



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

4 November 2024

## **Minister O’Gorman announces opening of €25m capital funding scheme to deliver thousands of additional early learning and childcare places**

- **Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme to open for applications before year-end**
- **Grants for community and private early learning and childcare services to increase their capacity by means of large-scale extensions**
- **Funding to also be made available for community services to purchase or construct new premises**

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman has today announced the launch of the €25m Building Blocks Extension Grant scheme for early learning and childcare providers.

The Building Blocks Extension Scheme will deliver additional capacity by supporting existing early learning and childcare Core Funding partner services to extend their premises. It will also allow community services to purchase or construct new premises.

The scheme will have four strands:

- Extensions to existing premises for private services
- Extensions to existing premises for community services
- Purchase of new premises for community services
- Construction of new premises for community services

All projects will be required to deliver net increases in full-time places for one to three-year-olds. Projects will also be required to incorporate Universal Design.

The Extension Grant scheme follows on from the Building Blocks Expansion Grant scheme which ran earlier this year and the Building Blocks Improvement Grant Scheme which operated last year.

The Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme is part of the wider Building Blocks Capital Programme for Early Learning and Childcare under the revised National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP). Up to €89m million has been allocated between 2023 and 2026.

Making the announcement today, Minister O’Gorman said:

*“I am very pleased to formally launch this scheme. It demonstrates further significant commitment to the development of the sector and investment in the expansion of provision. The scheme is great news for children, their parents and providers. It will deliver a welcome increase in places, particularly for young children.*

*“The Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme will result in thousands of additional, affordable early learning and childcare places coming on stream. In particular, it is a huge boost for the community sector, and funding will be prioritised for applications from areas with the greatest supply needs.”*

He added:

*“This scheme builds on the very significant successes in recent years in expanding the delivery of improved and more affordable early learning and childcare.*

*“I would like to acknowledge the key role of the Office of Public Works in the design and delivery of this scheme. Their participation will ensure the delivery of high-quality projects.”*

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth continues to progress a range of other actions to increase the supply of quality and affordable early learning and childcare including significantly increased investment in the Core Funding scheme and the National Childcare Scheme in 2025 and the introduction of the regulation of childminders since September.

**ENDS/**

**Note for Editors:**

### **Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme**

#### **Key elements of the scheme**

- Application process to open in November 2024, funding to be available from 2025.
- Total funding available for this Scheme will be €25m.
- Scheme is open to Core Funding partner services only.
- The Minister will employ the use of charges (also known as liens) over capital assets delivered through this funding programme in order to protect substantial public investment over the long term
- All projects must deliver net increases in full-time places for one to three-year-olds. Minimum thresholds for number of places to be delivered are proportionate to the grant value.
- A maximum fee threshold will apply.
- Funding will be prioritised for applications from areas of identified undersupply.

The scale of funding available for different types of projects is outlined below:

#### **Strand 1 Extensions to Private services**

- Private providers can apply for funding between €50,000 (min) and €250,000 (max) to extend existing premises
- Match funding will be required with a maximum contribution by the Department of €250,000 or 50% of total project costs, whichever is lower

- Project values between €100,000 and €650,000 will be eligible, with any additional project costs exceeding €500,000 to be funded by the service

#### Strand 2. Extensions to Community Services

- Community Providers can apply for funding between €100,000 (min) and €500,000 (max) to extend existing premises
- Project values between €100,000 and €650,000 will be eligible
- Any additional project costs between €500,000 and €650,000 to be funded by the service

#### Strand 3 Purchase of building to supplement existing owned or leased premises or to replace a leased premises (Community only)

- Community providers can apply for funding between €300,000 (min) and €750,000 (max) to purchase and fit out an Early Learning Childcare facility or a premises that could be easily adapted for this purpose
- Any additional project costs exceeding €750,000 to be funded by services, subject to a maximum project value of €1,500,000
- Services can purchase a premises to supplement their existing premises or to replace a leased premises.

#### Strand 4 Construction of a new premises (Community only)

- Community providers can apply for funding between €300,000 (min) and €750,000 (max) towards the cost of building a new premises or installation of a modular building
- Any additional project costs exceeding €750,000 to be funded by services, subject to a maximum project value of €1,500,000
- Services can construct a premises to supplement their existing premises or to replace a leased premises.

Further details of the scheme are being provided to the sector this week. Application forms and applicant guidelines will be made available to the sector in the coming weeks.