



21st January 2022

Dear Providers

I welcome the decisions today by Government to start easing restrictions based on the recommendations from NPHE. The recommendations do still place a huge importance on continued Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) measures, isolating if symptomatic, vaccination and booster programmes.

At the outset, I would like to take the opportunity to thank early learning and childcare providers and their staff for the commitment they have shown to children and families since the onset of Covid-19 and their ongoing efforts to effectively implement the IPC guidance, keeping the children in their care safe.

A number of provider representative bodies have asked for guidance from my Department on whether there are any changes for early learning and childcare services.

In the immediate term, the current position is that early learning and childcare services should continue to operate under the sectoral IPC guidance, with play-pods remaining a key feature. This approach is in line with schools and is in effect until 28th February 2022. My officials will keep you updated if there is any change to this.

Also announced by Government today, the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) will revert to the standard rates from 1 February 2022 for most sectors of the economy, including ELC employers. This funding, which amounts to €22 million per month in additional funding for the ELC sector, will continue to meet the full costs of implementing IPC guidance and, in particular, the operation of play-pods.

In addition to the EWSS, a suite of other Covid-19 supports remain in place for the ELC sector, including the antigen programme for early learning and childcare services and the grant to improve ventilation, which remains open to applications until 31st January 2022.



I will continue to engage regularly with the Covid-19 Sub-Group of the Early Learning and Childcare Stakeholder Forum and with public health experts and provide regular updates as necessary.

Roderic O'Gorman, TD

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.