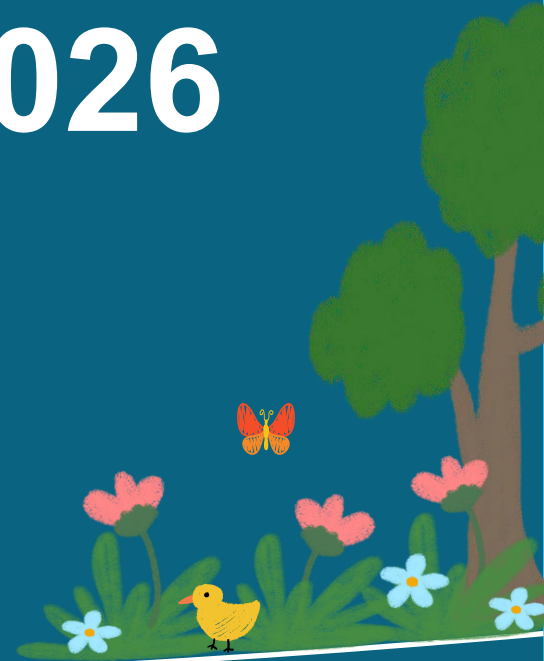
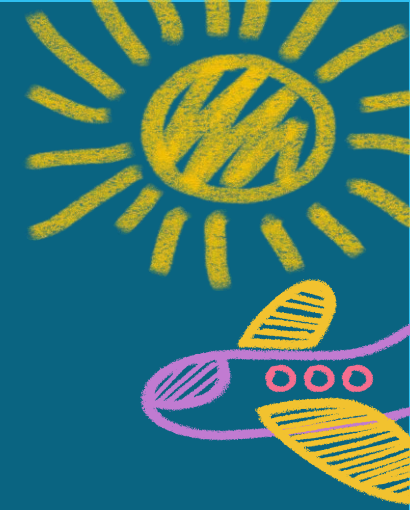




# Programme Readiness 2026



# Programme Readiness 2026



**Fee Table**



**Parent Statement**



**Core Funding**



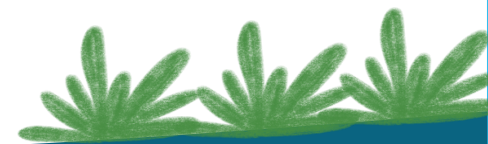
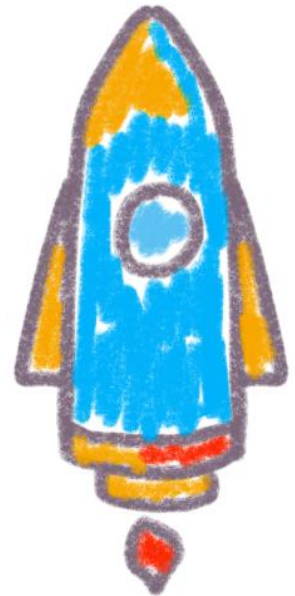
**National Childcare Scheme (NCS)**



**Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE)**



**Access & Inclusion Model (AIM) Levels 1, 4, 5 & 7**



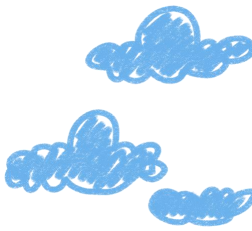
# Programme Readiness 2026 Key Dates

Task	Date
NCS Registrations	Rolling
AIM Level 4 and 5 Application process opened	06/05/2026
Core Funding 2026/2027 Application process	Opening Date To Be Confirmed
ECCE Registrations opens	06/07/2026
AIM Level 1 Application process for existing students	06/07/2026
CCSP 2026/2027 Programme opens	10/08/2026
NCS 2026/2027 Programme opens	17/08/2026
ECCE 2026/2027 Programme opens	24/08/2026
AIM Level 1 Application Process for new graduates	Opening Date To Be Confirmed
AIM Level 1 back dating cut off	22/10/2026

# Fee Table



# Fee Table Highlights



## Toggle Option

As in previous years, during **June, July, and August**, the Fee Table will include a toggle that allows you to switch between a **Partner Service** and an **Approved Provider** Fee Table.

Select your current service status:

It is a mandatory requirement under DCDE funding Schemes to complete a Fee Table.

Please select **Approved Provider** if you are not/do not intend to be a service with an active Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement for the programme year to which this Fee Table applies.

Please select **Partner Service** if you are a service who has/intends to have an active Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement with the Minister and agrees to operate fee management and quality improvements for the programme year to which this Fee Table applies.

Approved Provider  Partner Service

This will provide services with the option to select whether they will be an Approved Provider or Partner Service in the 2026/2027 programme year.





# Fee Table Highlights



## Toggle Option

From **1 September**, the toggle option will no longer be available. At this point, the status of your Fee Table will automatically reflect whether an original Core Funding Application Module has been submitted for your service.

If your service status changes (for example, from Partner Service to Approved Provider, or vice versa) you'll need to update your Fee Table.

You can do this easily by selecting '**Save as Draft**' on your submitted Fee Table. This will update the Fee Table status. You may be required to edit some of the Fee Options in order to resubmit your Fee Table.



# Parent Statement



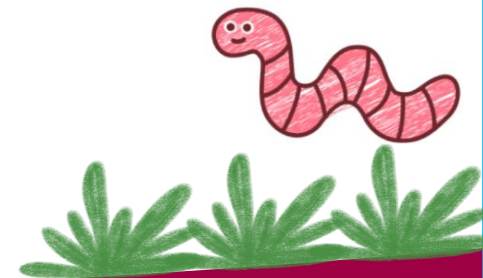
# Parent Statement Highlights

It is a mandatory requirement under DCDE Funding Schemes to complete your online Parent Statement.

Create Parent Statement

There are no structural changes to the Parent Statement for this upcoming 2026/2027 Programme Year.

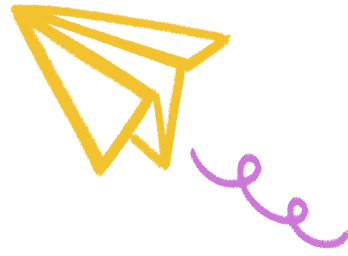
Text changes have been made throughout the wording of the Parent Statement.



# Core Funding



# Core Funding



## Key Dates

Core Funding Task	Date
May Review and Confirm (2025/2026 Core Funding Programme Year)	1 May 2026 – 14 May 2026
Core Funding Application Module 2026/2027 and Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement 2026/2027	To Be Confirmed
August Review and Confirm (2026/2027 Core Funding Programme Year)	1 August 2026 – 31 August 2026





# Completing the Core Funding Application



1

Review and Update Service Profile

2

Complete May Review & Confirm (If Applicable or Outstanding) for the 2025/2026 Core Funding Programme Year

3

Submit the Original Core Funding Application Module for the 2026/2027 Core Funding Programme Year

4

Accept NCS/ECCE Funding Agreements where applicable

5

Accept Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement 2026 within **21 days** of submission of original 2026/2027 Core Funding Application Module



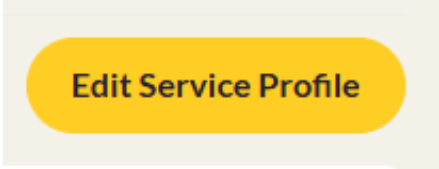


# Core Funding: Key Points



Partner Services contracted into the 2025/2026 Core Funding Programme Year:

- Must maintain their 2025/2026 Core Funding application information until the end of the programme year, 31 August 2026.
- Ensure Service Profile information is up to date
- Services who have completed the May Review and Confirm process and their R&C record has reached an 'Approved' status, will have the option to auto-populate their original Core Funding Application Module for the 2026/2027 Core Funding programme year using the information from the most recently 'Approved' 2025/2026 Core Funding application record.
- Where a Partner Service has a retrospective Update Due Dates(s) for the 2025/2026 Core Funding programme year, these must be actioned prior to starting the submission of their original Core Funding Application Module for 2026/2027 programme year.







Programme Readiness will be available from early June 2026.



Services are entitled to 10 subsidised closure days per programme year. Please ensure that you mark these days on your NCS service calendar.



NCS subsidies for School Aged Childcare (SAC) is not eligible on weekends or after 7pm on weekdays.



Please remember to adhere to the NCS attendance rules and note that NCS subsidised hours can only be claimed for the hours outside of the hours a child attends ECCE or school.

**\*Failure to amend these claims may result in further action including but not limited to amendment of claims and/or recoupment of funding.**



Support and guidance is available through the Early Years Hive or by contacting the Early Years Provider Centre.





# Upcoming changes to NCS 2026/27



**Approved Providers cannot limit a child's access to, or remove a child from childcare, based on performance, gender, sponsorship, or memberships in a secondary organisation. Additionally, a child cannot be removed based on a parent's complaint regarding the Approved Providers compliance to Scheme rules or Tusla regulations.**

*Please see the NCS 2026 Funding Agreement for more information*



**The Scheme Administrator may initiate an administrative process to address unconfirmed claims.**

**The process will allow for the cancellation of a registered claim that remains unconfirmed 3 months after the CHICK has expired.**





# Upcoming changes to NCS 2026/27



**There will be a rise to the lower and upper NCS Income thresholds, in addition to increases to the Multiple Child Discount (MCD).**

*From 31 August 2026*



**New functionality will be added at the point of claim, to support the calculation of a parent's weekly co-payment.**

*Prior to the opening of 2026/27 NCS Programme (Final dates to be confirmed)*



# Changes to NCS Thresholds and Multiple Child Discount (MCD)

Changes to NCS thresholds and the Multiple Child Discount, announced by Minister Norma Foley, will come into effect from **31 August 2026**.

NCS Income Thresholds and Multiple Child Discount	Increases
Lower Threshold	rise from €26,000 to €34,000.
Upper Threshold	rise from €60,000 to €68,000.
Multiple Child Discount for 2 Children	increase from €4,300 to €5,500.
Multiple Child Discount for 3 or more Children	increase from €8,600 to €11,000.

## How will existing claims be affected?

Existing awards and claims will be recalculated and updated accordingly. Applicants will not be required to confirm existing claims again, however applicants who have not yet confirmed their claims will still be required to do so. All claims must be confirmed by an applicant, before payments can flow to a Provider.

**Important:** It should be noted that where rates change, a parent's co-payment must be updated, and the parent informed.






Service Providers will be able to identify affected claims in a specially dedicated view on the Early Years Hive. Additional guidance, support resources and communication about the changes will be made available in advance of 31 August 2026.





# New Co-payment Functionality



-  New functionality will be added for Service Providers at the point of registering an NCS claim, to support the auto calculation of a parents weekly co-payment.
-  Service Providers will have the option to supply the required information in two ways; via a pre-populated drop down from their fee table, and/or via manual input. The information will be mandatory prior to submission of a claim.
-  Information to be provided will include the weekly full fee, the corresponding hours and minutes, if an ECCE subsidy is applicable and any weekly discounts. This will **enable the auto calculation** of a parents weekly co-payment.
-  A new downloadable and printable summary will be available, with existing functionality to edit claims at a weekly level remaining.
-  Additional guidance, support resources and communication will be made available in advance of the introduction of the new functionality.



# Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)

## Split Place Exemption

The Department have confirmed that **'split place exemptions'** will no longer be available for the ECCE programme from the beginning of 2026/2027 ECCE programme year.

To support the transition, those that have already been granted a 'split place exemption' for the current 2025/26 programme year can continue to use this provision for their second year of ECCE in 2026/27, if they choose to do so.



## Ethnicity Details

Ethnicity details on an ECCE pre-registration form is voluntary.

If ethnicity details have not been included on the pre-registration form completed by the parent/guardian, this should also be left blank on the ECCE Registration on the Early Years Hive.



# Access & Inclusion Model (AIM) Levels 1, 4, 5 & 7



# AIM Service Profile



The AIM Service Profile provides Better Start's Early Years Specialists (EYS) with an overview of the service, for example the training qualifications, safeguarding policy, equality and diversity.



Updates to the Service Profile can be made at any point throughout the year.



It is important for a service provider to enter the maximum staff and children information as per their Tusla registration.



Maximum staff should not include AIM additional employees. These fields must be kept up to date for compliance.





# AIM Level 1



The AIM Level 1 application supports the increased ECCE capitation, funded by DCDE in recognition of the leadership and mentoring role which is delivered by the Inclusion Co-ordinator during the 2026/2027 pre-school year.



AIM Level 1 is an annual application process for higher capitation, aimed at fostering an inclusive environment, with 2026/2027 applications opening on the Early Years Hive:

- For existing graduates: **6 July 2026**
- For new graduates: date is to be confirmed later in the year.





# AIM Level 1



Prior to submitting the AIM Level 1 application, service providers must ensure that they have completed their ECCE programme readiness steps and activated the ECCE Funding Agreement.



New graduates (i.e. graduating in Summer 2026) can apply when final exam results have been notified by Mary Immaculate College (expected September 2026).



The backdating cut off date for applications is the **22 October 2026**.





# AIM Level 4



AIM Level 4 applications for the 2026/2027 programme call opened on **6 May 2026**.



There are 2 options for completing the '**Parental Acknowledgement**':

Document Upload AIM Application Acknowledgement

or

Online AIM Application Acknowledgement





# AIM Level 7

## 2026/2027 Programme Call



Please be advised that the AIM Level 7 application form for the 2026/2027 programme call is currently unavailable on the Early Years Hive due to a planned redesign intended to streamline the application process and minimise administrative requirements for service providers.



Service providers may still request AIM Level 7 support for the 2026/2027 programme call through the AIM Level 4 application procedure, during which an Early Years Specialist (EYS) will reach out by phone.





# AIM Level 7

## 2025/2026 Programme Call



All AIM Level 7 applications for the 2025/2026 programme call should **continue to be submitted** in line with the existing application processes currently in place within the published closing date.



Where a child is in receipt of AIM Level 7 support for the 2025/2026 programme call and is eligible for a second year of AIM Level 7 support **no action is required** currently.





# AIM Level 7

## 2025/2026 Programme Call

Where a child with an overage exemption wishes to avail of a third year of AIM Level 7 support, the service provider must contact the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC) by raising a **request** using the following headings on the HIVE for further information.

Early Yearshive [UAT] Search Portal Content

Home > Support > Create a New Request

Summary \*

Programme \*  
AIM Level 4

Request type \*  
Exemption Request

Request Type Detail \*  
General



# AIM Level 7

AIM Level 7 is currently undergoing a planned remodel designed to simplify processes, reduce administrative burden for services, and streamline the application journey. As part of this remodel:

- The level of support allocated to a child will be determined once their AIM Level 4 application has been submitted and an initial review of the child's needs has been completed by Better Start.
- The allocated level of support will apply for the full duration of the AIM Level 4 application.
- The AIM Level 7 application process will be streamlined and will no longer require room or session-level details, nor individual daily hours.
- Where a child is eligible for AIM Level 7 support during ECCE and corresponding NCS registration data is available, a Level 7 capitation will be applied automatically. As a result, there will be no requirement to complete AIM Plus or Non-Term application forms.
- Due to the enhanced integration with ECCE and NCS registrations, a significant reduction in the need to submit reviews is anticipated.





# AIM Level 5



AIM Level 5 applications for the 2026/2027 programme call opened on 06 May 2026.



Prior to submitting an AIM Level 5 application the AIM Level 5 Programme will **need to be activated** on the Early Years Hive.



A child does not require an AIM Level 4 application to apply for AIM Level 5.



To submit an AIM Level 5 application, the below documents are required:

A report from a HSE Health Professional/ NCSE Visiting Teacher on the required AIM Template.

**And**

Quotations for all items of equipment and/or minor alterations that are being applied for.



There is no limit on the number of items of equipment in which a child can apply for.



# AIM Level 5



If minor alterations are being applied for, quotations must be included.

For building works/ alterations less than €5,000.00 one written quotation is required.

For building works/alterations equal to or more than €5,000.00 a minimum of three written quotations are required.



For minor alterations and/or permanently fixed items of equipment, an owner's permission document is required.



The maximum grant payable for minor alterations under AIM Level 5 is capped at €7,000.00 per child inclusive of VAT and professional fees.

# Programme Readiness Support



# Support



Submit a Request on the Early Years Hive




Contact EYPC: 01 511 7222




# Programme Readiness Checklists

### Core Funding Programme Readiness Checklist



**Getting Started:**  
Make sure each item is up to date




- Organisation Details  
My Account > Organisation Profile
- Confirm Service Provider Details  
My Account > Manage Service Providers > Click on Service Name > Review and Click Submit
- Primary Authorised User (PAU)  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Portal Users  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Bank Account  
My Account > Bank Account
- Tusla Registration  
My Account > Tusla Reg Maintenance




**Core Funding**

- Review, Update and Submit your Service Profile  
My Account > Service Profile  
This must be completed before starting your 2026/2027 original Core Funding Application Module.
- Complete May Review and Confirm for the 2025/2026 Core Funding programme year  
This is needed to auto-populate the 2026/2027 Core Funding Application.
- Complete and Submit original Core Funding Application Module 2026/2027  
Programmes > Core Funding > Core Funding Applications
- Complete Fee Table  
My Account > Service Fees  
We recommend ensuring you are completing the correct version of the Fee Table, depending on whether or not your service will be in Core Funding for the upcoming programme year.
- Complete Parent Statement  
My Account > Online Parent Statement  
We recommend that you submit your original Core Funding Application Module for the upcoming programme year before completing the Parent Statement.  
Reminder: The Fee Table determines which version of the Parent Statement (Partner Service or Approved Provider) is presented on the Early Years Hive.
- Activate National Childcare Scheme (NCS) 2026 and Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) 2026 Funding Agreements (if applicable)  
Programmes > Programme Applications & Returns > All Programme Applications > Available Programme Applications
- Activate Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement 2026  
Programmes > Programme Applications & Returns > All Programme Applications > Available Programme Applications  
This must be completed within 21 days of the submission of the original Core Funding Application Module.
- Submit Application Changes for 2026/2027 (as required)  
Programmes > Core Funding > Core Funding Applications
- Submit Parent Statements for Partner Services 2026/2027  
My Account > Online Parent Statement  
We recommend that you submit your original Core Funding Application Module for the 2026/2027 year before activating the Parent Statement.
- Complete August Review and Confirm

**IMPORTANT NOTES:**  
Partner Services who submit an original 2026/2027 Core Funding Application Module on or before 21 August will have their base fee capped for the 2026/2027 programme year at their approved August Review and Confirm record. You must activate your NCS Funding Agreement before activating your Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreements.






### National Childcare Scheme (NCS) Programme Readiness Checklist



**Getting Started:**  
Make sure each item is up to date

- Organisation Details  
My Account > Organisation Profile
- Confirm Service Provider Details  
My Account > Manage Service Providers > Click on Service Name > Review and Click Submit
- Primary Authorised User (PAU)  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Portal Users  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Bank Account  
My Account > Bank Account
- Tusla Registration  
My Account > Tusla Reg Maintenance






**NCS**

- Create Service Calendar  
My Account > Service Calendars
- Complete Fee Table  
My Account > Service Fees  
We recommend ensuring you are completing the correct version of the Fee Table, depending on whether or not your service will be in Core Funding for the upcoming programme year.
- Complete Parent Statement  
My Account > Online Parent Statement  
We recommend that you submit your original Core Funding Application Module for the upcoming programme year before completing the Parent Statement.  
Reminder: The Fee Table determines which version of the Parent Statement (Partner Service or Approved Provider) is presented on the Early Years Hive.
- Activate NCS Funding Agreement  
Programmes > Programme Applications & Returns > All Programme Applications > Available Programme Applications
- Issue Fee Table and Parent Statement  
Display Fee Table and Parent Statement in your service. Circulate the Parent Statement and, where required, obtain the Parent's/Guardian's signature.
- Advise parent/guardians to apply for NCS award in the NCS applicant portal [www.ncs.gov.ie](https://www.ncs.gov.ie)
- Retrieve approved CHICK from parent/guardian and register CHICK on Early Years Hive  
Programmes > NCS > Child Registrations > Retrieve a CHICK
- Advise parent/guardian to make sure claim is correct and confirm claim through the NCS portal  
Payment will not begin until parent has approved claim.

**Important Notes**

- Parent/guardian applying for NCS must have a verified MyGovID.
- Direct parent/guardian to NCS website and application guide in order to support the process.
- Advise parent/guardian of the Parent Support Centre available at 01 908 8530.

### Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Programme Readiness Checklist



**Getting Started:**  
Make sure each item is up to date

- Organisation Details  
My Account > Organisation Profile
- Confirm Service Provider Details  
My Account > Manage Service Providers > Click on Service Name > Review and Click Submit
- Primary Authorised User (PAU)  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Portal Users  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Bank Account  
My Account > Bank Account
- Tusla Registration  
My Account > Tusla Reg Maintenance



**CCSP**

- Create Service Calendar  
My Account > Service Calendars
- Complete Fee Table  
My Account > Service Fees  
We recommend ensuring you are completing the correct version of the Fee Table, depending on whether or not your service will be in Core Funding for the upcoming programme year.
- Complete Parent Statement  
My Account > Online Parent Statement  
We recommend that you submit your original Core Funding Application Module for the upcoming programme year before completing the Parent Statement.  
Reminder: The Fee Table determines which version of the Parent Statement (Partner Service or Approved Provider) is presented on the Early Years Hive.
- Activate CCSP Funding Agreement  
Programmes > Programme Applications & Returns > All Programme Applications > Available Programme Applications
- Issue Fee Table and Parent Statement  
Display Fee Table and Parent Statement in your service. Circulate the Parent Statement and, where required, obtain the Parent's/Guardian's signature.


**Important Notes**

- No new registrations can be submitted for children who were not previously registered on 12 March 2023.
- Children must start within 4 weeks of the service re-opening for the new programme year to remain on the scheme.







### Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme Readiness Checklist



**Getting Started:**  
Make sure each item is up to date

- Organisation Details  
My Account > Organisation Profile
- Confirm Service Provider Details  
My Account > Manage Service Providers > Click on Service Name > Review and Click Submit
- Primary Authorised User (PAU)  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Portal Users  
My Account > Manage User Roles
- Bank Account  
My Account > Bank Account
- Tusla Registration  
My Account > Tusla Reg Maintenance



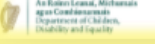


**ECCE**

- Create Service Calendar  
My Account > Service Calendars
- Complete Fee Table  
My Account > Service Fees  
We recommend ensuring you are completing the correct version of the Fee Table, depending on whether or not your service will be in Core Funding for the upcoming Programme Year.
- Complete Parent Statement  
My Account > Online Parent Statement  
We recommend that you submit your original Core Funding Application Module for the upcoming programme year before completing the Parent Statement.  
Reminder: The Fee Table determines which version of the Parent Statement (Partner Service or Approved Provider) is presented on the Early Years Hive.
- Print pre-registration forms and give to each parent/guardian to complete  
Resources > Programme Documents > ECCE Documents
- Activate ECCE Funding Agreement  
Programmes > Programme Applications & Returns > All Programme Applications > Available Programme Applications
- Issue Fee Table and Parent Statement  
Display Fee Table and Parent Statement in your service. Circulate the Parent Statement and, where required, obtain the Parent's/Guardian's signature.
- Register ECCE-eligible children on Early Years Hive

**Important Notes**

- If a session holds less than 8 ECCE-eligible children, the service must get an approved Maximum Numbers Exemption form from ECCE.
- Review ECCE rules.
- Review Compliance checklist.

The above can be found in the Programme Documents section of the Early Years Hive.



# CCC Contact Information



There are 30 City and County Childcare Committees which coordinate the implementation of national early learning and childcare policy and programmes at the local level on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

CCCs support parents and guardians to understand their early learning and childcare options and keep an updated directory of Early Learning Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) services in their local areas.

**For a comprehensive list and contact details for each CCC visit:**

[www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/city-and-county-childcare-committees/](http://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/publications/city-and-county-childcare-committees/)



# Thank you!

