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

***(Policy Number)*** *TEMPLATE* STAFF ABSENCES POLICY *WITH GUIDANCE*

## Rationale and Policy Considerations

The Policy on Staff Absences must outline the arrangements in place in the service to ensure that the required adult:child ratios are in place when an [employee](#employee_definition) working directly with children is absent.

It is inevitable that at times a member of staff or even a number of staff members will be unable to attend work on some days. Arrangements must be in place in the service to ensure that the required adult-to-child ratios are maintained when one or more staff members working directly with children are absent.

In the event that the person in charge of the service is absent, a person must be named who will deputise for the person in charge so that everyone is clear, at all times, about who is in charge. In the event that both the person in charge and the named deputy are absent, there is another named person who is in charge.

The way in which staff absences are managed is important for the level of supervision of the children, for the children’s wellbeing and for their learning. For example - If children, particularly the youngest children, are distressed due to the absence of familiar adults, this may impact on both their emotional wellbeing and on their learning. Children who cannot engage happily in playing and other activities due to emotional upset will be unable to benefit fully from even the most well-planned, well-resourced learning experiences. It is important that this potential impact is considered as far as practicable when staff are being moved to other rooms to cover others’ absences.

With this in mind, it is necessary to make clear in writing how the adult-to-child ratio is to be maintained; how the service will respond to staff members’ absences; how staff members’ absences are to be notified to the service and also how the staff roster will reflect staff members’ absences and substitution.

### Legislation and regulatory requirements

* Under the [Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print), Regulation 11 requires that the service must ensure that an adequate number of staff is available at all times during the provision of services to meet the needs of the children attending. At all times, the number of staff within the service must be appropriate to the needs of children and the type of service and care provided.
* Regulation 9 requires that the designated person in charge or a named person to deputise is on the premises at all times while the service is in operation.
* Regulation 10 requires a written Staff Absences policy and procedures.
* Regulation 27 requires that a provider must ensure that all children are appropriately supervised at all times while attending the service.

*[Refer also to Employment Legislation and Regulation relating to employee’s leave entitlements.]*

### Children’s needs

Children need:

* To have enough adults available to adequately and appropriately meet their needs, while being safely supervised.
* Consistency of care to be a priority consideration when decisions are being made about staffing cover and to have at least one staff member who they know in their group at all times where possible. This is important for their wellbeing in both the short and long term.

### Parents’/Families’ needs

Parents/guardians need to know that:

* Arrangements are in place to ensure that their child will be well cared for and safely supervised at all times.
* Their child’s needs, including their emotional and psychological needs, will be given every consideration in the event that a staff member is absent, and most especially if that staff member is their Key Person.

### Staff needs

Staff members need to:

* Be very clear on the arrangements for when they cannot attend work.
* Know exactly what their responsibilities are in relation to letting the service management know that they cannot attend.
* Be aware of the service requirements in terms of notice in relation to their various Leave Entitlements.
* Be clear about what is to happen should a colleague not be able to attend work for any reason.
* Be clear on who can provide staffing cover and who cannot, and what must be considered when arrangements are being made – in particular the children’s needs.
* Know who will deputise for the owner/manager/deputy should they be absent from the service for any reason and they need to be able to explain the arrangements to parents/guardians.

### Management needs

Management needs:

* This policy to help ensure that they meet the requirements of the Early Years Regulations to have arrangements in place to ensure that the adult-to-child ratio is maintained and to respond appropriately to staff absences.
* To make clear to all staff members how staff absences (sick leave or other leave) are to be notified to the service.
* To have arrangements in place for dealing with freeing up staff members to take planned leave or to attend training during normal service hours.
* To ensure that any person who provides relief staffing cover is appropriately qualified and vetted.
* To identify clearly how the staff roster is to reflect any staff absences and substitutions.
* To ensure that all staff team members are clear on the arrangements for dealing with staff absences and that parents/guardians are clear on how staff absences are managed.
* The policy to reflect that the needs of the children are prioritised.
* To ensure that the requirement for an annual review of the policy is written in to the policy.

### 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/)

## Definitions/Glossary

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

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| --- | --- |
| Absences | For the purposes of this policy, absences include annual leave, unpaid leave, statutory leave, training leave or leave due to illness or emergencies. |
|  |  |
|  |  |

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

*[The policy on staff absences for any service will need to be tailored to the particular service therefore this is not a sample Policy Statement but a guide to developing one. You will need to refer to the* ***Rationale and Policy Considerations*** *above as well as the guidance documents listed below under* ***References****, in order to ensure that all considerations are comprehensively covered here within your own policy statement.*

*In general, the policy will be that the service will always ensure well-planned, adequate and appropriate staffing levels when core staff members have to be absent for any reasons including illness; annual leave, unpaid or other statutory leave; leave for training/continuing professional development (CPD) or any other reasons.*

*All staff-related decision making should have consideration of the emotional and psychological needs of the children and be reflected in the policy.*

*The policy will also need to include making it clear that a named person will:*

* *Deputise for the person in charge when the person in charge is absent for any reason*
* *Deputise when both the person in charged and the named deputy are absent.*

*It will need to state that appropriate Garda Vetting, references and proof of appropriate qualifications are sought for any person providing relief staffing cover.*

*The policy will also need to state that the staff roster will always reflect staff members’ absences and substitutions.*

*State also that the Staff Absences Policy will be reviewed at least annually.]*

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

*[You will need to write clear and specific procedural guidance* ***for your own service*** *to accompany your Policy Statement.]*

*For this too you will need to refer to the* ***Rationale and Policy Considerations*** *above as well as the guidance documents listed below under* ***References****, in order to ensure that all considerations are comprehensively covered here within your own procedures and practices guidance.*

**How the adult:child ratio is maintained.**

*You will need to outline how the adult:child ratio is maintained.*

* *Staff know the required adult: child ratios*
* *Required adult: child ratio is implemented*
* *Staff roster is implemented*
* *Staff members know what to do in the event of the adult; child ratio not being met due to a staff absence.*

**How the service responds to staff absences: both planned and unplanned.**

*You will need to outline here how staff members are to notify the service of any unplanned absences (such as Sick Leave, Force Majeure Leave or Bereavement Leave) and include:*

* *When the service is to be informed (as soon as possible)*
* *Who is to be informed (person in charge)*
* *How they are to be informed*
* *What the procedure is for advising the management of their return to work.*

*Link this policy to the Infection Control Policy and necessary exclusions of staff members with infectious illness.*

*In relation to planned absences, link this policy to the Staff Training Policy and outline what the arrangements are for providing staff cover when staff members request or are required to attend training during normal service hours or are taking time off in lieu of training time.*

*(If you have a Staff Leave Policy, link this policy to it and outline the requirements for staff members to plan their Annual Leave or any other planned leave (such as Parental Leave, Carer’s Leave) with sufficient notice to allow the management to plan appropriately for staffing cover).*

*Outline clearly the procedure for contacting relief staff, including agency staff where an agency is used. Specify that any person providing relief cover must meet the qualification requirements, be appropriately Garda/Police vetted and have the required written references. Outline what must be done to ensure this and to have appropriate records on file for any persons providing relief. Be clear also on who cannot provide relief cover. (Refer to the Tusla: Quality and Regulatory Framework for information on what is required.)*

*Include guidance on always considering the need for the children – especially the youngest children – to have at least one staff member whom they know and are comfortable with, wherever possible, when planning for providing relief cover. This is particularly important for young children’s emotional and psychological wellbeing, especially when the absent staff member is their Key Person. It is also especially important during their earliest months in the service when they will already be experiencing the challenges of adapting to some very significant changes in their lives.*

**How the staff roster shows staff absences and substitutions.**

*Specify that any changes in staffing (absences and substitutions) must be reflected in the roster.*

*State that the policy must be reviewed annually and how this is to be done.*

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

*[Suggested wording as follows:]*

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

A summary of this policy will be included in the parent handbook. This policy will also be reviewed with staff at induction and annual staff training.

A copy of all policies 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 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.]*

* **Policy on Infection Control**
* **Risk Management Policy**
* **Recruitment Policy**
* **Staff Training Policy**
* **Supervision Policy**
* Child Protection Policy
* Key Person Policy
* Partnership with Parents Policy
* Staff Leave Policy

**…***add any other policies, procedures or forms that you have, which you consider are linked to this policy.*

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

* [Child Care Act 1991(Early Years Services) Regulations 2016](http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2016/si/221/made/en/print)
* [Tusla: Quality Regulatory Framework](http://www.tusla.ie/services/preschool-services/early-years-quality-and-regulatory-framework/)

…*add any others that you referred to in writing your policy.*

## Who Must Observe This Policy

This policy must be observed by all managers and all staff members.

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

*[Add in any relevant actions to be taken]*

## **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 |  |