

What is a Sponsor Referral?

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Section 14 of the Childcare Support Act 2018 allows special arrangements where a child can be referred by certain Statutory Organisations for an NCS subsidy where childcare is needed on child welfare, child protection, family support or other specified grounds. There are strict criteria applicable for a referral to be made

See also chapter 14 of the [NCS Policy Guidelines](#).

2. What are the criteria for referring a child for a Sponsor subsidy?

[Schedule 2](#) of the Childcare Support Act 2018 names the Sponsor Organisations and outlines the grounds upon which a referral may be made. Each Sponsor Organisation has a formal agreement with the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth which details the referral criteria for their organisation, as well as the maximum hours and subsidy rates that will apply for that Sponsor body.

3. Who are the 5 statutory Sponsor bodies?

The following designated statutory bodies may make referrals for childcare support under NCS, for the specific reasons outlined:

1. **Minister for Education and Skills:** To support parents under the age of 18 years to remain in education or training through access to childcare services.
2. **Minister for Justice and Equality:** To facilitate access to childcare services for applicants within the meaning of section 2 of the Act of 2015 and programme refugees within the meaning of section 59 of the Act of 2015, so that parents or children can access education, integration and other relevant supports.
3. **Tusla, Child and Family Agency:** To enable participation in a childcare service as part of the provision of child care and family support services by the Child and Family Agency to promote the welfare of children who are in need of additional care or protection.
4. **HSE:** To enable participation in a childcare service where there is an identified need for childcare as an additional support to the home environment to meet child development needs for a child who is under the age of 4 years and who is not enrolled in a pre-school programme funded by the Minister or the Minister for Education and Skills and who would otherwise not attend a childcare service.
5. **Local authorities:** To support homeless persons (within the meaning of the Housing Act 1988) with children that are homeless or moving out of homelessness to access childcare services.

These reasons can be found in [Schedule 2](#) of the Childcare Support Act 2018.

4. How does the Sponsor process work?

A paper referral form is completed by the Sponsor, giving the parent details, the child details, and the referral details.

The Sponsor either posts the referral to us directly or else sends it back to the parent, who then uploads it on their portal or posts it to us for processing.

We process each referral as a Sponsor Application, and a Sponsor Award is created with a CHICK within a short time.

A notification is sent to the Sponsor or the parent with the CHICK details.

5. Is a parent's income considered in Sponsor cases?

There is no income assessment involved in Sponsor cases.

6. Do parents pay fees for a Sponsor place?

No, there is no co-payment. The NCS contract states that providers cannot charge the parent a fee for the Sponsor place.

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth pays the subsidy for the sponsor place.

7. Does the parent have to approve the registration?

No, unlike other CHICKs, registration of a Sponsor CHICK does not require parental approval.

If a parent requires more information on Sponsor Referrals, they can contact the NCS Sponsors Team by phone at **01 906 8535** or by email at sponsors@ncs.gov.ie.

8. When does a Sponsor award end and how is it renewed?

A Sponsor Award will have an end date. A notification will be sent 8 weeks in advance of the end date (via the Parent Portal or by email to the Sponsor/Parent) advising that the award is due to expire.

The Sponsor will review the child's needs and may complete a new referral form where appropriate; this can be submitted as described above.

Therefore, the sponsor referral process effectively starts again with a new referral.

9. Can a provider apply on behalf of a parent?

No, only a Sponsor can make a Sponsor referral, every referral is signed by an official acting on behalf of the Sponsor Organisation.

10. Are there any age restrictions applicable for Sponsor children?

Yes. Each Sponsor Body has its own age rules:

Tusla	Birth to 18 years
HSE	Birth to 4 years
DOE (Department of Education)	Birth to 15 years
IRPP (Irish Refugee Protection Programme)	24 weeks to 15 years
Local Authorities / Homeless Agencies	Birth to 13 years

11. What are the Sponsor Subsidy hourly rates?

The hourly rates are the same across all Sponsor bodies:

< 12 months	€5.87
Pre-ECCE	€5
ECCE / ECCE-eligible / Early Start	€4.54
School-age	€4.31

12. Where can I find more information on the Sponsor process?

For more information on the Sponsor process, you can contact the NCS Sponsors Team by phone at **01 906 8535** or by email at sponsors@ncs.gov.ie.