



**An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais
agus Comhionannais**
Department of Children,
Disability and Equality

PRESS RELEASE

Tuesday, 21 April 2026

Minister Foley announces new €10 million capital scheme for early learning and childcare services

Minister for Children, Disability and Equality Norma Foley has announced the opening of a €10 million capital funding scheme to deliver a significant number of additional early learning and childcare places.

The Building Blocks Extension Scheme Phase 2 will provide grants for community and private early learning and childcare services who are Core Funding partner services to increase their capacity by means of extensions to their existing premises.

Community providers can apply for a capital grant of between €100,000 and €530,000 to extend their existing premises. Private providers can apply for a capital grant of between €50,000 and €265,000 to extend their existing premises.

All projects will be required to deliver net increases in full-time places for one to three-year-olds. Projects will also be required to incorporate Universal Design Guidelines.

Announcing the opening of the scheme, Minister Foley said:

“I am very pleased to formally launch this scheme which will deliver a welcome increase in high quality, affordable places, particularly for younger children. The scheme builds on the success of Phase 1 of the Building Blocks Extension Scheme, which is currently operating, and which will deliver up to 1,500 additional places.”

The Building Blocks Extension Scheme is part of the wider Building Blocks Capital Programme for Early Learning and Childcare under the revised National Development Plan 2021-2030 (NDP).

The scheme will run in tandem with and will complement the State-led Early Learning and Childcare Capital Programme, for which €135 million will be made available over the next five years.

The Department of Children, Disability and Equality continues to progress a range of other actions to increase the supply of quality and affordable early learning and childcare

including significantly increased investment in the Core Funding scheme and the National Childcare Scheme over the past two years.

ENDS

Note for Editors:

Building Blocks Extension Grant Scheme

The scheme is open to Core Funding Partner Services that:

- will offer additional full-time places for the 1–3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age-cohort
- part time services, sessional services and school age childcare services that are willing to extend their operations to provide full time places for the 1-3-year-old (pre-ECCE) age-cohort
- will commit to opening for a minimum of 46 weeks per year, five days per week and 8 hours per day.

There are two strands to the Scheme, as follows:

Community strand:

- Community providers can apply for a capital grant of between €100,000 (minimum) and €530,000 (maximum) to extend their existing premises.
- Match funding is not a requirement.
- Project values between €100,000 and €680,000 will be eligible.
- Any additional project costs between €530,000 and €680,000 must be funded by the provider.

Private strand:

- Private providers can apply for a capital grant of between €50,000 (minimum) and €265,000 (maximum) to extend their existing premises.
- Match funding will be required.
- Project values between €100,000 and €680,000 will be eligible.
- Any additional project costs between €530,000 and €680,000 must be funded by the provider.

Eligible projects are limited to physical extensions to existing premises. This may include the physical extension of an existing premises or the installation of a modular building.

All proposed projects must adhere to the Early Years Services Regulations 2016 and must incorporate Universal Design Guidelines for Early Learning and Care Settings (UDG).

The closing date for applications is 31 July 2026. This will ensure that all applicants have sufficient time to engage with their design teams and their solicitors prior to the closing date. The outcome of the appraisal process will be communicated to services in September 2026.

Successful applicants can commence their projects after 1 January 2027, and all projects must be completed by 31 December 2027.