



Will any information on a child or family be used as part of this process?

Personal information that we collect may include a child's name, date of birth, gender and parents' contact details (phone numbers, email addresses and home addresses). The Access and Inclusion Profile asks for information about the child's abilities and support needs. Any relevant report/documentation from other professionals which may support a child's access to the ECCE programme can be included.

Is parental consent required?

Yes, parental consent is necessary to apply for access and supports from AIM. We require consent to share information regarding a child with relevant professionals to prepare and plan for the child's inclusion in the pre-school setting. No personal information on children or families will be used or maintained on record by Better Start without consent. Children or families will not be identified in any reports or publications relating to the access and inclusion model. Better Start complies with all requirements of the Data Protection Acts 1988/2003.

Through their work with early years services, AIM Early Years Specialists may sometimes use photographs or short video recordings to provide feedback to staff. This might include samples of children's work or activities they are engaged in. These records are used for coaching and

mentoring feedback only and will not be used for any other purpose. Parental consent is required for this purpose. If a parent/guardian/carer does not wish their child to be included in images or recordings this will be accommodated.

Child Protection and Welfare

Better Start AIM works within the context of *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* on which Pobal's *Safeguarding Policy* is based. AIM Early Years Specialists have an ethical obligation to promote the safety and welfare of children in ECCE settings. Should concerns arise in relation to the safety or welfare of children in the course of this programme, the AIM Early Years Specialist is obliged to implement standard Child Protection reporting procedures. In the first instance the AIM Early Years Specialist will report their concerns to the Designated Liaison Person for the service. They will also report their concerns to their DLP. Better Start may potentially report concerns directly to the statutory authorities

Further information and contact details:

Further information on Better Start Access and Inclusion Model is available by visiting www.preschoolaccess.ie. Further information on Better Start National Early Years Quality Development is available on www.betterstart.ie. Information on local supports and services is available through your local City or County Childcare Committee.

Information for Parents and Early Childhood Care and Education Providers



Forbairt Cáilíocht
Luathbhlianta Náisiúnta
National Early Years
Quality Development





What is Better Start?

Better Start is a national initiative established by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to promote and enhance the quality of early childhood education and care (ECEC) for children from birth to six years in Ireland. Better Start works in partnership with City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs) and Voluntary Childcare organisations (VCOs) to bring a coordinated range of quality supports to early years services.

Better Start Access and Inclusion Model

The Better Start Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a child-centred model of supports which is designed to ensure that children with disabilities can access and participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme. Most children with disabilities can fully participate in preschool without additional supports.



Full information on the supports offered is available at www.preschoolaccess.ie

What support does Better Start AIM offer?

AIM provides seven levels of increasingly progressive support moving from universal (information, training) to highly targeted supports based on the abilities and needs of the child and the capacity of the pre-school setting. This support does not require a formal diagnosis of disability.

What does the Better Start AIM Early Years Specialist Service do?

Better Start AIM provides qualified and experienced Early Years Specialists to assist the service provider, in partnership with the parent to ascertain a child's abilities and needs. The specialists support pre-school settings through advice, mentoring and support to ensure that children with disabilities can access and fully participate in the ECCE programme.

Should a child require therapeutic support from the HSE to meaningfully access their free pre-school programme (ECCE), the early years specialists will liaise with the HSE and work collaboratively to provide appropriate support (equipment or therapeutic support) to ensure the child can participate to their full potential.

This service is free of charge and is flexible and adaptable to work within the demands and constraints of an ECCE service.

Who are Early Years Specialists?

The AIM Early Years Specialists are highly qualified professionals with a range of skills, expertise and experiences working in the area of early childhood education and care, disability and additional needs in the early years sector. All Early Years Specialists are Garda Vetted and undertake professional supervision.

How will the Early Years Specialist engage with a child and the ECCE service?

How the Early Years Specialist engages with the service provider and the child will be determined by the child's level of need. They will:

- Provide Information and advice to pre-school staff
- Coach and mentor pre-school staff on ways to support a child in the pre-school
- Support pre-school staff to create an Access and Inclusion Plan for the child.
- Support the pre-school to identify additional supports and resources required to adequately meet children's needs in the setting.
- In exceptional circumstances for children with very complex needs, seek specialist clinical advice from HSE early intervention services.
- Liaise with the NCSE to support the child's transition to primary school, in collaboration with parents and the pre-school.

How do ECCE Providers and parents apply?

AIM supports are applied for by the child's pre-school provider. As a parent if you think your child will need additional supports to access or participate in pre-school, speak to your chosen pre-school and discuss the child's abilities and needs. With your consent, they can complete an online Access and Inclusion Profile available through the PIP Portal on www.pobal.ie. This profile will provide an outline of the child's abilities and needs and the pre-school's capacity. This information will be used to determine the type of support the pre-school can access to support the child to meaningfully participate in the free pre-school (ECCE) programme. One application form can be used to access supports across levels 4, 5, 6 or 7. This process should take 4 to 6 weeks to enable preschools to plan ahead for the child's inclusion.