

What happens when the MSD Assessor comes to my programme and what do they want to see?

The “MSD Accreditation” process is carried out by the Ministry of Social Development (MSD) Accreditation team. MSD Accreditation is granted under the authority of the Social Security (Child Care Assistance) regulations 2004.

Applications for MSD Accreditation should be mailed MSD – there is an application form to complete and all required policies and documents should be included. A member of the Accreditations team will check your paperwork. [The process is outlined by MSD here.](#)

The assessor will get in contact with you and may ask for more information, if there is anything significant missing or unclear. They will make a date to visit the programme site, to check that the venue meets the standards and is suitable for the proposed programme, to check on-site paperwork, and possibly to see the programme in operation.

Sometimes programme owners and managers can be a little nervous, but assessments are constructively carried out, with allowance made for remedial actions to be followed up. (Think of it as an opportunity to get an free external review of the programme.)

If you are applying for MSD Accreditation for the first time

At the site visit the assessor will want to meet with the programme owner, manager or a relevant senior staff member. They will want to meet at a time when they can discuss the Accreditation, look at the venue and assess on-site paperwork.

The assessor will usually send a message that confirms the visit date and outlines what they will want to see during their visit. The assessor will give you an idea of how long the assessment to take, but expect an initial assessment to take 2-4 hours. The assessor is looking for assurances and evidence that the organisation/owner *can and will* run a programme that is safe for children, and complies with legislation and the MSD Standards.

Assessors have usually been to many programmes and have seen different ways that programmes have implemented the standards. As programmes and venues vary dramatically, assessors may have to use some discretion and there may need to be some negotiation to find solutions that both parties are satisfied with. Assessors are not looking for fault or ways to fail applications.

There will be variations in how each Assessor approaches the process but usually at a site visit they will want to:

- **Discuss the paperwork submitted:** clarify anything that is unclear, and talk about how the programme will put policies into practice. They may ask about who will carry out key tasks like following up absences, employing new staff, responsibility for police checks, managing serious behaviour incidents etc.
- **View any onsite paperwork:** employment agreements, job descriptions, police checks, drivers’ licences, first aid certificates and referee checks. An assessor

may also want to view any completed enrolment forms, sign an/out sheets and other information about children and attendance.

- **Assess the venue safety:** building warrant of fitness, evacuation plans on the walls, exit signs on fire evacuation doors, an agreement to use the venue, hazard management documents for the venue, fire extinguishers and evidence that they are maintained. There may be discussion about phone access.
 - **Review the risk assessment for higher risk programme activities** e.g. swimming activities - identify the competence of staff and children around water; how supervision of children in and out of the water will be managed.
 - **Check that the venue is suitable for the programme and the number of children.** The assessor will look at the indoor and outdoor space. There may be questions about how you will cater for wet weather, active play, availability of a quieter space and supervision of various parts of the venue.
 - **View food preparation and eating areas** and discuss arrangements for ensuring that food is prepared, served and eaten hygienically. The assessor may want to discuss what cleaning equipment is available to the programme.
 - **Check other facilities and access** e.g. toilets, (how many and how accessible they are to the public); how the programme plans to ensure children don't have access to roads and car parks; safe pick up and drop off points if children are collected and brought to the venue by programme staff.
 - **Look at the programme in action:** do the programme and paperwork reflect each other? Are interactions between staff and children appropriate and positive? Are there activities and equipment that match the ages of children?
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When will I know how I'm doing?

Assessors will tell you at the time of the assessment anything that needs to be addressed before Accreditation can be granted and discuss ways that the programme could do this. It may involve changes to the way you plan to use the venue or they may require evidence that policy is carried out – e.g. they will need to sight completed police vetting checks for staff before a full Accreditation can be given.

A letter/report will follow the assessment with any follow-up requirements identified and a timeframe given to address those requirements. It is quite common to have several small things to follow up after an Accreditation visit.

I am already approved and MSD is coming for a re-Accreditation visit

Programmes are usually visited every 3 years to check that they are still operating safely and in line with the OSCAR Standards. The process of re-Accreditation is much the same, but the MSD assessor will be looking for evidence that the programme is doing what is outlined in its policy document.

When an assessment is arranged the MSD assessor will outline what they want to see. The assessor will need to see paperwork that shows that there are systems in place and that they are being followed. They will want to see employment records, safety and risk assessment records, enrolment and attendance records, financial records, accident/incident and any complaint records.

If there are things that are not complying with the standards or the evidence is not available at the time, the assessor will tell you and a report letter will outline what needs to be addressed and a timeframe will be set for providing the information to MSD.

If there are serious concerns about a programme's ability to continue to meet the standards this will be discussed with the programme and a plan of action developed to either remedy or to discontinue the Accreditation.

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