



2024/2025 Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme

Dear Provider,

The 2024/2025 ECCE Programme will be open from 19th August 2024 until 27th June 2025 for 38 week services and until 11th July 2025 for 41 week services to allow for flexibility of services' opening and closing dates and will be administered on the Early Years (EY) HIVE.

The EY HIVE will open for approved providers to submit registrations from 1st July 2024.

Tusla Registration

A service who provides both Early Learning and Childcare and/or School Aged Childcare must be registered with Tusla for both services. The EY HIVE will only permit registrations to be made for the Tusla certificates uploaded. When registering a child there will be an automatic system check to ensure you hold the relevant Tusla certification for the education stage of the child. Otherwise, you will be unable to proceed with the registration until the correct Tusla certificate is uploaded. All facilities/locations operated by a service must be registered with Tusla, have an individual Service Reference Number and children must attend the facility/location in which they are registered.

Activating a Funding Agreement

Fee Tables and Service Calendars must be submitted on the EY HIVE, a minimum of 2 weeks prior to a service opening for the programme year, prior to activating an ECCE 2024/2025 Funding Agreement.

Written Notice to Parents/Guardians

If you change your Service Calendar or Fee Table, the parent(s)/guardian(s) must be given 20 working days written notice of any changes to the Fee Table or Service Calendar. Any changes must be approved in advance by your local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC).

ECCE Pre-Registration Form

To assist services in managing information for registrations, an ECCE Pre-Registration Form is available to download on the EY HIVE. The Pre-Registration Form is available for parents/guardians to complete the relevant details prior to registration. The Eircode is a mandatory field that must be filled in for a registration to be completed. Where an Eircode is unavailable for a property, services should save the registration as a draft and raise a [Request](#) on the EY HIVE quoting its registration identifier code.

The Pre-Registration Form requests ethnicity identifiers, however, this is voluntary information. This information will help develop an identification model for [Equal Start](#), a funding strand which forms part of [Together for Better](#).

The Pre-Registration Form includes a section where the parent's/guardian's written consent is required, before the information can be recorded on the EY HIVE.



Parent Statement

The Parent Statement will remain in place for the duration of the time a family is with a service. The Parent Statement will only be required to be signed once by a family. Only the signature page must be kept on file.

ECCE Applicant Declaration Form

The ECCE Applicant Declaration Form sets out the fee, where applicable, after the free 15 ECCE hours have been offset. It must reflect the published fees, including any discounts, optional extras etc., for each eligible child. As per the terms of the ECCE Funding Agreement, ECCE providers must manually enter the fee information applicable for each eligible child.

Where there is more than one child in a family in receipt of funding under the ECCE Programme, an ECCE Applicant Declaration Form is required for each child. Where there is a change in fees or a change in level of childcare provided to a child, a new ECCE Applicant Declaration Form must be printed and signed by the parent and kept on file for compliance purposes.

ECCE Eligibility

All children must be aged between 2 years 8 months (by 31st August 2024) and not older than 5 years and 6 months (on 27th June 2025) to be eligible for the 2024/2025 ECCE Programme.

ECCE Programme Registration Process

ECCE must be available free of charge to parents/guardians for 3 hours a day, 5 days per week for 182 days for the 2024/2025 programme year, in return for the capitation that approved providers receive from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY). Services may not, under any circumstances, extract ECCE fees from parents/guardians, including non-refundable and optional extra deposits.

Approved providers will be unable to complete a registration for an eligible child without an Eircode being submitted.

The latest an approved provider can register a child is **6 weeks** after the child's start date.

DCEDIY reserves the right to decline or not backdate funding on any "late registrations" (i.e. more than 6 weeks after the child's start date).

In addition to keeping attendance records for all children on-site, Pobal will require attendance records for any registration uploaded on the EY HIVE more than 6 weeks after the child begins in the service. Children should only be registered for the actual days they attend.

Important: Except for compliance purposes, under no circumstances should you cancel an active 2023/2024 registration as this will create an overpayment for your service. If you are registering a child for the 2024/2025 ECCE Programme who is currently registered in your service, please add an additional, separate registration for 2024/2025 ECCE Programme.

Please note, once the child's registration has been completed, the parent/guardian must co-sign the 'Parent Statement'.

Optional Extras

"Gymboree type events" have been replaced with the following; **'Interactive Play and Exploration'** type classes/events (where outside providers deliver a holistic child development fostering



physical, cognitive and social skills in a supportive and engaging environment).

Charging for items which would be expected to be part of a preschool service (e.g. arts and craft materials) is not permitted. Similarly, it is not permitted for services to make payment of optional extra(s) a criterion for admission to the service, or to combine a list of additional services into a single option on the Fee Table.

Minimum Numbers Exemption

If approved providers do not meet the minimum number requirements for the ECCE Programme, for the 2024/2025 programme year, they must apply to the CCC for a Minimum Number Exemption. See chapter 13 of the Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025.

Requirement to Maintain Attendance Records

Attendance records must be maintained for each room/session operated by a service. These records must include the following: date, child's full name, arrival and departure time and absences. The approved provider must also maintain attendance records of registered children that records the daily hours of attendance, in a weekly format. It is recommended that the format of attendance records should not be in daily sheets, but rather each sheet should show at least one week of attendance. Approved providers must also maintain original attendance records and should not destroy or duplicate original records. For further information please see Chapter 9 of Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025.

Force Majeure

Approved providers must apply for Force Majeure with the Scheme Administrator, no later than **5 days** after the incident. The Scheme Administrator will seek supporting proofs for such claims. COVID-19/staff shortages do not qualify as Force Majeure. Under legislation, approved providers must have arrangements in place in their service to ensure that the required adult:child ratios are in place for staff absences.

Staff must continue to be paid during the claimed Force Majeure closure period. The Scheme Administrator may ask for proof that the staff's wages have been paid before granting a Force Majeure claim.

Polling Days

In the case of an approved provider having to close due to the premises the service is located in, is being used as a polling station for elections/referendum, the service will be allowed to close for the day without having to update their Service Calendar. An application for Force Majeure will not be necessary in these circumstances. Proof must be kept on file for compliance purposes.

Affected services providing the ECCE programme are not required to make up that day for the purposes of meeting the 182 day rule in the programme year.

Critical Incidents

A critical incident is an event out of the range of a normal experience, one which is sudden and unexpected, involves a threat to life, or loss of life and can include elements of physical or emotional loss.

Services that are impacted by a critical incident that may involve a closure should contact their local CCC who will approach the DCEDIY on their behalf.



For further information, please refer to Chapter 10 of the Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025 and/or your local CCC.

Non-Compliance with the Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025

An approved provider will receive a sanction (as described below) for persistent non-rectification of non-compliant outcome(s) following a compliance inspection (any programme) and/or failing to engage with the supports provided.

If an approved provider fails to rectify non-compliant outcomes within the given rectification period then, depending on the outcome(s), the approved provider may be referred onto the Compliance Framework. This sanction, if reached, constitutes 6% of an approved provider's annual Core Funding allocation for the programme year. 80% of the sanction is payable when an approved provider is placed on the Framework, and the remaining 20% is payable if the service fails to rectify within the given period. Please refer to Chapter 9 of the Rules for the ECCE Programme 2024/2025.

The ECCE Programme 'Letter to Parent/Guardian' is available to download from the EY HIVE. Please provide a copy of this letter (hard copy or electronic copy) to each parent/guardian wishing to apply for the ECCE Programme in your service.

If you have any queries regarding this process or any aspect of the ECCE Programme, please contact your local CCC. Contact details for your local CCC can be found at www.myccc.ie.

Approved providers can contact the Early Years Provider Centre at eypc@pobal.ie or 01 511 7222 for assistance in administering the rules of the ECCE Programme as well as any technical issues with the EY HIVE. The Scheme Administrator's 'How To' Guides for the ECCE Programme are available on the EY HIVE.

Yours sincerely,

ECCE Operations Team
Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth
June 2024