

**General Terms and Conditions governing participation in the
Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Scheme**

September 2010

1. A participating service provider must have an agreed contract with the Minister for Health and Children and be:
 - (a) notified to the Health Service Executive (HSE) as a pre-school service and have a satisfactory level of compliance with the Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No. 2) Regulations 2006, or
 - (b) a service provider which is registered with the Irish Montessori Educational Board (IMEB) and was not previously notified to the HSE.
2. Administration of the scheme shall be the responsibility of the Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (OMCYA). The Term of the contract shall be from September 2010 to August 2012, however, it will be open to either party to withdraw from the contractual agreement at the end of August 2011 subject to the provision of 3 months notice to the other party.
3. Participating service providers must be trading as a sole trader, partnership, limited liability company or school Board of Management, and must demonstrate tax compliance by providing an up to date Tax Clearance Certificate.
4. Participating service providers must agree to use grant funding received under the ECCE scheme to provide a free pre-school year in Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) place, as provided for under the terms and conditions of the scheme, to all qualifying children in return for the capitation fee paid to the service provider by the OMCYA.
5. Participating children must normally be more than 3yrs 2 months and less than 4yrs 7 months in September of the relevant year. For a child to be eligible to participate in the Scheme in September 2010, she or he must have been born on or after 2 February 2006 and on or before 30 June 2007. In September 2011, a child must have been born on or after 2 February 2007 and on or before 30 June 2008. Exceptions will be allowed where children have been assessed by the HSE, or a treating consultant, as having special needs which will delay their entry to school or it is appropriate to accept children at an older age due to the enrolment policy of the local primary school.
6. Subject to the exception set out in this condition, children will not be allowed to participate in the scheme in more than one period of provision, running from September to August of each year. Where a child has been assessed by the HSE or a treating consultant as having a significant disability by either the HSE or the treating consultant and where the HSE or the treating consultant has confirmed that the child would benefit significantly from a second free Pre-School Year that child may, at the discretion of the OMCYA, be allowed to participate in the scheme for an additional year. This discretion will not be applied where the free Pre-School Year is being provided in a specialised service for children with disabilities.
7. Participating service providers are expected to have a minimum enrolment of 8 children in their pre-school year. Subject to compliance with all other contractual requirements, exceptions will be considered in the case of:
 - service providers which have an enrolment of at least 8 children but, for good reason, only 3 or more are in their pre-school year and the remainder will be eligible for a pre-school year in the following year, and

- smaller service providers which are considered appropriate settings for delivery of the pre-school year but, for good reason, have an enrolment of not less than 5 children in their pre-school year.
8. Participating service providers must agree to provide an appropriate educational programme for children in their pre-school year, which adheres to the principles of Síolta, the national framework for early years childhood education. Participating service providers will be supported in meeting this requirement through the assistance of Síolta Co-ordinators and their local City or County Childcare Committee (CCC). Participating service providers must agree to accept assistive visits and advice from Síolta Co-ordinators and staff of the local CCC.
 9. A pre-school year catering for 16 to 20 children, as appropriate to the setting, must be delivered by a Pre-school year Leader assisted by a childcare worker. Where a pre-school year caters for not more than 8 or 10 children, as appropriate, it must be delivered by a Pre-school year Leader. Pre-school year Leaders must hold a certification for a major award in childcare/early education at a minimum of level 5 on the National Framework of Qualifications of Ireland (NFQ) or an equivalent nationally recognised qualification or a higher award in the childcare/early education field. During the period September 2010 to August 2012, the qualification requirement will be considered to be met where a person can demonstrate that he or she has achieved a certification for an award in ECCE that includes significant content covering the core knowledge areas, child development, early learning, health and welfare and has at least 2 years experience of working in a position of responsibility with children in the 0-6 age range.
 10. Participating service providers will be paid in a capitation grant for eligible children enrolled and attending its service, at the start of each term or period of payment, as applicable. The capitation fee will, normally, be equivalent to €64.50 per week for 38 weeks, in the case of a playschool sessional service provider. A higher capitation fee, equivalent to €75 per week for 38 weeks, will be payable to playschool sessional service providers where all Pre-school Leaders hold a bachelor degree in childhood/early education (minimum of Level 7 on the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) or equivalent) and have 3 years experience working in the sector, and where all Pre-school Assistants hold a relevant major award in childcare/early education at level 5 on the NFQ or its equivalent. In the case of a full or part-time daycare service provider, the capitation fee will be equivalent to €48.50 per week for 50 weeks.
 11. Service providers can participate in the scheme on the basis of a number of options.

A playschool sessional service provider will be required to provide a pre-school service for 3 hours per day, five days a week for 38 weeks (183 days) per year, in return for a capitation fee of €64.50 per week. *(Exceptions may be allowed where, for good reason, it is not possible for a sessional service provider to operate over 5 days. Where an exception is allowed on this basis, a service will be allowed to participate in the scheme on the basis of providing the pre-school year for 3 hours 30 minutes per day for 4 days per week. In such cases, a service provider will be required to provide the pre-school year over 41 weeks (157 days) and references to 38 week services should be taken as applicable to these services.)*

A full or part-time daycare service provider will be required to provide a pre-school service for 2 hours 15 minutes per day, five days a week for 50 weeks (241 days) per year, in return for the capitation fee of €48.50 per week. *Where for good reason one or more children attend a full or part-time daycare service for 3 days a week only, the service provider can participate in the scheme on the basis of providing the pre-school year to those children for 3 hours 45 minutes per day for 3 days per week. In such cases, a service provider will be required to provide the pre-school year over 50 weeks (145 days) and references to 50 week services should be taken as applicable to these services.*

Arrangements for the pre-school provision may vary as follows. A full or part-time service provider may choose to provide a sessional service over 38 weeks of a year (or 2 sessional services each day) while a sessional service provider may choose to provide 2 hours 15 minutes per day over 50 weeks. Where a service provider proposes to participate in the scheme by providing a 38 week service and a 50 week service, this should be indicated clearly on the application form completed.

12. In all cases, participating service providers must operate the relevant pre-school provision free to parents in return for the applicable capitation grant and parents should be given access to the Pre-School Service where their child only attends the pre-school element of the service. However, participating service providers may charge parents for optional additions as follows:
- hours which are additional to the free pre-school year requirement. In the case of a full or part-time service, the service provider will offer additional hours to the pre-school provision which they will charge for. In the case of a sessional service provider, an additional 30 minutes per day may be offered as an optional addition which can be charged for. A part-time service provider within the 38 week model can offer up to 2 hours per day as an optional addition which can be charged for;
 - optional additional services can also take the form of various one-off or on-going activities or services such as outings, birthday parties, specific teaching resources such as dance or music, and food but should not include activities which would generally be regarded as a normal part of a pre-school service, e.g. general arts and crafts activities.

Note: Participating service providers must ensure that parents are informed that their agreement to additional hours or to any optional charge is not compulsory and that agreement is not a condition of initial or continued enrolment and appropriate programme based activities are provided to children not participating in an optional activity where this takes place during the required period of pre-school provision. Booking deposits may be required from parents provided this is not more than twice the weekly capitation fee applicable to the service and provided it is repaid to parents by the end of September 2010, or September 2011, as applicable.

13. All places provided under the scheme by a service provider must meet the requirements in terms of length per day, days per week and weeks per year. It is not mandatory that children attend every day but service providers should prioritise places for children where parents indicate that they intend to avail of the place for at least 4 days each week. Playschool service providers should enrol children under the scheme on the basis of providing a full place. However, where for good reason a service provider provides part-places, i.e. where two or more children share one pre-school place and each attends for a number of days per week, this will be permitted. In such circumstances the service provider will be paid a pro-rata capitation grant (i.e. the grant will be calculated by reference to the total number of children attending each day rather than the total number of children attending per week). Should additional capacity arise in the service during this period e.g. a child leaves to take up a full pre-school year place in another service, the additional capacity should be made available to another child or children already attending the service.
- 14.1 Where a service provider participated in the ECCE scheme during January to August 2010 and wishes to re-enter the scheme from September 2010, it should have completed and returned an application form to the OMCYA by 30 April 2010. The application form must be accompanied by (1) an up to date Tax Clearance Certificate, (2) copies of the staff qualifications held (or details of any changes to qualifications since a previous application) and (3) the applicant's bank details and email address.
- 14.2 Where a service provider did not participate in the ECCE scheme during January to August 2010 and wishes to enter the scheme from September 2010, it should have completed and returned an application form to its local City or County Childcare

Committee (CCC), accompanied by the details referred to in paragraph 14.1, by 30 April 2010.

15. Service providers will be required to complete all contractual requirements and have a contract in place with the OMCYA by July 2010. A later date may be permitted where the OMCYA deems it appropriate. Contractual requirements will include requirements governing record-keeping, accounts, reporting and audit procedures. All approved providers will be required to submit for approval, a Fees Policy to their local CCC at contract stage which demonstrates that, where children attend for more than the minimum hours, the capitation is used in full to reduce the fee charged to parents for additional hours. The OMCYA will require service providers to communicate with the Office by e-mail where required, and to make an electronic return in September 2010, and on other date(s) thereafter, giving details of eligible children enrolled and for whom the capitation grant is being claimed.