



# Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Delivery Plan 2024-26



# Introduction / Executive Summary



Aberdeen City Council has a statutory duty, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to prepare and publish an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan, every 2 years, to set out the strategic direction for the delivery of ELC in the city. The Plan will respond to local need and reflect the diversity of communities in Aberdeen. The 2024-26 Delivery Plan follows on from the 2022-24 Delivery Plan and is informed by the outcomes of a Parent and Carer Consultation and engagement with key stakeholders including staff.

## Background

### The National Context

Since August 2021, all three and four year olds, and eligible two-year olds have been entitled to receive 1140 hours of funded ELC per year. This means more funded hours, more choice of where children can go to access their ELC entitlement and more flexible models of ELC are available to support families.

### Deferred Entry

In August 2023, new legislation was implemented which means that all families with eligible children can now choose to defer their start date for primary one and be automatically entitled to access funded ELC for a further year. The new legislation supports families to make decisions based on the best interests of their child, without the financial barrier of ELC costs. Aberdeen City Council welcomed the opportunity to be one of 10 pilots across Scotland to implement this automatic deferral from August 2022.



## Best Start: Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan for Scotland 2022-26

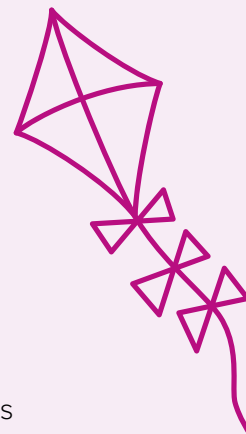
The Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan for Scotland 2022-26 was published by Scottish Government in October 2022. It outlines the Scottish Government vision and priorities for the next four years; its approach to policy design and delivery; and next steps. The strategic priorities outlined in the Plan are:

**Priority 1:** Realising the benefits of the expansion to 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare for children and families.

**Priority 2:** Progressing the expansion of our childcare offer, including building a future system of school age childcare and a new early learning and childcare offer for one and two year olds.

**Priority 3:** Ensuring that the delivery of our priorities is supported by a sustainable, diverse and thriving sector and profession.

**Priority 4:** Ensuring that our ambitions are underpinned by fair funding and outcomes frameworks, robust data and organisations that work together to support good outcomes for children and families.



The delivery principles which underpin Early Learning and Childcare continue to be:

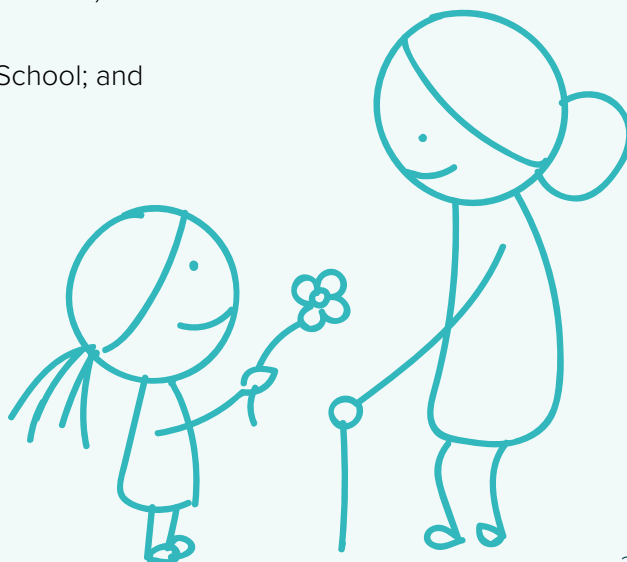
- Quality
- Flexibility
- Accessibility
- Affordability

Our Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26 dovetails with the Strategic Plan.

### The Local Context

Aberdeen City Council welcomed the opportunity to expand services in recognition of how the expansion of ELC could help reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. As a result of the ELC Expansion Programme Aberdeen City Council has implemented the delivery of the increased entitlement of 1140 hours from August 2021 and offers a mixed delivery model of ELC provision in the city:

- In 53 Local Authority settings, including 3 stand alone ELC settings: At the multi-agency Links Hub; and at our 2 Outdoor Nursery provisions at Duthie and Hazlehead Parks;
- In 41 Funded Provider ELC settings;
- At our Gaelic Medium Unit based in Gilcomstoun Primary School; and
- Through 62 Funded Provider childminders.



In June 2023 we consulted with parents, carers and future parents and carers to seek their views to inform and to help develop the next Delivery Plan. The consultation received a total of 664 responses after 3 weeks (+210 (46%) from 2021).

**Key headline points include:**

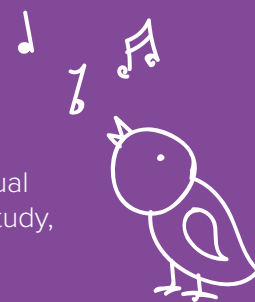
- 79.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (Associated School Group (ASG)) (+7.4% from 2021).
- 75.8% have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG.
- 80.6% of respondents were able to secure their first choice of ELC provision.
- 88.4% of respondents were satisfied with the location of their ELC provision. (+5.4% from 2021).
- 76.8% of respondents were satisfied with the times ELC services are available (+9% from 2021).
- 87.1% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date (+ 4.7% from 2021).
- 73.6% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC (+4.8% from 2021)
- The majority of respondents, at over 95%, identified Early Learning and Childcare as having a positive impact on their child's development with:
  - o 87% identifying improved social skills;
  - o 81% seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills;
  - o 71% identifying improved creativity;
  - o 68% identifying improved fine motor skills;
  - o 64% identifying improved emotional development;
  - o 63% identifying improved physical development;
  - o 62% identifying improved listening skills;
  - o 60% identifying improved literacy development; and
  - o 60% identifying improved numeracy development.
- 39.8% of respondents stated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (-11.4% from 2021).
- 29.2% of respondents indicated that they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family (-9.5% from 2021).
- 24.1% are now considering a return to work or study (-4.4% from 2021).
- 24.1% stated improved wellbeing/respite as a positive impact from the expansion of ELC (-2% from 2021), with 18.9% of respondents finding they now have more time to themselves (-5.4% from 2021).
- 73.3% of respondents stated that they are aware that Aberdeen City Council offers Eligible 2's ELC placements.



# Vision for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Aberdeen City

Monitoring of supply and demand, consultation with parents and carers and engagement with key stakeholders validates the vision set in the 2017 Delivery Plan.

Our vision is to provide ELC which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and is available up to 50 weeks of the year. Provision will be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community and will support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty.



## Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will be used to inform our practice. All ELC provision across Aberdeen City will:

- Capitalise on intergenerational support
- Offer a level of personalisation to ensure maximum gains for children
- Be nurturing, inclusive and offer a holistic service to children and families in keeping with GIRFEC
- Feel owned by the community
- Fully utilise outside space to promote wellbeing
- Be staffed by skilled practitioners who have opportunities to develop their skills further through a suite of professional learning suited to their needs and situation
- Be quality assured across a locality by one skilled practitioner who will have a key role in supporting parents to fully capitalise on the local offer.

## Key Themes for Development

Based on the outcomes of our Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC (undertaken in 2022), our consultation with parents and carers, and our engagement with key stakeholders, including staff voice, triangulated via staff survey, Collaborative Improvement and ELC Learning Festival, we suggest that our key priorities for development over the next 2 years continue to be:



Workforce  
Support



Transitions



Community  
Partnerships

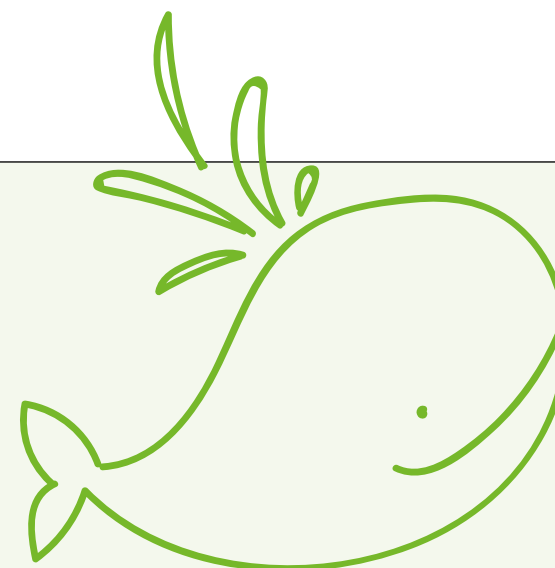
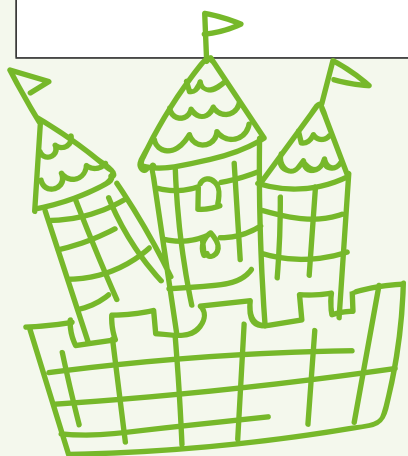


Family  
Support

Improvement activity and actions for next 2 years are detailed in the following pages.

## How will we deliver Early Learning and Childcare?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
Maintain a mix of Local Authority and Funded Provider delivery models across all Associated School Groups (ASGs) to meet the needs of all children and families	<p>Continue to monitor demand across the city and in individual ASGs.</p> <p>Ongoing consultation and engagement with families to establish any changing patterns in service usage.</p> <p>Continue to monitor uptake with Funded Providers.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Funded Providers</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p>	<p>Families are able to access a range of delivery models within their ASG.</p> <p>% of first choice applications.</p> <p>ELC Parent and Carer Consultation.</p>
Continue to offer all children attending ELC regular and routine access to high quality learning outside	<p>Ongoing development of Duthie Park and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries.</p> <p>Provision of professional learning (including at Duthie and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries).</p> <p>Opportunities for staff to shadow at Duthie Park and Hazlehead Nurseries.</p> <p>Promotion and Quality Assurance of Outdoor Learning across all ELC settings.</p> <p>Childminders – Promoting environmental and community work.</p>	<p>Outdoor Manager</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Outdoor Manager</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Childminders</p>	<p>Provision of and evaluations of professional learning</p> <p>Evaluations from Quality Improvement Visits</p> <p>Number of staff engaging in job shadowing.</p> <p>Number of childminders participating.</p>

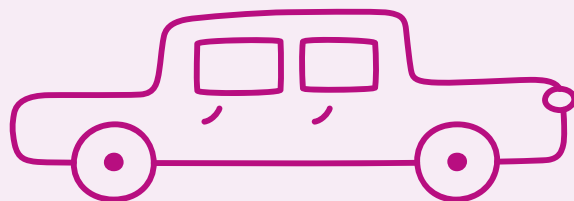


<p>Increase the number of childminders to promote flexibility and choice</p>	<p>Monitor demand for childminders.</p> <p>Target recruitment activity according to demand and in priority regeneration areas.</p> <p>Work in partnership with Scottish Childminding Association to deliver Programme for Scotland's Childminding Future (PSCF) - a National Partnership Programme on Childminder Retention &amp; Recruitment – to recruit 25 new childminders per year in Aberdeen.</p> <p>Continue to evaluate and improve the support afforded to funded provider childminders.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p>	<p>Monitor application process.</p> <p>Secure current numbers of funded providers.</p> <p>Increase in the numbers of Childminders and Funded Provider Childminders across the city.</p> <p>Increase in the numbers of Childminders and Funded Provider Childminders in priority regeneration areas.</p>
<p>Increase uptake for eligible 2 year old children</p>	<p>Monitor demand for eligible 2 places.</p> <p>Send quarterly mailshots using information from Data Pipeline Project to target eligible families.</p> <p>Secure places at Local Authority and Funded Provider ELC settings including childminders</p> <p>On-going collaboration with multi-agency partners to identify eligible 2s.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>All ELC Settings</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p>	<p>Monitor application process.</p> <p>Families are able to access delivery models within their ASG which meet their needs and any change in demand.</p> <p>Increase in % of eligible 2 year old children taking up their ELC entitlement.</p>



## How will we ensure quality?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
Deliver ELC in accordance with National Standard for ELC	Regular self-evaluation by ELC Settings. Quality Improvement Visits.	ELC Locality Lead Officers ELC Managers ELC Settings	Improved evaluations from Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate
Deliver a comprehensive Quality Assurance programme	Alignment of Quality Improvement visits with school Quality Assurance calendar for all ELC providers, including the work of trio groups supporting Local Authority settings across the city.  Implementation of robust Quality Improvement Framework for Local Authority and Funded Provider settings incorporating reference to national guidance documents such as Realising the Ambition - Being me.  Identification of areas for targeted support, pre and post inspections.	ELC Locality Lead Officers	Improved evaluations from Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate
Support and enhance smooth transitions	Ongoing review of transition processes with early in person transition and early engagement with staff, where practicable.  Pilot some more creative transition processes within Local Authority ELC settings.  Regular communication and engagement with parents and carers.	ELC Locality Lead Officers ELC Managers ELC Settings	Feedback from children, parents/carers and staff.  Increased wellbeing of children – using Leuven Scale to evaluate this in observations.  Reflective dialogue on transitions with practitioners during visits and ASG meets.  Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.





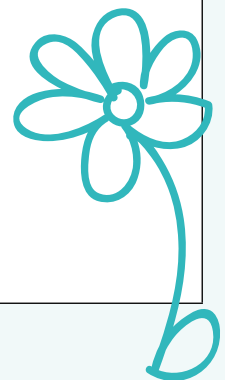
<p>Work in partnership with families and communities, including through a Peep offer, in all settings as part of a partnership Family Support offer</p>	<p>ELC and Peep colleagues will work together to ensure that at least one member of staff from each ELC setting has been Peep trained and support will be given to staff when delivering Peep sessions.</p> <p>Monitor uptake to identify if there are any barriers preventing these from taking place in order to remove them.</p> <p>Liaise with colleagues from Family Learning to ensure that settings are maximising Family Support sessions offered.</p> <p>Support language and literacy development via promotion of Bookbug Programme, Curriculum Resources &amp; Information Service (CRIS) and encouraging library membership.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Peep</p> <p>Family Learning Team</p> <p>Aberdeen City Libraries</p>	<p>Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.</p> <p>Increase in the number of parents and carers who have awareness of how to support their children's learning and development at home.</p> <p>Improved relationships with families.</p> <p>Increase in the number of families engaging with Aberdeen City Libraries.</p>
<p>Provision of free healthy meals and snacks as part of ELC offer</p>	<p>Every child will receive a minimum of one meal or substantial snack per ELC session, consistent with Setting the Table nutritional guidance.</p> <p>Provision of milk and healthy snack via Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme</p>	<p>ELC settings</p> <p>Catering Service</p> <p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC settings</p>	



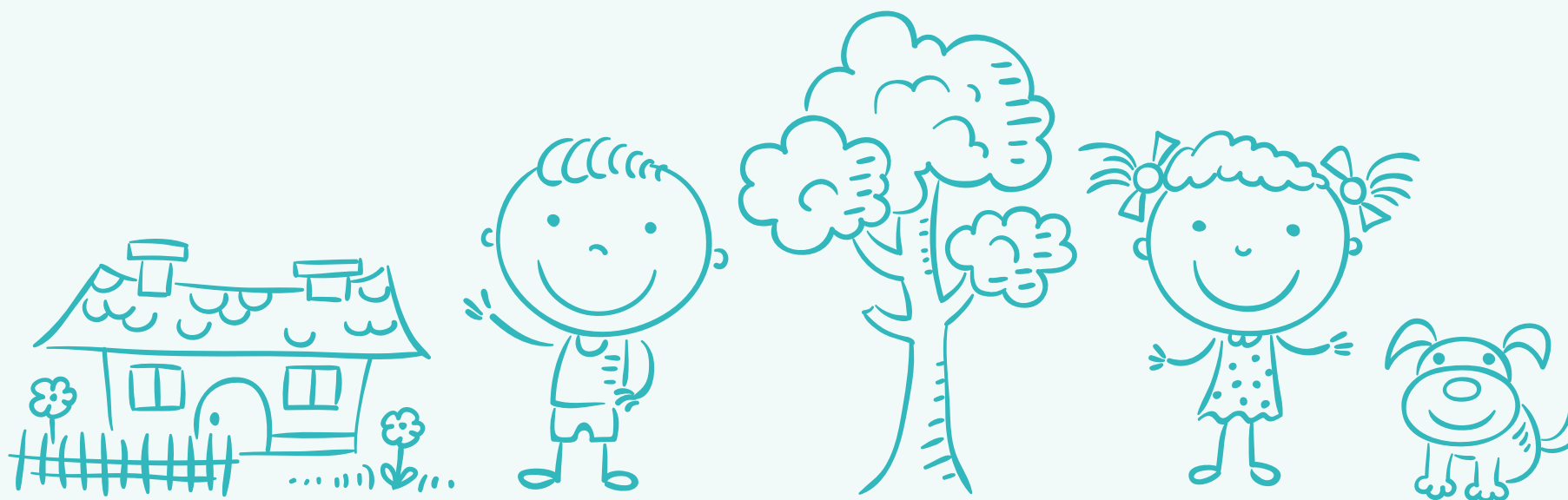
## How will we support and develop our workforce?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
<p>Create positive pathways into careers in ELC and provide access to funding for accredited qualifications</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers will use the ABZworks platform to link with ELC employers and training providers to promote positive pathways into ELC careers.</p> <p>Continue to offer Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in Local Authority ELC settings, building this role into our staffing model in a variety of settings that deliver different models of ELC.</p> <p>Partnerships with local training providers to widen the offer of the Foundation Apprenticeship Children and Young people in Aberdeen City Council secondary schools.</p> <p>Collaborating with People and Organisation to create an internal 'Introduction to ELC' course to be available to young people in secondary schools.</p> <p>Offer Workforce Development and Expansion funding annually to support workforce, across the city, to undertake accredited qualifications and meet SSSC registration requirements. Additionally, supporting staff to gain qualifications above what is required to allow for further career progression.</p> <p>Work with Employability Team to promote grants for those undertaking qualifications to support routes out of poverty and maximise funding available.</p> <p>Development and expansion of supply/relief pool support workers in order to create additional pathway into the sector, supporting their progression into permanent posts in order to complete qualifications.</p> <p>Development of professional learning opportunities for supply/relief staff to enhance understanding of the sector and opportunities for progression.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>ABZworks</p> <p>Training Providers</p> <p>Employability Team</p>	<p>Increase in number of applicants for vacancies.</p> <p>Increase in applicants for Foundation Apprentice in Early Years course.</p> <p>Supply staff moving into permanent posts providing continuity for children and staff.</p> <p>Increase in the number of staff attaining accredited qualifications across all levels.</p> <p>Number of young people accessing the 'Introduction to ELC' course.</p> <p>Supply staff reporting increasing confidence.</p>

<p>Deliver high quality professional learning for all</p>	<p>Understand the needs of current staff through questionnaires and findings of inspections or quality assurance visits.</p> <p>Develop resources for CLPL both internally and utilising external resources.</p> <p>Bespoke CLPL delivery for localities, delivered by ELC Locality Lead Officers.</p> <p>Continue to grow our online CLPL platform via an accessible platform for access to materials that can be used flexibly and in collaboration with others.</p> <p>Provide tutorial sessions based on content provided online to facilitate further collaboration and discussion for ELC practitioners sector wide.</p> <p>Induction for new ELC managers following Collaborative Improvement recommendation.</p> <p>Uptake of Education Scotland offer for Aberdeen to be part of a four-day training that they have developed around Pedagogical Leadership. Members of the central team will also attend and co-deliver which will ensure this training can be part of the induction for all new managers in the future.</p> <p>Promote and facilitate collaborative working within ASG's.</p> <p>Build on Managers sessions with focus on priority themes to continue to upskill and support ELC staff and collegiate sharing sessions to share good practice.</p> <p>Offer networking and professional learning opportunities for ELC Support Workers.</p> <p>Build capacity through both digital offer and face to face opportunities.</p>		<p>Staff will have access to relevant and meaningful learning opportunities which will upskill them to continue to be able to provide the most current best practice. This will be evidenced by both internal quality assurance and external inspection reporting ensuring that settings are meeting the national standard.</p>
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Support and upskill ELC Teams to provide a fully inclusive offer	Build capacity and confidence through observations, shadowing and training.  Ongoing rollout and delivery of CIRCLE training resource.  Delivery of ASNAP training.  Provision of advice, guidance, support and training from Educational Psychology Service.	Early Years Team  ELC Locality Lead Officers  Autism Outreach Team  VSA ASNAP  Educational Psychology Service	Increased staff confidence.  Reduction in Requests for Assistance.
Support the health and wellbeing of staff	Regular 1-2-1 and Team meetings.  Regular network meetings.	ELC Managers  ELC Locality Lead Officers	Reduction in absence and staffing shortages.  Staff report improved wellbeing.
Offer opportunities for collaboration locally and cross-boundary to increase capacity and maximise resources	Work in partnership across ASGs and Authorities where appropriate.	ELC Locality Lead Officers	Staff will have access to relevant and meaningful learning opportunities which will upskill them to continue to be able to provide the most current best practice. This will be evidenced by both internal quality assurance and external inspection reporting ensuring that settings are meeting the national standard.



## How will we communicate, engage and consult?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
Open and regular engagement and consultation with parents and carers	Statutory consultation with parents and carers every 2 years. Regular engagement across ASGs.	Early Years Team / Summer 2025 Locality Lead Officers	Consultation Report. ASG Feedback.
Regular engagement and consultation with all Partners and Key Stakeholders	Regular engagement city-wide and across ASGs – in person and via digital platforms. Termly meetings offered and themed focus groups.	Early Years Team ELC Locality Lead Officers	Feedback from Partners and Key Stakeholders.
Provision of accurate and up to date information on ACC communication channels	Communicate key information through social media channels. Maintain and update ELC pages on Aberdeen City Council website.	Early Years Team / Webmonitor	Number of views and shares.
Ongoing promotion of ELC, delivery models, options and Gaelic Medium provision	Promote all ELC models across the city. Promote Gaelic Medium provision. Promote blended ELC offer. Promote ELC as Early Learning AND Childcare. Ensure Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents and Carers booklet is maintained, updated and accessible.	Early Years Team	Evidence of uptake. Evidence of uptake of Gaelic Medium provision. Evidence of uptake of blended ELC offer.

