

# PARENT & TODDLER GROUPS

## Health and Safety

**As parents/carers are responsible for the care and supervision of their own child, you may wish to be aware of the following health and safety points:**

- Are the doors and windows secure - could an inquisitive child escape from the hall?
- Is there any stored furniture that a child may be able to climb on?
- Is there direct access into the kitchen area?
- Are radiators and associated pipework sufficiently covered?
- Are electrical sockets covered when not in use and are all leads out of reach of tiny hands?
- Do parents/carers leave hot drinks under their chairs or near table edges?
- Does the play equipment conform to safety standards?
- Could any of the toys pose a choking hazard to young children?
- Have plants been checked to ensure they are non poisonous?



For further information contact:  
**KERRY COUNTY CHILDCARE  
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**Your local Parent & Toddler Group is....**

**And we meet...**



Parent & Toddler  
Groups



## What is a Parent and Toddler Group?

Parent and Toddler Groups provide a place for parents, childminders and carers to relax and chat together while babies and toddlers play with a variety of toys and learning resources alongside other children. Groups are often set up by parents and are usually based in parish halls or community centres. They meet for a few hours once or twice a week and depend upon the help of volunteer parents to run them. Parents or carers always stay with their children and for this reason groups do not have to be registered or inspected by Child & Family Agency, Tusla or any other authority.

Information about Parent and Toddler Groups frequently changes so it is a good idea to phone the group beforehand to check days and times. Some groups are very popular and may have a waiting list or operate on a first come, first served basis. As the groups are not registered, the County Childcare Committee is reliant upon the groups themselves informing us of their existence and any changes within their provision. Parent and Toddler Groups are often also advertised in local papers, Health Clinics, doctor's surgeries and First Stop Information points in Local Libraries.

## Why attend a Parent and Toddler Group?

Attending a Parent & Toddler group allows your child to socialise with others, without having to leave them alone, and so they gain confidence. Parent and Toddler Groups can be a first good step towards leaving your child in some form of childcare. Children have the opportunity to play with new toys and join in fun activities.

It gives you the opportunity to socialise with other parents/carers and so reduce any sense of isolation that looking after children can involve. You can meet people who are in similar situations and find support and make new friends.

## Who can attend a Parent and Toddler Group?

Parents, grandparents, childminders, carers and guardians and children in their care under school going age. The group should clearly identify if they have a specific target group, e.g. lone parents. It should also be very clear what age groups of children are catered for.

## What happens at a Parent and Toddler Group?

Many Parent and Toddler Groups aim to devise ways of setting out and managing a range of activities so that all the children's ages and stages of development are catered for safely by providing such things as:

- Physical equipment
- Baby area
- Books
- Creative activities
- Messy play
- Jigsaws
- Songs and rhymes
- Stories
- Imaginative play
- Construction

The Group may also organise trips and visits. Refreshments may be provided for children and adults. Other groups or supports may be formed from the Parent and Toddler Groups, for example, support groups, parenting courses, playgroups or babysitting groups. Parent and Toddler Group sessions generally run for one or two hours, one day a week.

## What are the costs?

Parent and Toddler groups are usually not expensive. Most groups will charge about €2 to €3 per family per session which usually include the cost of refreshments.

## Where will I find a Parent and Toddler Group?

In Kerry there are approximately 50 Parent and Toddler Groups. Kerry County Childcare Committee (KCCC) has contact details for all of these. You should be able to find a Parent and Toddler Group in your area; if not KCCC can provide supports in assisting you in the development of a Parent and Toddler Group for your area. Groups may be held in a variety of venues including parish halls, community centres, Family Resource Centres, community childcare facilities, leisure centres and health centres.

## How do I know if it is a good quality Parent and Toddler Group?

### HERE ARE A FEW THINGS TO LOOK FOR:

- What kind of equipment and play materials are on offer? The equipment and activities should be appropriate to the children's age and stages of development.
- Any food and drink that is provided should be prepared hygienically, served safely and be appropriate to the needs of children and adults.
- There should be a warm, friendly atmosphere. Are my child and I made to feel welcome? Do we feel comfortable and relaxed here?
- Are the play areas and the play materials safe and in good repair? (see overleaf)
- The group should be of a manageable size and the children should be well supervised.
- There should be appropriate and adequate insurance cover.
- The group should have clear policies e.g. fire evacuation procedure and health and safety information to ensure the safety of children and adults.
- How much involvement is expected from you, the parent/carer/childminder?
- Is it accessible for children and parents/carers with disabilities?
- What is the age range of children? Can you take your older children along during the school holidays?
- If you do not enjoy the first Parent and Toddler Group you try, do not give up, try another one until you find one that is right for you and your child.