

PRESS RELEASE



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

Record numbers of families and early learning and childcare providers engaging with the National Childcare Scheme

- **90,000 children now benefitting from the National Childcare Scheme, an increase of 38,000 children over the last 12 months.**
- **A 10% increase in the number of early learning and childcare providers offering National Childcare Scheme.**
- **OECD data shows that, in 2021, net childcare costs as a share of the household's net income for lone parents on low income fell below the EU average**

Thursday 10 November

Roderic O’Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has today announced that **90,000** children are now benefitting from the National Childcare Scheme – the highest number since the Scheme began. This figure represents an increase of 38,000 children benefitting from the National Childcare Scheme since this time last year.

In addition, there has been a 10% increase in the number of early learning and childcare providers offering the National Childcare Scheme from this time 12 months ago. This increase is due largely to the new Core Funding Scheme, which requires early learning and childcare providers to offer the National Childcare Scheme to families accessing their service.

Also today, Minister O’Gorman welcomed OECD data that shows over the period 2019-2021, Ireland had the highest decrease in early learning and childcare costs to families across the EU.

OECD data from 2018, before the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme in late 2019, showed that early learning and childcare costs in Ireland, relative to household income, were the highest in the EU for couples on low incomes and third highest for lone parents on low incomes, with couples paying on average 26.5 per cent and lone parents paying 25.2 per cent, compared to the EU averages of 9.6 per cent and 10.5 per cent respectively.

By 2021, early learning and childcare costs in Ireland fell to 14.2 per cent of net income for couples and 5.3 per cent for lone parents - compared to the EU averages of 8.1 per cent and 8.4 per cent respectively.

The data does not take account of enhancements made to the National Childcare Scheme in 2022, which include an end to the practice of deducting hours spent in pre-school or school from the entitlement to subsidised hours from and the extension to the universal subsidy to all children under 15. It also does not include changes to be introduced in January 2023.

An additional €121m was allocated for the National Childcare Scheme under the recent Budget that will bring investment in the Scheme up to €357.6m in 2023. From 2 January 2023, all families accessing registered early learning and childcare will be entitled to receive a minimum hourly universal subsidy of €1.40 off the cost of early learning and childcare under the National Childcare Scheme. With the current minimum hourly universal subsidy set at €0.50 per hour, this represents an additional €0.90 per hour off the cost of early learning and childcare. For families, this means up to €3,276 off their annual bill per child. With up to €1,170 currently available per annum, this represents up to an additional €2,106 off the annual cost of early learning and childcare per child.

Welcoming these developments, Minister O’Gorman said:

“Government is delivering on its promise to make high-quality early learning and childcare affordable and accessible to all children.

“I am delighted that record numbers of early learning and childcare providers are now in contract to deliver the National Childcare Scheme and record numbers of families are now claiming their entitlement under the Scheme. I would urge others to visit www.ncs.gov.ie, call the Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 or talk to their early learning and childcare provider to make sure they are fully availing of the financial supports under this Scheme.

“I am also strongly encouraged by data emerging from the OCED that shows Ireland’s performance in supporting families, and particularly lone parent families, with the cost of early learning and childcare is markedly improving - with Ireland having the highest decrease in early learning and childcare costs to families across the EU over the period 2019-2021.

“While I acknowledge further progress is needed, the enhancements I have introduced to the National Childcare Scheme since coming into this Office through Budgets 2022 and 2023, will bring further reductions in out of pocket costs for early learning and childcare for families and will see further gains in Ireland’s performance in an international context.”

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