Preparing children and families for re-opening

By Avril Stanley

'We made a cake with wiggly worms and hairy spiders for you' were the magical words two excited children, with their mischievous smiles, were shouting as they approached me with a cake made from sand, pinecones and sticks. Yes, we have reopened our service and hearing the chatter and laughter of the pre-school/afterschool is music to our ears.

Open, two-way, and clear communication between management, directors, the team and parents, from the onset, was the key ingredient to enable us to reopen. On-going team meetings prior to opening allowed us to voice concerns and work through the guidelines. New Covid 19 policies, cleaning schedules and checklists were developed, toys were cleaned, and hand sanitising stations were established. A deep clean and sanitization of the service was conducted. Induction training and Return-To-Work forms, to name a few, were completed.

Social distance for pick up and drop off outside our service



Entrance to our hallway, Covid 19 information

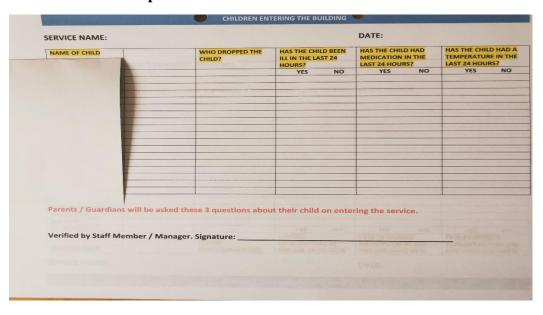


Hand sanitising station



At the same time, parents were informed about the new guidelines and the many changes we had to introduce i.e. new enrolment forms to be completed, drop off and collection points, new opening hours and the establishment of play pods, through email, newsletter and phone calls. Links to websites i.e. ECI and DCYA were shared to assist parents in supporting their children's transition back to our service.

New Documents for parents and staff



Service Name: Week Beginning: This is to confirm that I am well and do not have any symptoms associated with COVID-19				
MONDAY DATE: - SIGNATURES:	TUESDAY DATE: - SIGNATURES:	WEDNESDAY DATE: - SIGNATURES:	THURSDAY DATE: - SIGNATURES:	FRIDAY DATE:
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As a community-based pre-school/afterschool service our setting consists of a large, bright and airy community room which doubled as a pre-school and afterschool room for the children pre-Covid 19. This room is now divided into 2 Play Pods (Pod 1 – Pre-school and Pod 2 - After school). We continue to use our key worker system, playing outdoor daily was always the norm (Pod 1 – outdoor space and Pod 2 Public playground at the front of the service) and each team member knows their role and those of their co-workers within their pod.

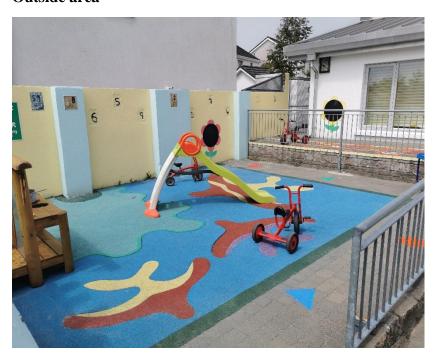
Play Pod 1



Play Pod 1 classroom



Outside area



Play Pod 2





While there were many challenges along the way, our collaborative approach and following the Covid 19 Health and Safety and Tusla Self-Assessment Checklists has enabled us to reopen. Any anxieties, parents and our team may have had about reopening quickly vanished as the children came bouncing back into the service on the first day.