Parents Training
Leitrim County Childcare Committee in conjunction with the HSE West plans to provide training for Parents through Fas le Chéile. The training is aimed at supporting parents/guardians in their role as carers for their children. This programme will take place on Tuesday 15th April in the County Leitrim Partnership Offices Drumsnahanbo.

Fathers and Children’s Activity Day
The Fathers and Children’s Day is an annual event hosted by the County Childcare Committee. This is a day for Fathers and their children to enjoy a day of activities together. Last year the day took place in Swin Island Animal Farm and Marina. In total 18 fathers and 31 children took part. This year the day will be held on Saturday 17th May in the New Ballaghi Centre, Roscommon. Transport provided if required. If you are interested in attending please contact the Leitrim County Childcare Committee Office.

Children’s Day: This Event will provide a day for children to spend time involved in a range of creative and interactive activities. This occasion will take place in June of this year in the centre of the County and all are welcome. This event will be advertised locally nearer the time with a confirmed date and venue.

Childcare Advertisement
Our Annual Childcare Advertisement for Childcare Providers will take place in early June to promote services and summer scheme projects in the county. Application forms must be completed and returned to the office by the 12th May 2008. There will be a small charge involved.

Childcare Workers Relief Panel
Leitrim County Childcare Committee is currently forming a childcare worker relief panel. The database of successful childcare workers will be made available to all childcare services and the public for their use. If you wish to be placed on the relief panel, please contact the office for an application form. If your name is placed on the childcare worker relief panel you will receive notification from the County Childcare Committee.

Summer Scheme Grants
In conjunction with the Health Service Executive West, all Summer Scheme Projects are invited to apply for a small support grant to assist them throughout the year, application forms are available now from the office. Closing date Wednesday 30th May 2008.

Resource Library
The Resource Library available in our office for parents, providers, childminders and childcarers in training to access resources to assist them in several areas of childcare and parenting. If you would like to borrow books from our library you can call into the office between 9 am and 1 pm every Friday morning or ring the office to arrange a suitable time. There are a number of new books for example such as “parenting is child’s play” by David Coleman, a number of Irish stories with CDs accompanying them for parents, Childcare & Education and young children, to name a few. A catalogue is available on request.

Web Site Information
We have a web page on the link to our local organisations. This link has our Strategic Plan 2007 - 2010 and our childcare directory which has a list of all the community and private childcare services, parent & toddler groups and childminders which have made themselves known to the County Childcare Committee. In the near future we will have our newsletter available on this web page.

Update on Community Childcare Subvention Scheme
In December 2007 the Office of the Minister for Children approved a number of new provisions to the scheme:

- The subvention for Band A parents (those in receipt of social welfare related payments) has been increased from €80 to €100 per week (€5,200 p.a.).
- The subvention in respect of Band B parents (those in receipt of Family Income Supplement (FIS) or certain childcare subsidies under FAS/VEC schemes) has been increased from €30 to €70 per week (€3,840 p.a.).
- Services will also be granted to provide reduced childcare fees for parents who are above the Family Income Supplement (FIS) threshold. Low-income parents in Band C are expected to benefit by €45 per week (€2,340 p.a.).
- A minimum subvention of €20 per week will be of particular benefit to small providers, especially in rural areas.
- Special provisions will apply in the case of some childcare services (e.g. women’s refugees, special services for children of drug misusers).
- As a transitional measure during 2008-2010 services will receive grant aid equal to not less than 90% of their previous grant level during July-December 2008, equal to not less than 85% of that amount in 2009, and equal to not less than 75% of that amount in 2010.

Launch of Leitrim County Childcare Committee Strategic Plan 2007 - 2010
Paschal welcomed Minister Brendan Smith, Minister for State with responsibility for children at the Department of Health and Children as the guest at the launch of the second Strategic Plan for Leitrim County Childcare Committee on the 22nd of February in Lislough House, Drumsnahanbo.

Minister Smith commended the Committee on the Strategy and followed on to say ‘In developing the Strategic Plan, the Committee have set out five clear strategic goals for the period 2007 – 2010. These aims seek to improve the level of services provided, while ensuring that they are high quality services, and can be achieved by working in partnership to ensure that families and providers gain from the significant levels of investment into the sector.’

Minister Smith said that to date over 9.6 million has been allocated in capital and staffing grants to the county, one of the highest amounts per capita in the country. He was confident that this Strategy will enable Leitrim County Childcare Committee to continue to develop childcare services within the county.

A view of the crowd attending the launch of our Strategic Plan

Leitrim County Childcare Committee in conjunction with Leitrim VEC and Leitrim Partnership held a Graduation Ceremony on Wednesday 12th March at 3 p.m. in the County Leitrim Partnership offices. This Graduation Ceremony was to present certificates to 106 participants who had completed a number of FETAC Childcare courses ranging from FETAC Level 6 Supervision in Childcare, FETAC Level 5 Childcare 0-6 years, four of FETAC Level 5 stand alone modules and An Introduction to Childminding course.

FETAC Level 6 Supervision in Childcare

Leitrim County Childcare Committee Chairperson Paschal Mooney opened the ceremony by congratulating all the participants in completing the various courses and commending them on their hard work. Paschal presented the FETAC Level 5 Participants with their certificates.

Paschal also welcomed Eric Plunkett who spoke on behalf of the Health Service Executive West who provide a large amount of funding support to the County Childcare Committee and Stephanie McGovern who is secretary of our Committee and also a childcare provider representative.

Aedamar Keenan, manager gave an overview of the methodology used in developing the plan, the profile of childcare in the County, the needs which were identified during the consultation process and the future actions set.

Paschal concluded by acknowledging and thanking all those who contributed to the consultation process which was fundamental in the drawing up of this document. The independent research consultant, Karen Mahoney and to the Staff and the Committee members who represent the statutory, voluntary and community sector and are to be recognised for their enthusiasm and commitment to the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

A view of the crowd attending the launch of our Strategic Plan
Leitrim County Childcare Committee recently hosted the Media Initiative for Children (MIFC): Respecting Difference. The MIFC was developed by Early Years-the organisation for young children (Northern Ireland) and the Peace Initiatives Institute (PI, USA). It combines a series of interactive workshops and learning activities with a pre-school curriculum. The aim of the programme is to promote understanding of and positive attitudes towards those who have similarities and differences, through respect for self and others within the local community.

This was the second time the training has been run for childcare workers in the County and it proved to be a huge success. Overall participants found the training very interesting and useful on a practical basis. They said the training was done in a relaxed and friendly environment and that it was a very valuable and worthy project. As childcare workers they found it to be a great learning curve and provided an increased awareness of diversity issues.

Each service that participated in the training received a comprehensive pack of equipment, the cost of which was subsidised by Leitrim County Childcare Committee. The pack contains pencils, postcard, videos and a selection of games to support early years workers in implementing the programme in their service. Participants recommended that similar training be developed for those working in After-school services as they felt children of this age group would benefit greatly from such a programme. Thanks to all who attended the training and to the tutors from Early Years-the organisation for young children for facilitating the training.

**Slota - The National Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education**

Slota is the first nationally agreed set of standards for early childhood education in Ireland and represents comprehensive guidance for quality in service delivery and professional practice. The programme is concerned with improving the quality of early childhood experiences for all children aged birth to 6 years of age. It is relevant for a wide range of settings including crèches and nurseries, pre-schools and playgroups, childminders and infant classes in primary schools.

Leitrim County Childcare Committee will be running a number of workshops in the coming months for childcare services who wish to participate in the project. Please keep an eye on our monthly mailings for further details.

**Parents Seminar**

As part of the Early Years Health Promotion Project ‘3 week menu planning’ and ‘Food for Families’ training took place in the Bush Hotel, Carrick-on-Shannon on the 19th February. The aim of the evening was to provide practical tips to childcare providers on using the ‘3 week menu planner’ and promoting healthy eating to families. Amanda Mc Crea, Lecturer in Food Studies of St. Angela’s College facilitated the evening. Amanda prepared quick nutritious snacks with the help of the participants and everyone got to sample them. There were a variety of snacks prepared including banana muffins, hommos and selection of vegetables, pasta salads and much more. Participants on the night included childminders and parents and all seemed to enjoy the practical advice they received. If you would like a copy of the presentation and recipes from this training evening please contact Sheila in the office.

**Parents Training Audit**

To make sure that we are catering for the needs of parents/guardians to the best of our ability, the County Childcare Committee asked parents/guardians to complete a short questionnaire outlining their training preferences. The parents were asked to rank their training preferences based on feedback we received at seminars in the past. Topics included the following: Behavioural Management, Self Esteem Building, Dealing with Teenagers, The effects of Media and Television on Children, Bullying, Internet Safety, Using Educational Toys, Eating Disorders and Obesity- how to encourage a healthy lifestyle, Food and Nutrition, Play and Mental Health Issues. Many parents have returned the completed questionnaires however to get a better idea of the needs in the county we are asking all those who have not yet returned their completed forms to do so as soon as possible.

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**Early Years Health Promotion Worker’s Update**

The Parents Seminar took place on the 1st of March in the Bush Hotel in Carrick on Shannon. As part of the day parents took part in a variety of workshops which included Baby and Infant Massage, facilitated by Charlotte Matthews “Taking Care of your Baby” facilitated by the Public Health Nurse Toni Moore, “Encouraging Self Esteem” facilitated by Trish Maryn and Anna Mc Tiernan from Leitrim Lissitat and “The Importance of Play” facilitated by Siobhán Mc Guinness, Physical Activity Development Officer from the HSE. A great day was had by all and participants thoroughly enjoyed the workshops.

**Parents and Children Enjoying the Activities Organised during Parents Seminar**

**Children First Child Protection training was ran in March and again in April these courses were well attended if you have not had the opportunity to attend this vital training please contact me to have your name added to the waiting list!**

**Childminding Advisory Worker Update**

**Graduation Ceremony**

At the Leitrim County Childcare Committee Graduation/Presentation Ceremony. Childminders who had completed the Introduction course received certificates of attendance. 11 Childminders and potential Childminders successfully completed the Introduction to Childminding. This course ran over 6 weeks and provided a comprehensive introduction to running a childminding service in your own home, well done to all those who received their certificates!

**Introduction to Childminding**

An “Introduction to Childminding” course is currently running in Kinlough and I am planning to run this course again in September in south Leitrim please let me know what part of the county you would like to have this course run in.

**Children Protection Training**

Children First Child Protection training was ran in March and again in April these courses were well attended if you have not had the opportunity to attend this vital training please contact me to have your name added to the waiting list!

**National Childminding week**

Commenced with Childminding Ireland Annual Conference and AGM on Saturday 5th April

**Trip to Connagh Creative Resource Centre**

On Saturday 23rd February we made our way again to Castlebar on the first of what has now become our twice yearly trip to Connagh Creative Resource trip where we stocked up on endless supplies for Mother’s Day, St. Patrick’s Day and Easter.

The plan was to make another trip later in the year in time for Halloween.

**Educate Together**

**Occupational First Aid**

Our Occupational First Aid course and two refresher courses were all fully booked. Please check your certificate and ensure that you book your place on our waiting list for our next refresher as demand is high!

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