



Deputy Padraig O’Sullivan
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12 August 2026

Dear Paudie,

Further to Parliamentary Question 53768/26, namely:

“To ask the Minister for Children; Disability and Equality the number of childcare providers in Cork city and county that have increased fees, reduced services or changed opening hours in each of the years 2022 to 2025 and to date in 2026; and if she will make a statement on the matter.”

I am aware of a number of services that have reduced services, changed opening hours and increased fees over the years 2022 to 2026. The tables below have been provided by Pobal, the scheme administrator. It should be noted that Core Funding runs in programme years, all information is provided across programme year rather than calendar year.

Operating hours were compared between each service's first and latest application under the same programme call. Services were then classified according to whether their hours increased, decreased, changed, or stayed the same. Partner Services represents the total number of Core Funding contracted services in each county division.

Programme year	County	Services	Changed operating hours	Increased operating hours	Decreased operating hours	No change in operating hours
2022/23	Cork City	162	13	12	1	149
2022/23	County Cork	332	43	30	13	289
2023/24	Cork City	168	9	4	5	159



2023/24	County Cork	359	26	13	13	333
2024/25	Cork City	167	8	4	4	159
2024/25	County Cork	379	39	12	27	340
2025/26	Cork City	174	12	8	4	162
2025/26	County Cork	407	46	20	26	361
2026/27	Cork City	60	0	0	0	60
2026/27	County Cork	116	0	0	0	116

The analysis reviews open services on the Early Years Platform to determine whether they currently offer full-day sessions and whether they have offered them in the past. Services are then classified as continuing to offer full-day provision, having moved away from full-day provision, never having offered full-day provision, or having insufficient history for comparison.

The number of partner services that changed from offering full-time care to only offering part-time/sessional care

County	Services	Moved from full day to part time or sessional	Continue to offer full day	Never offered full day	Single application no historical comparison
Cork City	170	6	66	95	3
County Cork	398	11	123	258	6

A key condition of receiving the significant State funding that is available through the Scheme requires that a Partner Service adhere to the Core Funding fee management system. The fee management system requires compliance with the fee freeze and maximum fee caps. This forms part of a broader, phased strategy geared toward the standardisation of fees across the country, in line with the recommendations of the Partnership for the Public Good report.

The fee freeze meant that in return for funding through the scheme, services that sign up for Core Funding agree not to raise their fees above what was charged to parents on 30 September 2021 or as per a sanctioned increase in the 24/25 Programme Year. For services who were not in existence on this date, they are permitted to set their fees at their own discretion but must adhere to their fees as set on the date that they signed their Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement.



In instances where an individual identifies a potential increase to fees charged or a potential breach of Fee Management rules by a Core Funding Partner Service, they may seek to have this examined and a conclusion reached through the Core Funding Fee Review Process.

Warm regards and good wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norma', written above a horizontal line.

Norma Foley TD

Minister for Children, Disability and Equality