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## **Childcare Scheme Is Attracting More Clare Parents**

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The local T.D. said the release of preliminary figures from the second annual return of the CCSS shows that the increase is occurring due to the opening of additional services, and an increase in the number of children attending existing community services.

The CCSS subvents the fees charged to disadvantaged and lower income parents in the 20% of crèches and pre-schools in the not-for-profit sector. In total, the CCSS subsidises childcare costs in 865 community based childcare services.

According to Minister Killeen, “The CCSS subsidises childcare costs for low paid and disadvantaged parents in community-based not for profit childcare facilities, of which there are a number in County Clare. I am delighted to report that the number of families benefiting from the scheme is increasing on a monthly basis, due to the opening of additional services, and an increase in the number of children attending existing community services’.

Key points in the CCSS return are: the number of places availed of in the scheme had increased by 20% since November 2007; quality indicators, including salary levels and child to staff ratios, show a high level of service; and parental fees remain well below those in the commercial sector.

Minister Killeen commented, “The cost of childcare is also important and by using tiered fees, CCSS services make childcare more affordable for all in the community, regardless of economic circumstances. The increase in funding for CCSS services is up from EUR37m in 2007, to over EUR50m in 2008, and has substantially reduced the average fees paid by parents.”

He added, “The current average fee is EUR83 per child, per week, starting from an average of EUR40 for the most disadvantaged parents, EUR70 to EUR95 for lower income working families, and EUR140 for middle and upper income parents. This compares favourably with the national average weekly childcare fee of EUR174 per child, per week, found by the National Children’s Nurseries Association in a recent survey. Fees in community services are based on the cost price (79% of which are staff costs), less CCSS subvention. These costs are projected to rise by an average of EUR12 per week in 2009, keeping them well below the market rate, even for middle and upper income parents.”

‘I am also pleased to see that the quality of the experience children have in these CCSS services is second to none. This is clearly assisted by staffing ratios, which exceed the already excellent standards set down in the Childcare (Pre-School) Services Regulations,’ concluded Minister Killeen.