



# National Síolta Aistear Initiative Newsletter

## Welcome to the new Síolta Aistear Newsletter

Here you will find information to keep you up to date on the latest developments relating to the national early childhood frameworks, Síolta and Aistear, and the **Aistear Síolta Practice Guide** the online resource designed to help you to use Aistear and Síolta together.

## In this issue you will find ...

- An overview of the National Síolta Aistear Initiative
- An introduction to the two national coordinators responsible for the initiative
- The structure of National Síolta Aistear Initiative
- An outline of the forthcoming Síolta Aistear Introductory workshop
- A list of the partner organisations currently involved in the National Síolta Aistear Initiative
- A "What's happening?" section, outlining upcoming professional development opportunities and news

**The newsletter will be published regularly, so keep an eye out for new issues.**

## The National Síolta Aistear Initiative - An Overview

The National Síolta Aistear Initiative has been developed to provide central support and coordination of Síolta and Aistear implementation across the early childhood sector.

Two national coordinators were appointed in Autumn 2016 to support the initiative. The coordinators are working in close collaboration to provide central direction and oversight of Síolta and Aistear.

The initiative has two strands. The first will focus on Síolta, including the introduction of Síolta awareness-raising workshops and the expansion of the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP). The second strand relates to Aistear, and will see the development of workshops and coaching to support practitioners to use Aistear in their setting.



## National Coordinators

### **Joanne Roe, National Síolta Coordinator**

Joanne works in the Early Years Education Policy Unit co-located in the Department of Education and Skills and Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

She is responsible for the development and implementation of the Síolta Framework, including the Síolta Quality Assurance Programme (QAP).

The Síolta strand of the initiative will focus on building capacity including training of additional Síolta Mentors, review and revision of Síolta resources and materials and increasing understanding and awareness of Síolta.

### **Sandra O' Neill, National Aistear Coordinator**

Sandra works for the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

She is currently responsible for the development of 10-hours of workshops on curriculum development underpinned by Aistear. These workshops draw on materials in the online Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. Sandra is also responsible for the further development of the Practice Guide.

Workshops will be piloted in early 2017 and will support early childhood practitioners, supervisors and managers in sessional and full and part-time day care settings to use Aistear and Síolta together to improve the quality of their curriculum.

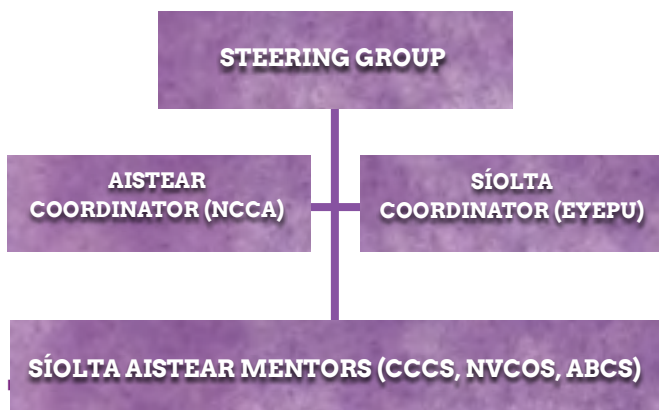


## National Síolta Aistear Initiative Structure

The initiative is being overseen by a steering group, which is made up of representatives from the Department of Education and Skills (DES), the Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA).

The initiative has a strong focus on the integration of Aistear and Síolta, and will work in partnership with a range of stakeholders across early childhood. 68 Síolta Aistear mentors have been selected and participated in a number of seminars on specific aspects of practice to further support them in their work with practitioners.

Drawn from City and County Childcare Committees, National Voluntary Childcare Organisations and from Area Based Childhood (ABC) Programmes, the mentors bring a wealth of experience and expertise to the initiative. For more information about their activities in the coming months, see the 'What's happening' section below.



## Introductory Workshop

The Síolta Aistear Introductory Workshop provides an overview of the two national early years frameworks, Síolta and Aistear, and the online support tool, the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide. The 2.5-hour workshop will support participants to

- learn about the purpose and structure of Síolta and Aistear
- explore the connections between the two frameworks
- find out more about the Aistear Síolta Practice Guide
- examine the possibilities for further support and guidance in relation to Aistear and Síolta in the early childhood sector.



Once a practitioner has attended this workshop, he/she qualifies to participate on the 10-hours of Aistear workshops. Please be aware that other local criteria may apply.

## Our partners

A number of early childhood organisations across the country are currently working with us to facilitate workshops and support settings to implement Aistear and Síolta.

Our partner organisations include

- Barnardos, various locations
- Better Finglas (ABC programme)
- Carlow Childcare Committee
- Cavan Childcare Committee
- Clare Childcare Committee
- Cork City Childcare Committee
- Cork County Childcare Committee
- Dublin City Childcare Committee
- Donegal Childcare Committee
- Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Childcare Committee
- Early Childhood Ireland, various locations
- Fingal Childcare Committee
- Galway Childcare Committee
- Irish Steiner Kindergarden Association
- Kerry Childcare Committee
- Kildare Childcare Committee
- Kilkenny Childcare Committee
- Leitrim Childcare Committee
- Limerick Childcare Committee
- Longford Childcare Committee
- Louth Childcare Committee
- Mayo Childcare Committee
- Meath Childcare Committee
- Monaghan Childcare Committee
- National Childhood Network, various locations
- Offaly Childcare Committee
- Start Right Limerick (ABC programme)
- Roscommon Childcare Committee
- Sligo Childcare Committee
- South Dublin Childcare Committee
- Tipperary Childcare Committee
- Wicklow Childcare Committee
- Wexford Childcare Committee
- Waterford Childcare Committee



## What's happening?

### Aistear Workshops

10 hours of Aistear workshops are currently being piloted across the country. Settings taking part will attend five two-hour workshops, and avail of four one-hour visits from their mentor over a six-month period. 25 of the 68 Síolta Aistear mentors will facilitate the pilot across the country. The pilot will be evaluated in the summer. Watch this space for more information.

### Updated Síolta Manuals

Síolta materials are being updated! We've learnt a lot since the publication of the four individual Síolta manuals in 2009. As the principles and standards are consistent across each of these manuals, it has been decided to combine these manuals into one Síolta User Manual which will be applicable to all types of settings.

This will replace the previous manuals, although content in terms of principles, standards and components remain unchanged so individual user manuals can continue to be used.

The Síolta User Manual is now available from Government Publications. Call 01 6476834 or 1890 213434 to order. The manuals cost five euro per copy (postage is free).

### National transition to school template

NCCA is developing national reporting templates that will be used to transfer information as children move from preschool to primary school. This information will focus on children's learning and development. The templates are being piloted this year by a number of settings in Tipperary, Galway, Limerick and Laois as part of a wider transition initiative, and will be available for use from Autumn 2018. Watch this space for updates.

### New Practice Guide resources

The Aistear Síolta Practice Guide is an online resource to support practitioners to use Aistear and Síolta together to improve the quality of their curriculum. Access the Practice Guide at [www.aistearsiolta.ie](http://www.aistearsiolta.ie)

To learn more about the Practice Guide, watch this [short video](#).

## Send us your ideas!

As this is a new initiative, we welcome your feedback and suggestions.

Let us know what you would like to see in future editions of the newsletter by emailing us at

[earlychildhood@education.gov.ie](mailto:earlychildhood@education.gov.ie).

