

Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents



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: A Guide to Early Learning and Childcare in Argyll and Bute

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

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 the learning and other essential skills that they will rely on in later life.

There are currently 51 local authority ELC settings based in Primary Schools, including 4 which offer Gaelic provision.

There are 4 standalone local authority settings and 1 local authority outdoor nursery.

In addition to local authority managed nurseries, Argyll and Bute Early Years is currently in partnership with 24 Partner Provider settings who provide quality ELC within the private, voluntary and independent sector. This also includes 2 outdoor nurseries.

There are currently 22 partner childminders who are commissioned by the local authority to provide ELC for eligible 2 year olds. There are currently 15 childminders who are commissioned by the local authority to provide ELC for our 3 and 4 year olds. Registered childminders who would like to provide funded ELC an work with the local authority must ensure they 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 - <https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-principles-practice/pages/2>

A full list of local authority managed ELC and Partner Provider centres and Partner Childminders can be found at: <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/childcare-and-pre-school-education>

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 to view on the Council's website: <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-circulars>

Funded Early Learning and Childcare

1140 hours ELC is intended to support child development, help close the attainment gap through the provision of high quality services and support parents and carers to return to work, train or study. These ELC hours will use four key principals as outlined within A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland.

- Quality
- Flexibility
- Accessibility
- Affordability

Funded ELC hours ensure there are a range of choices on offer. Parents and Carers will have a variety of needs which will shape their preferences for how their funded hours might be provided. The Early Years Team works closely with partner provider nurseries and with local childminders to try to ensure parents and carers can access funded hours in the way which best meets their family's needs.

More Information can be found on the Council's website: www.argyll-bute.gov.uk



When is my child eligible for a place?

3 year old children are eligible to start the Monday after their 3rd birthday, unless their birthday falls between March and June, when they will start the following August – the same as school.

Children must be 3 years of age by the first in-service day of the new school term in August to start on the first day of term; otherwise it will be the Monday after their 3rd birthday.

A child's entitlement to funded ELC will be 1140 hours (pro rata) over a minimum of 38 weeks within the school year. Some providers offer a different pattern of provision. Information on what providers are offering can be found at the back of this booklet, from each provider or school, or on the Council's website. Contact details can be found at the back of this leaflet.

If you wish to change your child's pattern of attendance or placement you must provide 4 weeks' notice to your current provider in writing. You must also check with the setting that you wish to move to that they can accommodate your child.

Parents of children still aged 4 at the start of the school year (school commencement date) have a legal right to be deferred.

Children whose fifth birthday falls in January or February have the right to start school at 4½. They also have the right to defer entry and to have a funded Early Learning and Childcare place for an extra year.

Children whose fifth birthday falls between August and the end of December also have the right to start school. They also have the right to defer entry to school but a funded Early Learning and Childcare place is not automatic for these children, it is at the discretion of the local authority. In Argyll and Bute a funded place will be provided.

For more information on deferred entries, please contact Early Years.

Funded 2 year old Early Learning and Childcare

Are you in receipt of one of the benefits below?

If yes, your 2 year old child will be eligible for an ELC funded place:

- Income support
- Job seekers allowance (income based)
- Any income related element of employment and support allowance
- Incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance
- Pension credit
- Universal credit - where household earned income is £610 or less per month
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit, and your income is less than £16,105
- Both maximum Child Tax Credit and maximum Working Tax Credit and your income is under £7,320
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Those aged 2 or over who are (or have been at any point since turning 2) either looked after by a local authority, the subject of a kinship care order or a child with a parent-appointed guardian are also entitled to funded ELC.

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

1 st March – 31 st August	August term*
1 st September – 31 st December	January term
1 st January – 28/29 th February	April term

* Children whose birthday falls after the first day of term in August (including in-service days) will start in the October term following their 2nd birthday.

Applying for an Early Learning and Childcare place

How do I apply for ELC for my 3 year old child?

Registration week for ELC usually takes place in late January/early February. It will be an online process to register your child for ELC this year. Please visit <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery> Details of the registration week and where places are available for ELC can be obtained from:

- Adverts in the local press prior to registration week
- Social networking sites
- Posters displayed in council offices, libraries, community education offices, primary and secondary schools, private, voluntary and independent providers
- Our helpline service – details under ‘Contact Information’.

On the application form you will be asked to identify your first, second and third choice of provider. This section must be fully completed. Every effort will be made to meet your first preference but this will depend on the number of places that are available and on the priority given to applications. **If you are choosing to access your funded hours across more than one provider, a registration form must be completed for each provider and the blended placement box ticked.**

Please remember that you will need your child’s Birth Certificate/Passport when registering!

How do I apply for ELC for my 2 year old child?

- Parents/carers should contact the Early Years Helpline on 01369 708503 and request an application pack
- When you have chosen your preferred funded provider, please phone them to check whether there are available spaces
- Completed packs should be emailed/sent to the nursery manager, head teacher or childminder
- Your application will be checked by someone from Early Years who will confirm your place in writing
- If you require support to fill out the forms please contact Early Years, speak to your Health Visitor or Jobcentre Plus.

How are places offered?

Early Years will inform you by letter of your child's ELC placement. This is usually confirmed by the end of May.

If there are not enough places at your chosen ELC setting a ballot will be held using the priorities of that setting. If you are unsuccessful in the ballot for your preferred provider, you will be offered another ELC place, and you will be informed of this following the ballot.

Please see Appendix 1 & 2 for further information on this process.

What do I need to know if my child accesses a place at a Partner Provider of ELC?

A Partner Provider nursery, playgroup or childminder is commissioned by the local authority to provide Early Learning and Childcare.

- You may be asked to sign a form at your setting confirming your child's placement. Although we recognise that this process can be inconvenient, it is important that you sign the form when asked as this ensures your nursery receives their funding for ELC.

How do I change my child's ELC place?

Continuity is always seen as being an important part of high quality ELC, therefore careful consideration should be given when changing your child's ELC placement.

- Children can change provider by parents giving the nursery or childminder 4 weeks written notice (direct to your current provider).
- If you require to make a change to your child's ELC provider and are unable to give 4 weeks written notice due to unforeseen circumstances, you must contact the Early Years helpline on 01369 708503 or email earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk explaining the reason for your request.



Frequently Asked Questions

Where can I find out information on what ELC is available in my area?

Argyll and Bute Council website [Funded Early Learning and Childcare Providers \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk) contains up-to-date information on all Funded Providers across Argyll and Bute, including indoor settings, Childminders and Outdoor Settings. The information covers topics such as individual setting Ethos/Vision, what funded hours they offer and links to their own service website/social media pages.

Do I have to use all the funded hours?

No, the hours are an entitlement, not a requirement, so you can choose to take all or some of the hours available to you.

Further information on what hours each setting offers is available at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/childcare-and-pre-school-education>

You may also wish to discuss directly with your ELC setting prior to completing your online registration.

When can my child start their funded ELC hours?

If your child's birthday is on or between 1 March – 31 July: They will be eligible from August (autumn term) 2021.

If your child's birthday is on or between 1 September – 28/29 February they will be eligible from the Monday following their 3rd birthday.

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

“The aim is that children experience consistent high quality early learning and childcare. This means consistency of relationships with staff and other children; and consistency of experiences”. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Early Learning and Childcare, Statutory Guidance.

However, a range of settings can also be beneficial for children and parents. Argyll and Bute Council will accommodate shared placements across 2 different

providers more widely across the week, where this meets the needs of the child and parents or carers.

Covid-19 Restrictions to Blended placements

Level 0 – All blended placements can go ahead

Levels 1 and 2

Following Scottish Guidelines Argyll and Bute Early Years are only allowing blended placements as stated below, however any blended placement should not occur during one day e.g. morning indoor nursery - childminder afternoon.

- One indoor nursery and outdoor nursery
- One indoor nursery and Childminder
- One Outdoor nursery and Childminder

The local authority has a strong expectation that ELC Providers 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.

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 may be entitled to a funded meal. An application can be requested from your setting or Early Years.

When the Scottish Government confirms the statutory entitlement of 1140 hours of funded ELC all children will be entitled to a funded meal.

Is transport provided for ELC?

ELC provision has no entitlement to transport, unless in exceptional circumstances. Further information can be found on the Argyll and Bute Website at <https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/registering-your-child-nursery>

When will I receive confirmation that my child's place is confirmed?

No later than May, following ELC registration. There are a number of processes that follow registration week, including ensuring there is sufficient capacity at the setting you have applied for and staffing levels are correct as per Care Inspectorate standards.

What happens if there is not enough spaces at my chosen setting?

Every effort will be made to meet your first preference but this will depend on the number of places that are available and on the priority given to applications. If there are not enough places at your chosen ELC setting a ballot will be held using the priorities of that setting. If you are unsuccessful in the ballot for your preferred provider, you will be offered another ELC place, with your 2nd or sometimes 3rd choice.

You will be kept up-to-date throughout this process.

Complaints Framework

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.

Appendix One: Administration of Ballot for ELC Provision

1. If, after registration week, an ELC funded provider has received more application forms than capacity available a ballot will be required.
2. The Early Years Team must be contacted to advise a ballot is required. A meeting will be arranged to categorise application forms by the Manager or Head Teacher.
3. Set the date on which the ballot is to take place.
4. Inform the parents concerned of the ballot date. On the ballot day the names of the children on separate ballot slips should be laid out for checking by those present.
5. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to place the ballot slips into the ballot box.
6. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to draw out the slips.
7. Places should be allocated as slips are drawn out.
8. Once all the places are allocated, slips should continue to be drawn out and the Nursery Application Management System (NAMS) waiting list amended.
9. In the event of any child selected for a place not taking up that place, the place will be offered to those children on the waiting list in the order of the draw.

10. Those children not receiving a place need to be moved to the 2nd choice provider, therefore the Early Years Helpline should be notified with the details of the children for this to be carried out.

Appendix Two: Priorities

Priority 1

For children deferring entry from P1 and staying at nursery an additional year of funding has been agreed by Argyll and Bute Council.

Priority 2

- (i) Children on the child protection register or identified through child protection procedures.
- (ii) Referral from social work department where the child is deemed to be in need where:
 - The placement would help the child remain within the family environment rather than be looked after by the local authority.
 - The child is subject of a statutory order.
 - The placement would support the child's return to the family.

Priority 3

Supporting statements from the undernoted professionals where there are concerns about the development of the child, parent or family.

- Education establishments
- Health agencies
- Education psychology services
- Social work services
- Voluntary sector agencies

This priority refers to children who require support as a result of circumstances which are placing the child, parent or family at an education, social or health disadvantage. This includes children who are adversely affected by the disability

of any other person in the family, or it may include children with English as an additional language where a high level of support is needed.

Priority 4

Child(ren) (for example sibling) who live in the same household and attend the same ELC setting/school

Priority 5

Reside within catchment area of school.

Priority 6

- (i) Children out with Argyll and Bute requesting an ELC place within Argyll and Bute will be placed once all eligible children residing within Argyll and Bute have been placed.
- (ii) Children out with Argyll and Bute will not be placed within Argyll and Bute if placing them incurs extra costs for Argyll and Bute.

Contact Information

Argyll and Bute Council – Education Service, Early Years

Early Years Helpline.....01369 708503 Monday-Friday 9-5pm

Email..... earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Address..... Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ

Web page..... www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning

List of ELC Providers within Argyll and Bute

<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/childcare-and-pre-school-education>

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Early Years



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