



Education: Early Years



Helensburgh and Lomond – ELC provision survey

Argyll and Bute Council's Early Years team recently carried out a survey to seek views on the effectiveness of our provision and delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in the Helensburgh and Lomond (HL) area.

The survey was open to anyone with a requirement for ELC in the HL area, and was open for two weeks, from 29 November – 13 December 2024.

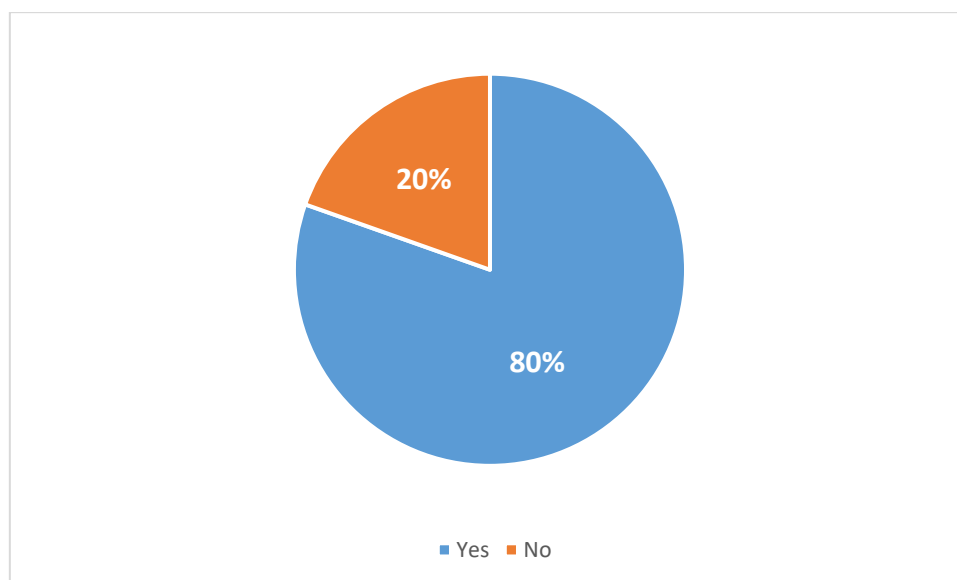
HL has 26 funded ELC Providers (childminders, voluntary, private and local authority settings).

97 responses were made.

Thank you to everyone who took time to complete the survey and provide comments.

We asked: Are you happy with the choice of ELC settings available in the Helensburgh and Lomond area? (ie Local Authority settings, Partner Nursery and Partner Childminder settings)

You said: 80% are happy with choice of ELC settings available.



Those expressed unhappiness were asked to comment further:

“There aren’t enough options for parents who work early and later than 9am-3pm”

“We live in Arrochar and found that the Arrochar Pre-5 to be unable to meet my children's needs or offer the right support. We are now hopefully enrolling him in the Helensburgh nursery after Christmas”

“Quite a few have very bad opinions on from other parents and the ones that are ‘good’ have a long waitlist etc.”

“There are not enough registered childminders in the area”

“Limited availability at selected nurseries”

“Every nursery is oversubscribed, finding a space was very hard work”

“Hours offered locally”

“Working in Glasgow, and the opening hours of the local ELC settings make it impossible really for my child to attend a nursery local to his home. As I cannot drop off and pick up within the designated hours and still make my work hours. It would be good to have a nursery with longer opening hours. In addition a nursery with good outdoor space is essential. His current nursery, which attends Monday-Wednesday (East Dunbartonshire) has great outdoor space. Also his childminder who is local has great outdoor space”

“There is no local authority provision in Central Helensburgh. My child's catchment school is Hermitage Primary but I either need to send him to a funded place in a private nursery (which will cost me money as this incurs other costs) or a local authority nursery at another school which isn’t within walking distance”

“I believe there should be an ELC offering 1140 hours available at Hermitage Primary”

“Not enough spaces”

“Massive waiting lists for the nurseries. I signed my son up when I was pregnant”

“Not enough options and hard to get in without having them on waiting lists months prior to start dates especially when the child is under 3. Not enough options for under 3s”

“High demand for nursery spaces - Hermitage Primary’s derelict land would be great to build a nursery/ pre-school”

“Not enough provisions for under 2s”

“Too many children, not enough spaces at current”

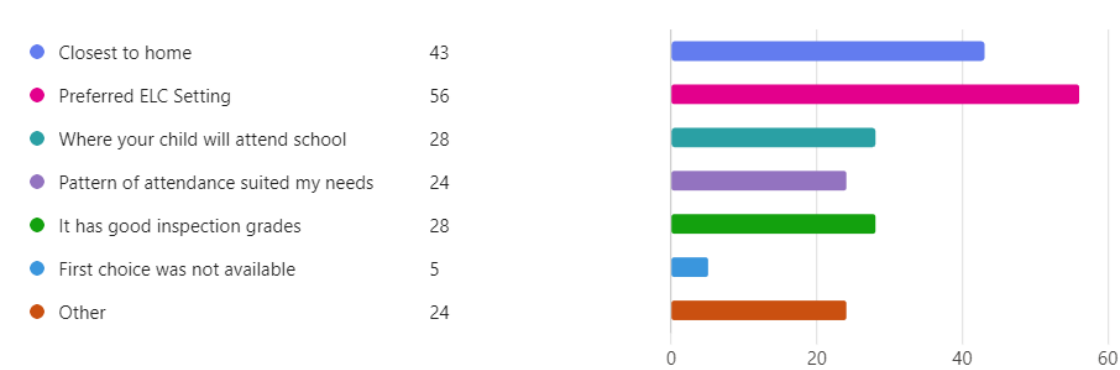
“Many of the local settings play around with the provision resulting in parents having to pay regardless of not using their full allocation. Drumfork is the only one that doesn't do this AND provides service outwith school hours. Choices are very limited for working parents on a tight budget”

“No wraparound care available at Cardross ELC and very limited childminder availability”

“Not enough places for children so there is no control over where your child is placed”

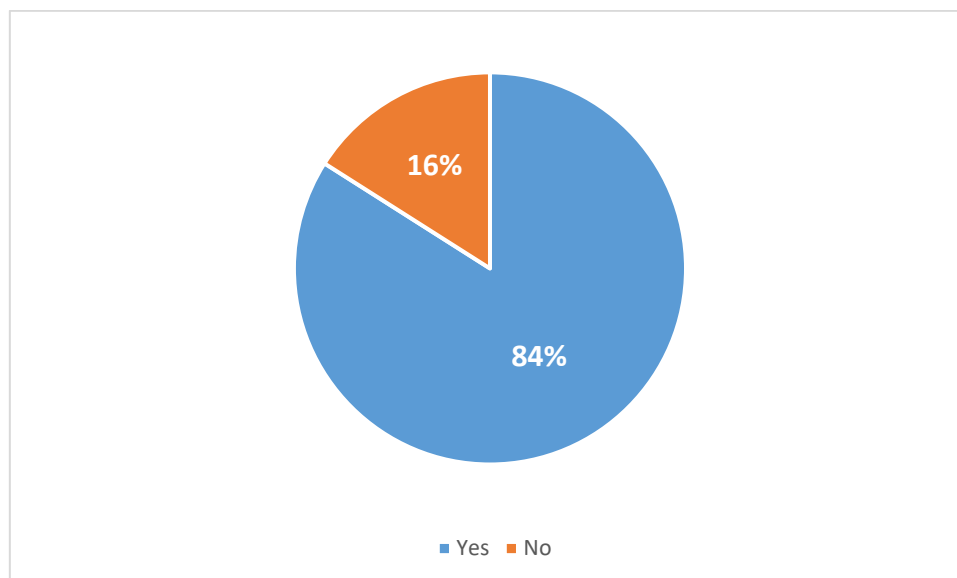
We asked: Why did you choose to register your child at your chosen ELC setting (with the option to select as many options as you liked)?

You said: The top reasons were closest to home, preferred ELC setting and a tie for where your child will attend school and good inspection grades.



We asked: Does the pattern of attendance on offer meet your needs? Pattern of attendance is the number of weeks your child attends their ELC setting and the number of hours offered per day/week, e.g. 38 weeks, 6 hours per day.

You said: 84% of respondents said that the pattern of attendance on offer meets their needs.



Those who expressed that the pattern of attendance did not meet their needs, were asked to comment further:

“Arrochar pre-5 kept pushing for full time which I think made my child more anxious”

“Only school hours (on offer)”

“Nursery hours are 0900-1500. I would prefer hours be allocated to what suits the parent. For me that would be 0900-1700. So if my child went Monday-Thursday I wouldn’t have to pay for After school club which starts at 1500-1700 and costs £25 a day. That’s £125 for a 5 day week and monthly cost of £500”

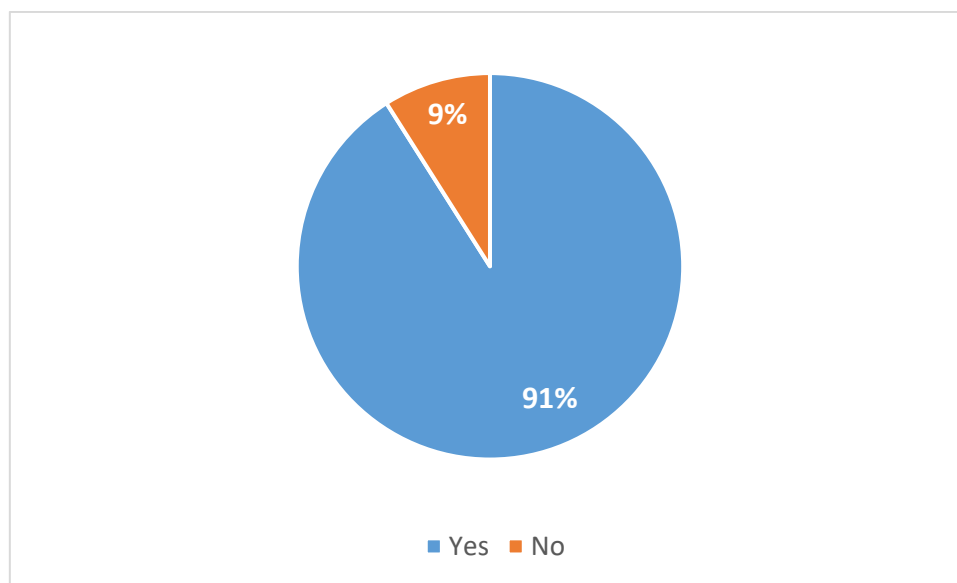
“There’s no option for half days therefore all funded hours are used over 3 days even when the child is not in for those hours”

“The nursery have recently refused to take my child during the holidays which has resulted in a lot of problems for me”

“It does not fit with my working hours (9-5) and no offer of any (paid for) cover during the holidays. Local childminders also don’t take pre-school children in holidays. Myself and my partner can only have 2 weeks annual leave taken together through the year and even still we are miles off covering holidays. Supplementing with (unpaid) parental leave and family favours”

We asked: Do you believe you have been treated with equity and fairness in relation to the provision of ELC?

You said: 91% of respondents said that they have been treated with equity and fairness in relation to the provision of ELC.



If you wish to follow this up and discuss please contact our Customer Service Centre on 01546 605522 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

We asked: Are there any comments you wish to add in relation to ELC in the Helensburgh and Lomond area?

You said:

"The staff are wonderful, wouldn't want my children anywhere else!"

"Garelochhead ELCC are committed to a high standard of care and learning. Their input into my child's quality of life and experiences in his community are well planned and appreciated by myself and family. They are always responsive and supportive"

"I think they should have options at lunch instead of just one meal as if don't like it it's a very long day without food"

"The Arrochar pre-5 needs younger staff with more recent education in early education and childcare"

"There are very few options for wraparound childcare in this age group. I would love my child to attend her ELC 5 days but there just isn't any wraparound to allow me to work. Even private nursery options are very difficult to come by - I couldn't get her registered with one in Helensburgh and Lomond so she attends one in Dumbarton"

"The staff are amazing, my little boy is so happy there and I believe it's down to them"

“I think ELC provision is ok I think the issue is probably more in wrap around hours and full time provision to allow parents to work”

“There was a point that it looked like Kanga Rhu would close down. This would have meant that my two children who attend there wouldn't be able to go to nursery as I don't drive and with two other kids in school I didn't have the time nor did I have the money to take them elsewhere. Kanga Rhu is vital to the area and on top of that the best nursery any of my children have attended”

“There needs to be more private hours available for babies and children under 3 to support working parents”

“I believe there to be discrimination by age of child as some children get provision of free funded hours from the week after they turn 3. Other not until the next term after they turn 3. And also some do not get funded till they join school due to them reaching 5 years old months before the first school term”

“Would be good if funding started earlier as per other parts of the UK”

“It's very hit and miss, speaking to friends. My children are at Drumfork and we are happy but the fee increases are outwith any pay rise we are in receipt of, along with rises in cost of everything. I also feel strongly that the nursery needs to split the 3-5.5 year olds, currently my 3 and 4.5 year old are in the same room despite a big difference in needs and ability. I also feel we haven't been given enough support with the decision to defer, and assurance of how the nursery will cater to my eldest child and ensure she remains actively learning and engaged. I have also not heard anything about their partnership with the local schools”

“There is not enough capacity. I was lucky because I registered my child before they were born and got the location and days I needed. Others have struggled. It would be good also to see funded hours extended like they have in England- given we already pay more tax here, it is disappointing that the rollout hasn't been extended to Scotland yet”

“Desperately need another Nursery or more spaces available at our current Nurseries. The waiting lists are extremely long for under 3s”

“All ready commented in previous sections. I really appreciate my childminder who is local. As prior to my son turning 3 this year, there were no childcare settings in my local area which he could attend under 3. She does an amazing job and my son loves going to her. More under 3 childcare provision would be awesome”

As a result of the feedback received

We Will:

- Investigate opportunities to increase wraparound hours at existing providers
- We are always looking to increase the number of childminders offering funded ELC across the Authority and Helensburgh and Lomond is no exception
- Address any specific concerns raised with individual settings
- Feedback positive comments to individual settings