An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais, Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Budget 2023

Overview and Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Parents and Guardians

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Overview

In 2023, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) funding for early learning and childcare is €1.025 billion, a €346 million increase on last year's funding. The funding in 2023 provides for:

- The continuation and of the National Childcare Scheme offering supports to offset the cost of early learning and childcare to a greatly expanded cohort of children and families.
- The continuation of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme that will benefit more than 108,000 children in 2023.
- The continuation of the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) to ensure more than 5,000 children with a disability can access and meaningfully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme.
- The delivery of a range of regulatory and quality supports for the implementation of the National Action Plan for Childminding, Nurturing Skills, the Workforce Plan, and the ongoing development of the registration and inspection system as well as policy development commitments set out in the First 5 Strategy and the Programme for Government.

Budget 2023 also introduces major reforms to the National Childcare Scheme from January 2023 that will substantially improve the affordability of early learning and childcare for families.

Additional funding of €121m has been allocated from January 2023 so all families accessing registered early learning and childcare will receive a minimum hourly subsidy of €1.40 off the cost of early learning and childcare. With the current minimum hourly subsidy set at €0.50 per hour, the represents an additional €0.90 per hour off the cost of early learning and childcare. This translates to up to €63 off parent weekly bill for early learning and childcare per child using 45 hours of early learning and childcare. With up to €22.50 currently available per week, this represents up to an additional €40.50 off weekly costs.

Frequently Asked Questions

National Childcare Scheme

1. Who can benefit from the National Childcare Scheme?

The National Childcare Scheme helps families to meet the cost of early learning and childcare. The Scheme provides two types of subsidy for children aged over 6 months (24 weeks) and up to 15 (children aged 15 do not qualify):

- A **universal subsidy** which is not means tested; or
- An **income-assessed subsidy** which is means tested.

You cannot get the universal subsidy and an income-assessed subsidy at the same time.

Your early learning and childcare provider (this includes childminders and school-age childcare providers) must be registered with Tusla and have a National Childcare Scheme contract with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

You must apply for a subsidy, but it is paid directly to your early learning and childcare provider. Your provider then will subtract your subsidy from your bill.

2. What is changing for families on the National Childcare Scheme?

From the 2 January 2023, the minimum (universal) subsidy under the National Childcare Scheme will be €1.40 per hour. With the current minimum subsidy set at €0.50 per hour, the represents an additional €0.90 per hour off the cost of early learning and childcare.

Any family who is not already in receipt of the maximum hourly (income-assessed) subsidy under the National Childcare Scheme will see an increase in their subsidy (see Table 1).

Table 1

Child's age	Maximum hourly (income-assessed) subsidy
24 weeks to 12 months	€5.10
12 to 35 months	€4.35
3 years or older and not yet in school	€3.95
School-age (or 6 years to 15 years)	€3.75

3. What will the increase in National Childcare Scheme universal subsidy mean for my family?

All families who currently receive the minimum (universal) subsidy of €0.50 per hour will receive €1.40 per hour from 2 January 2023.

Families receiving more than €0.50 per hour, but less than the maximum subsidy (see Table 1) will also benefit from a subsidy increase.

The amount of increase individual families will see in their hourly subsidy will differ widely depending on their current subsidy.

4. ***When will the increase in National Childcare Scheme universal subsidy be introduced?***

The increase will come into effect on the 2 January 2023.

5. ***How do I check how much extra I will receive?***

A subsidy calculator is available at www.ncs.gov.ie. The calculator will be updated later this year and you will be able to the check new subsidy rates.

6. ***How do I apply for the National Childcare Scheme?***

All families with children under the age of 15 in Tusla-registered early learning or childcare can avail of the National Childcare Scheme. You can find more information on www.ncs.gov.ie and can apply online or by post.

If you are applying online, you will need:

- A verified MyGovID account; and
- The date of birth and Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) for each of the children you are applying for.

If you are applying by post, you will need to ring the Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 and request a postal application form. The Centre operates from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday.

7. ***If I am already receiving subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme and my subsidy will change, do I need to reapply?***

No you won't need to reapply. Any change in subsidy will be automatically applied. Anyone with a current subsidy of less than €1.40 per hour will be raised to that amount. Other subsidy rates may also increase.

You should check that your service provider has changed your co-payment to reflect the new subsidy rate, which comes into effect on 2 January 2023.

Childminding

8. ***My children go to a childminder, can I get any help with the cost of early learning and childcare?***

All early learning and childcare providers who are registered with Tusla, whether centre-based or childminders working in their own homes, can take part in the National Childcare Scheme.

If your childminder is minding four or more pre-school children or seven or more children of any age, they can register with Tusla and take part in the National Childcare Scheme.

Currently few childminders have registered with Tusla as most childminders are outside the scope of regulations and registration. The extension of funding supports and regulation to childminders who are currently outside the scope of regulation is the focus of the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028.

During 2023, preparations will continue for the phased extension of regulation and supports to all paid, non-relative childminders, including through:

- The development and initial roll-out of Foundation Training for Childminders.
- Engagement and consultation with childminders on the reforms being developed, as well as research to support the Action Plan.
- Increasing the number of Childminding Development Officers to enable childminders to engage and participate in training and supports at local level.
- Testing the development of staffed local networks to engage childminders in pre-registration training and supports.

The National Action Plan for Childminding commits to opening the National Childcare Scheme to childminders at the earliest possible opportunity, though it will be necessary first to develop and introduce childminder-specific regulations, and to give childminders adequate time and support to meet regulatory requirements.

Core Funding

9. Will the National Childcare Scheme universal subsidy be accepted by all service providers?

Participation in the National Childcare Scheme by service providers is not compulsory. However, a majority of service providers do offer this Scheme.

In addition, service providers (other than sessional service providers) that are signed up to the new Core Funding Scheme are required to offer the National Childcare Scheme (as well as the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme). Services signed up to the new Core Funding Scheme have also agreed not to increase their fees from September 2021 levels. This means that families will not be faced with fee increases, and the full affordability effects of the National Childcare Scheme, and the Early Childhood Care and Education Programme, will be felt.

To date, more than 90%, or over 4,000 service providers have signed-up to Core Funding. To find out if your service provider is signed up to Core Funding, see https://first5fundingmodel.gov.ie/together-for-better/ for the list of participating service

providers. Alternatively, you can contact your local City/County Childcare Committee. Contact details for each City/County Childcare Committee can be found at myccc.ie.

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme

10. Are there any changes to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme?

No. Budget 2023 supports the continued implementation of the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme benefiting up to 108,000 children in 2023.

Payment under this Programme is by way of capitation, payable in respect of each eligible child enrolled, which are paid directly to the service provider.

Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

11. Will supports under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) continue to be available?

AIM provides a range of targeted and universal measures, to support children with disabilities to take part in the Early Childhood Care and Education programme. AIM supports will continue to be available in 2023.

Further information on AIM is available at https://aim.gov.ie/