



An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

Guidance on eligibility for childcare

on the phased reopening of Early Learning and Care and School
Age Childcare



Guidance on eligibility for childcare

The Government Roadmap for Reopening Society and Business allows for the phased reopening of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare services, including childminders, from 29th June. Whilst initially the Roadmap indicated that services would resume only for the children of essential workers, this has now been widened.

It is important to note that, as Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare services are private businesses, and now that the Roadmap has extended eligibility for services, the allocation of places is a matter for the service provider. This guidance is provided to help support providers in managing allocation of places when services reopen in a situation where demand is greater than the supply available.

In the best interests of the child and families, children should, as far as possible, be enabled to return to the service they attended Pre-COVID-19. Services availing of the Temporary Wage Subsidy Childcare Scheme (TWSCS) are contractually bound to retain places for families who used those places pre-COVID-19, until such time as the services reopen. There are significant benefits for children's wellbeing and development in maintaining the link with their pre-COVID-19 providers of Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare.

If a service has additional capacity, they may register new families who have not previously used the setting, either on a long-term or a short-term basis depending on the service's capacity.

If capacity is limited, services are asked to prioritise the children of health and social care workers and other frontline workers, where possible. Services are also encouraged to support:

- vulnerable children sponsored under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and children funded through legacy childcare schemes who are experiencing poverty, disadvantage or child welfare issues;
- children with disabilities who previously attended part or full-time early learning and care, including those preparing to start school in September; and
- children whose parents need access to childcare in order to return to work, including children of childcare practitioners.