



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

Friday, 3rd October 2025

New Employment Regulation Order for Early Years Educators and School-Age Practitioners – Ministers Dillon and Foley

10% average increase in minimum hourly rates of pay for an estimated 35,000 Early Years Educators and School-Age Childcare Practitioners.

Minister of State for Employment, Small Business and Retail Alan Dillon has confirmed he intends to sign a new Employment Order for Early Years Educators and School-Age Practitioners.

The Order will revoke the 2024 Order currently in operation for the sector and will commence on 13th October 2025. It will provide for increases in new minimum hourly rates of pay as follows:

- Early Years Educators and School Age Childcare (SAC) Practitioners - from €13.65 currently to €15.00 per hour;
- Early Years Lead Educators (Room Leaders) and School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinators – from €14.70 currently to €16.00 per hour;
- Early Years Graduate Lead Educators (Room Leaders) and Graduate School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinators – from €16.28 currently to €17.50 per hour;
- Deputy/Assistant Manager – from €16.49 currently to €18.00 per hour;
- Centre Manager -from € 17.33 currently to €19.00 per hour;
- Graduate Centre Manager from €18.11 currently to €20.25 per hour.

The Employment Regulation Orders apply to approximately 35,000 staff in the Early Years and School-Age Childcare sector. While around one third of staff are already being paid

above the current minimum rates of pay, it is estimated that 67% (23,000 approximately) of those working in the sector will see their wages increase as a result of the new minimum pay rates.

An additional €45 million in ring-fenced Core Funding will be provided to support early learning and care services in meeting the increased cost of minimum pay rates in the sector

This will bring total Core Funding for services to over €390 million in the 2025/26 programme year.

Minister Dillon said: *“I am very pleased to approve these Employment Regulation Orders that will increase the hourly pay rates of approximately 35,000 staff in the Early Years and School-Age Childcare. This is recognition of the vital role Early Years and School-Age Childcare professionals provide to our society. Those working in the sector provide an outstanding service to infants and children while offering invaluable support to the trust that families place in them every day. This government is committed to building a sustainable, high-quality childcare sector by ensuring fair pay and condition. This new ERO is a clear commitment to the continued investment in the professionals caring for our children.”*

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Norma Foley *has welcomed Minister Dillon’s acceptance of the Early Years Services Employment Regulation Orders as they will deliver improved pay and conditions, will support career pathways, and will help to support the recruitment and retention of early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners.*

Minister for Children, Disability and Equality, Norma Foley said: *‘I warmly welcome the adoption of these Employment Regulation Orders, which represents a much-needed improvement in pay and conditions for early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners.*

The Department of Children has ringfenced €45 million in Core Funding for early learning and care services to make these Employment Regulation Orders a reality. I welcome the fact that this funding will be used solely for improved pay for early years educators and school-age childcare practitioners, who are a hugely significant resource in the delivery of excellence in the early learning and care sector.

“I would like to acknowledge the independent nature of the Labour Court and Joint Labour Committee process and the hard work of its members in negotiating the pay and conditions for the early learning and childcare sector. I look forward to seeing further positive negotiations from this process in the future.”

In the 2025/2026 programme year, a new pay element of the grant calculation, the Staff Funding Additional Contribution, will be introduced to centre-based Partner Services to facilitate the distribution of the €45 million in ringfenced funding.

This new element of Core Funding will support Partner Services to meet the costs of increasing rates of pay as a result of the new Employment Regulation Orders. The rate at which the Staff Funding Additional Contribution is to be paid was agreed upon during the Joint Labour Committee's negotiation phase.

The Government will continue to deliver on the Programme for Government commitment to implement Employment Regulation Orders to attract and retain early years educators.

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