

1. What is the current ECCE scheme?

Every child in Ireland is entitled to free pre-school before they begin primary school. Currently each child receives:



3 hours per day Monday to Friday



over 38 weeks of the year (Sept - June)

Eligibility under the current ECCE scheme is for children from age 3 years and 2 months to 4 years and 7 months.

2. How is the scheme being expanded?

The programme is being expanded starting in **September 2016** to offer children free preschool hours from the age of **3 years**.

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

There will now be **3 points** during the year when a child can enrol in the scheme. The following table demonstrates the age criteria for the ECCE year starting from September 2016:

To avail of the ECCE Programme from:	Children must have been born between the following dates (inclusive):
September 2016 (Until June 2017)	1 st January 2012 - 31 st August 2013
January 2017 (Until June 2017)	1 st January 2012 - 31 st December 2013
April 2017 (Until June 2017)	1 st January 2012 - 31 st March 2014

3. Did you defer your ECCE place this year, despite being eligible?

If your child is eligible for the ECCE scheme under the current rules (i.e. if your child was born between 2nd Feb 2011 and 30th June 2012) but did not take up their place, then your child may NOW be able to avail of Free Preschool. This is subject to there being a vacancy in your preferred early years setting.

Your child will be eligible to continue in the scheme in September 2016 (assuming your child will be younger than **5 years and 6 months** at the end of June 2017).

The table shows the age criteria for the current ECCE pre-school year

To avail of the ECCE scheme during the year:	Children must have been born between the following dates (inclusive):
September 2015 - June 2016	2 nd February 2011 - 30 th June 2012

ECCE "Free Preschool Year" Guide for Parents



Late enrolment into this year's Free Preschool Year (ECCE scheme) is possible.

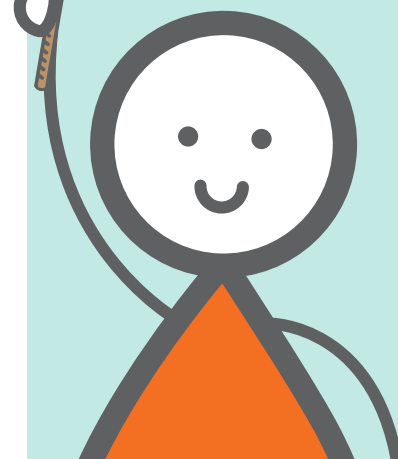


If you are already paying for a place you may be entitled to a refund.



Expansion of the programme will begin in September 2016.

Budget 2016:
What has Changed?



4.

Did you take up an ECCE place this year at your own expense?

If your child is eligible for ECCE this year under the current rules AND you have been paying for a preschool place since September, you may now be able to avail of Free Preschool AND you may be **entitled to a pro-rata refund** for the weeks you have already paid for.

5.

How to apply for a refund: speak to your childcare provider



You should act now. Your childcare provider may be able to enrol your child in the ECCE scheme. Usually registrations can be back-dated for up to 8 weeks, but it may be possible to back-date the registration for a longer period.

You need to speak to your childcare provider immediately and ask them to register your child for ECCE on the "PIP system", from the date your child started in your service this year. They will need to submit the registration with a registration request to explain why it is late. You should request that they give the following reason for the late registration request: that you only decided that you wanted your child to undertake ECCE this year following the Budget announcements.

If the registration is approved your childcare provider will receive a refund and will be required to pass it on to you.

Keep Up to Date!

Early Childhood Ireland has produced this guide for parents, using the best information available to us at the time.

For further details on the above and to keep up with developments:



The Early Childhood Ireland Website:

<https://www.earlychildhoodireland.ie/work/policy-advocacy-2/budget-2016-childcare/>



The Early Childhood Ireland Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/earlychildhoodireland>



Department of Children and Youth Affairs:

<http://dcya.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?fn=%2Fdocuments%2FECCE-Scheme%2Fintro.htm&mn=chit&nID=2>