



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

EARLY YEARS

**Finance
Governance
and Reform**

Quality

**Operations and
Communications**

Projects

**Policy and
Strategy**

**latest
UPDATE**
from our Minister

Dr. Katherine Zappone
Minister for Children and Youth Affairs



Dear Colleagues,

June 2019

Welcome to the latest edition of our e-bulletin which is designed to keep you up to date with the various developments across the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Division of the Department. As always, we continue to welcome any comments you have or any suggestions on topics you would like us to cover in future editions.

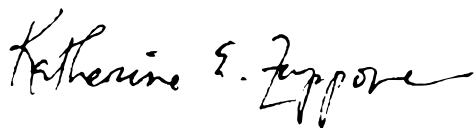
Firstly, I would like to express my gratitude to you all for taking the time to complete the Pobal Early Years Sector Profile survey. The 83% response rate was exceptional and will help ensure that the Profile continues to be a critical source of information for my Department and the sector generally.



I am delighted to say we have announced capital funding of €6.25m which will support fire safety improvements and create additional 0-3 and school-age childcare places. I am also delighted to say we have launched the Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care settings. This publication offers guidance on the refurbishment, renovation and the building of settings to ensure they are accessible and welcoming to children, their families and those working in them.

I would like to remind you that the consultation on school-age childcare is still open until 5th July. Please make sure that you have your say and encourage others to do so as well. Preparations are now at an advanced stage for the roll out of the National Childcare Scheme later this year. Over the summer months I would ask for your help to encourage parents to get their verified MyGovID set up to support the application process.

I am now entering into negotiations with my Government colleagues in relation to Budget 2020 and will continue to seek sustained investment into this sector as I know the positive impact it can have on outcomes for children. I look forward to continuing to work with you to deliver accessible, affordable and high quality Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare for children and their families, while also creating a rewarding and sustainable sector for practitioners.



Katherine E. Zappone T.D.

Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

QUALITY

School-Age Childcare Open Policy Debate

As part of the public consultation on future regulations and standards for School-Age Childcare, the Minister recently hosted an Open Policy Debate. This generated rich discussions and offered us valuable insights from the sector on the priorities, the challenges and solutions to those challenges.



Minister Katherine Zappone at the School-Age Childcare Open Policy Debate in DCYA



A call for [submissions](#) and an online [public survey](#) on future regulations and standards for School-Age Childcare are open until 5pm on **5th July 2019**. We would encourage individuals and organisations to participate.

A report on the findings from the public consultation will be submitted to the Minister in early Autumn. We will continue to update you on progress in this area.

Universal Design Guidelines launched

On 10th June, the Minister launched the **Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings**. These guidelines are an important step in making services accessible to all children and offer guidance on the refurbishment, renovation and building of centres.

This work was undertaken by Early Childhood Ireland and Trinity Haus (Trinity College Dublin) on behalf of the Department and the Centre for Excellence in Universal Design at the National Disability Authority



Pictured at the launch event were: (l to r) Geraldine Delahunt and Chantelle Hughes (Wigwams, Kildare), Takaharu Tezuka (Tezuka Architects), Dr Katherine Zappone, T.D., Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Norma Hanley (Ballinderreen Community Childcare and Education Centre), Evelyn Reilly (Kidz@play) and Teresa Heeney (CEO, Early Childhood Ireland).

AIM support for September 2019 pre-school year – Apply early!!

The AIM application process for the September 2019 pre-school year is now open. We advise that applications should be made as early as possible to ensure that the relevant supports are in place for children when required. <http://aim.gov.ie/news/aim-application-process-for-september-2019-preschool-year-is-now-open/>

AIM Rules 2019/2020 to be published soon

The AIM Rules 2019/2020 will be published on www.aim.gov.ie in the coming weeks. Keep an eye on PIP for updates.



POLICY AND STRATEGY

Developing a new Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare



First 5: A Whole of Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families commits to at least doubling investment in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare by 2028 and a key vehicle to ensure that such significant additional investment delivers for children, families and the State will be a new funding model.

The intention with the new funding model is to design mechanisms to deliver additional funding to Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare providers to ensure greater levels of affordability, quality and inclusion in their services. It is planned that the new funding model will operate in addition to the major funding streams for the universal Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme and the National Childcare Scheme when it comes into operation later this year.

In order to lead the development of the funding model, the Minister is appointing an Expert Group with expertise in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare systems, funding and quality as well as those with expertise in economics and policy. The Group will be asked to agree principles to underpin the new funding model in consultation with stakeholders, identify and consider options on how additional funding for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare can be structured to deliver on policy objectives and design a new model to recommend to the Minister.

A Research Partnership will support the Expert Group with evidence and analysis. Engagement and consultation will also be central to this work. The new funding model is likely to take some time to develop. Further updates will be available as the work formally begins and progresses.

OPERATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS

Programme calls 2019/20 – Contracting Process

Funding Agreements for ECCE, CCSP* and TEC* are now available to activate on PIP for the 2019/20 programme year.

*The CCSP and TEC are roll-over Agreements from the 2018/19 programme year (as referred to in the CCSP Funding Agreement 2018/19, clause 1.10**, TEC clause 1.11). However, it is still necessary for all services to activate these Funding Agreements for the 2019/20 programme year.



New Services: New services wishing to participate in the CCSP and TEC programmes for the first time must first contact their local City/County Childcare Committee in order to commence the contracting process.

You can find the contact details of your local CCC by visiting www.myccc.ie

The following sequential steps must be completed on PIP by all services in order to activate the Funding Agreements.

1. Ensure that you have completed the Primary Authorised User (PAU)
2. Certify your organisation details
3. Certify your service details
4. Activate your Funding Agreement

Further guidance on the contracting process can be found in the [How to Guidance](#) section on the PIP Portal.

****CCSP Funding Agreement 2018/19 clause 1.10:**

"Term" means a one year period from the date of commencement of the Community Childcare Subvention Plus Programme on 20/08/2018, pursuant to this Agreement or such further period as necessary pending the introduction of the Affordable Childcare Scheme ("ACS"), or such similarly worded scheme, to be introduced pursuant to legislation to be enacted in 2018 which will replace the CCS Programme.

Please note the Affordable Childcare Scheme referred to above relates to the National Childcare Scheme (NCS).

Fees Lists and Service Calendars

Fees lists and Service Calendars must be uploaded by Friday 16 August 2019

Please be aware that these dates differ to those outlined in clause 2.1 (e) of the 2018/19 CCSP Funding Agreement and 2.1(e) of the 2018/19 TEC Funding Agreement:



Guidance on how to upload Fees Lists and Service Calendars can be found in the [How to Guidance](#) section on the PIP Portal.

General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) Training

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) came into force on the 25th of May 2018. All organisations are responsible for ensuring that they are compliant with all relevant legislation, including GDPR. Further information can be found on the Data Protection Commission website: <https://www.dataprotection.ie/docs/Home/4.htm>

In response to concerns within the Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare sector relating to GDPR readiness, the Department has made complimentary online GDPR training available for all services to support them in meeting the Data Protection obligations. This training is designed and delivered by iHasco. Further information, including the link to the training site, can be found on Pobal's Childcare Collaboration Portal.





This online training is offered as a support for services in relation to GDPR obligations and provides a high-level overview of the principles of GDPR. Services will need to assess what further actions they may need to take to ensure they are fully informed of their responsibilities in relation to GDPR in an Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare context.

Did you Know?

Anyone with an interest can sign up to receive this e-bulletin by contacting dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie with your name, organisation and e-mail address.

PROJECTS

The National Childcare Scheme

National Childcare Scheme Contracts

Contracting for the National Childcare Scheme opened on the 10th of June. There has been an excellent response so far with **over 1900** providers signing up to participate in the Scheme to date.

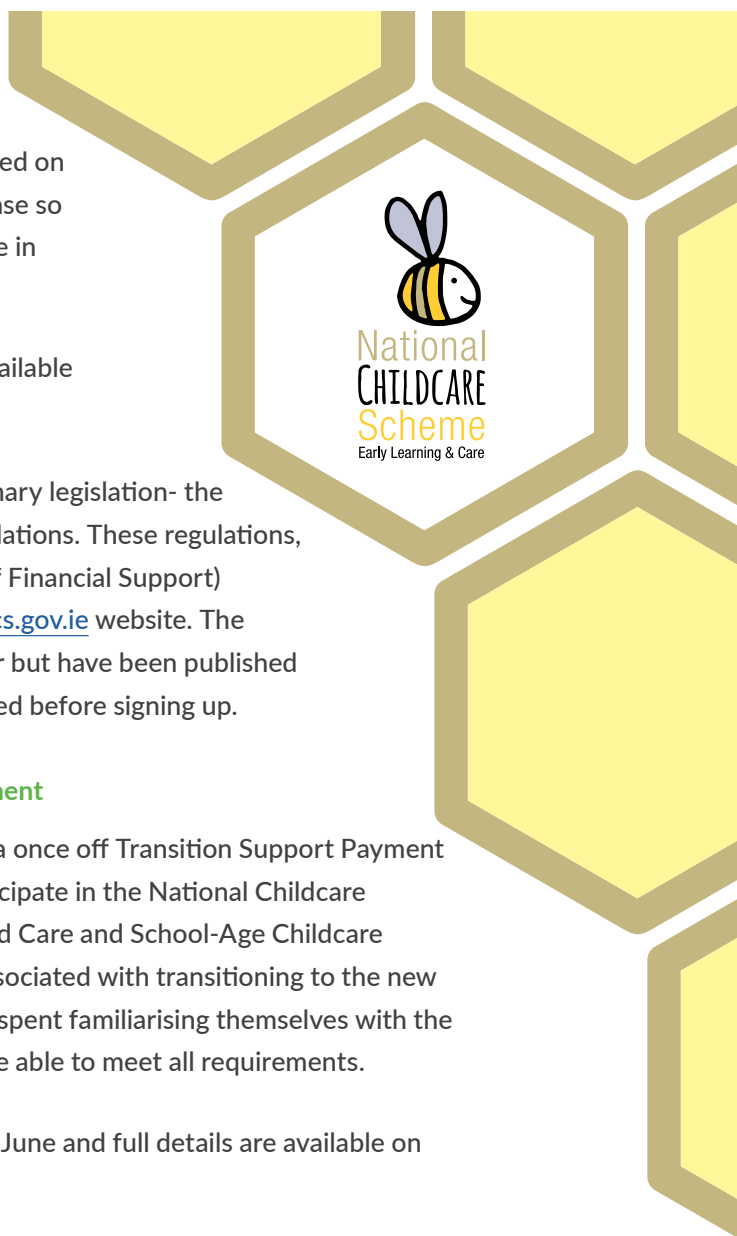
The Contract and a helpful Explanatory Guide are available to read on the [Latest News](#) page of the website.

The Explanatory Guide references the Scheme's primary legislation- the Childcare Support Act 2018- as well as Scheme regulations. These regulations, entitled the Childcare Support Act 2018 (Payment of Financial Support) Regulations, are also available in draft form on the ncs.gov.ie website. The Regulations have not yet been signed by the Minister but have been published in **DRAFT** form so that providers can be fully informed before signing up.

National Childcare Scheme Transition Support Payment

On March 11th, 2019 Minister Zappone announced a once off Transition Support Payment which will be paid to all services who sign up to participate in the National Childcare Scheme. The payment will support Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare Services to meet the administrative requirements associated with transitioning to the new Scheme. It includes supporting services for the time spent familiarising themselves with the National Childcare Scheme, ensuring that they will be able to meet all requirements.

Applications for the payment opened on the 10th of June and full details are available on ncs.gov.ie.



National Childcare Scheme Capital Grant Initiative

Applications for National Childcare Scheme capital funding opened on the 10th of June. Full details are available on www.ncs.gov.ie.

Nationwide Training Programmes

We would like to thank everyone involved in the **Phase 1 Training**, which finished in June. Over 3,500 Early Years professionals attended a Phase 1 Training session and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

If you have any questions regarding **Phase 1 Training**, you can contact your local [City or County Childcare Committee](#). E-learning materials will also be published on the ncs.gov.ie website shortly.

Phase 2 Training Sessions will start on the 26th of August. These sessions will provide practical training on the use of the National Childcare Scheme's IT system, covering both the service provider portal and the parent application process. All sessions will be listed by region on the [Provider Page](#) so that you can book a place at a time and location that suits you.

National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre

A dedicated 'Parent Support Centre' for the National Childcare Scheme opened on the 24th of June. It is specifically available to assist parents with any queries they may have in relation to the new National Childcare Scheme.

The Parent Support Centre is open Monday to Friday from 9:00am – 5:00pm. The contact number is: (01) 906 8530.

National Events

As part of the National Childcare Scheme Communications Campaign, we will be attending events throughout the year to provide information to the public.

Staff from the Department, Pobal and the CCCs have attended events such as Bloom and the National Parents Council Annual Conference, speaking to families about the Scheme.

To ensure that people are ready to apply online, our colleagues from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection have been attending our events to provide information about getting a **verified MyGovID**. We have been verifying mobile phone numbers and MyGovID accounts for members of the public (including our own Minister!), so they can access the fast, safe, secure online application process later this year.

If you are hosting an event and would like National Childcare Scheme information materials, please contact us at ncs@dcya.gov.ie.



Did you Know?

The National Childcare Scheme is on Facebook!

You can find us at <https://www.facebook.com/nationalchildcarescheme/>

We now have dedicated [Frequently Asked Questions for Providers](#).

From more information on the Scheme visit www.ncs.gov.ie or contact us at ncs@dcya.gov.ie

EARLY YEARS EDUCATION POLICY UNIT

NSAI Aistear and Play CPD

The National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative is a collaboration between the Department, the Department of Education and Skills, Better Start National Early Years Quality Development and the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment. The purpose of the initiative is to support the coordinated roll out of *Síolta* and *Aistear*, the national quality and curriculum frameworks. *Aistear* and Play is being delivered by Better Start Quality Early Years Specialists.

Aistear and Play consists of 5 individual workshops (each 2.5 hours in duration) and two onsite support visits with an Early Years Specialist to support participants to apply the learning within their own settings. The aim of the CPD is to support practitioners' understanding and use of *Aistear* and the *Aistear Síolta* Practice Guide to improve the quality of early childhood curriculum for children from birth to six years. The value and importance of play in supporting children's learning and development is a central theme running through the CPD. There is also a focus on developing quality learning environments, facilitating playful interactions and supporting the development of a play-based, emergent curriculum.



NSAI Aistear and Play participants, Cork City, May 2019



The first round of *Aistear* and Play took place between March-June 2019. 294 participants from 60 settings around the country took part.

For further information on the National *Síolta Aistear* Initiative please see <https://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Early-Childhood/national-siolta-aistear-initiative/>

For further information on *Aistear* and Play please contact the National *Síolta Aistear* implementation office at NSAI@betterstart.ie



FINANCE GOVERNANCE AND REFORM

Compliance

It is the Department's responsibility to ensure public money is properly allocated. Because subsidies for the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare programmes are paid on the basis of attendance, compliance visits focus on programmes rules relating to PIP registrations and attendance records. CCS has historically had high levels of non-compliance. For this reason, compliance visits in the first half of the programme year focused on CCS contracts.



We appreciate that this approach may have caused concern for providers, especially those working in difficult circumstances. Ensuring that public money is being spent properly is an important part of making the case for the much-needed increased funding for the Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare sector, which the Department continues to do. To support services, we operate a Case Management system to assist those facing sustainability issues, and local CCCs provide information and support. Contact details for CCCs are available on www.myccc.ie. We will continue to work with the sector to improve compliance rates and it is encouraging that we have seen a high level of engagement from services this year.

For the coming programme year, as previously announced, the CCS programme will close and all CCS children will instead have the opportunity to register onto CCSP. The CCSP programme offers the same subvention rates but greater flexibility for parents and providers. There are differences in the rules that apply, and services are required to familiarise themselves with the rules for all programmes, which are available at www.dcy.gov.ie.

The 2019/2020 programme year will see the introduction of the National Childcare Scheme. In due course the National Childcare Scheme will replace existing programmes (with the exception of the ECCE Programme). The National Childcare Scheme will offer an improved, streamlined approach to Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare to the benefit of all stakeholders.



The Department recognises that the National Childcare Scheme will require providers to familiarise themselves with new rules. Nationwide training and supports have been put in place (see Early Years Projects updates). We plan to continue to work closely with the sector to ensure that good governance is built into the scheme from the outset. Compliance visits will continue to check the rules for all programmes with the focus on working together to ensure that the scheme's benefits and requirements are understood by all.

IN OTHER NEWS...

Leagan Gaeilge

Más maith leat an ríomh-fheasachán seo a fháil i nGaeilge, cuir ríomhphost chuig dcyaey_comms@dcya.gov.ie le d'ainm, ainm na seirbhíse agus do sheoladh ríomhphoist.

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Early Years Division at the Department of Children and Youth Affairs

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