# This document provides guidance for policy development in outline/template form only. It is not a sample policy.

# *(Policy number)* *TEMPLATE* INCLUSION **POLICY WITH GUIDANCE**

## Rationale and Policy Considerations

The Inclusion Policy needs to specify the way the service ensures that the needs (including the physical, emotional and intellectual needs) and the religious beliefs (if any) of all children attending are addressed.

‘Participation in inclusive high-quality early childhood settings enhances all children’s early learning experiences. In an inclusive setting there is an awareness and respect for each child’s individual strengths and areas of difficulty. Inclusive settings engage in meaningful collaboration with parents/guardians and other professionals to ensure access, equality and full participation for all children.’

[*Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education*](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) (Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016)

All forms of early years service provision should be

‘…without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his/her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, nationality, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status’.

*U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child* 2.1

The purpose of the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy is to ensure that:

* The service is a place where everyone, irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances, feels safe, feels a sense of belonging, is respected and valued and has their individual needs understood and met as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided.
* In line with Aistear and Síolta, the curriculum/programme reflects the identities of all children and recognises their abilities and interests.
* All children are enabled to meaningfully participate in all aspects of the curriculum/programme, and learning is extended to challenge and promote the individual child’s abilities and development.
* That service planning and provision embraces the needs of all children and works to deliver an inclusive and accessible environment for all.
* Children of all abilities have equal access to culturally and developmentally appropriate play-based educational activities, both indoors and outdoors, which develop their understanding, dispositions, skills and holistic development.
* Parents are acknowledged as the primary educators and experts on their child, and the smooth transitioning from home to the early childhood care and education setting is supported.
* The service works in partnership with parents, families and the wider community to promote equality of opportunity and to oppose all forms of bias, oppressive behaviour, prejudice and discrimination.
* The service provides opportunities that help develop children’s sense of personal and group identity so that they can become confident, open to difference, receptive to change and respectful towards other identities.
* The service enables children and staff members to have the confidence and skills to challenge instances of prejudice and discrimination.
* Children and staff members are equipped to understand that reason, logic, respect and sensitivity have to underpin ways and means of resolving arguments and conflicts.
* Equality of opportunity is an integral part of all planning and decision making within the service.
* The service operates inclusive recruitment practices

[Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) (DCYA, 2016)

The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy has implications for most aspects of service provision including:

* The Workplace – diversity among the workforce and interaction between staff members.
* Management of Human Resources – Employment - advertising; recruitment; selection; interviewing; promotion; access to training and other employee benefits
* Admissions – Considering content and wording of application forms; offers of places; waiting lists; criteria.
* Resources – Carefully evaluating all the materials and equipment in the setting for messages about diversity – omissions; stereotypes; accuracy; knowledge of appropriate uses of resources. Determining which materials stay; which need to be sourced to ensure inclusion and a sense of belonging; which need to be modified and which should be taken out because of their stereotypical or inaccurate content.
* Pedagogy and Learning Styles – Taking account of the different learning styles which the children in the group use to concentrate, process and retain information when planning activities and programmes.
* Curriculum/Programme – Ensuring equal access to the curriculum/programme for all children. Considering the physical layout of rooms; visible representations of diversity; the individual needs of children with physical and/or intellectual disabilities; the needs of children learning English as an additional language – valuing home languages and dialects, understanding bilingualism. How the curriculum/programme incorporates an anti-bias approach and a way to counter the learning of negative attitudes and behaviour towards difference, talking openly about differences. Considering whether specific action needs to be taken to address inequalities. Ensuring that there is a basic understanding and knowledge of the beliefs and faiths of the children and families in the setting, considering whether specific action is needed to involve everyone, questioning and evaluating the purpose of celebrating festivals relevant to the users of the service.
* Guiding Behaviour – Addressing issues such as bullying, inappropriate body language, harassment, name-calling.
* Communication – Ensuring that all parents/guardians and staff members are able to communicate clearly with one another (‘Plain English’[[1]](#footnote-1)/translation/interpretation etc. where necessary).
* Assessment – Ensuring no form of assessment discriminates unjustifiably.
* Funding – Identifying any funding that may be available to implement the policy and/or to ensure there is no discrimination.
* Training – Ensuring that all training needs relevant to Diversity, Equality and Inclusion are identified and included in the budget and that appropriate training is provided for all staff members.

### Legislation and regulatory requirements

* [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)
* [Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print)
* U.N. Convention on the Rights of the Child in particular Article 2 (UNCRC, 1989)
* Irish Constitution (Bunreacht na hEireann) in particular Articles 40.1, 40.3.1, 40.3.2 and 44.3.3.
* [Equal Status Acts 2000-2012](http://revisedacts.lawreform.ie/eli/2000/act/8/revised/en/html)
* [Employment Equality Acts 1998-2015](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1998/act/21/enacted/en/html)
* See also p9 of [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) Department of Children and Youth Affairs 2016 for a more extensive list of international agreements, Irish legislation and national and European policy

### Children’s needs

Children need:

* A safe, accessible environment that facilitates, supports and encourages a positive individual and group identity.
* Well-trained and informed staff who understand their individual culture, identity, needs and interests.
* Equal access to a differentiated and full curriculum/programme that caters for their individual and particular needs.
* A policy that ensures that they can learn to be comfortable with difference, to identify what is fair and unfair and to be able to stand up for themselves and others.

### Parents/Families’ needs

Parents/guardians need:

* To know that their child will have their individual learning and development needs met and that their family culture and identity will be recognised and valued.
* To be communicated with clearly and effectively, and be able to communicate effectively, with the people who they trust to care for and educate their children.

Parents and other family members also need to have equal access to and participation in the service environment and to feel a sense of belonging when visiting the service.

### Staff needs

Staff members need:

* To know and to ensure that all of the service’s processes are fair, open and transparent and not discriminatory.
* To work in and be involved in providing a safe, anti-bias, accessible environment.
* Be supported to be comfortable with difference and to engage effectively with parents/guardians and families; to be able to critically think about and confidently engage in dialogue around issues of equality, diversity, inclusion, bias and discrimination.
* Be able to have effective two-way communication with all of the children they care for and educate, and with their parents/guardians and families.

### Management needs

Management needs:

* To know that all those who use the service or who work in it have their individual needs met as far as possible within the context of the service and that staff members have the appropriate skills and knowledge to meet the diverse needs of all of the children who use the service and their families.
* To ensure *[through this policy]* that:
* The service does not discriminate against anyone directly or indirectly, that all relevant legislation and regulation is fully complied with and that the service meets quality standards.
* All of the service’s policies and procedures reflect a commitment to equality and inclusion and that the service promotes positive and proactive approaches to valuing and respecting diversity.
* All staff members and management *[including committee members where applicable]* contribute to the development and review of policies.
* Steps are taken to enable the contribution of the children to the development of policies and procedures.
* Parents/guardians are facilitated to contribute in whatever ways suit them best.
* The review and evaluation of policies is used to identify specific actions to address equality, diversity and inclusion issues.
* Interactions with children and curriculum/programme content are monitored to ensure appropriate content and breadth of content.

### National Quality Frameworks

* [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)
* [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](http://siolta.ie/)
* [Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](https://www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/aistear)
* [Early Years Education focussed Inspection (EYEI) Framework](https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/A-Guide-to-Early-years-Education-focused-Inspection-EYEI-in-Early-years-Settings-Participating-ECCE-Programme.pdf) (Department of Education and Skills)

Also:

* [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf)
* [Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)](http://aim.gov.ie)

## Definitions/Glossary

*[Include definitions here of any words used that may need explanation.]*

*There is a comprehensive glossary relevant to this policy in the* [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) *(DCYA, 2016) at page 82. You will also find a list of Definitions at page vi.*

[Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf) *- which are informed by national and international equality and anti-discriminatory educational approaches and practice - includes an* ***Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Policy Template*** *which will help you to develop your own Policy Statement. It will also help you to identify the specific Procedures and Practices you will need to outline in your policy.*

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Pedagogy | Pedagogy is a term that is used to refer to the whole range of interactions which support the child’s development. |
|  |  |
|  |  |

3. Policy Statement*[The Policy Statement outlines the principles, values and the purpose of the policy. It will generally be quite short. The Policy Statement can be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook.]*

*Your service’s Diversity, Equality and Inclusion* ***Policy Statement*** *will need to outline, in broad terms, your service’s approach to ensuring that the goal of providing an inclusive service is reached in practice. State how the service intends to practice in order to be a service where everyone - irrespective of their age, gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, ability, disability and social circumstances - feels safe, welcomed, respected and valued and has their individual needs understood and met (as far as resources allow within the context of the service provided).*

*You will also need to include details of what steps will be taken by the service to deal with any discriminatory incidents.*

*State in general terms how the policy will achieve its stated purposes (See* ***Rationale and Policy Considerations for a Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy*** *above.)*

*It is important that your service policy is in accordance with the* ***Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter (2016)****.*

4. Procedures & Practices*[Outlines the specific steps and/or guidance to be followed in order to implement the policy.]*

*To complete this section you will need to**spell out precisely what actions are to be taken in line with your own policy statement and outline the steps to be followed or the way that tasks are to be performed to implement the policy.*

*For* this you will need to refer to the **Rationale and Policy Considerations** above and to the [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf)***,*** *which includes an* ***Education National Inclusion Policy Template,*** *in order to ensure that all considerations are comprehensively covered within your own procedures and practices guidance.*

## Communication Plan *[For staff & families]*

*Suggested wording for this section:*

All parents/guardians are to be informed of the policy and procedures regarding Diversity, Equality and Inclusion on enrolment. Staff members will check with parents/guardians that they have read and understood the policy and provide any assistance needed.

The Policy Statement will be included in the Parents/Guardians Handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with all staff members at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies and procedures will be available during all hours of operation to staff members and parents/guardians in the Policy Folder located in ………………....................

Parents/guardians may receive a copy of the policy at any time upon request.

Parents/guardians and all staff members will receive written notification of any updates.

## Related Policies, Procedures and Forms *[List of all related documents. The policies in bold are those required under the Early Years Regulations 2016.]*

* **Staff Training Policy**
* **Recruitment Policy**
* **Policy on Managing Behaviour**
* Admissions Policy
* Interactions Policy
* Curriculum/Programme Policy
* Parent Involvement/Partnership with Parents Policy
* Supporting Social, Emotional and Behaviour Skills Policy
* Communications Policy

7. References/Supporting Documents/Related Legislation*[List of any relevant Legislation and Practice Guides referred to in drafting the Policy]*

*Include:*

* [Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)
* [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print)
* [Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education](http://aim.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Diversity-Equality-and-Inclusion-Charter-and-Guidelines-for-Early-Childhood-Care-Education.pdf)
* [Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)](http://aim.gov.ie)
* [Síolta: The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education](http://siolta.ie/)
* [Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework](https://www.ncca.ie/en/early-childhood/aistear)
* [Early Years Education focussed Inspection (EYEI) Framework](https://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Inspection-Reports-Publications/Evaluation-Reports-Guidelines/A-Guide-to-Early-years-Education-focused-Inspection-EYEI-in-Early-years-Settings-Participating-ECCE-Programme.pdf) (Department of Education and Skills)

*List relevant equality legislation referred to here also*

## Who Must Observe This Policy

*Suggested wording for this section:*

**a) Owner/Management Committee**

* Ensuring the service complies with all relevant legislation, guidelines and the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion National Charter.
* Ensuring the policy and its related procedures and practices are implemented.

**b) Service Manager**

* Implementing the policy and its related procedures and practices.
* Ensuring that all staff members are aware of their responsibilities and given appropriate training and support.
* Taking appropriate action in any cases of discrimination.
* Having a member of staff designated and trained as Inclusion Coordinator[[2]](#footnote-2).

**c) The Inclusion Coordinator**

* Supporting the Service Management in providing a leadership role on inclusion in the setting and ensuring the appropriate implementation of this policy

*This specific nature of this role and the responsibilities associated may need to be clearly outlined here*

**d) All Staff Team Members**

* Knowing how to identify and challenge bias and stereotyping and dealing with any related incidents.
* Promoting equality and good relations and not discriminating on grounds of gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, sexual orientation, age, ability, disability or social circumstances.
* Keeping up to date on diversity, equality and inclusion issues by attending training and information opportunities.

**e) Parents/Guardians**

* Being aware of and complying with the service’s Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy and understanding that it applies to all children and all those involved in and with the service.
* Supporting staff team members in developing a shared understanding and an appreciation of the benefits of an anti-bias/anti-discriminatory approach.

**f) Relevant Agencies (such as Tusla, HSE, Pobal)**

Supporting the service in the development and implementation of the policy. Being aware of and complying with the service’s Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy.

**g) Visitors**

Being aware of and complying with the service’s Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Policy.

## Actions to be Followed if the Policy is not Implemented

*You need to set out the action that will be taken if people do not comply with the policy – for example see some suggested wording below:*

Victims of bullying, harassment and/or discrimination will be given every support. Those responsible will also be supported by appropriately challenging the behaviour, by providing accurate information on the issue, by giving the person an opportunity to think about the effects of their actions and by being clear that such behaviour is not accepted in this service.

*You also need outline the steps for dealing with incidents of discrimination as outlined in the national guidelines.*

10. Contact Information*[Who to contact for more information]*

If you need more information about this policy, contact:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Name |  |
| Phone number or email |  |

## Policy Created

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date this policy was created |  |

## Signatures

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Name and position | Signature |
| Approved by |  |  |
| Approved by |  |  |

## **Review Date**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Date this policy will be reviewed  *Suggested wording* | This policy will be regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it does not disadvantage particular sections of the community and that it reflects current legislation, regulation, guidelines and relevant quality frameworks (in particular the Tusla Quality and Regulatory Framework; Síolta: the National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education; and Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework).  Equality, diversity and inclusion issues will be discussed regularly at team meetings and management committee meetings *[if applicable]*. The effectiveness of the policy will be evaluated *[indicate by what length of time]* by the team with the support of the service’s Inclusion Coordinator.  A formal review will take place on *[insert date]* |

1. See NALA Plain English Guidelines at a Glance: [www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Plain%20English%20guidelines%20at%20a%20glance\_1.pdf](http://www.nala.ie/sites/default/files/publications/Plain%20English%20guidelines%20at%20a%20glance_1.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Ref: The ***Early Childhood Care and Education National Inclusion Charter and Guidelines for Early Childhood Care and Education Early Childhood Care (2016)*** The Leadership for Inclusion (LINC) programme supports those taking on the role of Inclusion Coordinator within their own settings. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)