

# Parent Statement for Partner Services

## 1. Welcome to our Partner Service

**Smart Steps Lifford, Lifford National School Townparks Lifford F93DE28**, is a Partner Service, working together with the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, and parents/guardians to deliver high quality, affordable, inclusive Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC) services for children under Together for Better.

Together for Better is the funding model for early learning and childcare that brings together four major programmes, the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme - including the Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), the National Childcare Scheme (NCS), Core Funding, and the Equal Start.

As a Partner Service, we offer subsidy schemes to parents/guardians and receive Core Funding. Core Funding, which began in September 2022, is a supply side funding stream to develop a closer partnership for the public good between the State and providers. Its primary purpose is to improve pay and conditions in the sector as a whole and improve affordability and accessibility for parents as well as ensuring a stable income to providers.

This Parent Statement outlines some of the important things you can expect from us, as a Partner Service. This Parent Statement is provided as a condition of the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement, the NCS, ECCE and CCSP Saver Funding agreements and informs the agreement in place between us Smart Steps Lifford and the parents/guardians that use our service. The Minister of Children, Disability and Equality is not a party to this agreement which is solely between the service and parent/guardian.

### 1.1 About Us

Here are some of the basic things to know about us:

A typical week for us is 13:45 to 18:00 Monday to Friday for 49 weeks per year.

At Smart Steps Lifford we offer the following services to children and their families:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Sessional Care for Early Learning & Care (ELC) excluding ECCE provision
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sessional pre-school under ECCE (Free Pre-school)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Full day care/part time care for Early Learning & Care (ELC)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Term time School Age Childcare
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Out of term School Age Childcare

## 2. Early Childhood Care and Education Programme (ECCE), Access and Inclusion Model (AIM), National Childcare Scheme (NCS) and Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Saver Programme.

This Partner Service is in contract to deliver the:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Childcare Scheme (NCS)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Childcare Subvention Plus (CCSP) Saver Programme

### **National Childcare Scheme (NCS)**

NCS provides subsidies to parents and families to offset the costs of Early Learning and Care (ELC) and/or School Age Childcare (SAC). There are two types of subsidies available to apply for under the NCS - the Universal or Income Assessed subsidy. Both subsidies are available to families with children between 24 weeks and 15 years of age.

This service welcomes children who wish to avail of the National Childcare Scheme, including children referred under the sponsorship programme. Further information about the NCS, including how to apply for a subsidy, is available here - <https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/> or contact the NCS Parent Support Centre on 01 906 8530 (Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm).

Your NCS award includes a unique Childcare Identifier Code Key (CHICK) and information on the maximum number of hours you can claim. To use your award, you must:

- 1) Receive a CHICK by applying to <https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/> or contacting the NCS Parent Support Centre.
- 2) Bring the CHICK to Smart Steps Lifford and register your NCS subsidised hours of care. The hours that you will agree should be based on the hours you need and what Smart Steps Lifford can offer you.
- 3) After Smart Steps Lifford has registered your hours, **you must confirm** that these details are correct. These details must be confirmed at <https://www.ncs.gov.ie/en/> or in writing to National Childcare Scheme, PO Box 13105, Southside Delivery Office, Cork, depending on whether you originally applied online or by post to receive your award.
- 4) **Your NCS subsidy can only be paid once your CHICK has been registered by Smart Steps Lifford and you have confirmed on the system that all details are correct.**

The amount that you must pay to Smart Steps Lifford is called the 'co-payment'. The co-payment is Smart Steps Lifford's fee for your child minus the NCS subsidy paid by the Department to Smart Steps Lifford for your child.

Smart Steps Lifford must provide you with details of how your co-payment amount is calculated (our fee less your NCS subsidy). We will always notify you within 20 working days if and when your co-payment amount changes, including details on how it has been calculated.

### **Calendars**

Smart Steps Lifford will provide you with a separate letter indicating the days our service is closed over the programme year. We will provide you with a minimum of 20 working days written notice period of our intention to change this.

## **3. Fees Policies**

As a Partner Service, we operate a Fees Policy that is transparent and understandable to our parents/guardians and is compliant with the requirements under the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement. Please do not hesitate to contact Lisa Anderson - Manager who will provide additional clarification as required.

The below Fee Management requirements in section 3.1 only apply if we remain a Core Funding Partner Service.

If we choose to withdraw from the scheme during the programme year (September 2025 – August 2026) we are required to give you, and Pobal the scheme administrator, 3 months written notice of our intention to withdraw.

The Department offers us, as a Partner Service the option of availing of Case Management supports if we are experiencing concerns souring our viability as an alternative to withdrawing from the scheme, and removing the benefits of the scheme to parents.

**3.1 Fee Management – As a Partner Service**, we operate our Fees Policy in accordance with the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement, which in programme year 2025/2026 involves no increases of fees on those charged to parents/guardians on 30 of September 2021, called an effective ‘fee freeze’. There may be some exceptions to this rule, which can be found in <https://earlyyearshive.ncs.gov.ie/downloads/download-corefunding/>. In order that you can understand what this fee freeze means for you, we have outlined our fees and associated fees policy below.

<input type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>a) Our service was in existence on or before 30 September 2021</b></p> <p>As a Partner Service, we are committed to operating the effective ‘fee freeze’ for Programme Year 2025/2026. This means that we will not charge our parents/guardians more for the same service than what we were charging in September 2021.</p>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>b) Our service was established after 30 September 2021</b></p> <p>As a Partner Service, we are committed to operating the effective ‘fee freeze’ for Programme Year 2025/2026. This means that we will not charge our parents/guardians more for the same service than what we were charging when we first became a Partner Service.</p>

**3.2 Donations** - We will not request or accept any donations, voluntary or otherwise from parents/guardians, in respect of the ELC/SAC services being provided.

**3.3 Deposits** - We will not charge any non-refundable deposits<sup>1</sup> to parents/guardians in the respect of their ELC/SAC service where the parent/guardian takes up the service for which the deposit was paid. Additionally, we will return all deposits which have been taken relating to the 2025/2026 programme year once your child’s registration is approved on the Early Years Hive or within four weeks of the child taking up the place, whichever is sooner.

**3.4 Discounts** – We will keep all discounts that were available on 30 September 2021 in place, provided that they are available to all children in our service. Any discount relevant to you will be applied to your normal fee.

**3.5 Optional Extras** – The term ‘Optional Extra’ is only applicable to any extra services or activities we offer under the ECCE/CCSP Saver Programmes which are not funded by the Programmes but which are voluntary with optional charges to you. These optional extras are very limited in nature and there is a copy of the Department approved optional extras list available in Appendix 1 of the [ECCE programme rules](#), which are also available on the Early Years Hive.

**3.6 Additional Service** - Is when something additional to a service type/fee option is offered to parents/guardians. Take up of the additional service must be entirely optional to parents/guardians. For example, a service provider may offer school collection services in addition to their SAC Service Types, all additional extras must be entirely optional to parents/guardians and charged for additionally. These must appear on the fee table as applicable.

**3.7 Fee Review Process** - As a Partner Service, we must uphold our contractual obligations regarding our fees charged to parents/guardians as laid out in the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement.

Where a parent/guardian/individual identifies a potential breach of Core Funding fee rules by a Partner Service, they may seek to have this examined and a conclusion reached through the [Core Funding Fee Review process](#).

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<sup>1</sup> Non-refundable deposits include administration/registration fees or other such charges.

A parent/guardian/individual who has identified a change to a Partner Service's fee policy potentially breaching the Core Funding Partner Service Funding Agreement, may address the issue in the first instance directly with the Service if they chose to do so.

In certain cases, this step may allow for the quick resolution of the case between the Partner Service and the parent/guardian without engagement with the CCC. This pre-fee review stage is optional.

Where a parent/guardian does not wish to engage with the service with their concerns or questions around Fee Management, a parent/guardian can raise the case directly with the relevant CCC.

### **3.8 Fee Policy**

C. This service was established after 30 September 2021. The fee policy we are going to implement for year 2025/2026 has not changed since this service became a partner service.

### 3.9 Fee Tables

#### 3.9.1 - Section A: Fee Options

Programme Year: 2025/2026

Fee Type Name	Age Range	School Age / Early Years	ECCE Available?	Session Start Time	Session Finish Time	Second Session Start Time	Second Session Finish Time	Incorporated Services?	Choose Incorporated Service	Additional Information	Hrs:Mins per Day	Days per Week	Hrs:Mins per Week	Weeks per year	Full Fee	Fee (with ECCE deduction for 3 free hours)	Effective From	Effective To
Jnr. Afterschool Session 1:45pm - 6pm	4y - 7y	SAC	No	13:45	18:00			Yes	Meal	Full afterschool session for Junior & Senior infants. Light snack and hot meal included.	4.15	5	21.15	38	€103.25	€	01/09/2025	
Link Hour (Jnr & Snr infants)	4y - 7y	SAC	No	13:45	14:45			Yes	Meal	Link hour for Junior & Senior infants. Light snack included.	1.00	5	5.00	38	€35.5	€	01/09/2025	14/08/2026
Snr. Afterschool Session	6y - 13y	SAC	No	14:45	18:00			Yes	Meal	Afterschool session for 1st -	3.15	5	16.15	38	€79.75	€	01/09/2025	14/08/2026

2:45pm - 6pm										6th class children. Hot meal included.								
In-Service days - Afterschool session	4y - 13y	SAC	No	12:15	18:00			Yes	Meal	Extended afterschool session for all children on school in-service days. Fees are charged in accordance with existing sessions / charges. E.g. 12:15pm - 4:30pm is charged at the Jnr. afterschool session rate (4.25 hrs).	5.45	1	5.45	5	€27.75	€	01/09/2025	14/08/2026
Out of Term - Half Day	4y - 13y	SAC	No	09:00	14:00			Yes	Meal	Half day session	5.00	5	25.00	11	€116.25	€	01/09/2025	14/08/2026

										during applicable school breaks . 9am - 2pm only. Snack included.								
Out of Term - Full Day	4y - 13y	SAC	No	08:00	18:00			Yes	Meal	Full day during applicable school breaks . Breakfast, snacks and hot meal included.	10.00	5	50.00	11	€194.75	€	01/09/2025	14/08/2026

**3.9.2 - Section B: Fee Extras: Deposit / Discount / Optional Extras\* / Additional Services**

Type	Extras	Amount	Frequency	Other	Description	Additional Detail / Conditions	Effective From	Effective To
Discount		€60	Weekly		60% Staff discount		01/09/2025	14/08/2026
Discount		€10	Weekly		10% siblings discount for 12+ hours use in term	Discount applied where 2 or more siblings	01/09/2025	14/08/2026

						attend the setting and at least one sibling is booked and charged for 12 or more hours per week during term time.		
Discount		€10	Weekly		10% siblings discount for 3+ full days out of term	Discount applied where 2 or more siblings are booked and charged for 3 or more full days out of term.	01/09/2025	14/08/2026
Discount		€10	Weekly		10% siblings discount for 5 x half days out of term	Discount applied where 2 or more siblings are booked and charged for 5 half days out of term.	01/09/2025	14/08/2026
Deposit		€0	Weekly		We do not charge deposits		01/09/2025	14/08/2026
No Optional Extras		€						

\* These are entirely optional to parents/guardians.

### 3.9.3 - Section C – Other Additional Information

**Term time fees are charged weekly in line with the child's booking - regardless of attendance / non-attendance for any reason. Term Time fees are not charged over school holidays. Out of Term sessions are booked and charged for separately. Full fees apply for weeks in which the service is operational and a bank holiday occurs. Permanent changes (lasting four weeks or more) to a booking may be made following discussion with the Service Manager and must be requested with a minimum of two full weeks' notice. Cancellations of individual/random days are not permitted. Only permanent booking changes (of four weeks or longer) are accepted with appropriate notice. 4 weeks notice is required for cancellations. Full fees are charged for closures that are out of our control e.g. due to adverse weather conditions / loss of power, water etc. - subject to a maximum of 3 days per calendar year. Additional / extra hours or sessions booked at short notice may be subject to the full fee for the additional hours / session (drop-in rates) and are accommodated strictly according to the availability of spaces.**

**3.10 The changes to our Fees Policy as applicable on September 30, 2021 (or when we first became a Partner Service, whichever is earlier), are as follows:**

**3.10 (a) The following new Service Types ARE available:**

Fee Type Name	SAC/ELC	Age Range	Min Age	Max Age	ECCE available for ECCE Eligible Children	Session Start time	Session finish time	Incorporated Services ?	Choose incorporated Service	Additional Information	No. hours per day	No days per week	No. hours per week	Fee (less ECCE 3 Free Hours (€))	Full Fee
														€	€

**3.10(b) The following Service Types are NO LONGER available:**

Fee Type Name	SAC/ELC	Age Range	Min Age	Max Age	ECCE available for ECCE Eligible Children	Session Start time	Session finish time	Incorporated Services ?	Choose incorporated Service	Additional Information	No. hours per day	No days per week	No. hours per week	Fee (less ECCE 3 Free Hours (€))	Full Fee
														€	€

#### 4. Quality measures

As a Partner Service, we are committed to delivering quality for children and families. There are number of ways we can show this.

##### 4.1 Our staff have the following qualifications:

Room/Session	Qualification
Afterschool / Out of Term	First Aid Response Certification
Afterschool / Out of Term	Leading Inclusive Childhood Education (LINC)
Afterschool / Out of Term	Children First DLP Certification
Afterschool / Out of Term	QQI L5 Certificate in Early Years Education and Care
Afterschool / Out of Term	QQI L6 Certificate in Early Years Education and Care
Afterschool / Out of Term	QQI L7 Early Years Education & Care
Afterschool / Out of Term	Children First (Child Protection) Certification for Mandated Persons
Organisation Management	QQI L8 Certificate in Support Theory & Supervision
Afterschool / Out of Term	Fire Safety Certification
Afterschool / Out of Term	Food Hygiene Level 2 (HACCP)
Afterschool / Out of Term	Health & Safety for Schools and Creches Certification

##### 4.2

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<p><b>We are actively working to implement our Quality Inclusion Practice Plan (QIPP) and we will report on progress at the end of the year to the Department of Children, Disability and Equality and our parents/guardians.</b></p>
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Smart Steps Lifford will display the end of year QIPP report in an area accessible to parents/guardians as well as on any online platform maintained by the Smart Steps Lifford for the purpose of advertising its service or providing information to parents/guardians.

**Queries** -If you have any queries or wish to discuss any of the above, please contact **Lisa Anderson - Manager**. Alternatively, you could address queries to your local City/County Childcare Committee (CCC). A list of CCC contact details is available from [City and County Childcare Committees](#).

Smart Steps Lifford will display this Parent Statement at all times in an area accessible to parents/guardians as well as on any online platform maintained by the Smart Steps Lifford for the purpose of advertising its service or providing information to parents/guardians. Smart Steps Lifford will print and co-sign a Parent Statement for each family. A copy signed by Smart Steps Lifford and the parent/guardian will be retained on file. Any changes to Fee Policies will require that an updated Parent Statement is displayed and Smart Steps Lifford will issue updated Parent Statements by email to our parents/guardians and retain proof of the associated email.

In this section include details of the child(ren), in this family only, enrolled at the service (as per parent/guardian name below):

Use **BLOCK CAPITALS**:

Child first name	Child family name

This Parent Statement, which is an agreement solely between the parent/guardian and the Partner Service, sets out what is on offer at Smart Steps Lifford and the applicable fees. If these terms conflict with the terms of any other agreement between Smart Steps Lifford and the parents/guardians then this takes priority. However any parts of any existing agreement that do not conflict remain in force and are not affected by this Parent Statement.

Programme Year:	2025/2026
Service Provider Name:	Smart Steps Lifford
Service Reference No.:	25DL0350
Signed – Parent/Guardian:	
Parent/Guardian name in BLOCK CAPITALS:	
Date:	