



**NATIONAL
STANDARDS
for
CHILD DAY CARE
FACILITIES**

JULY 2006



FOREWORD

The publication of the National Standards for Child Care Facilities is yet another step taken by Government towards ensuring a better, safer, and healthier environment for children, an important priority for Government.

As Minister for the Family and Social Solidarity and Minister for Education, Youth and Employment, we firmly believe that childcare and early education are of central importance to our society and a key responsibility for Government. It is imperative that safe and developmentally appropriate children's services are available to promote the holistic development and well-being of children and their families. As a result, these standards have been developed with this aim as their target.

These standards are being presented jointly by our two Ministries in view of our commitment to synchronise the care and educational aspects involved in the provision of child care services. The publication of the Early Childhood Education and Care Policy, which was launched recently, also contributes towards developing a coherent policy in this area.

A first document with proposed standards was issued in July 2004 and widely promoted with parents, providers and prospective providers. Following a consultation process, which was both extensive and thorough, the final document is being presented here laying down these National Standards.

Ensuring good quality standards is not a task which Government can achieve alone. All stakeholders, especially parents, need to participate in this process. We are convinced that this document can in fact further empower parents to take a more active role in ensuring that the services they are making use of are of good quality and fit for their children.

Government's commitment is to promote a new view of childhood as an important phase of life in its own right and not just as a preparation for adult life. We must allow children to live in the present and to realise their full potential.

We augur that these standards will contribute towards the all-important improvement of children's quality of life.



Dolores Cristina
*Minister for the Family
and Social Solidarity*



Louis Galea
*Minister of Education,
Youth and Employment*

CONTENTS

Introduction	1
---------------------	----------

Standards

1. Suitable Persons	3
2. Physical Environment, Premises and Equipment	6
3. Management and Organisation	9
4. Health and Safety of Children	11
5. Care, Learning and Play	13
6. Working in Partnership with Parents	15
7. Behaviour Management	17
8. Child Protection	19
9. Food and Drink	21
10. Equal Opportunities and Children with Special Needs	23

Annexes

A. Good Practice Guidelines for Programme of Activities	25
B. References	29
C. Contributors to the Formulation of the Standards	30

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of Standards

These National Child Day Care Standards have been developed to ensure that maximum benefit is derived by children, parents and the community. They were developed in consideration of day care and educational needs of children below three years of age.

These standards are considered essential for the delivery of quality day care to children, in order to stimulate and enhance their emotional, social and educational development. They are intended to safeguard the best interests of the child, facilitate work and family balance and contribute towards the promotion of social cohesion.

Children deserve the best possible care for their well-being and development. When parents choose to make use of these facilities, it is important that those persons entrusted with the care of these children do give the best alternative care possible and that standards are maintained to ensure the safety and well-being of the child.

These standards are intended to apply equally to child day care services operating in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The range of services include both 'Centre Based' (kindergartens, play schools, nurseries and other facilities catering for children under three years of age) and 'Home-Based' facilities.

In all of these types of service, parents should feel assured that their children are well looked after by qualified persons, within suitable premises and with the appropriate activities and organisation.

Using the National Standards

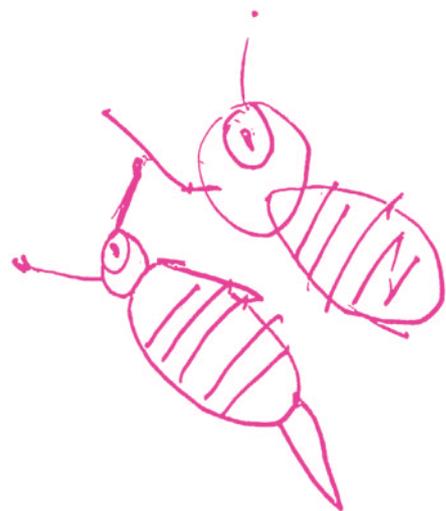
We are here presenting the child day care standards from the point of view of the user, that is, of the parent. These standards focus on what the parents should expect from a childcare facility.

If you, as a parent, are thinking about using the services of a child day care facility, these standards will help you to know what to expect from a child day care service that is suitable for your child's overall well-being.

Child day care providers can also use the standards to find out what is expected of them in offering proper child day care services. Providers of child day care services are thus in a position to take the necessary steps needed to become compliant with the national standards. The implementation of these standards will be phased in over a timeframe as established by Government.

The standards make it clear that everything about the service should lead parents and children to benefit from good quality services. They should guide the provider on the type of staff to employ and how the service is to be organised and managed.

These National Child Day Care Standards provide the framework for monitoring and assessing quality and outcomes of service provision.



Monitoring the Implementation of Standards

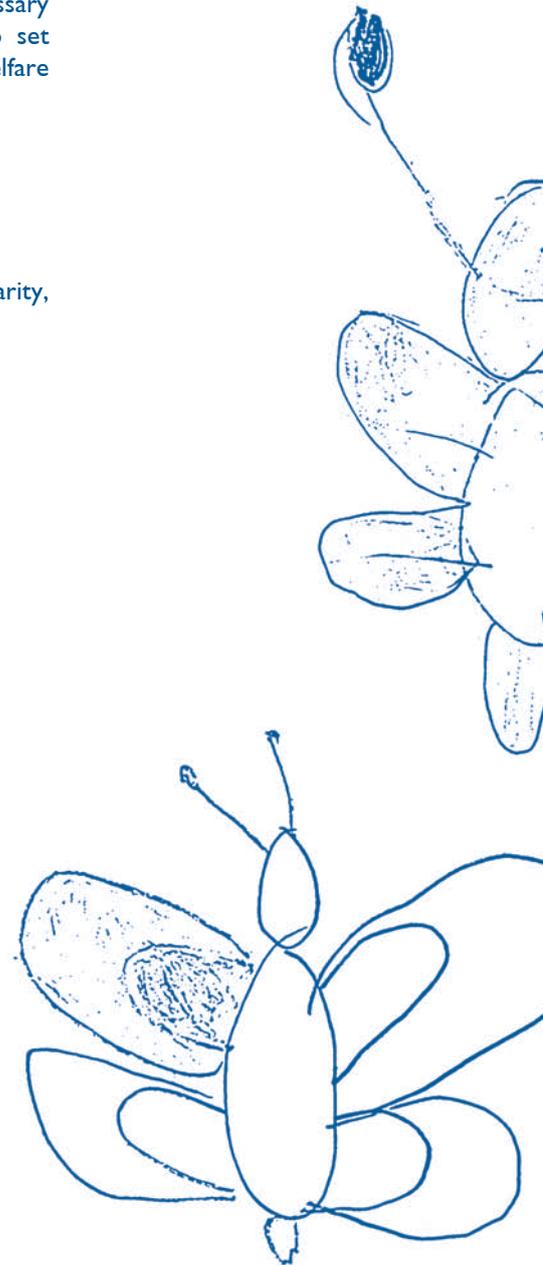
Government selected child day care services as a priority to benefit from the reassurance of a well monitored and regulated service provision. The Department of Social Welfare Standards (DSWS) is the body that is responsible for operating a regulatory system for the social welfare sector. The DSWS will promote the standards of welfare and will encourage good practice. It will assist childcare facilities in their service development process towards meeting the standards in their provision of the service.

The DSWS will also be responsible to monitor the provision of such services whilst taking into account the nature of the service and the level of risk present.

The Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity is preparing the necessary legislation that will give the State the power to publish regulations to set standards. The promotion, registering, monitoring and assessment of all welfare service provision will be taken into account.

Correspondence

Correspondence related to this document may be sent by e-mail to: childcare@gov.mt or by post to the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity, Palazzo Ferreria, 310, Republic Street, Valletta.

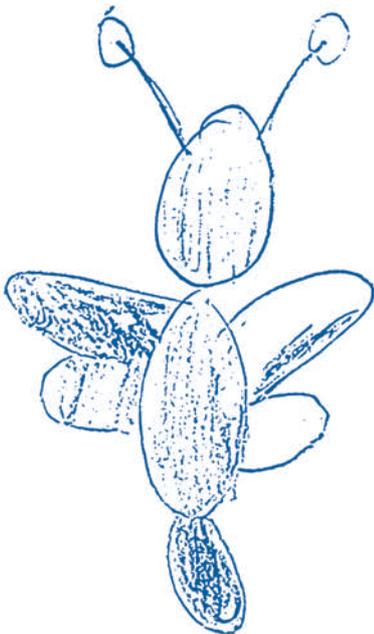




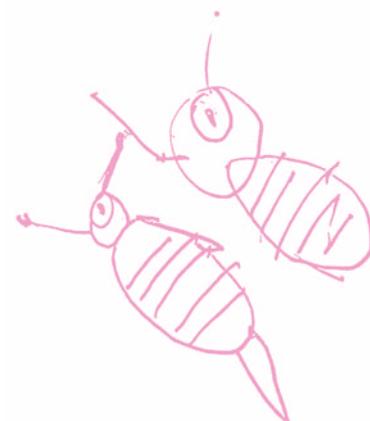
STANDARD I SUITABLE PERSONS

Children are looked after by suitable and qualified staff who have a positive regard for children and who have satisfied the recruitment criteria. The facility maintains the appropriate carer to child ratios.

1. Children will be cared for by qualified staff with the necessary aptitude and skills to provide good quality care.
2. Carers are suitable and trustworthy persons who are able and trained to respond appropriately to children's different needs.
3. Carers have a positive attitude towards children and interact with them in a warm, affectionate and firm manner.
4. The staff members are knowledgeable on issues concerning childcare, and management encourages staff development and provides the necessary supervision to staff members caring for children.
5. The service provides appropriate carer to child ratios, enabling children to receive individual attention from their designated carer.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD I



1.1 'Centre Based' Facilities

'Centre-Based' facilities include premises that:

- (a) are only used and are equipped for the provision of day care to children; and/ or
- (b) are part of the service provider's home, but which have a separate entrance.

1.1.1 Eligibility Criteria for Staff Recruitment

Supervisor/ Principal/ Manager

Age	21 years or over
Experience	Experience working with children
Qualification	Childcare qualification (see footnote 3) Training in Management or Administration ¹ Certificate in Paediatric First Aid ²
References	Current detailed Police Conduct Certificate Two character referees

Carer

Age	18 years or over
Qualification in childcare ³	A recognised level of training and education
References	First Aid Certificate (see footnote 2) Current detailed Police Conduct Certificate Two character referees

Owner/ Licensee⁴

Age	18 years or over
References	Current detailed Police Conduct Certificate

1.1.2 Carer to Child Ratios

Age of Children	Children per Carer
0 to 12 months	3
13 to 24 months	5
25 to 36 months	6
Mixed Group ⁵	6

¹ DSWS will vet the level of qualification as well as its relation to child day care services.

² Only a First Aid Certificate achieved within the last three years is acceptable.

³ Accreditation of the childcare qualification is to be established by the Malta Qualifications Council in consultation with the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity in accordance with Legal Notice 347 of 2005.

⁴ Applies if the Owner/ Licensee is not the supervisor/ principal/ manager and not directly involved in the day-to-day provision of the service.

⁵ Within the mixed group only one child can be under the age of eighteen months.



1.2 ‘Home-Based’¹ Facilities

‘Home-Based’ facilities are premises which form part of the service provider’s own residential home.

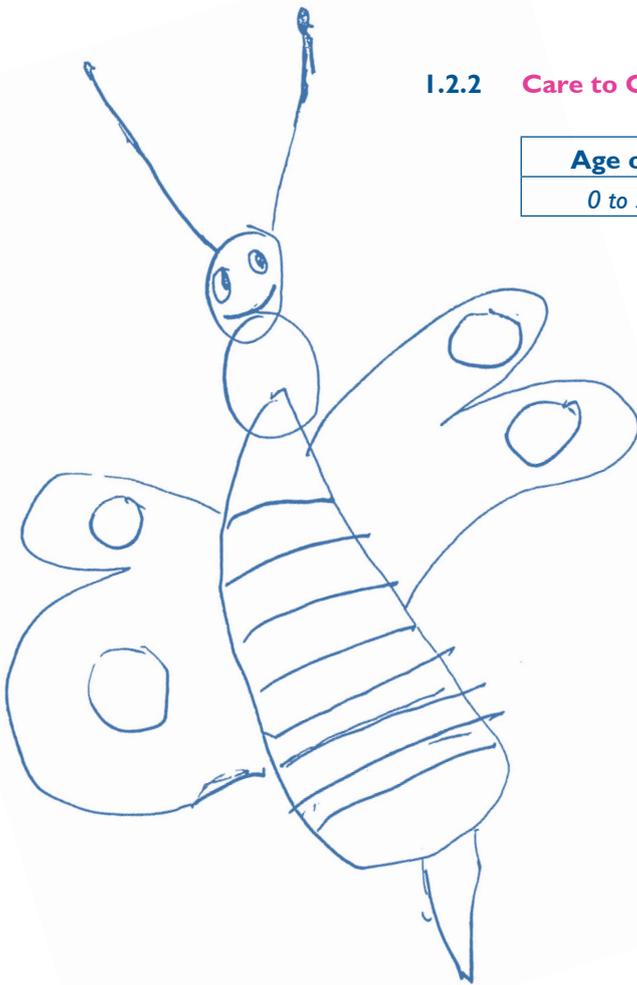
1.2.1 Eligibility Criteria

Carer²

Age	21 years or over
Qualification	A recognised level of training and education in childcare ³ First Aid certificate ⁴
References	Current Detailed Police Conduct Certificate Two character references

1.2.2 Care to Child Ratios

Age of children	Children per Carer ⁵
0 to 36 months	6 ⁶



¹ ‘Home-based’ premises are expected to be homely, safe, secure and suitable for their purpose.
² Other adults residing at the ‘home-based’ facility will be required to submit a detailed Police Conduct Certificate.
³ Accreditation of the childcare qualification to be established by the Malta Qualifications Council in consultation with the Ministry for the Family and Social Solidarity in accordance with Legal Notice 347 of 2005.
⁴ First Aid Certificate to have been achieved within the last three years.
⁵ It is recommended that another adult/ carer be available as a reliever.
⁶ The ‘home-based’ provider may only care for a maximum of six children, including his/her own children and only one of the children can be under the age of 18 months.



STANDARD 2

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT, PREMISES AND EQUIPMENT

The physical environment is welcoming and the premises are suitable for the service provided. The premises are safe, secure and accessible. The furnishings and equipment are suited to the needs of children and are kept in a good state of cleanliness and repair.

1. Children have adequate space enabling them to engage in both indoor and outdoor activities.
2. The design of the layout of the Centre allows staff to supervise and engage with children and is spacious enough to allow the free movement of children between different areas and activities.
3. The equipment is safe and is suitably designed for children and is regularly cleaned and maintained.
4. The premises and equipment are in compliance with regulations and standards of safety.
5. The premises are kept in a good state of cleanliness and repair.
6. The premises are safe and only authorised persons are permitted entry.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD 2

2.1 'Centre-Based' Facility

'Centre-Based' facilities include premises that:

- (a) are only used and are equipped for the provision of day care to children; and/ or
- (b) are part of the service provider's home, but which have a separate entrance.

2.1.1 Suitable Premises

- Ground floor^{1,2}
- Accessible³
- Indoor and outdoor area⁴
- Space allowance of 5 square metres per child⁵
- Natural light, ventilated, damp-free
- Comfortable temperature
- Telephone landline
- Kitchenette area⁶
- Rest Area⁷
- Nappy changing area⁸
- Hygienic receptacle for used nappies
- Separate toilets for staff and children⁹
- Security gates, fencing
- Safety glass
- Indoor non-slip flooring
- Out door play equipment¹⁰

2.1.2 Clearances from Regulatory Bodies

- MEPA permit¹¹
- Health and Safety Audit Certificate
- Department for Social Welfare Standards Registration
- Others as necessary

2.1.3 Maintenance of Premises and Equipment

- Premises and equipment to be regularly cleaned and maintained
- All materials certified fire resistant/ retardant
- All materials, paints, toys certified lead free

¹ According to DC2000 (MEPA), ground floor "may have up to six steps up or down." Semi-basements may also be considered provided that they fulfil the other requirements, i.e. are naturally well-lit and have access to outdoor play area.

² Centres situated in areas which are prone to flooding are expected to have a contingency plan stating the procedures to be adopted in cases of heavy rainfall and flooding.

³ In compliance with the Equal Opportunities (Persons with a Disability) Act (Chap. 413).

⁴ The outdoor area is to be at least 20% of total space.

⁵ Child space allowance includes both indoor and outdoor area.

⁶ Kitchen area does not have to be a separate room.

⁷ This applies especially for those centres which cater for children under the age of one year.

⁸ This may form part of the toilet area.

⁹ This need not necessarily be separate rooms. The use of a divider to separate the toilets is acceptable.

¹⁰ Ground under swings/slides etc. should be covered with soft flooring.

¹¹ Every centre must be in possession of a license granted by MEPA.



2.2 'Home-Based' Facilities

'Home-Based' facilities are premises which form part of the service provider's own residential home.

2.2.1 Suitable Premises¹

- Indoor and outdoor area
- Natural light, ventilated, damp-free
- Comfortable temperature
- Telephone landline
- Hygienic receptacle for used nappies
- Security gates, fencing, doors
- Safety glass
- Indoor non-slip flooring
- Out door play equipment²

2.2.2 Clearances from Regulatory Bodies

- Health and Safety Audit Certificate
- Department for Social Welfare Standards Registration
- Others as necessary

2.2.3 Maintenance of Premises and Equipment

- Premises and equipment to be regularly cleaned and maintained
- All materials certified fire resistant/ retardant
- All materials, paints, toys certified lead free



¹ Flats are not considered suitable for the provision of 'home-based' services.

² Ground under swings/slides etc. should be covered with soft flooring.

STANDARD 3

MANAGEMENT AND ORGANISATION

The facility is managed by a qualified person who has the skills, knowledge and experience required to achieve the aims and objectives of the service. The service has a written manual of policies and procedures, which is accessible to users.

1. The aims and objectives of the service are clearly defined and are understood by both staff and users.
2. The management ensures the good organisation and the smooth operation of the service in order to cater for the safety, well being and care of the children.
3. The manager is qualified and has the skills, knowledge and experience to run and monitor the service and to ensure the good quality of the service provided.
4. The manager demonstrates effective leadership qualities and fosters effective working relationships between staff, parents and children.
5. The facility has a written manual containing all the policies and procedures that the service uses to operate.
6. The staff members working at the facility are abreast of the policies and procedures adopted by the service. The policies and procedures are easily accessible to all users.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD 3

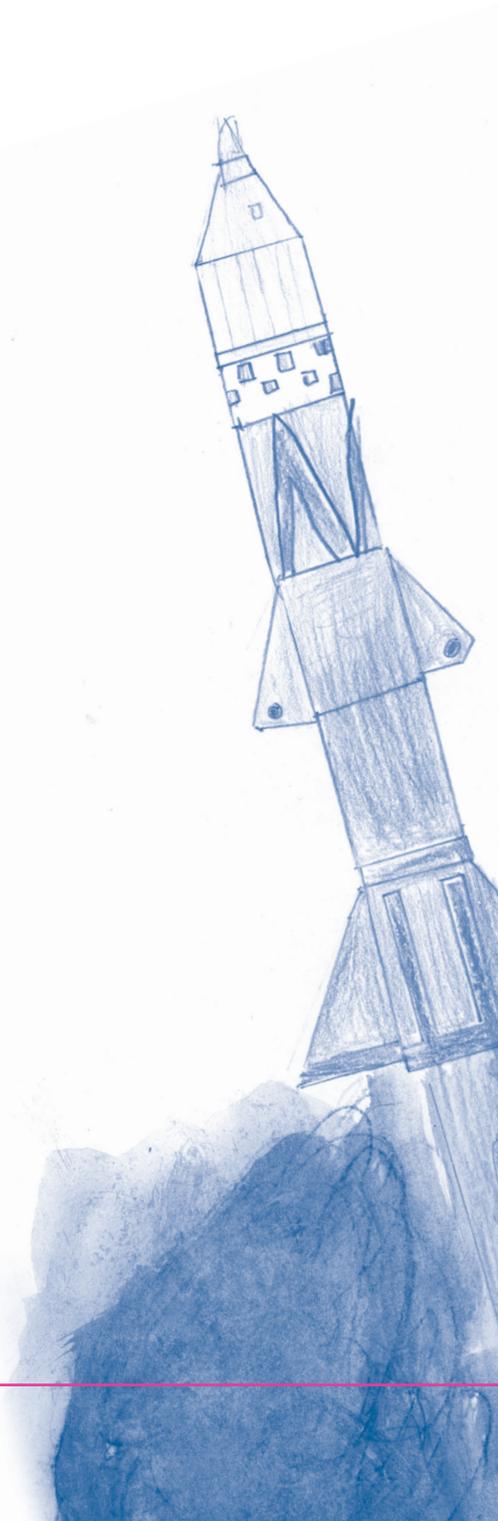
Contents of Policies and Procedures Manual

- Admission to child day care facility
- Working in partnership with parents
- Safety of children
- Sick child and accident management
- Behaviour management
- Child protection¹
- Child's personal records²
- Transition³
- Uncollected child
- Staff recruitment
- Staff development
- Staff supervision
- Staff records keeping
- Whistle blowing
- Complaints about the service
- Data Protection

¹ Refer to Child Protection Policy by Appogg and Child Protection Policy by Education Division.

² This file is accessible to parents and, within the Data Protection Act parameters, also to the Assessors appointed by the Department for Social Welfare Standards.

³ Transition procedure upon child's initial entry to childcare and transition procedure when child transfers to kindergarten.



STANDARD 4

HEALTH AND SAFETY OF CHILDREN

The good health and safety of children is promoted at all times. Good standards of hygiene are practised and encouraged and positive steps are taken to prevent and control the spread of infection. Strict attention is paid to all aspects of the environment to ensure that equipment together with the indoor and outdoor areas are in conformity with good standards of safety and hygiene.

1. Children are cared for in a smoke free environment.¹
2. The premises including both indoor and outdoor areas are safe and secure.
3. The premises, equipment and materials used by the children are regularly cleaned and staff, maintain and encourage good standards of hygiene.
4. All medicines are kept locked and out of reach of children. Only authorised staff may administer medicines to children.
5. The Centre keeps records concerning accident and/or injury and parents can view these records in relation to their own child.
6. When a child becomes ill or has an accident the parents will be immediately informed and the child's carer will remain with the child until the parents' arrival.
7. Strict standards of hygiene are practised for the prevention and control of the spread of infection and the disposal of related waste.
8. Only the parents or their authorised deputy can collect children from the Centre.
9. Organised outings² for children require the written consent of the respective parents.

¹ In accordance with prevailing law.

² During organised outings more adults should be present with children than that established in Standard 1. Parents may contribute to the adult to child ratio on these occasions.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD 4

Health and Safety

4.1 Promotion of Good Health and Safety

- Health and Safety Audit every two years
- Daily cleaning routines¹
- Good hygiene practices²
- Safe disposal of clinical waste³
- Sick child policy and procedure⁴
- First Aid Box⁵

4.2 Safety Measures

- Power sockets covered or out of reach of children
- Corners covered with soft protective covering
- Safe storage of utensils and cleaning materials
- Shatterproof glass windows/ doors⁶
- Child proof locks on doors/ windows/ cupboards/ drawers
- Protective barriers on low-level windows/ glass panels
- Security gates on stairs
- Use of lead free paint only on walls and furniture
- Non-slip flooring for outdoor and wet play areas
- Child safe thermostatic control of water supply

4.3 Fire Safety

- Fire extinguisher⁷ and blanket
- Use of fire retardant/ resistant materials
- Unobstructed fire exit
- Plan of premises indicating exits during evacuation
- Signage in centre indicating routes of escape
- Prohibition of gas cylinders⁸

4.4 Electrical Appliances

- Electrical appliances annually certified as safe by an electrical engineer.

¹ Cleaning routines of the premises includes daily cleaning of toys, sand and other play materials.

² Encourage the washing of hands, covering mouth and nose when coughing, sneezing etc.

³ Use of proper receptacle for the disposal of soiled nappies.

⁴ This policy is to be included in the manual of procedures.

⁵ First aid box to be maintained and checked regularly by a designated staff member.

⁶ Protective film may be utilised on glass windows/ doors.

⁷ These items are to be checked regularly and staff members must be familiar with their use.

⁸ For 'home-based' facilities, gas cylinders are to be located outside of the premises and out of reach of children.

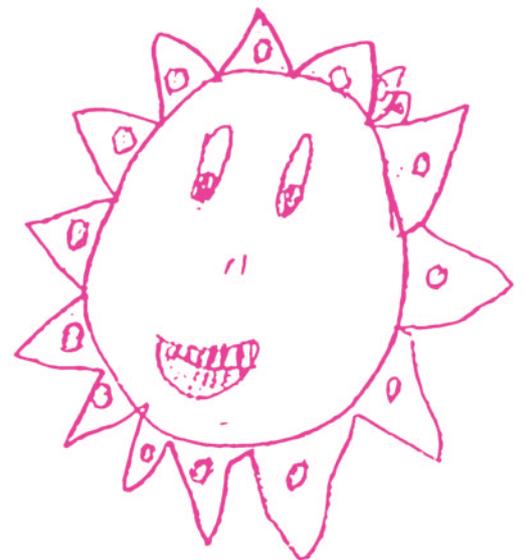


STANDARD 5

CARE, LEARNING AND PLAY

Qualified caregivers talk, listen to and otherwise interact with children and cater for their physical, social, intellectual and emotional needs. Activities and opportunities for play are organised so as to meet the full range of children's developmental needs.

1. Children are cared for by a designated carer who is responsive to their individual needs.
2. Children have the opportunity to participate in various activities that encourage physical activity and playing and the attention is given to ensure their physical need for care is met.
3. Children are encouraged to participate in various activities and are listened to and given the opportunity for self-expression. They are given the opportunity to play individually and to interact with other children.
4. The programme of activities provided is designed to promote the intellectual curiosity and development of children.
5. The staff members regularly consult with the parents concerning the progress and development of the children.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD 5

Outline of Programme of Activities¹

The early years environment should provide holistic care and education, by addressing the range of children's developmental needs (i.e. their physical, intellectual and language needs, emotional and social needs). A more "holistic" approach implies that children's overall development will benefit from having a range of experiences rather than specifically concentrating on one aspect.

Important Milestones for Infants/ Toddlers (up to the age of 2 years)

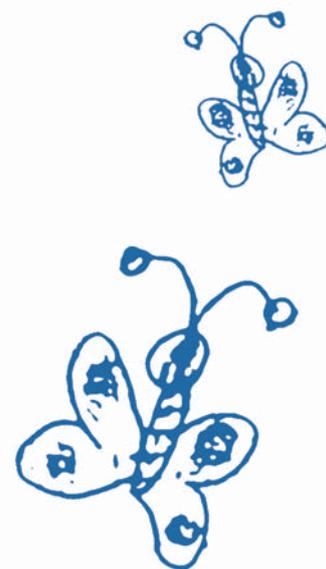
The child should:

- be able to make and maintain contact with others;
- develop a positive self-awareness and a positive attitude to his/her own learning ability.

Important Milestones for Three Year Olds:

The child should:

- develop independence, creativity and flexibility
- be able to identify with other people's situations and see situation from several angles
- be able to collaborate, have regard to and show care for others
- learn and contribute to formulating positive standards for working with others
- develop good spoken skills
- be able to communicate effectively on various levels



¹ See Annex A 1.1 for suggested good practice and 1.2 for a full list of recommended equipment for the Early Years Setting.

STANDARD 6

WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS

Carers welcome parents and work in close collaboration with them to promote the welfare and development of the children. Carers encourage the involvement of parents to improve the quality of the service provided.



1. The service welcomes the presence and involvement of the parents especially during the initial stages of their child's introduction to the service and also throughout the time the child attends the service.
2. The staff members welcome and encourage the involvement of the parents of the children who attend the Centre.
3. The staff members regularly discuss with the individual parents the progress and development of their child.
4. Any information provided by the parents concerning the health or dietary requirements of their child is respected by the staff members who will follow the instructions of the parents concerning the particular needs of the child's care.
5. All information concerning either the child or the family will be kept confidential.
6. The instructions of the parents concerning the collection of their child from the facility are adhered to and only persons authorised by the parents will be allowed to collect the child.
7. Any concerns that the staff members may have to do with the child's health, social, emotional or intellectual development are to be discussed with the parents in order to promote the best interests of the child.



APPENDIX TO STANDARD 6

Working in Partnership with Parents

Guidelines to Good Practice

- Parents and carers collaborate to promote the welfare and development of the child;
- Daily informal conversations between parent and carer;
- Planned communication between parent and carer at a minimum of twice yearly;
- Discussion of child's strengths, health issues and any other concerns;
- Encouragement of parental feedback in relation to the strengths and needs of the service provision;
- Regular review of child's development and adjustment to the care at the facility;
- Planning of the child's transition to kindergarten or other educational facility;
- Easy access to complaints procedure allowing parents to discuss any problems or complaints with the provider in order to arrive at a joint resolution;
- Confidentiality should be maintained by the service provider at all times except where this may run contrary to the child's safety and well-being at which time the appropriate authorities must be informed.



STANDARD 7 BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

The service has a clear code of behaviour management that is understood and applied by the staff, parents and children. Children are encouraged through positive guidance to take responsibility for their own behaviour and to show care and consideration for others.

1. The staff members ensure that children are not bullied or threatened while in their care.
2. Children are not given physical punishment nor are they exposed to intellectual, emotional or verbal abuse.
3. The staff members work in a respectful and courteous partnership with parents and children to promote positive behaviour.
4. The staff members will address and respond to children's difficult behaviour in a firm, caring and sensitive manner that promotes positive interactions between the carer and child and the child and other children.





APPENDIX TO STANDARD 7

Behaviour Management¹

Acceptable Discipline

- Positive guidance
- Setting of clear-cut limits²
- Fostering of the child's ability to become self-disciplined
- Praise for positive behaviour
- Redirection

Prohibited Discipline

- Corporal punishment is not allowed (hitting, spanking, beating, pinching etc)
- Threats of corporal punishment
- Withdrawal of food, rest or bathroom
- Threat of withdrawal of food, rest or bathroom opportunities
- Abusive language
- Any form of public or private humiliation
- Any form of abuse (including emotional, verbal, physical or any other form of abuse)



¹ Every service must have a Behaviour Management Policy in the manual of procedures setting out the approaches and methods that they use in dealing with difficult behaviour.

² The limits should be clear to the child.

STANDARD 8

CHILD PROTECTION

Child day care providers have a duty to protect and care for each child during their period of attendance at the Centre. Their Manual of Procedures contains a Child Protection Policy and Procedure, which they are bound to follow in instances of suspected abuse. The provider is obliged to report all instances of suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities.

1. The facility has a written Child Protection Policy and Procedure.
2. The staff is trained to recognise signs of suspected abuse and is required to report these findings to the manager of the facility.
3. In cases where abuse is suspected the manager, upon hearing the report of his/her staff member is obliged to report this suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities.
4. All issues concerning parents and their child will be treated confidentially and only shared with other professionals on a 'need to know' basis.
5. The staff members at the facility take every precaution to ensure that children attending the facility are protected against abuse.
6. The facility has a 'whistle-blower policy' to ensure that the children are safe from abuse while attending the facility.



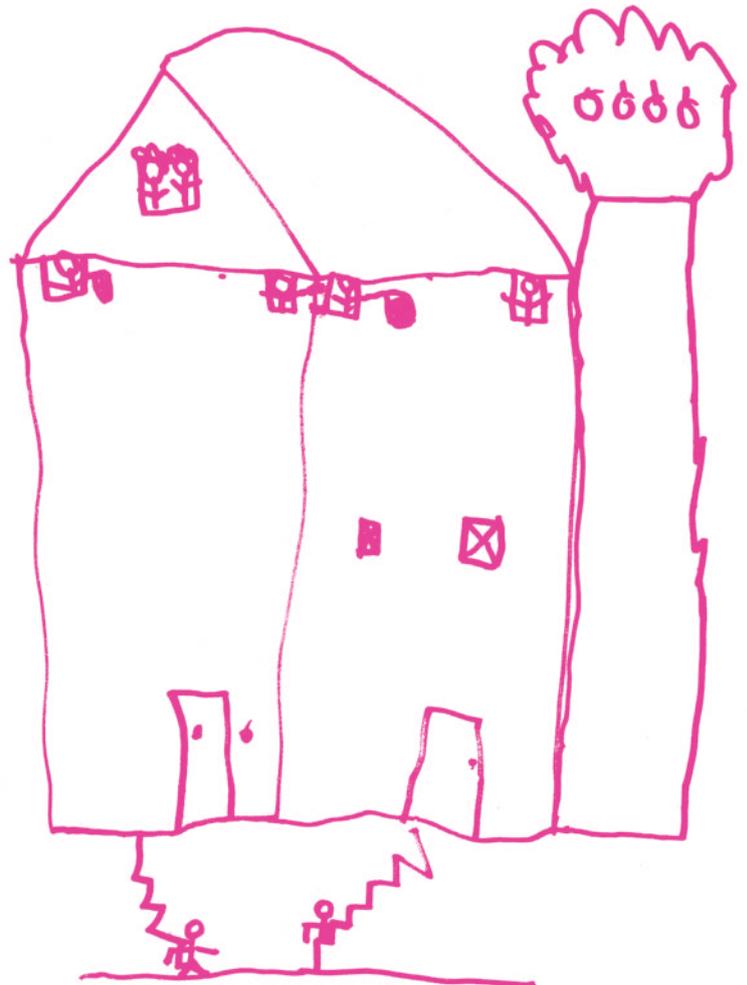


APPENDIX TO STANDARD 8

Child Protection

Good Practice Guidelines

- Service provider is required to have a Child Protection Policy¹ and Procedure;
- The safety and security of children must always be prioritised;
- All carers and staff at the facility are required to comply with said policy and procedure;
- The service manager is required to report any instance of suspected abuse to the appropriate authorities;
- The service provider must include a “whistle blower” policy in his/her Manual of Policies and Procedures to ensure that any abuse committed within the facility is duly reported.



¹ Refer to Child Protection Policy by Appogg and Child Protection Policy by Education Division.

STANDARD 9

FOOD AND DRINK

The service provision promotes the benefits of a healthy diet and encourages parents to provide healthy nutritious snacks for their children. The staff members also take careful note of any special dietary requirements and also ensure that children receive the help they need in feeding. Flexible eating routines are permitted and children have access to drinking water at all times.

1. Parents are encouraged to provide healthy food for their children.
2. Every care is taken to ensure that food is properly stored and refrigerated.
3. Food, which is provided by parents, is prepared and heated to the appropriate temperature.
4. The facility, if this is part of the service offered, provides food for the children which is nutritious and wholesome.
5. Staff members take note of the individual and special dietary needs of children and ensure that the children have access only to these foods.
6. Staff members encourage independence and help the children with feeding in the way that meets the best needs of the children.
7. Meal times are flexible in order to meet the individual needs of the children.
8. Children have free access to drinking water throughout the period of time spent at the Centre.

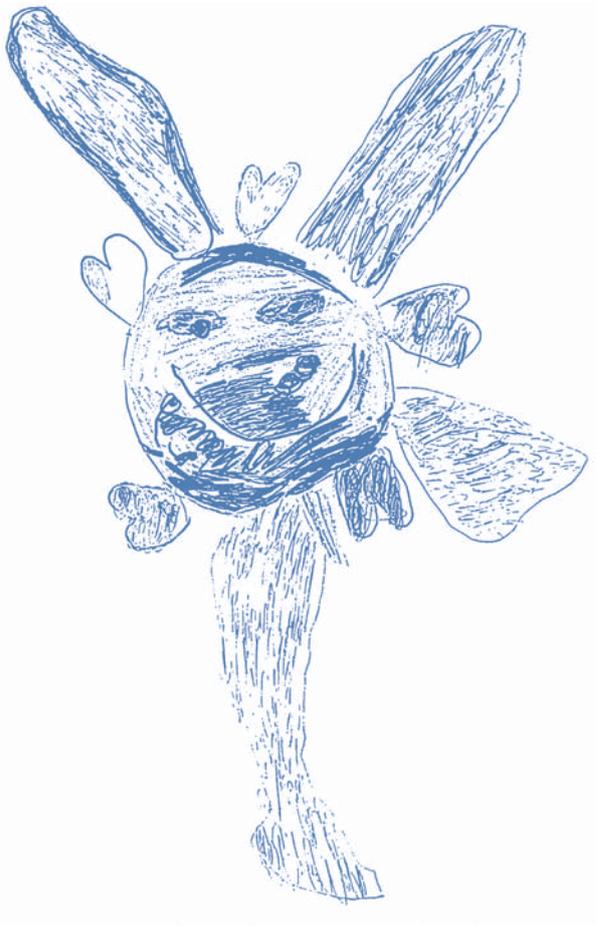


APPENDIX TO STANDARD 9

Food and Drink

Promotion of a Healthy Diet

- Parents providing food for their child should be encouraged to provide healthy food and snacks.
- Food provided by the service provider is to be nutritious and properly prepared.
- Service providers to keep a record of individual special dietary requirements.
- Availability of drinking water at all times.



¹ Where the provider undertakes to provide meals for the children, this should be done in accordance with the dietary/ health/ religious requirements of the children and should be nutritious and properly prepared.

STANDARD 10

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Each child is valued as an individual and helped to develop his/her full potential through inclusion and participation in various activities designed to display a wide range of positive images and objects, which reflect non-stereotypical roles, and the diversity of race, culture and religion.

1. Every child attending the Centre is welcomed as an individual in his/her own right.
2. The staff members show respect towards all parents and children using the service.
3. The service is physically accessible and measures are taken to ensure this accessibility.
4. The service has toilets, which are accessible to everyone using the Centre.
5. The staff members give opportunities to each child, to help them progress towards their developmental goals and to realise their own potential.
6. Children are included in all activities offered by the service and the members of staff actively reduce or remove any barriers that restrict participation in any of the activities.
7. The race, culture or religion of any child is respected at all times.

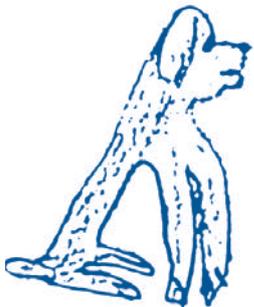


APPENDIX TO STANDARD 10

Equal Opportunities and Children with Special Needs

Good Practice Guidelines

- Promotion of equality of opportunity
- Promotion of anti-discriminatory practice
- Inclusion of all children in the various activities
- Removal of barriers to participation in activities
- Valuing each child as an individual
- Respect for the person of each child
- Embracing a wide range of positive images and objects to reflect non-stereotypical roles, racial, cultural and religious diversity, and disability
- Proactive approach to the special needs of particular children and appropriate action¹



¹ Arrangements on a case-to-case basis are to be made between the parents and the service provider.

**ANNEX A****GOOD PRACTICE GUIDELINES FOR PROGRAMME OF ACTIVITIES****1.1 Activities by Age****6 Weeks – 3 Months¹:**

- Sing, talk, hold baby
- Show him/her things, objects, people
- Allow baby to suck (taste) smell and touch
- Allow baby to kick, hold objects, materials
- Encourage baby to look, listen and make sounds
- Allow baby personal space
- Let baby lie quietly on the floor or sit and watch a mobile
- Prop up baby in a safe place² so that he/she can watch people, activity
- Allow baby to explore objects³

4 – 5 Months:

- Provide different toys with a range of textures and sounds
- Sing nursery rhymes combined with finger play
- Give baby the opportunity to find out things for himself/herself
- Allow baby to begin to choose play activity
- Encourage baby to play alone and with other children
- Talk to baby and respond to baby's own sounds
- Offer rattles and soft squashy toys to provide a variety of textures

6 – 9 Months:

- Encourage confidence and balance by placing toys around sitting baby⁴
- Encourage mobility by placing toys just out of baby's reach
- Encourage visual awareness by providing varied experiences
- Encourage baby to pick up small objects to develop pincer grasp⁵
- Build tower of bricks with baby and watch his/her delight when they fall down
- Provide simple musical instruments⁶
- Imitate animal sounds, encourage baby to imitate you
- Look at pictures with baby, encourage him/her to point at objects by naming them

18 – 24 Months:

- Encourage and praise early attempts at drawing
- Provide toys to ride and climb upon
- Provide space to run and play
- Allow opportunities for messy play with water and paints
- Encourage the use of safe sand trays⁷
- Provide simple models to build
- Provide jigsaw puzzles, crayons and paper, picture books and glove puppets

¹ Learning through senses and movement.

² Surround with cushions on mat on the floor.

³ Example treasure baskets, which are suitable for sitting babies.

⁴ Make sure furniture is stable and has no sharp corners when baby is using it to pull himself/herself up.

⁵ Small objects must be safe if chewed by baby, baby must also be supervised.

⁶ Examples Xylophone, wooden spoon and saucepan.

⁷ Always supervised.

24 - 36 Months:

Aesthetic subjects	Music, arts and crafts, movement and drama
Language/communication	Story-telling, handed down text, children's own text creations, non-verbal communication such as physical posture, and facial expressions
Nature/environment	Plants, animals, landscape, seasons, weather develop children's love of nature and their understanding of the interplay between man and nature.
Physical development/health	Physical activity and movement through games and free play should be encouraged in order to develop motor skills, bodily control and coordination of movements and mobility. Such activities develop the coordination of vision and hand movements that underlie the development of lifelong central skills. Play to allow children to experience the body's possibilities, to practice and try out their own skills. Rhythmic activities, dance and movement games are therefore important.

1.2 List of Equipment¹ for Early Years Setting**Pretend Play:**

- Dolls (including multi-ethnic and differently-abled dolls to promote diversity)
- Dolls clothes
- Doll's house with furniture
- Dressing-up clothes (ex. nurse, police, doctor, fireman uniforms, hats, capes)
- Shatterproof mirror
- Children's kitchen
- Animal and farmyard
- Wild animal collection
- Ocean world animals
- Zoo animals
- Puppets
- Dinosaurs
- Screen for shadow play and projections

Domestic Play:

- Utensil/cutlery sets
- Dinner sets
- Mini cooking sets
- Let's pretend groceries
- Cleaning equipment for children

¹ Choice of items also depends on the ages of the children being catered for.

Physical Activities:

- Push and pull toys
- Ball barrel
- Ball pit
- Climbing frames
- Adventure gym system
- Mats
- Play slide
- Tunnel systems
- Tricycles/tractors etc.
- Beanbags
- Different sized balls

Sand and Water:

- Sand and water trays and accessories (boats, measuring jugs, funnels, sand moulds, scoops, buckets, sieves etc)
- Play sand

Construction:

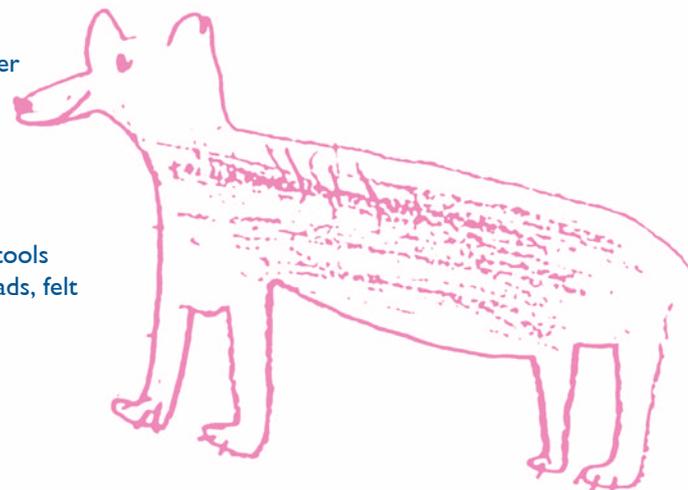
- Nesting and sorting toys
- Building bricks
- Wooden cubes
- Soft blocks
- Jigsaw bricks
- Lego

Musical Instruments:

- Percussion (xylophone, chimes, glockenspiels, triangles, cymbals, tambourines, maracas, drums)
- Keyboards
- Cassette player
- Selection of instrumental music

Arts and Crafts:

- Wax crayons/pastels
- Colouring pencils/ drawing pens
- Watercolours
- Sponges/brushes
- Adhesives
- White and coloured paper
- Acetate sheets
- Light table
- Safety scissors/markers
- Clay
- Plasticene/ play dough
- Modelling materials and tools
- Selection of fabrics, threads, felt
- Palette knives
- Recycled materials





Listening, Reading and Communication:

- Age-appropriate books
- Plastic books/Cloth books
- Picture books/ Broad books
- Big books/ Music books
- Nursery rhyme books and tapes
- Board games

Numeracy:

- Items for sorting and counting activities¹
- Measuring scoops
- Funnels
- Rulers
- Shapes
- Balances
- Cardboard coins and money
- Children's clock



¹ Leads to ordering, grouping, number association and the development of early mathematical language ex. holed beads and threads (not appropriate for very young children).



ANNEX B

REFERENCES

Equality for Men and Women Act (Chapter 456 of the Laws of Malta)

Equal Opportunities (Persons with Disabilities) Act (Chapter 413 of the Laws of Malta)

Data Protection Act (Chapter 440 of the Laws of Malta)

Commissioner for Children Act (Chapter 462 of the Laws of Malta)

Child Protection Policy (Agency Appogg)¹

Child Protection Policy (Education Division)²

National Minimum Curriculum – Ministry of Education, Youth and Employment



¹ May be obtained from the Department for Social Welfare Standards.

² *Ibid.*

ANNEX C

CONTRIBUTORS TO THE FORMULATION OF THE STANDARDS

This document is the result of months of research and discussions carried out by the Technical Committee on Child Day Care (TCCDC) established within the Ministry for Social Policy in May 2002. The following persons have constituted the Committee during one or more of its terms: Ms Anna Borg; Ms Chiara Borg; Dr Frances Camilleri; Dr Marguerite Camilleri; Ms Sylvia Galea; Ms Grace Izzo; Ms Dorothy Meli; Mr Frank Mifsud; Ms Stephania Sant; Mr Jesmond Schembri; Ms Micheline Sciberras; Ms Anne Scolaro; Dr Valerie Sollars.

Acknowledgements are also due to the following persons who have offered their invaluable input to the development of this final version of the document: Mr Joseph Ebejer, Dr Maria Sciriha, Mr Bryan Magro, Ms Marija Schranz, Ms Marian Muscat Azzopardi and the team of assessors at the Department for Social Welfare Standards.

The wide-ranging remit of these standards necessitated that discussions be held with various stakeholders. These standards were developed in consultation with service providers, parents, educators and a number of entities. Of particular mention are:

- Education Division
- Employment and Training Corporation
- Department for Social Welfare Standards
- Malta Environment and Planning Authority
- National Family Commission
- National Commission for the Promotion of Equality for Men and Women
- Commissioner for Children
- National Commission for Persons with Disability
- Children's Homes Office
- Department for Civil Protection
- Malta College for Arts, Science and Technology
- Malta Qualifications Council.

Significant reference was also made to regulations and standards from other countries including England, Ireland, Scotland, Canada, Sweden and Norway. Participation in international conferences and visits abroad further enhanced the Technical Committee's knowledge base on the subject.

The standards, which had been published for public consultation in July 2004, have been revised on the basis of the feedback received. They have been also influenced by a feasibility study carried out by the Management and Efficiency Unit of the Office of the Prime Minister and a gap analysis carried out by the Department for Social Welfare Standards, based on a self assessment by service providers.