



**Childminders' Support Pack:
For Voluntary Notification**





Childminders' Support Pack: Voluntary Notification

This support pack contains all the information, samples and checklists to assist Childminders in the Voluntary Notification process. At all times, the Childminding Advisory Officer (CMAO) is available to a Childminder to provide assistance either by telephone, email or visits to the office or to the Childminding home.

Steps to Follow:

Once you have completed the Voluntary Notification Form and the Self Evaluation submit them and any supporting documents to your local County Childcare Committee / CMAO (see contact page for details). The Childminding Advisory Officer (CMAO) will be in touch to arrange a visit to your home. At the visit, the Childminder and the CMAO will review the application. If any items are outstanding or incomplete the Childminder will be advised accordingly. Once the application is completed in full, the Childminder will be provided with documentation from the local County Childcare Committee / CMAO to verify their status as a 'Voluntary Notified' Childminder.







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The County Childcare Committees were established in 2000 to assist in the development of a wide range of integrated, high quality, accessible and affordable services for children in each County. Childminding has always been supported as an integral part of this range of services. However, since the implementation of the National Childminding Initiative, more time and resources were allocated nationally and locally to continue supporting the childminding sector. Under the 'National Guidelines for Childminders (voluntary notification)' Childminders are encouraged to Voluntary Notify their local county Childcare Committee /CMAO.

If caring for 4 or more Preschool children Childminders are required to notify the HSE, Pre-School services.

All Childminders, whether they are notified to the HSE or Voluntary Notified (VN) to the CCC/CMAO as appropriate, can take advantage of the many supports available, such as:

- Assistance to set up a childminding service, including Advisory Visits to the home by the Childminding Advisory Officer
- Ongoing support for established Childminders
- Ongoing training specific to Childminding
- Assistance in preparation for HSE inspections for notified Childminders
- Guidance in record-keeping
- Access to grants for childminders
- Mutual support through a local network of childminders.

Childminding is valued as another option for parents when choosing the type of childcare that suits the needs of their family. It is the traditional model for childcare in Ireland. Childminding represents the largest type of childcare being used by families of preschool children in the country today.

The Regulations state that;

A pre-school child is defined as a child under 6 years of age who is not attending a national school or equivalent.





National Guidelines For Childminders

Voluntary Notification: Self Evaluation Checklist

The following documents are required to complete the Self Evaluation section of Voluntary Notification for Childminders.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> 1. Copy of Letter to Garda Commissioner requesting Garda Clearance (<i>copy of reply, if any</i>)
Sample letter available from your local County Childcare Committee\CMAO</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 2. Two written references that attest to my good character and to my suitability to provide single-handed childcare for a group of pre-school children</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 3. Copy of current First Aid Certificate
<i>Or</i>
Plans for attendance at First Aid Training in the near future</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 4. Written Policies and Procedures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Confidentiality- Health and safety policies including a safety statement- Child Protection- Fire safety policy- Positive Discipline Policy- Partnership with Parents- Equal Opportunities <p>Samples available from your local County Childcare Committee / CMAO</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> 5. Complete Record Keeping system</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Record keeping Policy and Procedure- Daily attendance- Child's Information Record- Daily Routine- Menu Plans (ensuring healthy, balanced nutritional diet; food stored correctly)- Accident/Incident Form- Medicine Administration Form <p>Sample forms available from your local County Childcare Committee / CMAO</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 6. Copy of Certificate of Completion of Children First Child Protection Training
<i>Or</i>
Plans for attendance at Children First Training in the near future</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 7. Appropriate insurance cover in place. Copy provided</p> <hr/> <p><input type="checkbox"/> 8. Copy of Fire safety procedures, including evacuation plan</p> |
|---|---|

At all times during the Self-Evaluation process the Childminding Advisory Officer or your local County Childcare Committee / CMAO is available to support you through the process.





Developing Written Policies and Procedures for Voluntary Notification

Your childcare policies are simply your views and practices regarding the way you provide childcare. Written policies provide these views in a transparent manner so that parents may read about and develop a clear understanding of the way you operate your service, care for the children and the reasons why you do things in the manner that you do. These policies will guide your service so that there is consistency from child to child and family to family.

Procedures are the practical side of policies. While policies explain the ‘why’, procedures explain the ‘how’. The way the policy is implemented on a daily basis in the childcare service is the procedure.

Having written policies and procedures available to parents at the beginning of the relationship ensure there are no misunderstandings between parents, providers and others who may be involved. They ensure that parents see the service you offer is well developed, planned and thought out and that you are offering a professional service of high quality. Any back up or substitute person, volunteers, students or others involved in your service should also be familiar with and implement your policies and procedures.

List of Policies and Procedures required for the ‘National Guidelines for Childminders: Voluntary Notification’

1. **Confidentiality**
2. **Health and Safety policies including a safety statement**
3. **Child Protection**
4. **Fire Safety Policy**
5. **Positive Discipline Policy**
6. **Partnership With Parents**
7. **Equal Opportunities**

It is recommended that a copy of your Policies and Procedures be provided to all families who use your service as part of their Parent Handbook, so that they may refer to them as required. An annual review and update is also recommended. Your local County Childcare Committee/CMAO can assist you in developing your policies and your parent handbook.

Samples of the required Policies and Procedures are provided on the following pages.





Sample Policies and Procedures: Voluntary Notification

SAMPLE: Confidentiality Policy

All information gathered by and for this childminding service is done so with the intention to provide the best quality of care to your child. No information is requested for unnecessary reasons. It is the policy of this service to keep confidential all personal information about the children and families, past and present, involved.

Confidentiality procedures, for example....

- Parents will have access to records kept in the childminding service, but only in relation to their own child
- Any emergency back up staff or volunteers will be informed of our confidentiality policy and procedures as part of their induction programme
- Information held in the service in relation to Child Protection concerns will be stored securely and will be shared only on a need to know basis in line with our Child Protection Policy

SAMPLE: Health and Safety Policies

Health Policy, for example....

It is the policy of this childminding service to promote a healthy lifestyle through prevention of illness, promotion of active lifestyles and establishing healthy eating patterns. The following regulations maybe used as a support to you in developing the policies below (Child Care Pre-School Services Regulations 2006* and Food Hygiene Regulations*.

Healthy Eating, for example....

- A balanced diet is provided (by the Childminder/by the parent in cooperation with the childminder) with fresh, nutritious food
- Sweets, crisps, chewing gum and nuts are discouraged
- Special dietary needs of children are met, including allergy precautions, cultural and religious dietary practices and, family preferences where appropriate
- Meal times at our childminding service are treated as family meals, with time for conversation, social interaction and the encouragement of good eating habits

Illness Policy, for example....

I believe that the best place for an ill child is resting at home with a parent or other family member. In fairness to other children attending, ill children are not accommodated in the service.

- Children with infectious diseases should not attend the service. Parents are advised to refer to the Infectious Disease list (see below) within the parent manual, including the incubation period and minimum period of exclusion. It is the policy of this service not to accept children who have been ill until the after minimum period of exclusion
- Parents are advised that a child who has been sick during the night should not attend the Childminding service the next day
- All parents are asked to inform the Childminder if the child has been unwell since last attending the childminding service
- All parents are informed if any child attending the Childminding service has an infectious disease





Infectious Diseases: Symptoms, Incubation periods, minimal periods for exclusion

Diseases	Early Symptoms	Incubation Period	Period With Infectious	Minimum Period Of Exclusion
Measles	Cold, Cough, Fever of child, Sore eyes, white spots in mouth (1 or 2 days), rash after 2 or 3 day on face, weak chest.	8 – 15 days	From a few days before the running nose and head cold to 7 days after rash appears	7 days from appearance of rash
German Measles	May have fever, sore throat, stiff neck, rash after 1-2 days usually starts on face	14- 21 days usually 12 days	From 7 days before to at least 4 days after rash appears	4 days from appearance of rash
Whooping Cough	Fever and Catarrh for approx 1 week before cough develops	7 – 14 days	From 7 days after exposure to 21 day after coughing begins	21 days after whooping cough
Mumps	Fever, sore throat, dry mouth, pain when chewing	12-25 days	From 7 days before swelling appears to 9 days afterwards	9 days from appearance of swelling
Chicken Pox	May be slight fever, headache, nausea, spots appear on the 2nd day starting on the back	11 –21 days	From 5 days before until 7 days after the last lot of blisters	6 days from appearance of rash
Conjunctivitis	Sore eyes, inflamed discharge or watering	1 – 3 days	Contagious until treated	Until treated and cleared
Impetigo	Blisters, spreading at the edges which are raised, thick yellow crust when blisters break		Contagious, spread by hands and by objects touched	Until skin is completely healed
Ringworm	(Body) Round red areas with a raised border	10 –11 days	Contagious spread by scratching and material under finger nails	Until treated
Scabies	Intense itching, blistering, pin point blood crusts	Several days	Mites spread rapidly by contact from clothing or bedding	Until treatment has commenced
Bad Cold	Coughing or sneezing		While child is coughing or sneezing	Coughing and sneezing may pass germs between children.





Accident and Safety Policy

It is the policy of this childminding service to promote the health, well-being and personal safety of all children in our service, through developing and regularly reviewing accident prevention procedures and fire safety procedures.

Accident Prevention, for example....

- A *Safety Statement*** has been prepared and is reviewed on a regular basis
- Emergency contact numbers are posted in an easily accessible location
- A back up person is available and may be called in an emergency. This person is familiar with the safety statement
- Care is taken to ensure that no child can leave the premises undetected
- Furniture and equipment are laid out to minimise safety risks
- Only suitable and age appropriate items are available to children

Accident Procedures, for example....

- The First Aid Box** is always fully equipped, easily identifiable and in an accessible location.
- The childminder holds an up to date First Aid Certificate.
- Records are accessible in case of an emergency
- Minor accidents will be treated in the childminders home and parents/carers will be advised of the injury and the action taken when the child is collected
- All accidents even minor ones, are recorded using accident forms.
- The childminding service has an arrangement with the local surgery in case of an accident or sudden illness
- In the case of serious accident the childminder will phone the doctor and the child's parent/carer.

SAMPLE: Child Protection Policy

It is the policy of this childminding service to ensure that children are protected and kept safe from harm at all times.

Child Protection Procedures, for example....

- The Childminder has availed of Child Protection training provided by the HSE and your local CCC
- This childminding service gives parents and children information about any other adults who are present in the home, or visit the home.
- This childminding service ensures that the back up person is carefully selected and aware of all policies
- Records are kept of all accidents, injuries, incidents in keeping with current Child Protection training recommendations
- This childminding service has reporting procedures regarding the following:
 - Considering all child protection concerns;
 - Making a formal referral where appropriate, to the Duty Social Worker at the HSE

SAMPLE: Fire Safety Policy

It is the policy of this service to minimise the risk of fire through the practice of fire prevention and to be prepared to act in the event of a fire within the childminding service.

- The Childminding service maintains fire safety equipment, e.g. fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and fire blankets





- The fire safety equipment is checked annually and recorded**
- The Childminding service has a fire evacuation plan**
- The Childminder carries out a monthly fire drill, involving all the children.
- A record is kept of all fire drills carried out**

(The Dept of the Environment's Fire Safety in Pre-Schools booklet maybe used as a support in developing the above policy)*

SAMPLE: Positive Discipline Policy

This Childminding service believes that children should be encouraged to grow and develop to their full potential in a suitably planned environment. The children will know what is expected of them, and where clear limits are set, appropriate to their age and stage of development and any special needs they may have.

Positive Discipline Procedures, for example....

- Children's effort, achievements and feelings will always be acknowledged so as to promote the growth of self-esteem and self-discipline
- The Childminding service will strive to manage behaviour consistently in order that children have the security of knowing what to expect and can build up good patterns of self-discipline
- All rules will be discussed and explained to all children and parents. Rules will be kept to a minimum and will be enforced in a supportive, yet consistent manner
- This Childminding service recognises that the key to behaviour management is good observation and communication skills
- This Childminding service has a 'No Smacking' Policy. Corporal punishment will never be used. When children have to be disciplined, the focus will be on the behaviour. It will always be made clear to the child in question that it is the behaviour and not the child that is unacceptable. At all times a child will be made to feel valued as an individual.

SAMPLE: Partnership with Parents

This Childminding service recognises that parents are the primary carers for their children. It is the goal of this service to support parents in the challenging, yet fulfilling role of raising their children.

Partnership with Parents Procedures, for example....

- Parents are provided with a copy of the policies and procedures of the Childminding service before the child begins
- Parents are encouraged to have open communication with the Childminder, e.g. make the Childminder aware of family events/issues/changes in order to support the child, all information received will be treated in the strictest confidence
- Parents are encouraged to share cultural, religious and/or ethnic practices that they wish the Childminder to be aware of, respect and where possible, include in the service
- There is an 'Open Door' policy in place. Parents are welcome to visit the home at any time





SAMPLE: Equal Opportunities Policy

It is the policy of this Childminding service to respect the individuality of all children and adults involved in the childminding service and to promote positive attitudes to differences of age, disability, religion, culture, race, gender, language and financial circumstances and to minority groups and members of the Traveller community.

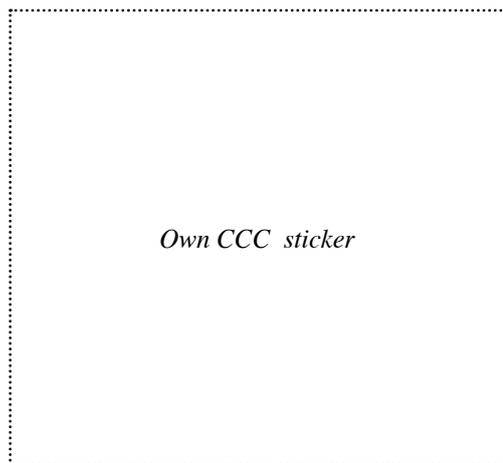
Equal Opportunities Procedures, for example....

- The service is open to all families in the community
- A range of activities, books, equipment is chosen to reflect various differences in cultures, gender and ability
- Special dietary needs of children are catered for where possible
- We will challenge any statements or behaviour by anyone in the Childminding service, including parents, children, back up person or family members which are racist or sexist or which reinforce stereotypes or which are in any other way derogatory to an individual

**See Further Resources Section*

*** See Record Keeping Section: Sample Records*

These sample policies have been initially developed by the Galway County Childcare Committees and reproduced for use by a selection of Childminding Advisory Officers (CMAO) to support the National Guidelines for Childminders: Voluntary Notification. Further assistance is available from your local CCC or from the CMAO.





Childminder's Insurance Information

Many home insurance policies may be extended to cover childminding for up to 2 additional children. Some provide cover for up to 5 children in total. If you currently have home insurance cover it is advisable to consult with your own insurance provider. If you do not have home insurance, the policy offered by Childminding Ireland would cover such situations as well as cover childminding in rented accommodation.

We encourage childminders to source all of their options in terms of obtaining insurance for their childminding service.

Childminding Ireland

Members Insurance Package - covers up to 5 children including Childminders own children up to the age of 14 years.

You must be a member with Childminding Ireland to avail of this policy. Contact Childminding Ireland for up to date rates.

Contact Info:

TEL: 01 - 2878466

www.childminding.ie





Garda Vetting

*Garda Central vetting Unit
Racecourse Road
Thurles
Co Tipperary*

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to request Garda Clearance from the Crime and Security (Vetting) department of the Garda Commission. I intend to operate a single-handed Childminding Service in my own home and wish to provide parents with evidence that I am free from criminal conviction or pending conviction that would deem me unsuitable to have unsupervised care of children.

Please forward the appropriate authorisation form to:

Thank you for your assistance,

For Further Information contact the Garda Central Vetting unit at : Tel: 0504-27300





Health and Safety Awareness

As a childminder you have taken on sole responsibility for the safety, health, well being and development of your minded children while they are in your care. By ensuring that your home is safe and secure for children you will go a long way in avoiding the types of accidents and injuries that have the potential to be serious if not life threatening. The family home is a place where many injuries occur. The real tragedy is that most of these injuries are preventable. A safe environment will allow you and the children to relax and enjoy your day more.

When are children most often injured?

- When you're not paying attention: Young children, especially under 3 years of age, need to be watched all the time.
- When you don't expect the child to have a certain skill: As children develop they acquire new skills. The infant that was rolling on the carpet today, could be pulling himself up to the table tomorrow. Safety checks need to be carried out regularly considering each child's new level of development.
- When children are tired: Injuries can happen before lunch and at the end of the day, when children are too tired to pay attention to what they are doing.
- When the environment is unfamiliar: When children first come into your home or enter a new place, watch out – injuries are more likely to happen when children are not familiar with their surroundings.

How can you prevent injuries?

- Take a safety walk through your house: Look at your home with a view to spotting potential opportunities for accidents and injuries to occur.
- Crawl: Get down on all fours and look at your home for the child's perspective. Look under tables, behind furniture, see what cabinets, presses and drawers a child might be able to open. What is inside them?
- Safety proof your home before you begin childminding (Or immediately if you are currently childminding): Install locks on cupboards and presses, gates on stairs, move all potentially dangerous substances out of reach.
- Perform a safety check each morning: Before your minded children arrive each day (See safety checklist on next page)
- Anticipate new skills: As the children in your care grow and develop, consider their new skills in terms of the safety of their environment. Re-asses and alter their surroundings to improve safety.

Preparing for an Emergency

- Take a First Aid Course: Courses are organised regularly by the County Childcare Committee/CMAO.
- Post Emergency numbers by the phone: These should include contact numbers for Ambulance, Guards, (999 or 112) local doctor, all parents and alternate contacts, a second adult who is available to you in an emergency.
- Have a First Aid Kit on hand: Check its contents regularly to be sure it is properly equipped.
- Is your emergency equipment in good working order? Check your smoke detector, fire extinguisher, fire blanket and flashlight at regular intervals. It is no good to you in an emergency if it isn't working!





Childminder's Home Safety Checklist

One of your most important responsibilities as a Childminder is to ensure that the environment you provide for children is a safe one. In addition to conducting regular safety checks of your home, get into the habit of going through your home each morning before the children arrive to check for hazards. The following lists provide only basic guidelines for safety. This should be adapted to suit each home and other environment you may use with the children.

Install Safety Features	Remove Harmful Substances	Potential Dangers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gates at top and bottom of stairs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cleaning supplies in a locked area, washing up liquid/dishwasher soap is stored out of reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric cords and plugs are in good condition (replaced when worn)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety latches on cupboards, presses, drawers, freezers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicine, vitamins, cough syrup, etc are in a locked container/press 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electric cords are tied up or taped down, not dangling and loose
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Safety sockets fitted to electric plugs Guards on cooker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Plastics are stored out of reach (shopping and rubbish bags, dry cleaning bags, etc) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Power circuits are not overloaded
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fireguard surrounding open hearth or stove 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scissors, knives and other sharp items are out of reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pot handles are turned towards back of cooker, back burners are used when possible
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smoke alarms on each level of the home, fire extinguisher and fire blanket are on hand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pins, tacks, beads, other small and/or sharp objects are out of reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Drapery and blind cords are secured out of children's reach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Panel doors and patio doors should have protective glass or be covered with protective film 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perfumes, razors, shampoo, hair dryers, straghteners, etc in bathroom are stored out of reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Furniture and equipment are checked regularly for sharp edges, splinters, peeling paint, etc and are repaired, replaced or removed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rooms children should not enter on their own should have a latch on door (ie washrooms, utility) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Matches, lighters, cigarettes, ashtrays, and alcohol not in areas used by children (Childminding Homes should not permit smoking at any time on premises) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floor area is uncluttered, clean and dry, scattered rugs are removed or secured with double sided tape
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictor openings on windows 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potentially poisonous plants are removed, both in home and garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decorative vases, framed pictures, knick knacks are out of reach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Temperature control on hot water tank maintained at 40 degree C 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Herbicides, fertilizers, etc are store in a locked shed. Use outside of childcare hours, with caution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nappy bags, purses, etc are out of reach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Garden gate, shed, any out buildings have locks, are inaccessible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rubbish bins inside and outside have tight fitting lids and are inaccessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Halls and stairways are uncluttered and well lit
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Outdoor sand areas should have covers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be cautious with water (ie ponds, pools, buckets, etc) and always supervise children. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Toys with parts small enough to swallow should not be in use





Childminders' Support Pack: Further Resources

1. Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 and Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) (Amendment) Regulations 2006

GPSO Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2 Telephone (01) 647 6879.

By mail order: Government Publications, Postal Trade Section, 51 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2

(Tel: 01 6476834/35/36/37; Fax: 01 6476843)

May be downloaded from the below website address: www.dohc.ie/publications/pdf/si20060505.pdf?direct=1

2. Food Hygiene Regulations (1950 -1989)

May be downloaded from: www.irishstatutebook.ie/ZZSI62Y1989.html

3. Fire Safety In Pre-Schools (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government)

GPSO Government Publications Sale Office, Sun Alliance House, Molesworth Street, Dublin 2

Telephone (01) 647 6879.

Download from:

www.environ.ie/DOEI/DOEIPub.nsf/wvNavView/PublicationsList?OpenDocument&Lang=en

For further information contact:

Department of the Environment, Heritage & Local Government, Custom House, Dublin 1 Telephone (01) 888 2000.

4. Department of Health and Children Food and Nutrition Guidelines for Preschools

Health Promotion Unit, Department of Health and Children, Hawkins House, Hawkins Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.

Telephone: 01 6354000

Or to download from:

www.healthpromotion.ie/uploaded_docs/HPU_pre-school_guidelines.pdf

4. Equal Opportunities Information:

www.equality.ie





Cavan County Childcare
Committee Ltd
Railway Station
Belturbet
Co. Cavan

Tel: 049 9529882
Email: admin@cavanccc.ie
Website: www.cavanccc.ie



Longford County Childcare
Committee
Enterprise Centre,
Ballinalee Road
Longford.

Phone: 043 42505
Fax: 043 42504
Email: info@longfordchildcare.ie
www.longfordchildcare.ie



Louth County Childcare
Committee
Unit 14 Ardee Business Park
Hale Street , Ardee
Co Louth

Tel : 041 -685 9912
Fax: 041 -685 9913
E-mail: info@louthchildcare.ie
www.louthchildcare.ie



Monaghan County
Childcare Committee
7 The Grange
Plantation Walk
Monaghan

Tel. No. 047 72896
Fax No. 047 72881
E-mail: monaghanchccc@eircom.net
www.monaghanchildcare.ie



Westmeath County Childcare
Committee Ltd,
6 St John's Terrace,
Blackhall,
Mullingar,
Co Westmeath.

Tel: 044 93 354 54
Fax: 044 93 47 962
Email: info@westmeathchildcare.ie
www.westmeathchildcare.ie



Offaly County Childcare
Committee Ltd,
St. Joesphs Community Centre,
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Co Offaly, Ireland.

Tel: +353 (0) 57 91 35878
Fax: +353 (0) 57 91 35879
E-mail: info@offalychildcare.com
www.offalychildcare.ie



Wexford County Childcare
committee
7 Castle Hill
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Co. Wexford

Tel: 053 9237156 / 9239763
Fax: 053 9239540
E mail: infowxccc@eircom.net
www.wexfordcountychildcare.ie



Meath County Childcare
Committee
No 1 New Bridge
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Telephone: 046-9073010
Fax: 046-9067221
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www.mccc.ie



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committee
Rear Coill Mhuire
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Kilkenny

Tel: 056 7752865
Fax: 056 7786903
E mail: info@kkccc.ie
www.kkccc.ie



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Transforming Ireland.

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