

Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Aberdeen

The Scottish Government will expand the offer of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours per year for all three- and four-year olds and eligible two-year olds. The four guiding principles that underpin ELC expansion are:

- Quality
- Flexibility
- Affordability
- Accessibility

The increased offer will enable families to access a high-quality service that is flexible, affordable and accessible and ensure that children across Aberdeen have the best start in life.

ELC Expansion in Aberdeen City

This is an exciting time for ELC in Aberdeen. The expansion of ELC will support child development through the provision of high-quality services and support parents to return to work or study. Aberdeen City Council plans to provide local, flexible early learning and childcare, which is accessible, affordable and of high quality. We want to provide parents and carers with a choice of services and offers that will best meet the needs of their child and their family.

What is Changing?

By August 2020, 1140 funded hours will be available at ELC settings and childminders working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council.

At present, the current entitlement of 600 hours per year of ELC is currently offered to all three- and four-year olds, as well as eligible two-year olds. Eligibility of two-year olds is related to financial circumstances and offered to children who are looked after or under either a kinship or guardianship order.

Over the next year, towards August 2020, Aberdeen City Council will be increasing the amount of funded hours that children aged three and four years old, and eligible two year olds, can access in ELC settings across the city, moving from the current 600 funded hours to a total of 1140 funded hours.

ELC Entitlement: 1140 Hours

Aberdeen City Council has a duty to secure Early Learning and Childcare places for all parents who wish it for their children. However, the 1140 hours is an entitlement and there is no obligation for parents to take up the full entitlement.

Early Learning and Childcare Delivery

Aberdeen City Council want to offer choice and flexibility to families so they can choose the options which best meet their needs. There are several ways we will deliver the 1140 hours. We will deliver a number of flexible models in each locality across the city to meet the needs of families, such as:

- Full day provision
- Half day provision – morning or afternoon
- Blended provision – a combination of local authority and funded provider / childminder provision

Early Learning and Childcare will be delivered by:

- Local authority – ELC settings
- Private ELC settings (funded providers)
- Childminders

For the forthcoming school session of 2019/2020, Aberdeen City Council will continue to deliver the current statutory entitlement of 600 funded hours on the existing basis. This is either five sessions (morning or afternoon) in a local authority setting, which is a full placement of 600 hours.

The funded entitlement can be taken in full in a funded provider setting (private nursery), where longer hours are required and in a pattern to suit the needs of the family, by way of a discount in their monthly fees (currently around £250 per month).

Early Learning and Childcare Trials

The legal entitlement for families to access the 1140 hours starts in August 2020. However, during the next school session 2019-20, we will be trialling increased hours in some of our ELC settings (local authority and funded provider). Trials will take place in the priority locality areas of the city during in line with Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan. We will pilot various methods of delivering the extended hours. This will include longer days, more flexible hours and split placements, in order to test out how different models of provision will work. Your nursery will be in contact with you if it is offering additional hours, where demand is higher than available, eligibility criteria will be applied.

Engagement and Consultation

Engagement

To deliver ELC Expansion by 2020, we would like to hear from parents, carers and future parents regarding how best services can be provided and delivered in Aberdeen. We have a statutory duty, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to consult with parents and carers on a regular basis.

As we approach the final school session before the implementation of 1140 hours in August 2020, we would like to hear from you. The Early Years team will be running an online survey to gather the views of parents, carers and families to understand their ELC needs. The questionnaire is due to be rolled out over summer 2019.

This will be followed up by a series of focus group meetings and parent information session, which run from September 2019 onwards. Information will be shared regularly on the ELC website, on social media and through partners, community groups, locality events and electronic briefings.

Resources

An Aberdeen City Council Guide to ELC Expansion for Parents and Carers will also be available from August 2019.

Further information on ELC Expansion is also available from the Parent Club website: <https://www.parentclub.scot/>

Further information

Family Information Service

The Family Information Service can provide details on all Early Learning and Childcare options available in the city.

Website: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/family-information-service>

Email: fis@aberdeencity.gov.uk

General Enquiries

Further information will be made available to families as the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion programme progresses and we work towards the full implementation in August 2020.

General enquires can be sent to: elcexpansion@aberdeencity.gov.uk

Website: <https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare>

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