



OFFALY COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE



WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

5th June 2024



IMPORTANT DATES, DEADLINES AND DCEDIY PRESS RELEASE

Here you will find details and reminders of important upcoming deadlines along with DCEDIY current press releases.



OCCC UPCOMING EVENTS

Here you will find details of all our upcoming training events with links to bring you directly to Eventbrite.



HIVE NOTIFICATIONS

Here you will find the most recent Hive notifications and details on Compliance for ECCE and NCS.

CONTACT DETAILS



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IMPORTANT DATES AND DEADLINES

Portal will open on or before for service providers to register nominated accountants for Core funding Income & Expenditure report

**29TH APRIL
2024**

Early Years Sector Services Profile Survey Closes

7TH JUNE 2024

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Survey

7TH JUNE

Employment Regulation Orders for the Early Years Services Sector

COMMENCES ON 24TH JUNE

Submission of Core Funding income & Expenditure report

**CLOSING DATE:
26TH JUNE
2024**

Tusla deadline for existing services to submit Change of Circumstance application

1ST JULY 2024

Public Consultation on a National Plan for Irish Language Provision in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare

**CLOSES 12TH
JULY 2024**

The Education for Persons with Special Educational Needs (EPSEN) Survey:

<https://accessiblesurveys.com/s2/epsenreview/init>

This survey is aimed at children and young adults with special educational needs, who may face challenges with traditional survey methods. The survey includes accessible features, including easy read, voice over and ISL. The survey is available in both Irish and English. This important accessible online consultation will enable those with cognitive challenges to share their valuable opinions and perspectives.

We invite you to actively participate in this survey to share your experience of special education. Your insights and experiences are invaluable in shaping the future of special education in Ireland.

For further details regarding the review of the legislation, including a consultation paper and information about the groups overseeing the process, please visit the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/.../e3842-epsen-review-consultation/>



New pay agreement to provide pay increases for the early learning and childcare workforce – Ministers Higgins and O’Gorman

Emer Higgins, Minister of State for Business, Employment and Retail has today accepted proposals for new Employment Regulation Orders for the Early Years Services Sector. The Orders will commence on 24 June 2024 and will increase the minimum hourly rates of pay for various roles in the Early Years Services Sector. The Employment Regulation Orders apply to approximately 33,000 educators and it is estimated that 53% of those working in the sector will see their wages rise as a result of the new Employment Regulation Orders.

Minister Higgins said:

“I am very pleased to approve these Employment Regulation Orders which will improve the hourly pay rates of approximately 33,000 educators in the early learning and childcare sector.

“Those working in the early learning and childcare sector provide an outstanding service to infants and children while offering invaluable support to growing families

“This Government will continue to support and improve pay for those who work in the sector.

“The first Employment Regulation Orders for the sector was introduced in 2022 and has been very successful in providing stability, better staff retention rates, and improved pay and conditions for this workforce

“I would like to thank the members of the Joint Labour Committee and those interested parties who made submissions as part of the public consultation for their contributions to this process. The Early Years Services Joint Labour Committee is a good example of how effective the reformed Joint Labour Committee system can be when representatives of employees and employers voluntarily negotiate together to identify a mutually beneficial agreement”.

Minister O’Gorman has welcomed Minister Higgin’s acceptance of the Early Years Services Employment Regulation Orders as they will deliver improved pay and conditions, will support career pathways, and will help to support the recruitment and retention of early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners.

Minister O’Gorman said:

“Since becoming Minister, I have prioritised improving the pay and conditions of those working with children as I believe early years educators’ and school-age childcare practitioners’ pay and conditions should reflect the importance of the work they do.”

“Improvement in pay and conditions is essential if we are to recognise the important work that is done every day by those who work in this sector. It is also essential if we are to improve recruitment and retention and raise the profile of careers in the sector. And it is essential if we are to support the ongoing professionalisation of the sector.”

“While I very much welcome this, I recognise that pay in the sector still remains relatively low, however I remain committed to supporting further improvements in pay and conditions and aim to do this through Core Funding which, this year alone will increase by 15% to €331 million on last years allocation.”

“I would like to acknowledge the independent nature of the Labour Court and Joint Labour Committee process and the hard work of its members in negotiating the pay and conditions for employees in the early learning and childcare sector and I look forward to seeing further positive negotiations from this process in the future.”

Minister O’Gorman announces plans for €14m boost in support for children with a disability accessing early learning and childcare

- **Funding for Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) increasing by €14m (32%) in 2024**
- **This funding is currently supporting around 7,100 children with a disability to participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, an increase of almost 900 children from the same period last year**
- **Also, from September 2024, ECCE-enrolled children will be fully supported to access and participate in early learning and care settings beyond the time they spend in the ECCE programme – both in term and out of term**

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman today announced plans for an additional €14 million in supports for children with a disability under the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM).

AIM was first introduced to ensure that children with a disability could access and meaningfully participate in the State-funded Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme in mainstream settings – through a suite of universal and targeted supports.

Up until now, a key support - additional funding to providers to enable a lower adult-child ratio – was allocated for the duration of the ECCE programme only (i.e. 3 hours per day, 5 days per week and 38 weeks per year).

The additional funding will ensure an increasing number of ECCE-enrolled children can be supported under AIM. It will support an extension of AIM support from September 2024, meaning that children with a disability enrolled in the ECCE programme will now be fully supported to access and participate in early learning and childcare settings beyond the time they spend in that programme – both in term and out of term.

Combined with existing supports through the ECCE programme and Core Funding, providers will be funded for up to a further 15 hours of capitation per week in term and for 30 hours per week out of term to enable a lower adult-child ratio.

Since AIM was first launched in 2016, more than 28,000 children have received targeted AIM supports in over 4,400 settings nationally and many more children have benefited from its universal supports. AIM has also been recognised nationally and globally, winning awards for excellence in practice and inclusion.

Minister O’Gorman said:

“Every child should have access to high quality early learning and care.”
“The findings from the evaluation I published in January show the enormous difference AIM is making to the lives of children with a disability.”
“This extension will bring further benefits to these children and support access to early learning and childcare on a par with their peers.”
“This extension is among a suite of actions officials in my Department are taking to ensure we continue to build on the success of AIM to ensure, going forward, AIM works in the best interest of all children and families.”

Applications for these additional hours will open in the coming weeks for the 2024/2025 programme year.

While the AIM application process remains open year round, providers and parents are advised, where possible, to apply at least three months before the child’s planned start date in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, in order to ensure that the application can be processed in a timely manner.

Children First



ALWAYS CHILDREN FIRST: CHILD SAFEGUARDING AWARENESS TRAINING

This accredited training course will enable participants to

- **Gain a deeper knowledge and understanding of how to recognise and respond to child protection and welfare concerns.**
- **Consider child-centred practice as a key part of child safeguarding and how you might implement child centred practice.**
- **Gain a clear understanding of your role and responsibilities in relation to keeping children safe and promoting their welfare to enable them to achieve their full potential**

Booking Conditions

- ✓ Training participants must complete the Tusla eLearning programme prior to attendance of this course.
- ✓ Open to all early years practitioners working in a childcare service in County Offaly, including those in DLP or Mandated Person roles
- ✓ Maximum booking of 2 people per service, service must be based in Offaly
- ✓ Cost per participant: €10

Date:

- **Saturday 6th July 2024**

Venue:

- **O'Connor Square, Tullamore,
Co. Offaly, R35 Y2T5**

Time:

- **9.30am - 4.00pm**

Register Now on Eventbrite



www.offalychildcare.com

Hive Notifications

Annual Early Years Sector Profile Deadline Extension

Dear Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare provider,

The deadline for the 2023/2024 Annual Early Years Sector Profile survey has been extended to allow more time for services to complete the survey. **The survey will now close at 11pm on Friday 07 June.**

Please remember to complete the survey as soon as possible. Completion of this year's survey before the revised deadline is mandatory for all existing Core Funding Partner Services. If you are contracted into Core Funding and you do not complete the Annual Early Years Sector Profile 2023/24 before the deadline on 07 June your Core Funding payments will be placed on hold until such a time as the process is completed.

Services who wish to become a Core Funding Partner Service for the 2024 programme year must also complete the 2023/24 Annual Early Years Sector Profile survey in advance of submitting their Core Funding application. As well as providing information about the sector, this survey enables the capture of data that will help to monitor the impact of Core Funding on the sector.

Thank you to those services who have already completed the survey and we encourage any remaining services to submit by Friday 07 June.

Regards,

The Early Years Team

Hive Notifications

Scheduled updates to the Early Years Hive on 6 June 2024

Dear Service Provider,

The Early Years Hive will be temporarily unavailable on Thursday 6 June at 5pm for up to 5 hours.

During this time, a number of updates to the Early Years Hive will be released to ensure that both the system runs as smoothly as possible.

Afterwards you may need to refresh your web browser to access the portal again.

We try to hold these releases out of hours to reduce disruption. We apologise for any inconvenience this may cause and thank you for your cooperation.

Regards,
The Early Years Team

Hive Notifications

ECCE compliance

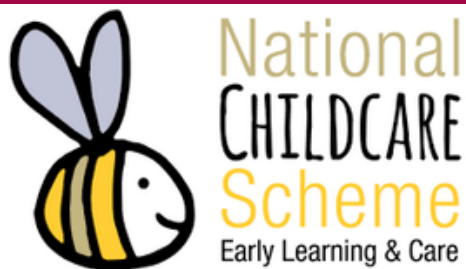
It is the responsibility of the Service Provider to ensure compliance with their contractual requirements. Service providers should ensure that they understand and adhere to the ECCE Funding Agreement. Failure to do so will result in non-compliance and will require corrective action.

In order to make compliance visits as efficient as possible for both providers and visit officers, service providers should ensure that their compliance file is kept up to date and contains:

- Attendance records
- Enrolment details (including minimum enrolment exemption where relevant);
- Parental declaration forms
- Parent letters
- Fee records
- Staff qualifications
- Higher capitation forms

The below documents offers guidance for service providers on ECCE compliance:

- [ECCE Compliance Checklist 23-24](#)
- [ECCE Compliance Approved Provider Guide 23-24](#)
- [ECCE Post-Inspection Rectification Actions 23-24](#)
- [ECCE Good Practice Guide for Attendance Records](#)



National Childcare Compliance

- [Accessing the NCS Compliance Report on Hive](#)
- [NCS Compliance Checklist](#)
- [NCS Compliance Service Provider Guide](#)
- [NCS Post Inspection Rectification Actions](#)

Hive Notifications

CCSP Saver Programme compliance

It is the responsibility of the Service Provider to ensure compliance with their Funding Agreement requirements. Failure to comply with any of the terms of the Funding Agreement may result in the suspension of CCSP Saver Programme Funding and/or DCEDIY funding or part thereof may be withdrawn and/or a termination of this Funding Agreement.

In order to make compliance visits as efficient as possible for both providers and visit officers, providers should ensure that their compliance file is kept up to date and contains:

- Attendance Records
- Service Fee Information Letters
- Parental declaration forms;
- Parent/guardian letters;
- Fee records;
- Staff qualifications and letters of qualifications;
- Grandfathering declarations as applicable;
- Evidence of Tusla registration(s).

The compliance file must be kept on site and available for inspection at all times.

Services should also ensure that:

- Registrations are correct,
- Fees list and calendar, for all approved funding programmes, are clearly displayed for parents and,
- **There is a staff member on site at all times who has access to the compliance file and can facilitate the visit. Failure to do same could result in a service being found non-compliant.**

Please note that if the records are readily available for review any interruption to the service will be minimal, other than seeking clarifications when required.

To assist services to comply with the CCSP Saver Programme requirements, the Department and the Scheme Administrator provide a range of training and supports.

These include:

- [CCSP Compliance Checklist 23-24](#)
- [CCSP Compliance Approved Provider Guide 23-24](#)
- [CCSP Post-Inspection Rectification Actions 23-24](#)

Providers are strongly encouraged to engage with these supports, both before and after compliance visits, to ensure that they maintain compliance with scheme rules.

Hive Notifications



AIM Level 7 Compliance

AIM Level 7 compliance checks will be commencing on AIM Level 7 payments from the week beginning 22 April 2024. This will involve a series of standardised checks on AIM Level 7 approved capitations relating to additional assistance in the pre-school room and the maintenance of reduced ratios.

The compliance checks are aimed at confirming adherence with AIM Level 7 rules and contract conditions as set out by the Department of Children Equality Disability Integration & Youth (DCEDIY).

To ensure the compliance checks can be conducted at unannounced inspections, please ensure that the person in charge on-site has access to the following records to present to the Visit Officer for review:

- The child attendance records for each of the ECCE sessions attended by child/ren benefitting from AIM Level 7
- The Staff Qualifications for staff working in these ECCE session/s

The Pobal compliance team have uploaded additional compliance support documents to the Hive in order to assist services in preparing for a compliance inspection. The documents, which are listed below, are available under the Resources section and can also be accessed through this link

- [AIM Level 7 Compliance Guide for Approved Providers 2023 - 2024](#)
- [AIM Level 7 Compliance Checklist for Approved Providers 2023 - 2024](#)
- [AIM Level 7 Rectification Actions Guide 2023 - 2024](#)

Please note - these documents are only supports, intended to assist you. There is an onus on each provider to familiarise themselves with their responsibilities under the AIM Rules (AIM Level 7 included) and contractual conditions.