



A Career in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare

Explore pathways into Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare: a meaningful professional career that makes a lasting difference in the lives of children and families.

Starting your career in Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare

Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare are careers where you can make a real difference. You support children to learn, develop and feel safe while also supporting their families in ways that really matter. If you want a career that's people-focused, practical and meaningful, this is a rewarding career path to choose.

There are a few different roles you can choose from.

- **Early years educators** work with babies and young children from birth to six in indoor and outdoor settings.
- **School-age childcare practitioners** work with children outside school hours (before/after school and during holidays), in indoor and outdoor settings.
- **Childminders** care for children in the childminder's own home.

No matter which role you choose, the heart of the work is building good relationships with children and creating a safe, welcoming space. You'll help children build confidence and develop communication and social skills - often through games, creative activities and hands-on play. These roles may also be within Irish-Medium settings where you will support children's Irish language development, their identity, sense of belonging and connection to Ireland's cultural and linguistic heritage. It's a skilled and rewarding profession.

How to get started

There are several ways to begin, including Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses through various providers including local Education Training Boards (ETBs), Central Applications Office (CAO) options and higher-education routes. Many courses offer flexible formats and include practical placements to build real experience. As you progress, you can move into roles with greater responsibility such as lead educator, or Manager. Ongoing learning is part of the sector, with CPD and eLearning options available to deepen your skills and support career progression.

Key requirements

In Early Learning and Care, staff working directly with children must hold a recognised minimum qualification, National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ) Level 5, with progression pathways at Level 6 and Level 7+ for lead and graduate/management roles (recognised and equivalent awards apply). Anyone working with children must also complete Garda Vetting and child safeguarding training.

A career that matters

For those seeking a purposeful and progressive career, Early Learning and Care and School-Age Childcare offer opportunities across Ireland, clear pathways for professional growth, and the chance to make a meaningful impact every day.

This rewarding profession supports children's learning, development and wellbeing while contributing to stronger families, thriving communities, and Ireland's social and economic wellbeing. For more information on pathways, recognition of qualifications, funding supports and learning opportunities, visit www.nurturingskills.ie.



What people working in Early Learning and Care say about their career

“Early years is really a very vital time in a child’s life and it’s a wonderful place to be. The joy on a child’s face when they learn something new is really wonderful.”

Eimear

“It’s a career where you go into your work and are greeted with such excitement and enthusiasm, and I just don’t think you can get that in any other career. The children are always so grateful, and they think the world of you. The work you do and the importance it has is really something special to experience in your career.”

Kelly

“You feel like you’re an important part of the community and that you are making a really big impact in people’s lives. Working through Irish every day is also incredibly rewarding. You can see children naturally picking up the language through play and conversations.”

Jane

Visit www.nurturingskills.ie
for more details.



An Roinn Leanaí, Míchumais
agus Comhionannais
Department of Children,
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