**The National Childcare Scheme (NCS)**

The NCS launched in November 2019 to provide financial support for parents towards the cost of their childcare. The NCS is a streamlined scheme where parents continue to have access to a subsidy to meet the cost of their childcare.

The scheme provides 2 types of childcare subsidy for children aged over 6 months (24 weeks) and up to 15 (children aged 15 do not qualify):

* A **universal subsidy** which is not means tested.
* An **income-assessed subsidy** which is means tested.

You must apply for a subsidy, but it is paid directly to your childcare provider. Your provider will then deduct this from your creche fees..

**Budget 2023**

It was announced in [Budget 2023](https://www.citizensinformation.ie/en/money_and_tax/budgets/budget_2023.html) that the National Childcare Scheme subsidy will increase from €0.50 per hour to €1.40 per hour in January 2023.

**Which subsidy can I apply for?**

You can apply for the subsidy that is best for your family situation.

**Key points about the universal subsidy**

* It is available to parents of any income level and it is not means tested
* Your child must be aged between 6 months (24 weeks) and 15 years (children aged 15 do not qualify)
* The subsidy rates are based on the number of hours your child is attending childcare.
* Children must be attending a childcare provider who is registered with Tusla

**Key points about the income-assessed subsidy**

* It is for children aged between 6 months (24 weeks) and 15 years
* It is means tested and available to families with an annual reckonable income of up to €60,000. See ‘Rules’ below.
* Your hourly subsidy rates are based on your individual circumstances (depending on your reckonable family income and the age and educational stage of your child). See ‘Rates’ below.
* During school terms, you can use your subsidised hours for before-school and after-school childcare costs
* Children must be attending a childcare provider who is registered with Tusla

**How to apply**

You can apply online at [ncs.gov.ie](http://www.ncs.gov.ie/).

To apply online, you need:

* A verified [MyGovID](https://www.mygovid.ie/) account
* Your children’s information, including their date of birth and PPS numbers
* Your employment and income-related details
* Your partner’s PPS number (your partner does not need a verified MyGovID account)
* Your partner’s employment and income-related details

You can get more information about getting a verified MyGovID from the [MyGovID](https://www.mygovid.ie/) website.

The NCS website has a [step-by-step guide to the online application process](https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/application-form-guide).

Subsidies are awarded on a yearly basis. Parents and childcare providers will be notified when a subsidy is due for renewal. You will get this notification at least 20 working days before your subsidy payment is due to expire.

**What happens when my application has been approved?**

1. You get a unique code called a CHICK (Childcare Identifier Code Key) when your application is approved
2. Your provider then uses the CHICK and your child’s name and date of birth to register your child on the National Childcare Scheme
3. You get an email notification asking you to confirm that the hours of childcare are correct
4. Your subsidy is paid directly to your childcare provider on your behalf
5. Your childcare provider subtracts the subsidy from your childcare bill

For more information on the National Childcare Scheme visit [www.ncs.gov.ie](https://ncs.gov.ie/) or contact the National Childcare Scheme Parent Support Centre. Call (01) 906 8530 (9am - 5pm Monday to Friday) or email NCS@dcya.gov.ie.