



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

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Press release

Early Learning & Care service closures at lowest level for five years – new data confirms

46 net closures in first 7 months of 2023 compared to 78 in same period in 2019

Closures of Early Learning & Care services (ELC) have fallen to a five-year low, new data published today (25th August) by the Government confirms. In addition, the overall number of ELC and standalone School-Aged Childcare (SAC) services is now increasing.

The latest data on service closures and new service registrations, drawn from the official register at end July 2023 shows:

- a five-year low in the number of net ELC services closures, such as crèches and pre-schools (i.e. 46 net closures January-July 2023 compared to 71 net closures in 2022, 77 net closures in 2021, 77 net closures in 2020 and 78 net closures in 2019 for the same time period)
- a net increase of 72 standalone SAC services (after-school childcare) year to date;
- a net increase of 26 in the overall number of ELC and SAC services year to date.

These services are required by law to register with Tusla. Registered childcare providers are required to notify Tusla in writing of the closure of a service not later than 28 days after the closure. The register is updated monthly.

Registered childcare service closures & new service openings January – July, 2019 - 2023

	ELC	SAC Standalone*	Total
Jan-Jul 2019			
Service closures	112		112
New services	34		34
Net difference	-78		-78
Jan-Jul 2020			
Service closures	105	6	111
New services	28	124	152
Net difference	-77	118	41
Jan-Jul 2021			

Service closures	91	7	98
New services	14	46	60
Net difference	-77	39	-38
Jan-Jul 2022			
Service closures	93	10	103
New services	22	21	43
Net difference	-71	11	-60
Jan-Jul 2023			
Service closures	69	28	97
New services	23	100	123
Net difference	-46	72	26

Source: Tusla register of Early Years Services and Tusla register of School-Aged Services

In total, at the end of July 2023 there were 4,797 childcare services registered with Tusla.

Commenting on this latest data, Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O’Gorman said:

‘Ensuring access to affordable, high quality places in ELC and SAC is a Government priority. I am encouraged to see an increase in the overall number of ELC and SAC services nationally, and a continuing fall in the number of net ELC service closures this year so far.

The introduction of Core Funding in September 2022 resulted in a €259 million increase in public investment in the sector, supporting the sustainability of ELC and SAC services, as well as providing a basis for improvement in staff wages and affordability for parents. That investment will increase by €28 million or 11% for year 2 of the scheme to €287 million, with over €8 million of this additional funding allocated to a further expansion in capacity.

In addition to this, parental choice is set to be strengthened by Government plans to bring childminders into the scope of regulation and National Childcare Scheme subsidies from later in 2024, in line with the National Action Plan for Childminding 2021-2028’.

This latest data from the register of services show the annual trend of a decline in net ELC service closures nationally is continuing. In 2022, there were 141 ELC service closures notified to Tusla and 83 new ELC service registrations (i.e. 58 net closures) compared with 141 ELC service closures and 65 new ELC service registrations in 2021 (i.e. 76 net closures), 197 ELC service closures and 91 ELC new service registrations in 2020 (106 net closures), and 196 ELC service closures and 93 new ELC service registrations in 2019 (103 net closures).

While five-year comparisons are not possible for standalone SAC services, due to registration only commencing in late 2019, an overall increase in the number of standalone SAC services is also evident from the data.

Net closures of services do not necessarily imply a reduction in capacity in the sector, as open services may be expanding capacity at the same time. In its first year of operation, Core Funding provided evidence of increased capacity, with analysis showing the increased capacity was the type of capacity that is in highest demand relative to supply (i.e. more baby and toddler places as well as school-age places). The additional investment in Core Funding for year 2 of the scheme provides for further increases in capacity, of 3%.

Where childcare services have chosen to close, the reasons given by providers for closures are diverse (see breakdown of reasons in table below). While some services have closed for financial reasons, many have closed for other reasons such as retirement of the owner or manager.

ENDS

NOTES

“ELC services” are services that provide early learning and care for children of pre-school age. Some ELC services provide both ELC and SAC, either before/after school or during school holidays.

“Standalone SAC” services are services that only provide SAC.

The total number of services registered with Tusla is the number of ELC services plus the number of standalone SAC services.

At the end of July 2023, there were 4,797 ELC and standalone SAC services:

- 4,027 ELC services, of which 1,662 provide both ELC and SAC.
- 770 standalone SAC services.

There is considerable diversity in the reasons given for closure by providers. The tables below set out the reasons given to Tusla for closure of the ELC and standalone SAC services that have closed over the period January-July 2023. Please note the following caveats for this data:

1. The reasons given for closures are all ‘self-declared’ by the provider and collated from the cessations forms they submitted to Tusla. This information is not formally verified by Tusla.
2. A provider may have listed more than one reason for closure and is not required to give a reason, which explains why the number of reasons given does not match to the number of closures.

Reasons for closure of childcare services January – July 2023

* Source: Tusla register of Early Years Services and Tusla register of School-Aged Services

Reasons for Closure	Number of ELC Services	Number of SAC services
No reason Given	13	13
Personal Reasons	6	2
Not financially viable	14	4
Rental agreement expired	7	1
School room taken back	2	1
Business moving premises	1	
Unable to attain fire safety compliance	2	
Reduction in child numbers	9	3
Retirement	10	
Building conditions	1	
Temporary closure	1	1
Unable to source staff	7	1
Business ceased		1
Covid-19		1
Total	73	28

An annual breakdown of the closure numbers for ELC and standalone SAC services

* Source: Tusla register of Early Years Services and Tusla register of School-Aged Services

Closures	2019			2020			2021			2022			2023		
	ELC	SAC Standalone*	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total
Jan	21		21	5	0	5	5	0	5	10	0	10	8	4	12
Feb	12		12	0	1	1	9	5	14	10	4	14	7	6	13
Mar	8		8	2	0	2	8	0	8	5	0	5	3	1	4
Apr	4		4	2	0	2	12	0	12	7	0	7	2	5	7
May	23		23	8	0	8	3	1	4	6	0	6	3	1	4
Jun	24		24	34	0	34	24	0	24	20	2	22	19	1	20
Jul	20		20	54	5	59	30	1	31	35	4	39	27	10	37
Aug	21		21	25	3	28	15	0	15	20	10	30			
Sep	22		22	43	1	44	16	4	20	17	15	32			
Oct	11		11	13	1	14	7	0	7	2	2	4			
Nov	10		10	2	0	2	11	2	13	6	2	8			
Dec	20		20	9	1	10	1	2	3	3	3	6			
Total Closures	196		196	197	12	209	141	15	156	141	42	183	69	28	97
New	ELC	SAC Standalone*	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total	ELC	SAC Standalone	Total
Jan	3		3	5	34	39	3	6	9	5	7	12	5	2	7
Feb	6		6	1	46	47	2	3	5	4	3	7	1	8	9
Mar	3		3	8	10	18	3	4	7	2	0	2	5	13	16
Apr	1		1	0	0	0	1	10	11	2	2	4	1	3	4
May	1		1	3	0	3	2	2	4	3	1	4	3	18	21
Jun	2		2	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	8	13	3	14	17
Jul	18		18	11	34	45	3	21	24	1	0	1	5	42	47
Aug	22		22	25	20	45	30	28	58	11	39	50			
Sep	13		13	18	0	18	9	40	49	30	26	56			
Oct	18		18	8	6	14	8	12	20	11	9	20			
Nov	0		0	8	6	14	2	13	15	7	24	31			

Dec	6	6	4	8	12	2	3	5	2	11	13				
Total New	93	93	91	164	255	65	142	207	83	130	213	23	100	123	
Net difference	-103	0	-103	-106	152	46	-76	127	51	-58	88	30	-46	72	26

* Registration of SAC Services only commenced in late 2019