

Early Childhood Care and Education

What is the ECCE scheme?

The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme provides early childhood care and education for children of pre-school age. From September 2016, children can participate in the ECCE scheme from 3 years of age and continue until they transfer to primary school (provided that they are not older than 5 years and 6 months at the end of the pre-school year). This is an increase in the number of weeks than previously available on the ECCE scheme.

The total number of ECCE weeks a child can avail of will depend on:

- the child's birth date
- the age at which the child begins primary school

Children are able to enrol in pre-school at 3 different points (September, January and April) in the school year in order to access the scheme. This is subject to there being a vacancy in your preferred early years setting.

Eligible age range

To avail of the ECCE programme with effect from	Children must have been born between the following dates (both dates inclusive)
April 2017 – June 2017	1st January 2012 – 31st March 2014
September 2017 – June 2018	1st January 2013 – 31st August 2014
January 2018 – June 2018	1st January 2013 – 31st December 2014

A more comprehensive table with the number of weeks a child is eligible can be viewed here:

[Your-childs-eligibility-for-the-ECCE-programme.pdf](#)

For information on what to look for when choosing an early years' service see our webpage:

<https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/information-parents/choosing-childcare/>

Access and Inclusion Model (AIM)

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr Katherine Zappone TD, has introduced a new model to enable children with disabilities to access and fully participate in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programme.

The Access and Inclusion Model (AIM) is a child-centred model, involving seven levels of progressive support, moving from universal to the targeted, based on the needs of the child and the pre-school provider. Further information is available at [Access Inclusion Model](#) website <http://aim.gov.ie/> and [Access and Inclusion Model \(AIM\) - Information and Contact Leaflet](#).

Affordable Childcare Scheme

The Affordable Childcare Scheme is a new national scheme of financial support for parents towards the cost of their childcare. It will replace the existing targeted childcare subsidisation schemes with a single, streamlined and more user-friendly scheme. The new scheme will provide a system from which both universal and targeted subsidies can be provided towards the cost of childcare. It will not affect the ECCE scheme as it is intended to provide 'wraparound' care for preschool children and in the targeted subsidies, for school age children also. It is intended that this new Affordable Childcare Scheme will be available from September 2017.

In the case of **targeted subsidies**, these will be payable for children from 6 months of age up to 15 years of age. The level of subsidy will depend on the investment available and on a family's income.

The **universal subsidy** is for children between the ages of 6 and 36 months (or until the child qualifies for the free pre-school programme if later) who are availing of childcare by a Tusla registered childcare service. The universal subsidy will not be means-tested and will be available for families at any income level.

For more information on the proposed Affordable Childcare Scheme see our website : www.earlychildhoodireland.ie or the Department of Children and Youth Affairs website : <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/>