



To: All registered early learning and care and school age childcare services

Cc: Members EY Forum, CCC Managers, Anna Shakespeare (Pobal), Brian Lee, (Tusla), Darragh O Connor (SIPTU), Elaine Dunne (Federation).

Date: 7 May 2020

Re: **URGENT Request from DCYA for services to volunteer to provide childcare to essential health workers**

Dear Provider,

I am writing to you to request that you support the national effort to manage the Covid-19 pandemic, by indicating whether you are in a position to reactivate your service (or part of your service) to provide an outreach childcare service to essential health workers from Monday May 18. Childcare is crucial to enable our health service to continue to operate and whilst childcare facilities remain closed, Government has asked us to make this service available, on a restricted basis.

Pobal will shortly make available an application form for services who are in a position to volunteer for this service. Also, given the urgency and importance of our ask, Pobal will, over the next few hours, begin to contact services directly to ask you to volunteer.

Services which complete the application form will be assessed by Pobal and DCYA against a number of priority criteria including size and location, and we will select a first group for reactivation of service. If you are selected, Pobal will confirm this with you as soon as possible. If you are not selected at this point in time, Pobal will place your name on a list for a second phase if this is required.

How it will work

We will be asking services to make their staff (or some of their staff) available to support eligible essential health workers within the essential health workers' homes.

Services will identify the number of staff within their service who can provide this full-time service and submit these numbers in an application form to Pobal. A part-time service may also be required by some health staff, but it is expected to be in less demand and hence services will be encouraged to offer a full time service where possible, based on a 45 hour week for this temporary and emergency initiative.

Once Pobal and DCYA have selected the services that will be approved for this scheme, you will be notified.



Pobal will gather the names of eligible families requiring the service and your local CCC will then contact approved services to match families within your capacity.

The staff volunteering for this initiative will remain your employees and under your management.

Prerequisites to sign up

- As always, all staff working with young children will need to have the relevant qualification and be Garda vetted. Given that your staff will be working in a new environment, DCYA has been advised that staff will need to be re-vetted. The Garda Vetting Bureau, ECI and Barnardos have however agreed to turn these applications around very quickly. **Nonetheless, I am asking you to make this application for vetting immediately.** You can apply to Pobal for inclusion in this scheme prior to completion of vetting, but your staff can only be assigned to a family once the vetting is satisfactorily completed. Once you have confirmation that your staff member is vetted, please resubmit your updated application form to Pobal (pipdocuments@pobal.ie.) Only vetted staff will be assigned to families.
- If you are currently availing of the Revenue Temporary Wage Subsidy Scheme (TWSS), you will need to consider how many of your staff can be paid under this childcare for healthcare scheme, within the limits of the TWSS income rules. As a rule of thumb, 50% of your staffing capacity should allow you to remain eligible for this childcare for healthcare scheme without breaking the 25% turnover loss rule imposed by Revenue. In other words, you may wish for some of your staff to remain on the TWSS, and others to take part in the childcare for healthcare scheme.

Prioritisation of full-day services

If over-subscribed, our focus at the outset will be on larger services, but we would ask all services to please consider indicating their interest as soon as possible.

If you are approved to participate, it is likely that you may be asked to provide extended opening hours, in evenings and at weekends, to cover the needs of essential health workers and hence you should factor the staffing needs associated with this into your offer to re-open. Only one staff member will be used per family wherever possible for public health reasons.

Next Steps:

If you are a full day care service, Pobal will call you and ask you to complete an Emergency Volunteer Application template to provide a profile of your service and availability. All other services should consider whether they can volunteer and also fill out the form and return to Pobal.



In applying to participate, please indicate how many staff you have available to work full-time in health workers homes, possibly over extended hours or weekends. Ideally there should be one worker per home for the 45 hour week covered, but where a rota systems is required this should be cleared with Pobal prior to assignment of the second staff member.

If you have any questions on the scheme, your local CCC is available to offer advice.

Payment

Payment will be on the basis of the provision of a 45 hour week for each full-time equivalent childcare practitioner signed up to the scheme or where necessary a 22.5hr week.

The payment rate to services will be €20.71 per hour. This includes a recommended hourly average wage of €15 for staff delivering the outreach childcare. The €20.71 payment also provides for employer PRSI, additional payment to allow for paid annual leave, plus a flat fee of €3 per hour per childcare practitioner for the management and oversight of the outreach childcare and practice resources.

While it is clearly a matter for services to decide pay rates to their staff, DCYA is making provision within the €20.71 for an average of €15 per hour to be passed on to staff.

DCYA will conduct a short review of the scheme after two weeks to assess how it is working.

How to volunteer your service

Whilst the initial focus will be on larger full day care services, all services are requested to volunteer by completing the template on PIP – COVID 19 Emergency Volunteer Application, and email to pipdocuments@pobal.ie.

Pobal will also be contacting all full day care services with over 10 staff over the next 48 hours to support sign-up.

Pobal will contact you as soon as possible to confirm whether or not you are being approved to open on an outreach basis from May 18th.

Your local CCC is available to talk through any concerns or queries you may have in relation to your capacity to apply for this scheme.

Other considerations

DCYA has been in contact with Allianz and has received preliminary approval that existing insurance cover will be extended to cover this outreach service, but you also need to make contact with your insurer and gain approval for this.



DCYA has been working with the regulator Tusla and Tusla is supportive of this proposed measure given the exceptional circumstances that prevail.

DCYA has developed an Outreach Pack and FAQs to assist providers, their staff and parents who avail of the scheme,

Finally, DCYA is conscious of the very significant distress caused to all providers and their staff across the country due to the closure of services on March 12. DCYA has done its very best to maximize the amount of financial support during the closure period to assist the sector's sustainability and to help services reopen after COVID. We appreciate however that many service providers have significantly reduced income and have deep concerns for the viability of their service. We appreciate that this request for this emergency service comes at a time when providers have many other concerns and worries, however, the timing is unavoidable. DCYA has witnessed the great sense of solidarity the sector has already shown for the health service and other frontline services in this challenging time. We would like to thank you all, and your representative groups, for considering this request and for the help and advice that has been offered during this very difficult period.

Wishing you, your families and your work colleagues the very best in these extremely challenging times.

Regards

Bernie McNally
Assistant Secretary