

PRESS RELEASE



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

Over 3,600 children in County Westmeath receive childcare subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme

But many are missing out on the scheme which can cut thousands off childcare bills

Minister for Children, Roderic O’Gorman, T.D. is today calling on all parents in County Westmeath using Tusla-registered childcare services to make sure they are getting their full entitlement to subsidies, which could cut thousands of euros off their childcare bills each year.

3,644 children in County Westmeath received subsidies towards the cost of their childcare under the National Childcare Scheme (NCS) in 2023, with more than €6 million paid to early learning and childcare providers in County Westmeath to reduce parents’ fees.

Minister O’Gorman said:

“With the Easter holidays approaching, many families will be looking for further childcare cover.

While thousands of parents are receiving subsidies, many will be unaware they can use their subsidy for more hours than usual during mid-term and holidays, or even to cover one-off camps.

“There are almost 4,000 providers across the country eligible to receive your subsidy.

“I would strongly encourage all parents or guardians to talk their provider about their subsidies and extra hours over the holiday period if needed.

“Parents who want to explore using a childcare provider for the first time can talk to their local county childcare Committee.”

Currently, the minimum hourly subsidy is €1.40 an hour and it will be increasing to €2.14 in September. This will mean families using full time care (45 hours a week) will receive a minimum of €5,000 euro a year off their bill per child. Many Families can receive an Income Assessed Award, which is based on household income, which can be as high €12,000 per year for those using full-time care.

Families who would like to know if their childcare provider is registered for the NCS can access the [Childcare Search Service](#) on the NCS website, at www.NCS.gov.ie, where they can also see the providers’ fees list. Families will also find information on how to apply for the NCS.

Families who want some more support in how to apply can contact the Westmeath County Childcare Committee. Childcare Committees are a local government funded support designed to help families access childcare supports.

Muriel Flynn from Westmeath County Childcare Committee (CCC), said:

“The National Childcare Scheme provides a huge benefit to parents in Westmeath by reducing their childcare fees.”

"Anyone who wishes to find out more information on the NCS can contact the team at Westmeath CCC who will answer any of your queries and guide you through the application process. Westmeath CCC can be contacted on 04493 35454."

"The Scheme Administrator, Pobal, also run a helpline to provide support and guidance to parents in relation to the NCS. The Parent Support Centre can be contacted on 01 906 8530 - Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm."

Also for families from County Westmeath planning a trip to Dublin, the team from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability Integration and Youth as well as County and Childcare Committee members from across the country will be at the Pregnancy & Baby Fair in the RDS on the 23 to 24 March to speak to parents and expectant parents about childcare so if you're planning a visit, be sure to stop by stall G9.

ENDS

Note for Editors:

The National Childcare Scheme (NCS) was launched in late 2019 and has been highly successful, with over half a billion euros of exchequer funds being provided as NCS subsidies since then. More than 180,000 children will benefit from the NCS in 2024.

The NCS supports children at all stages, regardless of parents' income, from the ages of 24 weeks up to 15 years. NCS subsidies are awarded at an hourly rate, so whether a family uses an hour's after-school care a day or has a child attending crèche full-time, they can benefit.

As long as their early learning and childcare provider is registered with Tusla and has signed up to the NCS, families can receive an hourly subsidy based on a child's typical childcare usage outside of the time the children are in school or in free preschool (the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme)). Parents can receive up to a maximum of 45 hours a week.

Together for Better, the Government's new funding brings together three major schemes, the NCS, the ECCE programme and Core Funding. 94% of providers who offer the NCS this year have signed up to Together for Better, which mean they have committed to freezing their fees to September 2021 levels, ensuring the full benefit of the NCS is passed on to parents.

At present, only Tusla-registered childminders are able to offer the NCS. Currently the legislation prevents most childminders from registering with Tusla. Work is underway through the National Action Plan for Childminding, to extend regulation to all paid non-relative childminders, which will open the NCS to a much wider cohort of childminders.

ENDS