



**An Roinn Leanaí
agus Gnóthaí Óige**
Department of Children
and Youth Affairs

19/20 ECCE Optional Extras Guide

02/07/2019

ECCE Optional Extras Overview:

One of the core principles of ECCE is that it is free of charge to all parents. Therefore the DCYA would prefer that services keep 'optional extras' for children attending ECCE to an absolute minimum and provide charged activities outside the three hours of the ECCE programme. With the exception of sessional only services, **no additional time may be included as an optional extra**. It is imperative that no child should ever feel excluded if they are not participating in an optional extra activity. No additional activity should be held in a manner that would leave non-participating children feeling excluded. **Charging for items which would be expected to be part of a pre-school service (e.g. arts and craft materials) is not permitted.** Similarly, it is not permitted for services to make payment of optional extras a criterion for admission to the service, or to combine a list of additional services into a single option on the fees list. Any optional extras must be individually optional, and this requires an individualised charge for each optional extra.

Where an optional extra happens during an ECCE session, **children not attending the optional activity must have a full content-based session**, and the required **child to adult ratio must be maintained** for children taking part in the optional extra as well as those not participating.

If a family no longer want an optional extra previously agreed to, they must be allowed withdraw from it. While notice may be required for such withdrawal, it must not exceed four weeks.

The DCYA reserve the right to add to both the allowable and disallowable lists below.

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Allowable optional extras:

NB: Many of these will be provided by services free of charge

- **Food** (children must also have the option of bringing their own snack/lunch instead)
- **'Gymboree'** type events (where outside providers deliver an educational or entertainment based activity)
- **Nappies/pull-ups** (where applicable)
- **Aprons/smocks** (option to wear their own must also be allowed)
- **Baking** (where this is a regular part of the programme)

Disallowed optional extras:

- **Booking Fees** (a refundable booking deposit may be taken, but it must not exceed four weeks capitation, and must be refunded once the child is successfully registered on PIP)
- **Additional minutes/hours** (excluding sessional **only** services who may offer an **optional** 30 minutes only)
- **Arts & Crafts materials**
- **Insurance**
- **Worksheets**
- **School trips which incur no cost** (e.g. walking to a nearby park)
- **Report cards**
- **Graduation diploma/gowns**
- **Claims to have higher quality, or to have lower staff ratios** than other participating services
- **Different curricula**
- **Unspecified "flexibility"** (in drop-off and collection times)
- **Dancing** (as opposed to programme-based dance instruction)

- **School plays/concerts**
- **Anything** which is required for effective participation in the programme