



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

EARLY YEARS

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latest
UPDATE
from our Minister

Dr. Katherine Zappone
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs



Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to our new e-bulletin from the Early Years Division at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs. The early years sector has been undergoing a period of radical change over recent years. The sector has continued its journey of professionalisation; funding has increased by 117% over recent budgets; structural changes have occurred in how the sector is regulated, inspected and funded, and there is still so much more to do to deliver the world class early learning and care that we all aspire to for our children.

In order to keep abreast of these changes, I am happy to launch this monthly e-bulletin from the Early Years Division at DCYA, which will contain information from across the five Early Learning and Care Units. We hope



that this will help you to stay up to date with information on the various developments, such as capital funding opportunities, progress with the new Affordable Childcare Scheme or initiatives such as those relating to continuing professional development.

I will continue to seek sustained investment into this sector as I know the impact it can have on outcomes for children. I look forward to working with each of you to deliver high quality early learning and care that is affordable and accessible for families, as well as rewarding and sustainable for practitioners.

FINANCE GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

ECCE Services receive 7% increase in capitation



Weekly payments for children registered on the scheme rose by 7% from September 2018 to €80.25 where room leaders have degrees or €69 where staff have the minimum qualification of Levels 5 and 6. The increase is intended to acknowledge the quality work delivered by practitioners and **not as a reduction to the cost to parents.**

A service with 20 children participating in ECCE will receive between €3,500-€4,000 additional funding per programme year as a result of the changes depending on qualifications of ECCE room leaders in the service.

Budget 2019

The Early Learning and Care budget grew by €89m in Budget 2019. This represents an increase of 18% over 2018. This brings the total annual investment in Early Learning and Care to €574m. The additional resources will allow for:

Increased funding to schemes including CCS and ACS	€61.0m
Costs associated with delivery of new and existing schemes	€10.5m
Increase to Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) Funding	€10.5m
8% increase to existing Programme Support Payments (to maintain 2018 level of funding)	€1.4m
New, once off, Programme Support Payment for ACS	€ 2.0m
Capital increase	€2.0m
Childminding initiative	€ 0.5m
Increase to Inspectorates	€ 0.6m
Other policy initiatives	€ 0.5m



Compliance

Ensuring compliance with the rules of any Government funded scheme is one of the most important administrative responsibilities for any service provider. Being fully compliant means following all of the rules for the Department and Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) funded programmes. Everyone involved in the provision of early learning and care has a role to play in creating and maintaining a culture of compliance, this includes the DCYA, Pobal, City and County Childcare Committees and service providers.



High levels of compliance assure the public and the Government that investment is being used properly: it assists the DCYA in making a case for more investment, and where there are high levels of compliance, compliance resources can be freed up for other positive initiatives.

DCYA wants to acknowledge and commend all those services that are already highly compliant. DCYA wants to support services that have had difficulty with compliance to improve this so that they can continue to access Government schemes.

Compliance visits for the 2018/2019 programme year have now commenced, with a focus on checking attendance records and PIP registrations. Support on these, and other compliance issues, including 'how to guides' and instructional videos, is available on PIP. Further supports are available from City and County Childcare Committees.

Did you know?

In the 2017/ 2018 programme year, DCYA provided over €450m for childcare schemes which benefited almost 200,000 children.

During the 2017/2018 programme year, Pobal conducted compliance visits to more than 1,711 services.

QUALITY

Range of initiatives for childminders to be introduced

€0.5m has been allocated in Budget 2019 to create a team of Childminding Development Officers to support the registration of eligible childminders with Tusla and to help childminders prepare for new regulatory standards to be introduced in the coming years. Only childminders registered with Tusla will be able to offer the Affordable Childcare Scheme. The new Childminding Support team will help unregistered but eligible childminders to meet Tusla registration requirements, thus enabling more childminders to take part in the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

In addition, a post-award bursary has been announced to support childminders who obtain a relevant NFQ Level 5 qualification, which is a requirement for childminders to register with Tusla. Details will be published soon.

A Childminding Action Plan will be published shortly, which will include short, medium and long-term actions to move towards the wider regulation and support of childminders. The Budget 2019 funding will allow for first steps to be taken in delivering on the forthcoming Action Plan.



Funding for First Aid Response Training

Funding is to be made available to provide one free place on a First Aid Response training course for every registered service over the next two years. The funding will also be available to an estimated 250 childminders.



School Age Childcare Services

Initial regulations for school-age childcare will be published in the coming weeks, for commencement in early 2019. These regulations will for the first time allow school-age providers to register with Tusla. In turn, that will allow school-age providers to take part in the Affordable Childcare Scheme.

The development of standards for school-age childcare will also be progressed early in 2019, building on the work of the standards working-group, which included representatives from across the sector. In parallel, work will begin on developing comprehensive regulations for school-age childcare, which will replace the initial regulations.

As part of planned phased regulation of school age childcare services, an additional €0.45m has been allocated to the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate to enable it to register these services in 2019.

Got an Inclusion Co-Ordinator in your pre-school setting?

If you wish to apply for Increased ECCE capitation for employing a LINC graduate who has agreed to take on the role of Inclusion Co-ordinator in your pre-school setting, the application process is open on the PIP portal for the September 2018 ECCE programme year. For further information, visit www.aim.gov.ie



Update re AIM Inclusive Play packs

Distribution of the 6,500 packs to ECCE rooms across the country is nearly complete. Thanks to all those who sent messages – the Minister was delighted to hear childrens' responses to the packs. Don't forget to check out the video demonstrations regarding the contents of the pack [here](#).

Review of Level 4, 5 and 6 awards

QQI recently began a review of Level 4, 5 and 6 awards for early childhood education and care.

Details of QQI's consultation process are available at www.qqi.ie/Articles/Pages/Current-consultations.aspx

Did you know?

65% of staff working with children in Early Learning and Care have a level 6 qualification or above.



OPERATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force on 25 May 2018. All organisations are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with all relevant legislation, including GDPR. Further information can be found [by visiting the Data Protection Commission website](#).



The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) has made **complimentary online General Data Protection Regulation training** available for all services to support you in meeting your Data Protection obligations.

This training is designed and delivered by iHasco. Further information, including the link to the training site, can be found on PIP.

This online training is offered as a support for services in relation to GDPR obligations, and provides a high level overview of the principles of GDPR. Services will need to assess what further actions they may need to take to ensure they are fully informed of their responsibilities in relation to GDPR in an early years context.

Enhancements made to the PIP Portal

To support Early Years Service Providers, Pobal has made a number of recent enhancements to the PIP portal.

These improvements include a **detailed view of contract values** and a **download function** which allows Service Providers to prepare an immediate breakdown of payments received.

A user guide is available on PIP to assist Services with navigating the updated Portal. An infographic explaining how Pobal calculates payments for ECCE, CCS/P and TEC can also be viewed on the Pobal YouTube channel [here](#).



Did you know?

There are nearly 4,500 childcare providers engaged in at least one DCYA programme, helping to make childcare more affordable for parents.

95 new services opened last year.



PROJECTS

Affordable Childcare Scheme (ACS)

Work is progressing apace on the new Affordable Childcare Scheme, which will open to applications in October 2019. ACS will provide financial support for parents towards the cost of Early Learning and Childcare. It will provide a system from which both universal and targeted subsidies can be provided.

Earlier this year the Childcare Support Act was passed by the Oireachtas, providing the legal infrastructure for the new scheme. IT development is also well underway.

DCYA has consulted various stakeholder groups representing Early Learning and Childcare practitioners, parents and children throughout the development and will continue to do as preparations for the launch continue. Focus group sessions and user testing with parents are also underway to ensure the most user friendly system possible. Similar sessions will commence shortly with childcare providers.

The new scheme will replace the existing targeted childcare programmes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme and will include 'wraparound' care for pre-school and school-age children.

ACS will:

- ✓ improve outcomes for children,
- ✓ reduce poverty,
- ✓ facilitate labour activation and,
- ✓ tangibly reduce the cost of childcare for tens of thousands of families.

New Affordable Childcare Scheme – Q&A

Q1: When will applications for the new Affordable Childcare Scheme open?

A1: Applications for the new Affordable Childcare Scheme will open in **October 2019**.

Q2: Can families still register for the current schemes until then?

A2: Yes, the current childcare schemes will remain in place until ACS launches (see Q4 for further details).

Q3: Will the new Affordable Childcare Scheme replace all the existing childcare subsidy schemes?

A3: Yes, the new Affordable Childcare Scheme will ultimately replace all existing schemes except ECCE.

Q4: Can families choose to remain on their current supports?

A4: Yes, for a transitional period. The current schemes will open for one final programme year in August 2019. Families who register for these schemes from August 2019 can choose to move over to the new scheme in **October 2019**, or stay on their current scheme until the **programme year ends in 2020**. However, once ACS launches, the current schemes will be closed to any new applicants.



Q5: Will providers continue to receive a Programme Support Payment (PSP) in 2019?

A5: Yes, under Budget 2019, €19.4m has been allocated for a PSP for providers in recognition of the administrative support they offer in delivering the benefits of Early Learning and Childcare support schemes to families.

Q6: Will supports be available for parents and providers when changing over to the new Affordable Childcare Scheme?

A6: Yes. Comprehensive information, training and supports will be made available for families and childcare providers from early 2019.

Further information will be made available on www.affordablechildcare.ie over the coming months.

Q7: How will the level of subsidy (if any) be determined for families under the new Affordable Childcare Scheme?

A7: The amount of subsidy available under the new Affordable Childcare Scheme is tailored to each individual household's circumstances. This means that the subsidy amount will vary depending on how much a family earns, how many children there are and the age of the children.

POLICY

Launch of the First 5

First 5, a Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families has recently been finalised. The Strategy sets out a ten-year plan to improve experiences and outcomes for young children in Ireland, covering all aspects of children's lives: family, community, physical and mental health and early learning and care. The Strategy has been approved by Government and will be launched by the Taoiseach, Minister Zappone and other Government Ministers on Monday 19th of November.



We will publish details of the Strategy in the next DCYA EY Division bulletin for your information.



IN OTHER NEWS...

Be Winter Ready

The Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) attended the launch of the Government's Winter Ready campaign recently and we would encourage everyone to visit www.winterready.ie to enable us all, as individuals and as communities, to be prepared for the winter months ahead.

Leagan Gaeilge

Más maith leat an ríomh-fheasachán seo a fháil i nGaeilge, cuir ríomhphost chuig dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie le d'ainm, ainm na seirbhíse agus do sheoladh ríomhphoist.

If you would like to receive this early years e-bulletin in Irish please reply to dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie with your name, name of service and e-mail address.

Early Years Division at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

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