

Outlining Childcare Options For Parents and NCHDs

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Date of publication

May 2026

Health and Wellbeing

Childcare Resource

1. Introduction

The Physician Health and Wellbeing Committee is a group of RCPI trainees who are committed to improving the training conditions and wellbeing of NCHDs. This resource was prepared to assist doctors who are parents in accessing childcare and to inform them of their entitlements. It outlines childcare options, government subsidised schemes, tax benefits, leave entitlements, and practical considerations for NCHDs working in Ireland. It is not intended to be a comprehensive document but rather a starting point for parents seeking childcare.

All leave entitlements should be checked directly with your employer. Changes to government policy in relation to subsidised schemes and tax benefits may be announced in the future and may therefore differ from those outlined below. It is the responsibility of the individual employee to ensure that any childcare arrangements they utilise are appropriate and meet the necessary standards. The information provided below is intended as guidance only, and employees are responsible for verifying its accuracy and ensuring that it applies to their individual circumstances.

2. Types of Childcare Options

2.1 Crèches

Crèches (also known as early years services) provide full-day care for babies and children, typically from 0-5 years

Crèches usually operate from 7:30am-6:00/6:30pm, Monday to Friday, making them suitable for NCHDs on standard day shifts. Most crèches are eligible for the National Childcare Scheme and ECCE program.

They are registered and inspected by Tusla and must meet strict regulations regarding staff qualifications, child-to-staff ratios, safety standards, and facilities.

2.2 Childminders

2.2.1 Tusla-Registered Childminders

Childminders who care for more than 3 pre-school children (not including their own) must register with Tusla. Registered childminders are inspected for compliance with regulations.

Using a Tusla-registered childminder allows you to avail of the National Childcare Scheme subsidies.

2.2.2 Unregistered Childminders

Childminders caring for 3 or fewer pre-school children (not including their own) are not required to register with Tusla. While they may offer more flexibility and competitive rates, you will not be eligible for National Childcare Scheme subsidies with unregistered childminders.

When using an unregistered childminder, ensure you conduct thorough reference checks, request Garda vetting, and establish clear contractual terms.

2.3 Preschools

Preschools (also called playschools or Montessori) focus on educational and developmental activities for children typically aged 2.5-5 years in preparation for primary school.

They usually operate sessional hours (e.g., 9:00am-12:00pm or 9:00am-1:00pm) during school term time only. Many preschools participate in the free ECCE programme.

Preschools may be suitable for NCHDs working part-time or with flexible schedules, but typically require supplementary childcare arrangements to cover full working days.

2.4 After-School Services

After-school services provide care for primary school-aged children (typically 4-12 years) before school, after school, and during school holidays.

They typically operate from 8:00am-9:00am and 2:00pm-6:00pm during term time, with full-day care during school holidays.

After-school services that are Tusla-registered can participate in the National Childcare Scheme. This option is essential for NCHDs with school-aged children who work beyond school hours.

2.5 Au-Pairs

Au pairs typically live with a host family and provide childcare in exchange for accommodation, meals, and a weekly allowance. Au pairs usually work up to 30 hours per week and are considered part of the family rather than employees.

This arrangement can provide flexible, live-in support for NCHDs with irregular hours. Au pair arrangements are not regulated by Tusla and do not qualify for childcare subsidies.

For more information see:

- [CitizensInformationchildcareoptions](#)
- [Tusla preschool services](#)

3. Finding Childcare Services

3.1 Tusla Early Years Inspectorate

Tusla maintains a register of all early years services by county. This is the most authoritative source for finding registered and inspected childcare providers in your area. You can view inspection reports to assess the quality and compliance of services.

For more information see [Tusla Early Years Services](#)

3.2 [Childcare.ie](#)

Childcare.ie is Ireland's national childcare directory, providing a comprehensive searchable database of registered childcare services including crèches,

preschools, after-school clubs, and childminders. You can search by location, type of service, and age group. The website also provides information on the National Childcare Scheme and other supports.

For more information see [Childcare.ie](https://www.childcare.ie)

3.3 Pobal Service Directory

Pobal administers government childcare programmes and maintains a directory of early years services that participate in the National Childcare Scheme and Early Childcare and Education (ECCE) Programme. The directory allows you to search for services by location and shows which subsidies and programmes each service accepts. This is particularly useful for identifying providers where you can use your National Childcare Scheme funding.

For more information see [Pobal early years services](#)

3.4 City and County Childcare Committee

Each county in Ireland has a ~~City and County Childcare~~ City and County Childcare Committee (CCC) that supports parents in finding and accessing quality childcare. CCCs provide free, impartial information and advice on childcare options, financial supports, and services in your local area. They can be particularly helpful for NCHDs relocating to a new area, as they have detailed local knowledge and can provide personalised guidance. Contact your local CCC for one-to-one support in finding suitable childcare.

For more information see [Dept of Children, Disability and Equality childcare committees](#)

3.5 Supplementary Childminding Directories

Some organisations and online platforms provide directories that may help parents identify local childminders or explore flexible childcare options. These sources are **not regulatory registers**, and listings may include both Tusla-registered and unregistered providers.

Childminding Ireland is a membership organisation that supports childminders and hosts an online directory to help parents connect with services in their locality. While it can be a useful starting point for identifying potential options, parents should independently verify Tusla-registration status, Garda vetting,

references, insurance, and contractual arrangements before engaging any provider.

Primary sources for regulated childcare providers remain the Tusla Early Years Register and City and County Childcare Committees (see Sections 3.1 and 3.4).

For more information see [Childminding Ireland](#)

3.6 Community-based Childcare Resources

Informal or community-based networks can help parents locate childcare options, including:

- Local parenting or childminder social media groups
- Parent and toddler networks
- Hospital or colleague recommendations

These routes can be helpful for NCHDs seeking flexible or short-term arrangements, particularly during rotations or when relocating. However, these listings are **not regulated**, and parents should always confirm Tusla-registration where applicable, request Garda vetting, and carry out appropriate reference checks before finalising arrangements.

4. Financial supports and subsidies

4.1 National Childcare Scheme

The NCS provides financial support to help families with their early learning and childcare costs. These subsidies are available for children aged between 24 weeks and 15 years and can be used with any participating childcare provider that is Tusla-registered. The scheme provides two subsidies: a universal subsidy available to all applicants regardless of income, and an income-assessed subsidy based on household earnings. You can apply for the subsidy using a verified MyGovID account or through a postal application.

For more information see [National Childcare Scheme](#)

4.2. Early Childcare and Education (ECCE) Programme

The ECCE programme provides free preschool care and education to eligible children in the two years before starting primary school. This universal programme is available to all children within the qualifying age range, regardless of family income.

Eligibility:

- Children must be at least 2 years and 8 months old at the start of the ECCE year and must not be older than 5 years and 6 months of age at the end of the programme year.
- Most children can avail of up to two years of ECCE before entering primary school
- The programme provides 15 hours per week over 38 weeks of the year (or 182 days which can be found on the provider's ECCE calendar). This typically provides a 3-hour session per day, 5 days a week.
- The programme year runs from 1st September to 30th June each year.

For more information see [Early Childcare and Education Programme](#)

4.3 Tax and Employment Supports

Single Person Child Carer Credit

If you look after a child on your own, you may be entitled to this tax credit which reduces the overall amount of tax you pay.

Medical Expenses

You may be able to claim 20% tax relief on eligible medical expenses for your children.

Home Carer Tax Credit

If you or your spouse is working part-time or stays at home full-time to care for your children, you may be entitled to this tax credit.

Tuition Fees

If you cover the cost of your child's education at a third-level institution, or enrol them in a foreign language or IT course, whether taken full-time or part-time, you may qualify for tax relief at the standard rate of 20%.

Child benefit

This is a universal payment that is paid monthly by the government to parents of children under 16.

Incapacitated child tax credit

If you are the parent of a child who is permanently incapacitated, either physically or mentally, you may be entitled to this tax credit.

For more information see:

- [Citizens Information](#)
- [Revenue](#)

5. Employment rights

NCHDs who are parents may be entitled to a range of statutory leave options that support childcare responsibilities and family life. The summaries below provide a high-level overview only; local HR policies and training requirements may vary. NCHDs should discuss leave options early with their employer, training body, or postgraduate training scheme where relevant.

Parental Leave

The purpose of this leave is to allow employees to take time off work to care for their children. This entitles you to 26 weeks of unpaid leave per child up until the child's age of 16.

For more information see [Citizens Information – Parental Leave](#)

Parent's Leave

This entitles employees to 9 weeks of leave up until the child's age of 2. You may be entitled to parent's benefit from the Department of Social Protection.

For more information see [Citizens Information – Parent's Leave](#)

Premature Birth and Additional Maternity Leave

If your baby is born prematurely, you may be entitled to additional paid maternity leave. This extra leave is added after the standard 26 weeks of maternity leave, subject to eligibility under HSE maternity leave policies. NCHDs should notify their employer as soon as possible following the birth and discuss arrangements with their local HR department and training body where relevant. For more information see [HSE – Maternity Leave](#)

Force Majeure Leave

This entitles employees to limited time off work for an urgent family reason, such as the injury or ill-health of an immediate family member. This leave entitles employees to 3 days in 12 consecutive months, or a total of 5 days in 36 consecutive months; however, depending on your contract and employer, you may be able to take more than this. Employees are paid while out of work on force majeure leave.

For more information see [HSE – Force Majeure Leave](#)

Carer's Leave

Employees may be entitled to unpaid carer's leave to provide full-time care to a person who requires significant support due to illness or disability. Eligibility criteria apply and certification through the Department of Social Protection is required. NCHDs considering carer's leave should discuss implications for training and rotations with their training body in advance.

For more information see [Citizens Information – Carer's Leave](#)

Unpaid leave for medical care

Employees may take a limited amount of unpaid leave each year to provide personal care or support to a child or dependent who requires significant medical attention. This leave is distinct from force majeure leave and may be particularly relevant for planned medical appointments or ongoing care needs.

For more information see [HSE – Unpaid Medical Leave](#)

Special Unpaid Leave

In exceptional circumstances, NCHDs may need to avail of other types of unpaid leave. These may include Force Majeure leave (for urgent family emergencies), unpaid leave for medical care purposes, or **Special Unpaid Leave**, which may be granted at the discretion of the employer. NCHDs have availed of Special

Unpaid Leave in the past, particularly where additional time off was required after maternity leave due to challenges accessing childcare.

NCHDs considering this option should discuss their circumstances with their employer and training body in advance, as approval is discretionary and may have implications for training progression.

6. RCPI Supports

RCPI facilitates opportunities for NCHDs who are parents to connect with colleagues and share experiences of balancing training and family life. NCHDs are encouraged to keep an eye on the RCPI website and communications for upcoming events and initiatives, as availability and scheduling may vary.

Medical Parents Events

RCPI periodically hosts in-person events that allow colleagues from across specialties to meet in an informal and supportive environment.

RCPI Webinars

RCPI hosts joint webinars with other medical training bodies throughout the year that often cover topics relevant to parents in medical training.

RCPI Guidance document on leave entitlements for NCHDs who are

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The RCPI published a useful resource to assist doctors who are new parents in planning their leave and understanding their entitlements.

For more information see [RCPI Guidance on Leave Entitlements](#)

7. Special considerations for NCHDs

7.1 Frequent Re-locations

- **Start early:** Begin searching for childcare as soon as you know your next placement location (3-6 months in advance if possible)
- **Network with colleagues:** Ask outgoing NCHDs about childcare arrangements and recommendations for your new location

- **Waiting lists:** Many popular services have waiting lists of 12+ months. Register early, even if you're uncertain about dates
- **Short-term contracts:** Discuss your situation with providers. Some may accommodate shorter contracts or provide flexibility
- **Notice periods and contract terms:** Most services require 4 weeks' notice.

7.2 Emergency and Back-up Childcare

- **Emergency childminding services:** Some private agencies provide emergency cover for unexpected childcare needs, though availability varies by area.
- **Colleague networks:** Build relationships with other NCHDs/hospital staff with children for mutual support.
- **Family support:** If possible, have family members on standby for emergencies or consider their proximity when choosing rotations
- **Force Majeure or unpaid leave options for medical care:** Consider taking Force Majeure Leave or unpaid leave for medical care if required. (See Section 5)

8. Planning Childcare Once Your Training Site is Assigned

One of the challenges faced by NCHDs is that the training site for the July rotation is often confirmed only 3–4 months in advance. This short timeframe can make childcare planning difficult, particularly where waiting lists for childcare services are long.

The checklist below outlines practical steps that may help when organising childcare once your next training site has been confirmed.

Once your training site is assigned (typically 3–4 months notice)

- Begin researching childcare options in your new location using the Tusla Early Years Register, Childcare.ie, and local City and County Childcare Committees
- Contact outgoing NCHDs at your new placement for childcare recommendations and local insights
- Arrange visits or virtual meetings with potential childcare providers where possible
- Discuss your working hours, shift patterns and on-call commitments with potential providers

- Review provider opening hours and flexibility, particularly if your rota includes early starts or late finishes
- If places are limited, ask about waiting lists or short-term arrangements

Before starting in your new role

- Confirm your childcare place and complete any required registration forms, deposits or contracts
- Review contract terms carefully, including notice periods and payment arrangements
- Apply for the National Childcare Scheme subsidy if eligible
- Consider proximity to the hospital when arranging accommodation and childcare
- Identify backup childcare options where possible (family, colleagues, emergency childminding services)

After starting in your new placement

- Connect with other NCHD parents in your hospital for peer support and local advice
- Familiarise yourself with Force Majeure leave and other family-related leave options (see Section 5)
- Keep contact details for backup childcare providers easily accessible in case of unexpected rota changes

Key Contacts and Resources

Understanding Childcare Options

Types of childcare explained: [Citizens Information – Childcare Options](#)

Finding Regulated Childcare Providers

[Tusla Early Years Register \(inspection reports and registered services\)](#)

[City and County Childcare Committees \(local advice and support\)](#)

[National childcare directory \(registered services\)](#)

Services participating in the [National Childcare Scheme and ECCE Programme](#)

Financial Supports and Parenting Resources

[National Childcare Scheme](#)

[Citizens Information](#) (family supports, leave entitlements and childcare information)

[HSE Parenting Supports and Services](#)

NCHD-Specific Supports

[RCPI Leave Entitlements Guidance Document for NCHDs who are parents](#)

[RCPI website](#) (Medical Parents supports and events)

Supplementary Childminding Platforms (Not Endorsed by RCPI)

[Babysits.ie](#)

[MindMe.ie](#)

These platforms are not regulatory registers. Parents should independently verify Tusla-registration, Garda vetting, references and insurance before engaging any provider.

Childcare for NCHDs – Quick Guide

This quick guide summarises key points from the full resource and should be read alongside the detailed sections above.

Childcare Options

- Crèches – Full-day, Tusla-registered childcare
- Childminders – Registered or unregistered options
- Preschools – Sessional early learning services
- After-school services – Care for school-age children
- Au pairs – Flexible live-in support arrangements

Financial Supports

- National Childcare Scheme (NCS)
 - Subsidies for Tusla-registered childcare providers
- ECCE Programme
 - Free preschool programme (15h/week, 38 weeks/year)

Key Tips for NCHDs

- Check Tusla-registration before booking childcare
- Waitinglists are common – apply early where possible
- Confirm hours suit shift & on-call patterns
- Agree fees, notice periods & late pick-up policies in advance
- Familiarise yourself with parental leave, force majeure leave, and medical care leave options

Finding Childcare

- Tusla Early Years Register
- City & County Childcare Committees
- Childcare.ie national directory
- Pobal Service Directory

Useful Links

- [National Childcare Scheme](#)
- [Citizens Information](#)
- [RCPI](#)
- [Pobal Early Years Services](#)
- [Childcare.ie](#)
- [Tusla Register of Services](#)

Developed by RCPI's
Physician Health and Wellbeing Committee
to support parents who are NCHDs



Registered Charity Number (RCN): 20002718

