

PRESS RELEASE



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

90% increase in number of children benefitting from National Childcare Scheme

Unprecedented demand for the National Childcare Scheme in first six months since increased subsidies came into effect

- **A total of 134,580 children benefited from supports under the National Childcare Scheme within the first six months of 2023 – an increase of 90% from the previous year;**
- **Massive growth is seen in the number of school-age children availing of financial supports under the Scheme – with 183% more claims submitted than the previous year;**
- **Families welcome the positive impact of recent changes to the National Childcare Scheme, including the increase in the minimum hourly subsidy rate to €1.40;**
- **All families with children under the age of 15 are encouraged to avail of their entitlements under the Scheme.**

09 August 2023

Roderic O’Gorman, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth today announced a 90% increase in the number of children who benefitted from a National Childcare Scheme (NCS) subsidy within the first six months of 2023 compared to the previous year. Within the first half of 2023, a total of 134,580 children availed of supports under the Scheme – compared to 70,786 for the same period in 2022.

The largest increase was among school-age children, where increases of 183% in the number of school-age children benefiting from a NCS subsidy has been recorded within the first six months of 2023 - with 52,676 school-age children benefitting compared to 18,627 for the same period in 2022.

The increase is driven by recent changes introduced to the Scheme.

In August last year, the age eligibility for a universal subsidy under the Scheme was extended to children under 15 from children under 3.

In January this year, the minimum hourly subsidy was increased to €1.40, per hour, per child from €0.50 per hour per child.

The minimum subsidy under the Scheme is now worth up to €3,276 per annum for families availing of a full-time place in a Tusla-registered early learning and childcare service and the subsidy can be flexibly used to offset the cost of various early learning and childcare options – including breakfast clubs and school-age childcare (in term and during the school holidays). Families on low incomes are eligible for higher subsidies under the Scheme, with up to €8,775 per annum, per child available through an income-assessed award.

These changes to the Scheme have been backed by an additional €121m secured in Budget 2023 by Minister O’Gorman, bringing total funding for the Scheme to €358m in 2023.

Record numbers of Tusla-registered early learning and childcare providers now offer the Scheme to parents nationwide – 15% more than in 2022. An early learning and childcare search function is available on www.ncs.gov.ie that details all providers offering the Scheme on a local level – including those providing school-age childcare.

Parents are encouraged to visit www.ncs.gov.ie, call the Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530, or talk to their early learning and childcare provider to make sure they are fully availing of financial supports under the Scheme.

Welcoming today’s announcement, the Minister said:

“This Government is delivering on its promise to make high-quality early learning and childcare more affordable for families and accessible to all children.

“I welcome the news that more than 130,000 children, and their families, benefitted from the National Childcare Scheme within the first half of 2023.

“We have seen unprecedented demand for the National Childcare Scheme since the increase in subsidies was announced as part of Budget 2023.

“I am committed to securing further investment in the Scheme in Budget 2024 to introduce further subsidy changes and importantly, to widen access to the Scheme to families that use childminders, following the introduction of regulation.

“I strongly encourage all eligible families to avail of the supports on offer through the National Childcare Scheme, by visiting www.ncs.gov.ie, calling the Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 or talking to their early learning and childcare provider”

ENDS

Note for Editors

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) provides financial support to help families with their early learning and childcare costs.

There are two types of subsidies available for children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years of age:

- A universal subsidy which is not means tested and provides €1.40 per hour, for a maximum of 45 hours per week;
- An income assessed subsidy which is means tested and will be calculated based on a family’s individual circumstances.
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Within the first half of 2023, a total of 134,580 children availed of supports under the Scheme – compared to 70,786 for the same period in 2022. The number of school-age children with a submitted claim under the NCS in the first half of 2022 was 52,676 compared to 18,627 the previous year.

Since 2 January 2023, the minimum hourly subsidy for families using registered early learning and childcare is €1.40 per child - offsetting up to €3,276 in annual out of pocket costs for early learning and childcare per child. Higher levels of subsidy – which are means assessed – are available to families on lower incomes, up to a maximum of €8,775 per child.

Parents can apply for the Scheme on ncs.gov.ie or call the Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 to make an application by post.

**Issued by the Press and Communications Office at the Department of Children, Equality,
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