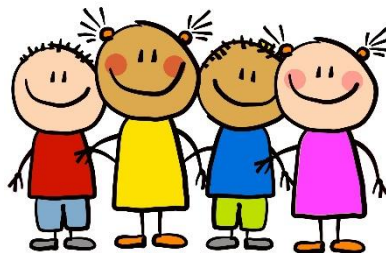An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth

pobal
government supporting communities

Core Funding Programme 2022/2023

for Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Services

Applicant Guidelines

July 2022

Contents

About Core Funding

Under First 5, the Whole-of-Government Strategy for Babies, Young Children and their Families, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has been developing a new funding model for Early Learning and Care (ELC) and School Age Childcare (SAC) Services. An Expert Group was convened to provide recommendations for this model, and their report, Partnership for the Public Good: A New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare was published in December 2021. Their recommendations were accepted in full by Government.

Core Funding was identified in this report as a key element of the new funding model, which consists of four elements:

1. Core Funding.
2. Tackling Disadvantage funding (to be developed after Core Funding is implemented).
3. National Childcare Scheme (NCS), with some developments.
4. The Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme, with some amendments.

- ➢ Core Funding is a payment to partner services designed to support quality, sustainability, and enhanced public management, with associated conditions in relation to fee control and cost transparency, incorporating funding for administration and to support the employment of graduate staff.
- ➢ Core Funding aims to offer better financial sustainability to partner services in return for a cultural shift to a partnership relationship between partner services and the State that reflects the public good dimension of ELC and SAC.
- ➢ Funding, equivalent to €221m in full year costs, was committed to Core Funding in Budget 2022 to support its introduction from September 2022 onwards. Applicants will be able to submit their Service Profiles for Core Funding in late July, with payments being made from the end of August 2022. The Budget 2022 allocation marks a significant investment from the outset in order to ensure a sufficiently comprehensive package for ELC and SAC providers to opt into the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement and achieve the objectives of quality, affordability, and sustainability.
- ➢ Core Funding will support partner services in meeting their operating costs, including increased costs related to improved quality measures, in return for a commitment that fees to parents will not increase. A central aim of Core Funding is to allow partner services costs to increase to improve quality, while ensuring that these costs are not passed onto parents in higher fees or that services are not made unsustainable. Importantly, Core Funding is contingent on an Employment Regulation Order (ERO) or Orders that cover all roles across the sector being agreed by the Joint Labour Committee (JLC) and coming into effect.
- ➢ The majority of Core Funding will be allocated to partner services based on their capacity. Services with graduate-led provision will also be able to attract a graduate premium. See page 6 for more information on how Core Funding will be calculated.

NCS, ECCE (at standard capitation rates), AIM and CCSP will continue to operate with funding distributed based on child registrations and attendance. Core Funding will operate alongside these schemes/programmes to support improved sustainability by offering partner services an allocation each year based on service capacity and hence will not fluctuate in line with children's attendance. ECCE higher capitation and Programme Support Payments (PSP) have been into Core Funding so these are no longer available from September 2022 onwards.

The amount payable under Core Funding will be determined through the Service Profile, the Core Funding Application Module, and the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement process and will be paid to partner services in instalments monthly in advance over the Core Funding Programme Year.

Timeline

Stage 1 of the application process opened in April and began with the Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP), which is a pre-requisite for the Core Funding Application Module. The initial data collection window for the AEYSP closed at the start of May.

In cases where a service could not complete the survey over this period, this will not prevent them from entering into Core Funding. The AEYSP reopened on the 14th June 2022. It will remain open so that services can complete the survey and apply for Core Funding throughout the whole programme year.

Stage 2 of the application process opened on the 28th July 2022.

The Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement was published on the 29th June 2022, to allow applicants to review what they will later be asked to sign.

Applicants will be required to define their service's profile and their capacity in detail on the Early Years Hive. This is a two-part process with the service level details and staff details recorded in the Service Profile and the staffed capacity detail and age ranges captured at the room/session type level in the second section - The Core Funding Application Module.

The funding award displayed will be calculated on the information provided by the applicant and is provisional until such a time as it is appraised (where applicable) and approved, and the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement is signed.

Stage 3 of the process will commence in August. Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreements will be made available for electronic signature on the Early Years Hive prior to payments been made.

Who can apply?

Community and privately owned Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC) services who offer Full Time, Part Time or Sessional childcare in the Republic of Ireland. Childminders are also eligible to apply.

A Pre-School Service in a Drop-in Centre and SAC services that operate Drop-in care only, are not eligible for Core Funding.

Please note: The Core Funding application process is only available on the Early Years Hive. To onboard to the Early Years Hive please review the guidance document HERE.

All applicants must:

> - **Have a Service Reference Number** for the childcare service which is the subject of the Core Funding Application Module. Please note: The service reference number was formally called the DCYA reference number.

> - **Be registered with Tusla** for the type of service offered ELC or SAC or ELC & SAC.

> - **Complete the Early Years Sector Profile Survey.**

> - **Complete the online application process** on the Early Years HIVE.

What must I do in advance of submitting my Core Funding Application Module?

1. Complete the **Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP)**
   If you have not completed the survey, you must do so in advance of applying for Core Funding – see guidance HERE.

2. Ensure all **Tusla Registration** Certificates assigned to your service are captured on the Early Years Hive under the My Account Section. If you are registered as an ELC and an SAC service, both Tusla registration numbers must be reflected on the Early Years Hive – see guidance HERE.

3. **Read the Applicant guidelines** carefully to ensure you have all the information required to complete the process and understand the method of calculation for Core Funding. Please also refer to the FAQ if you encounter issues.

4. Complete the **Parent Statement for Partner Services**
   A Core Funding Partner Service is required to complete the Parent Statement for Partner Services and attach this to their Service Profile – see guidance HERE.

5. **Attach Evidence of Qualifications for Managers & Educators for Graduate Premiums**
   Proof of qualification is required for staff with QQI level 7 or above qualifications.
   Please also refer to the Technical Guide if you encounter issues.

How is my Tusla Registration information linked to my Core Funding Application Module?

Your Tusla Registration information (including your registered service type and capacity) captured on the Early Years Hive will be used to validate your Core Funding Application Module.

For example:

➤ The Care Types you outline within your Core Funding Service Profile should align with your Tusla registered Service Type i.e., if your service is Tusla registered as a Part Time service, and you include Full Time as a care type within your Core Funding Application Module, then a validation message will display, and you will not be able to submit the application.

➤ The level of anticipated capacity you declare within your Core Funding Application Module should not be greater than your registered Tusla capacity, i.e. If your registered Tusla capacity is 25 ELC places + 5 SAC places but you declare anticipated capacity of 30 ELC places + 10 SAC places, this will give a validation message on the application form.

If you believe there is a discrepancy in your Tusla Registration data, you will be given the opportunity to attach evidence to support your correct registration information. For example, if you have recently been given permission to increase your capacity by Tusla but this is not being reflected in the Core Funding Application Module validations, you will be able to submit evidence of this higher capacity. The required evidence is a Tusla Certificate/Tusla letter dated no earlier than 3 months prior to the

application submission date as part of Step 2 the Core Funding Application Module process. An upload form for these documents will be available in the Core Funding Application Module, see Page 16 for more information

NB: You are only required to attach evidence if there is a discrepancy in your Tusla registration data. If not, there is no need to upload any evidence of your Tusla registration details.

If a service provides both ELC & SAC, services they must provide 2 Tusla numbers. If the Early Years HIVE currently only stores one Tusla number, please visit the My Account section on the Early Years HIVE and submit the additional Tusla number.

Childminders will only have one Tusla registration number, even if they provide care to both ELC & SAC.

How is Core Funding Calculated?

The calculation for Core Funding is based on the below formulas.

1. Main Base Rate
Number of child places in an age group multiplied by value based on ratio that applies to the age group in Table 1 below multiplied by hours of operation per week multiplied by weeks open per year.

2. Graduate Lead Educator Premium
Number of rooms led by a graduate multiplied by hours worked per week multiplied by the weeks open per year multiplied by Graduate Lead Educator premium rate of €4.44, with a maximum of one Graduate Lead Educator premium per ELC room.
A Graduate Lead Educator must hold an eligible qualification as per the Department's list of approved Qualifications, QQI Level 7 or above. They must also have a minimum of three years paid eligible work experience in the sector.[1]

3. Graduate Manager Premium
Hours worked per week multiplied by operating weeks per year multiplied by Graduate Manager premium rate of €4.44, with a maximum of one Graduate Manager premium per service.
Note: The ELC Graduate Manager Premium is calculated on the basis of the hours in which the Manager is working, *and* the service is open and available to children, In practice this means the operating hours of the service or the working hours of the manager, whichever is the lower.

A Graduate Manager must hold an eligible qualification as per the Department's list of approved Qualifications, Level 7 or above. They must also have a minimum of three years paid eligible work experience in the sector.

SAC Only Services and Childminders are not eligible for the Graduate Manager Premium.

---

[1] 1.8. "Eligible Paid Experience" means paid experience working in an Early Learning and Care service or a School-Age Childcare service provided that:
(a) the year, refers to, at least, a full academic year or nine months of work within each calendar year, either full or part-time but at least 15 hours per week;
(b) the experience can be gained through a range of work activities but must involve work with pre-school or primary school aged children;

Table 1: Core Funding Base Rates:

Age of child	Value of Core Funding per place per hour
Full Time and Part Time	
0-1 year of age	€1.66
1-2 years of age	€1.07
2-3 years of age	€0.92
3-6 years of age	€0.68
Sessional	
0-1 year of age	€1.66
1-2.5 years of age	€1.07
2.5-6 years of age	€0.65
School-age AM/ School-age PM	
4-15 years	€0.55
Graduate premium rates per hour	
Graduate Lead Educators in ELC	€4.44
Graduate Managers in ELC or combined ELC and SAC	€4.44

The Core Funding Application Process

The Core Funding application process consists of two parts, Part A and Part B.

In Part A – Service Profile, applicants will provide information related to their service's opening times, rooms, session types and staff. This information will be used to populate Part B – the Core Funding Application Module. This section will not include validations on the information provided (such as confirming the room square footage against number of child places, or staff to child ratios) and no calculations will be carried out.

In Part B, the Core Funding Application Module will incorporate existing information you provided within Part A to provide an overall view of the day-to-day operations of your service. You will be required to select each room and provide information on the capacity of the service and the age ranges of children to be catered for as well as the staffing assigned to manage the stated capacity, so that a Core Funding award can be calculated. The system will retrieve Service Profile data where applicable to assist you in completion of Part B to make the process as quick and easy as possible. This information will be used solely for Core Funding. It will be validated and will provide the basis for your Core Funding allocation.

Part A – Complete your Service Profile

Your Service Profile can be accessed on the Early Years Hive under My Account. It is available to authenticated (signed-in) users through their Primary Authorised Users (PAUs) and Delegated PAUs.

Your Service Profile captures information relating to the operation of your service in one central location on the Early Years Hive. Currently, it reflects service level information as well as information on Rooms, Session Types and Staff.

Service level information

On the first page of the Service Profile, the applicant is required to input information at service level regarding the following fields. Please also refer to the Technical Guide if you encounter issues.
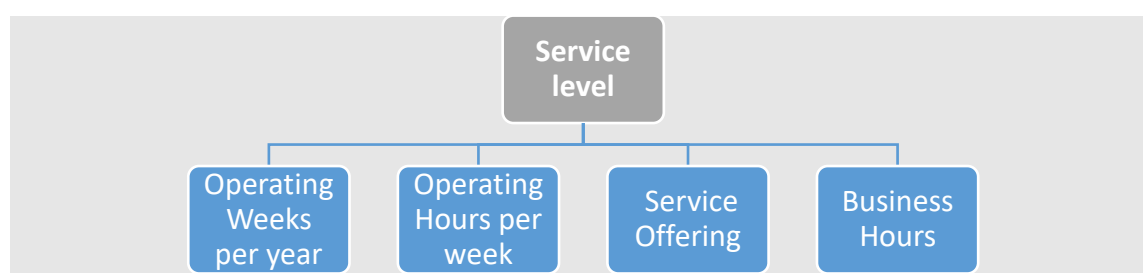
- ➢ **Operating Weeks Per Year** – This is the number of weeks your service is open and available to children.

- ➢ **Operating Hours Per Week** – This is the time the service is open and available to children; it does not include hours where the service is open but not available to children (although it *does* include hours during which the service is offering care to children but none have currently taken up the offer, e.g. if the service has opened an afternoon session but no children have registered yet at the time of application).

- ➢ **Service Offering** – Select if you offer Term Time Only, Out of Term Only or Both Term/Out of Term.
  - **Term Time Only** – this refers to the part of the year in which schools/pre-schools are open.
  - **Out of Term Only** – during school holidays.
  - **Both Term/ Out of term** – When the service offers care during Term Time and during school holidays, or all year round.

- ➢ **Business Hours Per Week** – The total hours when staff are present and working, including opening/operating hours and other hours, e.g. for cleaning, administration, or non-contact time.

Parent Statement for Partner Services

The Parent Statement for Partner Services Template and Guidance Document on Completion are available on the Early Years Hive – Click HERE. A Core Funding Partner Service is required to complete this template and attach this to their Service Profile before submitting Part B - the Core Funding Application Module.

A Core Funding Partner Service is required to issue the completed Parent Statement for Partner Services to all parents/guardians and retain evidence of this on file.

Appendix 4 - Outline of Parent Statement for Partner Services

Partner Services' Parent Statements will include the following information, to be completed in a template provided by the Scheme Administrator, as outlined in section 6.6.2 of the Funding Agreement.

1. **Welcome to our Partner Service**

   - Notification that the Partner Service is participating in Core Funding and an overview of the services offered to families.

2. **ECCE, AIM and NCS**

   - The DCEDIY schemes the Partner Service is contracted to deliver.
   - An brief overview of these schemes
   - Information on where they can get further information and support.

3. **Fees policies**

   - The Partner Service's commitment to operating the Fee Management clauses of this Funding Agreement, including information on no increases from September 2021 Fee Policy; obligations to publish and display their Fee Policy; obligations on deposits; prohibition of voluntary donations, etc.
   - Provision of the Fee Policy that will apply for September 2022-August 2023, using a template provided by the Scheme Administrator.

4. **Quality measures**

   - Staff qualifications in each of the rooms/sessions
   - A commitment by the Partner Service to implement their Quality Action Plan and report on their progress at the end of the year

Room Level

Applicants are required to input the rooms (multiple rooms can be added) in their service and outline the below information:
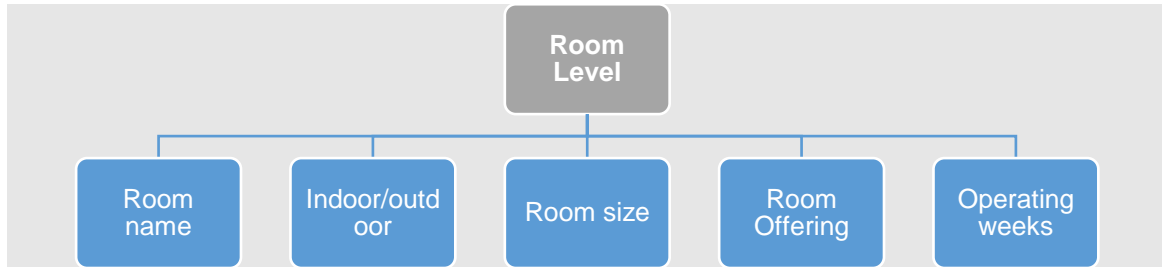
- ➢ **Room name** – Enter the name of the room.

- ➢ **Indoor or Outdoor** – Is the room located indoors or outdoors?

- ➢ **Room Size** – To be measured and input in square metres.
  To calculate the size of a room in square metres, measure its length and its breadth and multiply them.

- ➢ **Room offering** – Select if **Term Time Only, Out of Term Only**, or **Both Term/ Out of Term.**
  If a room offers Both Term/Out of Term care, there will be an option to input the number of weeks the room is open during Term Time and the number of weeks it is open Out of Term. **If a room offers the same care all year round with no distinction between Term and Out of Term, select the Both Term/Out of Term option. Insert the total number of weeks the room is open for Term Time and input "0" for Out of Term.**
  E.g. A Baby Room operates the same care all year round for 50 weeks. Select 'Both Term/Out of Term and input 50 into the Term Time field and 0 into the Out of Term field.

- ➢ **Operating weeks** – Number of weeks in the programme year the room operates.
  Note: This cannot be greater than the number of weeks the whole service is open.

Session Type

Session Type means a type of ELC/SAC session determined by the typical daily start and finish time and the day/s per week that it is applicable to. It also includes the capacity (numbers and age ranges of child places) being offered during the session which is also related to staff assigned to the session, this is what is referred to as staffed capacity.

The session offering and staffed capacity must remain consistent within the defined period outlined. A new Session Type is required where there is a change in the staffed capacity.
A Session Type may be applicable to multiple rooms if the session offering and staffed capacity remain consistent within the defined period outlined and therefore need only be defined once and applied to each applicable room.

A service defines one of its Service Types and names it "ECCE Sessional AM 9am - 12pm Term Time Only". This service type may be applicable to multiple rooms and only needs to be defined as a Session Type once. It could be applied to both of the following example rooms:

Room 1 – Capacity 11 Pre-school Sessional Places – 1 Qualified Adult – Session Type: "ECCE Sessional AM 9am - 12pm Term Time Only".

Room 2 – Capacity 22 Pre-school Sessional Places – 2 Qualified Adults - Session Type: "ECCE Sessional AM 9am - 12pm Term Time Only".

In the above example, the capacity does not change during the sessions. The below is an example of how to manage Session Types where this does happen:

A service offers full day care 8am-6pm in Room 3. However, many children are collected at 4pm, so one staff member goes home early and the staffed capacity in Room 3 is therefore reduced between 4pm and 6pm. The way to manage this is by creating separate Service Types: "Full Day Care 8am-6pm" and "Full Day Care 4pm-6pm". These can then both be assigned to Room 3 without overlapping.

See Appendix 1 for further examples on how to record Session Types.
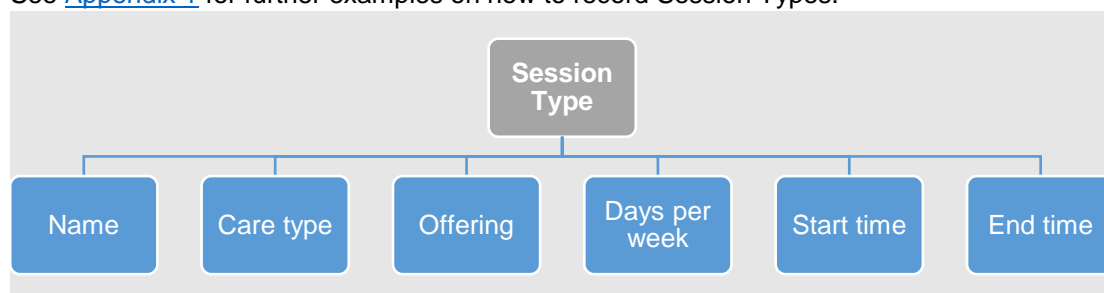
> **Name** – Name the session type as something identifiable for ease of reference when inputting into the Application stage.

> **Care type** – Select from Full Time, Part Time AM, Part time PM, Sessional AM, Sessional PM.
> *SAC only services will only have Part Time and Full Time options to choose from. ELC Care Types for 3 hours or less (outside of the ECCE session), which are required to be split due to Staffed Capacity, should label the Care Type as either Part Time or Full Time.*

> **Service Offering** – Select if **Term Time Only, Out of Term Only**, or **Both Term/ Out of Term.**

> **Days per week** – Select the days the care type runs on.
> **Monday to Sunday are available as options. Please ensure that you have selected the correct days and number of days. Selecting additional days, that are not applicable, could lead to an overpayment of Core Funding.**

> **Start time** – Time the care type starts

> **End time** – Time the care type ends.

Staff

It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure that all relevant staff have been made aware of their GDPR rights regarding their data being included in the Service Profile. The applicant will be required to confirm the declaration before they can progress within the staff section. A Privacy Policy that can be shared with staff can be found HERE.

Staff who have been previously entered on the Early Years HIVE under Higher Capitation will pre-populate with the staff member's name.

The applicant will select from a dropdown menu to outline if the staff member is one of the following:

➢ Out of ratio staff

➢ In ratio staff / vacancy

➢ Manager

Out of ratio staff:

The system will generate a Staff ID for the Out of ratio staff member.
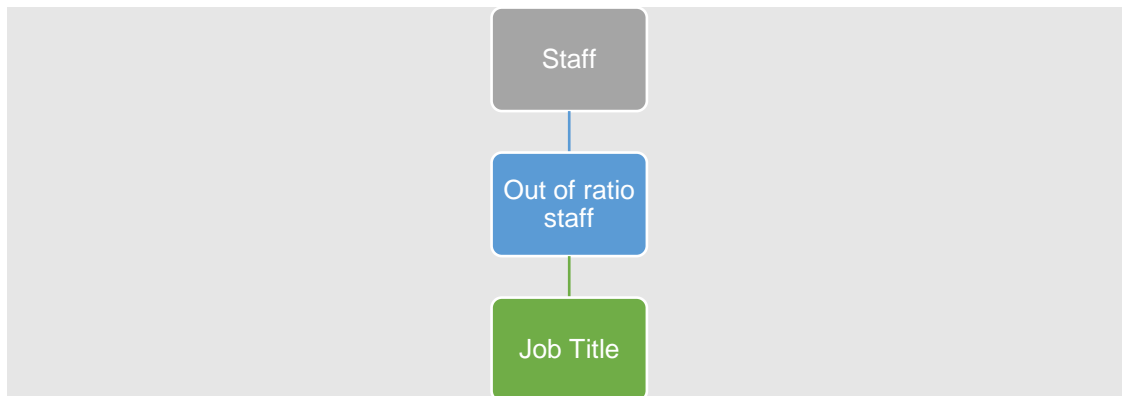
Job Title: Select a role from the dropdown menu-

Deputy manager, cleaner, driver, kitchen staff, caretaker/gardener/maintenance, security, administrator, salaried director, non-salaried director, owner-operator/sole-trader, AIM Level 7 (assigned to specific children), other (when other is selected a free text description box will be provided).

In ratio staff:

The applicant will select if the staff member is currently employed or if the position is currently vacant.

Employed:
The system will generate a unique staff ID for each staff member.
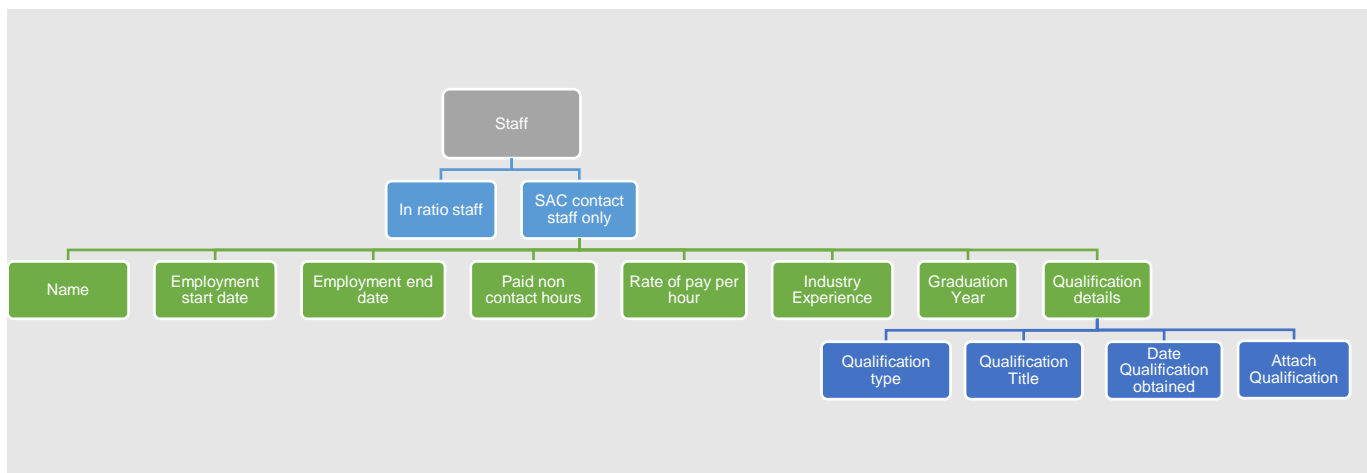
- ➢ **SAC contact staff only** – Select yes if staff member works in contact with School Age Children **only**.

- ➢ **Name** – Input Staff member's name.

- ➢ **Previous name** – Include previous surnames , etc, in this field if the name on the staff member's proof of qualification is different to their current name (it is not necessary to enter anything in this field if the staff member's current name matches the name on their proof of qualification).

- ➢ **Employment start date** – Date the staff member commenced employment.

- ➢ **Employment end date** – This field is only required to be completed when updating the Service Profile because a staff member has left.

- ➢ **Paid non-contact hours** – Applicant must enter number of hours per week for paid non-contact time.

- ➢ **Rate of pay per hour** – Input value with decimal places.
  If this value changes throughout the programme year, insert the average rate of pay.

- ➢ **Graduation Year** – Insert year of graduation. E.g., 1999, 2010.

- ➢ **Industry Experience** – Number of years and months industry experience.

- ➢ **Qualification** – In-ratio staff have the option to complete information regarding their qualification & experience. N.B - If 'yes' is selected for the 'SAC contact staff only' question, the qualification section will be optional.

  - • Qualification Type – Select qualification from the options list.
    For LOE (Letter of Eligibility) select the 'Other' option.

  - • Qualification Title – This will pre-populate dependant on the qualification type selected from the options list.

 - • Date Qualification obtained – Select from the calendar option.

- Attach proof of qualifications – **proof of qualification is only mandatory for staff with level 7 or above qualifications.**

  Acceptable proof of qualification is a copy of the relevant qualification. The copy must clearly outline the Award Title, Awarding Body, Name of Staff Member, and Date Award is Conferred. In the absence of the above, an exam transcript will be accepted, providing it is for the current Academic year. Additionally, a valid Letter of Eligibility to Practice (LOE) will be accepted.

Vacancy:

A vacancy should be added to the Service Profile, where applicable. Applicants can assign a vacancy to the relevant rooms and session types in the Core Funding Application Module, to outlined staffed capacity when the vacancy is filled.
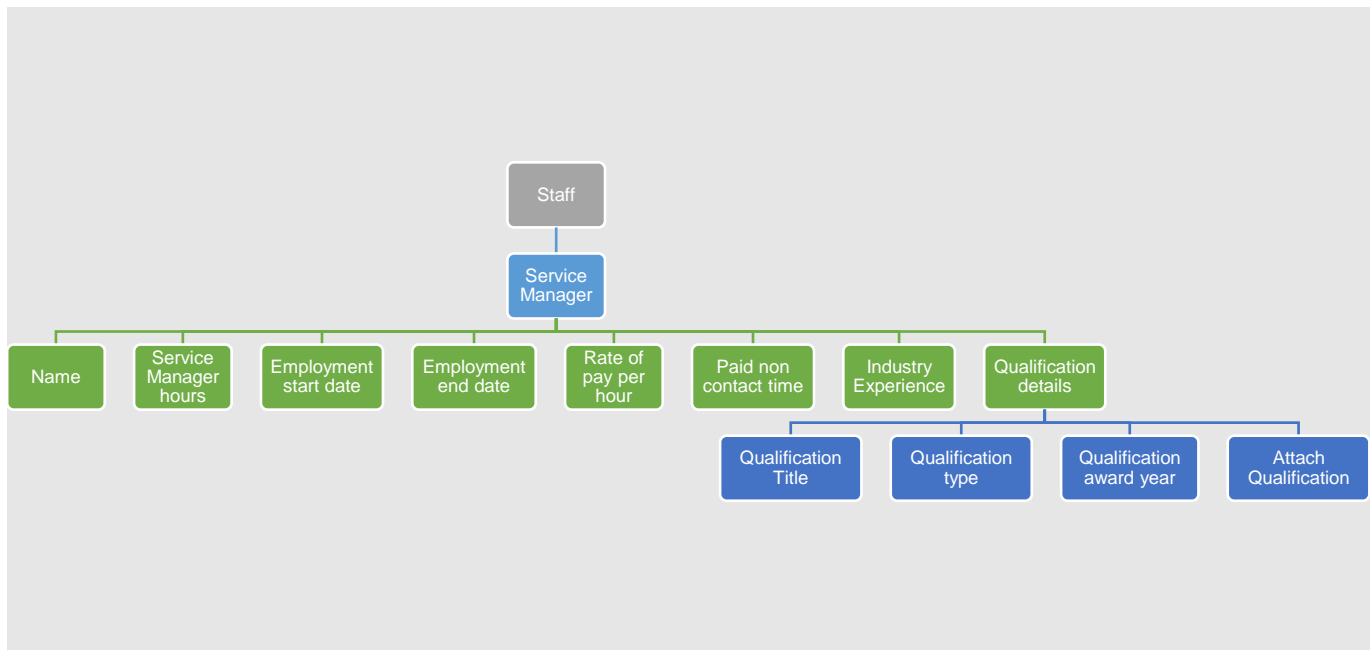
The applicant selects the **vacant** option.
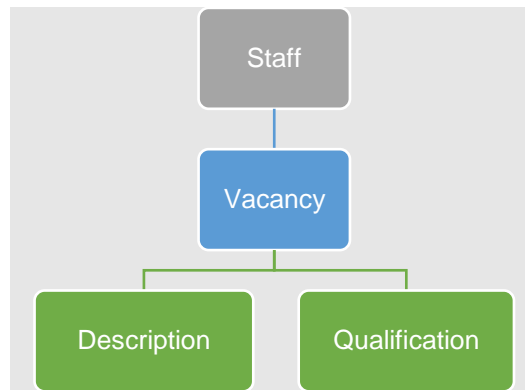
- ➢ **Description** – This is a free text box.

- ➢ **Qualification** – Applicant selects "Other" under staff qualification.
  The applicant must then select the Qualification box relevant to the vacancy – QQI Level 5, 6, or 7.

Manager:

➢ **Name** – Input Staff member's name.

➢ **Previous name** – Include previous surnames , etc, in this field if the name on the staff member's proof of qualification is different to their current name (it is not necessary to enter anything in this field if the staff member's current name matches the name on their proof of qualification).

➢ **Manager hours** – Manager will be required to input hours worked per week.

➢ **Employment start date** – Date the staff member commenced in the role.

➢ **Employment end date** – This field is only required to be completed when updating the Service Profile because a staff member has left.

➢ **Paid non-contact hours** – Applicant must enter number of hours per week for paid non-contact time.

➢ **Rate of pay per hour** – Input value with decimal places.
If this value changes throughout the programme year, insert the average rate of pay.

➢ **Graduation Year** – Insert year of graduation. E.g., 1999, 2010 (if applicable).

➢ **Industry Experience** – Number of years and months industry experience.

> - **Qualification** – Managers have the option to complete information regarding their qualification & experience. Information regarding qualifications are necessary if the Manager wishes to work in ratio in an ELC setting and/or wishes to apply for the Graduate Manager premium.

- Qualification Type – Select qualification from the options list.
  For LOE (Letter of Eligibility) select the 'Other' option.

- Qualification Title – This will pre-populate dependant on the qualification type selected from the options list.

- Date Qualification obtained – Select from calendar option.

- Attach proof of qualifications – **Proof of qualification is only required for a manager with a level 7 or above qualification.**

Part B – Complete the Core Funding Application Module

The Core Funding Application Module captures information at the individual room/session type level. It incorporates existing information you have already provided within your Service Profile to provide an overall view of the day-to-day operations of your service.

You are required to select each room and select the session types and staff data from drop down menus that you have already created in your Service Profile. You may also de-select a room or session type you have created that is not currently in use. This is more likely to occur if you are editing your service information later in the year.

Room(s):
The applicant will be presented with the list of rooms created in the previous Step – Step A – Service Profile.

Session Type(s):
The applicant will be presented with the list of Session Types created in the previous Step – Step A – Service Profile.

If the Care type offered within the Session Type is not in line with the Tusla Registration Service Type, an attachment option is available to attach evidence of the correct Tusla Registration.

NB: You are only required to attach evidence if there is a discrepancy in your Tusla registration data.

Associating Session Types to a Room:
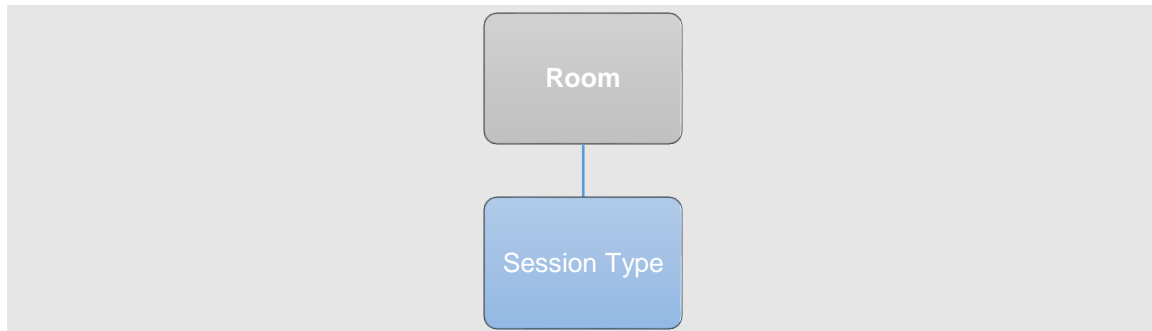
The applicant must add at least one Session Type to each Room. In instances where a Room has more than one Session Type, the applicant can add an additional line, select the Room again from a drop-down menu and add the additional Session Type. Please also refer to the Technical Guide for further guidance.

Note – The applicant must link at least one Session Type to each Room included in the application.

For each Session Type the applicant must select the description that best describes the session type as follows: ELC Only, SAC Only or ELC and SAC.

Note – An ELC type & a SAC type can run at the same time however a room cannot provide 2 ELC session types or 2 SAC session types at the same time.

Staff:

The applicant must ensure the room is adequately staffed to meet the required ratio per age ranges proposed for that room/session type.
The applicant will assign staff to each session type within a room from the staff list outlined in the Service Profile.
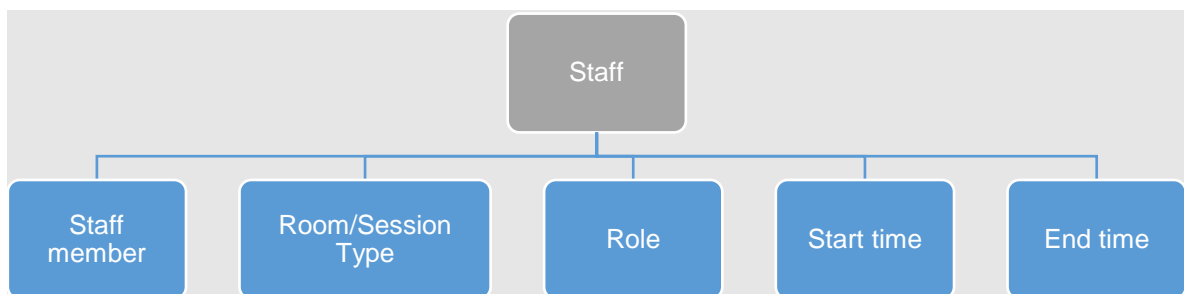
> **Manager** – The Manager can be added if they work in a Session Type. The Manager's name will be available in a drop-down list with other staff members, populated from the Manager role outlined within the Service Profile.

- ➢ **Staff Member** – Select staff member name from drop down list, which will be populated with the staff outlined in the Service Profile.

- ➢ **Role** – The applicant must select a role for the staff member- Educator or Lead Educator. *Dependant on the role selected and meeting the qualification requirements this information will be used to calculate the Graduate Lead Educator Premium.*

- ➢ **Start time** – This is the time the staff member starts in the Session Type.

- ➢ **End time** – This is the time the staff member finishes in the Session Type.

Manager

A **Manager** refers to the person in charge of a setting, as defined in the Early Years Regulations 2016 and SAC Regulations 2018, i.e., 'the person who has day-to-day charge of the service'. This person may or may not be the Registered Provider. While ELC and SAC services vary considerably in their legal and organisational structures, every service must – as a condition of its registration – have a designated person in charge (here termed the 'Manager') who is responsible for the daily running of the service and – unless deputised by a named person – must be on the premises at all times when the service is being carried on.
The Core Funding Graduate Manager premium can only be attracted by this designated person in charge, not by any of the other members of staff who may deputise when the manager is not present.

Educator

In keeping with *Nurturing Skills: The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare 2022-2028*, the working title chosen to describe those working in centre-based ELC was 'Early Years Educator'. The term 'assistant' will not be used, in acknowledgement that each qualified staff member – regardless of grade or qualification – is an Early Years Educator in their own right. The working title for those working in centre-based SAC is 'School-Age Childcare Practitioner', however they should be designated 'Educators' for the purposes of the Core Funding Application Module.

Lead Educator

A **Lead Educator** is defined as an Early Years Educator who leads practice with a group of children. The term 'Lead Educator' is used to reflect the important pedagogical leadership role played by these individuals with a group of children and with other Early Years Educators who are also working with that group of children. Previously this role was often termed 'room leader'. The term 'Lead Educator' will be relevant to groups of children of all ages in centre based ELC settings. For the purposes of Core Funding, each ELC room can only have one Lead Educator at any one time; even if the children are organised into groups within the room.
A Graduate Lead Educator must hold an appropriate qualification as per the Department's Higher Capitation Qualifications list. They must also have a minimum of three years' experience in the sector, see Page 6 for more information.

Capacity for each Child Age Group:

The applicant is required to specify the number of places available for the different child age ranges for each care type.

This section of the application module lists the Child Age Ranges for each Room/Session Type combination created by the applicant in a previous step.

Please enter the maximum staffed capacity for each Child Age Range across all Room/Session Type(s). If a Child Age Range does not apply for a given Room/Session Type, the Capacity field can remain blank. The Applicant may also include a '0' value in each field that does not apply, for the purpose of reviewing the data to ensure the correct Child Age Range for a given Room/Session Type has been completed.

If the capacity outlined is not in accordance with the information on the Tusla Register, please attach supporting evidence to reflect the change in Capacity provided in your Service.

NB: You are only required to attach evidence if there is a discrepancy in your Tusla registration data.
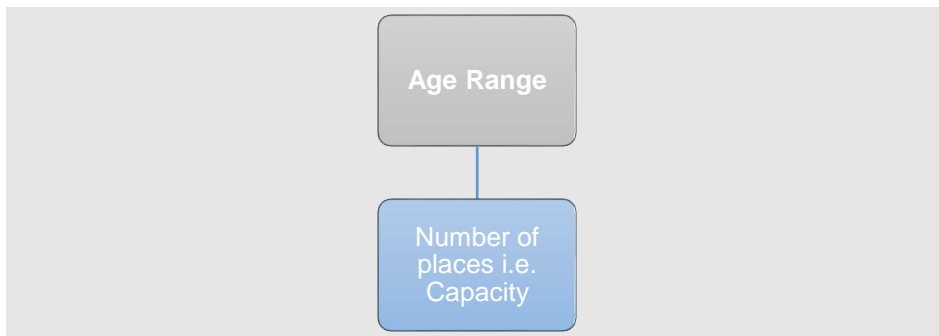
Note: Number of places is the staffed capacity and not the number of registered children.

Full Time and Part Time AM/PM				
0-1 years	1-2 years	2-3 years	3-6 years	4-15 years
Sessional AM/Sessional PM				
0-1 years		1-2.5 years		2.5-6 years
School Aged Care				
4-15 years				

Note: In year 1 the capacity outlined in the Core Funding Application Module will be the Service's Maximum Capacity for the year.

Once all room and staff information is inputted and validated, the system will check the total number of places across all rooms is within the service's registered Tusla capacity. If unsuccessful, the system will either

a) check that supporting documentation has been attached or

b) indicate that supporting documentation is required to be attached.

Summary:

Once all validations have been passed on the application form, the applicant will be able to view their un-appraised Core Funding values, prior to submission. The applicant will be able to view calculations at an overall service and individual room level.

➢ Annual Core Funding un-appraised value at service level (i.e., the full annual total) including graduate premiums if applicable.

➢ Annual Core Funding un-appraised value at room level (i.e., the annual total for each individual room) including graduate premiums if applicable.

➢ Monthly Core Funding un-appraised value at service level (i.e., the full monthly total) including graduate premiums if applicable.

➢ Monthly Core Funding un-appraised value at room level (i.e., the monthly total for each individual room) including graduate premiums if applicable.

Ensure the information provided is accurate before submitting the Core Funding Application Module.

NB: Once you submit your application, you will no longer have an opportunity to amend the information so please ensure all of the details are correct prior to submitting the application.

Appraisal of submitted applications

Applications that generate the Graduate and/or Manager premium and/or which include submitted evidence that the applicant's Tusla registration information is incorrect will require an appraisal. The appraisal process will consist of a review of the supporting documentation submitted to support the qualification of the Lead Educator and/or Manager and/or updated Tusla information.

As part of the appraisal process, applications may be referred back to the applicant if the supporting evidence provided is not acceptable or to request further information.

Once all supporting information submitted has been appraised and approved, your Core Funding Application Module status will be set to approved.

Appraisals should be processed within 6 weeks of submission of the application form. If a service is awaiting appraisal, payments can begin on a provisional basis, based on the result of the Core Funding Application Module. If any appraisals are not passed and this has resulted in an overpayment, the overpayment will be offset against the remaining payments in the programme year.

Validations

The applicant will not be able to submit their Core Funding Application Module if their data has not passed the following validations.

At Room level these validations are:

- ➢ The Staff to Child Ratio must be appropriate for the room.

- ➢ The Floor Space must be sufficient for the number of child places being offered in the room.

- ➢ The Staffing Hours must be sufficient for the operating hours of the room.

- ➢ The Annual capacity hours must not exceed 8760.

- ➢ The number of open weeks per year for a room cannot exceed 52.

- ➢ The number of open hours per day for a room cannot exceed 24.

- ➢ Applicant must enter details for at least one room in a core funding Service Profile. Childminders may enter details for one room only.

- ➢ Applicant must enter a capacity value greater than zero for at least one age range.

- ➢ At least one Care type must be added to a room.

- ➢ Applicants cannot offer two care types at the same time in the same room.

At Session Type level these validations are:

- ➢ An ELC session can only have one ELC lead educator.

- ➢ A SAC session may have an ELC lead educator, but the graduate premium will not apply for that session.

- ➢ Staff members may be assigned to more than one session, however the session start, and end times must not overlap. The same staff member cannot be present in more than one session at the same time.

- ➢ Applicants must have a Tusla registration for ELC and SAC when offering early learning and school age session care. This validation is not applicable to Childminders. Childminders can offer ELC places if they are SAC and vice versa – up to the maximum capacity allowed.

- ➢ Applicants that have a Tusla registration for SAC only must not be able to offer ELC sessions, and vice versa. This validation is not applicable to Childminders.

- Where an applicant is offering a care type for which they are not Tusla registered, the system will request the applicant to upload evidence to be appraised by the Pobal Administrator.

- The staff member employment start date must be on or before the session start date.

- The Care Types entered by the applicant must align with Tusla registration type i.e., Full time – can offer Full Time, Part Time, and Sessional. Part-time can offer Part Time, and Sessional. Sessional can only offer sessional.

- There must be a sufficient number of staff associated with the session type so that the minimum ratio requirements are met for the number of children in the session.

- A service can have only one Service Manager.

- The number of places offered at any one time must not exceed the Tusla Registration capacity.

Staff roles and qualifications validations are:

- The system retrieves the staff qualification of the staff member assigned to the room and session type.

- The system checks the Roles (Lead Educator, Educator) of the staff members in each session type.

- Session can have more than one level 7 graduate and all of these staff members must be appraised, but only the staff member in the lead educator role attracts the graduate premium.

- To qualify for the Graduate premium, the staff member's role in the early years session type must be an ELC Lead Educator; they must have a relevant qualification (level 7 or above) and they must have at least 3 years' experience. The system will use the Service Profile Staff field "Number of years' experience" field to check the experience of the staff member and it is the responsibility of the partner service to maintain this and other service profile data.

Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement

The Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement is the contract for Core Funding. A brief summary of the main conditions are provided below.

Partner services will be required to accept the terms and conditions of Core Funding including:

- Follow the fee management system – in 2022/23 this will be a requirement not to increase fees above September 2021 rates.
- Implement quality improvement measures.
- Implement the relevant practice frameworks.
- Report on quality measures.

- Provide transparent financial reports and participate as required in cost surveys and other necessary data-collection exercises.
- Offer the NCS (Full Time, Part Time, School Age Services and Childminders) and the ECCE programme (Sessional pre-school services) to all eligible children/parents.

Full information and detail on the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement is available here.

Core Funding is contingent upon Employment Regulation Orders being in effect to cover all roles across the sector as defined in the Early Years' Service Joint Labour Committee Establishment Order.

This Funding Agreement shall commence on the date of acceptance by the Partner Service, or on the date upon which the Employment Regulation Orders comes into effect to cover all roles across the sector as defined in the Early Years' Service Joint Labour Committee Establishment Order whichever is the later date ("Effective Date"), and will expire on 31 August 2023 (Term) unless otherwise terminated by the Minister.

Core Funding is applicable from the point in which a partner service agrees to the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement. Therefore, an applicant should accept the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement at the earliest opportunity to ensure that they receive their full Core Funding allocation.

Eligible Expenditure:
Eligible expenditure allowed under the Core Funding as noted in the Appendix Section of the Funding Agreement.

Appendix 1 – Approved areas of Expenditure

- Costs relating to staffing of Partner Services in the provision of Early Learning and Care and/or School Aged Childcare (ELC/SAC), which may include non-contact time in preparation and review of ELC/SAC provision.

- Costs of participation in Continuing Professional Development relating to ELC/SAC including cost of cover for absence due to such participation.

- Costs relating to the administration of the service including the administration of schemes funded by Department.

- Overheads pertaining to running of the ELC/SAC service including rent, rates, utilities and insurance.

- Any other costs which may reasonably be asserted to enhance the quality of ELC/SAC service provision.

Ineligible Expenditure:
Ineligible expenditure allowed under the Core Funding:

- Capital

- Any other costs which may not reasonably be asserted to enhance the quality of ELC/SAC service provision.

Changes and Updates to your Service Profile and Application

Partner Services (applicants who have signed the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement) are required to keep their Service Profile and information up to date throughout the programme year. Changes after signing the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement relating to staff vacancies, staff qualifications and level of service offered may reduce your initial Core Funding allocation. Failure to update your information may result in your Core Funding allocation being placed on hold or revoked.

Additional information on application changes will be provided in due course.

Core Funding Payments

Once all validations have been passed on the Core Funding Application Module, the applicant will be able to review their un-appraised Core Funding values before submission. The calculation inputs and output will be made available on the summary page for the applicant to reference as required. Once the application is submitted, this becomes read only and remains on the system. The applicant's provisional Core Funding allocation will be displayed to the applicant for review, broken down into the following detail for additional clarity:

- ➢ Annual Core Funding un-appraised value at service level (i.e., the full annual total).

- ➢ Annual Core Funding un-appraised value at room level (i.e., the annual total for each individual room).

- ➢ Monthly Core Funding un-appraised value at service level (i.e., the full monthly total).

- ➢ Monthly Core Funding un-appraised value at room level (i.e., the monthly total for each individual room).

The un-appraised value is the amount of funding the applicant will be allocated until such a time as it is appraised (where applicable) and approved.

Core Funding will be paid monthly in advance, in monthly instalments spread across the entire programme year. Core Funding will be paid into the bank account listed for each service on the Hive, through the same processes as ECCE and NCS. It is important, for those schemes as well as for Core Funding, to ensure that all bank account details are up-to-date.

Core Funding payments will be made monthly in advance starting in August 2022.

Weekly catch-up payments will be facilitated.

Privacy Statement

Please review the Privacy Statement HERE.

Further information

For further information regarding the Core Funding Programme, visit the First Five website here.

Training will be provided, and a technical guide will also be available when the application process opens.

Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC): The Pobal Early Years Provider Centre is available to assist ELC and SAC providers with their online applications for Core Funding.

For queries relating to technical support, accessing and using the Early Years Hive and / or questions regarding sector/service profile or application queries please raise a 'Service Request' on the Early Years Hive or email eypc@pobal.ie.

The Early Years Provider Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm.

City and Country Childcare Committees (CCCs): The CCCs are also available to support local ELC and SAC providers with queries associated with Core Funding. In particular, questions relating to specific Service Profile requirements or the Core Funding Application Module should be directed to your local City and County Childcare Committee in the first instance.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Session type examples

ECCE session 9am - 12pm Monday to Friday. Capacity remains the same for the 3 hours therefore only 1 Session Type is required.
(Capacity 2 staff: 22 places)

Name	Care type	Service Offering	Days per week	Start time	End time
ECCE session 9am - 12pm	Sessional AM	Term Time only	5	09:00	12:00

2 room service, ECCE session 9am - 12pm Monday to Friday. Capacity, days, and time remains the same for the 3 hours in both rooms therefore only 1 Session Type is required.
Room 1 - (Capacity 2 staff: 22 places)
Room 2 - (Capacity 2 staff: 22 places)

Name	Care type	Service Offering	Days per week	Start time	End time
ECCE session 9am-12pm	Sessional AM	Term Time only	5	09:00	12:00

Baby Room is open 8am - 6pm. Offers same care all year round. The capacity increases and decrease throughout the day due to staffed capacity therefore 3 Session Types are required.
8am - 9am - (Capacity 1 staff: 3 places 0 -1 Years)
9am - 4pm - (Capacity 2 staff: 6 places 0 -1 Years)
4pm - 6pm - (Capacity 1 staff: 3 places 0 -1 Years)

Name	Care type	Service Offering	Days per week	Start time	End time
Baby room 8am-9am	Full time	Both Term/Out of Term	5	08:00	09:00
Baby room 9am-4pm	Full time	Both Term/Out of Term	5	09:00	16:00
Baby room 4pm-6pm	Full time	Both Term/Out of Term	5	16:00	18:00

Sessional Service offers both term and out of term -
Term Time only - ECCE session am & ECCE session PM - Consistent throughout the week.
Out of term - Same hours and Ratio Out of Term - Offers Camp - Monday to Thursday. Change in hours on a Friday.
ECCE AM - (Capacity 2 staff: 22 places)
ECCE AM - (Capacity 2 staff: 22 places)
Camp - (Capacity 2 staff: 16 places)

Name	Care type	Service Offering	Days per week	Start time	End time
ECCE AM 9am - 12pm	Sessional AM	Term Time only	5	09:00	12:00
ECCE PM 2pm - 5pm	Sessional PM	Term Time only	5	14:00	17:00
Camp Monday - Thursday	Part time AM	Out of Term only	4	10:00	15:00
Camp Friday	Part time AM	Out of Term only	1	10:00	14:00