

BUDGET 2027 SUBMISSION

INVESTING IN PROFESSIONAL PAY AND HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION AND CARE

July 2026



SIPTU IS CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO INVEST:

PAY –

€130 million ringfenced funding for pay including recognition for experience and qualifications

ACCESS AND INCLUSION MODEL (AIM) –

€40 million increase in the Budget to extend AIM to children under three years of age.

OUR VISION

SIPTU's vision is to deliver high-quality, accessible education and care for all children, ensure affordability for parents and support sustainable services where Educators and Managers are properly recognised and rewarded through professional pay and conditions.

In the medium term, we propose the State assumes responsibility for wages. In the interim, Budget 2027 must include increased investment in pay through a new ringfenced funding allocation from September 2027.

To attract and retain staff, Early Years Professionals must see consistent annual improvements in pay.

A QUALIFIED AND EXPERIENCED WORKFORCE

Early Years Educators require a broad range of skills and competencies to fulfil their roles and implement Aistear and Síolta in practice. A minimum Level 5 qualification is required, with Level 6 for Lead

Educators and plans for a graduate-led workforce by 2028. It is also proposed that in the next few years School Age Childcare will require a Level 5 qualification to practice.

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION – A CRITICAL ISSUE

Staff turnover is still high at **25.8% annually**.

While Government subsidies under the National Childcare Scheme have reduced parental fees and increased demand, services are struggling to recruit enough staff to keep rooms open or expand capacity.

A cycle of low pay → staff shortages → burnout → higher turnover → impact on quality

Early Years Professionals need clear incentives to enter and remain in the sector.

They need to see annual progress towards professional pay scales that reflect their value to children, families, communities and the wider economy.

SIPTU IS CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO INVEST:

An additional €130 million ringfenced funding to support a new pay deal that delivers a 10% pay increase and recognises experience and qualifications.

ACCESS INCLUSION MODEL (AIM)

AIM supports children with disabilities to participate in preschool, with plans to extend to all settings set out in First 5, including school-age care; however, there is an urgent and immediate need to expand supports to children under three.

SIPTU IS CALLING ON GOVERNMENT TO INVEST:

An additional €40 million and extend the Access and Inclusion Model to Children under three years of age in 2027.



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