

FAQs re Early Years Budget 2018 changes:

1. What changes were announced for early years care and education in Budget 2018?

- **ECCE:**
 - Full two programme years for all eligible children from September 18,
 - a 7% increase in capitation rates from September 18.
- **Targeted Schemes:**
 - Full year costs secured for 2018 in relation to more affordable childcare measures introduced in September 2017, including Universal payment and significant increase in CCS and TEC subsidies.
- **'Non-Contact time'/Programme supports payment:**
 - Increase of €3.5m in base spending bringing the total available in 2018 and thereafter to €18m (refer to **Appendix 1** below for more information.)
- **Other measures;** €2.3m additional funding secured in 2018 ; apportioned as follows:-
 - Inspections - €1m
 - Sustainability: €0.7m
 - County Childcare Committees: €0.6m

2. When will the Budget 2018 changes to free pre-school take effect?

- The Budget 2018 changes to free pre-school apply from **September 2018**.

3. How many children benefit from ECCE?

- The numbers benefitting in 2016-17 were:
 - 89,500 in September 2016
 - 112,400 in January 2017
 - 120,800 in April 2017

- The proposed change will only commence in September 2018. So those parents who were expecting to start their children in ECCE in January and April 2018 will still be able to do so.

- Those who would have benefitted from April 2019, and who will now only benefit from September 2019, are children born between January and March 2016, i.e. children who are now 1.5 years old. The 12 extra weeks of free pre-school that this small group received following the Budget 2016 expansion was an anomaly that has now been addressed with this refinement which will ensure that all eligible children can avail of an equal amount of free pre-school. While some of this group may feel they are facing a cut in eligibility, our experience from this year suggests that possibly only 55% of the cohort would be likely to take up the April 2019 entry. In addition, the group is being given more than 1.5 years notice, which seems to be reasonable, particularly as the change will only serve to reduce their total ECCE eligibility to the same duration as other children. They will still be able to avail of a full 2 years ECCE. There is a strong argument for this measure on the basis of equity (giving 76 weeks to all), as well as quality (through enabling service providers to plan more effectively and to offer staff better terms and conditions in their contracts).

- **How many children will start ECCE in September 2018?**
 - The DCYA understands that 114,000 children will start in September 2018. The DCYA will soon make information available to each CCC, as it did in preparation for the 2016 ECCE expansion, re the number of ECCE eligible children in each Electoral Division so that capacity can be assessed. Given that there were 120,000 children in the system in April 2017, it is understood that capacity generally should not be an issue. Where CCCs have evidence to the contrary, DCYA will consider this.

4. How will the increased capitation affect parental fees where parents access extra childcare hours?

- The increase in capitation is targeted at increasing the quality of care and education provided through ECCE, and in particular supporting the recruitment and retention of high quality staff. The increased capitation will contribute to the enhancement of the 3 hour ECCE provision accessed by children. It is not a mechanism to offset fees paid by parents for time their child may spend in childcare unrelated to ECCE provision. DCYA is currently considering mechanisms to manage this increase and ensure it goes to enhance provision to the child within these three hours. These will be communicated as part of the annual preparation process for the forthcoming (2018/19) cycle.

5. If I don't want my child to go to pre-school for five days per week, can they still benefit from free pre-school?

- Yes. Your child doesn't have to attend for five days per week in order to avail of free pre-school. However, your pre-school provider must agree to take your child on a part-time basis. Bear in mind that if a parent, for example, enrolls a child for three days per week, the pre-school provider will only be paid by Government for the days the child attends. A provider may not be able to find a child to take the place for the other two days a week, so this arrangement may not be financially viable for pre-school providers. A provider may prefer to keep the place for a child who attends pre-school five days a week.

6. How will the new measures announced under Budget 2018 affect ECCE eligibility?

- All children born between September and December will have increased eligibility (76 weeks rather than 61 weeks). This will benefit more than 20,000 children each year.

- In addition, all children taking part in the ECCE scheme will benefit from quality improvements that result from the ability of providers to plan more effectively as a result of having a single intake each year. Such quality improvements will benefit all of the approx. 114,000 children who are expected to take part in the programme in 2018-2019.
- There will be no change in eligibility for children born between April and August, who already have 76 weeks eligibility.
- For children born between January and March, in principle there will be reduced eligibility - from 88 weeks to 76 weeks. This new measure will address the inconsistencies that led to a wide range in the number of free preschool weeks a child could avail of – between 61 and 88 weeks – and will ensure a programme that is equitable for all children.
- The change will also have the benefit of equity, ensuring that all children - regardless of their month of birth - will be eligible for the same duration of ECCE.

7. My child will not be aged two years and eight months by 1st September 2018. Can they start in free pre-school during the 2018/19 programme year?

- No. In order for a child to be eligible to be enrolled for free pre-school on 1st September 2018 they must have been born between 1st January 2014 and 31st December 2015. Please refer to **Table 1** below for further details. Parents who choose to send their child earlier will have to pay childcare providers for this service. They should consider other child care supports that they may be eligible for.
- The following table sets out relevant eligibility dates by year of birth:

Table 1: Eligibility for ECCE by month of birth and of enrolment in pre-school

Birth date between	Eligible Enrolment date(s).	ECCE end date
1 st January 2014 - 31 st March 2014	1 st April 2017, 1 st September 2017 + 1 st September 2018*	June 2019
1 st April 2014 - 31 st August 2014	1 st September 2017 + 1 st September 2018*	June 2019
1 st September 2014 - 31 st December 2014	1 st January 2018 + 1 st September 2018*	June 2019
1 st January 2015 to 31 st March 2015	1 st April 2018, 1 st September 2018 + 1 st September 2019	June 2020
1 st April 2015 - 31 st December 2015	1 st September 2018 + 1 st September 2019	June 2020
1 st January 2016 - 31 st December 2016	1 st September 2019 + 1 st September 2020	June 2021
1 st January 2017 - 31 st December 2017	1 st September 2020 + 1 st September 2021	June 2022
1 st January 2018 - 31 st December 2018	1 st September 2021 + 1 st September 2022	June 2023
1 st January 2019 - 31 st December 2019	1 st September 2022 + 1 st September 2023	June 2024

* Children born between 1st January and 31st December 2014 will continue to be eligible for free pre-school under the terms of the ECCE expansion as announced in Budget 2016. ECCE eligibility criteria as announced under Budget 2018 will come into effect with effect from 1st September 2018.

8. Why are there no longer three separate entry points?

- The measure to reduce the number of entry points to one refines the development introduced last year, whereby three intake dates were adopted. This was a recommendation of the 'Right from the Start' report. Further funding has now been made available to give every child access to a full two programme years of free pre-school. One enrolment period at the start of the pre-school year will help streamline the administration process and will make it easier for childcare providers to operate and budget for the programme year. This will also make it simpler for parents to secure places on the ECCE programme for their children.

9. How many free pre-school weeks will my child be eligible to?

- Under the Budget 2018 changes, a child will be eligible for a potential duration of 76 weeks (two programme years) of free pre-school from September 2018. Parents may decide to use less than this for various reasons including for example, depending on their child's date of birth, their wish to send their child to school at 4 rather than 5 years of age.

10. Why are these changes only coming into effect from September 2018?

- In Budget 2018 it is being announced that, from September 2018, children will be eligible to start free preschool when they turn age **2 years and 8 months**, and can continue in free pre-school until they start primary school (once the child is not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the relevant pre-school year i.e. end June). This refinement of the free pre-school programme will build on the expansion of this programme as announced under Budget 2016. It would be impractical to introduce these changes in the middle of a programme year as to do so would be disruptive for parents and childcare providers alike. However, we hope that you will appreciate that this extended provision, when introduced, will ensure that from the age of two years and 8 months, all children in Ireland will be able to access free education, either in pre-school or in primary school. This is a significant step forward for children and families.

11. Early Years and School Age Capital 2018

- €6.86m in Capital will be made available in 2018. More information regarding the 2018 Capital programmes will be made available in due course.

Appendix 1

Programme Support Payment (PSP) Payment - Case Studies:

Service A

For a small privately operated service providing early years care and education for 30 children in a rural environment, PSP 1 and 2 provided a payment of €2,567.

This is a small rural private service

Programme	Registrations 2016/17	PSP 1 2016/17	*PSP 2017/18	2
ASCC	7	€224	€224	
CCSP	5	€212	€336	
CEC AS	0	€0	€0	
CEC PS	0	€0	€0	
CETS	1	€63	€63	
ECCE	17	€1,445	€0	
**CCSU	0	€0	€0	
Total	30	€1,944	€623	

* based on same level and type of registrations as 2016/17

** actual registrations to date 2017/18

Service B

For a medium sized community service providing early years care and education for 83 children in an urban environment, PSP 1 and 2 provided a payment of €21,418.

This is a medium sized urban community service

Programme	Registrations 2016/17	PSP 1 2016/17	*PSP 2017/18	2
ASCC	0	€0	€0	
CCSP	11	€1,113	€1,659	
CCS	59	€6,054	€9,191	
CEC AS	1	€56	€63	
CEC PS	1	€112	€112	
CETS	9	€1,484	€1,484	
ECCE	1	€90	€0	
**CCSU	0	€0	€0	
CCSR	1	€0	€0	
Total	83	€8,909	€12,509	

* based on same level and type of registrations as 2016/17

** actual registrations to date 2017/18

Service C

For a large privately operated service providing early years care and education for 113 children in a

rural environment, PSP 1 and 2 provided a payment of €9,388.

This is a large rural private service

Programme	Registrations 2016/17	PSP 1 2016/17	*PSP 2017/18	2
ASCC	3	€147	€147	
CCSP	18	€1,820	€2,765	
CEC AS	6	€336	€378	
CEC PS	1	€112	€112	
CETS	38	€609	€609	
ECCE	21	€1,625	€0	
**CCSU	26	€0	€728	
Total	113	€4,649	€4,739	

* based on same level and type of registrations as 2016/17

** actual registrations to date 2017/18

Service 4

For a large community service providing early years care and education for 136 children in an urban environment, PSP 1 and 2 provided a payment of €20,070.

This is a large urban community service

Programme	Registrations 2016/17	PSP 1 2016/17	*PSP 2017/18	2
ASCC	0	€0	€0	
CCSP	21	€865	€1,435	
CCS	76	€5,541	€8,869	
CEC AS	0	€0	€0	
CEC PS	0	€0	€0	
CETS	0	€0	€0	
ECCE	39	€3,360	€0	
**CCSU	0	€0	€0	
CCSR	0	€0	€0	
Total	136	€9,766	€10,304	

* based on same level and type of registrations as 2016/17

** actual registrations to date 2017/18

Calculations of PSP

2016/17 payment in June was calculated as follows:

ECCE: the no of registrations (FTE) during each full week in May was calculated; week with Max FTE was then used to calculate the basic ECCE & Higher capitation for 7 days.

CCS/CCSP: payments based on all approved registrations (regardless of start & end date) within programme year CCS/CCSP/CCSR/CCST - Rate (subject to session types, i.e. full time/part time/sessional and band profiles- A/AJ/B) x 7 days applied to registrations

TEC: payments based on a snap-shot period of registrations enrolled for at least one full week in January 2017 - Rate (subject to session types, i.e. full time/part time/sessional) x 7 days applied to registrations

For 2017/18, the payment in December, we have used the same registration level and type as 2016/17 in the case studies and applied the relevant new rate x 7 days.