

PRESS RELEASE



**An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
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Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

Minister O’Gorman announces new scheme to pilot the provision of hot meals to children in early learning and childcare settings

Tuesday 22 November 2022

- **€150,000 scheme to pilot the provision a range of meal options to children, including the provision of hot meals.**
- **Pilot sites will include early learning and childcare settings operating in areas of concentrated disadvantage.**
- **Results from pilot scheme to inform wider work under way to develop a DEIS type model for early learning and childcare.**

Roderic O’Gorman, T.D., Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth today announced €150,000 in funding for a scheme to pilot the provision of meals, including hot meals, to children in early learning and childcare settings.

The pilot scheme, which is being funded under Dormant Accounts Funding, will test a range of meal options for children in early learning and childcare settings operating in areas of concentrated disadvantage.

The three meal options in the pilot scheme will be:

- Breakfast or snack
- Breakfast or snack, plus a packed lunch for children to take home
- Hot meal or snack

As well as funding, pilot settings will have the assistance of a dietitian to support the selection of the meal options.

The pilot scheme will be subject to an evaluation that will include consultation with children and their families, educators and service managers.

The pilot scheme is one of a range of measures committed to under *First 5*, a whole-of-government strategy for babies, young children and their families, to help tackle early childhood poverty and to support children's health, learning and development.

The results of the pilot scheme will inform decisions about wider roll out as well as work ongoing in the Department to develop a DEIS-type model for early learning and childcare, which aims to provide services with a proportionate mix of universal and targeted supports to support children and families accessing their services who are experiencing disadvantage.

Pobal will support the delivery and evaluation of this pilot scheme.

In announcing the pilot scheme, Minister O'Gorman said:

"Early learning and childcare services work very hard every day to support children experiencing disadvantage and are uniquely placed to ensure these children can access nutritious meals and snacks – which is so important for children's health, learning and development.

Already, as required by regulation, children attending these services on a full-time basis are provided with two meals (one hot) and two snacks throughout the day. This covers a significant proportion of their daily food intake – as much as 70 percent.

For children attending these services for shorter periods however, the provision of food is far more limited. Under this scheme, a range of meal options, including a hot meal, will be piloted among this cohort.

The results of the pilot scheme is being undertaken under First 5 and as part of wider work underway in my Department to develop a DEIS-type model for early learning and childcare".

Anna Shakespeare, CEO of Pobal said:

"Pobal is delighted to partner the Department on this important initiative given the impact this intervention will have on children experiencing disadvantage."

ENDS/

Notes to Editors:

Under the [Child Care Act 1991 \(Early Years Services\) Regulation 2016](#), 'a registered provider shall ensure that adequate and suitable, nutritious and varied food and drink is available for each pre-school child attending the pre-school service'.

The Quality and Regulatory Framework that support the regulations expands on regulation 22 and explains what services must currently provide:

Sessional Services	Part Time	Full Day
Up to 3.5 hours	Up to 5 hours	5 hours plus
1 meal 1 snack	2 meals 1 snack	2 meals 2 snacks (1 meal hot)
1880 services	1316 services	1504 services

- Children in Full Day Care – that is, for more than 5 hours – should have at least two meals and two snacks offered to them, one of which is a hot meal.
- Children in Part -Time Care – that is, care for up to a maximum of 5 hours – should have at least two meals and one snack, though it is not necessary to have a hot meal.
- Children in Sessional Care – that is, up to 3.5-hours – should have one meal and one snack. (In practice, this often means that, if a child attending a sessional service, they usually brings a packed lunch from home and the service provides a snack).

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

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