

What are the minimum operating requirements for OSCAR services?



While the majority of OSCAR operators do obtain [MSD Accreditation](#), this is not mandatory (which is explained further at the [establishment page](#).) Whether or not you decide to become MSD Approved it is essential that any after school care or holiday programme has certain minimum procedures in place.

Disclaimer: our on-line guidance does not provide comprehensive legal or regulatory advice. Please seek expert advice or [contact us for further assistance](#).

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- **Enrolment form**
 - **Written information for parents**
 - **Attendance / sign in-sign out register**

Taking care of other people's children is a serious undertaking, with legal obligations such as [duty of care](#). When you enrol children, you are forming a legally binding agreement with parents and it is best to do all this in writing. *[Note: care of children under five years is likely to be subject to Early Childhood Regulations. Other than the children of on-site staff, we strongly advise that no under 5 year olds be enrolled in your service.]*

Written enrolment ensures that you get essential information such as any medical conditions, as well as emergency contacts and details of any people who are authorized to collect the children from your programme. In return, parents should receive from you [information about how your service operates](#) and what you expect from them, including terms and conditions around bookings, fee payments, late collections etc.

[Attendance registers and sign in/out sheets](#) are essential to make it clear when you are accepting (and handing back) responsibility for the care of children, to keep tabs on children's arrivals and departures, and if an evacuation of the facility or other emergency should occur.

There is no required format for these, but programmes generally adapt templates to suit their needs. [View some sample enrolment forms here](#).

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- **Financial record-keeping: bank account, invoices & receipts**

If you are intending to collect fees and/or pay wages, you should keep accurate records. You don't have to operate a dedicated bank account for your programme, but doing so will make financial record-keeping more straight-forward.

Regular invoicing of parents will be vital to your cash flow if you have staff wages to pay. It is also important to be able to give parents accurate information on what they currently owe, when requested.

If “running the books” isn’t your thing, we recommend that you get help from someone who can. You need to keep up with regular obligations like PAYE and GST (only if your programme crosses the GST income threshold) and if you receive any government funding, you are required to maintain accurate and up to date financial records.

• **Appropriate facilities & basic equipment**

Fortunately, the OSCAR sector doesn’t have a mass of regulations about where programmes can operate. Facilities need to be safe and comply with relevant building standards (check with you local council if you have questions). The facility should have adequate toilets, running water, hygienic food preparation facilities, secure storage for your equipment and you should be able to access telephone services at all times.

If you are operating an after school service, or your holiday programme goes into the early evening, you should consider the safety of staff at the facility near the closing time of your service: building security, exterior lighting etc.

For children’s activities, the facility should provide appropriate, safe indoor and outdoor space, taking into account the number of children likely to attend. We suggest that there is provision of dedicated space for quieter activities and also consideration of what provision can be made for active play when weather restricts outdoor access. Outdoor space needs to be away from traffic, car parks etc., or be suitably fenced.

[More information about OSCAR venues here.](#)

We don’t recommend buying lots of equipment when your programme is still getting started. If you wait until children start attending, you will get a better idea what you might need. It’s safe to say that you will need some balls of various sizes, including low impact balls for indoor use.

Other basic equipment would include: pencils, felt tips, a supply of scrap paper, scissors, an assortment of small toys (cars, toy people, dolls etc.), playing cards and something that plays music. What equipment you need really depends on how you plan to run your programme. Op shops or second hand dealers can be a very good option to stretch your budget further. (While you are op shopping, get a supply of fun dress ups.)

[More extensive equipment list here](#)

- **Health & safety procedures**
- **Hazard identification**
- **Regular safety checks & risk assessment**

- **Emergency procedures**
- **First aid kit (including sun screen)**
- **First aid & basic safety training, including emergencies**
- **Accident / incident register**

In any workplace, it is a [legislative requirement](#) to provide a safe environment for staff and everyone else. A basic safety system will cover all the elements listed above and someone must be checking that these procedures are being carried out. The legal minimums are just that – a minimum. Because you are looking after children, we

strongly recommend that you consult the [MSD Standards for OSCAR](#) for further guidance on safe practices, including programme supervision requirements. Also look out for opportunities for health and safety training that OSCAR support bodies or other related groups might provide.

See also: [OSCN health and safety resources on-line](#)

- **Job descriptions**
- **Induction record – including police vetting & referee checks**
- **Employment (or volunteer) agreements**
- **Supervision & monitoring of all staff**
- **Clear rules & boundaries**

Appropriate staff practices are fundamental to a successful programme and this starts with job descriptions. [OSCN has samples](#) that reflect commonly understood OSCAR tasks and responsibilities. Staff learn mostly about their role “on the job”, so on-job training, supervision, feedback and support are essential to building an effective team.

A key part of any staff recruitment will be safeguarding your service through background checks and screening of applicants. This is a requirement under the Vulnerable Children Act 2014, [which is explained further at this link](#).

Children’s behaviour is hugely influenced by the expectations set by staff and the example that staff set in their own behaviour. A focus on fun is very important but that is best underpinned by a clear understanding of what behaviour is expected at the programme and what staff will do to promote these positive behaviours.

[Download a checklist of this information](#)

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