



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



What's new for Partner Services in Core Funding Year 4?

June 2025

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Glossary

2016 Regulations means the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016.

2018 Regulations means the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018.

2024 Regulations means the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Childminding Services) Regulations 2024.

August Review and Confirm means the Review and Confirm that takes place during the month of August before the beginning of the programme year.

Capital means an asset intended for use on a continuing basis with an expected life of more than one year.

City and County Childcare Committees coordinate the implementation of national Early Learning and Childcare policy and programmes at a local level on behalf of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality.

Childminder is a person who was registered with Tusla as a childminder before 2024 under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and/or Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018, and who is currently registered with Tusla under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Childminding Services) Regulations 2024.

Core Funding means the supply-side funding stream that the Department has made available to Partner Services in order to achieve a range of policy objectives including improved quality of services, affordability for parents/guardians and sustainability for providers.

Core Funding Application means the application Partner Services must complete and submit on the Early Years Hive, giving information about the staffing and capacity of their service which is used in the calculation of their Core Funding allocation.

Core Funding Rules Document means the Core Funding Rules 2025/2026 document which provides extensive details about the specific rules relevant to this Programme Year and which is incorporated into the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement. The document is available on the [Early Years Hive](#).

Department means the Department of Children, Disability, and Equality (DCDE).

The Early Years Hive means the IT system maintained by the Scheme Administrator.

Employment Regulation Order sets minimum rates of pay and conditions for workers in a specified sector. An ERO is drawn up by a Joint Labour Committee set up through an Establishment Order.

The Early Childhood Care and Education Programme is a universal two-year pre-school programme available to all children within the eligible age range funded by the Department.

Equal Start is a funding model and a set of associated universal and targeted measures to support access and participation in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare for children and their families who experience disadvantage.

Fee Band refers to a discrete category within the fee structure. Each band is associated with a maximum allowable fee corresponding to its service type, which is measured in hours per week. There are six bands in total within the fee structure.

Fee Cap is the maximum fee that applies to Core Funding Partner Services.

The Fee Policy will state all of the Service Types offered; care types, hours of care, applicable age ranges, etc. and the associated fees for each (before the application of National Childcare Scheme subsidies and before and after the deduction of Early Childhood Care and Education programme subsidies). It will also describe any Additional Services in addition to basic fees and the cost of that additional service.

Fee Table means the table of fees contained within the Parent Statement for Partner Service (or fee list for Fees Charged prior to the Parent Statement being introduced) which are charged for individuated Service Types and the conditions that apply in implementing the list of fees.

Fee Review Process is a mechanism utilised by the Department to make a determination on whether a breach of fee management rules has or has not occurred. In the event that a determination is made by the Minister at the end of this process that a breach has occurred, the Minister and/or other agent appointed by the Minister will instruct the Partner Service of specific steps to remedy. Further detail is provided in section [2.3](#) of this document.

Fee Structure refers to the common structure for fees in Partner Services. The Fee Structure arranges service types by the weekly hours they are available for, as outlined in section [2.1](#) of this document and section 7.2 of the Core Funding Rules Document.

Funding Agreement means the Agreement between the Minister and Partner Service for the Core Funding Scheme which incorporates the Core Funding Rules Document.

Funding/Grant/Allocation means the financial support provided by the Department to a Partner Service, through the Scheme Administrator, under this Funding Agreement.

Joint Labour Committee is an independent body made up of equal numbers of employer and worker representatives. A Joint Labour Committee sets the employment conditions and minimum rates of pay for employees in a certain sector in Ireland. The Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment appoints a Committee Chairperson to facilitate discussions between employer and employee representatives on pay and working conditions of employment.

Lead Educator means an Early Years Educator who leads practice with a group of children (previously referred to as "room leader"), in a Partner Service.

Manager means the person in charge of a Partner Service, as defined in the 2016 Regulations and the 2018 Regulations, i.e. 'the person who has day-to-day charge of the service'. This person may or may not be the Registered Provider.

Minister means the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

The National Childcare Scheme is the affordable childcare scheme established under the Childcare Support Act 2018.

New Partner Service is defined strictly to mean services that were not in existence on 30 September 2021 and who joined Core Funding in the intervening years. Services that have made changes such as name, address, owner, or legal structure do not qualify as new Partner Services. If a Partner Service undergoes a closure and has been closed for over 6 months and has fully deregistered with Tusla, and subsequently a new service registers in the same location under Tusla, this will be considered to be a New Partner Service.

Original Core Funding Application means the first Core Funding application Partner Services submit.

The Parent Statement for Partner Services is a document providing clarity and transparency for parents/guardians regarding services delivered, information about the Department's schemes, and fees charged. This Parent Statement will need to be signed once by a parent(s)/guardians per programme year. Further details can be found in section 10.2 of the Core Funding Rules Document.

Partner Service means an Early Learning and Care and/or School Age Childcare service in its entirety, including all rooms, sessions and Service Types within that service, who has entered into the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement with the Minister.

Programme Year covers the period of the 2025/2026 Core Funding Programme. The programme commences 1 September 2025 and runs until 31 August 2026.

Review and Confirm means the process, which occurs four times throughout the programme year, whereby the Partner Service must review their Service Profile and Core Funding Application on the Early Years Hive.

Scheme Administrator means the body appointed by the Minister to administer the Core Funding Scheme. Functions carried out by the Scheme Administrator on behalf of the Minister under this agreement may be carried out by the Minister or other agent appointed by the Minister from time to time and Partner Services will be notified accordingly of any change. For the purpose of the 2025/2026 Programme Year Pobal are administering Core Funding scheme.

Service Type means a type of Early Learning and Care or School Age Childcare provision offered to parents/guardians defined within the Fee Policy contained within the Parent Statement for Partner Services, and includes within its definition the nature of the service, applicable age range, the typical daily start and finish time and, the number of hours of service provided per day; the number of days per week and weeks per year. A service type specifically includes the hours, days and weeks offered as well as the nature of the service and the age range. Hence it cannot be added to or taken away from while remaining the same service type. Any change in offering, be it increased or decreased, results in a new service type being added.

Tusla refers to the Child and Family Agency, the statutory regulator for the early learning and childcare sector.

Introduction

Core Funding Year 4 will run from 1 September 2025 to 31 August 2026. This document aims to support providers in understanding the changes to the allocation model, fee management, and rules of the Core Funding scheme in Year 4.

1. Core Funding Allocation Model for Programme Year 4

The Minister secured additional funding of nearly €20 million in Budget 2025 for Year 4 of Core Funding. This brings the full year budget for Core Funding Year 4 to a minimum of €350 million.

This significant increase allows for important enhancements to Core Funding, making further progress on the objectives of the scheme. Core Funding will continue to contribute to improved affordability, quality, accessibility, and sustainability. The scheme supports the partnership between providers (Partner Services) and the State that reflects the importance of early learning and childcare in serving the public good.

The additional allocation of close to €20 million includes:

- Over €7 million to support Partner Services in meeting costs whilst maintaining the fee freeze, and;
- Over €11 million to support natural growth in the sector, allowing for 3.5% growth in capacity.

In addition, a maximum of €45 million in State funding to support services to meet costs of increased minimum rates of pay in the sector will be made available to services from September 2025 onwards. This maximum of €45 million is contingent on the establishment of new minimum rates of pay in the sector through updated Employment Regulation Orders.

1.1 Base Rate Increases

The majority of Core Funding will be distributed to services via the base rate, based on a service's staffed capacity - the opening hours, opening weeks and the age group of children for whom services are provided as well as number of places available.

Core Funding base rates include contributions towards:

- staff pay and conditions, including contact and non-contact time, holiday pay, sick pay and other employer costs;
- administrative staff/time;
- non-staff overhead costs.

Although the overall allocation for Core Funding factors in these elements, Partner Services can choose how to spend their Core Funding grant in accordance with the approved areas of expenditure outlined in the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement. Capital

expenditure (such as building an extension onto a service) is the only item that cannot be paid for using Core Funding.

All of the Base Rates for Early Learning and Care in Year 4 will increase. This will support Partner Services in meeting rising costs while maintaining the Core Funding Fee Management conditions.

Table 1: Core Funding base rates for Programme Years 1, 2, 3 and 4

Age range	Year 1 Base Rate	Year 2 Base Rate	Year 3 (current) Base Rate	Year 4 Base Rate	Increase per place per hour	Percentage change on Year 1	Percentage change on Year 3
Full time (5+ hours per day) and Part time (3.5 to 5 hours per day)							
0 to 1 years	€1.66	€1.69	€1.86	€1.90	€0.04	14.5%	2.2%
1 to 2 years	€1.07	€1.10	€1.23	€1.28	€0.05	19.6%	4.1%
2 to 3 years	€0.92	€0.95	€1.06	€1.10	€0.04	19.6%	3.8%
3 to 6 years	€0.68	€0.71	€0.76	€0.80	€0.04	17.6%	5.3%
Sessional (up to 3.5 hours per day)							
0 to 1 years	€1.66	€1.69	€1.86	€1.90	€0.04	14.5%	2.2%
1 to 2.5 years	€1.07	€1.10	€1.23	€1.28	€0.05	19.6%	4.1%
2.5 to 6 years	€0.65	€0.68	€0.72	€0.76	€0.04	16.9%	5.6%
School-age (any duration)							
4 to 15 years	€0.55	€0.57	€0.59	€0.59	-	7.3%	-

1.2 Targeted measures

- **Flat rate top-up for sessional-only services**

The flat rate top-up payment for all services registered with Tusla as sessional-only will remain at €5,000. This top-up payment is in addition to the service's Base Rate, Graduate Premium and Staff Funding Additional Contribution.

- **Minimum allocation**

The base rate minimum allocation will be increased to €14,400. This is an increase of €400 (3%) over the Year 3 minimum base rate allocation. This is the minimum amount of funding a Partner Service delivering centre-based provision will receive in relation to their capacity

(including the flat rate top-up for sessional-only services). Sessional, school-age and small services, benefit the most from the minimum allocation.

Graduate Premiums and the Staff Funding Additional Contribution are paid in addition to the base rate minimum.

- **Maximum allocation**

The maximum base rate allocation will be reduced to €450,000 for Year 4. Partner Services will not receive base rate funding beyond this maximum value. Anyone receiving a base rate allocation above this value will see their allocation reduced to €450,000. This measure will affect only a very small number of services.

Graduate Premiums and the Staff Funding Additional Contribution will continue to be considered separately and can increase a Partner Service's overall allocation above €450,000.

1.3 Graduate Premiums

There are no changes to the Graduate Premiums for Year 4 of Core Funding. Both the Graduate Lead Educator Premium and Graduate Manager Premium will be paid to Partner Services at the hourly rate of €4.44 in respect of their graduate-led ELC provision.

1.4 Staff Funding Additional Contribution (NEW)

What is the Staff Funding Additional Contribution

In Programme Year 4 a new funding element, the Staff Funding Additional Contribution, will be introduced to centre-based services to distribute the ring-fenced funding. This new element will support Partner Services to meet the costs of increasing rates of pay as a result of new Employment Regulation Orders negotiated by the independent Joint Labour Committee. This allocation will be released once new EROs are agreed or on 1 September 2025, whichever is later.

Contingency with Joint Labour Committee

Data available to the Department shows that the 2022 and 2024 Employment Regulation Orders do not absorb all of the available Core Funding which was signalled for staff pay and graduate leaders.

Therefore, the amount of funding released from the €45 million ring-fenced for improved staff pay and conditions will be proportionate to the cost of the agreed Employment Regulation Orders, with a **maximum** of €1.14 payable per hour.

Calculation

This calculation per service is linked to the staffing requirements set out by regulations, and reflects that the funding available for graduate-led provision for the previous three years can, and should, be facilitating higher rates of pay for graduate leaders in the sector.

This new strand of Core Funding is calculated as:

Minimum staffing hours *minus* Graduate Lead Educator Premium hours *multiplied by* up to a maximum of €1.14 per hour.

Minimum staffing hours are the minimum contact hours that a service must staff in order to satisfy the regulatory adult to child ratios. For example, a service offering between 12 and 22 places for the Early Childhood Care and Education programme must always have two staff members in that session at a minimum to comply with regulations. For such a session, the minimum staffing hours would be 1,140 hours (2 staff members for 15 contact hours a week for 38 weeks per year).

The calculation per service is linked to the staffing requirements set out by regulations, and the minimum staffing hours required to operate a service's staffed capacity.

A staff member cannot attract the Graduate Lead Educator Premium and the Staff Funding Additional Contribution at the same time. Hours worked by Graduate Lead Educators in sessions not attracting a premium (specifically school age only sessions) will attract funding under this new staffing support.

What can this element of the grant be spent on

This funding is ring-fenced for staff pay and conditions, and therefore this portion of a Partner Services grant under Core Funding must be used for this purpose only. The Staff Funding Additional Contribution should not be used towards any other expenses.

2. Fee management in Year 4

When signing up to Core Funding, Partner Services agree to maintain their fees as charged on or before 30 September 2021. If the service came into existence after this date (i.e., New Partner Services), fees must be frozen at the point of first contracting with Core Funding. Services who were successful in the Fee Increase Assessment process in Programme Year 3, agree not to charge above the new maximum fee as determined by the Department through that process.

This effective fee freeze will continue in Year 4 for most Partner Services. A maximum fee cap for all Partner Services will be introduced from September 2025, facilitated by the Common Fee Structure.

2.1 Common fee structure

The common fee structure was introduced in 2024/2025. It is based on the weekly hours of provision offered as part of a fee option, spread across six Fee Bands. The Fee Bands are as follows:

Table 2: Common Fee Structure

Fee Band	Hours per week purchased under fee option
A	Less than 10 hours
B	Between 10 hours and 19 hours 59 minutes
C	Between 20 hours and 29 hours 59 minutes
D	Between 30 hours and 39 hours 59 minutes
E	Between 40 hours and 49 hours 59 minutes
F	50 hours or more

2.2 Maximum Fee caps

A maximum fee cap will apply to all Partner Services in Year 4 of Core Funding (Programme Year 2025/26).

These fee caps are facilitated by the common fee structure. Each Fee Band in the structure has a corresponding maximum allowable fee under Core Funding for these services. The maximum allowable fees from September 2025 are below:

Table 3: Core Funding Fee Caps

Fee Band	Hours per week	Maximum weekly fee for <u>ALL</u> Partner Services in 2025/2026
Band A	Less than 10 hours	€59
Band B	Between 10 hours and 19 hours 59 minutes	€118
Band C	Between 20 hours and 29 hours 59 minutes	€177
Band D	Between 30 hours and 39 hours 59 minutes	€236
Band E	Between 40 hours and 49 hours 59 minutes	€295
Band F	50 or more hours	€354

Where an individual child is availing of multiple service types, the fee cap will apply based on the total weekly cost of provision (i.e., fees charged to parents) for the total weekly hours agreed between the Parent/Guardian and provider. For example, where a parent avails of a breakfast club for 5 hours a week and afterschool care for 5 hours a week the total hours agreed would be 10 hours per week, which places the fee in Band B and subject to a maximum fee of €118.

In the event that an existing service type is above the maximum allowable fee at the relevant Fee Band, the fee must be reduced to at least the maximum fee. If the fees are already at or below the maximum values, there will be no action required.

Other fee management rules, such as those regarding proportionality increases/decreases, remain the same. However, compliance with the fee structure will now take precedence above these other rules. For example, if a service offers 15 hours of care at a cost of €105 per week, and would like to increase to 19 hours of care a week, a proportional increase would see a new charge of €133. However, with the introduction of the maximum allowable fee, the Partner Service would still be in Band B, and therefore only allowed to charge a maximum of €118.

Where a Partner Service must reduce their fee to comply with the fee structure, the maximum allowable fee will be set as the new baseline fee for any proportional increases/decreases.

These values will be assessed annually as part of the progressive development of the fee management system under Core Funding and in line with Government commitments to progressively reduce the cost of early learning and childcare.

2.3 Fee Review process

If someone has concerns about a potential breach of Core Funding fee management conditions by a Partner Service, which has occurred during the 2025/2026 Programme Year, they may seek to have this examined and a conclusion reached through the Core Funding Fee Review process.

Where the initiator is a parent/guardian and has identified a change to a Partner Service's fee policy potentially breaching the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement, the issue may be addressed in the first instance by discussing the matter with the Partner Service. In certain cases, this step may allow for the quick resolution of the case between the Partner Service and the parent/guardian without engagement with the Fee Review Process.

Please note that this action is optional. Where an individual does not wish to engage with the Partner Service directly, they can contact their local City/County Childcare Committee.

If there is a possibility of a potential breach, the City/County Childcare Committee can, with the permission of the individual, assist with initiating the Fee Review Process. Further detail on this process is available in the Guidelines on Fee Management section on the Early Years Hive: [Guidelines on Fee Management - Service Provider Portal](#).

3. Financial Reporting Requirements

When signing up to Core Funding, Partner Services agree to comply with financial reporting requirements. Partner Services will be required to submit a trial balance in programme year 4 by a date no later than 6 months after the end of the programme year (February 2027).

For Partner Services that had an active Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement during the 2022/23 and/or 2023/24 programme years, a transitional arrangement with reduced requirements was in place in which Partner Services completed and returned through their accountant an Income and Expenditure Template covering the period from 1 September to 31 August for each of the respective programme years. For the 2024/2025 programme year onwards, a trial balance is required.

Completing the financial returns is a prerequisite for participating in future Core Funding programme years. It is still a requirement to submit the financial returns even if a service is no longer in Core Funding, including due to termination of the Funding Agreement by the Partner Service or the Department.

3.1 Transitional arrangements – 2023/2024 financial reporting requirements

The transitional phase of financial reporting continued for Year 2 (2023/2024), with only an Income and Expenditure Template required to be submitted no later than 28 February 2025.

Completing the Year 2 Income and Expenditure Template is a prerequisite for participating in future Core Funding programme years. A service that received Core Funding in Year 2 will not receive Core Funding in Year 4 or future years until they have provided this completed Template.

Services can apply for Core Funding from the start of the programme year in order to be eligible to receive funding for the whole year, but their funding will be placed on hold until the report is received. Non-compliance with the Financial Returns policy will result in the forfeiture of all funding currently being held for the 2024/2025 programme year.

3.2 2024/2025 full financial reporting requirements

Any Partner Service that participated/is participating in Core Funding during the current 2024/2025 programme year (Year 3) will be required to submit a trial balance for their validated financial returns for that programme year by a date no later than 6 months after the end of the programme year (i.e. February 2026).

The Department committed to engaging with the sector regarding support and information requirements needed in order to fulfil their Financial Reporting obligations for Year 3. This engagement process took place online and included engagement with providers from different structures which were selected using a random selection generator operated by the Department's in-house specialist researcher. This approach was used to provide as broad as possible engagement with Core Funding Partner Services so that the Department could have input from providers that reflected the diverse nature of the sector.

The Department ran several sessions in June 2024, with representatives from sole traders, companies and community/not for profit services.

3.3 2025/2026 full financial reporting requirements

Any Partner Service that is in Core Funding during the upcoming 2025/2026 (Year 4) programme year will have to submit a trial balance for their validated financial returns for that programme year by a date no later than 6 months after the end of the programme year (February 2027).

4. Other Core Funding scheme rules

4.1 Childminders

As part of the ongoing pilot project, Core Funding will continue to be available to childminders who, in 2024, were registered with Tusla under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) Regulations 2016 and the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Registration of School Age Services) Regulations 2018. These childminders will continue to be eligible for Core Funding if they have since been re-registered under the Child Care Act 1991 (Early Years Services) (Childminding Services) 2024.

Given that childminders have a fundamentally different operating model and cost base to centre-based provision, the minimum base rate allocation and the Staff Funding Additional Contribution will not apply to registered childminders. All other Core Funding measures will apply.

4.2 Notice of withdrawal to parents/guardians

If a Partner Service wishes to withdraw from the Core Funding programme in Year 4, they must provide at least 3 months' written notice to the parents/guardians within their service. A withdrawal template will be provided to Partner Services to give to parents. This template will be optional.

4.3 School Age Childcare Term Time/ Out of Term hours

A Partner Service can include School Age Childcare sessions for the age range of 4-15 years during Term Time (Outside of normal School hours e.g. Breakfast Club, Afterschool) and during Out of Term. If a Partner Service includes a session for the age range of 4-15 year during Term Time during school hours, a validation will appear, and the Partner Service will be required to review and update their session and capacity information.

5. Service Profile Enhancements

The main enhancements made to the Service Profile are contained in the facility and staff sections. This includes questions which have transferred from the Annual Early Years Sector Profile (AEYSP) to the Service Profile. Data from the Service Profile will prepopulate into the AEYSP. This will benefit Partner Services as it will avoid unnecessary repetition of data input for these questions each year.

Services should review/update their responses when needed as part of the normal Service Profile review/submission or at any other time throughout the programme year. The staff section allows users to upload and amend information about staff in Partner Services.

Under the 'Facility Details' section there have been two new questions added, which were previously captured under the AEYSP, relating to wheelchair accessibility. These additional questions will be blank and will be mandatory for services to complete.

There are changes to the 'Staff Members' section. There are new mandatory questions added for each staff type.

Two job titles will be removed from the 'Out of Ratio' staff type: AIM Level 7 (Assigned to specific children) and Equal Start Resource Allocation. Existing 'Out of Ratio' staff with these job titles will be updated to 'In Ratio Staff.' These need to be reviewed, and all mandatory fields updated.

All new questions are mandatory, you must review and update information for all existing staff members. Partner Services are responsible for ensuring their Service Profile is accurate and up to date. In particular, it is important to ensure that pay data is accurate and up to date. Pay rates that are reported as below the rates set by the Establishment Regulation Orders will be flagged by the system.

6. Core Funding application module enhancements

For Year 4, the Core Funding application process will be a more user-friendly and streamlined process.

Partner Services who have completed the May Review and Confirm process and are at an 'Approved' status will have the option to auto-populate their new Core Funding Application Module for the 2025/2026 programme year using the information from the most recently 'Approved' Core Funding Application 2024/2025.

All retrospective Update Due Dates (UDD) on the previous programme call Application (2024/2025) Module must be actioned prior to starting the Core Funding Application Module for 2025/2026 programme call.

Early preparation and submission of applications will support a smoother process. Further details on the Core Funding application can be found in the Core Funding Applicant Guidelines available on the Early Years [Hive](#) from 09 June 2025.

7. Core Funding Rules Document

The Department is publishing an updated Core Funding Rules Document, which is enclosed in Schedule 2 of the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement 2025/2026. The rules document is intended to provide clear guidance on the rules surrounding the scheme. Partner Services are encouraged to read the Funding Agreement and Core Funding Rules in full.

8. Key Dates for Programme Year 4

8.1 Applications open week starting 09 June 2025

Applications open the week starting 09 June 2025 for the 2025/2026 Core Funding Programme Year.

All services are encouraged to have their Service Profile up to date by 09 June. Services who have completed and have an 'Approved' May Review and Confirm to have the option to auto-populate their new Core Funding Application Module for the 2025/2026 (if eligible).

If a service is not required to complete the May Review and Confirm, they will not have the option to auto-populate.

New Services are encouraged to have all of the required information submitted and must be registered to the Early Years Hive by 09 June to be ready to apply for Core Funding.

8.2 August Review and Confirm: 1 August – 31 August 2025

The August Review and Confirm opens on 1 August and runs until 31 August. Partner Services who submit their original Core Funding Application on or before the 31 August are required to complete the August Review and Confirm.

Prior to completing the August Review and Confirm service will be required to have submitted their Parent Statement for Partner Services 2025/2026.

It is important to note that Partner Services who submit their 2025/2026 Core Funding Application Module on or before 31 August, will have their base rate cap at their approved August Review and Confirm form.

For Partner Services who submit their Core Funding application Module from 1 September onwards, they will not be required to complete the August Review and Confirm window, and their base rate will cap on the approval of their Original Core Funding application.

The Review and Confirm windows for the full year are as follows:

- 1 August - 31 August 2025
- 1 November - 14 November 2025
- 1 February - 14 February 2026
- 1 May - 14 May 2026

Any changes to these dates throughout the programme year will be fully communicated to all services in advance of the changes taking place.

8.3 Programme year begins on 1 September 2025

Core Funding Programme 2025/2026 begins on 1 September 2025.

The Funding Agreement commences on the 1 September 2025, or the date of acceptance by the Partner Service, whichever is the later date.

For a Partner Service to receive a Core Funding payment the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement must be accepted, Applications must be at "approved status" and Partner Services must be in compliance with all Core Funding rules.

Partner Services that are in Core Funding for less than a full programme year will be allocated the appropriate number of weekly payments.

ENDS

APPENDIX

Table 4: Overview of Targeted Measures, Graduate Premium and Staff Funding Additional Contribution values for Programme Years 1, 2, 3 and 4.

Allocation Elements	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4
Minimum Base Rate Allocation	-	€8,150	€14,000	€14,400
Maximum Base Rate Allocation	-	€600,000	€500,000	€450,000
Flat Rate Allocation	-	€4,075	€5,000	€5,000
Graduate Lead Educator Premium	€4.44	€4.44	€4.44	€4.44
Graduate Manager Premium	€4.44	€4.44	€4.44	€4.44
Staff Funding Additional Contribution	-	-	-	max. €1.14 ¹

¹ Value of rate to be confirmed contingent on updated Employment Regulation Order coming into effect.