



Notification to the Sector (ELC and SAC Services)-**For dissemination to all Educators in your Service**

Nurturing Skills Learner Fund (NSLF) Update

The NSLF will continue in 2026 for educators seeking to upskill for the academic year 2026/2027 commencing autumn 2026.

NSLF 2026 applications are expected to open in Mid-March 2026.

The NSLF aims to assist early year's educators to pursue early learning and care (ELC) qualifications at level 7 and level 8 that have been approved by the Qualifications Advisory Board (QAB) while continuing to work in the sector.

Since its inception in 2024 the NSLF scheme has been in a position to offer financial support to over 700 NSLF applicants.

Further information on NSLF application date will be notified to you, and be available on the Nurturing Skills website: [Home](#) | [Nurturing Skills](#)

NSLF 2026/2027 Eligibility Criteria

Those wishing to make an application for NSLF in 2026 must meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Be working with children in a Tusla-registered Early Learning and Care (ELC) or School Age Childcare (SAC) service.
- The service in which the applicant is working in, must have a **current** signed Core Funding contract with DCDE.
- Applicants must have worked within an ELC or SAC service for the six months prior to their application.
- Applicants must have a current application/offer for 2026/2027 entry to a Level 7/8 Degree course approved by the Qualification Advisory Board (QAB) that is eligible for NSLF.
- Be a **new entrant** to an Approved Course for the academic year commencing 2026/2027 (Autumn 2026).
- **For clarity purposes, at time of application an applicant must not hold (or be already undertaking) an Approved Course at level 7 or level 8 in Early Learning and Care.**

Note: Only applicants who fulfil all the above Eligibility Criteria will be considered for NSLF funding in 2026.

Kind Regards,
Workforce Unit,
Early Years Division.