

Updating *Aistear*

Written submission template for organisations, groups and individuals

This template is intended to help you (and your colleagues) develop a written submission in relation to Updating *Aistear*. Please e-mail your completed submission to aistearsubmissions@ncca.ie

Individual submission details

Name	
Date	
E-mail	

Organisation submission details

Name	Maria McEnery
Position	
Organisation	National Cancer Control Programme
Date	
E-mail	

Do you consent to this submission being posted online including your name and organisation*?

Yes

No

Please provide some brief background information on your organisation (if applicable).

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) works with health service providers to prevent cancer, treat cancer, and increase survival and quality of life for those who develop cancer, by converting the knowledge gained through research, surveillance and outcome evaluation into strategies and actions. The NCCP is tasked with implementing recommendations from the Department of Health National Cancer Strategy 2017-2026. Cancer prevention is recognised as a corner stone of the strategy with specific recommendations to support people living in Ireland to reduce their risk of cancer. In particular, recommendation 2 tasks the NCCP to lead the development and implementation of policies and programmes focused on cancer prevention. There is particular focus on reducing skin cancers, the most common cancer in Ireland.

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The NCCP in collaboration with Healthy Ireland and other cross-sectoral partners are working together on implementing the National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan (2019-2022) which specifically prioritises reducing skin cancer risk for children and young people. Specifically, action area 3.7 of the plan states *'Develop resources to increase awareness of UV risk and protection among young children attending ELC settings, in line with the roll-out of Aistear, the National Curriculum for Early Childhood'*

Most skin cancers could be prevented by protecting skin from ultraviolet radiation (UV). UV is emitted from the sun and sunbeds. Skin cancer prevention initiatives are population-wide. There is a focus on children and young people as unprotected exposure during the first 10–15 years of life makes a disproportionately large contribution to lifetime risk of skin cancer

Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Children (SAC) settings and schools offer the ideal setting for educational and behavioural interventions to be implemented. An opportunity to minimise skin damage risk and prevent future skin cancers. In addition behaviours learned at a young age are more likely to be adopted for life.

Therefore the NCCP want to work with children and young people programme to develop resources and tools to support the ELC, SAC and school sectors.

The remainder of the template includes two sections. Section 1 invites your overall comments and observations on *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Section 2 is structured according to the Principles, Themes and Guidelines for Good Practice. Each section is briefly summarised as a support for working on the submission.

Section 1

Please outline your overall comments and observations on updating *Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*

The HSE National Cancer Control Programme (NCCP) are involved in coordinating the implementation of the National Skin Cancer Prevention Plan with Healthy Ireland and other key stakeholders.

Children and Young People are a priority area for the plan as they are particularly vulnerable to UV exposure. UV exposure during the first 10–15 years of life makes a disproportionately large contribution to lifetime risk of skin cancer¹. Severe sunburn during childhood (3 or more instances before the age of 20) is associated with a 2-4 times higher risk of developing melanoma in later life². To minimise this risk, skin protection during childhood is extremely important. A key action in the plan relates to Aistear is:

Action area 3.7 - Develop resources to increase awareness of UV risk and protection among young children attending ELC settings, in line with the roll-out of Aistear, the National Curriculum for Early Childhood

Having skin protection behaviours encompassed in Aistear framework is important to support those who work with children and young people to protect their skin and reduce skin cancer risk.

Currently there is no mention of skin protection for children in Aistear: The Early Childhood Curriculum Framework.

References:

1. Cancer Institute New South Wales. NSW Skin Cancer Prevention Strategy 2012-15. New South Wales; 2012.
2. Markovic SN, Erickson LA, Rao RD, Malignant Melanoma in the 21st Century, Part 1: Epidemiology, Risk Factors, Screening, Prevention, and Diagnosis. Mayo Clin Proc. 2007; 82 (3) 364-380.

Section 2

Principles of *Aistear*

Aistear is based on 12 Principles of early learning and development. Each principle is presented using a short statement. This is followed by an explanation of the Principle from the child's perspective. This explanation highlights the adult's role in supporting children's early learning and development. The Principles can be accessed [here](#).

Please give your feedback in relation to updating the Principles of *Aistear*. Please indicate what is working well with the principles and what might need to be enhanced or updated.

Children as citizens

Children are citizens with rights and responsibilities. They have opinions that are worth listening to, and have the right to be involved in making decisions about matters which affect them. In this way, they have a right to experience democracy. From this experience they learn that, as well as having rights, they also have a responsibility to respect and help others, and to care for their environment

Suggested amendment to last line,

'From this experience they learn that, as well as having rights, they also have a responsibility to respect and help others, **empowering them to take action for their own health and wellbeing** and to care for their environment

Suuggest including wording which empowers a child that they can take action to care for their own health.

Section 3

Themes of *Aistear*

Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework presents children’s learning and development using four Themes. These are:

1. Well-being
2. Identity and Belonging
3. Communicating
4. Exploring and Thinking.

The themes describe what children learn—the dispositions, attitudes and values, skills, knowledge, and understanding. Each theme begins with a short overview of its importance for children as young learners. The theme is then presented using four aims. Each aim is divided into six learning goals. *Aistear*’s Themes can be accessed [here](#)

Please give your overall feedback in relation to the themes of *Aistear*. Please indicate what is working well with the themes and what might need to be enhanced or updated.

On the theme Well-being, under aim 2, learning goals 2, 4 and 5 there is potential to relate this section to skin care. It currently states: ‘In partnership with the adult, children will

2. be aware of their bodies, their bodily functions, and their changing abilities
4. use self-help skills in caring for their own bodies
5. show good judgement when taking risks
6. make healthy choices and demonstrate positive attitudes to nutrition, hygiene, exercise, and routine.

These relate to the later part of the document, sample learning opportunities, “promotes good health and encourages children to make healthy choices”, example. Potentially to add an example of “models and encourages wearing hat, playing in the shade on sunny days”.

Section 4

Guidelines for Good Practice

Aistear has four sets of guidelines, focusing on different aspects of practice:

1. Building partnerships between parents and practitioners
2. Learning and developing through interactions
3. Learning and developing through play
4. Supporting learning and development through assessment

These describe how the adult can support children’s learning and development across *Aistear’s* principles and themes. *Aistear’s* Guidelines for Good Practice can be accessed [here](#)

Please give your overall feedback in relation to updating *Aistear’s* Guidelines for Good Practice. Please indicate what is working well with the guidelines and what might need to be enhanced or updated.

Under guideline 3 - Learning and developing through play, page 55 discusses “Responding to the weather”. This section highlights having wellies and waterproof jackets ready but there is potential to reference a “sunny day” box as well as highlighting protecting their skin when outside in the sun.

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