



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige**
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Minister O’Gorman announces suite of new measures to support the early learning and childcare sector in the latest wave of Covid -19.

13 December 2021

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman TD, has today announced a suite of new Covid-19 measures to support the early learning and childcare sector, including:

- €10 million Grant Programme for Improved Ventilation and Other Measures to Reduce Transmission
- Student Temporary Employment
- Updated Covid-19 Resource Pack

€10 million Grant Programme for Improved Ventilation and Other Measures to Reduce Transmission

The objective of this once-off exceptional Grant Programme is to support services to improve ventilation, given the need to mitigate risks associated with Covid-19 in line with the current National Public Health guidance. HEPA filters will be among eligible items under this Programme. The Grant Programme will also enable providers to introduce other measures to reduce Covid-19 transmission.

Student Temporary Employment Arrangements

On a temporary basis Further and Higher Education Institutions will, where possible, facilitate the temporary release of students (until end January 2022) who are undertaking relevant studies and who meet eligibility criteria to work in early learning and childcare settings.

To enable students to work temporarily in the sector to assist with the Covid-19 response, on a temporary basis, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has introduced an accelerated process for assessment of eligibility to work in the sector for students who are currently enrolled on a recognised level 6, 7 or 8 course and have completed the equivalent of a level 5 award. Details will be available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/000073-recognition-of-an-early-years-qualification/>

In addition, a facility for advertising temporary posts will be available on www.myccc.ie, week commencing 13 December. Early learning and childcare services that wish to advertise a temporary post on this site should contact their local City / County Childcare Committee.

Updated Covid-19 Resource Pack

An updated Covid-19 Resource Pack will be disseminated to support early learning and childcare providers, including childminders to raise awareness among staff and parents of the current public health guidance. It will also signpost services to additional Covid-19 supports available to sector.

Today's announcement follows the recent announcement to restore the enhanced rate of the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) until end January. Since August 2020, registered early learning and childcare employers have been eligible to access the EWSS without having to demonstrate the 30% reduction in turnover required of other employers.

EWSS at enhanced rates amounts to an investment of €34 million per month in the sector and is estimated to cover, on average, 80% staff costs and 50% operating costs.

Commenting on the new suite of measures, Minister O'Gorman said: -

"Children's health and well-being is at the forefront of all our work. Early Learning and childcare providers have risen to the challenge of adapting to the current Covid-19 restrictions. To further support their efforts and make these critical services safer for children, their families and the early learning and childcare workforce, I am pleased to announce this grant programme to improve ventilation.

I am also announcing temporary employment arrangements for students, where colleges will – where possible – facilitate students of early learning and care education programmes to work in settings until the end of January 2022 to relieve current staff supply pressures owing to Covid-19. I would like to thank Further and Higher Education Institutions for their support with this measure. Thanks also to the students for their offers of help.

Information on these announcements together with the new digital pack of resources on responding to Covid-19 is being disseminated to early learning and childcare services nationally".

Further measures, including the introduction of an antigen testing programme for early learning and childcare services (similar to the programme in schools) will be announced in the coming days.

Editor Notes:

Grant Programme for Improved Ventilation and Other Measures to Reduce Transmission

The Grant Programme for Improved Ventilation and Other Measures to Reduce Transmission will be administered by Pobal on behalf of the Department. Further information on the application process, including detailed application guidelines, will be made available to services from 16 December 2021.

Early learning and childcare providers are encouraged to contact their local City/County Childcare Committee with any queries on the grant programme and the application process.

The breakdown of the allocation to early learning and childcare services is as follows and is available to registered services that are in receipt of funding from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth:

Number of Children Registered	Grant Amount Available
1-49	€1,500
50-100	€3,000
100+	€4,500

Student Temporary Employment Arrangements

In light of the current staffing pressures in early learning and childcare services, resulting from the high level of Covid-19 cases in the community, on a temporary basis Further and Higher Education Institutions will, where possible, facilitate the temporary release of students (until end January 2022) who are undertaking relevant studies and who meet eligibility criteria to work in early learning and childcare settings.

To enable students to work temporarily in the sector to assist with the Covid-19 response, on a temporary basis, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth has introduced an accelerated process for assessment of eligibility to work in the sector for students who are currently enrolled on a recognised level 6, 7 or 8 course and have completed the equivalent of a level 5 award. Details will be available at <https://www.gov.ie/en/service/000073-recognition-of-an-early-years-qualification/>

In addition, a facility for advertising temporary posts will be available on www.myccc.ie from early in the week of 13 December. Early learning and childcare services that wish to advertise a temporary post on this site should contact their local City / County Childcare Committee.

Issued by the Press and Communications Office at the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Tel: 01 647 - 3153/3032

Email: media@equality.gov.ie

This press release has been sent to you because your name is included in a mailing list maintained by the Press & Communications Office of the Department Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth

Press Office

Communications Unit