

FAQS FOR PARENTS

1. What is changing for families on the National Childcare Scheme (NCS)?

There are two changes to the NCS which will result in more parents getting more subsidised hours of early learning and childcare in Tulsa registered services. All centre-based early learning and care providers are registered with Tulsa. Suitable qualified childminders can also register with Tulsa, which will give parents using their service access to NCS subsidies.

1.1. Extension of the universal NCS subsidy

The universal NCS subsidy provides €0.50 per hour towards the cost of a registered early learning and childcare place, for a maximum of 45 hours per week. This is worth up to €1,170 off your annual early learning and childcare costs.

The universal subsidy is not means tested – all parents can claim it. Following this Budget, the universal subsidy will be made available to all families with children under 15 years of age under this (currently the universal subsidy is available to children before they start ECCE, the universal pre-school programme).

This change will be introduced in September 2022.

1.2. Change in practice of deducting hours spent in pre-school from the entitlement to subsidised NCS hours?

There will be a change in practice of deducting hours spent in pre-school or school from the entitlement to subsidised NCS hours. This means that you will be able to use your full awarded subsidised NCS hours regardless of whether your children are in pre-school or school. If your award is for 20 hours and your child is in school for more than 20 hours a week you will be able to use your NCS hours for 20 hours of after-school care per week during the school term.

This change will be introduced in 2022, the date has not yet been finalised, but your early learning and childcare provider will be able to let you know when the change is introduced.

The following table shows the hours available for you to use throughout the year when this change is implemented compared to what is currently available.

What will it mean if I am standard hours? That is where all parents/guardian in the household are not in work or study?

<i>Age/education stage of child</i>	<i>Current maximum hours per week of subsidy</i>	<i>Hours available to use year round</i>
Prior to qualification for ECCE	20 hours (term time) 20 hours (non term)	20 hours
Qualifying for ECCE and not yet in school	5 hours (term time) 20 hours (non term)	20 hours
Junior or senior infant classes in primary school	0 hours	20 hours
First to sixth class in primary schools	0 hours	20 hours

What will it mean if I am on enhanced hours? That is where all parents/guardians in the household are in work or study?

<i>Age/education stage of child</i>	<i>Current maximum hours per week of subsidy</i>	<i>New maximum hours per week of subsidy year round</i>
Prior to qualification for ECCE	45 hours (term time) 45 hours (non term)	45 hours
Qualifying for ECCE and not yet in school	30 hours (term time) 45 hours (non term)	45 hours
Junior or senior infant classes in primary school	23 hours (term time) 45 hours (non term)	45 hours
First to sixth class in primary school	17 hours (term time) 45 hours (non term)	45 hours

1.3 How do I apply for the NCS?

All families with children under the age of 15 in registered early learning or childcare can apply for NCS subsidies. You can find information on www.ncs.gov.ie. You can apply online or by post. If you are applying online you will need

- A verified MyGovID account
- The date of birth and Personal Public Service Number (PPSN) for each of the children you are applying for

If you apply by post you will need to ring the NCS Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 and request a postal application form. You can ring them between 9 to 5, Monday to Friday.

1.4 If I am already receiving NCS subsidies but they are lower than the new 50 cent per hour universal subsidy - do I need to reapply?

No you won't. Any award increasing as a consequence of this change will be automatically applied. Anyone with an award below 50 cent will be raised to that amount and other awards may see some small increases on foot of this new minimum.

1.5 If I am already receiving NCS subsidies, do I have to apply for additional hours when the practice of deducting hours spent in pre-school or school from the entitlement to subsidised NCS hours changes?

If you are already getting an NCS subsidy, you will receive an email when this change is introduced. Your provider will then be able to register you for the new hours and you will then be able to confirm those hours in the same way you have for your original registration.

This change will be introduced in 2022. The date has not yet been finalised.

2. CHILDMINDERS

2.1 My children go to a childminder, can I get any help with costs?

All early learning and childcare providers, whether centre-based or childminders working in their own homes, who register with Tusla can take part in Department funding schemes, including the NCS which provides subsidies to early learning and childcare fees.

Currently few childminders have registered with Tusla as most childminders are outside the scope of regulations and registration. In April 2021 the Department published the National Action Plan for Childminding, which sets out a phased and incremental approach to bringing all non-relative childminders within the scope of regulation and support. The National Action Plan commits to introducing childminder-specific regulations and opening up the National Childcare Scheme to childminders within 2-3 years.

Further information about childminding, the National Action Plan and the National Childcare Scheme is available from your local County Childcare Committee.

3 New funding scheme

3.1 Will the new funding scheme reduce my early learning and childcare costs?

Parents whose children attend services that are signed up to the new funding stream will benefit from improved affordability.

Participating services will commit, from September 2022, not to increase their fees from September 2021 levels.

This means that parents will not be faced with fee increases, and the full affordability effects of the NCS, and the universal ECCE Pre-school Programme, will be felt by parents.