

Frequently Asked Questions for Parents/Guardians Regarding the ECCE Programme

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[ECCE Programme](#)

Q: What is ECCE?

The ECCE Programme is a free, preschool programme available to all children within the eligible age range. It provides children with their first formal experience of early learning prior to commencing primary school.

Q: When does the ECCE Programme run?

The ECCE Programme generally runs from September to June each year for 38 weeks.

Q: What is the eligibility criteria for ECCE?

The eligibility of a child for ECCE is they must have turned 2 years and 8 months on or before 31st August, and not be older than 5 years and 6 months on or before 30th June, to be eligible for the current programme year.

Q: What are the City/County Childcare Committees (CCCs)?

The CCCs are funded by the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) to act as the local agent in the delivery of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC). Parents/Guardians can contact their local CCC if they have any questions or issues in relation to their childcare provision www.myccc.ie.

Q: What is an approved provider?

“Approved provider” means a Tusla registered provider of an ELC service or a combined ELC and SAC service in accordance with the ECCE Programme who has entered into the ECCE Funding Agreement with the Minister.

[Split Place Exemptions](#)

Q: Can my child attend 2 different services?

Yes, a child's ECCE place can be split between 2 services in the following circumstances:

- Joint custody arrangement
- Working arrangements
- Where a full 5 day place may be unavailable

- ECCE place be split between a specialist and mainstream preschool where a child has an additional need

Q: How can I apply for a split place exemption?

Requests for split place exemptions should be submitted in writing to the Early Years Schemes Oversight Unit of the DCEDIY at EYQueries@equality.gov.ie.

Q: What information do I need to apply for a split place exemption?

Please include child's name, date of birth, the reason for the split place, and the 2 service reference numbers of the services attended. Both approved providers will be able to give you their service reference numbers to apply.

A service reference number is used by the Scheme Administrator to identify the service.

Q: Who is the Scheme Administrator?

Pobal are agents appointed by this Department and are the Scheme Administrator of the ECCE Programme.

[ECCE Registration Process](#)

Q: What information do I need to register my child for ECCE?

You need your child's full name, date of birth, child's PPS number, and Eircode.

Q: What happens if I do not have a PPS number for my child?

You will need to contact the Department of Social Protection (DSP).

Q: How do I register my child for ECCE?

You will need complete a Pre-Registration form. The Pre-Registration form is available from your approved provider. The service will use the information from this form to submit your details through the Early Years HIVE system.

[Pre-Registration Form](#)

Q: What is a Pre-Registration form?

If you are enrolling your child in the ECCE Programme, you need to complete this form entering the home address including Eircode, name of the child, date of birth, and PPS number of the child.

You will also need to complete your child's start and end date, as agreed with your approved provider, and the total number of days per week that your child will attend ECCE.

The Pre-Registration form is provided to the parents/guardians by the approved provider.

[Ethnicity Identifiers](#)

Q: Do I have to complete the part in relation to ethnicity identifiers on the Pre-Registration form?

While it is not mandatory for parents/guardians to provide data on ethnic or cultural backgrounds, the information may be useful for the purposes of allocating appropriate resources in schools to meet the individual needs of the children from these communities and to comply with a number of

international reporting requirements for children from these countries. This information is also used for statistical analysis and in order to underpin future policy and planning within DCEDIY.

Q: Are there any other forms that I need to complete for the ECCE registration process?

Yes. You are also required to complete/sign an ECCE Applicant Declaration form. Please see more information below on the ECCE Applicant Declaration form.

[The Fee Table](#)

Q: What is the Fee Table?

While ECCE is a free programme, if you are availing of additional childcare hours, an approved provider's fee table shows details of all the fees agreed between the parent/guardian and the approved provider, as well as details of any additional charges, discounts, optional extras etc. agreed by the parent/guardian and applied by the approved provider.

Q: Where can I find a copy of the most up-to-date Fee Table for my service?

The fee table must be kept updated at all times and be displayed in a prominent place onsite for parents/guardians to see, as well as on all the approved provider's platforms of online platforms. You can also access the Fee Table online at the [EY HIVE](#).

[Deposits](#)

Q: Is there a deposit for ECCE?

An approved provider may charge a refundable deposit to hold an ECCE place for a child.

Q: How much is the deposit for ECCE?

The maximum deposit a provider may charge is equivalent to 4 weeks ECCE payment, i.e. €276. This deposit must appear on their fee table and the approved provider must give an accurate description and the total cost of the deposit.

Q: Is the deposit refundable?

The deposit must be returned to the parent/guardian once the registration has been approved. There are no exceptions to this rule.

If a parent/guardian has any issue getting their deposit returned, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

[Optional Extras](#)

Q: Do I have to pay for optional extras to avail of the ECCE Programme?

It is at the discretion of the parent/guardian as to whether they want to avail of optional extras. You do not have to opt in to any optional extras if you do not want to.

Q: What are the optional extras allowed on the ECCE Programme?

The only optional extras that an approved provider are currently allowed to charge for are:

- Food (children must also have the option of bringing their own snack/lunch instead).
- 'Gymboree' type events (where outside providers deliver an educational or entertainment based activity).

- Nappies/pull-ups (where applicable).
- Baking (where this is a regular part of the programme).
- One paid preschool trip (entry fees, cost of transportation).

Anything outside of this list is not allowed.

[Additional 30 Minutes](#)

Q: What is a sessional service?

Tusla (Child and Family Agency) define a sessional service as a preschool service in an Early Years Service offering a planned programme to children for not more than 3.5 hours per session.

Q: Can my child avail of additional time in a sessional service?

Yes, if your sessional service offers an additional 30 minutes and your child is enrolled, then your child can avail of 30 additional minutes in the service.

[Voluntary Donations/Administration Fees etc.](#)

Q: Are voluntary donations/administration fees etc. allowed for the ECCE Programme?

No. Voluntary donations/administration fees etc. are not allowed in the ECCE Programme. If your approved provider has charged you a voluntary donation/admin fee etc., please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

[Fee Changes](#)

Q: If I am availing of additional hours/optional extras and my approved provider intends to change the fees, how much notice should my approved provider give me before a fee change?

Parents/Guardians must be given 20 working days written notice of any change to the approved providers' fees. This Fee Table change must have been approved by your local CCC.

If a parent/guardian has any issue in relation to fees/changes in fees, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

[ECCE Calendar](#)

Q: What is an ECCE Calendar?

The ECCE calendar, which is given to you by your approved provider, shows the days the service is not open during the 38 week period that the programme runs for. Overall, the ECCE Programme should be offered for 182 days of the programme year.

[Calendar Changes](#)

Q: How many days' notice should my approved provider give me before a calendar change?

Parents/Guardians must be given 20 working days written notice of any change to the approved providers' calendar.

If a parent/guardian has any issue in this regard, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

Q: My approved provider has closed for a day without giving 20 working days' written notice, what should I do?

If your approved provider has not offered an alternative day for the closure, and you haven't been given the required 20 working days' notice, please raise the issue with your local CCC. Details of your local CCC can be found at www.myccc.ie.

[ECCE Applicant Declaration](#)

Q: What is an ECCE Applicant Declaration form?

The ECCE Applicant Declaration form outlines information which has been submitted to the Scheme Administrator to verify eligibility of a child for the ECCE Programme. The fee outlined where applicable has been calculated subject to funding approval.

The parent/guardian has to declare that the child will attend the service and confirms the level of service. It also notifies the parent/guardian, the requirement to provide 4 weeks' notice to withdraw their child from the service. Please be aware non-attendance for 4 weeks or more will result in the cancellation of the child's ECCE place unless there are exceptional circumstances. Please refer to the questions on special circumstances below for further information.

It is very important that you sign this form and return a copy to your approved provider.

If a parent/guardian has any issue in relation to any information contained in the ECCE Applicant Declaration form, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

Q: I have more than one child registering for ECCE. Can I have one Applicant Declaration form for all of my children?

No. Where there is more than one child in a family in receipt of funding under the ECCE Programme, an Applicant Declaration is required for each child.

Q: Are there any other forms to complete/sign during the ECCE process?

Yes. You must also complete/sign a Parent Statement.

[The Parent Statement](#)

Q: What is the Parent Statement?

Your approved provider is required to provide a Parent Statement outlining the approved provider's fees for any additional hours of childcare as well as details of any optional extras, discounts, etc. that are being availed of and have been agreed between the approved provider and the parent/guardian and applied by the approved provider.

Q: Is there a deadline to sign and return the Parent Statement to my approved provider?

It is very important that you sign the Parent Statement and return it to your approved provider within 4 weeks of receipt.

If a parent/guardian has any issue in relation to any information contained in the Parent Statement, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

Attendance

Q: What is the provision for ECCE?

The ECCE Programme must be provided for 3 hours per day, 5 days per week, over 38 weeks or 182 days over the ECCE programme year by your approved provider. These hours/days/weeks should have been agreed upon with your approved provider before your child began attending the service for ECCE.

If a parent/guardian has any issue in this regard, please contact your local CCC at www.myccc.ie.

Q: Is there a cut-off period that my child needs to be in attendance in the service once they are registered in the ECCE Programme?

A child must be in attendance at the end of the 4th week after the child's registration has been approved. If the child is not in attendance by this time, the child's ECCE registration will be cancelled.

Q: Can I change the number of days of attendance of my child in the service?

Only if the approved provider can cater for the request in their service. If you require further assistance in this regard please contact your local CCC.

Q: Can a provider change the number of days my child attends the ECCE Programme?

No. All children must be offered the full 15 ECCE hours. Any reduction to the 15 ECCE hours must be with the consent of the parent/guardian.

Q: What happens if my child attends the service less than what was originally agreed upon?

Where attendance has been less than the registered hours in each of the previous 4 weeks, the approved provider must adjust the registration to reflect this unless they apply to the Scheme Administrator (Pobal) for special circumstances, where they may be able to retain the registrations beyond 4 weeks.

Q: What happens if my child is not in attendance in the service for 4 consecutive weeks?

If your child is not attending the service, your approved provider should, within the first week of the absence commencing, contact you directly to establish the cause of your child's absence. If your child has not attended the service for 4 consecutive weeks without a qualifying special circumstance, the approved provider must end date the registration.

Q: What are special circumstances?

A special circumstance is an allowable exception to the attendance rule.

Q: How do I apply for special circumstances?

A special circumstance can be applied for by the approved provider to the Scheme Administrator to retain the registration beyond 4 continuous weeks up to 6/12 continuous weeks. Proofs may be requested at a later date by the Scheme Administrator. Acceptable proof may include a letter or medical certificate which can be uploaded on to the EY HIVE by the approved provider (as provided by and with the agreement of the parent/guardian).

Q: What qualifies as a special circumstance?

- A family bereavement

- Extended travel once a year to the birthplace of the child or either of the child's parents/guardians
- Prolonged illness (more than 4 weeks), of either the child, the parent/guardian or a sibling

Q: What are the maximum absences for prolonged illness, bereavement, etc.?

A child can be consistently absent for up to 6 weeks during a family bereavement or extended travel to the child's or the parents' birthplace. Absence during a prolonged illness for the child, a parent/guardian, or sibling can be for up to 12 weeks.

Q: What happens if my child needs to attend a series of medical or therapeutic appointments during the ECCE programme year, are they allowed to miss a day a week for a period of time? Will my child be able to continue attending the ECCE Programme?

Yes, your child may attend an ECCE service during a series of medical or therapeutic appointments. A completed form (made available through your approved provider) supported by medical certificate/letter to include dates of absence, must be submitted by yourself directly or through your approved provider to apply. This application must be completed 4 weeks from the first date of under attendance.

Q: How many times can an application for medical/therapeutic appointments be granted?

This can only be granted once in a programme year.

Q: Can I apply for special circumstances via post?

Parents/guardians can choose to apply for a special circumstance via post directly to the Scheme Administrator. The parent/guardian will need to get the form from their approved provider. The postal address to send all parent/guardian special circumstances forms is Early Years Parent Centre, PO Box 13105, Southside Delivery Office, Cork City.

Q: What is the Pobal Parent Support Centre?

Pobal, the Scheme Administrator, have a Parent Support Centre available to provide guidance and assist parents/guardians with any queries they may have about the programme. The Parent Support Centre can be reached Monday to Saturday from 8.00am – 6.00pm at (01) 906 8530.

The Parent Support Centre is where parents/guardians can mail their application for special circumstances if they would rather keep their reason for applying confidential.

Q: Can I avail of another childcare scheme alongside ECCE?

Yes. If you're availing of additional childcare hours, you can apply for funding under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) via www.ncs.gov.ie. Please contact your local CCC for more details at www.myccc.ie.

[Leaving a Service](#)

Q: Can I move my child to a different service during the ECCE programme year?

Yes, but you must give 4 weeks' written notice to the approved provider.

Q: Do I have to give notice to my approved provider if I want to move my child to another service?

Yes, you must give 4 weeks written notice to your approved provider that you intend to move your child to a different service. Failure to do so will result in your new provider not being able to register your child until a 4 week period has elapsed.

Q: Can I leave my approved provider if I don't give notice?

Yes, but you will not be able to register your child in the ECCE Programme in a different service until 4 weeks have elapsed. The approved provider will be able to claim up to 4 weeks of ECCE subvention for your child.

Q: What happens if Tusla is closing my service?

In circumstances where Tusla is closing a service, a parent/guardian is entitled to remove their child from the service and re-register the child in a new service. The parent/guardian can re-register their child without being required to serve the normal 4 week notice period.