

ECEC Play Hub Operating Guidelines - How to Set up and Run an ECEC Play Hub

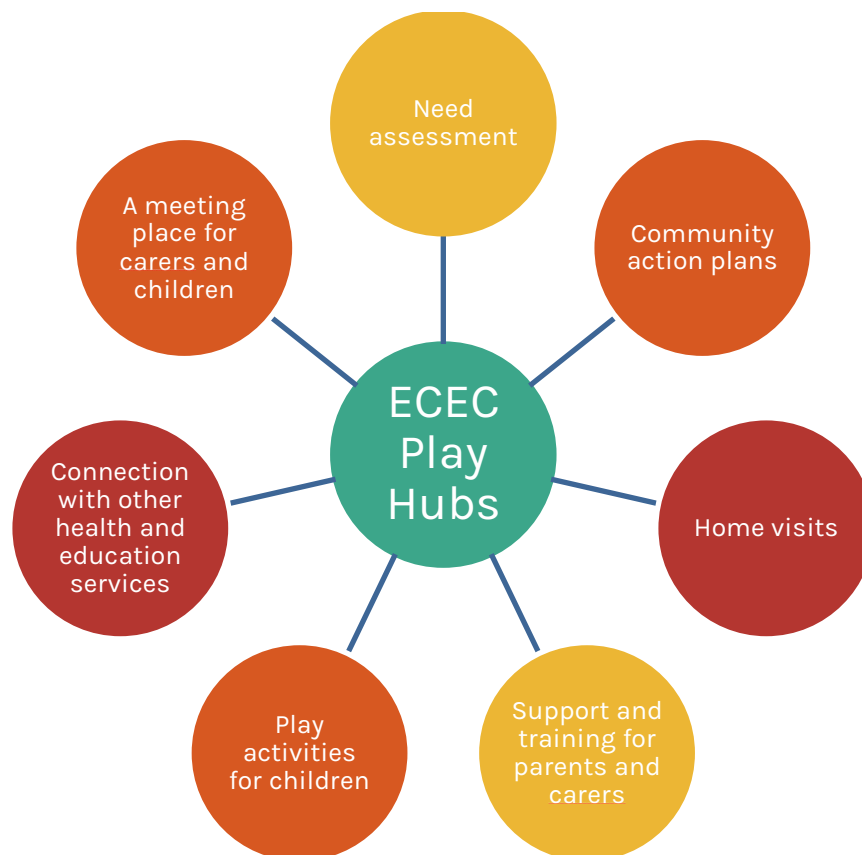
Making the first 1000 days count!

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What is an ECEC Play Hub?


- ECEC Play Hubs are community play centres for children 0-4 and their families
- A space where children and their families of all ages are welcome to play games with each other, where information about childrearing, health, early learning and development can be passed to parents and grandparents, and where they can meet with other parents to take part in creative and social activities.
- The Hub also serve as toy libraries where families can borrow toys and learn how to play with them.
- Finally, the hubs connect families with other services in their communities, such as health centres, ECEC centres, schools, etc.

What happens in an ECEC Play Hub?



- **A meeting place for carers and children**
 - Provide a safe space for families and members of the community to meet, socialize and support each other.
- **Need assessment**
 - They are staffed by a Hub Coordinator and volunteers who can advise parents about materials to support children's learning and development, assess needs and at-risk situations.
- **Community action plans**
 - The Hub is also the meeting place for the local Committee, who leads the need assessment and research conducted in the communities; which in turn informs developing annual action plans and targets.
- **Home visits**
 - Bi-monthly home visits focus on play learning and development for families with children 0-3 years old.
 - Visits are offered by health extension workers who received extra training by ESD or trained community facilitators.
 - One visit per family for all targeted families to assess home environment and give some advice. Only families considered at risk will receive further home visits. All other families will access the services offered in the ECEC Play Hubs.
- **Support and training for parents and carers**
 - Mother-to-mother and father-to-father support groups, monthly info sessions for parents and extended families, weekly 'stay and play' sessions for parents and children, toy library services, etc.
 - Information for parents: Simple organized sessions to model responsive parenting practices, importance of play and how to play and stimulate young children, child development, health, sanitation, pregnancy, vaccinations, birth registration, reproductive health, family planning, women's rights, information about preschool and school services.
- **Play activities for children (suggestions)**
 - Stay and play activities: Staff and volunteer support parents to model how to play with young children and discuss responsive parenting behaviours (listening, encouraging, explaining, positive discipline).
 - Handcraft sessions: Potato printing, painting, coloring, making handmade toys like paper kites, small cars etc.
 - Reading sessions: Weekly reading sessions, where mothers, fathers and grandparents can read to their children. Supporting reading and communication skills can also boost carers' self-confidence and literacy skills.



- Story telling: Older members can read a book, share stories of their past with children. Staff and volunteers can encourage children to ask questions.
 - Intergenerational activities: Invite older members of the community (e.g. grandparents) for activities of sharing knowledge, values, interests, ideas, skills between generations.
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- **Connection with other health and education services**
 - Organize check-ups in the Play Hub at least twice a month
 - Connecting families to ECEC centres and schools
 - After need assessment, possible to link services (doctors/nurse/health extension workers/lawyers etc.) as necessary.
 - Provide support for families to get in touch with needed services

Planning an ECEC Play Hub with the Community

- When selecting a location, consider how **safe**, **secure** and **accessible** the venue is to families with young children.
- Utilize members of the community as volunteers and recruit staff.
- It should be in one room:
 - Well-lit, welcoming to families with young children
 - Safe equipment in the room
 - Windows
 - Plenty of low shelves to display toys and book
 - Organized and visible toys and books
 - Sufficient floor space for children to play with toys on the ground or at low table
 - All furniture should be mobile/movable
 - A round table and chairs for an arts and crafts corner, which could also be used for meetings
 - Place for parents to sit and relax
 - A desk for the Play Hub assistant
 - Storage space
 - Updating board
 - Water/sink for washing and cleaning toys
 - Toilet facilities
 - Possibility to lock the room during closing hours
- It should also have access to outdoor space:
 - Safe, well maintained and accessible to young children, and children with disabilities
 - Have a clear and attractive signage that also displays opening hours and closures for holidays
 - Outdoor activities such as a sand box, gardening etc.
 - Avoid slides and swings as they do not promote playing and learning together



Role of the ECEC Play Hub Coordinator

- ECEC Play Hub coordinator (community facilitator) is the most important resource in the ECEC Play Hub!
- The coordinator should be supported by volunteers
- She/he is responsible for the day-to-day running of the Play Hub:
 - Getting to know and building strong relationships with member families
 - Providing advice about child development and play
 - Assessing needs and at-risk situations
 - Linking professional services
 - Daily administration concerning borrowing and returning toys
 - Conducting home visits on play and development, if the health extension workers are not already doing it

Staffing

- A list of volunteers for each Play Hub will need to be available to the Play Hub coordinator.
- Families who are members of the Play Hub and are very interested could also contribute some time with time and resources. This could be helping run the toy library when it is open and cleaning toys. If families are not available during the opening hours, they could take toys home to clean and repair.

Opening hours

- We suggest the Hub to be open at least once a week for a full day (example: Saturday) or twice a week half days (example: Wednesday morning and Saturday morning) for play and stay sessions and toy library services. Opening days must be decided with the community and the beneficiaries of the activities. They may vary from location to location and be changed or adapted in time.
- The Hub will host info meetings, health checks, etc. in the other days.
- The Hub space can also be used by other services to organize activities, against a small payment.



Choosing toys and books

- Safe, age-appropriate, replaceable parts, easy to clean (Annex 1 contains a list of toys that are appropriate for different age groups)
 - Avoid toys with small pieces, battery-operated toys, toys that encourage violent play, computer games
 - Mark the toys for ages in a consistent and organized manner
 - Keep record of toys (Annex 2)
 - Keep a borrower catalogue
- Toys should be regularly cleaned

Promoting the ECEC Play Hub in the Community

- Posters, leaflets, newsletters, radio, community announcements, family play days, community fundraisers, toy donations

Example Set-up

The following examples from the Toy for Inclusion project (www.toy4inclusion.eu) of set-ups show the essential components of an ECEC play hub, the size/set-up/outdoor space/furniture etc. can be chosen as appropriate.

The following video came from a play hub in Croatia:

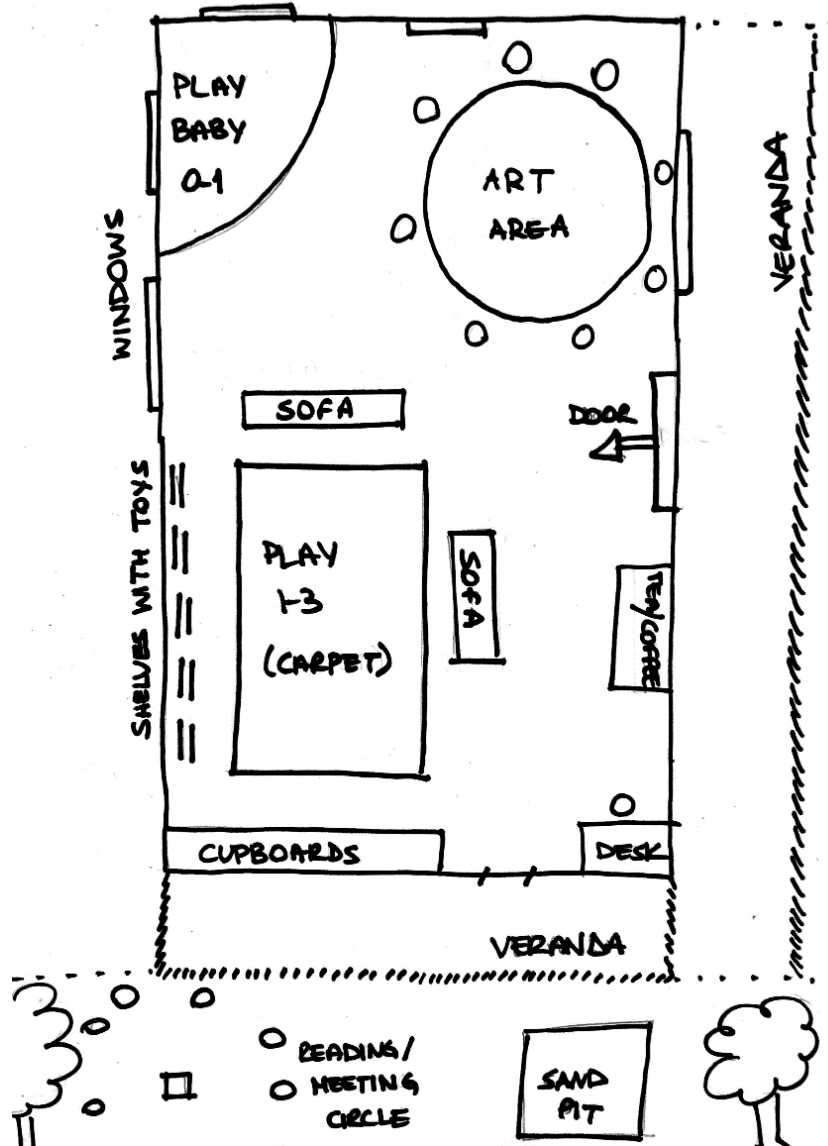
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From a play hub in Slovakia



From a play hub in Hungary



From a play hub in Italy



Monitoring and Evaluation

- Families need to sign the membership agreement (Annex 4), and family details need to be recorded (Annex 3 and 5). These records are not for share, so they need to be kept in a locked drawer.
- After each activity, a simple evaluation from carers and children is required. Please use the evaluation form in Annex 6.
- Monthly mentoring and monitoring meetings will be held by the local Committee with the Hub Coordinator. The Hub Coordinator will draft brief reports of these meetings. Please use Annex 7 as a framework for these meetings and their reports.
- Every 3 months, the meeting reports should be sent to ESD.



Annexes

Annex 1: Example of Age Appropriate Toys

AGE	TYPE OF TOY	SKILLS
6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Action/reaction toys - Stacking toys - Textured ball - Music - Toys to encourage crawling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin to control their body - Only slight support needed when sitting up - Simultaneous actions (e.g. bang a rattle and shout at the same time) - Begin to look for things they drop
7 months – 8 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toys that encourage physical development such as walking/crawling - Shape sorters - Surprise sounds - Action/reaction toys - Stacking toys - Containers with items to fill and empty - Toys with dials and levers (pretend phone) - Sorting and building toys - Easy to activate pop-up toys 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support their own weight and stand when holding something - Recognises voices and their name - Starts to poke and prod - Grasp by cupping entire hand around an object - Likes looking at complex objects - Change position to get a better view - Beginning to develop small motor skills (e.g. picking up small objects with the thumb and index finger) - Knows that toys don't disappear when hidden; they still exist somewhere - Starting to investigate the world - Begin making sounds
9 months – 11 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stacking, sorting and building toys - Toys that encourage crawling/walking - Toys with dials and buttons - Language development toys - Books - Basic role play toys - Shape sorters - Stacking toys that encourage hand-eye coordination - Toys that encourage early learning - Sports themed toys - Large plastic snap together beads 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sits alone - Stretches to reach toys without falling over - Can catch a suspended object or a ball rolled directly to them - Can pass a toy from one hand to another - Begins to make signs (e.g. lifts arms to request being picked up) - Knows that smaller objects fit in larger ones - May walk if you hold both hands - Can perceive depth if crawling - Can respond to one or two commands - Begins to imitate, watching and copying actions
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Push and pull toys - Construction playsets 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begin to walk, but still fall over easily



<p>12 months – 18 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Playsets - Dollhouse-themed playset - Musical instruments - Building blocks - Puzzles with knobs or a few large pieces 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can put together two ideas so plans and behaviour begin to flow - Starts to treat objects in the appropriate way (e.g. cuddles teddy bears) - Says first word
<p>18 months – 24 months</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Toys that help refine eye-hand coordination - Cars, trucks, trains and other vehicles - Toy housekeeping tools - Dolls and doll accessories (carriage, cradle, high chair) - Books with different textures and brightly coloured pictures - Wagons - Large crayons - Play dough 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very mobile - Can pull and push things - Can throw a ball - Can put one block on top of another - Can follow simple directions - May know 50 – 200 words
<p>2 – 3 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Themed play sets - Race-themed small vehicle play - Role-play toys - Sports toys - Toy boxes - Pretend play - Stuffed animals & dolls - Building blocks - Books - Crayons, colouring books, non-toxic paints and play dough - Simple puzzles - Basic counting and number toys - Music-making toys - Play kitchen with pretend food and utensils 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Begins to jump and hop - Understands what is safe and what is dangerous - Enjoys playing with other children - Good hand-eye coordination - Happy rolling and breaking play dough - Should be able to put toys away - Good hand- eye coordination - Puts words together to make simple sentences - Tells you what they are going to draw before they start - Like to have choice of colour when drawing - Can play alone, putting the pieces into the puzzle
<p>3 – 4 years</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dollhouses & accessories - Playsets and action figures - Role play - Cars, vehicles & RC toys - Creative activity toys - Science-themed entertainment toys - Simple hand puppets - Dress-up clothes and props - Picture books and story books 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can jump and hop - Like ball games, running and chasing - Realises drawings can look like face and people - Can make shapes of people out of play dough - Often pretends to be someone else during play and enjoys dress-ups



	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Toys for learning shapes, colours, numbers and letters- Intermediate puzzles- Simple board games- Variety of sport balls, e.g., soccer, football, kickball, super bounce ball- Dress-up clothes and accessories	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Like to hear about friends and relatives and love that lots of people love them- Begin to show sympathy and empathy for characters in stories- Prints name on paintings and drawings- Understands that other people have thoughts and feelings different to their own
5 – 6 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Toys that encourage creative expression- Entertainment toys- Framed puzzles with 25 to 50 pieces- Picking-up or balancing games- Simple card games and picture bingo- Science materials such as magnets, binoculars, magnifying glass- Jump rope	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Draws recognizable pictures- Give reason and solve problems- Can put some objects in order and sort items into simple categories- Can explain games to other children- Indicates when something is “pretend” and when something is “real”

Annex 4: Rules of Membership

It will be important to display the rules of membership inside the ECEC Play Hub and also inform new members when they join. Rules should be clear and simple. Below is an example of membership rules for a ECEC Play Hub. It is important to note that these are only examples of rules for toy libraries; each ECEC Play Hub is different and should develop their own unique set of rules.

Member of the ECEC Play Hub must agree to the following rules:

1. Members may borrow a maximum of **4 toys** at any one time.
2. Toys can only be borrowed for a two-week period.
3. If toys are returned more than a week late the member will only be able to borrow 2 items for the next two visits.
4. Toys must be returned clean, undamaged and complete.
5. For toys that are lost or irreparably damaged the family will be required to pay a fee or work voluntary hours at the ECEC Play Hub (adult members of the family only).

The following sentence needs to be included on the membership form and signed.

I acknowledge that I have read and understood the rules of membership and I accept personal responsibility to comply with them. I accept personal responsibility, and I indemnify and hold harmless **(name of partner)** for any lost, harm or injuries to any person or property arising out of or related to toys borrowed from the ECEC Play Hub whether outside or on the premises.

Signed.....Date.....



Annex 5: Family Information Sheet

Date joined:		Location:		Membership no:	
Family details					
Family name: (Surname of the parent identifying the whole family, Household Head)					
Address					
Phone number					
Number of children:		No. of children aged 0-4:			
<i>Comments and special requests from the family:</i>					

Annex 6: Example Evaluation of Activity

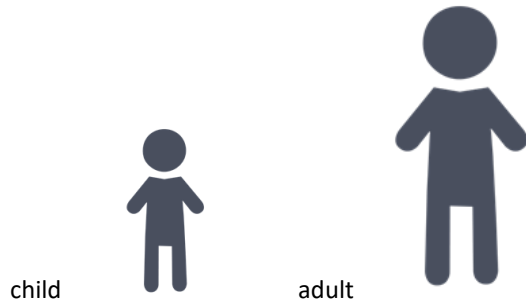
Did you like it?

Evaluation of activity

Your comments are important!

(Family members to help young child to fill in evaluation)

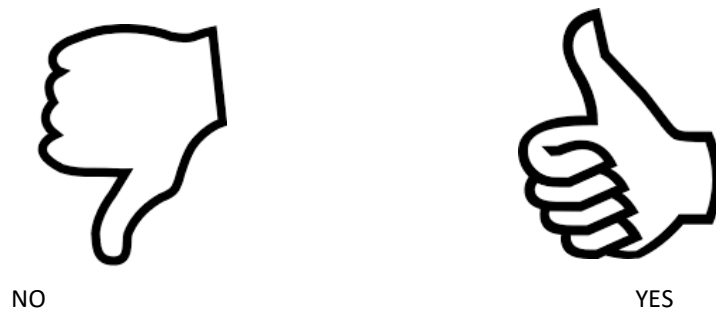
I am (circle):



1. How was for you today's activity? (Circle or cross)



2. Would you like to come and play with us again soon?



3. My suggestions and comments for today's activity (draw or write)

Annex 7: Guidelines for monthly mentoring and monitoring meetings with the Committee

Each meeting should include at least half of the members of the Committee, the ECEC Play Hub coordinator and keep record of the following:

Date:
Location:
In attendance:
Agenda
List of activities and events that took place in the given period:
Main challenges
<i>Prompts: were the materials enough and adequate? Did you receive support from volunteers? Was the space adequate to accommodate participants' social/emotional/cognitive/physical need? How was the interaction between adults and young children?</i>
Main successes
Necessary adjustments for the coming month, based on the lessons learnt during this month
How are the activities contributing to play and development of young children?
Decisions made
Points for future discussion