In accordance with section 42A of the Industrial Relations Act 1946 (No. 26 of 1946), the Early Years' Joint Labour Committee submits to the Labour Court the final proposals it formulated on 19th October 2026.

The proposal provides for the making of an Employment Regulation Order fixing the statutory minimum remuneration and conditions of employment of Early Years Educators, School Age Childcare (SAC) Practitioners, Appointed Lead Educators (Room Leaders), Graduate Appointed Lead Educators (Room Leaders), Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinators, Graduate Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinators, Deputy/Assistant Managers, Centre Managers and Graduate Centre Managers.

PART I

1. Commencement

1. (1) This Order shall come into operation on the date on which it is signed by the Minister. The minimum remuneration and conditions of employment prescribed by Employment Regulation Order S.I. No. 477 of 2025 and Employment Regulation Order S.I. No. 478 of 2025 shall continue to apply until immediately before that date. The minimum remuneration and conditions of employment prescribed by this Order shall apply on and from that date.

2. Interpretation

2. (1) In this Order, unless the context otherwise requires —

"Act of 2000" means the National Minimum Wage Act 2000 (No. 5 of 2000);

"Act of 1946" means the Industrial Relations Act 1946 (No. 26 of 1946);

"Act of 1990" means the Industrial Relations Act 1990 (No. 19 of 1990);

"Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader)" means a worker who is wholly or mainly in direct contact with children, is involved in their education or care or both, has responsibility for the education and care of a group of children, and leads practice with that group;

"Graduate Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader)" means an Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader) who has attained a minimum QQI Level 7 qualification, or an equivalent qualification, approved by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality;

"Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator" means a worker who falls within the definition of "Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader)";

"Graduate Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator" means an Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator who has attained a minimum QQI Level 7 qualification, or an equivalent qualification, approved by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality;

"Centre Manager" means a worker who is the primary designated person in charge of the service, carries out its day-to-day management duties and responsibilities, and may also work directly with children;

"Graduate Centre Manager" means a Centre Manager who has attained a minimum QQI Level 7 qualification, or an equivalent qualification, approved by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality;

"Deputy/Assistant Manager" means a worker appointed by the employer to support the Centre Manager and who may also undertake one or more of the following duties:

(a) working directly with children in addition to undertaking day-to-day managerial duties and responsibilities;
(b) deputising as the person in charge of the service in the absence of the Centre Manager;

(c) being wholly or mainly engaged in supporting the Centre Manager with the day-to-day management duties and responsibilities of the service

"Early Years Educator" means a worker who is wholly or mainly in direct contact with children and is involved in their education or care;

"School Age Childcare (SAC) Practitioner" means a worker who falls within the definition of "Early Years Educator";

"Employment Regulation Order S.I. No. 477 of 2025" means the Employment Regulation (Amendment) Order (Early Years' Service Joint Labour Committee) Order No. 1 2025 (S.I. No. 477 of 2025);

"Employment Regulation Order S.I. No. 478 of 2025" means the Employment Regulation (Amendment) Order (Early Years' Service Joint Labour Committee) Order No. 2 2025 (S.I. No. 478 of 2025);

"Employer" means a person who employs one or more workers to whom this Order applies in an Early Years' Service falling within the sector described in the Schedule to the Establishment Order;

"Establishment Order" means S.I. No. 292 of 2021 — Early Years' Service Joint Labour Committee Establishment Order 2021;

"Minister" means the Minister for Enterprise, Tourism and Employment;

"Remuneration" has the meaning assigned to it by section 42A (7) of the Act of 1946;

"Worker" has the meaning assigned to it by section 23(1) of the Act of 1990;

"Working Hours" means all hours during which a worker performs work for the employer, including contact hours with children, non-contact hours and time spent undertaking training that is required or approved by the employer and connected with the worker's duties;

Unless the contrary intention appears, a word or expression defined in the Establishment Order has the same meaning in this Order.

PART II

3. Workers to whom this order applies

3. (1) This Order applies to a worker employed in any of the following capacities: Early Years Educator; School Age Childcare (SAC) Practitioner; Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader); Graduate Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader); Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator; Graduate Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator; Deputy/Assistant Manager; Centre Manager; or Graduate Centre Manager.

PART III

4. Minimum hourly rate of remuneration

4. (1) Subject to paragraphs 4(2) and 4(3) of this Order and section 48A of the Act of 1946, an employer shall remunerate a worker to whom this Order applies, in respect of all Working Hours, at the applicable rate specified in subparagraphs (i) to (vi):

(i) Early Years Educator and School Age Childcare (SAC) Practitioner — €16.00 per hour
(ii) Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader) and Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator — €17.00 per hour
(iii) Graduate Appointed Lead Educator (Room Leader) and Graduate Appointed School Age Childcare (SAC) Coordinator — €18.60 per hour
(iv) Deputy/Assistant Manager — €19.20 per hour
(v) Centre Manager — €20.20 per hour
(vi) Graduate Centre Manager — €21.55 per hour

4. (2) Prescription of percentages of hourly rate of remuneration

A worker who—

(a) has not attained the age of 18 years shall be remunerated by his or her employer at a rate of not less than 70 per cent of the applicable rate specified in subparagraphs 4 (1) (i) to (vi);

(b) is 18 years of age shall be remunerated by his or her employer at a rate of not less than 80 per cent of the applicable rate specified in subparagraphs 4 (1) (i) to (vi); and

(c) is 19 years of age shall be remunerated by his or her employer at a rate of not less than 90 per cent of the applicable rate specified in subparagraphs 4 (1) (i) to (vi).

4. (3) Pro-rata entitlement to minimum hourly rate of pay for less than one hour

Where a worker works for less than one full hour, the remuneration payable by his or her employer under this Part shall be calculated pro rata by reference to the applicable hourly rate specified in paragraph 4(1).

4. (4) Computation of Remuneration

Any reference in this Part to remuneration shall be construed as a reference to the amount obtained or to be obtained by the worker from his or her employer before any deduction in respect of any matter whatsoever, except any deductions lawfully made under any enactment for the time being in force requiring or authorising deductions to be made from remuneration.

PART IV

5. Bullying, Harassment, Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures

5. (1) The following Codes of Practice provide practical guidance and establish relevant standards of conduct for employers and workers in Ireland:

S.I. No. 169 of 1993 — Industrial Relations Act 1990, Code of Practice on Employee Representatives (Declaration) Order 1993.

S.I. No. 146 of 2000 — Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Code of Practice on Grievance and Disciplinary Procedures) (Declaration) Order 2000.

S.I. No. 208 of 2012 — Employment Equality Act 1998 (Code of Practice) (Harassment) Order 2012.

S.I. No. 463 of 2015 — Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Code of Practice on Victimisation) (Declaration) Order 2015.

S.I. No. 674 of 2020 — Industrial Relations Act 1990 (Code of Practice for Employers and Employees on the Prevention and Resolution of Bullying at Work) Order 2020.

S.I. No. 159 of 2021 — Workplace Relations Act 2015 (Workplace Relations Commission Code of Practice on the Right to Disconnect) Order 2021.

PART V

6. Existing Contracts and Agreements

6. (1) Nothing in this Order shall operate to reduce any remuneration or other term or condition of employment provided for in an existing contract or collective agreement where that remuneration, term or condition is more favourable to the worker than the equivalent minimum entitlement prescribed by this Order.