

PRESS RELEASE



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

Government announces substantial supports for the Re-opening of Childcare

Minister Zappone announces funding package of €75M for Reopening Early Learning and Childcare Services

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Katherine Zappone today announced a major funding package to facilitate the reopening of childcare facilities from 29 June. The Minister said:

‘Early Learning and Childcare Services are important for children and their parents, and they are essential to reopening the economy. I’m pleased to give details today of how we will support the childcare sector to get up and running again.’

In developing the funding model the Minister recognises that a reduced number of children are likely to attend Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services in the initial weeks of reopening. This necessitates a tailored model, which will allow providers to operate with less parental income.

It will also ensure that childcare providers will not have to charge higher fees than they did Pre-Covid-19, even though the costs of providing childcare will increase.

While many of the 4,500 childcare services in the State usually close for July and August, 1,800 services were open in the summer of 2019, and the Minister is hoping that these services can reopen this summer.

The Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS) will continue to operate up to June 28th.

The new funding model contains four significant elements:

- 1. A once-off reopening grant of €18M for centre-based providers opening on 29 June and late August:**

This will help providers with operational costs, including:

- Additional staffing costs, such as to help with drop off and pick up times, or cleaning staff to ensure that hygiene standards are met;
- To provide training to staff on guidelines for reopening;
- To provide additional learning resources, books and toys so that each play-pod has their own; and
- To buy hygiene and cleaning consumables, such as sanitiser, soap, and paper towels.

The amount of the grant for each individual provider will be based on the number of children on Department of Children and Youth Affairs (DCYA) schemes in the service pre-COVID-19. Services which open on 29 June (or within a week of that date) and who are open for 6 of the 8 weeks until 23 August will be eligible to receive a higher grant than services which reopen in late August or September. This is in recognition of the fact that a reduced number of children are likely to attend Early Learning and Childcare services in the initial weeks of reopening.

Number of DCYA registered children in each service	Payment for services opening on June 29	Payment for services opening in late August / September
1-11	€2,000	€1,000
12-40	€4,000	€2,000
41-100	€7,000	€3,500
100+	€10,000	€5,000

2. A once-off capital grant of €14.2M. All registered centre based services re-opening between 29 June and the beginning of September can avail of this grant:

This grant can be used by services to help them to adhere to the reopening guidelines by improving hygiene facilities and outdoor play areas. This will reduce the risk posed by Covid-19. Allowable expenditure will include:

- Outdoor play equipment;
- Outdoor shade and shelter to enable outdoor play as much as possible;
- Additional handwashing and toilet facilities;
- Purchase of partitions or room dividers to enable play pods to remain separate in larger rooms; and
- Installation of screens in reception areas.

The capital grant will be allocated in accordance with the following:

Number of children on DCYA schemes per service	Grant value €
1-11	1000
12-40	2500
41-100	4000
101 +	6000

Childminder reopening grants

A once-off grant totalling €375, 000 will be provided for childminders. A grant of €500 per childminder registered with Tusla, or notified to their City / County Childcare Committee (CCC), and tax compliant, will be made to assist them with the costs of reopening. There are approximately 750 registered or CCC notified childminders in the State.

3. Continuation of the Revenue-operated Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS) (€32.8M):

The TWSS will continue until the end of August for childcare services that reopen on June 29. It will provide an 85% (or 70% for higher incomes) contribution towards the cost of wages.

4. All DCYA funding schemes, including universal subsidies and targeted subsidies for parents (NCS, CCS and TEC) will be available again for children attending Early Learning and Childcare services from June 29.

All DCYA childcare subsidisation schemes will resume, as will the charging of fees to privately paying parents.

A condition of these additional funding measures to childcare providers will be to retain parental contribution/fees at pre-COVID-19 rates.

Where services experience higher levels of demand and this exceeds approximately 50% of their pre- COVID-19 numbers, the Minister is asking providers to consider reducing any fee they charge parents who are not using places in July and August, but wish to retain their place for September.

Speaking following the announcement, Minister Zappone said that she believed the combination of these measures would facilitate a majority of the 1,800 services who normally open in July and August to reopen.

“Many parents need to return to work to support their families. Childcare is essential to this and a critical element in enabling our economy to get up and running again. We have clear public health guidance for the childcare sector on how this can happen as safely as possible. We now have a funding model which supports the public health guidance. I believe it supports the sustainability of the childcare sector. It is the first step back towards full capacity.”

This suite of measures will run from June 29 to August 23. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs will review the operation of these measures in July and will then make further arrangements for services normally reopening in late August / early September.

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