

AIM Level 7

2026/2027 Programme Call

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

How to use this FAQ

- Start with Key actions at a glance if you need a quick overview.
- Use the contents list to go directly to applications, eligibility, funding, staffing, attendance, reviews, parent information or introductory guidance.

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Important

- AIM Level 7 funding depends on submission of the AIM Level 7 confirmation form and the relevant programme conditions, including a valid ECCE registration and, for NCS-funded hours, a confirmed NCS claim.
- Review functionality for 2026/2027 applications is expected to be available on the Early Years Hive in October. Until then, reviews are processed manually through the Requests page.

1. Key actions at a glance

To access approved AIM Level 7 support

- 1. Submit an AIM Level 4 application in partnership with the child's parent(s), legal guardian(s) or carer(s).
- 2. Better Start reviews the child's needs and issues the outcome through the Early Years Hive.
- 3. Submit the AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form to confirm that the approved AIM Level 7 support is still required.
- 4. Ensure the required ECCE registration and, where relevant, confirmed NCS claim are in place.
- 5. Review the support type and plan the additional resource around the children's attendance patterns.

A child may require support during ECCE hours but not during NCS hours, in this case a request must be submitted through the Early Years Hive to advise of this.

What has changed with the AIM Level 7 process?

The AIM Level 7 application process has been redesigned and renamed as the AIM Level 7 confirmation form. The purpose of the redesign is to simplify the process for service providers requesting AIM Level 7 support.

The new approach replaces the previous system of multiple application forms with a single, streamlined confirmation process. It also removes AIM Level 7 session requirements and eliminates the need for multiple submissions and separate reviews of different application types. These changes are intended to reduce the administrative burden on both service providers and the reviewing team while making the application process more efficient and user-friendly.

What should I do first?

Submit an AIM Level 4 application. Following Better Start's review and an appropriate approval in principle, submit the AIM Level 7 confirmation form for the relevant programme call.

2. Applications and the new process

What is an AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form?

The AIM Level 7 confirmation form is the form completed by a service provider to confirm that an approved AIM Level 7 support is required for a child for the relevant programme call. This is the new terminology for what was previously referred to as the AIM Level 7 application form.

The redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation application form is now available on the Early Years Hive. Service providers who have submitted an AIM Level 4 application and indicated that they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 supports for the 2026/2027 programme call must now submit the confirmation application form to confirm that they still wish to receive AIM Level 7 supports.

Where a child has been awarded a support level and an active ECCE and NCS registration is identified, support will be awarded automatically following the submission of the AIM Level 7 confirmation application. Therefore, if a service provider does not require all supports awarded to a child, a request must be submitted on the Early Years Hive advising of this. For example, where a child does not require AIM support during NCS hours.

When should we submit an AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form?

Service Providers, in partnership with a child's parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s), should first submit an AIM Level 4 application. Please note that AIM Level 4 applications may take up to 4 weeks to process. Following Better Start's initial review of the child's needs, a service provider will receive an Approval in Principle for AIM Level 7 support, where appropriate. To avail of the approved AIM Level 7 support for the relevant programme call, a service provider must then submit an AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form. The redesigned AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form is now available on the Early Years Hive is only submitted after an AIM Level 4 application has been reviewed and an Approval in Principle for AIM Level 7 support has been previously issued.

Has the timeframe for decisions changed for AIM Level 4 and Level 7?

No. At present, the existing 12-week processing timeline remains in place for processing of AIM Level 4 applications and AIM Level 7 confirmation forms.

Following the submission of an AIM Level 4 application Better Start will carry out an initial review of the child's needs and a Preliminary Notification will be issued. For further information on Preliminary Notifications, please see the question below.

I submitted an AIM Level 4 application but have not yet been contacted. What should I do?

Once an AIM Level 4 application is submitted, it will be reviewed in line with standard processing timelines. As part of this process an Early Years Specialist will contact the service provider by phone to discuss the child's needs and support requirements.

In the meantime, service providers are encouraged to submit the AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form, which is now available on the Early Years Hive, if they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 support.

Please allow sufficient time for contact from the Early Years Specialist, as applications are reviewed in the order they are received and in line with established processing timelines.

What happens after an AIM Level 4 application is submitted for Level 7 support?

Once an AIM Level 4 application, including a request for Level 7 support, has been submitted. It is reviewed by an Early Years Specialist. Following this review, a decision is issued via the Early Years Hive. The outcome may be:

Individual ECCE / Shared NCS: awarded where it has been determined that the child needs individual support during the ECCE programme, and shared support (up to a maximum of three children) for any additional hours availed of under NCS.

Where a sessional service receives an 'Individual ECCE / Shared NCS' decision for a child, individual support applies for the full duration of the ECCE programme. If the child avails of hours beyond ECCE for the upcoming programme call, shared support has already been determined for those hours.

Shared ECCE / Shared NCS: awarded where it has been determined that the child needs shared support (up to a maximum of three children) during both the ECCE programme and any hours availed of under NCS.

Not Approved: indicates no AIM Level 7 support has been awarded.

Please note: AIM Level 7 funding is dependent on the submission of the Confirmation Form, a valid ECCE registration, and a confirmed NCS claim. This ensures that support and funding are only processed where a service provider confirms that AIM Level 7 support is still required.

What does a “Preliminary Decision” mean?

Under the AIM Level 7 redesign, the level of support is determined following the submission of an AIM Level 4 application and the completion of Better Start's review of the child's needs. Preliminary decisions issued from July 2026 onwards reflect the outcome of this review and provide an indication of the level of support awarded to the child.

This outcome is referred to as a 'Preliminary Decision' as service providers must still confirm that they wish to proceed with the request for AIM Level 7 support by submitting the redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation form, which will be available on August 18, 2026. The final approval of AIM Level 7 support is also dependent on an active ECCE and/or NCS registration being identified for the child.

Where can I see the Preliminary Decision?

Upon the completion of Better Start's review of the AIM Level 4 application, a notification will be issued to service providers advising of the level of support awarded to the child. This part of the notification advises service providers which support level has been allocated to the child:

AIM Level 7 - Application Outcome

Dear Service Provider

We are writing to confirm that the AIM Level 4 application in respect of the child [Unique Child ID] has been received and reviewed. As part of this process, consideration was also given to the request for AIM Level 7 support.

Outcome of Application**Support Award Type:**

- **Level 7 - Shared/Individual/Not Approved (as applicable)**

This part of the notification provides additional information on what each level of support means. However, only one level will apply to a child as identified in the text box above.

- **Shared ECCE / Shared NCS:**

The child has been approved for shared Level 7 support for ECCE and where applicable NCS. The Level 7 capitation may be shared with up to a maximum of three children who have been approved for shared support within the setting. If the child has a confirmed NCS claim, they may also be eligible for AIM Level 7 support outside of ECCE attendance.

- **Individual ECCE / Shared NCS:**

The child has been approved for individual Level 7 support for ECCE and where applicable shared Level 7 support for NCS. If the child has a confirmed NCS claim, they may also be eligible for AIM Level 7 support outside of ECCE attendance.

- **Not Approved:**

The child has not met the criteria for Level 7 support. As a result, no Level 7 capitation funding will be allocated in respect of any applications submitted.

The service will receive AIM Level 4 educational advice and mentoring from the Early Years Specialist. Please note, the service provider can request a review of this decision if it does not meet the needs of the child or the service. Any request to amend this arrangement must be submitted for review and must receive approval from Pobal before any change can be implemented.

Will I need to apply for AIM Level 7 now that the Confirmation Form is available?

Yes, Service providers who have submitted an AIM Level 4 application and indicated that they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 supports for the 2026/2027 programme call must now submit the AIM Level 7 confirmation form to confirm that they still wish to receive AIM Level 7 supports. The AIM Level 7 confirmation form is now available on the Early Years Hive.

Where a child has been awarded a support level and an active ECCE and NCS registration is identified, support will be awarded automatically following the submission of the AIM Level 7 confirmation form. Therefore, if a service provider does not require all supports awarded to a child, a request must be submitted on the Early Years Hive advising of this. For example, where a child does not require AIM support during NCS hours.

A child in my service is currently in receipt of AIM Level 7 support and is eligible for a further year. What do I need to do?

The action required depends on whether the child is eligible for a second or third year of AIM Level 7 support:

- Second year of AIM Level 7 support: Service providers must submit an AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form to confirm that they wish to continue receiving AIM Level 7 support for the child.
- Third year of AIM Level 7 support (Overage Exemption): Service providers must submit a Hive request outlining the child's details and the approved overage exemption code.

This will ensure that the child's eligibility and support requirements can be reviewed and processed appropriately.

Please note: AIM Level 7 funding is dependent on the submission of the Confirmation Form, a valid ECCE registration, and a confirmed NCS claim. This ensures that support and funding are only processed where a service provider confirms that AIM Level 7 support is still required.

Who is responsible for completing the AIM Level 4 application and AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form?

The AIM Level 4 application and AIM Level 7 confirmation form should be completed through a joint partnership between the Service Provider and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s). This collaborative approach supports the timely submission of the application and confirmation form to ensure that support can be put in place when required.

While the process is a shared responsibility, the service provider leads the application and confirmation form process to ensure the timely submission and coordination of supports. This includes maintaining regular communication with parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s), such as informing them when an Early Years Specialist (EYS) to visit the setting has been arranged.

The service provider is also responsible for notifying both Pobal and the parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s) of any delays including issues with scheduling the EYS visit or in the recruitment of the AIM Level 7 additional resource.

Timely communication and collaboration are essential to ensure that appropriate supports are in place to meet the child's needs.

When is the new process going live?

The redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation form is now available on the Early Years Hive. Service providers who have submitted an AIM Level 4 application and indicated that they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 supports for the 2026/2027 programme call must now submit the confirmation form to confirm that they still wish to receive AIM Level 7 supports.

Please note: AIM Level 7 funding is dependent on the submission of the Confirmation Form, a valid ECCE registration, and a confirmed NCS claim. This ensures that support and funding are only processed where a service provider confirms that AIM Level 7 support is still required.

Do I need to create AIM Level 7 sessions for 2026/2027?

No. Currently, service providers do not need to create AIM Level 7 sessions for the 2026/2027 programme call.

Can applications or confirmation forms be amended following submission?

No, if major amendments are required, the application and confirmation form must be resubmitted or submitted for review, as appropriate. Once submitted, application and confirmation form cannot be amended or referred back for changes.

Where changes to the information submitted on the AIM Level 7 Confirmation form are necessary, the original Level 7 confirmation form must first be cancelled or withdrawn.

3. Eligibility and support decisions

Will the redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation form change eligibility criteria or levels of support?

No. The redesigned AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form does not change the eligibility criteria for AIM Level 7 or the levels of support that may be awarded.

Eligibility for AIM Level 7 continues to be determined through the submission of an AIM Level 4 application and the initial review of the child's needs completed by Better Start. The redesign relates to the process used by service providers to confirm the approved Level 7 support and does not change how eligibility or support levels are assessed

Does submitting an AIM Level 4 application guarantee AIM Level 7 support for 2026/2027?

No. Submitting an AIM Level 4 application does not guarantee AIM Level 7 support. The redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation form is now available on the Early Years Hive. Service providers who have submitted an AIM Level 4 application and indicated that they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 supports for the 2026/2027 programme call must now submit an AIM Level 7 confirmation form for each eligible child to confirm that they still wish to receive AIM Level 7 support.

Please note: AIM Level 7 funding is dependent on the submission of the Confirmation Form, a valid ECCE registration, and a confirmed NCS claim. This ensures that support and funding are only processed where a service provider confirms that AIM Level 7 support is still required.

How is the decision made about the level of support allocated to a child?

The level of support allocated to a child is determined once their AIM Level 4 application has been submitted and an initial review of the child's needs has been completed by Better Start. The allocated level of support will apply for the full duration of the AIM Level 4 application. Service Providers can expect to receive a preliminary decision of the level of support determined at the AIM Level 4 application stage from 2026/2027 programme call.

What is the ratio eligibility for AIM Level 7?

The level of support allocated to each children's confirmation form will be communicated to Service Providers via the Early Years Hive.

Once the level of support has been awarded, the onus is on the Service Provider to allocate AIM Level 7 support appropriately across the service in line with ECCE programme requirements and Tusla guidelines. Service providers must ensure that any support awarded to a child is consistently in place at all times the child is in attendance.

When planning the use of these allocations, providers should avoid grouping all children receiving AIM Level 7 support in one room, as this can lead to an uneven distribution of resources. As a guideline, no more than 2–3 additional AIM Level 7 support resources should be assigned to a single room, depending on the number of children present, their individual needs, and the room's core AIM additional resources arrangements. This is intended to support the balanced and effective use of AIM Level 7 resources across the service and should be considered a planning guideline rather than a fixed compliance ratio

What types of AIM Level 7 support are available?

There are different support levels available under AIM Level 7:

Shared ECCE / Shared NCS

- Your child is allocated funding for a shared support during the ECCE programme.
- This support may be shared with up to three children in the setting who have similar needs.
- If your child has a confirmed NCS claim, they may also receive support outside ECCE hours. During NCS-funded hours, where applicable, this support may be shared with up to three other children in the setting.

Individual ECCE / Shared NCS

- Your child is allocated funding for individual support during the ECCE programme.
- If your child has a confirmed NCS claim, they may also receive support outside of ECCE hours. During NCS-funded hours, where applicable, this support may be shared with up to three other children in the setting due to the reduced adult-to-child ratios for full day care service or part-time day care service set out in the Early Years Service Regulations 2016.

Not approved

- The child has not met the criteria for Level 7 support. As a result, no Level 7 capitation funding will be allocated in respect of any applications submitted. The service will receive mentoring as part of AIM Level 4.

What is the difference between 'Individual' and 'Shared' support?

The difference between 'Individual' and 'Shared' support is 'Individual' support is assigned to a specific child and 'Shared' support is allocated across multiple children up to a maximum of three children.

How can I apply for an ECCE split-place exemption under the AIM programme?

For the 2026/2027 programme year, children who availed of a split-place exemption in the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programme during the 2025/2026 programme year remain eligible.

Split-place exemptions are now closed for new applications, with the following exception:

- A child may be eligible for an ECCE split-place exemption where they are attending a specialised preschool on one or more days per week in order to receive necessary targeted supports.

To apply, please contact eyqueries@dcde.gov.ie.

When submitting an application, please include all relevant information and supporting documentation that may assist the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) in assessing the child's ECCE split-place requirements.

4. Funding and payments

Has the redesign impacted on the amount of funding capitation my services receive?

The redesign has not impacted on the capitation levels for Level 7. However, the frequency and timing of payments have changed. Payment is now aligned with NCS and are issued one week in arrears of the claim date to allow confirmation of the NCS claim.

A capitation rate of up to €540 per week is available to support services in enhancing AIM additional resources provision.

This funding supports up to a Max of 30 hours of additional resources per week.

- Up to 15 hours AIM support per week during ECCE term time.
- Up to 15 hours NCS support per week during ECCE term time.
- Up to 30 hours NCS support per week during non-term time.

The Level 7 capitation is based on a child attending the ECCE programme for 3 hours per day and additional funding for non-ECCE hours is available where a confirmed NCS claim is in place. Capitation amount is based on the highest individual child's attendance hours, not the combined hours of all children.

What is the maximum weekly capitation and how many hours can it support?

A capitation rate of up to €540 per week is available. Funding supports up to a maximum of 30 hours of additional resources per week:

- Up to 15 hours of AIM support per week during ECCE term time.
- Up to 15 hours of NCS support per week during ECCE term time.
- Up to 30 hours of NCS support per week during non-term time.

What is a capitation?

Capitation is the amount of funding provided to a service to support additional resources such as AIM Level 7 additional resources. The capitation amount is determined by the attendance hours of the individual child/children with the highest level of need, rather than the combined hours of all children. The capitation amount paid weekly is based on a child's attendance pattern (e.g. hours per week).

Does Level 7 support apply to hours beyond the ECCE programme?

Yes, if your child is ECCE age eligible and has a confirmed NCS claim, the child will be allocated funding for Level 7 support for outside the ECCE hours (15 hours max during term time per week and 30 hours max for non-term per week).

The capitation amount is based on the highest individual child's attendance hours, not the combined hours of all children.

What must be in place before Level 7 funding can be processed?

The Level 7 Confirmation Form must be submitted. The relevant ECCE registration and, for NCS-funded hours, a confirmed NCS claim must also be in place.

When is the first AIM Level 7 payment scheduled?

The first payment is will be made by 7 September and will reflect from the beginning of the 2026/2027 programme call.

From September 2026, AIM Level 7 payments will be made one week in arrears. This means payment is based on the previous week's eligible ECCE registrations and NCS claims.

To support timely payments, please ensure registrations remain active and accurate throughout the programme year.

What is required in order for AIM Level 7 payments to be processed?

Please note that, for AIM Level 7 payments to be processed:

- An AIM Level 7 confirmation form must be submitted and approved for all year 1, year 2 and year 3 children. This is the new terminology for what was previously referred to as the AIM Level 7 application form.
- Each AIM child must have an active ECCE and/or confirmed NCS registration in place.
- A service must have completed ECCE and NCS pre-contracting steps.
- Payments cannot be made unless an AIM Level 7 confirmation form has been submitted and where the child has an active ECCE and/or confirmed NCS registration associated with the child.

To avoid delays, please ensure all registrations and programme information are accurate and up to date.

How can I view AIM Level 7 payments made to date?

To view AIM Level 7 payments:

- Go to the Funding tab
- Open [Payments Issued](#)
- Filter by AIM 7 Programme Call (AIM7 2026)

This will provide a list of the AIM Level 7 payments made to date.

Export Payment Values Total Funding Agreement Total						
Payment Instruction ▲	Programme Call	Payment Type	Pay Until Date	Processed Date ▲	Payment Value	Funding Agreement Paid to Date
XA-9702375	AIM7 2026	Payment	24/08/2026	19/08/2026	€918.00	€918.00
HV-5071882	AIM7 2026	Payment	24/08/2026		€0.00	€918.00

[View Allocations](#)

Export Payment Values Total Funding Agreement Total						
Payment Instruction ▲	Programme Call	Payment Type	Pay Until Date	Processed Date ▲	Payment Value	Funding Agreement Paid to Date
XA-9702375	AIM7 2026	Payment	24/08/2026	19/08/2026	€918.00	€918.00

Service providers can select the option to ‘view’ allocations for a particular AIM Level 7 payment which will provide a breakdown of what has been included for any of the payments issued.

Funding Agreement	Child	Allocation Description	Allocation Source	Allocation Value	Allocation Date ▲	Approved Date	Status
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Individual	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/2026 09:51	Approved
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Shared	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/2026 09:51	Approved
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 6 hours	AIM7 Individual	€108.00	24/08/2026	18/08/2026 10:28	Approved
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Shared	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/2026 10:28	Approved

How can I view AIM Level 7 allocations in more detail?

Service providers may select the option to view Allocations for a particular AIM Level 7 payment which will provide a breakdown of what has been included for any of the payments issued.

Export Payment Values Total Funding Agreement Total						
Payment Instruction ▲	Programme Call	Payment Type	Pay Until Date	Processed Date ▲	Payment Value	Funding Agreement Paid to Date
XA-9702375	AIM7 2026	Payment	24/08/2026	19/08/2026	€918.00	€918.00

Funding Agreement	Child	Allocation Description	Allocation Source	Allocation Value	Allocation Date ▲	Approver
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Individual	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/20
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Shared	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/20
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 6 hours	AIM7 Individual	€108.00	24/08/2026	18/08/20
BE4387-AM726001 / 21WW0034 - B App		1 resources 15 hours	AIM7 Shared	€270.00	24/08/2026	18/08/20

The Allocation Description provides a detailed breakdown of the approved funding, including the number of resources and the number of hours allocated for each week. The allocation source identifies if the allocations is for Individual or Shared supports.

For payable weeks on the ECCE calendar, ECCE AM/PM allocations and NCS wraparound AM//PM allocations where relevant will be displayed. For non-payable weeks on the ECCE calendar, NCS- only allocations where relevant will be displayed. Where no AIM Level 7 applications qualify for funding in a given week, no allocation will be displayed.

Where a review is in force for a particular week, the details of the review will be visible in the allocation descriptions and will be reflected in the allocation value for each week where the review remains in force.

REVIEWS

Name	Review Type	AIM L7 Resource Type ▲	From Date ▲	To Date	Review Status
Stop Resource	Stop Resource	Shared	05/10/2026	04/12/2026	Approved
Change Use of Capitation	Change Use of Capitation	Shared	04/01/2027	26/02/2027	Approved

Can I view payment details of a specific capitation session?

Yes, for more information on specific calculations made for AIM Level 7, service providers can view details for a selected capitation session under the 'Programmes' tab on the Early Years Hive. The AIM Level 7 Capitation page will show a Capitation summary for the service.

Programme Call ▲	Capitation Session Type ▲	Capitation Value
ECCE 2026	ECCE AM	€75,708.00
ECCE 2026	ECCE PM	€16,794.00
ECCE 2026	NCS AM Wraparound	€46,062.00
ECCE 2026	NCS Only	€31,050.00
ECCE 2026	NCS PM Wraparound	€20,250.00

This summary is made up of between one and five capitation sessions. A service will have one or two ECCE capitation session depending on if they run ECCE AM and/or ECCE PM sessions.

- **ECCE AM**
- **ECCE PM**

Where a service offers NCS, they will also have up to three NCS capitation sessions:

- **NCS AM Wraparound - *children in ECCE AM also in receipt of NCS***
- **NCS PM Wraparound - *children in ECCE PM also in receipt of NCS***
- **NCS Only (Non-Term)**

The detail of each Capitation Session may be viewed by selecting the 'View' option on a selected item, this page will outline:

- General information about the Capitation Session, such as the Capitation Session Type, e.g. "ECCE AM"
- A list of Level 7 Applications associated with the Capitation Session
- A list of allocations, there will be one or more for each week where AIM Level 7 funding is approved.

The Allocations list within the Capitation Session displays the weekly funding amount payable for both Individual Resources and Shared Resources for each week of the Programme Call.

Can I view the list of AIM Level 7 applications associated with a capitation session?

Yes, service providers can access a list of the AIM Level 7 applications associated with a capitation session is available through the 'view' option on the selected capitation session.

AIM7 CAPITATION - APPLICATIONS - ECCE

AIM7 Application ▲	Child	Support Level	Support Start Date	Confirmed Date	Withdrawal Date	Stage	ECCE Start Date	ECCE End Date
AT-5697117	Max Jordan	Individual	07/09/2026	17/08/2026		Confirmed	31/08/2026	16/07/2027
BQ-7234292	Molly Kerry	Shared	24/08/2026	21/08/2026		Confirmed	24/08/2026	16/07/2027
ES-3585503	Evelyn Hansen	Shared	24/08/2026	04/08/2026		Confirmed	24/08/2026	16/07/2027
HC-5258862	Alex Geller	Shared	07/09/2026	25/08/2026		Confirmed	07/09/2026	16/07/2027
LD-8760260	Pippa O'Brien	Individual	24/08/2026	18/08/2026		Confirmed	24/08/2026	16/07/2027
QX-1453661	Jane Cullins	Shared	24/08/2026	18/08/2026		Confirmed	24/08/2026	16/07/2027
TQ-0887118	Sanaa Bonilla	Individual	07/09/2026	04/08/2026		Confirmed	07/09/2026	02/07/2027
ZV-4209835	Valerie Raymond	Shared	24/08/2026	04/08/2026		Confirmed	24/08/2026	16/07/2027

5. Staffing and additional resources

Should I hire an AIM additional resource before a decision is issued to the service provider?

All recruitment decisions are the responsibility of the service provider as the employer. Pobal does not provide guidance or direction on the hiring of additional resource. Preliminary decisions regarding AIM Level 7 supports are expected to be issued in July 2026. As such, we are not in a position to advise on recruiting or hiring additional resource in advance of these decisions.

Will the support type influence how many AIM Level 7 additional resource(s) are required in my service?

The support types will influence how many AIM Level 7 additional resources are required to be compliant under the AIM programme.

If the support type has 'Individual' in the support label one AIM Level 7 additional resource has been awarded for that child.

If the support type has 'Shared' in the support label one AIM Level 7 additional resource has been awarded for up to a maximum of 3 children.

Example:

- In a group of 6 children:
 - 2 children receive Individual ECCE/Shared NCS
 - 4 children receive Shared ECCE/Shared NCS
- This may result in:
 - 4 AIM Level 7 additional resource for ECCE
 - 2 AIM Level 7 additional resources for NCS

Please note – this example will only be relevant where all 6 children are in the same ECCE and NCS sessions.

I have been awarded Level 7 Support. Can this be used for maintenance of reduced ratio?

At present, Level 7 additional assistance cannot be used for the maintenance of reduced ratios through the application system.

A service provider may request to use AIM Level 7 funding to support a Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement instead of employing an AIM Level 7 resource. Where a maintenance of reduced ratio review is approved, the service provider must reduce the room ratio by a minimum of three children. Only one Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement can be approved and used in a room at any one time. AIM Level 7 resources may also be used in the same room, but there can only be one Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement in place.

Once the relevant functionality becomes available, requests of this nature will need to be submitted as a review.

Please note: Review functionality for 2026/2027 AIM Level 7 applications will not be available on the Early Years Hive until October. As a temporary measure until this functionality becomes available, reviews will be processed manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive. Please select the following categories on the Requests page:

- Programme: AIM Level 7
- Request Type: Review
- Request Type Detail: Standard

Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as all reviews are currently being processed manually. Please continue to monitor the Early Years Hive over the coming weeks for further updates.

6. Attendance and session arrangements

How do attendance patterns affect AIM additional resourcing assumptions?

Children's attendance patterns play a key role in determining AIM additional AIM Level 7 additional resources.

- The child who attends for the highest number of hours in a given week determines the capitation level for that week.
- AIM additional resources must be reflected when children are attending, not just the total number of children enrolled.

Why is the timing of attendance important for AIM additional resources?

The timing of attendance is important because

AIM Level 7 additional resources must be present during the sessions when children attend.

- If children attend at different times (e.g. morning and afternoon sessions), AIM additional resources must ensure coverage across those time periods.
- AIM additional resources cannot be based solely on total numbers; session distribution must be considered.

What if the AIM Level 7 children are in different sessions?

If you have been awarded multiple AIM Level 7 supports, please check the award level. If the support type has 'Individual' in the support label one AIM Level 7 additional resource has been awarded for that child.

If the support type has 'Shared' in the support label one AIM Level 7 additional resource has been awarded for up to a maximum of 3 children.

However, if children with a 'shared' support level are in different AM and PM ECCE sessions, the funding capitations will recognise this, and separate funding allocations will be made.

Review functionality for 2026/2027 AIM Level 7 applications will not be available on the Early Years Hive until October. As a temporary measure until this functionality becomes available, reviews will be processed manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive. Please select the following categories on the Requests page:

- Programme: AIM Level 7
- Request Type: Review
- Request Type Detail: Standard

Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as all reviews are currently being processed manually. Please continue to monitor the Early Years Hive over the coming weeks for further updates.

Do different sessions require additional AIM Level 7 additional resources?

Yes, different sessions may require separate or additional AIM Level 7 additional resources.

- Where attendance is spread across different sessions, providers may need multiple additional resources to cover non-overlapping time periods. This ensures that all children receive appropriate support during their registered attendance.
- In situations where AIM Level 7 capitation is shared between children whose attendance is spread across different sessions, providers should consider whether the existing additional resourcing arrangement continues to meet the children's needs. In some cases, adjustments may be required to ensure adequate support is in place and can be done through submitting a review.

Review functionality for 2026/2027 AIM Level 7 applications will not be available on the Early Years Hive until October.

As a temporary measure until this functionality becomes available, reviews will be processed manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive. Please select the following categories on the Requests page:

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Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as all reviews are currently being processed manually. Please continue to monitor the Early Years Hive over the coming weeks for further updates

How is an AIM additional resource determined when all children attend the same session?

If all children attend the same session, additional resources can typically be shared across that session.

Example:

A provider has received 3 Shared ECCE/Shared NCS awards, and all 3 children attend ECCE PM.

Additional resource assumption:

- 1 AIM Level 7 additional resource for ECCE
- 1 AIM Level 7 additional resource for NCS

All children attend at the same time, allowing a single AIM Level 7 additional resource to support them within that session as per the awarded support level.

How is an AIM additional resource determined when children attend different sessions?

AIM's additional resources requirements are based on whether children attend the same session or different programme sessions (e.g. AM and PM).

- If children attend different sessions at the same time, additional resourcing may be required to ensure appropriate support is in place for each session. If the attendance pattern impacts additional resourcing requirements a review may need to be submitted. Please note there is currently no review functionality available for 2026/2027 applications. As a temporary measure until this functionality becomes available, reviews will be processed manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive. Please continue to monitor the Early Years Hive over the coming weeks for further updates.

- If children attend the same session, they may share available support resources under the Shared Support model.

Example:

A provider has received 3 Shared ECCE/Shared NCS awards:

- 1 child attends ECCE AM
- 2 children attend ECCE PM

AIM additional resources assumption:

- 2 AIM Level 7 additional resources for ECCE
- 2 AIM Level 7 additional resources for NCS

Separate sessions require additional resourcing presence in both time periods. If a child has been awarded a 'shared' support level and is the only supported child in a session, they are still considered part of Shared Support. If another child with Shared Support attends the same session, both children are expected to share the available support resources.

How are AIM Level 7 additional resources allocated when children attend different hours?

AIM additional resources are based on the child who attends for the highest number of hours in a given week. This child determines the capitation level, and additional resources are allocated in line with this requirement.

This means that even if multiple children attend, the allocation may reflect the highest individual need rather than the total combined hours.

Example:

A provider has received 4 Shared ECCE/Shared NCS awards:

4 children attend

- Child A - 15 hours
- Child B - 12 hours
- Child C - 9 hours
- Child D – 9 hours

AIM additional resource assumption:

- 1 AIM Level 7 additional resource, based on the 15-hour registration.
- 1 AIM Level 7 additional resource, based on the 12-hour registration.

Child A who is attending 15 hours sets the first capitation level, and Child B who is attending 12 hours sets the second capitation level, so additional resources are aligned with this level rather than combining the hours of all children.

AIM additional resources are based on the highest attendance hours, not the total combined hours of all children.

How do I record children's attendance for AIM Level 7, ECCE and NCS compliance purposes? With the redesign of the AIM Level 7, service providers are no longer required to submit room or session-level details, nor individual daily hours.

Service providers are expected to use AIM Level 7 support allocations in a balanced and inclusive manner across their service.

However, services must continue to record and maintain accurate attendance records for children for compliance purposes. Attendance records may be reviewed as part of AIM Level 7 Compliance (CAR) checks, as well as ECCE and NCS compliance processes.

7. Reviews and changes

Temporary review process

- Until the online review functionality becomes available, submit reviews manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive.
- Select Programme: AIM Level 7.
- Select Request Type: Review.
- Select Request Type Detail: Standard.
- Allow sufficient time for manual review and continue to monitor the Early Years Hive for updates.

Can the decision be reviewed?

Yes. If a service provider believes the decision does not meet the needs of the child:

- A review can be requested.
- This applies to decisions relating to the child's approved AIM Level 7 Support Level, as outlined in Question 21 above.
- Any proposed changes must be submitted for review.
- Approval must be obtained from Pobal before any changes can be implemented.

Please note: [Review functionality for 2026/2027 AIM Level 7 applications will not be available on the Early Years Hive until October.](#) As a temporary measure until this functionality becomes available, reviews will be processed manually through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive. For Child Level reviews, if the service has already submitted an AIM Level 7 Confirmation Form, the service must withdraw that Confirmation Form and submit a new one. Please pay particular attention to the date on which the new support was approved, as this date should align with the withdrawal date of the previous Confirmation Form.

Services should not upload medical or clinical documents when submitting a review request through the Requests page on the Early Years Hive.

Please select the following categories on the Requests page:

- Programme: AIM Level 7
- Request Type: Review
- Request Type Detail: Standard

Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as all reviews are currently being processed manually. Please continue to monitor the Early Years Hive over the coming weeks for further updates.

What information should not be uploaded through the Requests page?

Do not upload medical or clinical documents, child reports or other documents containing sensitive personal information through the Requests page. Information relevant to the child should be attached directly to the child's Level 4 application where appropriate.

What is a child needs review?

Child needs reviews relate to the direct needs of the child, for example:

- The child's needs have changed, which may impact the support level awarded.
- Additional information has become available that may affect the support level awarded to the child. Service Providers should not attach child reports or any documentation containing sensitive personal information to requests submitted through the Early Years Hive. This information should be attached directly to the child's AIM Level 4 application.

To submit a child needs review request through the Early Years Hive, please select the following categories on the Requests page:

- Programme: AIM Level 7
- Request Type: Review
- Request Type Detail: Standard

Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as all reviews are currently being processed manually

What is a service needs review?

Service needs reviews relate to circumstances affecting the service provider, including:

- A service provider has received a shared support type for children, but the children are not attending the same ECCE and/or NCS sessions.
- A service provider has received a Shared Support type for children who are not attending the same ECCE and/or NCS sessions. Please Note: A request is not required where children have been awarded a Shared Support type and, for example, one attends an AM session and the other a PM session, as once ECCE registrations available on the system, these cases will be automatically identified.
- A service provider does not require all supports allocated.
- A service provider wishes to apply for Maintenance of Reduced Ratio.
- A service provider is unable to recruit AIM Level 7 additional resource.

To submit a child needs review request through the Early Years Hive, please select the following categories on the Requests page:

- Programme: AIM Level 7
- Request Type: Review
- Request Type Detail: Standard

Please allow sufficient time for your request to be reviewed and responded to, as **all reviews are being processed manually**.

What are the different types of service level reviews?

Service Need reviews relates to circumstances affecting a service provider. Service Need reviews can be broken down into four categories, as outlined below.

- **Additional resource:** A service provider may request additional AIM Level 7 funding where the standard shared-support allocation is insufficient to meet the service's needs.
- **Stop resource:** A service provider may request to decline AIM Level 7 funding where the allocated supports cannot be implemented within the funding provided.
- **Adjust hours:** A service provider may request an increase or decrease in AIM Level 7 funding where the current allocation is higher or lower than the service requires.

Change to use of capitation: A service provider may request to use AIM Level 7 funding to support a Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement instead of employing an AIM Level 7 resource. Where a maintenance of reduced ratio review is approved, a service provider must reduce the room ratio by a minimum of three children. Only one Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement can be approved and used in a room at any one time. AIM Level 7 resources may also be used in the same room, but there can only be one Maintenance of Reduced Ratio arrangement in place.

When submitting a review request through the Early Years Hive, service providers must include a clear rationale explaining the reason for the request. Any changes to the use of the approved use of Level 7 capitation awarded must be agreed in conjunction with a child's parents /legal guardian/carers.

8. Information for parents/legal guardians/carers

What should I tell parents or guardians who are concerned about delays in AIM Level 7 for 2026/2027?

The redesigned AIM Level 7 confirmation form is now available on the Early Years Hive. Service providers who have submitted an AIM Level 4 application indicated that they wish to avail of AIM Level 7 support for the 2026/2027 programme call must now submit the confirmation form to confirm that they still wish to receive AIM Level 7 supports.

The role of the Early Years Specialist continues to involve working in partnership with the service provider, parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s), and other professionals to develop an inclusive learning environment that supports the child in the Early Learning and Care setting. Please note, as part of the AIM Level 4 application process, an Early Years Specialist may contact the child's parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s) to discuss the information submitted in the application form as usual.

What does it mean if my child has been approved for AIM Level 7?

Approval for AIM Level 7 means your child has been identified as needing additional support within their early learning and care setting. To access this support, a service provider must submit an AIM Level 7 confirmation form. Once the AIM Level 7 Confirmation form has been processed, the child's awarded support level will be considered for funding subject to the required programme restrictions.

Where a child has been awarded a support level and has an active ECCE and NCS registration, support will be processed automatically following the submission of the AIM Level 7 confirmation form.

The type and level of support provided will depend on the support level awarded to your child.

If a service provider does not require all the support awarded, they must submit a request through the Early Years Hive to advise of this. For example, a child may require support during ECCE hours but not during NCS hours.

What is the difference between Individual and Shared support?

The difference between 'Individual' and 'Shared' support is 'Individual' support is assigned to a specific child and 'Shared' support is allocated across multiple children up to a maximum of three children.

9. New service providers, guidance and definitions

I am a new provider and unfamiliar with AIM. What should I do if I think a child may need Level 7 support?

New service providers should follow the same process as all others. If you believe a child in your service may require AIM Level 7 support for the 2026/2027 programme call in collaboration with the child's parent(s)/legal guardian(s)/carer(s), you should submit an AIM Level 4 application and an AIM Level 7 Confirmation form. As part of the AIM Level 4 process an Early Years Specialist will contact you by phone and you can indicate your interest in AIM Level 7 support during this call.

Please note: AIM Level 7 funding is dependent on the submission of the Confirmation Form, a valid ECCE registration, and a confirmed NCS claim. This ensures that support and funding are only processed where a service provider confirms that AIM Level 7 support is still required.

Where can I access guidance or training?

Support is available through AIM guidance materials available on the Early Years Hive and the Early Years Provider Centre.

What is ECCE and NCS ?

- ECCE (Early Childhood Care and Education): The ECCE Programme is a universal free programme available to all children within the eligible age range.
- NCS (National Childcare Scheme): A scheme providing financial support towards childcare costs outside of the ECCE session.

Does a child need a formal diagnosis to access AIM Level 7?

No. A formal diagnosis is not required to access support under AIM Level 7.

- Continue to monitor the Early Years Hive for updates.