Review of Fee Tables and Parent Statement for Core Funding Partner Services

The single Fee Table was first introduced within the Partner Service Parent Statement through Core Funding in 2022, before moving online in 2023 and consolidating fee information relating to the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) scheme, the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), and Core Funding into one document.

As part of the ongoing development of the fee management system under Core Funding, Partner Services entering Year 5 of Core Funding will undergo an **approval process for their 2026/2027 Fee Table and Parents Statement**. This process was previously run for those who were successful in the Fee Increase Assessment (FIA) process.

The new process builds on that introduced previously, expanding it to **include all Partner Services**. Additionally, all Fee Tables must be validated against their original Fee Tables or fees charged if these differ, which have been in place since the fee freeze on 30 September 2021. This is to confirm adherence to the fee freeze as part of the Core Funding rules.

The Agreement for the Provision of Core Funding in Programme Year 5 states;

- **4.3.29**. All Partner Services must obtain approval for their 2026/2027 Parent Statement for Partner Services from their local CCC on behalf of the Minister.
- All CCCs will have access to a Partner Service's Fee Table via the third-party portal, which the Partner Service has uploaded to the Early Years Hive.
- **4.3.7** All Fee Tables approved as part of the Parent Statement for Partner Services checks, as overseen by the CCCs, for Programme Year 5 (2026/2027) are to be understood as the working fee base line from the date of approval by the CCC.

This approvals process helps ensure that Fee Table data remains transparent, simple, and accurate for parents and/or guardians.

The Fee Table is also a critical compliance tool, supporting the Department, CCCs, and parents and/or guardians in verifying that:

- All Service Types are listed and readily available
- All Service Types listed align with Fee Management Rules
- Any approved fee increases have been implemented appropriately, if applicable
- Parents and/or guardians are provided with accurate, easy-to-understand information

It is important that Partner Services who intend to apply for the Core Funding Sustainability Review Process have their Fee Table checked for Fee Management compliance and their Parent Statement checked for an accurate "About Us" section, before they begin the application process.

Partner Services who do apply for a Core Funding Sustainability Review and are successful will need to have their Fee Table checked again to ensure that their fee increase has been applied correctly.

To assist with the process for Partner Services, please see the below which outlines some of the main factors to consider in creating your 2026/2027 Partner Service Fee Table, please ensure that you use the correct Fee Table and Parent Statement on the Hive for Partner Services, not Approved Provider.:

1) Weekly format used throughout the Fee Table.
2) Each fee option is a distinct Service Type, i.e., no mixed offerings (e.g. half days plus full days, in-term part-time SAC plus full-time non-term).
3) Occasional Service, such as day-rate or additional hour options, are only used where care is provided on an ad-hoc or irregular basis. Day-rate or additional hour fees are not aggregated to compose higher care types.
4) The Partner Service has not increased the fees charged to parents and/or guardians for the same service on 30 September 2021.

   OR

5) For Partner Services who were not in existence on 30 September, fees charged have not increased for the same service set out on the date they first joined Core Funding.

   OR

6) Fees are in line with any Fee Increase Assessment (FIA) Approval Letter the Partner Service has received.
7) All discounts that were available on 30 September 2021 or when the Partner Service first joined Core Funding (whichever is earlier) are still in place, except where Department approval was provided for the removal or adjustment of a discount. One exception to this is a Partner Service may choose to discontinue discounts that applied to individual children on a temporary and/or exceptional basis.
8) Where a new Service Type has recently been added, it must link back to a similar/related Service Type from 2021 or point of first contracting.
9) Fee Table lists all distinct Service Types that the service currently provides, with no duplications or long, unnecessary pro-rata fees.

10) Pro-rata service offers do not need to be listed separately on your Fee Table. Instead, list the typical 5-day option and include a note in the free text box at 3.9.3 Section C of the Partner Service Parent Statement that the option can be availed of on a pro-rata basis. Fees are compliant with the Fee Caps, this includes where a service can combine a number of offerings into one, and the combined offering may breach the fee cap for the combined number of hours.
11) Fee Table and the Parent Statement for Partner Services have transparent Deposit[1] rules aligning with the Core Funding Agreement which states, "the Partner Services will not charge any Non-Refundable Deposits (including administration/registration fees/waiting list fees, or other such charges) to parents or guardians in respect of their ELC/SAC for which the Deposit was paid."
12) Additional information is recorded in Section C of the Parent Statement; a note can be left in the Additional Information column indicating more information is available there.

Additionally, it is advised that if your Fee Table has service types that are no longer offered, or has every pro-rata service offer individually listed, you should simplify where possible.

Section C should be used to note any other relevant information, for example any fees being charged monthly, combined offerings, mixed seasonal offerings, etc.

All active service types must be included on the Fee Table. Any service type which has been withdrawn with the appropriate notice must be noted on the Parent Statement. This should be included on 3.10(b) on the Parent Statement. Similarly, any new service types introduced should be noted at 3.10(a) on the Parent Statement.

The number of weeks per year in the "About Us" section on the Parent Statement and the Operating Weeks per Year in your service's Core Funding Application should match. The CCC can support you with this where amendments are necessary.

For Standalone SAC Partner Services operating on school grounds, there will be an additional check to confirm that the number of Operating Weeks per Year and number of rooms accessed stated by the Partner Service on the Core Funding Application Module is consistent what the Partner Service has access to. This

[1] "Deposit" is any monies paid by a parent or guardian of a child to secure a place for their child in an ELC/SAC Service. This cannot be used as a holding or security Deposit during the child's placement at the Service. Any risk of loss of co-payment monies is mitigated by the 4-week cover offered in all Departmental funding Schemes.

check will be done by comparing the Operating Weeks per Year with the licence/agreement, which is in place between the Partner Service and the school. Alternatively, a letter on school headed paper is also acceptable.

Your CCC will engage with you around this process and help advise you on issues that may arise during the course of these Fee Table and Parent Statement approval checks.

As the CCCs will be checking the Fee Table of all Partner Services, the process will be carried out over several weeks. If you have already issued a Parent Statement to parents and there are changes made to your fee table as a result of the fee table checks, you will be required to update your Parent Statement and reissue and resign as per the different scheme guidelines, to parents.

Please reach out to your local CCC if you have questions surrounding the process.