



Notification to the Sector (ELC and SAC Services)-For dissemination to all Educators in your Service

Nurturing Skills Learner Fund (NSLF)– Launch of Application Process 2026, today 10th March 2026

The NSLF will continue in 2026 for educators seeking to upskill for the academic year 2026/2027 commencing autumn 2026.

The NSLF aims to assist early year's educators to pursue early learning and care (ELC) qualifications at level 7 and level 8 that have been approved by the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) while continuing to work in the sector.

Since its inception in 2024 the NSLF scheme has been in a position to offer financial support to over 700 NSLF applicants.

Further information on NSLF application date is available on Nurturing Skills website: [Home | Nurturing Skills](#)

Application Process and Timelines

From 10th March, 2026, **new applicants should email Pobal**, at NSLF@pobal.ie to request a link to the NSLF Student Portal in order to create an account and upload employment details and complete the new application process.

Applicants who previously applied for NSLF and were unsuccessful, should make a new application for the academic year 2026/2027 through the NSLF Student Portal. Applicants should login to their NSLF account, upload employment details and complete the new application process.

Applicants should ensure that all elements of the application are filled out and required documents provided prior to completing the application process.

The application process will close on **1st May 2026**.

NSLF 2026/2027 Eligibility Criteria

Those wishing to make an application for NSLF in 2026 must meet the following eligibility criteria

- be working with children in a Tusla-registered Early Learning and Care (ELC) or School Age Childcare (SAC) service.
- the service in which the applicant is working in, must have a current signed Core Funding contract with DCDE.
- Applicants must have worked within an ELC or SAC service for the six months prior to their application.



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- applicants must have a current application/offer for 2026/2027 entry to a Level 7/8 Degree course approved by the Qualification Advisory Board (QAB) that is eligible for NSLF.
- be a new entrant to an Approved Course for the academic year commencing 2026/2027 (Autumn 2026).
- for clarity purposes, at time of application an applicant must not hold (or be already undertaking) an Approved Course at level 7 or level 8 in Early Learning and Care.

Note: Only applicants who fulfil all the above Eligibility Criteria will be considered for NSLF funding in 2026.

Information for NSLF continuing and graduating students can be found on the Nurturing Skills website Nurturing Skills website: [Home | Nurturing Skills](#)

Kind Regards,
Workforce Unit,
Early Years Division