Education Service: Early Years

Early Learning and Childcare: Information for Parents



Early Years

AMBITION EQUITY RESILIENCE THRIVING TOGETHER

The term ‘Early Learning and Childcare’ is used in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This term has been used in place of Pre-School Education in recognition of this. The abbreviation 'ELC' (Early Learning and Childcare) will be used throughout this document. Throughout this guidance, the word ‘parent’ should be interpreted as including the child’s carer or legal guardian.

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Introduction

Argyll and Bute Early Years would like to welcome you and your child as you take your first steps into Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

The provision of a good quality Early Learning and Childcare experience builds on the valuable learning that takes place in and around the home before children start Primary School. It develops learning and skills that they will rely on for life.

This booklet is intended to help you and your child get the most out of the ELC experience by answering the most frequently asked questions we receive. Full details on the Council's policy on early learning and childcare are contained in the Education Management Circular available on the website.

Funded ELC Entitlement



All eligible children are entitled to receive 1140 hours of funded ELC (pro rata), over a minimum of 38 weeks within the school year.*

The increase to 1140 hours of ELC is intended to support child development, help close the attainment gap and provide high quality support to parents, enabling them to return to work, training or study. The design of the increase of ELC hours is based upon four key principals *(as outlined within A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland).*

Quality Flexibility Accessibility Affordability

As a parent you will have a variety of needs that shape your preference for how the funded hours are provided. The Early Years Team works closely with partner provider nurseries and local childminders, to try to ensure funded hours can be accessed in the way that best meets family's varying needs. This means that some settings offer patterns of provision that uses less hours a week, but across more weeks of the year.

**If your child's pattern doesn't fall over a proportionate amount of the ELC settings closure dates, your entitlement could run out sooner than the last day of the year as per the ELC model chosen. Children using 6 hours per day term time should not be affected.*

ELC Settings

There are a range of ELC settings across Argyll & Bute. As well as local authority managed nurseries, we work in partnership with a number of childminders and providers in the private, voluntary & independent sectors to increase the choice of high quality ELC options available to parents.

- 50 local authority settings based in primary schools, including 5 offering Gaelic provision.
- 4 standalone local authority settings
- 1 local authority outdoor nursery
- 19 partner nurseries, including 3 outdoor nurseries
- 17 partner childminders for eligible 2 year olds
- 14 partner childminders for eligible 3 and 4 year olds

All settings we work in partnership with meet the essential criteria as detailed in *A Blueprint for 2020 Funding Follows the Child and the National Standards for ELC Providers: Principles and Practice*

A full list of ELC settings can be found on our Childcare Provider search.

Where possible we have included details of hours and days that each ELC setting offers funded ELC, to allow you to find the best ELC setting to meet your needs.



Eligibility



If your child's 3rd birthday is between 1st March and the day before the first in-service day of the new school term (so they are 3 by the start of term), they will be eligible from the start of the August term.

If they turn 3 between the first in-service day of the new school term in August and 28th February, they will be eligible to start the Monday after their 3rd birthday.

Application Process

Registration week for ELC takes place online in January. You can find the application link during this time, on the Registering for ELC page.

Exact dates of registration week will be advertised via:

- Social networking sites
- Posters displayed in, libraries, community education offices, primary and secondary schools, private, voluntary and independent ELC settings

On the application form you will be asked to identify your first choice ELC setting. If you are choosing to access your funded hours across more than one ELC setting, there will be an option to choose a blended placement. Every effort will be made to meet your first preference but this will depend on the number of places available and on the admission priority of your application. If you do not gain a place at your first choice, we will be in contact by the end of March to ask for your second choice.

Please note that late applications (received the Monday after registration week onwards) will receive lower priority should your chosen setting be oversubscribed. If an application is incomplete (required documents aren't provided) this will also be classed as a late application, so:

Please remember that you will need your child's birth certificate to register them for funded ELC, as well as a proof of address letter (in your name).

Outcome of Application

If you wish to change the ELC setting you applied to after registration week, please note this will be classed as a late application at the new ELC setting (meaning lowest priority if the ELC setting was oversubscribed).

If there are not enough places at your chosen ELC setting a ballot will be held using the new application admission priorities of that setting (see Appendix 2 for local authority setting priorities). Partner ELC settings may follow their own admission priorities. If you are unsuccessful in the ballot for your preferred setting, Early Years will ask you for your 2nd choice or 3rd choice etc, until you are offered an ELC place (see Appendix 3 for ballot procedure).

Your chosen ELC setting will likely get in touch for further application details such as health information, over the course of Term 2.

However, official confirmation of your child's ELC placement will be sent by letter directly by Early Years. This is typically by the end of May, due to a number of processes that follow registration week.

Additional Year of ELC

Parents of children still aged 4 at the start of the school year (school commencement date) have the right for them to start primary school the following year instead, when they're 5. These children, with birth dates between the second day of term in August and the end of February, will automatically receive an additional year of funded ELC. For birth dates between March and the first day of term in August, an additional year of ELC will only be granted in cases warranting this at the discretion of Early Years.

For more information on an additional year of ELC, please visit the Useful Documents page on our website. You notify us of this request in your P1 registration week application – you still need to submit this.

If you are unsure about this decision your ELC setting will be able to help. Follow this, if you still have questions please contact Early Years.

Changing your ELC placement

Continuity is always seen as an important part of high quality ELC, therefore careful consideration should be given when changing your child's ELC placement. If you are on the waiting list for a local authority ELC setting, you will be contacted throughout the year if a space becomes available. ELC settings begin the space allocation process for the following academic year in December (see Appendix 1), so you should be contacted then if a space will be available from August.

Anyone wishing to take up a waiting list space, or make any change to their child's ELC placement, must provide 4 weeks' notice to their current ELC setting in writing (e.g. email). You should first check that the change you want can be accommodated. 4 weeks' notice can only be provided when both ELC settings are open, and the notice begins from the date when all ELC settings involved had been given notice. *4 weeks from the date notice was given, the current ELC placement as it was, will* ***end****. The next working day after this, the change requested can begin.*



4 weeks' notice cannot be given between 1st February – 19th March*, due to the registration process of new applications. *Please note changes can still occur in this time period, where notice was given by 31st January & 4 weeks in advance. In extenuating circumstances a request can be made to waive this.*

Children who will be leaving for P1, cannot change settings in the last month of the ELC model, even if the appropriate notice was provided. Children cannot switch ELC model (at the same ELC setting) in Term 3. This change would instead be from the start of the academic year.

A change to an ELC placement includes:

- Change of ELC setting
- Amending when hours are used or in/decreasing hours
- Changing days
- Beginning or ending a blended placement

Funded ELC for 2 year olds

Eligibility

Parents who meet the below criteria can enrol their 2 year old child for an ELC funded space:

Currently on one of these benefits:

- Income support
- Job seekers allowance (income based)
- Any income related element of employment and support allowance
- Incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance
- State pension credit
- Universal credit - where household earned income is £885 or less per month
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Care experience

- Parent who has experience of care
- Child with a parent-appointed guardian
- Child who has at any point since turning 2 been looked after by a local authority or subject of a kinship order.

Start date

2 year old children become eligible for funded ELC dependent on their month of birth as outlined below:

1st March – day before August term begins	August term
First day of August term – 31st December	January term
1st January – End of February	April term

Application Process

Applications can only be made when your child has turned 2.

1. Parent contacts Early Years and requests an application form.
2. Parent completes form in full and provides 2 supporting documents (birth certificate copy & proof of address letter) and evidence for the reason why they are eligible.
3. Parent sends application form back to Early Years.
4. Early Years confirms eligibility and establishes space at ELC setting by 1st, 2nd choice provided.

If you require support to fill out the forms please contact Early Years or speak to your Health Visitor.

Existing 2 year old ELC placements & 3 Year Old ELC registration week

Children currently accessing a 2 year old funded ELC space, who intend to remain at the same ELC setting for their 3 year old funded ELC, should **not** apply during registration week. Your ELC setting will be in touch to confirm your wishes in December.



Children currently accessing a 2 year old funded ELC space, who wish to change ELC settings for their 3 year old funded ELC, **should** apply during registration week according to advertised time scales.

Frequently Asked Questions

Please see below some common FAQs. More in depth FAQs, can be found on the Early Years FAQ Webpage.

What is an ELC model?

An ELC model is how hours will be offered across an academic year (1st August to 31st July). The most common model is a term time model where the 1140 hours of ELC entitlement are offered over 38 weeks (190 days of funded ELC). This means 30 hours are received a week with no hours received during school holidays.

Some ELC settings offer a year round model of funded ELC, such as 48 weeks (open for 240 days), and will set their own holiday dates for this. You can see what ELC model is offered by an ELC setting on their childcare provider page.

What do I do if I have a complaint?



If you have a complaint about your child's ELC talk it over with the Head Teacher or Manager. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction then contact the Early Years Team on 01369 708503 and they will discuss the matter with you, advise you on your options and if appropriate, where you should direct your complaint.

Is my child entitled to a funded lunch/meal?

If your child attends their setting for more than 4 hours over a day, and are in over a meal period, they will be entitled to a funded meal.

Is transport provided for ELC?

ELC provision has no entitlement to transport, unless in exceptional circumstances. Please read our transport leaflet found on the Useful Documents page on our website.

Can my child attend more than one Early Learning and Childcare setting (known as a blended placement)?

Argyll and Bute Council will accommodate blended placements across 2 different ELC settings. The local authority has a strong expectation that ELC settings will

share information on attendance patterns and anything else that might have an impact on a child's wellbeing, development and learning. This could be through visits, telephone contact, email or any other suitable means of regular communication. Parents can expect to be kept informed of how ELC settings are sharing progress and working together to ensure continuity in learning and care for their child and, through their own active engagement, will have an important role to play in this.



What proof of address document can I provide, as part of my applications supporting documents?

To apply for ELC you must have a letter showing you are resident at the address included in your application. This could a utility bill, council tax/benefits letter or bank statement where this matches exactly the name of the applicant. This must be no more than 3 months old and screenshots of digital letters are accepted.

How do I change my child's ELC placement before it has started?

Please contact the ELC settings involved directly, giving them as much notice as you can. 4 weeks notice is not required when the ELC placement hasn't started.

If you wish to change the ELC setting your child will attend, please contact the new ELC setting to find out if they can allocate you a space. If so, you should complete an ELC application with them (including a copy of your child's birth certificate) to ensure they have the appropriate details. A proof of address document isn't required for a second application for a child in Argyll & Bute, but let them know you previously made an application elsewhere.

What counts as a change to my child's ELC placement?

A change includes: increasing/decreasing or amending hours, changing days, changing ELC setting, starting/stopping a blended placement and leaving an ELC setting.

Can my child access their funded ELC in a different local authority to where I live?

Yes, this is called a cross boundary placement. Please apply directly to the local authority area you wish your child to attend funded ELC in.

Appendix 1: ELC Spaces Allocation

This details how spaces are allocated within local authority ELC settings. The process of ELC space allocation for the following academic year, begins in December.
ELC partner settings may use their own admission procedure. There are no catchment areas for funded ELC.

1
Children already accessing funded ELC, staying at the same ELC setting.

This includes eligible 2 year olds, and those approved for an additional year of funded ELC, where the application was received by the end of ELC registration week.

2
Children already accessing funded ELC (either at the same ELC setting or elsewhere), who as of 1st December are on the setting's waiting list for any/or additional sessions (prioritised in order of place on waiting list).

3
Equal priority will be given between:

- Children approved for an additional year of ELC at a different ELC setting, where the application was received by the end of ELC registration week.
- Children already accessing 3 year old funded ELC whose parent/carer advises by 31st January, that they wish to change settings.

- This does not include those who were on the waiting list (Category 2).
- Notice for changes to existing ELC placements (including changing days, changing settings, and increasing/decreasing or changing hours) will not be accepted between 1st February - 19th March, due to the registration process of new applications, and can resume from 20th March – see number 6. Requests during this time may be made to Early Years where there are extenuating circumstances. Changes can still take place during this period where notice was given by 31st January & 4 weeks in advance.

- This excludes eligible 2 year olds changing setting, who should apply to the new setting during registration week.

4

New applications received during registration week – categorised as per new application admission categories (see Appendix 2).

5

Equal priority will be given, in order of the date of the request, between:

- New applications received after ELC registration week and by 19th March.
- Children approved for an additional year of ELC, where the application was received after ELC registration week and by 19th March.

6

Equal priority will be given, in order of the date of the request, between:

- Children already accessing funded ELC who provide notice from 20th March, to change their placement.
- New applications received from 20th March onwards.
- Additional year of ELC requests received from 20th March onwards.

Appendix 2: New Application Admission Categories

The below details how new 3 year old funded ELC applications are categorised:

- Category 1-4 apply to applications at the first choice ELC setting.
- Category 1-5 apply **only to complete ELC applications that are received during registration week** (in order to count as complete, applications must include legible birth certificate copy and proof of address document meeting requirements).
- Applications received after registration week are late applications, Category 6. These will be offered a space or added to waiting lists when all on time applications have been placed.
- Any significant changes (e.g. change of ELC setting) made after registration week to an on time application, will move the application to Category 6 (late application).
- The lowest category applying to an application overrides any other.

Category 1
Equal priority will be given between these Argyll & Bute residents:

- Children on the child protection register or identified from child protection procedures.
- Referral from social work department where the child is deemed to be at risk.
- Children where there are supporting statements from professionals (health or social work) relating to concerns about the child.

Category 2
Applications with an Argyll & Bute address, where there will be a child in the same household attending the ELC setting or the primary school the ELC setting is attached to, in the academic year the ELC application is for.

Category 3
Applications with an address in Argyll & Bute, not meeting Category 1 or 2.

Category 4
Applications with an address outside Argyll & Bute (cross boundary applications).
Note: These are subject to different timescales due to approval being required from resident Local Authority.

Category 5
A) Applications to an ELC setting where this is their 2nd choice, due to the application at the 1st choice setting being unsuccessful.

B) Applications to an ELC setting where this is their 3rd choice, due to the application at the 1st & 2nd choice being unsuccessful.

Category 6
Late Applications received from the Monday after registration week onwards (see ELC Spaces Allocation 5 & 6).

Appendix Three: Ballot Procedure

In February ELC settings collate new applications received during the registration period. Where there are more requests than places available, and therefore they are oversubscribed for the following August, the below ballot procedure is initiated at local authority settings:

1. All applications are categorised as per New Application Admission Priorities (See Appendix 2).
2. Ballot date and witnessing procedure is agreed (Early Years will witness all ballots for an ELC space, 2nd ELC setting staff member will witness ballots that are only for a waiting list place).
3. Space allocation begins, starting with Priority 1, to establish which applicants will be in the ballot.
4. Applicants affected are advised that ELC setting does have enough space for all applications and their application will be included in a ballot.
5. Ballot takes place following witnessing procedure agreed:
    a. ELC setting works their way through each category of applications (in priority order), picking names to establish the order of applications within each priority category. When ELC spaces run out this continues until the end of Priority 5 applicants, to establish the waiting list order.
6. When all on time applications are allocated either an ELC space or waiting list place, Priority 6 (late applications) are allocated in the order that applications were received (earliest first).
7. ELC setting advises parents of outcome of the ballot, including where they are on the waiting list where applicable.
8. Early Years confirms next choice of setting with applicants, if this ELC setting is also full this process repeats until applicant is offered an ELC space.

Contact Information

Argyll and Bute Council, Education Service, Early Years

Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ

Early Years Helpline:

01369 708503 Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm

earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Early Learning & Childcare – Argyll & Bute Council

This information leaflet can be supplied in other languages and formats. Please contact the Early Years helpline.