au pairs are not required to have any specific experience of working with children. An au pair is not a professional nanny or childminder. Au pairs are not employees and there is no contract of employment between the host family and the au pair. The au pair is usually given room and board and paid a small weekly allowance. There are specialist private agencies that arrange the placement of au pairs with families.

Drop-in centres

A drop-in centre offers a service for short periods during the day. These centres are often provided in shopping centres, leisure centres, community halls and accommodation facilities, etc. The service is provided as part of a customer or client service and children are looked after while the parent is availing of a service or attending an event. This provision is typically time limited.

School-age childcare

Services for schoolchildren can include breakfast clubs in schools, after-school clubs and school holiday programmes such as summer camps, etc. Some school-age childcare is privately provided and is one of a number of services offered by a childcare service. Depending on the service, there may also be homework supervision, planned activities or a nutritious meal. Children aged from 4 to 12 years are catered for. There are currently no specific regulations in relation to adult/child ratios or programme delivery in an after-school service.

Affordable childcare

Affordable childcare is provided for families on lower incomes, and also to support parents to return to work or education. This type of service is called a community childcare facility. Funding is available through the National Childcare Investment Programme. The local City/County Childcare Committee will provide information on affordable childcare services.

Information about the National Childcare Investment Programme can be found on the Pobal website (www.pobal.ie) under 'Funding Programmes'.

Special needs assistants

Special needs assistants (SNAs) support children with special needs, typically in a mainstream school but sometimes in an ECCE setting or a special school. The role of the SNA is to assist with the individual needs of a child who presents with a physical, intellectual or emotional disability or a combination of these. The SNA is appointed by the school to support a child/children in the classroom and the allocation of SNA support may be made on a full- or part-time basis.

The duties of an SNA

The duties of SNAs are outlined in Appendix 1 of Circular DES SP.ED 07/02. An SNA's role is a non-teaching role. A student with a general learning disability would not typically require the services of an SNA.

In accordance with Circular 10/76: Duties and Responsibilities of Principal Teachers, the duties of SNAs are assigned by the principal teacher and sanctioned by the board of management. Their work should be supervised either by the principal or by a class teacher.

Those duties involve tasks of a non-teaching nature, such as:

- ▶ preparing and tidying classroom(s) in which the pupil(s) with special needs is/are being taught
- ▶ assisting children to board and alight from school buses; where necessary, travel as escort on school buses may be required
- ▶ special assistance as necessary for pupils with particular difficulties, e.g. helping physically disabled pupils with typing or writing
- ▶ assistance with clothing, feeding, toileting and general hygiene
- ▶ assisting on out-of-school visits, walks and similar activities
- ▶ assisting teachers in the supervision of pupils with special needs during assembly, recreational and dispersal periods
- ▶ accompanying individuals or small groups who may have to be withdrawn temporarily from the classroom
- ▶ general assistance to the class teachers, under the direction of the principal, with duties of a non-teaching nature (SNAs may not act as substitute or temporary teachers; in no circumstances may they be left in sole charge of a class).

Where an SNA has been appointed to assist a school in catering for a specific pupil, duties should be modified to support the particular needs of the pupil concerned. (See www.education.ie, accessed 31 October 2013.)

Qualifications

The qualifications for an SNA, as laid down by the Department of Education and Skills, are (as at October 2013): a FETAC Level 3 (awarded by QQI) major qualification on the National Framework of Qualifications; or a minimum of three grade Ds in the Junior Certificate; or equivalent.

It is important to note, however, that although these are the basic qualifications, many schools require higher qualifications, such as a FETAC Level 5 or 6 childcare award that incorporates the Special Needs modules at these levels.

Social care work

Work in social care typically involves working with marginalised or disadvantaged people and communities in a caring, compassionate way. Social care work includes working with: children and adolescents in residential child care; children/adults with learning disabilities; homeless people; people with alcohol/drug dependency; families in the community; elderly people; and asylum seekers/refugees. Typically the qualification needed to be a social care worker is a Level 7 degree in social care or equivalent. These degrees are offered at colleges and universities, including institutes of technology, throughout Ireland.

Students who have completed a FETAC award in childcare sometimes decide that they would like to work in social care and apply using their FETAC qualifications or as a mature student for entry to the social care degree programme.

NATIONAL CHILDCARE STRATEGY 2006–2010

As part of the National Childcare Strategy 2006–2010, the National Childcare Investment Programme provides for the quantity and quality of childcare facilities in Ireland. It is also responsible for co-ordinating childcare activities from national to local level.

Community Childcare Subvention Programme

The purpose of this programme is to support community-based childcare services and to facilitate them in providing quality childcare services at reduced rates to disadvantaged parents.

The Childcare Directorate at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs has responsibility for implementing the National Childcare Strategy 2006–2010. Its Guide for Parents is available at www.omc.gov.ie/documents/childcare/childcare_parents.pdf.

City/County Childcare Committees

The City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs) develop and implement a co-ordinated strategy for the provision of quality, affordable and accessible childcare in each county. The CCCs help communities identify gaps in current childcare services and develop new services to meet these needs. They provide information on funding and grant applications and facilitate a co-ordinated approach to childcare training at all levels. The available grants change from time to time, but at the time of writing there are grants available for the development of community services.

Childcare costs depend on the type of childcare service that is chosen, the number of hours and the level of staff training in that facility.

CHILDCARE QUALIFICATIONS

- ▶ **The Child Care (Pre-School Services) Regulations 2006** require that a minimum of 50% of staff in a service have a qualification appropriate to the care and development of children.
- ▶ **The Early Childhood Care and Education Scheme** states that from June 2012 the play leader in each room of a service must have a minimum qualification of a FETAC Level 5 Certificate in Childcare.
- ▶ **Employers** generally look for a minimum of FETAC Level 5 award in Early Childhood Care and Education or an equivalent qualification relevant to the specific job role and responsibilities.
- ▶ **The ECCE scheme** pays a higher rate per child (€75 at the time of writing) if the childcare leader has a degree in Early Childhood Education at Level 7 or above.

SÍOLTA

Síolta is the national quality framework for ECCE in Ireland. It provides the framework for evaluating the quality of service provision in an ECCE service. Síolta comprises three distinct but interrelated elements: Principles, Standards and Components of Quality.

The elements of Síolta

Principles

Standards

Components of Quality

Síolta's 12 Principles provide the overall ethos of the framework, and there are also 16 Quality Standards and 75 Components that all ECCE services are required to work towards. It details core principles to which all services must adhere and guides service providers and practitioners towards quality practice in all areas of service provision. Síolta is also a self-assessment Quality Assurance Programme.

First published in 2006, Síolta was developed by the Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE), on behalf of the then Department of Education and Science. The word Síolta means 'seeds' in Irish, and the symbol of the seed is used as a means of communicating the ways in which the framework can be used as a developmental tool, enabling the development of each service to its full potential and in its own unique way.

Síolta is designed to improve the quality of all elements of practice in an ECCE setting where children from the ages of 0 to 6 years attend. These settings include:

- ▶ full-time and part-time day care settings
- ▶ childminders
- ▶ pre-school sessional services
- ▶ primary school infant classes.

You should consider the Síolta Principles in your work practice and see how they are applied in your work placement.

Access Síolta's Principles at www.siolta.ie/principles.php.

Principle 1

Early childhood is a significant and distinct time in life that must be nurtured, respected, valued and supported in its own right.

Early childhood, the period from birth to six years, is a significant and unique time in the life of every individual. Every child needs and has the right to positive

experiences in early childhood. As with every other phase in life, positive supports and adequate resources are necessary to make the most of this period. Provision of such supports and resources should not be conditional on the expectations of the economy, society or other interests.

In practice

Consider how this principle can be applied in your work placement practice. How do you promote positive experiences for the children you work with? Are the necessary resources available in the ECCE setting you are working in? What are the necessary supports and resources needed? Consider what economic/societal factors might affect provision of services. How could you convince a service manager that more supports and resources are needed to satisfy this principle?

Principle 2

The child's individuality, strengths, rights and needs are central in the provision of quality early childhood experiences.

The child is an active agent in her/his own development through her/his interactions with the world. These interactions are motivated by the individual child's abilities, interests, previous experiences and desire for independence. Each child is a competent learner from birth and quality early years experiences can support each child to realise their full potential. Provision of these experiences must reflect and support the child's strengths, needs and interests. Children have the right to be listened to and have their views on issues that affect them heard, valued and responded to.

In practice

Do you take the time to get to know the children you work with? Do you know their likes and dislikes? How do you promote their independence? Do you scaffold their learning? How is the child supported to achieve their full potential? Do you listen to the children you are working with; and how do you demonstrate that you have heard them? Were there times when you did not listened to the child/children? What were the consequences of this? What do you do when you do not know how to support the child/children in your care? Who checks that children are provided with learning experiences suited to their needs?

Principle 3

Parents are the primary educators of the child and have a pre-eminent role in promoting her/his well-being, learning and development.

Quality early childhood care and education must value and support the role of parents. Open, honest and respectful partnership with parents is essential in promoting the best interests of the child. Mutual partnership contributes to establishing harmony and continuity between the diverse environments the child experiences in the early years. The development of connections and interactions between the early childhood setting, parents, the extended family and the wider community also adds to the enrichment of early childhood experiences by reflecting the environment in which the child lives and grows.

In practice

Consider the communication channels and methods used in your work placement setting. Are they included in curriculum planning? Do you have a parents' noticeboard? Does the provider have a website and/or Facebook page? Are communication books sent home with each child? Are notices printed and sent home in the children's bags? Why do you think this is the case? Are parents truly involved in their children's learning and development in the ECCE setting? Are parents given the opportunity to evaluate the services provided? How is parent-to-service communication recorded? How is service-to-parent communication recorded?

Principle 4

Responsive, sensitive and reciprocal relationships, which are consistent over time, are essential to the well-being, learning and development of the young child.

The relationships that the child forms within her/his immediate and extended environment from birth will significantly influence her/his well-being, development and learning. These relationships are two way and include adults, peers, family and the extended community. Positive relationships, which are secure, responsive and respectful and which provide consistency and continuity over time, are the cornerstone of the child's well-being.

In practice

How do you ensure relationship building and bonding with the children you work with in your ECCE setting? Why is key working important? How does it promote bonding in an early years setting? How do you role-model behaviour? Is there anything in your behaviour that needs to change to support the well-being of the children in the service? What do you do when a relationship breaks down in the workplace? How does a relationship breakdown affect your practice? Have you received in-house training on how to communicate with stakeholders?

Principle 5

Equality is an essential characteristic of quality early childhood care and education.

Equality, as articulated in Article 2 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and in the Equal Status Acts 2000 to 2004, is a fundamental characteristic of quality early childhood care and education provision. It is a critical prerequisite for supporting the optimal development of all children in Ireland. It requires that the individual needs and abilities of each child are recognised and supported from birth towards the realisation of her/his unique potential. This means that all children should be able to gain access to, participate in, and benefit from early years services on an equal basis.

In practice

How is equality of opportunity promoted in your ECCE service? Why is equality of opportunity different from equality of treatment? How does the curriculum and planning promote the optimal development of children, enabling them to reach their full potential? What would you do if you witnessed practices that run counter to equality legislation? Do you truly value equality?

Principle 6

Quality early childhood settings acknowledge and respect diversity and ensure that all children and families have their individual, personal, cultural and linguistic identity validated.

Diversity is a term which is generally used to describe differences in individuals by virtue of gender, age, skin colour, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity, ability, religion, race or other background factors such as family structure and economic circumstances. Quality early childhood environments should demonstrate respect for diversity through promoting a sense of belonging for all children within the cultural heritage of Ireland. They should also provide rich and varied experiences which will support children's ability to value social and cultural diversity.

In practice

In your placement, are all the children you work with represented? How are they represented? Do the books, toys, posters, art, language used and cultural events and activities all reflect the diversity of the children you work with? If you cannot source material to ensure diversity, how could you overcome this? How will you deal with parents who are concerned with diversity?

Note: links with Aistear – Identity and Belonging – are important here.

Principle 7

The physical environment of the young child has a direct impact on her/his well-being, learning and development.

The child's experiences in early childhood are positively enhanced by interactions with a broad range of environments. These include the indoor and outdoor, built and natural, home and out-of-home environments. The environment should be high quality and should extend and enrich the child's development and learning. These experiences stimulate curiosity, foster independence and promote a sense of belonging. The development of respect for the environment will also result from such experiences.

In practice

Do the children you work with have access to an outdoor play area? The weather is seldom bad enough to prevent outdoor play: when the outdoors is neglected it is more often because of inappropriate clothing or staff who are reluctant to go outside when it is cold or wet. How does the ECCE setting promote the children's development? How does the physical environment support the child's learning? Examine the room/

rooms you are working in: is there a home corner, construction area, creative section, water/sand play area, dress up/role play/book corner, etc.? How does each of these areas promote the child's learning and development? How is each play area physically defined, i.e. in the layout of the room(s)?

Principle 8

The safety, welfare and well-being of all children must be protected and promoted in all early childhood environments.

The promotion of child well-being is a characteristic of a quality environment. This involves the protection of each child from harmful experiences and the promotion of child welfare. Additionally, the opportunity to form trusting relationships with adults and other children is a key characteristic of quality. Promotion of safety should not prevent the child from having a rich and varied array of experiences in line with her/his age and stage of development.

In practice

Health and safety are important considerations in any childcare or work environment. Drawing up a safety statement (see Chapter 3) helps to identify potential risks and to develop work practices and/or policies to minimise or reduce risk. Activities and play can be risk assessed and developing an understanding of health and safety should not prohibit a child from the 'dignity of risk' in developing and engaging in activities that are age- and stage-appropriate. Conduct your own risk assessment of the room you work in, and of a planned activity. What recommendations, if any, could you make?

Principle 9

The role of the adult in providing quality early childhood experiences is fundamental.

Quality early childhood practice is built upon the unique role of the adult. The competencies, qualifications, dispositions and experience of adults, in addition to their capacity to reflect upon their role, are essential in supporting and ensuring quality experiences for each child. This demanding and central role in the life of the young child needs to be appropriately resourced, supported and valued.

In practice

Professionally qualified staff are important in an ECCE setting. The HSE requires that at least 50% of all staff in an ECCE service should have a FETAC Level 5 award in childcare. The ability of the childcare practitioner to reflect on their practice and to develop new and better ways of working with children is an important competency to develop. What opportunities for reflection are you provided with in the workplace?

Principle 10

The provision of quality early childhood experiences requires cooperation, communication and mutual respect.

Teamwork is a vital component of quality in early childhood care and education. It is the expression of cooperative, coordinated practice in any setting. Shared knowledge and understanding, clearly communicated among the team within the setting; with and among other professionals involved with the child; and with the parents is a prerequisite of quality practice and reflects a ‘whole-child perspective’. This also ensures the promotion of respectful working relationships among all adults supporting the well-being, learning and development of the child. Such teamwork, coordination and communication must be valued, supported and resourced by an appropriate infrastructure at local, regional and national levels.

In practice

Being able to work as part of a team is very important in an ECCE setting. The team includes not only your colleagues but also the children you work with, their parents and the wider community. Communication, both verbal and non-verbal, is a very important component of team working. Active listening also promotes a respectful working relationship. A childcare service should aim to facilitate effective communication and teamwork. What policies are in place to ensure a respectful working environment? What happens when conflict arises? (Communication is dealt with in Chapter 8.)

Principle 11

Pedagogy in early childhood is expressed by curricula or programmes of activities which take a holistic approach to the development and learning of the child and reflect the inseparable nature of care and education.

Pedagogy is a term that is used to refer to the whole range of interactions which support the child's development. It takes a holistic approach by embracing both care and education. It acknowledges the wide range of relationships and experiences within which development takes place and recognises the connections between them. It also supports the concept of the child as an active learner. Such pedagogy must be supported within a flexible and dynamic framework that addresses the learning potential of the 'whole child'. Furthermore, it requires that early childhood practitioners are adequately prepared and supported for its implementation.

In practice

The interactions in an ECCE setting should promote the child's learning and development. The child should be an active participant in their learning, not a passive recipient of information. A child's care and education are supported in an ECCE setting. The holistic development of the child needs to be supported and this includes the child's social, emotional, cognitive, language, physical, moral and spiritual development. Over a period of time, consider the holistic development of children in your placement. Are all these elements in the pedagogical framework implemented in your placement? Is there any bias towards one element? Consider how to integrate numerous elements into one activity – can all elements be drawn together?

Principle 12

Play is central to the well-being, development and learning of the young child.

Play is an important medium through which the child interacts with, explores and makes sense of the world around her/him. These interactions with, for example, other children, adults, materials, events and ideas, are key to the child's well-being, development and learning. Play is a source of joy and fulfilment for the child. It provides an important context and opportunity to enhance and optimise quality early childhood experiences. As such, play will be a primary focus in quality early childhood settings.

In practice

The stages of play should be supported in an ECCE setting. Different types of play should be evident, including creative play, construction play, role play, heuristic play and so on. The curriculum in the ECCE setting should reflect play as the conduit to enabling the child to learn and develop to their full potential. Play should be fun. How do you ensure that all children enjoy activities? How do you encourage shy children to play as part of a group activity? What are the challenges you have experienced when designing play activities? What do you reflect on when observing children playing? How do you handle observations that worry you, for example potential bullying behaviour, concerns about racism, etc.? Consider your behaviour during play activities. Are you involved? Should you be more actively involved?

Síolta is used in conjunction with the Aistear curriculum framework.

AISTEAR

In this section, we present an overview of Aistear as a curriculum framework, we evaluate it and look at how it can be used in an ECCE setting.

Aistear, the early childhood curriculum framework, celebrates childhood as a time of being, of enjoying learning from experiences as they unfold. It provides information for adults who work in an ECCE/school setting to help them plan for and provide enjoyable and challenging learning experiences, so that the children who have access to this curriculum can grow and develop into competent learners who have loving relationships with others. Aistear informs practice across a range of settings, disciplines and professions, and it encourages interdisciplinary work. One of the key elements of Aistear is that it can be used in conjunction with other approaches such as Montessori, Steiner, HighScope and other curricula.

Aistear complements and extends existing curriculum and materials, identifying what and how children should learn and describing the types of experience that support learning. It makes connections in children's learning through the early childhood years as they move from one setting to another; supports parents as their children's primary educators during early childhood; and promotes effective partnerships between parents and practitioners. The Aistear curriculum framework identifies important themes that permeate ECCE.

Aistear's Themes

Well-being
 Identity and Belonging
 Communicating
 Exploring and Thinking

- 1 **Well-being:** children should be confident, happy and healthy.
- 2 **Identity and belonging:** children develop a positive sense of who they are, and feel that they are valued and respected as part of a family and community.
- 3 **Communicating:** children share their experiences, thoughts, ideas and feelings with others with growing confidence and competence in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes.
- 4 **Exploring and thinking:** children are enabled to make sense of things, people and places in their world by interacting with others; by playing, observing, investigating, questioning, forming, testing and refining ideas.

It is very difficult to evaluate the Aistear curriculum as it is not a universal provision in the ECCE sector; it is a model that can be incorporated into other curriculum methodologies.

There is a requirement for all services that participate in the ECCE scheme to adhere to the quality assurance model of Síolta, but at the time of writing there is no requirement to implement Aistear. However, the Local Childcare Committees, which were established in 2001 by the Minister for Children, and of which there are 34 countrywide, are very much invested in the Aistear curriculum and provide training in Aistear for ECCE providers.

HOW WORK EXPERIENCE RELATES TO PRACTICE

We have so far looked at different childcare providers, national strategies that affect childcare services and curricula that inform the daily education and care of pre-school children. We must now consider how the other modules/courses that you are studying also impact on your learning and development as a childcare practitioner. The following are examples of what you may have learned or are learning in your childcare courses that you can apply to your practice in an ECCE setting.

Observation

- ▶ Examine how to use your observation theory when working with children. For example, identify what they like to do, and which toys/equipment they choose during free play.
- ▶ Are there any boy/girl differences in the activities they prefer? What gender theories have you learned? What role does Bandura's social learning theory have in relation to gender identities?
- ▶ Why is this information important?
- ▶ What do you know about the difference time of day makes for children? Are there different moods evident throughout the day? Are the children different in the morning and the afternoon? Does the day of the week make a difference?

(Adapted from Flood (2013))

Health and safety

- ▶ What have you learned about health and safety, fire drills, cleaning routines, illnesses, lifting and first aid? Are you familiar with the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work Act 2005?
- ▶ Consider what you know about all of these and why they will be important in your ECCE work placement setting.
- ▶ Is a tidy-up routine for the children important? If so, why would this be so? Consider ways you could encourage the children to help.

(For further information, see Kinsella (2012))

Children's routines

- ▶ Why do you need to understand the routine of the children you will work with?
- ▶ Why do we need to consider if they have settled in well? Or if they know what happens next in their daily routine?
- ▶ Why is consistency important in an ECCE setting and what will you do to ensure consistency in your practice?

Understanding the needs of different age groups

- ▶ What are the needs of the different age groups – babies, wobblers, toddlers and pre-school children – with whom you will be working in your work placement?

- ▶ Think about the work of cognitive theorist such as Piaget and social development theorist such as Vygotsky when considering how to meet a child's individual needs.

Greeting children and their families

- ▶ What have you learned about meeting and greeting children and their families when they come to the ECCE setting?
- ▶ How can you help a child who is upset when they arrive at the ECCE setting?

Behaviour management

- ▶ What have you learned about behaviour management?
- ▶ How will you apply what you have learned about behaviour management in your work placement? Think about the role of positive reinforcement and operant conditioning. Refer to the ECCE setting's policies and procedure on behaviour management.

Children whose first language is not English

- ▶ What do you need to consider in your work placement if working with a child or children whose first language is not English?
- ▶ Why do you need to take note of the range of language abilities in the setting?
- ▶ Should you compare the understanding and type of language used by the different children? What about the children who are only children or those who come from larger families? Describe the different approaches needed to deal with each of these children.

Play

- ▶ What do you need to know about the different types of play children engage in? When the children go outside to play, is there a difference between what boys like to do and what girls like to do?
- ▶ What do we understand about solitary play, parallel play and co-operative play?
- ▶ What should the adult carers do while the children are outdoors? Have you prepared some activities for the children to do before you start your placement?

Policies and procedures

- ▶ What do you know about your service? Do you need to familiarise yourself with the service/school prior to or during your placement?
- ▶ What are the purpose of policies and procedures in an ECCE setting? What do you already know about policies and procedures?

Background information on children/confidentiality

- ▶ Will you be given any background information on the children you will work with? Are you aware of the importance of confidentiality in a childcare setting?
- ▶ This is particularly relevant if you are required to work with children with special or additional needs.

Attachment theory

- ▶ Why is this theory important in childcare and why it is relevant to your practice?