

## ECCE Information

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides a free year of early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. In general, children are eligible for the ECCE scheme if they are aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months on 1 September of the year that they will be starting. The upper age limit can be extended in some cases – see 'Rules' below.

The State pays a capitation fee to participating playschools and day-care services. In return, they provide a pre-school service free of charge to all children within the qualifying age range for a set number of hours over a set period of weeks (see 'How the ECCE scheme is provided' below).

In general, children only qualify for ECCE in one school year. However, a child who has been assessed as having a disability may be able to spread their free pre-school year over 2 years - see 'Children with special needs' below.

**Eligible age range:** In general, children are eligible for the ECCE scheme if they are aged between 3 years 2 months and 4 years 7 months on 1 September of the year that they will be starting. This means that children born between 2 February 2006 and 30 June 2007 (both these dates included) are eligible to take part in the scheme for the school year 2010/2011.

For the year starting in September 2011, children born between 2 February 2007 and 30 June 2008 (both these dates included) will be eligible.

For the year starting in September 2012, children born between 2 February 2008 and 30 June 2009 (both these dates included) will be eligible.

**Exemptions from age limit:** If your child is over the eligibility age requirement due to special needs they may be able to get an exemption from the upper age limit for the ECCE Scheme. You should write to the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) seeking an exemption from the age limit (see 'How to apply' below).

If your local primary school's entry age policy requires children to be aged over 5 years and 7 months before starting school, you can also apply to the OMCYA for an exemption from the upper age limit.

**How the ECCE scheme is provided:** The pattern of hours of free pre-school education depends on the type of service that your child attends and the weekly pattern that the service operates.

- If your child attends a half-day or "sessional" service, such as a playschool, the normal pattern for the free pre-school year is 3 hours a day, 5 days a week, over 38 weeks. If your child attends for more than 3 hours, you will be charged for the extra time.
- If your child's sessional service cannot open for 5 days a week, the normal pattern for the free pre-school year is 3 hours and 30 minutes a day, 4 days a week, over 41 weeks.
- If your child attends a full-time or part-time day-care service, the normal pattern for the free pre-school year is 2 hours and 15 minutes per day over 50 weeks. If your child attends for longer than this each day, you will be charged for the extra time.

- To facilitate parents whose children attend a full or part-time service for only 3 days a week, such a service can opt to provide 3 daily free pre-school sessions of 3 hours 45 minutes each week over 50 weeks.

**Content and quality of service:** Childcare services taking part in the ECCE scheme must provide an appropriate pre-school educational programme which adheres to the principles of Síolta, the national framework for early years care and education. Síolta co-ordinators and staff of the local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC) will support participating services with assistive visits and advice.

There are general terms and conditions for the ECCE scheme and a leaflet for parents on the website of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. There is also an Information Note outlining the detail of the age limits.

**Children with special needs:** When the scheme was first set up, a second pre-school year was allowed, as an exceptional measure, for children with severe disabilities who would benefit from an additional period in a mainstream pre-school setting. This provision is not being continued beyond August 2011.

Instead of this, if your child has been assessed as having a disability and would benefit from attending pre-school for 2/3 days a week rather than 5 days each week, they can be allowed to spread their free pre-school year over a 2-year period. For example, a child with special needs may attend a pre-school service for 2 days per week in the first year and 3 days per week in the subsequent year. You will need to provide supporting documentation when applying for this type of arrangement - see 'How to apply'.

**Rates:** There is no charge to parents for the playschool or day-care hours provided under the ECCE scheme. The State capitation fee pays the playschool or day-care service to provide these ECCE hours. However, if your child attends for extra hours, you will have to pay for these extra hours in the normal way.

A service may charge parents for extra activities. However, these must be optional and the service must provide other appropriate activities to children who don't take part in the optional activity being charged for.

**Booking deposits:** The service may ask you for a booking deposit, which cannot be more than twice the weekly capitation fee (see below). Any deposit you pay must be repaid to you by the end of September of the year your child starts.

**How to apply:** To get a place for your child please contact us or drop in to us. Our phone numbers, email and postal address are on our contacts page and on the page for the individual services.

**You will need to provide your child's PPS number and a copy of their birth certificate.**

To get an exemption from the upper age limit, write to the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA) seeking an exemption. If your child is over the age limit due to special needs, you should enclose a copy of an assessment of need from the HSE or else an assessment by a consultant. A letter from a GP will not be enough to get an exemption for your child.

- If your child is over the age limit due to the local primary school's entry age policy, you must enclose a letter from the school principal, specifying their entry age policy and the enrolment of the children in their school.
- To request a spreading of the ECCE year over a 2-year period for a child with a disability, write to the OMCYA enclosing a recent and detailed assessment report from the HSE. Where for good reason an assessment report from the HSE is not available, an assessment report from the treating consultant will be accepted. A letter from a GP will not be enough to get an exemption for your child.

### **The Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS)**

The Community Childcare Subvention Scheme (CCSS) 2008-2010 operates as part of the National Childcare Investment Programme 2006-2010, which is administered by the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). It is a support scheme for community based childcare services to provide quality childcare at reduced rates to disadvantaged parents.

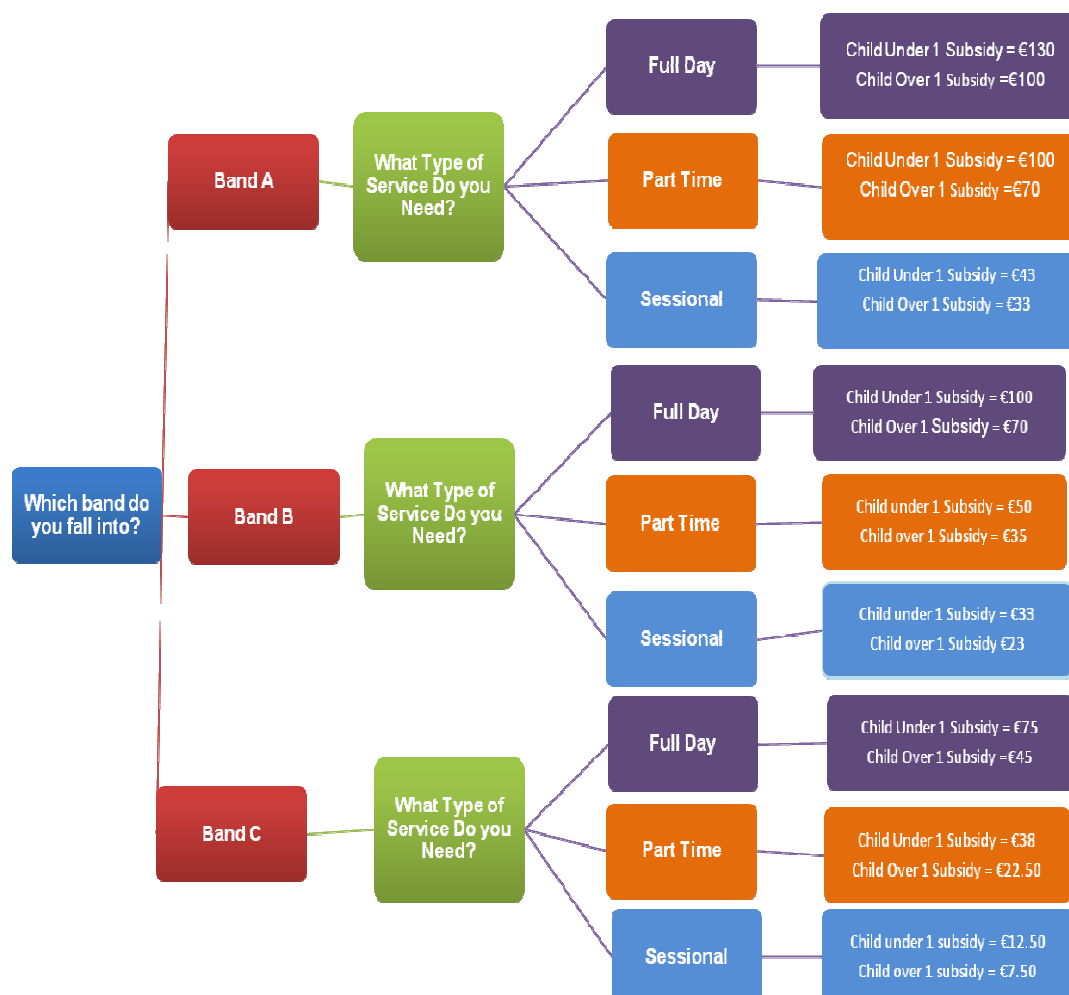
The scheme operates through a tiered fee system, with maximum and minimum fees set at appropriate levels. Childcare services will be subsidised to enable reduced fees to be charged to certain groups of parents. All monies received under the subvention scheme will go directly to the childcare service.

Eligible parents can access childcare places in community childcare facilities at a reduced cost through the Community Childcare Subvention Scheme 2006-2011. Subsidies are available for parents in receipt of social welfare payments, Family Income Support (FIS) or are engaged in education, training or work experience.

If you are entitled to any of the payments/supports listed below you may be entitled to a reduced cost place.

Band A	Band B	Band C
One Parent Family Payment Widows or Widowers Pension Jobseekers Benefit/Allowance Farm Assist State Pension Blind Pension Guardians Payment Illness or Injury Payment Disablement Benefit Invalidity Pension Disability Allowance Carer's Benefit/allowance Supplementary Welfare	Family Income Supplement FAS Training Allowance Part Time Job Incentive Scheme HSE Referrals	Medical Card GP Visit Card Any other criteria set by your facility & agreed with the OMCYA

Allowance		
Community Employment		
Domiciliary Care Allowance		



## The Childcare Education & Training Support Scheme (CETS)

### Overview – CETS Programme

The CETS programme is managed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs on behalf of FAS and the VECs. FAS and the VECs, in conjunction with the Dept. of Education and Skills, decide who is eligible and the main terms and conditions of the programme.

There are about 2,800 places in total available under the programme. These are divided between FAS and VEC parents, with full-time, part-time and afterschool places available.

The purpose of the programme is to benefit parents on eligible FÁS and VEC courses.

Most of the places will be allocated throughout the year as the need arises.

A number of providers who were in the programme will get an initial allocation. All other providers who were accepted into the programme will get no allocation to begin with, but can apply for individual places as eligible parents seek places in their facility.

If a parent has contacted their County Childcare Committee (CCC) looking for a place and the CCC decides your service is suitable, the CCC will contact you to ask you to take a CETS child. You are entitled to refuse a place if you are unable to take the child.

Alternatively, a parent may decide to come to you looking for a CETS place. Please see "CETS Checklist for Childcare Providers" below for information required from a parent for a CETS place.

#### **Approval:**

Under Government accounting rules, the Department must approve each place allocated by the CCC. The Dept. will usually approve each request for a new place within one full working day and the CCC will then inform the parent or provider.

#### **Summary of what the parent does:**

- The eligible parent gets a letter from FAS / the VEC (see templates below) giving their entitlement to CETS and contacts a provider and / or the CCC to get a suitable CETS place.
- Once they start a course, the parent will provide a letter to the service from FAS / VEC saying they have started the course.
- The parent fills in a CETS Parent Declaration form and sends it to the Department through the provider.
- The parent signs an attendance sheet every week.

#### **Summary of what the provider does:**

- The provider applies to be in the CETS and signs their contracts and returns them.
- The provider might be included in the initial allocation or they may not; if not, they can look for a place for qualified parents as the need arises.
- The provider keeps copies of letters from the parent confirming their eligibility and participation in courses.
- The provider sends on the CETS Parent Declaration form to the Department.
- The provider gets the parent to sign the attendance sheet every week and sends it at the end of each term to the CCC.