

## PRESS RELEASE



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

### **Minister O’Gorman marks Day of Hope and Recognition for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare**

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> of February**

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman T.D., has today (February 4th) marked the Day of Hope and Recognition for early learning and care and school-age childcare by committing to continue increasing Government investment into the sector and supporting early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners.

The Government has set out ambitious and wide-ranging reforms for the sector. These include: an overhaul of how the sector is funded; commitments to strengthen professional development and career pathways for educators and practitioners; and supports for improvements in pay and conditions.

Over the last twelve months, actions taken by Minister O’Gorman have included:

- Announcement of a new ‘core funding stream’ for services. This funding, worth over €207 million in a full year, will enable providers to attract and retain qualified staff.
- Launch of Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028, setting out plans for a graduate-led workforce and strengthened career pathways.
- A process that led to establishment of a Joint Labour Committee for Early Years Services, providing a mechanism to help address issues of pay and conditions in the sector.

Commenting on the Day of Hope and Recognition, Minister O’Gorman said:

*“During Covid-19, we all gained a much better appreciation of the work done by the professionals who work in early learning and care and school-age childcare. Through some of the darkest days of the pandemic, they kept their doors open, and made sure that our children had a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and develop.*”

*“As early years educators and school-age childcare professionals mark their day of hope and recognition, I want to re-iterate that I am committed to making sure their pay and conditions reflect the importance of the work they do.*

*“Our ambition is for Ireland to have world-class early learning and care and school-age childcare, which helps children thrive, is affordable for parents, and values those who work in it. We are embarking on wide-ranging reform of the sector, and by working in partnership with providers and professionals, we can achieve that ambition.”*

ENDS//

### **Notes to Editor**

- The total available Budget for Core Funding is equivalent to €207 million in a full programme year, contingent on an Employment Regulation Order being agreed by the Joint Labour Committee. Core Funding will be allocated to services based on their capacity and the qualifications of those working in a service in line with the following three elements, with the majority of Core Funding (i.e. €172 million of the €207 million) distributed via the first of these elements:

1. Main base rate

Number of child places in an age group \* Value based on ratio that applies to age group \* Hours of operation per week \* Weeks open per year

2. Graduate Lead Educator uplift

Applied at room level, scaling in line with hours per week and weeks per year group is operating (Maximum one Graduate Lead Educator uplift per ELC room)

3. Graduate Manager uplift

Applied at service level, scaling in line with hours per week and weeks per year service is operating (Maximum one Graduate Manager uplift per service)

- A Ready Reckoner to support services to determine the potential value of Core Funding will be available in early March along with further communications to the sector about the funding and contract.
- In the interim period, until April 2022, Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare employers continue to be eligible to access the Employment Wage Subsidy Scheme (EWSS) which has provided very substantial investment in the sector since August 2020. Following the cessation of EWSS, ELC and SAC providers will have access to a Transition Fund between May and August in advance of the introduction of Core Funding from September.

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