

Package Four: Family, Professional and Community Partnerships Package

Duration 10 hours

Objectives

- To understand and appreciate the role of parents/carers and families in children's early learning and care experiences.
- To acquire knowledge and a range of strategies to cultivate family-friendly early childhood education and care settings.
- To provide an introduction to the work of multi-disciplinary professionals in early learning and care settings such as paediatric occupational therapy, physiotherapists and speech and language therapists.
- To provide an introduction to the therapy resources and programmes that these therapists may use on a one-to-one basis/family/early learning and care setting to support a child's developmental needs.

Summary of Content

The importance of parents/carers/families feeling welcome and being invited to take part in the early learning and care (ELC) setting will be explored (Centre for Early Childhood Development and Education (CECDE) 2006; National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) 2009; Edwards, Gandini and Forman 2012; O'Byrne 2018). Strategies to promote parental involvement will be suggested (Epstein 2001; Evans 2013; Brillante, 2017). Parental involvement will be viewed as a continuum with the ultimate aim of achieving meaningful parental engagement (Goodall and Montgomery 2014). Strategies to ensure parents remain well-informed in relation to everyday activities in the ELC setting will be suggested and approaches to involving parents in decision-making about their child's learning, development and support needs will be provided (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2017b). The involvement of parents in the planning, implementing and monitoring their children's engagement and learning will be explored (ibid.). The different lenses through which parents/carers/families and ELC practitioners experience interactions with children in terms of the home in the context of everyday life and the ELC setting with other children will be explored in terms of how the different environments create different expectations for children (Brillante 2017). The role of regular communication in creating a seamless connection between home and the ELC setting will be discussed and the critical importance of communicating with a family in relation to the child's likes/dislikes; interactions with others; engagement in the etc will be highlighted (ibid.). The potential consequences of the ELC practitioner being the first professional to identify that a child may have an additional need and

the appropriate manner in which to discuss these concerns with the child's family will be discussed. Specific reference will be made to the individual access and inclusion plan and associated guidelines. The need for a cohesive approach in relation to therapy support services will be highlighted and the possibilities of benefitting from therapeutic expertise in the context of the Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) considered. The role and work of a paediatric occupational therapist in working with children in order to optimise their physical development will be explored. Their expertise in advising on ensuring accessibility to all areas of the ELC setting for children with diverse abilities will be explained and the range of programmes, equipment and resources that can be accessed will be detailed. The role of the therapist in working one-to-one with the child/family and early childhood settings will be explained and case studies presented as exemplars for this work. The role of the physiotherapist in working with children with medical conditions; injuries and/or physical differences, will be discussed. The physiotherapist's expertise in working directly with children and providing advice and guidance to parents and early years' settings will be explained. An overview of the range of programmes, equipment and resources that be accessed through the physiotherapy services will be provided. Similarly the role of the speech and language therapist will be considered in the context of working with children in ELC settings.

Key References/Sources

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