

The children put the life and soul back into the place

The children settled much better than we expected. We were quite apprehensive about it before we reopened but the transition was very smooth. We spent a lot of time thinking about resources to send to parents to share with their children. We shared social stories and staff made videos, all of which we emailed to parents along with the revisions to policies and practices. We are sure that this helped the children and their families with the transition.

We have a fish tank and some toys in our large, airy lobby and this has become our new settling in area for the nursery and wobbler room children. This is primarily for new children attending the centre (mainly babies at this time of year), but this can also be used with children who were with us previously but finding it a bit strange settling back in. Parents and staff are asked to wear masks or face shields here as it is indoors, and the period of time spent together is longer than is the drop off areas outdoors (we aim to keep this to a max. of 30 minutes).

As we are now asking parents to adopt a 'drop and go' approach which is very different than our usual way of doing things, we decided for the older children who may be finding the separation difficult that we would utilise the outdoor play area. This is a covered area and so the parent, child and practitioner can spend more time together outside to aid the child settling, Mom/Dad are not required to leave so quickly. Masks are available but not compulsory as this takes place in the outdoor area.

Parents of children in the Nursery and Wobbler rooms are the only parents required to wear masks because they are the only ones entering the building, all other parents do not enter. They stay out on the footpath while arriving with and collecting their children. Not all parents/staff wear the masks, we feel this is a personal choice, but hand washing/sanitising and cough and sneeze etiquette remain essential key practices.

We had a Covid19 review meeting after about a week and a half with our Covid19 reps and discussed any issues. We had the odd one or two and these were addressed with parents directly. We just explained the necessity of following the new practices in order to keep our service open and safe for all stakeholders.

Staff are definitely more relaxed and happier now, I found they had a lot of concerns and questions during our training prior to reopening, many of which were answered during the training. I also did a walk through with all staff to show them the new measures (the new entry/exit routes), to be able to see things in place, and how they should operate once open. Staff ideas were also sought throughout the process and implemented. Prior to reopening myself and the chairperson met with staff individually (anyone who wanted to) to enable them to air their concerns and we were able to explain what measures would be in place to address their concerns while also understanding that the environment would never be risk free.

One month in and as staff see all the measures that are in place and working well and by having regular review meetings I think this gives them the confidence that all measures are being taken to ensure the environment is as safe as possible for all. September will bring its own challenges though as our numbers will be much larger, we won't have as much staff hours for cleaning/sterilising etc. And we will also have an increase in level of children and staff presenting with symptoms coming into the winter months. We will not be in a position to join rooms like we previously did early in the morning and late in the evening so extra staff hours will be required for this. There is a lot of extra

Covid19 paperwork to be completed daily also, therefore some other paperwork will have to be curtailed where possible.

Thankfully the experience of reopening has been a positive one, we are delighted to have children back in the service, we had a photographer from the Corkman Newspaper down the first day we reopened and like I said to her the children put the life and soul back into the place. It's great, long may it continue.