Core Funding Programme
2023/2024
for
Early Learning and Care and
School Age Childcare Services

Applicant Guidelines

June 2023

Version 1

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

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government supporting communities

Contents

About Core Funding

In September 2022, Minister O'Gorman launched Together for Better, the new funding model for early learning and childcare. Together for Better brings together three major programmes, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, including the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and the new Core Funding scheme.
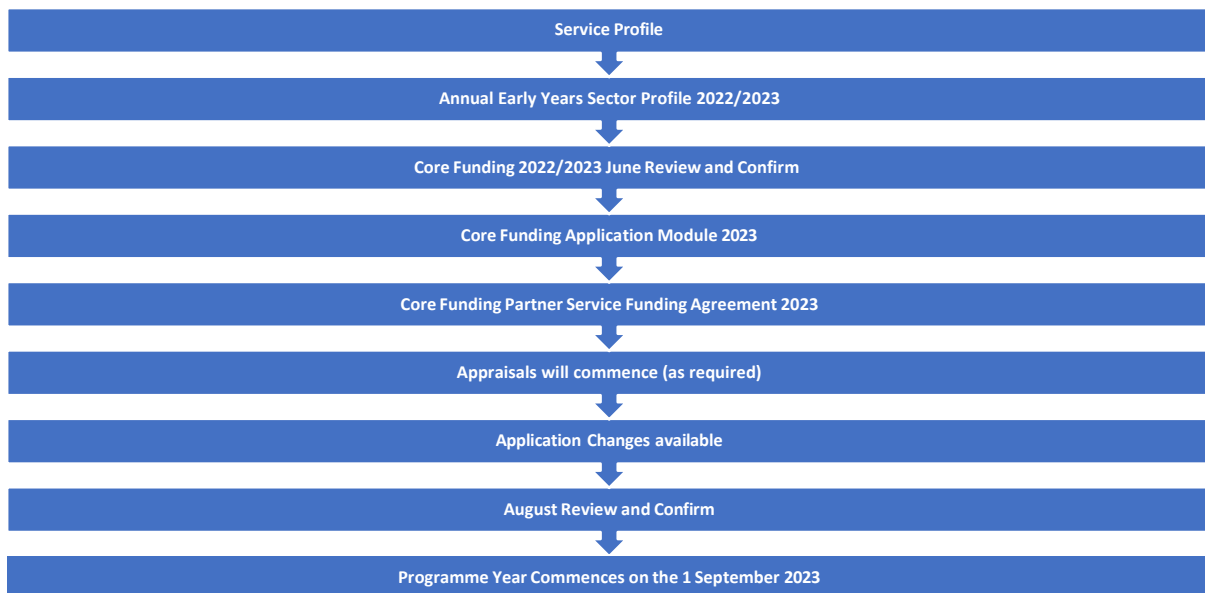
Core Funding is a grant to Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC) providers towards their operating costs. It is designed to deliver:

- Affordability for parents through ensuring no increases in fees and offering NCS and ECCE to all eligible children;
- Quality in services, including through better terms and conditions for staff and supporting graduate leadership in services; and
- Sustainability for providers through substantially increased funding to the sector, paid on a consistent and equitable basis.

Core Funding will operate programme year two from 1 September 2023 to 31 August 2024. The applicant guidelines aim to assist prospective Core Funding Partner Services in their applications for the Programme Year 2023/2024.

Timeline

The timeline below outlines for application process for existing Partner Services for Core Funding for the Programme Year 2023/2024 up until the first review and confirm window in August.

Service Profile

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Annual Early Years Sector Profile 2022/2023

↓

Core Funding 2022/2023 June Review and Confirm

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Core Funding Application Module 2023

↓

Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement 2023

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Appraisals will commence (as required)

↓

Application Changes available

↓

August Review and Confirm

↓

Programme Year Commences on the 1 September 2023

New applicants for Core Funding for the Programme Year 2023/2024 are not required to complete the Core Funding 2022/2023 June Review and Confirm.

Note: The Service Profile should be updated as required and may be reviewed prior to beginning the Core Funding Application Module for the Programme Year 2023/2024.

Who can apply?

Community and privately owned Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC) services who offer Full Time, Part Time or Sessional childcare in the Republic of Ireland. Childminders are also eligible to apply.

A Pre-School Service in a Drop-in Centre and SAC services that operate Drop-in care only, are not eligible for Core Funding.

Please note: The Core Funding application process is only available on the Early Years Hive. To onboard to the Early Years Hive please review the guidance document HERE.

What must Partner Services do in advance of submitting the Core Funding Application Module?

1. Ensure all **Tusla Registration** Certificates assigned to their service are captured on the Early Years Hive under the My Account Section. If Partner Services are registered as an ELC and an SAC service, both Tusla registration numbers must be reflected on the Early Years Hive – see guidance HERE.

2. Complete the **Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP) 2022/2023**
   Completion of the Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP) survey is a pre-requisite for applying for Core Funding. The initial data collection window for the AEYSP opened in May and closed mid-June, however for services that could not complete the survey over this period, this will not prevent them from entering into Core Funding. The AEYSP reopened on the 22 June 2023 so that services can complete the AEYSP and apply for Core Funding throughout the whole programme year.

3. Complete the **June Review and Confirm**
   Partner Services that complete the June Review and Confirm for Programme Year 2022/2023 will ensure that their Core Funding application data is as up to date as possible. Those Partner Services whose June 2023 Review and Confirm is approved, or subsequent approved application change, can avail of the option to auto-populate their Application Module for Programme Year 2023/2024, significantly reducing administrative burden. The option to complete a new application still remains to all Partner Services. Those who fail to complete this Review and Confirm will have to start their application for the next programme year anew.

How is Tusla Registration information linked to the Core Funding Application Module?

Partner Services Tusla Registration information (including registered service type and capacity) captured on the Early Years Hive will be used to validate the Core Funding Application Module.

If Partner Services believe there is a discrepancy in their Tusla Registration data, they will be given the opportunity to attach evidence to support the correct registration information. For example, if they have recently been given permission to increase their capacity by Tusla but this is not being reflected

in the Core Funding Application Module validations, they will be able to submit evidence of this higher capacity. The required evidence is a Tusla Certificate/Tusla letter dated no earlier than 3 months prior to the application submission date as part of Step 2 the Core Funding Application Module process.

NB: Partner Services are only required to attach evidence if there is a discrepancy in their Tusla registration data. If not, there is no need to upload any evidence of their Tusla registration details.

Childminders will only have one Tusla registration number, even if they provide care to both ELC & SAC.

How is Core Funding Calculated?

Core Funding allocations are calculated on a weekly basis. These weekly allocations are aggregated to monthly instalments which are paid in advance, spread across the entire programme year. Core Funding grant values will be calculated as follows, based on information provided by Partner Services in the Core Funding Application Module:

1. Base Rate
A base rate per session consisting of the number of staffed child places in each age range multiplied by Value that applies to each age range (see Table 1) multiplied by Hours of operation per week multiplied by Weeks open per year. The value for all sessions is added together to produce the base rate for the Partner Service

2. Graduate Lead Educator Premium
Number of sessions led by a graduate multiplied by the number of hours per week led by a graduate multiplied by weeks per year led by a graduate multiplied by Graduate Lead Educator premium rate of €4.44, with a maximum of one Graduate Lead Educator premium per ELC room.
A Graduate Lead Educator must hold an eligible qualification as per the Department's list of approved Qualifications, QQI Level 7 or above. They must also have a minimum of three years paid eligible work experience in the sector.[1]

3. Graduate Manager Premium
Number of service operating hours per week that the Graduate Manager is working multiplied by Weeks per year the service operates where the Graduate Manager is working multiplied by Graduate Manager Premium rate of €4.44, with a maximum of one Graduate Manager premium per service.

Note: The ELC Graduate Manager Premium is calculated on the basis of the hours in which the Manager is working, and the service is open and available to children. In practice this means the operating hours of the service or the working hours of the manager, whichever is the lower.

A Graduate Manager must hold an eligible qualification as per the Department's list of approved Qualifications, Level 7 or above. They must also have a minimum of three years paid eligible work experience in the sector.
A Graduate Manager Premium and a Graduate Lead Educator Premium cannot both be attracted by one individual.

SAC Only Services and Childminders are not eligible for the Graduate Manager Premium.

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[1]In the event an Employment Regulation Order comes into effect removing the requirement to have a minimum of three years' eligible paid experience to be eligible for the Graduate Lead Educator and/or Graduate Manager pay rates, the requirement to have 3 years' eligible paid experience will be removed from calculation of the Graduate Lead Educator Premium, and/or Graduate Manager Premium.

Table 1: Core Funding Base Rates:

Age of child	Value of Core Funding per place per hour
Full Time and Part Time	
0-1 year of age	€1.69
1-2 years of age	€1.10
2-3 years of age	€0.95
3-6 years of age	€0.71
Sessional	
0-1 year of age	€1.69
1-2.5 years of age	€1.10
2.5-6 years of age	€0.68
School-age AM/ School-age PM	
4-15 years	€0.57
Graduate premium rates per hour	
Graduate Lead Educators in ELC	€4.44
Graduate Managers in ELC or combined ELC and SAC	€4.44

A new Core Funding Allocation Model for Programme Year 2023/2024 was announced which includes targeted measures which are aimed at improving the sustainability of smaller and sessional Partner Services. Further information on these measures can be found in the 'Core Funding Programme Year 2 Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)' here.

The Core Funding Application Process

The Core Funding Application process consists of two parts, Part A and Part B.

Part A – Complete the Service Profile

The Service Profile can be accessed on the Early Years Hive under My Account. It is available to authenticated (signed-in) users through their Primary Authorised Users (PAUs) and Delegated PAUs.

New applicants will provide information related to their service's opening times, rooms, session types and staff. This information will be used to populate Part B – the Core Funding Application Module. This section will not include validations on the information provided (such as confirming the room square footage against number of child places, or staff to child ratios) and no calculations will be carried out.

Existing Core Funding Partner Services are required to review and update their Service Profile information.

For Core Funding 2023/2024 the Session Types for Sessional has been updated from Sessional AM and Sessional PM to ELC Sessional AM and ELC Sessional PM.

SAC only services will only have Part Time and Full Time options to choose from.

ELC Care Types (outside of the ECCE session), which are operating for three hours or less or which are required to be split due to Staffed Capacity, should label the Care Type as either Part Time or Full Time.

For Staff Members, Partner Services are required to the review important key information to ensure the details are accurate such as **Staff Qualifications**, **Industry Experience** and **Working Hours Per Week For Service Manager** as these fields are used when determining eligibility for the Graduate Lead Educator Premium/Manager Premium. For example, Industry Experience does not auto-update. Partner Service are required to update this field to ensure it is an up-to-date reflection of Industry Experience.

For information on each field contained within the Service Profile, please refer to the 'Core Funding Service Profile Glossary' here.

Parent Statement for Partner Services

The Parent Statement for Partner Services for Programme Year 2023/2024 will be available for completion online in August and further information will be available shortly.

Privacy Statement

New applicants completing the Service Profile for the first time are required to accept a declaration on the Staff Members section of the Service Profile.

New and existing Partner Services are required to review and share the Privacy Statement with all staff.
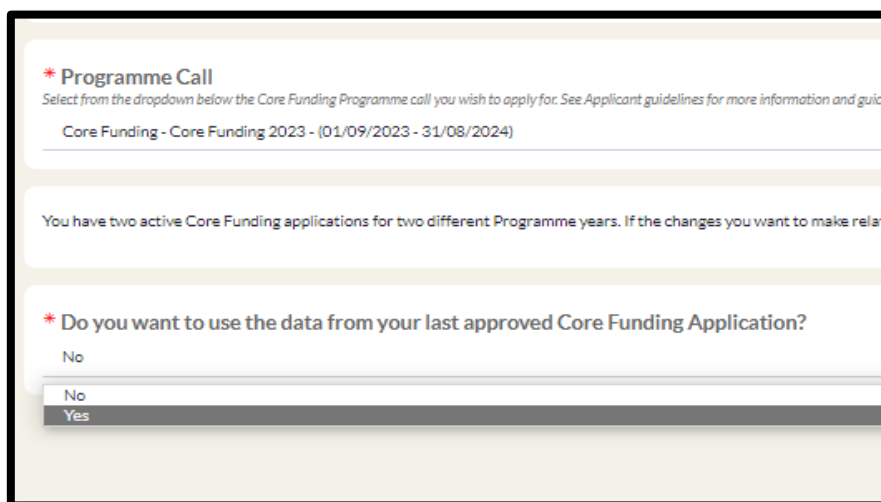
Please review the Privacy Statement HERE.

Part B – Complete the Core Funding Application Module

Partner Services who have completed the June Review and Confirm process and are at an approved status will have the option to auto-populate their new Core Funding Application Module for the 2023/2024 programme year using the information from the most recently approved Core Funding 2022/2023 Application.

Partner Services will be presented with the option to transfer the information from their most recently approved Core Funding Application to auto-populate their Core Funding Application Module 2023/2024. Partner Services should select 'yes' if they wish to proceed with the auto-population.

At any stage prior to submission of the application, Partner Services can abandon their draft application and start again if they choose. If a Partner Service decides not to clone their 2022/2023 Application and proceeds with a blank 2023/2024 Application, they can abandon their new 2023/2024 Application and restart with a clone.

If a Partner Services wishes to start a new application, this will also be possible by selecting 'No' below.

If a Partner Service **wants to change their selection** after originally selecting the option not to transfer the information from their last approved Application, they are required to **abandon the draft Application** and start a new Application.

Please note if Partner Services do not receive the option to auto-populate the Core Funding Application Module 2023/2024 it may be due to one of the following reasons:

- The June Review and Confirm (or subsequent application change if referred back) is not approved.
- The most recent Application Change following the June Review and Confirm is not approved.
- The Core Funding 2022 Application Module was submitted during/after the June Review and Confirm Window, and Partner Services are not required to complete the Review and Confirm. The option to auto-populate the information will not be available in this case.

Staff:

Partner Service must ensure the room is adequately staffed to meet the required ratio per age ranges proposed for that room/session type. The Partner Service will assign staff to each session type within a room from the staff list outlined in the Service Profile.

- ➢ **Staff Member** – Select staff member name from drop down list, which will be populated with the staff outlined in the Service Profile.
- ➢ **Role** – The applicant must select a role for the staff member- Educator or Lead Educator. *Dependent on the role selected and meeting the qualification requirements this information will be used to calculate the Graduate Lead Educator Premium.*
- ➢ **Start time** – This is the time the staff member starts in the Session Type.
- ➢ **End time** – This is the time the staff member finishes in the Session Type.

Capacity for each Child Age Group:

The Partner Service is required to specify the number of places available for the different child age ranges for each care type.

This section of the application module lists the Child Age Ranges for each Room/Session Type combination created by the applicant in a previous step.

Please enter the maximum staffed capacity for each Child Age Range across all Room/Session Type(s).

If the capacity outlined is not in accordance with the information on the Tusla Register, Partner Services should attach supporting evidence to reflect the change in capacity provided in the Service.

Note: Number of places is the staffed capacity and not the number of registered children.

Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement

The Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement for Programme Year 2023/2024 is the contract for Core Funding.

Partner services will be required to accept the terms and conditions of Core Funding.

Full information and detail on the Funding Agreement is available HERE.

This Funding Agreement shall commence on the date of acceptance by the Partner Service and will expire on 31 August 2024 (Term) unless otherwise terminated by the Minister.

The Funding Agreement will only become available once the original Core Funding Application Module for Programme Year 2023/2024 is at submitted.

Partner Services will have 14 days from the submission date of the original Core Funding Application Module to activate the Funding Agreement. Once 14 days have passed, the Core Funding Application Module will be cancelled, and this will require a new application submission.

Prior to activating the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement, Partner Services will need to be contracted into the relevant Funding Programme(s), based on their Tusla Registration type.

Appraisal of submitted applications

Applications that generate the Graduate and/or Manager premium and/or which include submitted evidence that the applicant's Tusla registration information is incorrect will require an appraisal. The appraisal process will consist of a review of the supporting documentation submitted to support the qualification of the Lead Educator and/or Manager and/or updated Tusla information.

As part of the appraisal process, applications may be referred back to the applicant if the supporting evidence provided is not acceptable or to request further information.

Once all supporting information submitted has been appraised and approved, the Core Funding Application Module status will be set to approved.

Appraisals should be processed within 6 weeks of submission of the application form.

If the Original Core Funding Application Module is in a referred back cycle and has never been approved, Partner Services will not receive a Core Funding Payment.

If an Application Change is submitted after the Original Core Funding Application Module is approved and the August Review and Confirm is approved, Partner Services will receive a Core Funding Payment based on the approved value while awaiting appraisal of the Application Change.

Referred Back applications:

As part of the appraisals process, a Core Funding Application Module can be referred-back to a Partner Service for additional information when necessary. A notification will be issued outlining the reason(s) for refer-back and the updates/actions required by the Partner Service in order to progress their application towards approval.

When an application is referred-back, Partner Service must edit their Core Funding Application Module/Application Change to address the reason(s) for refer-back. Examples of the reasons for, and the solutions to, referred back applications are outlined below.

Update required to Tusla information:

Applications referred back due to Capacity and/or Service Type changes, are required to provide evidence of a Tusla Certificate/Tusla letter/Tusla email dated no earlier than 3 months prior to the submission date of the first referred back application and no later than the submission date of the referred back application.

Where a Partner Service have indicated that they had higher capacity on their original Core Funding application, than on the Tulsa register, and have provided insufficient supporting evidence of Tulsa approval for this increased capacity declared, these applications will be "Referred Back".

- If a Partner service edits their Core Funding Application Module/Application Change and attaches insufficient supporting evidence again, this will result in their Core Funding payments being placed on hold.
- The Partner Service will have two further attempts to submit the correct documentation of Tulsa approval for their increased capacity declared or correct their application and reduce their capacity to that registered with Tulsa.

Note: If the corrective action is not taken this may result in their Core Funding Application being declined.

Update required to a staff Qualification:

- **Attach the eligible document to the staff member on the Service Profile-**
  - ➢ Where additional documents are required (as per comment) please ensure first submitted document is retained and subsequent document is added.
  - ➢ When the eligibility pertaining to the staff qualification has increased (i.e., from non-graduate to graduate).
- If the name doesn't agree to the Qualification, please amend the name field on the staff record in the Service Profile.
- In the event of duplicated staff, please ensure the relevant staff member is deactivated on the Service Profile in line with the comment.
- **Submit an application change** by updating the Staff Member and/or Capacity Change effective date with the current date. Partner Services do not need to make any further updates to the Core Funding Application Module at this time.
- If a Partner service edits their Core Funding Application Module/Application Change and is required to be referred back again three times, this will result in their Core Funding payments being placed on hold.

Note: If the incorrect information is submitted three further times, this may result in their Core Funding Application being declined.

A Partner Service should make changes relating to the reason(s) for refer-back only. Any additional changes must be submitted as a separate application change once the initial application has been approved.

Changes and Updates to the Service Profile and Application

Partner Services are required to keep their Service Profile and information up to date throughout the programme year. Changes after signing the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement relating to staff vacancies, staff qualifications and level of service offered may affect the initial Core Funding allocation. Failure to update the information may result in their Core Funding allocation being placed on hold or terminated.

A provider can update their Service Profile at any time and should ensure to maintain it on an on-going regular basis.

Overview of Core Funding Application Changes:

There is no expectation on Partner Services to record every change of staff that occurs within a service. The Department understands that Early Learning and Childcare services have to be dynamic and flexible in their day to day staffing arrangements. Consequently, it is the Department's expectation that Partner Services input data relating to a typical week and only update their Service Profile and Application Form when a material change occurs.

The Department's definition of a typical week is a period of time that is representative of an average operating week where the more usual staff rostering is evident. The Department recommends that Partner Services identify and keep a record of such a typical week, with a view to using these as a reference point for each of the Review and Confirm periods. Examples of an atypical week would be an instance where a room is temporarily closed, a number of staff members are out sick for a couple of days in the week and/or the week of bank holiday.

Within the context of Core Funding, the Department defines a material change as one which affects the typical week for a period of time greater than four weeks. This is under the assumption that the staffed capacity of the typical week as declared on the Core Funding Application Module is maintained and absences of staff that attract premiums are replaced with equally suitably qualified staff. If this is the case, there is no requirement to record these changes unless they are going to continue for a period greater than four weeks.

Please note that Application Changes functionality is available for two Programme Years, Core Funding 2022/2023 and Core Funding 2023/2024. If the changes Partner Services want to make relate to both programme years, then they should update their earliest application first before then updating their most recent. For example, If Partner Services have changes to make to their 2022/2023 application, they should make these changes before they apply/update their application for Core Funding 2023/2024.

Application changes must be made in **chronological order** of when the change occurred. **If applications changes are not submitted in chronological order, previous changes will be superseded by the most recent application change submitted, which will lead to additional administration and may impact funding.** Partner Services must wait until each change is approved before submission of the next change. Therefore, providers should ensure that all information provided is accurate with the correct supporting documentation attached where applicable.

Prior to submitting an Application Change, Partner Services should make sure their Service Profile is up to date and accurate.

How to access an application change:

To make a change to a Core Funding Application go to *Applications – Core Funding Application Module.*
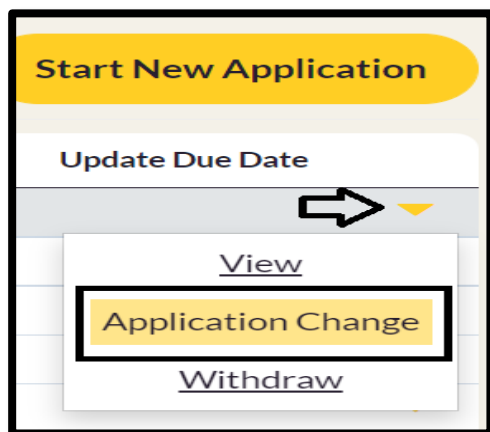
On the most recent application record select the dropdown arrow and the **Application Change** option from the menu

On selecting application change, a copy of the existing Core Funding application will be displayed which can be updated accordingly.

Partner Services must wait until each change is approved before submission of the next change. Therefore, providers should ensure that all information provided is accurate with the correct supporting documentation attached where applicable. Once submitted, an application change will reflect an approved status or a submitted status where an appraisal is required.

Please note the application may be referred back. For **Core Funding 2023/2024** - When an application is referred-back, Partner Services must **edit** their Core Funding Application Change record to address the reason(s) for refer-back. For Core Funding 2022/2023 - Partner Services were required to submit a new application change each time the previous application was referred back.

Recording an application change:

Early Learning and Childcare services have to be dynamic and flexible in their day-to-day staffing arrangements. Partner Services should input data relating to a typical week and only update their Service Profile and Application Form when a significant or material change occurs. A typical week is a period of time that is representative of an average operating week where the more usual staff rostering is evident.

Partner Services should identify and keep a record of such a typical week, with a view to using these as a reference point for each of the Review and Confirm periods.

To submit an application change Partner Services must provide a change effective date for the change(s) they wish to make. The change effective date is the date the change was implemented in the service.

Application Changes allows the Partner Service to input an effective date as any date from the date of the original Application Module submission until the date before the next Review and Confirm window.

Change Effective Dates:

The Core Funding week starts on a Monday and ends on a Sunday.

On step 1 of the application change the Partner Service can record the following change effective dates:

- ✓ **Service Level and/or Service Manager Change Effective Date -** This date should reflect changes to Service level information and Service Manager.
  E.g., Change in operating hours or change in Service Manager working hours.
- ✓ **Staff Member and/or Capacity Change Effective Date -** This date should reflect changes to staff and capacity within the service.
  E.g., Staff member becomes a Lead Educator in a room or change in capacity.

<u>Both date fields are mandatory</u>, if the change only relates to one of these areas, Partner Services must include the date of the change in the relevant section and the application change submission date in the other.

For example, if the change relates to the employment of an additional Graduate Lead Educator, Partner Services should include the start date of the staff member under the staff and capacity effective date (2) and the current date in the service level and manager section (1).

If applications changes are not submitted in chronological order, previous changes will be superseded by the most recent application change submitted, which will lead to additional administration and may impact funding.

Partner Services must wait until each change is approved before submission of the next change. Therefore, providers should ensure that all information provided is accurate with the correct supporting documentation attached where applicable.

It is the responsibility of the Partner Service to monitor application statuses and notifications.

Examples of recording changes:

<u>**Example 1: Recording 2 changes relating to staff with the same effective date:**</u> they can be outlined in the one application change form.

Two new staff members start on the same week. Both staff members must be recorded on the Service Profile and then added into the application change with the same **Staff Member and/or Capacity Change effective date.** The **Service Level and/or Service Manager Change Effective date** is the date the application change is being submitted.

<u>**Example 2: Recording 1 change regarding service level information and 2 staff updates:**</u> these can be outlined in the one application change.

1. Increase in operating hours (service level information). Update the operating hours in the Service Profile and input the date they were implemented into the **Service Level and/or Service Manager Change Effective date** on the Core Funding application change.

2. Updating of staff member A to a Lead Educator (both staff changes will be captured under the same change effective date when submitting the application change, as they both occurred in the same week.)
Inputting staff member B to a Room

   Make the relevant updates in the Service Profile to reflect the staff and Input the **Staff Member and/or Capacity Change Effective date** as the date the changes were implemented.

Tusla Registration updates:

Tusla registration updates are only required if Partner Services have an approved Tusla change in circumstances.

Ensure all Tusla Registration Certificates assigned to the service are captured on the Early Years Hive under the My Account Section. If Partner Services are registered as an ELC and an SAC service, both Tusla registration numbers must be reflected on the Early Years Hive – see guidance here.

When a change in circumstances is approved by Tusla, it can take time for the Tusla register to be updated, therefore Partner Services may be required to attach evidence on step 4 or step 7 of previously approved Tusla data. The required evidence is a Tusla Certificate/Tusla letter dated no earlier than 3 months prior to the application change submission date.

Please note: Partner Service's base rate on the date of approval of their August Review and Confirm or the date of approval of their application, whichever is the later, will be used as their highest value base rate for the programme year. The Partner Service's base rate may fluctuate throughout the programme year, but no Partner Service will be able to increase their base rate funding allocations above this highest value amount.

Update Due date:

An update due date is set on a Core Funding Application/change for the below reasons:

- Partner Services have added a Vacancy in the Service Profile and Core Funding Application Module.
- Partner Services have end dated a Staff member in the Service Profile.

Partner Services will have a four-week period to submit an application change to reflect a replacement staff member or reduction in capacity, otherwise the full Core Funding payment will be placed on hold.

As payments are issued monthly in advance, allocations dated after the update due date will not be eligible for payment until an application change to reflect a replacement staff member or reduction in capacity is approved.

In some cases, this will lead to a reduced payment during the four-week period. If required, catch-up payments will be made once an application change has been approved.

Note: ensure to remove the end dated staff member from the application when replacing a staff member or reducing capacity.

The update due date will be displayed on the most recent submitted Core Funding Application/Application Change form. If a Partner Service has two update due dates due to two staff members departing on two separate dates, the earlier Update Due Date will be displayed on the most recent approved Application/Application Change.

When the earliest update is reflected via an Application Change with an approved status, the next upcoming update due date will be displayed to reflect the 2nd staff member.

Vacancies:

Vacancies can be included as part of the Core Funding Original Application Module submission.

Assigning a vacancy to a Core Funding application is treated in the same way as a named person is, i.e., the vacancy is included in the staff ratios as part of the staffed capacity of the service.

Adding a vacancy to the application will set an update due date.

Partner Services will have until the update due date to submit an application change to reflect a replacement staff member or reduction in capacity, otherwise the full Core Funding payment will be placed on hold.

Staffing:

Note: Staff who have left the service or are on long term leave i.e., Maternity leave/sick leave will continue to receive unchanged levels of funding for this level of staffed capacity for a maximum period of 4 weeks or the date on which they are replaced, whichever is the earliest.

When a new staff member has been recruited and capacity has increased:

- Add the new staff member to the Service Profile
- **Submit an Application Change** reflecting the addition of the staff member in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) and update the capacity (Step 7) of the Core Funding Application Module.

Where a staff member has left on long term leave (Over 4 weeks)

- Do not end date the staff member as they have not permanently left the service.
- After 4 weeks of leave, either:
   - Submit an application change reflecting the removal of the staff member in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) and update the capacity (Step 7) of the Core Funding Application Module.
   - Or add the replacement staff member to the Service Profile and submit an application change to update staff members in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) of the Core Funding Application Module.

Where a staff member has left, and a new staff member is in place within 4 weeks:

- End date the departing staff member on the service profile when the staff member leaves,
- Add the new staff member to the Service Profile.
- Submit an application change to update staff members in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) of the Core Funding Application Module.

Where a staff member has left and is not replaced within 4 weeks:

- End date the departing staff member on the service profile when the staff member leaves.
- After 4 weeks from the employment end date submit an application change reflecting the removal of the staff member in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) and update the capacity (Step 7) of the Core Funding Application Module.

Where a staff member has left and is not replaced within 4 weeks (is replaced at a later date):

- End date the departing staff member on the service profile when the staff member leaves.
- After 4 weeks from the employment end date submit an application change reflecting the removal of the staff member in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) and update the capacity (Step 7) of the Core Funding Application Module.
- When a replacement is found, add the new staff member to the Service Profile.
- **Submit an application change** to update staff members in Rooms/Sessions (Step 6) and

update the capacity (Step 7) of the Core Funding Application Module.

Replacing a Manager:

Partner Services must have a designated person in charge (termed the 'Manager') who is responsible for the daily running of the service and – unless deputised by a named person – must be on the premises at all times when the service is being carried on.

When a Service Manager ceases employment there is no four-week allowance. The Service Provider must

- End date the Service Manager in the Service Profile by completing the "Employment End date field
- De-activate the Service Manager
- Enter the replacement Manger into the Service Profile
- Submit an Application Change reflecting the change in Service Manager

Capacity:

Once a Partner Service has contracted into the Core Funding 2023/2024 programme year, Application Changes functionality will be available, and Partner Services will have up until the August Review and Confirm to confirm their application data is correct.

The Partner Service's base rate on the date of approval of their August Review and Confirm or the date of approval of their application, whichever is the later, will be used as their highest value base rate for the programme year. The Partner Service's base rate may fluctuate throughout the programme year, but no Partner Service will be able to increase their base rate funding allocations above this highest value amount. Partner Service should still record an increase but this will not impact base rate (capacity) funding allocations.

The base rate can reduce during the programme year. It can also be restored back up to the highest value base rate (as noted above) if staffed capacity is restored.

Review & Confirm:

A Core Funding Partner Services is required to Review and Confirm their Core Funding Application information. The Review and Confirm window will open for a specific period throughout the programme year.

The first Review and Confirm window will open to all Partner Services in August 2023.

This process enables Core Funding payments to continue by facilitating Partner Services to confirm that no changes have occurred **or** to submit an application change. If a Partner Service does not complete the Review and Confirm process within the required timeframe, Core Funding payments will be placed on hold until such a time as the process is completed.

Only Applications/Application Changes at an **Approved** status can complete the Review & Confirm process.

If an application is at "Referred back" Partner Services must edit their Core Funding Application Module/Application Change to address the reason(s) for refer-back. Once the application is approved, Partner Services must then proceed to complete the Review & Confirm form.

Please note: Once a Partner Service has contracted into the Core Funding 2023/2024 programme year, Application Changes functionality will be available and Partner Services will have up until the August Review and Confirm to confirm their application data is correct.

The Partner Service's base rate on the date of approval of their August Review and Confirm or the date of approval of their application, whichever is the later, will be used as their highest value base rate for the programme year. The Partner Service's base rate may fluctuate throughout the programme year, but no Partner Service will be able to increase their base rate payments above this highest value amount.

Further information on the Review and Confirm process will be provided shortly.

Withdrawing from Core Funding:

If a Partner Services wishes to withdraw from the Core Funding Programme, they can do so by submitting a Service Request on the Early Years Hive outlining the withdrawal date and the reason for the withdrawal. Please see the below option when creating a Service Request:

Programme – Core Funding

Request Type - Withdrawal

A Partner Service should only withdraw if leaving the Core Funding Programme.

Pending Review and Confirm forms must be completed prior to withdrawing from the Core Funding Programme.

The most recent Core Funding Application/Application Change record will display the Withdrawn status only when the withdraw process is carried out.

All contractual obligations must be met up to the date the funding ceases. Core Funding allocations will be calculated and paid up to and including the week of withdrawal. Where required, any overpayments will be off set against other DCEDIY funding programmes.

Summary page:

The summary page of the Core Funding Application Module/Application Change/Review and Confirm displays a breakdown of each room including the staff, capacity and premiums relating to each room as outlined in the application.

For Application Changes, Partner Services will also be able to see their previous approved Core Funding values and the impact on funding (if any) of the changes they have outlined within their application change.

The values displayed for the fields 'Base Rate', 'Annual Grant', 'Monthly Grant' and 'Weekly Grant' will be representative of the values associated with the information submitted as part of the Core Funding application. This grant value does not include the targeted measures which the service may be eligible for. If the value outlined is less than the minimum value or exceeding the maximum value, this will be reflected through their Core Funding payments.

The Annual Grant Value displayed reflects the overall value of Core Funding[2] calculated based on the information provided as part of the Core Funding application and is reflective of a full Core Funding

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[2]This grant value does not include the targeted measures which the service may be eligible for. If the value outlined is less than the minimum value or exceeding the maximum value, this will be reflected through their Core Funding payments.

Programme year (1Sept – 31stAug). The monthly value is the Annual Grant Value divided by 12 months and the weekly value is the Annual Grant Value divided by 52 weeks. The actual Core Funding allocation is representative of the entitlement from the date on which the Programme Year begins, or the date on which Partner Services sign the Funding Agreement, whichever is later.

Core Funding Payments and Allocations

Further information on payments and allocations will be available in August.

Further Information

For further information regarding the Core Funding Programme, visit the First Five website HERE.

Training will be provided, and a technical guide will also be available when the application process opens.

Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC): The Pobal Early Years Provider Centre is available to assist ELC and SAC providers with their online applications for Core Funding.

For queries relating to technical support, accessing and using the Early Years Hive and / or questions regarding sector/service profile or application queries please raise a 'Service Request' on the Early Years Hive or email eypc@pobal.ie.

The Early Years Provider Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm.

City and Country Childcare Committees (CCCs): The CCCs are also available to support local ELC and SAC providers with queries associated with Core Funding. In particular, questions relating to specific Service Profile requirements or the Core Funding Application Module should be directed to the local City and County Childcare Committee in the first instance.