



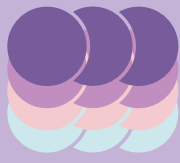
COSLA

Getting In Early

*Local Government's Role
in Delivering Early Learning
and Childcare*



Overview



Scotland's 32 local authorities, together with their partners, play a central role in the design and delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services across our communities.

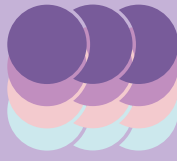
The earliest years of a child's life are crucial, and the evidence demonstrates the significant impact that high quality ELC can have in the lives of children and their families, both in the short and long-term.

Working in close partnership with Scottish Government and ELC providers in the private and third sector, Scotland's councils have successfully rolled out the increased entitlement to 1140 hours of funded ELC for all 3 and 4-year-olds, and eligible 2 year-olds, in Scotland, providing positive opportunities for play, learning and development.

Through this key intervention, local authorities and their partners are helping to secure a positive start in life for the youngest in our communities: laying the foundations for improved outcomes, contributing to closing the attainment gap, and ultimately supporting all our children to fulfil their potential.

At the same time, patterns of funded ELC provision have been established following detailed consultation with parents and carers, with expanded hours able to support families through reducing household costs, at a time when many are struggling due to the impacts of the costs crisis, and enabling parents to work, train and study.

Expansion to 1140 hours of funded ELC



Policy Framework

Since August 2021, all 3 and 4-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds have been able to access up to 1,140 hours of funded ELC per year, which equates to around 30 hours a week during term-time. This represents a near doubling of the previous entitlement (600 hours). Every child attending a funded ELC session can also access a free meal.

This is delivered under the Funding Follows the Child policy framework, which was jointly agreed by Scottish Government and COSLA. The key guiding principles for the model are:

- **Quality** – Quality is at the heart of the 1140 offer. All providers delivering funded hours have to meet the National Standard, which sets out clear and consistent quality criteria. This provides reassurance to parents and carers that any provider delivering funded hours is able to offer their child a high quality experience.
- **Flexibility** – Under the ‘provider neutral’ approach, parents and carers can access their child’s funded entitlement from any provider (including in the public, private, third and childminding sectors) that meets the National Standard, has a place available and is willing to enter into a contract with their local authority.
- **Accessibility** – ELC capacity should be as sufficient and as conveniently geographically located as possible – particularly in areas of higher deprivation and in rural communities – to support families and enable parents and carers to work, train and study, while also meeting the needs of children who require additional support and parents who request Gaelic-medium ELC.
- **Affordability** – The increased access to affordable ELC helps reduce barriers to participating in the labour market which parents and carers face.

The Role of Local Authorities

Flexibility & Choice – Local authorities ensure that the funded entitlement to 1140 hours is available to all eligible children in their area. Under Funding Follows the Child, local authorities are the 'key enabler of flexibility and choice' – and work to ensure that there is a range of options for families in their area. These patterns of provision are developed by local authorities in line with the fundings of consultation with parents and carers to inform their local offerings.

Quality – Local authorities are the 'guarantor of quality', ensuring funded providers are able to meet the National Standard, through meaningful partnership working, including providing support for improvement and monitoring compliance against the National Standard.

Supporting funded providers – Councils set and pay sustainable rates, with average rates paid to providers for 3-5 year olds receiving funded ELC increasing by around 57% between 2017 and 2022. Local authorities also offer a range of additional support packages for funded partners – this can include providing access to training, professional learning and qualifications; quality visits and a range of quality improvement support; business and financial support; IT systems and operational support; guidance and advice from central teams including Additional Support Needs and Educational Psychology teams; and sharing information and facilitating the sharing of best practice.

Key Successes



Partnership and Joined-up Working

The successful rollout and ongoing delivery of the 1140 offer has been built on close joint working between Local and Scottish Government. The expansion has been underpinned by the Funding Follows the Child policy framework, including the National Standard, as well as a multi-year funding agreement which were all jointly agreed by COSLA and Scottish Government.

Partnership working with ELC providers in the private, independent, third and childminding sectors has also been, and continues to be, central to the success of the expansion. Thanks to partnerships with ELC providers across the country at local authority level, parents and carers are able to access their child's funded hours at a diverse range of types of settings, which cater to a range of needs and preferences and provide high-quality experiences for children – including local authority nursery classes, private, independent or third-sector nurseries, playgroups, family centres, and childminders.

As well as delivering ELC provision, local authorities provide a wide range of other support and services for their communities – including employability, income maximisation and financial advice, transport, housing, and social work and care. Councils work hard to ensure that joined-up approaches between services are implemented, to ensure that children and families receive all the support they need.



Financial Inclusion in East Ayrshire

In academic year 2021-22, the Financial Inclusion Team in East Ayrshire ran a Schools Pathfinder project that saw a Financial Inclusion Officer based within a secondary school, Loudoun Academy, to support families with children and young people in the school, as well as the primary schools and the five early learning centres within that school cluster.

The aim of the project is to tackle the effects of child poverty at the earliest possible stage of a child's development, to give the child the best opportunity possible to achieve their potential. It is a holistic service, with team members addressing a range of issues from social security

benefits to entitlement of education based benefits, with referrals made to a range of partner organisations including Citizens Advice, Lemon Aid Fuels Poverty Services as well as other in-house Financial Inclusion Employability and In Court Advice services when required.

Launched in September 2021, to the end of the academic year the project generated financial gains of £140,887.77 for families. From April 2023, the project is now being rolled out to all seven secondary school clusters (covering 36 early learning centres) in East Ayrshire for a one year period.

Case Study

Ms X lived with her partner and both had children from previous relationships who had health challenges. Ms X was also a Kinship Carer looking after her nephew.

The Financial Inclusion Officer (FIO) undertook a benefit check and identified that only one carer's element had been included in the family's Universal Credit claim despite circumstances having been correctly reported to DWP at time of the couple's joint claim. The FIO also identified that the nephew for whom Ms X is the kinship carer had been considered as a 'looked after' child which meant that no child element was included in their UC assessment. The FIO contacted social work and obtained a letter confirming that the legal status of the child had changed to 'not looked after' that meant that the child element of UC could be paid for the nephew.

Both elements were backdated to the date of the joint claim, resulting in a monthly increase of UC by £413.39 and a backdated payment of £2,066.95.

The FIO also identified Ms X had health challenges of her own and has supported her to claim Adult Disability Payment whilst a claim for Carers Allowance was also identified which Ms X wanted to make in her next UC assessment period, decisions for which are currently awaited. The FIO also identified a potential review of the Child Disability Payment made on behalf of Ms X's son which will be undertaken once the child turns 3 years old.

Increasing Uptake

Uptake of the 1140 offer has been high to date, with Improvement Service data demonstrating both increases in the numbers of children accessing funded ELC, as well as increases in the proportion of children accessing the full 1140 hours entitlement.

In August 2021, the month the 1140 entitlement took effect, there were 90,890 2-5 year olds accessing funded ELC. Of these, 87% were taking the full 1140 hours. In September 2022, there were 93,902 2-5 year olds accessing funded ELC, representing a 3% year-on-year increase. The proportion of these taking the full 1140 hours increased to 89%.

With regards to eligible 2-year olds, in August 2021, there were 5,954 2 year olds accessing funded ELC. Of these, 72% were taking the full 1140 hours. In September 2022, there were 6,188 2-year olds accessing funded ELC, representing a 4% year-on-year increase. The proportion of those taking the full 1140 hours increased to 83%.



Dumfries and Galloway – Terrific Twos Campaign

To increase the number of eligible two year olds taking up their entitlement to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC), Dumfries and Galloway Council have a four-week e-newsletter and social media campaign which is promoted four times each year via their Gov Delivery system.

In the first week of the campaign an overview of the entitlement is provided for families which includes a short video, drawn from the Parent Club site, in which a parent talks about the opportunity the extended hours will provide for her child. In week two the campaign focuses on the benefits of attending ELC for children including the skills they will be developing as they learn through play. In week three the campaign focuses on the benefits of ELC for parents, which may enable them to work, train or study and the help ELC provides for supporting their child's learning at home. Week four provides a summary of the benefits of the entitlement. Each post includes links to the Parent Club website and to Dumfries and Galloway Council's webpage for further information about eligibility and the different ways in which families may apply.

The engagement rate for the campaign is above the average rate of engagement the council usually receives.

The campaign information is also accessible through Dumfries and Galloway's NHS Grow Well app which provides a variety of support and information for parents and families with children under five. The health visiting team also promote the entitlement when they visit households. When Financial Wellbeing and Revenue colleagues in the Council make contact with families who have an eligible two year old they also promote the entitlement.

Over time, Dumfries and Galloway Council have seen the number of eligible two year olds accessing ELC gradually increase. Currently around 57% of eligible children take up a place with 47% taking up the full hours.

Workforce Growth

The 1140 expansion has also led to the creation of thousands of high-quality jobs across Scotland. [Improvement Service data](#) demonstrates the substantial increases in the local authority ELC workforce specifically since pre-1140 expansion. As of September 2022, local authorities across Scotland reported an ELC workforce of 18,116 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). When compared to the total local authority ELC workforce in academic year 2016/17, there has been an increase of 8,540 FTE – an increase of 89% from 9,576 FTE in academic year 2016/17.

It is clear that an important wider benefit of the 1140 expansion has been significant increases in stable, high quality and well-paid job opportunities across local communities in Scotland.



Childminder Recruitment

The childminding workforce in Scotland has declined significantly in recent years, and recognising that this was more pronounced in remote and rural areas, the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) established the **Scottish Rural Childminding Partnership (SRCP)** in March 2022. This was led by SCMA with financial support from Highlands & Islands Enterprise, South of Scotland Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Government and delivered in partnership with 10 remote and rural local authorities (Argyll & Bute, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar, Dumfries & Galloway, Highlands, Moray, North Ayrshire, Orkney Islands, Scottish Borders, Shetland Islands and Stirling Councils). The pilot aimed to recruit 100 new childminders where they were most needed and test a demographically-targeted recruitment campaign and supported childminder recruitment model. To date, 43 new childminders have now completed the registration process with the Care Inspectorate, a further 10 are currently completing this process and another 6 are still to apply for registration. Of those who have completed registration, 39 new childminding businesses have been established and are providing much-needed childminding services to local communities, including in areas which have previously not had childminders or in which recruitment has been very challenging.

The emerging results from the SRCP pilot attracted considerable interest from local authorities in urban and mixed areas of Scotland. This led to the launch of the **Scottish Childminding Partnership (SCP)** in February 2023 which aims to recruit another 115 childminders, apply learning from the SRCP pilot and to test the application of this supported childminder recruitment model in larger, more densely populated urban areas while undertaking some targeted rural follow-up. The SCP pilot is led by SCMA and based on a participative model in which all partners contribute funding (the Scottish Government, the City of Edinburgh, Glasgow and Dundee Councils, East Renfrewshire Council, Dumfries & Galloway Council and Highlands Council).

Parents' and Carers' Satisfaction

In December 2022 Scottish Government published "[Parents views and use of early learning and childcare in Scotland, 2022](#)". This presents the findings of an independent survey of parents and carers which received more than 8,000 responses. The document indicates very high levels of satisfaction and positive experiences amongst respondents, including in relation to flexibility, accessibility, and quality of ELC provision. Key findings include:

- 97% of parents and carers with a three to five-year-old and 86% of those with an eligible two-year-old said they had accessed funded ELC places since August 2021.
- Almost all parents (97%) were satisfied with the quality of their main provider, including 70% of parents who were very satisfied.
- 88% of those with a three to five-year-old and 92% of those with a two year old were satisfied that they could use their funded ELC hours in a way that meets their family's needs.
- In terms of accessibility, 97% of parents of three to five year olds and 95% of parents of eligible two year olds saying they found it easy to travel to their funded ELC provider.

Wider Childcare Delivery

Local authorities, either directly or through working with partner organisations, also have targeted offers of childcare support for families in need of further support in their area. In 2021 and 2022, councils received additional funding from Scottish Government to deliver summer holiday activity, childcare and food programmes for school age children in their areas. The [evaluation](#) of the 2022 Summer Programme notes a number of positive impacts for participating children and families:

- **Children and Young People** – Children and young people enjoyed the activities they took part in, including outdoor activities, and experienced a number of wellbeing benefits, including: feeling happy; increased confidence; having a routine; feeling calm and relaxed; improved mental health and gaining independence. Spending time with friends or making new friends was also important – for some children and young people this was the best part.
- **Parents and carers** – evidence suggests the Programme helped working parents continue to work or made it easier to do so (although this depended on timing of activities and practical factors), as well as providing parents valuable respite time. Parents described ways in which the Programme increased their own wellbeing, including peace of mind; improved family relationships; having routine and structure; and mental health benefits from joining in with activities or trips themselves.

Next Steps



Local Government is committed to continuing to work closely with our partners to strengthen childcare provision in Scotland, to support the best possible experiences and outcomes for children and their families. Key next steps include:

- Progressing a range of work to strengthen the 1140 offer, including the ongoing joint Scottish Government and COSLA review of sustainable rate-setting processes, the review of the Funding Follows the Child Guidance and the supporting implementation of a shared inspection framework. This work will ensure that guidance documentation is up to date and fit for purpose, to support successful delivery of the 1140 entitlement in the current context.
- Continuing to support links between ELC and other local services, to ensure joined-up approaches are taken to ensure children and families can access all the support they need.
- Working closely with Scottish Government and other partners as wider plans around the expansion of funded childcare are progressed, supporting strong collaboration at all stages of development.



COSLA
 Verity House
 19 Haymarket Yards
 Edinburgh
 EH12 5BH

Visit www.cosla.gov.uk/about-cosla
 to learn more about our approach, our
 decision making, and our teams

COSLA

info@cosla.gov.uk
 @COSLA
 facebook.com/CofSLA