



OFFALY COUNTY CHILDCARE COMMITTEE



WEEKLY NEWS BULLETIN

12th 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**

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**

Always Children First Safeguarding Awareness training

**6TH 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**

Government approves publication of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2024

- Child Care (Amendment) Bill 2024 will introduce a range of reforms within early learning and childcare.
- The Bill will allow for childminding-specific regulations, which will enable parents using childminders to access National Childcare Scheme subsidies.
- The Bill will also provide the Tusla Early Years Inspectorate with additional enforcement tools to address serious non-compliance with the Regulations in early learning and childcare services.

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, has today secured Government approval for the publication of the Child Care (Amendment) Bill, paving the way for further reforms within the early learning and childcare.

The Bill provides the legislative basis for:

Registration and regulation of childminders

the removal of exemptions relating to childminders to facilitate the future extension of regulation to all paid, non-relative childminders. This will allow parents using childminders to access National Childcare Scheme subsidies.

Early learning and childcare reforms

enhanced enforcement tools – to build on the enforcement options available to Tusla, allowing for immediate closure of unregistered early learning and childcare services, temporary suspension of service registrations and putting the enforcement path on a legislative footing, formal information sharing with parents – to introduce a formal mechanism for sharing of certain information related to quality of an early learning and childcare service with parents and with the public generally, where appropriate, and the introduction of a “fit person” regulation to empower Tusla to assess the suitability of a person applying to be a registered early learning and childcare provider.

Minister O’Gorman stated:

“I am confident that these proposals will bring significant benefits to the early learning and childcare sector by addressing the limitations that have been identified in the current legislation and improving overall compliance with regulations.

“I am committed to delivering childminding-specific regulations that are both appropriate and proportionate, striking a balance between regulation and quality, and acknowledgement of the unique circumstances of a childminder operating in their home.

“Furthermore, this will allow parents who avail of a childminder to benefit from State supports such as the National Childcare Scheme”.

In line with the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028, these changes relate to the provision of care in the childminder’s home.

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 launches public consultation on Irish language provision in early learning and care and school-age childcare

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, has today announced the launch of a public consultation on a national plan for Irish language provision in Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School-Age Childcare (SAC).

The consultation will seek views on how best the Government can support the provision of Irish-medium ELC and SAC, and it will also explore what role the Irish language should play in English-medium ELC and SAC services.

The consultation process, starting on 6 June and running until 12 July, will be an opportunity for all parties involved and interested in the Irish language in ELC and SAC to voice their opinions. Stakeholders will be able to participate in and give their feedback through an online survey, through both online and in-person focus groups, and through a national stakeholder event. The process will also include consultation with children.

The consultation process follows through on commitments in First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families and in the 5 Year Action Plan for the Irish Language 2018 – 2022. First 5 includes commitments to introduce measures to ensure that children in Gaeltacht areas have access to Irish-medium ELC and SAC provision, and also to develop mechanisms to provide Irish-language supports to ELC and SAC provision where there are high proportions of children who are learning through the medium of Irish. The 5-Year Action Plan for the Irish Language includes a commitment to develop a comprehensive plan for the sector.

Speaking about the consultation, Minister O’Gorman said:

“It is important to ensure that strong supports are in place for Irish-language provision in early childhood. Public consultation is central to the development of a plan that is robust and effective, and that reflects the importance of our national language for young children and for society in general. The views of all stakeholders are important and I would like to encourage widespread participation from anyone interested in this significant issue.

“Early childhood is fundamental in providing solid foundations for our children. The development of a comprehensive plan for Irish-language provision in ELC and SAC shows my Department’s commitment to support the use of Irish in children’s early years in all areas of the country.”

Feedback and insights from children and young people, parents, early years educators, school-age childcare practitioners, ELC and SAC settings, Irish-language organisations, ELC support organisations, and all other interested parties will play an important role in shaping the development of a national plan for Irish language supports for ELC and SAC.

Make your voice heard by joining the public consultation [here](#) .

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

Update regarding Programme Readiness 2024/2025

Dear Service Provider,

We wish to provide an update regarding Programme Readiness 2024/2025.

Programme Readiness for ECCE, AIM Level 1, NCS and the CCSP Saver Programme 2024/2025 will be available on the Early Years Hive in the coming weeks, along with Core Funding Applications and Partner Service Funding Agreements.

We understand that this is later than it has been in previous years and we apologise for any inconvenience this may cause. This delay is due to new system enhancements that are currently being developed. Unfortunately, these enhancements are taking longer than anticipated but we are working extremely hard towards opening Programme Readiness for the 24/25 programme year during the week of the 24th June.

All Programme Readiness information, guidance and training will be communicated on the Announcements Page of the Early Years Hive. Important dates will also be included on the Calendar Page on an ongoing basis.

Should you have any queries in relation to Programme Readiness, please contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) by raising a Request on the Early Years Hive selecting the relevant programme and the request type from the available dropdowns. We look forward to working with Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Aged Care (SAC) services over the coming weeks. Again, we apologise for any inconvenience the delay in programme readiness causes.

Regards

The Early Years Team

Hive Notifications

ECCE compliance

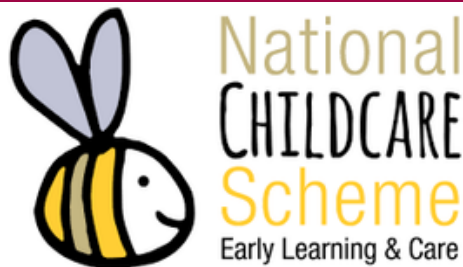
It is the responsibility of the Service Provider to ensure compliance with their contractual requirements. Service providers should ensure that they understand and adhere to the ECCE Funding Agreement. Failure to do so will result in non-compliance and will require corrective action.

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.