



Fee Increase Assessment/Sustainability Review 2026

As part of the ongoing development of the fee management system under Core Funding, the Department is introducing a new Fee Increase Assessment (FIA) process, known as the **Sustainability Review 2026/2027**, whereby Partner Services charging very low fees may apply for approval to increase up to an approved level. The new process builds on that introduced in 2024, while introducing enhanced eligibility criteria to ensure support is targeted at services that have operated with frozen fees at very low levels since the introduction of Core Funding.

Applications will open during Autumn 2026 for a limited cohort of eligible services. The process has been designed to balance the need to protect affordability for parents with the need to support the financial sustainability of services charging the lowest fees in the sector.

To qualify for a Sustainability Review, a Partner Service must fulfil the following criteria at a minimum:

- The service was operating prior to the introduction of Core Funding in September 2022.
- At least 1 fee on their Fee Table below the relevant threshold for its region and Fee Band which is available to parents for the full operational week of the service.
- Submitted a completed 2024/25 Trial Balance.
- Submitted a CCC approved 2026/27 Fee Table and Parent Statement.

Eligible Partner Services will be contacted by their local CCC. Once they have confirmed that they are interested in undergoing an assessment, the CCC will issue the Partner Service with a self-declaration form, which will then be verified by the Department.

As part of the application, an applicant's CCC will work with them to prepare all documents needed by the Department for the evaluation, including their 2026/27 Fee Table and Parent Statement and their Child Enrolment Data.

It is not a requirement for services to be in Core Funding to apply for Sustainability Review, however they will not be on the list of eligible services and therefore must contact their local CCC to apply. Applicant services that were previously in Core Funding but left the scheme, or who wish to join Core Funding for the first time, **must complete a Trial Balance template**, which is available on the Hive.

Once all relevant data has been provided, the Department will undertake an assessment of the service. This assessment will consider financial information



submitted through Core Funding, child enrolment data and the service's existing Fee Table to determine whether an increase is justified and, if so, on which fee entries.

Services should proceed as normal with all Programme Readiness activities, including submission of Fee Tables for CCC approval.

Consistent and accurate communication with parents will be important to ensure that any approved fee increase is clearly understood as part of the Department's Sustainability Review process.

Any approved increase will be subject to strict limits designed to protect affordability for families. The maximum allowable increase on an individual fee will correspond to the fee cap reductions applying from September 2026, as follows:

Fee Band	Maximum allowable increase
A	€3
B	€6
C	€9
D	€12
E	€15
F	€18

In addition, no approved fee increase will result in the fee exceeding the median fee level for the relevant region and Fee Band. Thresholds have been established using a Standardised Regional Threshold methodology, based on the regional median fee less the applicable affordability buffer.

Obtaining written approval from the Department through the Sustainability Review process is the only circumstance in which an eligible Partner Service may increase fees under this process.

Any fee increase implemented without explicit written approval from the Department would constitute a breach of Core Funding terms and conditions.

For services experiencing immediate or significant financial difficulties, supports may also be available through the Department's existing case management process, which operates independently of the Sustainability Review.



CCCs will contact eligible services in the coming days to identify those interested in undergoing a Sustainability Review. Please reach out to your local CCC if you have questions surrounding the process.

Appendix

Table 1: Regions

Eligibility thresholds for the Sustainability Review are based on subregions rather than county boundaries. These are as follows:

Border	Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo
West	Mayo, Roscommon, Galway
Mid-West	Clare, Tipperary, Limerick
South-East	Carlow, Kilkenny, Wexford, Waterford
South-West	Kerry, Cork
Dublin	Dublin
Mid-East	Kildare, Meath, Wicklow, Louth
Midland	Laois, Longford, Offaly, Westmeath



Table 2. Adjusted Regional Thresholds

Adjusted Regional Thresholds						
Regions	A	B	C	D	E	F
Border	€22.35	€59.00	€89.00	€108.75	€160.00	€162.00
Dublin	€32.00	€67.75	€123.50	€165.20	€208.65	€238.00
Mid-East	€27.00	€64.00	€106.00	€145.00	€180.00	€205.30
Midland	€27.00	€64.81	€101.00	€148.00	€174.75	€181.20
Mid-West	€22.00	€63.00	€91.00	€118.00	€158.85	€163.00
South-East	€25.70	€63.00	€95.30	€118.00	€160.00	€172.00
South-West	€24.36	€69.00	€107.48	€144.25	€182.81	€202.00
West	€22.00	€61.00	€91.00	€118.00	€154.28	€168.10