

PRESS RELEASE



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Changes to the National Childcare Scheme fast tracked to extend access to subsidised early learning and childcare for children and families

Minister for Children, Disability, Equality, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman, has announced changes to the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) that will extend access to subsidised early learning and childcare for children and families - benefitting up to 5,000 children and their families in the initial phase.

The National Childcare Scheme provides financial support to help parents to meet the costs of early learning and childcare. Where parents are not engaged in work or study, the Scheme provides an entitlement of up to 20 hours of subsidised early learning and childcare per week (standard hours). Where parents are engaged in work or study, the Scheme provides an entitlement of up to 45 hours of subsidised early learning and childcare per week (enhanced hours).

Currently, the hours spent in pre-school or school are deducted from a family’s entitlement to subsidised hours. Therefore, in cases where the parents are not engaged in work or study, access to subsidised early learning and childcare for children of pre-school and school age is generally only available during pre-school and school holiday periods.

From 2 May, hours spent in pre-school or school will no longer be deducted from a family’s entitlement to subsidised hours. This means all eligible children will have access to subsidised early learning and childcare all year round through the National Childcare Scheme in addition to the pre-school funded under the ECCE Programme and to school.

Commenting, Minister O’Gorman said:

“In Budget 2022, I secured funding to introduce this change to the National Childcare Scheme from September 2022. I am delighted to be introducing this change well ahead of time. This change benefit some of the most disadvantaged children in our communities.”

“We know that early learning and childcare benefits all children, particularly children experiencing disadvantage. The change will ensure these children can access early learning and childcare all year round, to avail of opportunities for rest, relaxation and recreation after school as well as a nutritious meal and time to engage and socialise with their friends.”

Parents who are not in work or study, and are already receiving NCS subsidies for during pre-school and school holidays will be able to find out how to access this new support for wrap-around care from their early learning and childcare provider.

Parents who are not currently getting any NCS subsidies can get information on the Scheme online at www.ncs.gov.ie.

ENDS

NOTES TO EDITORS

The National Childcare Scheme is a scheme that provides financial support to help parents to meet the costs of early learning and childcare. The National Childcare Scheme provides two types of subsidy for children over 6 months of age:

- A universal subsidy for children under 3, with children over 3 who have not yet qualified for the ECCE programme also eligible.
- An income-assessed subsidy for children up to 15.

From September 2022, the universal subsidy under the National Childcare Scheme will be extended to children aged up to 15.

Where parents are not engaged in work or study, the Scheme provides an entitlement of up to 20 hours of subsidised early learning and childcare per week (standard hours). Where parents are engaged in work or study, the Scheme provides an entitlement of up to 45 hours of subsidised early learning and childcare per week (enhanced hours).

Currently, the subsidised weekly hours include any time children spend in pre-school (the ECCE programme) or school. From 2 May, hours spent in pre-school or school will no longer be deducted from a family’s entitlement to subsidised hours. The implications of this change are set out below.

Where all parents/guardian in the household <u>are not</u> in work or study		
<i>Age/education stage of child</i>	<i>Current maximum hours per week of subsidy</i>	<i>Maximum hours per week of subsidy from 2 May</i>
Prior to qualification for ECCE	20 hours (in term) 20 hours (out of term)	20 hours
Qualifying for ECCE and not yet in school	5 hours (in term) 20 hours (out of term)	20 hours

Junior or senior infant classes in primary school	0 hours	20 hours
First to sixth class in primary schools	0 hours	20 hours
Where all parents/guardians in the household <u>are</u> in work or study		
<i>Age/education stage of child</i>	Current maximum hours per week of subsidy	Maximum hours per week of subsidy from 2 May
Prior to qualification for ECCE	45 hours (in term) 45 hours (out of term)	45 hours
Qualifying for ECCE and not yet in school	30 hours (in term) 45 hours (out of term)	45 hours
Junior or senior infant classes in primary school	23 hours (in term) 45 hours (out of term)	45 hours
First to sixth class in primary school	17 hours (in term) 45 hours (out of term)	45 hours

Issued by the Press and Communications Office at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

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