



Expressions of Interest for participation in the independent financial review of sessional early learning and childcare services.

Dear Service Provider,

The Department has commissioned Frontier Economics to complete an independent financial review of sessional early learning and childcare services. The Department wishes to invite sessional services to express their interest in participation in this review.

Sessional services provide a valuable service to children and families across the country, and their continued operation plays an important role in the provision of affordable, sustainable and high-quality early learning and childcare in Ireland. The Minister is committed to working with sessional services to ensure they are sustainable. Through the new funding model, *Together for Better*, there have been numerous actions taken to support the sustainability of all services, such as the introduction of supply-side funding through Core Funding, as well as the continued increase of investment in the sector with expenditure to exceed €1 billion in 2023.

The independent financial review aims to gather timely and robust data to help inform developments to the funding model. The review will involve two stages of data collection:

- 1) Frontier Economics will collect financial information through a questionnaire by email. To ensure the validity and accuracy of the findings of the review, verification of information will be a requirement to participate in this review. Verification documentation may include, for example, monthly income and expenditure reports with supporting evidence such as bank statements and bills.
- 2) Frontier Economics will then conduct one-on-one interviews by phone or video call. These interviews will provide an opportunity for providers to share their views on their own financial circumstances with reference to the financial information collected in stage one.

All sessional only services are invited to express their interest in participation in the independent financial review by completing and returning [this form](#) to ELCfinance@frontier-economics.com by 5pm on Wednesday 8th February.

Please note, if the review is oversubscribed, Frontier Economics will complete a selection process aiming to achieve a sample which captures a range of experiences. Numbers participating in the review are limited to 50 services maximum given the time available for completion of the review. If you do not wish to participate there is no requirement for action.

The Department would like to take this opportunity to encourage sessional services to express their interest in participation in this review which will provide critical information and evidence to underpin developments to our schemes and policies.

Best Regards,

ELC and SAC Division



Participant Information on the financial review of sessional early learning and childcare services.

What is involved?

This independent review conducted by Frontier Economics will involve an in-depth review of your service's financial situation using detailed information on income and expenditure and analysis of the impact of the early learning and childcare funding streams.

Who will participate?

Once you have indicated your service's interest in participating by sending a completed expression of interest form to Frontier Economics, Frontier Economics will request your service's profile data from the Department. The Department will provide this using existing information held by the Department and Pobal. Frontier Economics will then decide on the final participation list of services. The identities of selected services who participate in the review will be held confidentially within the team at Frontier Economics.

The number of services involved will be limited to a maximum of 50 given the constraints of the high level of input required from services and tight time-line. Please note that in order to enable this Independent Review to fulfil its remit, open and transparent engagement is paramount, including provision of verification documents. Services who find that they are not able to fully engage at the necessary level may not be able to continue within the review.

What will I have to do during the review?

You will be asked to complete a questionnaire requesting data from your service's financial records, followed by an interview to discuss your understanding of your service's financial position and the drivers of financial viability and your future expectations. The questionnaire will need to be completed between the 13th and 24th February, while interviews will be undertaken between the 6th and 24th March.

Further details on the required information and the practical logistics of the two steps are provided in the accompanying presentation slide pack. Questions can also be sent to the Frontier Economics team at ELCfinance@frontier-economics.com.

Will information I give be held confidentially and securely?

Throughout the review, the review team from Frontier Economics alone will have sight of the financial information and documentation supplied by your service. No identifiable information will be provided to the Department or published in this review. All data will be transferred as securely as possible and held only within Frontier Economics systems, which meet a range of data security certifications.

How do I express my interest to participate in the Review?

Participation in this review is voluntary. Services who wish to participate in this review must complete [the accompanying expression of interest form](#) and send it to ELCfinance@frontier-economics.com by **5pm on Wednesday 8th February**. If you do not wish to participate there is no requirement for action.