



Core Funding Programme  
2025/2026  
for  
Early Learning and Childcare  
Services  
Staffed Capacity –  
Frequently Asked Questions

July 2025 – Version 1.0



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## Staffed Capacity

### What is Staffed Capacity?

The Core Funding model is based on staffed capacity meaning the number of children the service can accommodate according to the services staffing levels; it does not matter whether the places offered are subsequently occupied or vacant. However, a minimum of one child must be registered for each hour of each staffed session in their service. The number of children the staff can accommodate must satisfy the minimum staff to child ratios as set in the Regulations.

### Base Rate Calculation

The base rate is calculated on a per session basis. A base rate per session is calculated as the number of staffed child places (i.e. Staffed Capacity) in each Child Age Group in a session multiplied by the value that applies to each Child Age Group multiplied by the hours of operation per week of the session multiplied by the weeks open per year of the room. The value for all sessions is added together to produce the base rate for the Partner Service.

## Application Changes

### A Typical Week:

All Core Funding Applications must be based on a Typical Week. The Department's definition of a Typical Week is a period representing an average operating week, where the more typical staff rostering is evident.

Partner Services application data must be based on a typical week, a period representing an average operating week, where the more typical staff rostering is evident. It is understood that Early Learning and Childcare services have to be dynamic and flexible in their day-to-day staffing arrangements. A service is only required to update their Service Profile and Application Form when a material or significant change occurs which affects the typical week for a period greater than 4 weeks assuming the staffed capacity of the typical week as declared on the Core Funding application is maintained. If this is the case, there is no requirement to record these changes unless they are going to continue for a period greater than 4 weeks.

It is recommended that Partner Services identify and keep a record of such a typical week, with a view to using these as a reference point for each of the Review and Confirm windows.

Examples of an atypical week are an instance where a room is temporarily closed (for less than 4 weeks), a number of staff members are out sick for a couple of days in the week, and/or the week of a bank holiday.

### Material or Significant Change:

Within the context of Core Funding, the Department defines a material or significant change as one which affects the Typical Week for a period greater than 4 weeks. This is under the assumption that the Staffed Capacity of the typical week as declared on the Core Funding Application is maintained. If this is the case, there is no requirement to record these changes unless they are going to continue for a period greater than 4 weeks. It is an obligation of the Partner Service to record all material or significant changes on the Early Years Hive.

Partner Services must identify and keep a record of such a Typical Week, with a view to using these as a reference point for determining when a material change occurs.

## Staffing, Rooms and Sessions

### Assigning Staff Members to a Room

Staff members that are assigned to a room on the Core Funding Application Module are expected to be present in the room during the times, days and offerings they have been assigned.

### Can I include Relief/Cover/Agency Staff in my Core Funding Application?

Relief/Cover/Agency staff should only be assigned to a room where they are always present during the days, times and offerings input. If these staff members are not assigned to a room for a specific period and only cover breaks, leave, absence or to maintain staffed capacity, these should not be assigned to the room on the Core Funding application. Relief staff can be recorded on the Service Profile on the Staff Members section by creating an "Out of ratio staff" and selecting "Relief/Cover Staff (Not assigned to a room)" from the list under "Job Title".

### Room 1 Layered Staffing - This room operates from 07:30-18:30, Both Term/Out of Term

The example below is using a Full-Time ELC service who operates Both Term/Out of Term for 52 weeks (38 weeks Term Time and 14 weeks Out of Term). They operate three rooms and below is showing how capacity is assigned based on staff assigned to the room:

Below we have outlined how sessions can be broken down to ensure capacity cover, where you have one staff member assigned from 07.30-16.30 and one staff member from 09.30-18.30:

<u>Session Type</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Child Age Group</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>No of staff assigned</u>
Session Type 1	07:30	09:30	Both Term/Out of Term	1-2 years	5	1
Session Type 2	09:30	16:30	Both Term/Out of Term	1-2 years	10	2
Session Type 3	16:30	18:30	Both Term/Out of Term	1-2 years	5	1

Staff assigned to the Room 1:

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>QQI Level 7+</u>
Staff 1	07:30	16:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes
Staff 2	09:30	18:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes

If you have rooms that operate in a similar way you are only required to create these Session types once and these can then re-used across different rooms.

### Room 2 – Unchanged Staff Capacity

This room operates the same staff capacity for the entirety of the operating hours of the room using consistent cover in both the morning and evening.

We have outlined an example below on how this scenario can be input into an application, noting hours would need to be amended based on how the room is staffed and when it opens and closes.

<u>Session</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Child Age Group</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>No of staff assigned</u>
Session 4	07:30	18:30	Both Term/Out of Term	1-2 years	10	2

Staff assigned to the Room 2:

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>QQI Level</u>
						<b>7+</b>
Staff 3	07:30	16:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes
Staff 4	07:30	16:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Educator	No
Staff 5	16:30	18:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes
Staff 6	16:30	18:30	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Educator	No

### Room 3 – Multiple Session Types in Same Room

Below is an example where multiple sessions take place in the same room. This room is open from 09:00-17:00 Term and 10:00-16:00 Out of Term:

<u>Session Types</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Child Age Group</u>	<u>Capacity</u>	<u>No of staff assigned</u>
Session Type 5	09:00	17:00	Term Time Only	3-6 years	7	2
Session Type 5	09:00	17:00	Term Time Only	1-2 years	5	
Session Type 6	09:00	16:00	Out of Term	2-3 years	6	2
Session Type 6	09:00	16:00	Out of Term	1-2 years	5	

Staff assigned Room 3:

<u>Staff</u>	<u>Start Time</u>	<u>End Time</u>	<u>Session Offering</u>	<u>Days</u>	<u>Role</u>	<u>QQI Level 7+</u>
Staff 7	09:00	15:00	Both Term/Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes
Staff 8	09:00	12:00	Term Time Only	5	Educator	No
Staff 9	12:00	17:00	Term Time Only	5	Educator	Yes
Staff 10	15:00	17:00	Term Time Only	5	Lead Educator	Yes
Staff 11	09:00	16:00	Out of Term	5	Educator	No
Staff 12	15:00	16:00	Out of Term	5	Lead Educator	Yes

If you are submitting an Application Change and have amended a sessions care type on the Service Profile included in your last application record, eg from ELC Sessional AM to Part-Time AM, you must review the Child Age Group and capacity on the session, prior to being able to proceed to Step 3, to ensure the information captured is correct. If you try to proceed to Step 3 without reviewing this information you will trigger the below validation:

#### Validation Message:

“The age range you have selected for xxxx does not align with the care type of the session, or you have amended this sessions care type on the Service Profile which requires review. Please review and update the session information accordingly.”

## Overlapping Session Types

### Can I assign overlapping Session Types to a Room on my Core Funding Application?

For the 2025/2026 Core Funding Programme Year, Partner Services are not allowed to assign overlapping sessions to a room, that are running during the same day, time and offering of another Session Type already assigned to the room on their Core Funding application record. Services are required to split these Session types out on Step 2 when submitting their Core Funding application record.

Partner Services need to create Session types as required on the Service Profile. Once these Session types are created on the Service Profile, the Partner Service can then proceed with the Core Funding application record and assigning these Session types and capacity to the relevant rooms.

Below is an example demonstrating before and after splitting out the overlapping Session types to overcome the validation message:

Before:

Room A							
Session Name	Type	Session Offering	No. of days	Start Time	End Time	Child Age Group	Capacity
Session Type 1		Both Term/Out of Term	5	08:00	17:00	3- 6 years	8
Session Type 2		Both Term/Out of Term	5	09:00	14:00	1-2 years	9

As you will see above there is a period of overlap between the two session types running in this room from 09:00-14:00, this will cause an overlapping validation when trying to add Session Type 2 to the room, the following validation message will appear to support amending the Session types so no overlapping occurs.

#### Validation Message:

"You have Session Types that overlap with one or more other Session types in room xxx. Please review the session information including start and end times, service offering and days to ensure there is no overlap before proceeding with your application."

After:

Room A							
Session Name	Type	Session Offering	No. of days	Start Time	End Time	Child Age Group	Capacity
Session Type 1		Both Term/Out of Term	5	08:00	09:00	3- 6 years	8
Session Type 2		Both Term/Out of Term	5	09:00	14:00	3-6 years	8
						1-2 years	9
Session Type 3		Both Term/Out of Term	5	14:00	17:00	3-6 years	8

As you can see from the 'after' example, we have split out our sessions into three, with no session type overlapping with another. As a result of this, no validation triggers. Where a session cares for more than one age group in the same room, as per Session Type 2 above, you need to reuse Session 2 in this room again and add the different age groups that are relevant for the session. Note, you should not

create/add a separate session for the second age group being cared for as this will trigger the overlapping session validation on adding the second session to the room.

### Further Information

This is version 1.0 of this document, additional versions may be circulated in the future to address additional queries and scenarios. For further information regarding the Core Funding Programme, visit the gov.ie website [here](#).

Early Years Provider Centre (EYPC): The Pobal Early Years Provider Centre is available to assist ELC and SAC providers with their online applications for Core Funding.

For queries relating to technical support, accessing, and using the Early Years Hive and / or questions about sector/service profile or application queries please raise a 'Service Request' on the Early Years Hive.

The Early Years Provider Centre is open Monday to Friday, 9.00am – 5.00pm, however on Wednesday the opening times are 10.00am - 5.00pm.

City and County Childcare Committees (CCCs): The [CCCs](#) are also available to support local ELC and SAC providers with queries associated with Core Funding. In particular, questions relating to specific Service Profile requirements or the Core Funding Application Module should be directed to the local City and County Childcare Committee in the first instance.