



Core Funding FAQ

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1. Background

1.1. What is Core Funding?

Core Funding is a grant to Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC) providers to support them in meeting increased operating costs. It is designed to deliver:

- affordability for parents through ensuring no increases in fees and offering NCS and ECCE to all eligible children;
- quality in services, including through better terms and conditions for staff and supporting graduate leadership in services; and
- sustainability for providers through substantially increased funding to the sector, paid on a consistent and equitable basis.

Core Funding is a key pillar of the new funding model recommended by an Expert Group in their report, *Partnership for the Public Good: a New Funding Model for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare*, published in December 2021. It is designed to enable a new type of partnership between the State and ELC and SAC providers to deliver the public good.

Core Funding will operate alongside NCS, ECCE (at standard capitation rates), AIM and the CCSP Saver Programme and be in addition to income from these funding streams and any income received in parental fees.

Importantly, Core Funding will only come into effect and 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.

1.2. How will Core Funding be allocated to services?

The majority of Core Funding will be allocated to Partner Services based on their capacity: the number of child places available, the age group/s of children for whom those places are available and the number of hours of provision. Importantly, Core Funding will be based on staffed capacity: it will not matter whether the places offered are subsequently occupied or vacant, but there must be enough staff in place to satisfy the minimum staff to child ratios as set in the Regulations.

ELC Services with graduate-led provision will also be able to attract a graduate premium.

The details of the exact formula and values for the allocation of Core Funding are set out in the funding agreement.

The amount payable under Core Funding will be determined based on the information provided through the application process and will be paid to partner services in monthly instalments in advance over the Core Funding programme year (1st September 2022 to 31st August 2023).

1.3. What is meant by Capacity?

Capacity is the number of child places a service can provide while adhering to the requirements under the Regulations for age ranges, session types, space, and ratios. A service's capacity cannot exceed the number of children the service can accommodate (overall service capacity) as stated on the Tusla Register. Core Funding allocations will be based on places, not on child registrations and attendance levels. Places do not have to be filled in order to be allocated Core Funding. However, for capacity to be funded, the necessary levels of staff must be in place. The staffing required depends on the age range and session types of the places available. The capacity of a service is also limited by the regulatory space requirements.

1.4. What is the ELC Graduate Premium?

Services with ELC graduate Lead Educators/Managers will receive an additional allocation through the ELC Graduate Premium. In order for a service to be allocated an ELC Graduate Premium, the person in question must be a Lead Educator in an ELC room and/or the Manager of an ELC or a combined ELC and SAC service

and must hold an appropriate qualification (QQI Level 7 or higher) as per the Department's Higher Capitation Qualifications list. They must also have a minimum of three years' experience in the sector. The ELC Graduate Premium is calculated based on the number of ELC graduate Lead Educators in ELC rooms in the service; and if the ELC or combined ELC and SAC service has an ELC graduate as the manager.

1.5. What is an ELC Lead Educator?

The definition of a Lead Educator is taken from 'Nurturing Skills – The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028':

"An Early Years Educator who leads practice with a group of children will be termed 'Lead Educator'. 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'."

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.

1.6. What is meant by the term Manager?

The definition of a Manager is taken from Nurturing Skills – The Workforce Plan for Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare, 2022-2028':

"The term Manager is used in the Workforce Plan to refer 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.

1.7. What does this mean for ECCE Higher Capitation?

The Graduate Premium is replacing ECCE Higher Capitation. All funding in respect of ELC graduate Lead Educators is contained within Core Funding from the 2022/2023 programme year onwards. This means that services with graduate Lead Educators outside of the ECCE programme will be able to access additional funding for the first time. Higher Capitation will no longer be available. ECCE services that choose not to apply for Core Funding will no longer have access to Higher Capitation funding.

1.8. What does this mean for the Programme Support Payment (PSP)?

Extra funding to support administration costs is also contained within Core Funding. This means that PSP will no longer be available from the 2022/2023 programme year onwards for services, regardless of whether or not they participate in Core Funding.

N.B. PSP is paid annually in arrears. This means that (subject to eligibility/conditions) your service will have received a PSP payment in July 2022 for the 2021/2022 programme year. From the 2022/23 programme year PSP will no longer be available.

1.9. Where can I see examples of sample services?

Examples of how Core Funding will operate for a wide variety of services are available [here](#).

2. Eligibility

2.1. Who is eligible for Core Funding?

To be eligible for Core Funding you must be an Early Learning and Care (ELC) or School-Age Childcare (SAC) centre-based service provider or a childminder who meets the following criteria:

- Registered with Tusla, the Child and Family Agency

- Contracted with DCEDIY to deliver ECCE and/or NCS, as appropriate:
 - A service offering sessional care to the ECCE-eligible age range must offer ECCE
 - A service offering care to any other age ranges must offer NCS
 - A service offering care to both must offer both programmes
- Not a pre-school service in a drop-in centre or a drop-in only school age service.

2.2. Why are Drop-In service ineligible for Core Funding?

Drop-in service provide a useful service to parents, but it is a very specific category of care which is not compatible with Core Funding.

A Drop-in service is one that offers care on a casual, 'drop in' basis – that is, the children only attend the service from time to time, for not more than 2 hours at a time.

These characteristics – intermittent, short attendance, without consistency of care – mean that a drop-in service is not compatible with the key aims of Core Funding to improve outcomes for children and families.

2.1. Do exemptions from pre-existing schemes exempt services from the condition to be in contract for NCS and/or ECCE?

No, participation in DCEDIY schemes other than ECCE and NCS do not contribute towards your eligibility for Core Funding. A service with a CCSP contract will have to activate an NCS or ECCE contract to come into Core Funding, as CCSP contracts do not meet the eligibility criteria.

3. Timeline and sequence

3.1. What is the timeline for the Core Funding application process?

- Stage 1: Pre Application Survey
Completion of the Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP) survey is a pre-requisite for application to Core Funding. The initial data collection window for the AEYSP opened in April and closed in May. For services who could not complete the survey during this period and who still wish to do so, the AEYSP reopened on 13th June 2022. This ensures that any service that wishes to complete an application for Core Funding can submit an AEYSP to allow them to do so.
- Stage 2: Complete application process
This stage will open on 28th July. Applicants will define their service's profile and their capacity in detail on an online system. Immediately on completion of the application, the service's specific Core Funding value will be calculated and communicated to applicants, subject to final verifications and confirmations.
- Stage 3: Contracting and payments
This will take place in August. Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreements will be made available for electronic signature on the Hive.

3.2. Does a service need to complete the AEYSP to apply for Core Funding?

Yes, completing the AEYSP is a necessary requirement in order to access the Core Funding Application Module.

The AEYSP will capture essential information to provide a baseline to assess the impact of Core Funding at a sector-wide level. As in previous years, the data collected in the AEYSP provides vital insight to track and monitor trends and identify key issues in the sector.

City and County Childcare Committees are available to assist with completing the AEYSP if necessary.

3.3. Does the AEYSP affect a service's Core Funding allocation?

The information provided in the AEYSP will not be used in assessing eligibility for Core Funding.

The purpose of the AEYSP is to create an aggregated picture of the sector as a whole. This is especially important this year, in order to set a baseline against which the impact of Core Funding can be measured in subsequent years.

4. Contract/Funding Agreement

4.1. What are the conditions of the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement?

The full detail of the conditions are set out in the published Funding Agreement.

Some of the key conditions include:

- Participating in the AEYSP.
- Operating a fee management system, which requires no increase to fees in 2022/23 above 30th September 2021 rates.
- Implementing practice frameworks
- Developing, implementing and reporting on a Quality Action Plan.
- Providing transparent and validated financial reports.
- Issuing a Parent Statement to all parents using the service outlining what they can expect.
- Offering the NCS and the ECCE programme to all eligible children.

4.2. What is the Core Funding programme year?

The programme year for Core Funding 2022/23 starts on 1st September 2022 and ends on 31st August 2023.

Where the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement has been signed on or before 1st September 2022, Partner Services will be eligible for funding from 1st September 2022.

Applications can be submitted following the start of the programme year but payments will not be backdated.

4.3. How will Core Funding be paid?

Core Funding will be paid 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 other Funding Agreements. It is important to ensure that all bank account details are up-to-date.

4.4. How do I sign the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement?

Following the submission of a Core Funding Application Module, a contract will be made available to Partner Services for electronic signature on the Hive.

4.5. What is the funding guarantee?

The change in approach to funding may mean that a very small number of applicants (estimated to be approximately 40 services in total, less than 1%) may receive somewhat less in Core Funding to what they had previously received in Higher Capitation and PSP combined. This affects a small number of Partner Services who have particularly benefited from the previous approach to Higher Capitation by having large ECCE groups with high occupancy levels.

For this small number of applicants, the Department is issuing a funding guarantee whereby, under Core Funding, applicants will receive the same level of funding as they received from Higher Capitation and PSP, assuming the numbers of graduate staff and the type of service offered remains the same in the 2022/23 programme year as in 2021/22. The funding guarantee will apply even if the number of children participating in the service have reduced.

Services for whom the funding guarantee applies will be paid at a number of points throughout the programme year, with the payment adjusted periodically if their Core Funding value changes.

4.6. Can new services join Core Funding?

Yes, new services are eligible to apply for and to receive Core Funding. For new services, the existing Partner Service on-boarding process will be used.

If you are a new service and have any questions about your application or eligibility for Core Funding, you can contact your local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC) for support and at the Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC). The contact details for the CCCs are available here: [City and County Childcare Committees](#)

5. Core Funding Application Process- Part A & B

5.1. When will the application form be available?

The application process will open at 2p.m on the 28th July 2022.

5.2. What information is required for the application form to calculate Core Funding?

The Core Funding Application Module is used to capture the details required to calculate Core Funding: information related to a service's opening times, rooms, session types and staff. Where services have graduate Lead Educators or graduate Managers, details and evidence of the qualifications of these staff will also be required in order to pay the graduate premium part of Core Funding.

Core Funding is based on staffed capacity. For this reason, the application form will require details on the staff to be allocated to each room during the course of the operating hours of the service. The application form will have in-built validations in relation to the staffing requirements by age range, session type and space.

If the application form passes all the relevant pre-requisites and validations, a service's Core Funding value will be calculated at room level based on the formula set out in the Funding Agreement.

The system will calculate a Core Funding Capacity Value and Graduate Premium (if applicable) at room level and repeat the calculation for all rooms in the service. The final calculation will incorporate the Graduate Manager Premium if applicable and present the total Core Funding value at service level.

The calculation will be subject to appraisal of any accompanying evidence submitted with it, but payments will be made on a provisional basis using the results of this calculation while the appraisal process takes place.

5.3. How does the application differ from the Ready Reckoner

A Ready Reckoner was launched in March in order to give prospective Core Funding applicants an idea of what their Core Funding amount may be so that they know what approximate figure to expect. The Core Funding Ready Reckoner gives an approximate indication of your potential value for Core Funding based on the information that you provide in response to the questions asked but is not an exact calculation. The Ready Reckoner also does not assess eligibility for Core Funding.

The full application will gather information on eligibility and capacity, as well as the staffing available to manage the stated capacity. The application will therefore verify actual capacity levels, whereas the Ready Reckoner accepted all information at face value. There will be a further process to validate qualifications of staff who are eligible to attract graduate premiums.

The [Core Funding Ready Reckoner](#) remains available, along with the [Ready Reckoner FAQ](#).

5.4. What documentation will I need to apply for Core Funding?

See applicant guidelines for further detail. [Link]

5.5. How long do I have to complete my application for Core Funding?

Applications for Core Funding covering programme year 2022-2023 will be accepted up until the 30th of June 2023. While services can join at any time, funding will not be backdated to the beginning of the programme year. Services that have submitted their application and signed the Core Funding Partner Services Agreement(s) by the 19th of August will receive their first payment in time for the programme year.

5.6. Who can support me in the completion of the Core Funding application process?

Your Local CCC and Pobal's Early Years Provider Centre should be able to assist you if you run into difficulty.

- 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 Core Funding Application Module queries please raise a 'Service Request' on the Early Years Hive, email eypc@pobal.ie or call 01 5117222.

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.

6. Part A – Completing your Service Profile

6.1. What is the procedure where staff have not yet been employed? /What do I do if my new employee is due to start at the beginning of the programme year but I'm completing my application prior to their first date of employment?

Enter the person in as a vacancy and update your Service Profile within four weeks.

6.2. How does a service, that is Tusla registered for Part time care, complete a session type for summer camps?

They should create an out of term camp session, this will also allow them to offer different operating hours if relevant.

6.3. Will Staff Qualifications have to be attached to the Application form for all staff or only for the Graduate Lead Educators and Graduate Managers?

Only the qualifications of staff with QQI Level 7 or higher will need to be attached.

7. Part B – Completing the Core Funding Application Module

7.1. Where services have not yet recruited the new staff at the time of the Core Funding Application Module – how do they enter this and having the planned capacity?

If a vacancy has been added to the Service Profile, services can assign that vacancy to the relevant rooms to show where the capacity will be when the job opening is filled.

7.2. My service has a Graduate Manager working across multiple rooms throughout the day. Are they eligible for the Graduate Manager premium across all rooms or just the one room?

The Graduate Manager Premium is payable for all the hours worked by the manager while the service is open and available to children, not just hours when they are working in a room.

7.3. A Graduate Manager works in 2 services, one in the AM and a second one in the PM. Can each service receive the Graduate Manager Premium?

Both, based on the actual operating hours worked by the graduate Manager in each service.

7.4. Lead Educator working 4 days and another Lead Educator doing one day – can the Graduate Lead Educator Premium cover the full week or only one person? Job Sharing was possible under Higher Capitation, how is it done under Core Funding?

The same principles apply as under Higher Capitation. The Graduate Premium for the Lead Educator is for the hours the room is led by a graduate. If another Lead Educator leads at a different point in time and they are eligible for the Lead Educator Graduate Premium, then they will attract the Graduate Premium for the hours they are leading in the room. It may be helpful to think in terms of the room rather than the individual

staff members: so long as the room has a Graduate Lead Educator, the Graduate Premium can be attracted, whichever member of staff it is that is present. The key rule here is that there can only be one graduate Lead Educator in a room at a time.

7.5. Does service capacity have an impact on the Graduate Premiums?

Capacity does not have any impact on the graduate Lead Educator or graduate Manager Premiums.

7.6. How does assigning a vacancy to a session affect the staffed capacity?

Assigning a vacancy to a session is treated in the same way as a named person is, i.e. the vacancy is included in the staff ratios as part of the staffed capacity of the service.

7.7. Will assigning a vacant position to a session affect the overall funding award?

Your initial award will not be affected. However, if you have not filled your vacancy within 4 weeks and/or have not updated your Service Profile and Core Funding Application Module, your core funding allocation will be reduced.

7.8. When do services find out the value of their core funding?

The last page of the Core Funding Application Module is a prefilled summary page which provides the overall unappraised value of the Core Funding allocation for the year at that time, as well as a room by room breakdown.

7.9. What happens after I've completed my application for Core funding?

The Core Funding Application Module becomes read only after submission. Following this, you will receive your Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement for acceptance. If everything is in order, you can accept the Terms and Conditions of the Agreement and payments will follow. Payments are made monthly in advance. Initial payments may be unappraised values if qualifications need to be verified for the Graduate Premiums or information that supports a different status to that on the Tusla Register needs to be validated.

7.10. Can I make changes to the application form after I've pressed submit on my application form?

No. The Core Funding Application Module becomes read only after submission, until the first time you will be asked to update it or confirm there have been no changes. After this, you will be able to update the Service Profile and Core Funding Application Module if there are any changes in your service, as required by the rules of Core Funding. However, it is important to note that your Core Funding allocation will be capped at the amount calculated at initial submission for the 2022/23 programme year. This process cannot be relied on to fix errors; you should take care to ensure that your application is accurate before submitting.

7.11. If I do not finish my application on time, will my payments be backdated?

No. Core Funding is paid from the point of contracting. For Core Funding, a payable week is considered 3 or more days, therefore if you contract after 1st Sept you must contract Mon-Wed to be awarded Core Funding for that week

7.12. How could my Core Funding allocation change during the Programme Year?

Core Funding allocations can increase if a staff member (including manager) who was not eligible for the Graduate Premium is replaced by one who is; or the existing staff member becomes eligible (i.e. completes a L7+ qualification and already has 3 years' experience; or already had a L7+ qualification and reaches 3 years' experience).

Core Funding allocations cannot increase in response to an expansion in the Partner Service's capacity.

Core Funding allocations can decrease if:

- A Graduate Lead Educator/Manager leaves and is replaced by a non-graduate
- Capacity is lost - a room is closed; a staff member (graduate or non-graduate) leaves and is not replaced within four weeks so staff:child ratios cannot be maintained.

A Core Funding allocation can be restored to its original level (or partially restored if appropriate) if lost capacity is restored, but only up to the level set at contracting. The initial allocation for capacity is a

maximum. Hence, if a service loses capacity and is subsequently able to increase it above the original level, funding can only be restored up to the level set at contracting.

There are no tolerances for Year 1 - any reduction in capacity will result in a proportionate and immediate reduction in Core Funding. Services should update their Service Profile/Application immediately as soon as any changes occur. However, provided that they have performed this update by the time of the next quarterly prompt, their allocation will only be revised effective from the quarterly update. If a change is subsequently found to have occurred prior to the quarterly update and was reported late, the allocation will be revised downward from the time the change occurred, and future payments will be reduced to offset any overpayments that have occurred.

If a service is found to have failed to report a reduction in capacity/staff/graduate staff before the most recent update, in the course of a compliance visit, this would be considered a breach of Core Funding rules.

8. Rules

8.1. Can I increase fees or introduce a charge to an existing Service Type?

No. As a condition of receiving Core Funding, a Partner Service agrees not to increase the fee for any Service Type which was extant on September 30th 2021 or introduce an extra charge for any component of that Service Type.

An increased charge of any kind for an existing and unchanged Service Type will be in breach of Core Funding rules.

This also includes circumstances by which a change of fee policy would result in an increase charges to parents, for example, a service that offered a multiple child deduction cannot remove it.

Anything that had been “folded into” the 30 September 2021 fee cannot now be charged for individually; for example if meals were included in the fee, they cannot now be charged separately. The charges for items and services which were offered for free or at discounted rates on 30 September 2021 cannot be increased beyond these levels.

A Partner Service that has any Service Types that have not changed since 30 September 2021 may reduce a charge for any of those Service Types. They may also increase provision without increasing charges, or introduce a change in fee policies if that change would reduce the charge to parents/guardians, e.g. introduction of a multiple child discount.

8.2. What is a Service Type?

“Service Type” means a type of ELC/SAC provision offered to parents defined within a Fee Policy and includes within its definition the nature of the service, the typical daily start and finish time and, the number of hours of service provided per week.

8.3. Can I change fees if I have changed a Service Type or introduced a new one?

The Partner Service agrees that they may create new Service Types where it can be clearly shown that this was not part of Fee Policy extant on September 30th 2021.

In cases where a Partner Service has introduced a new Service Type, the fees charged are subject to the rules explained in the following FAQs.

8.4. Can I increase a fee if I have started offering a Service Type to a new age range?

No. If a Partner Service is offering a Service Type to a new age range with the same hours as their existing Service Types, the fee should match the fee of the existing Service Type closest to that age range. If the hours are also higher, the fee may be set in proportion to the increase in hours above the closest equivalent Service Type as above, but it may not exceed this due to the different age range.

It is acknowledged that age ranges with higher staff:child ratios may incur higher running costs, and this is factored in to the allocation of Core Funding.

8.5. What if I have decreased a Service Type or introduced a new shorter one alongside my old ones?

If the hours per day and/or hours per week of a Service Type have been reduced, the fee charged must also be reduced. The reduction in fee should be proportionate to the reduction in hours; e.g. a full day care Service Type being reduced from 40 hours to 30 hours per week (a 25% reduction) should have its fee reduced by 25%.

If a new Service Type with shorter hours is introduced, the fee charged should be set in proportion to the closest existing Service Type, as above for cases where the Service Type has longer hours.

8.6. Can a Partner Service introduce a new additional service and charge a fee for it?

Introducing a new additional service and charging a fee is permissible under Core Funding **provided that it is entirely optional to parents**. For instance, if this charge was introduced to fund a tour or outing, a parent must be able to refuse this offer on the basis that they will still receive the ELC/SAC they would be entitled to if the tour or outing had not taken place.

8.7. What does the Core Funding's fee management system mean for deposits?

Non-refundable deposits cannot be charged and there cannot be any increases to refundable deposits charged.

8.8. My fees list for the programme year 2021-2022 were approved after the 30 September 2021?

Unlike NCS fees lists, ECCE fees lists (and CCSP fees lists for those services still providing care under the CCSP Savers scheme) must be approved by the local CCC. In normal circumstances, fees must not be increased above the levels in effect on 30 September 2021. However, if an ECCE or CCSP fees list had not yet been approved by the CCC until after 30 September 2021, the approved Fees List supersedes the list as of 30 September 2021. The approved fees list is then the one that cannot be deviated from as a condition of receiving Core Funding.

8.9. Can a sessional-only service that has been offering ECCE only now increase their offer to provide the additional 30 minutes per day allowed under ECCE rules?

Under ECCE rules, an Approved Provider who provides a sessional-only service and does not offer any other category of service (part-time, full-time, etc.) may offer an option of a maximum additional 30 minutes per day. The 30 minutes must be listed as an **optional extra** on the fees list.

Under Core Funding, sessional-only services which have been offering ECCE only, and which wish to increase provision and introduce a fee for the additional 30 minutes can do so provided they follow these rules:

- Those that declared nothing in the “fee excluding ECCE” column in their approved ECCE Fee Policy can charge up to a proportion of the standard rate but not in excess (i.e. €11.50 per week for the additional 30 minutes per day, as a proportion of the standard capitation rate of €69).
- Those that declared a “fee excluding ECCE” lower than standard capitation rate can charge up to the standard rate but not in excess.
- Those that declared “fee excluding ECCE” the same as the standard capitation rate can charge up to the standard rate but not in excess.
- Those that declared a higher “fee excluding ECCE” than the standard capitation rate can charge a proportion of that rate.

8.10. What fees should a new service that opened after the 30th September 2021 charge?

New services will have to adhere to their fees lists as registered on the HIVE when first contracting for ECCE or NCS.

8.11. What counts as a new service for the purposes of Core Funding?

Only services that were not in existence on 30 September 2021 qualify as new services.

This **does not** include changes of ownership, changes of address or changes of legal structure.

8.12. Can services organise fundraisers without being in breach of Clause 6.10 of the Core Funding Partner Service Agreement?

In relation to 6.10, this refers specifically to seeking or receiving donations from parents in respect of the ELC and/or SAC provisions that they are availing of in the service.

If a Partner Service is a registered charity, the Core Funding contract does not prevent them from seeking or accepting donations from businesses or the wider community, only parents using the service.

Fundraising events are not considered donations; if a Partner Service is a registered charity and organises a fundraising event, parents may attend if they wish.

8.13. What form of proof are Partner Services required to retain and provide of having offered a parent/guardian the option to avail of ECCE and/or NCS, and a record of their wish not to do so?

A template will be provided by the Scheme Administrator for completion by the Partner Service in cases where proof is required of parents being offered and voluntarily declining NCS/ECCE. The provision of this template will ease administrative burden on services while also facilitating compliance checks by ensuring that the form of proof provided does not vary on a case by case basis.

8.14. What is the requirement for a Quality Action Plan under Core Funding?

In line with a recommendation in Partnership for the Public Good, an aspect of Core Funding is the development of annual Quality Action Plans by each service. Core Funding will enable each provider to take some actions to review and enhance the quality of their provision. Many services are already engaged in quality improvement processes, e.g. through their engagement with the Better Start Quality Development Service or through self-evaluation processes supported by the Aistear-Síolta Practice Guide. Where this is the case, the simple quality reporting requirements for Core Funding will allow you to record this engagement. All services will be asked to complete a simple quality self-assessment template, using tools provided by the Department and their agents.

8.15. When will the Quality Action Plan have to be submitted?

The Quality Action Plan for Core Funding is due for submission in October 2022, with an opportunity to review the plan in early 2023 and a report due in summer 2023.

8.16. Will there be Guidelines?

Further details with more specific guidelines will be furnished once finalised, in time to support services with the process.

9. Appendix 1: The Core Funding Ready Reckoner

FAQs from the release of the Core Funding Ready Reckoner have been replicated below in case any services plan to use it again in preparation for applying and require a reminder.

9.1. What is the purpose of the Ready Reckoner?

The purpose of the Ready Reckoner is to provide an indication of the potential funding allocation an eligible ELC/SAC service may be able to expect when applications for Core Funding go live later in the year.

This will show the benefits of applying for Core Funding when it is possible to do so.

The Ready Reckoner can give users an idea of what their Core Funding amount may be so that they know what the approximate figure to expect. Once services have an idea of the funding allocation they might be eligible for as things are, they may wish to re-do the Ready Reckoner with different situations in mind. This would give an idea of how a Core Funding allocation would be impacted if you opened a new room or hired a new ELC graduate staff member for your baby room, for example.

Disclaimer:

The Core Funding Ready Reckoner is not an exact calculation and should not be relied on for financial planning. The Core Funding Ready Reckoner gives an approximate indication of your potential value for Core Funding based on the information that you provide in response to the questions asked.

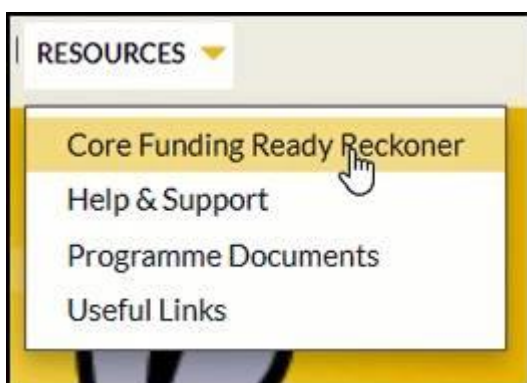
The Core Funding Ready Reckoner also does not assess eligibility for Core Funding. It is available to be used by any interested party. Use of the Core Funding Ready Reckoner does not imply that a service will definitely be eligible for Core Funding.

The outputs of the Core Funding Ready Reckoner are based on the information you have provided. You are not bound by the outcome of your use of the Core Funding Ready Reckoner and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth does not accept any liability for any action you may or may not take on the basis of that outcome.

For further detail see the [Ready Reckoner Terms and Conditions](#)

9.2. How do I find the Ready Reckoner?

Go to <https://earlyyearshive.ncs.gov.ie/> (no log-in is necessary).



If you are not logged in to the Hive, you will see a drop-down menu called “Resources” at the top left. Under Resources, you will find some older links - Help & Support, Programme Documents and Useful Links – as well as a new link to the Ready Reckoner. Click on the Ready Reckoner link. This will take you to the Ready Reckoner page with links to the Terms and Conditions and to these FAQs.

If you are logged in to the Hive, there will be more options on this menu and “Resources” will be further to the right, but you will still find it as an option there and the link to the Ready Reckoner will still be under the Resources tab.

9.3. I'm not a Hive user, can I use the Ready Reckoner?

Yes. The Ready Reckoner is available to all interested parties. There is no requirement to have a registered ELC or SAC service to access it.

However, it is important to be aware that you **will** need to be a Tusla-registered ELC or SAC service provider or a registered Childminder, with access to the Hive, in order to actually apply for Core Funding when the application does become available.

9.4. Do I have to complete the Ready Reckoner to be eligible for applying Core Funding?

No. As stated in the Introduction, the purpose of this tool is to give you an indication of the funding allocation you may be eligible to receive following the completion of the application and contracting process. The application and contracting process for Core Funding is separate to this, and will open later in the year.

For further details see the [Ready Reckoner Terms and Conditions](#)

9.5. How is the indicative potential funding allocation total calculated?

The Ready Reckoner will calculate an answer based on the following information, which you will need to input:

- The average annual service hours
- The total service capacity per age range offered
- Number of graduate Lead Educators in ELC rooms in the service (not SAC)
- If the ELC or combined ELC and SAC service has an ELC graduate as the service manager (this is not available for standalone SAC services)

The exact formula is as follows:

- **Main Base Rate**
 - Number of child places in an age group *multiplied by* Value that applies to age group (see table below Question 13) *multiplied by* Hours of operation per week *multiplied by* Weeks open per year

Plus

- **Graduate Lead Educator Premium (if applicable)**
 - Number of rooms led by a graduate *multiplied by* Hours per week *multiplied by* Weeks open per year *multiplied by* Graduate Lead Educator premium rate (see table below Question 13)
 - Maximum one Graduate Lead Educator premium per ELC room

Plus

- **Graduate Manager Premium (if applicable)**
 - Hours of operation per week *multiplied by* Weeks per year the service operates *multiplied by* Graduate Manager premium rate (see table below Question 9.6)
 - Maximum one Graduate Manager premium per service

= **Your indicative funding amount.**

9.6. What are the values that apply to each age group?

Age of child	Value of Core Funding per place per hour
Full-time (5+ hours per day) and Part-time (3.5 hours – 5 hours per day)	
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 (up to 3.5 hours per day)	
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	
4-15 years of age	€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

9.7. Will there be much difference between the Ready Reckoner total and what I am eligible to receive for the 2022/2023 programme year?

The Ready Reckoner tool is based on average values for Hours of operation per week and Weeks of operation per year. This allows the tool to quickly supply the user with an output. If there is significant variation in the Hours of operation per week and Weeks of operation per year across your service (for example between ECCE provision and full day provision) this might result in a difference in the Ready Reckoner output and your actual Core Funding allocation. However, if you wish to gain a more accurate figure, please see Appendix 1 below on how you may calculate an indicative funding amount at individual session level rather than whole-service level.

The Ready Reckoner is focused on the capacity of the service and the age ranges of children to be catered for. The Core Funding Application Module Form will gather information on those two elements as well as the staffing available to manage the stated potential capacity. The Ready Reckoner therefore assumes correct staffing levels, which the Application Form will actually verify.

The Ready Reckoner also accepts all information supplied by the user at face value. For example, if you state that you have a room with a Lead Educator who is qualified at the appropriate level and has the requisite experience to get a Graduate Premium, the Ready Reckoner accepts this. However, for the Core Funding Application Process, these qualifications will have to be checked and validated by Pobal.

If the information you input into the Ready Reckoner is correct and is based on appropriate staffing levels, you will receive a more accurate result.

9.8. How do I get a more accurate indication of my potential funding allocation?

You can get a closer estimation of your service's Core Funding allocation for programme year 2022/2023 by calculating the potential values at a session level and adding the results together, rather than inputting averages across your whole service, which is the default way to use the Ready Reckoner.

For further information and/or support please see Appendix 1 below.

9.9. Can I save and/or print my results?

Yes, you can use your own web browser's print function.

To save a calculation via browser, please take the following steps:

Once the calculation results are displayed, navigate to browser options and select “Print”, or press CTRL+P on your keyboard.

You can print the results page, or you can choose to “Save to PDF” as your print option to save a copy onto your desktop.

10. Completing the Ready Reckoner at Service Level

The calculation is at service level and will display an estimate of the indicative Core Funding amount for the service as a monthly figure and an annual figure.

The calculation is not based on the number of registered children attending the service per week. Instead, the Core Funding calculation is linked to the capacity of the service, the age ranges of children to be catered for and whether there are ELC Graduate Lead Educators and/or a Graduate ELC or ELC/SAC Service Manager. This aspect of Core Funding’s calculation will ensure that funding amounts do not fluctuate with attendance levels, thereby improving a service’s stability and sustainability.

10.1. How do I calculate the average weekly opening hours of my service?

If you have a service with more than one room and different operating hours in the different rooms, you should add the weekly operating hours of each room together, then divide by the total number of rooms to calculate the average weekly operating hours.

NB: The Ready Reckoner only accepts whole numbers, so you should round the result up or down as appropriate if the result includes a decimal.

Example

4 Room Service					
	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Total
Weekly Operating Hours	15	40	50	30	135
Calculating Average	Total hours of all rooms divided by number of rooms equals the average operating hours $=135/4=33.75$ (Whole numbers only accepted by the Ready Reckoner so round up) $= 34$ hours				

10.2. How do I calculate the average operating weeks of my service?

If you have a service with more than one room and different operating weeks in the different rooms, you should add the operating weeks of each room together, then divide by the total number of rooms to calculate the average operating weeks.

	Room 1	Room 2	Room 3	Room 4	Total
Operating Weeks	38	40	50	43	171
Calculating Average	Total weeks of all rooms / number of rooms = average operating weeks =171/4 = 42.75 (Whole numbers only accepted by the Ready Reckoner so round up) = 43 Weeks				

10.3. How do I calculate my service capacity by age range?

In order to calculate your service's total capacity by age range, you will need to populate a simple grid such as the one below (Example 2), noting the different ages ranges in each room and the number of child spaces in each using the following age range categories:

Age Ranges	
Early Years	< 1yr
	1 -2 yrs
	2-3 yrs
	3-6 yrs
	Sessional Pre-school - 2 yrs 6 mths to < 6 yrs
School Age	4 yrs to <15 yrs

Please Note: The service capacity that you indicate should not exceed the number of children your service can accommodate (overall service capacity) as stated on the Tusla Register.

Please Note: The age ranges have been simplified in the Ready Reckoner compared to what will be in the Application Form. The only age category that is missing from the table above is sessional care for 1 to 2.5 years old. *If you provide sessional care for this age group please record these child places under the 1-2 yrs age range when using the Ready Reckoner.*

Example 2:

Table 1

4 Room ELC Service		
	Age Range	Number of places
Room 1	Under 1yr	3
	1 -2 yrs	5
Room 2	Under 1yr	6
Room 3	2-3 yrs	12
Room 4 AM	Pre-School Sessional -2 yrs 6 mths to 6 yrs	22
Room 4 PM	Pre-School Sessional - 2 yrs 6 mths to 6 yrs	22

In the table above we can see that there are the following places:

Under 1yr = Three places for children under one year of age in Room 1, and six in Room 2, giving a total of **9** Under 1 year places in the service.

1-2 yrs = Five places for 1-2 year-old children in Room 1, giving a total of **5** 1-2 yrs places in the service.

2-3 yrs = Twelve places for children aged 2-3 yrs in Room 3, giving a total of **12** 2-3 yrs places in the service

3-6 yrs = no ELC places offered to this age range

Pre-school Sessional = AM Twenty-two places for children aged 2 years and 6 months to 6 years old and PM twenty-two places for children aged 2 years and 6 months to 6 years in Room 4, giving a total of **22** places for 2 yrs 6 mths to 6 yrs

SAC = no SAC places offered

The table below shows the totals in each age range as spelled out above:

Calculating Total Service Capacity by Age Range						
	Early Years				Pre-school Sessional	SAC
Average Service Capacity by age range	Under 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	2 yrs 6 mths to 6 yrs	4 yrs to 15 yrs
Number of places	9	5	12	0	22	0

10.4. What if I have more than one ELC Graduate in a session?

There can be only one Lead Educator (refer to Q4 for definition of Lead Educator) at a time; even if someone else in the room is an ELC Graduate (refer to Q3 for definition of ELC Graduate).

Therefore, the number of ELC Graduates that you input into the Ready Reckoner can only include ELC Graduates that are Lead Educators (Room Leaders). Other ELC graduates in the rooms should not be included in the Ready Reckoner as they will not be eligible for the graduate premium when your actual application is assessed.

10.5. Can I include an ELC Graduate leading an SAC session?

No, only ELC sessions can have a Graduate Lead Educator Premium when led by an ELC Graduate.¹ Currently there is no list of approved qualifications for SAC.

10.6. What if a Graduate Manager also works as a Lead Educator?

An ELC Graduate Manager who also works as a Lead Educator can only attract one premium. Therefore, they should only be included in the Ready Reckoner as a Manager and not as a Lead Educator.

10.7. What if I employ more than one ELC Graduate Manager?

There is only one ELC Graduate Manager Premium per ELC or ELC/SAC service. The Graduate Manager Premium is attracted by the person identified as the Designated Person in Charge of the setting as defined in the Early Years Regulations 2016 and School Age Childcare Regulations 2018. Other staff whose job title may

¹ *Nurturing Skills* (WDP), pg 19 'The working title for those working in centre-based SAC is 'School-Age Childcare Practitioner', the role of Lead Educator does not apply to the School-Age sector.

include 'manager' will not attract a Graduate Manager Premium. See Question 5 for the definition of a Manager.

10.8. Who can provide me with assistance in relation to completing the Ready Reckoner?

Your local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC) will provide you with support in completing the Ready Reckoner. The contact details for the CCCs are [here](#)

11. Completing the Ready Reckoner at Session Level

11.1. How do I use the Ready Reckoner to calculate the potential funding allocation at session level?

The Ready Reckoner is designed to give services a quick service-level indication of the potential funding allocation they may be eligible for the 2022/2023 programme year. However, if your service has more than one room/session it is possible to calculate a more accurate estimate based on room/session level information calculated separately and then added together. To get a more accurate estimate of your potential Core Funding value, you can use the Ready Reckoner at session level – that is, you can enter each session into the Ready Reckoner individually, make a note of the results, and add them together. For more detail, see the examples below.

ELC Graduate Manager working the full operating hours of the ELC or ELC & SAC Combined service

Working out an estimated potential indicative value of Core Funding using the Ready Reckoner at session level requires treating the ELC Graduate Manager a little different to using the Ready Reckoner at service level. In order to get a more accurate estimate, it is important to only include the Graduate Manager in the appropriate sessions. If you entered them every time, this would overestimate the value of the Graduate Manager Premium.

The Graduate Manager premium is calculated with the following formula: Hours of operation per week *multiplied by* Weeks per year the service operates *multiplied by* Graduate Manager Premium rate.

If you are using the Ready Reckoner at session level, you will need to work out for yourself which session/sessions are operating for the longest hours per day and the most weeks per year, and include the Graduate Manager when you input the details for those sessions into the Ready Reckoner. This will ensure that you get a good estimate of what Graduate Manager Premium you may be eligible for, without over- or under-estimating the result.

ELC Graduate Manager working less hours than the full operating hours of the ELC or ELC & SAC Combined service

If the service ELC Graduate Manager works less hours than the operating hours of the ELC or ELC & SAC Combined service, then the following calculation will provide the Manager Graduate Premium Value which can be added to the service's indicative Core Funding amount.

ELC Service operates 40 hours per week 50 weeks per year, the ELC Graduate Service Manager works on average 30 hours per weeks 40 weeks of the year.

30 hours multiplied by 40 weeks multiplied by €4.44 = €5,328

11.2. Ready Reckoner Examples

11.3. Examples of how to complete the Ready Reckoner at Service and Session Level

The following examples show how to complete the Ready Reckoner both a service and sessional level. They also demonstrate why a service might choose to complete the Ready Reckoner at session level: the use of averages in the Ready Reckoner can produce results that can be more or less than those generated when the Ready Reckoner is used at session level. Sessional level should produce a result closer to what a service can expect when they actually apply for Core Funding².

11.4. Example 1 – Service Level Ready Reckoner Calculation

This is a one room service which provides an ECCE session in the morning with capacity for 22 Pre-School Sessional Children and a part-time SAC session in the afternoon with capacity for 24 SAC children.

Example: 1 Room Service	
ELC Graduate Manager - Yes	
Happy Days Service	
Session 1	
Hours Per Week	15
Weeks Per Year	38
Care Type	Sessional
Preschool Sessional 2.5- 6 yrs Places	22
ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	No
Session 2	
Hours Per Week	20
Weeks Per Year	38
Care Type	Part-Time
SAC Places	24
ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	N/A

At service level you would run the calculator once by inserting the averages calculated using the methodology outlined in Questions 17, 18 and 19 above:

Input into the Ready Reckoner

Example 1	1 Room Service
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	18	How many ELC rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	38	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	0

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	0	0	0	0	22	24

² Subject to final verification and confirmations.

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€21,831.91** for the service.

11.5. Example 1a - Session Level Ready Reckoner Calculation

At session level you firstly need to look at the ELC Graduate Manager question.

In this example the service does have an ELC Graduate Manager with the appropriate 3 years' experience.

For this example, you would assign the ELC Graduate Manager to both the AM and PM sessions in this one room service, as this premium is applicable the ELC Graduate Manager of and ELC & SAC combined service.

ECCE AM Session

Room 1 - Session 1	Pre-school Sessional AM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	No
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	15	How many ELC rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	38	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	0

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	0	0	0	0	22	0

a) This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€10,669.26** for this session.

SAC PM Session

Room 1 - Session2	Part-Time SAC PM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	N/A
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	20	How many ELC rooms in the service?	0
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	38		

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	0	0	0	0	0	24

b) This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€10,032** for this session.

To complete the calculation to add the results a) and b) together = **€20,701.26**

11.6. Example 2 – Service Level Ready Reckoner Calculation

Early Learning and Care and School Age Childcare Service – This service has 2 rooms consisting of one ECCE Room, and one part time ELC, The service has a Manager who holds an ELC Graduate Qualification with more than three years’ experience in the sector. The room level details are noted below, the number of places in each age ranges, session types, and whether the rooms’ Lead Educator is an ELC Graduate.

Example: 2 Room Service			
ELC Graduate Manager		Yes	
Room 1		Room 2	
Name	Bluebell	Name	Daffodil
Session 1		Session 1	
Hours Per Week	15	Hours Per Week	20
Weeks Per Year	38	Weeks Per Year	50
Care Type	Sessional	Care Type	Part Time
Preschool Sessional 2.5- 6 yrs Places	11	under 1 yr places	6
ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	Yes	1-2 yrs places	6
		ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	No
Session 2		Session 2	
Hours Per Week	15	Hours Per Week	20
Weeks Per Year	38	Weeks Per Year	50
Care Type	Sessional	Care Type	Part Time
Preschool Sessional 2.5-6 yrs Places	11	under 1 yr Places	6
ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	No	1-2 yrs places	6
		ELC Graduate Lead Educator?	Yes

At service level you would run the calculator once by inserting the averages calculated using the methodology outlined in Questions 17, 18 and 19 above.

2 Room Service	
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	Yes
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	35	How many rooms in the service?	2
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	44	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	2

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	6	6	0	0	11	0

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€56,764.40** for the service.

Session Level

At session level you firstly need to look at the ELC Graduate Manager question.

In this example the service does have an ELC Graduate Manager with the appropriate 3 years' experience.

For this example, you would assign the ELC Graduate Manager to Room 2 (Session 1+Session2).

Then it is necessary to identify the following information for each of the sessions taking place in each of the rooms:

Room 1 – Session 1

Room 1 - Session 1	Pre-school Sessional AM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	No

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	15	How many ELC rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	38	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	0

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	0	0	0	0	11	0

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€4,069.23** for the session.

Room 1 – Session 2

Room1 - Session 2	Pre-school Sessional PM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	15	How many rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	38	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	1

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	0	0	0	0	11	0

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of **€6,600.03** for the session.

Room 2 – Session 1

Room 2- Session 1	Part-Time ELC AM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	No
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	20	How many rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	50	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	0

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	6	6	0	0	0	0

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of €20,841 for the session.

Room 2 – Session 2

Room 2- Session 2	Part-Time ELC PM
ELC Graduate Lead Educator	Yes
ELC Graduate Manager	Yes

What are the average weekly operating hours of your service?	20	How many ELC rooms in the service?	1
What are the average operating weeks of your service?	50	How many ELC rooms in the service are led by an ELC Graduate?	1

Average Service capacity by age range	< 1yr	1 -2 yrs	2-3 yrs	3 - 6 yrs	Pre-school Sessional 2.5 ys to 6 yrs	School Age
Number of places	6	6	0	0	0	0

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of €25,281 for the session.

Total:

This would result in an indicative Core Funding allocation of €56,791 for the service.



XW14

Miesian Plaza, 50-58 Baggot Street Lower,
Dublin 2. D02 XW14

T +353 1 647 3000

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