

A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020: THE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE SERVICE MODEL FOR 2020:
CONSULTATION PAPER



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INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES

Introduction

We know that the earliest years of life are crucial for every child, and the evidence tells us that if our early learning and childcare (ELC) offer is to help give children the best start in life and contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, it has to be of a high quality.

Families can currently get up to 600 hours of funded ELC a year (around 16 hours a week in term time) if their child is 3 or 4 years old. Some [2 year olds](#) may also be eligible for the funded hours. Funded ELC is free to parents and carers, and is funded by the Scottish Government.

From August 2020 the Scottish Government is increasing the number of funded hours to 1140 hours per year (around 30 hours a week in term time). The key aspiration for offering 1140 hours of funded ELC is to deliver the best possible outcomes for children. Therefore, only the best quality providers should be able to offer funded hours.

The Scottish Government and COSLA recently published [Early Learning and Childcare Service Model for 2020: Consultation Paper](#) which sets out the details of a new service model which will ensure that funded ELC is delivered in high quality settings.

What does this mean for families?

The new service delivery model in 2020 will be built on a Funding Follows the Child approach. The move towards a Funding Follows the Child approach will represent a significant change for families as it will affect how and where they access their child's funded entitlement.

For families, Funding Follows the Child means:

- **Quality** - Families across Scotland can expect a high quality funded ELC experience regardless of where they access their entitlement. This will ensure that, irrespective of setting, the funded ELC experience helps to give children the best start in life and contributes to their health, wellbeing and cognitive development.
- **Demand** - Local parental demand will be the primary driver of local flexibility, but within a system which safeguards high quality provision.
- **Choice** - Families will be able to access funded ELC in the provider of their choice if that provider meets the criteria set out in the new National Standard, is able to offer the entitlement and has a place available.
- **Affordability** - Funded hours will be free at point of access, regardless of setting. Families will not be charged in advance for their statutory hours and no top-up fees will be charged to families relating to the statutory 1140 hours. However, there may be circumstances in which parents opt to pay additional costs for additional services e.g. snacks, wrap-around hours.

- **Workforce** - We know that the most important driver of quality in ELC is a dedicated, highly skilled and well-qualified workforce. More workers in the ELC sector being paid the [‘real’ living wage](#) should increase staff retention rates, strengthening the benefits for children and families by allowing practitioners to build up strong, trusted relationships through consistent contact time.

What you can expect from a setting providing funded ELC

To ensure a guaranteed standard of high quality funded early learning and childcare across all settings, the new service model introduces a ‘national standard’ that all providers will be required to meet in order to be eligible to deliver the funded entitlement.

The criteria is grouped under the following headings:

- **Quality** – quality of staffing, quality of care and learning experience, of the physical environment and, a settings plan to continually improve its quality of provision and outcomes for children and families. [Care Inspectorate grading’s](#) must be good or better.
- **Accessibility** – equality of access for all children.
- **Business Sustainability** – a financially stable setting that will provide consistent care which allows strong relationships to be built.
- **Fair work Practices** – including paying the ‘real’ living wage to childcare workers delivering the funded hours.
- **Payment Processes** – funded hours free at point of access for families.
- **Food** – a free meal will be provided during each session.

The [Consultation Paper](#) seeks views on this new National Standard. We are keen to hear the views of families and we encourage you to participate in the consultation. In particular, families may have an interest in the following consultation questions:

Question 3a: We are proposing that the National Standard includes a qualification requirement for childminders delivering the funded entitlement to be qualified to or working towards the same qualification level as is required for an ELC practitioner (SCQF level 7). What are the advantages of including this criteria?

Question 4: Our aspiration is to see outdoor learning and play becoming a defining feature of funded ELC in Scotland. Does criteria 3 capture this ambition?

Question 5a: Will the criteria set out in the draft National Standard:

- ensure that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable Early Learning Childcare is delivered in all funded provider settings?
- Support increased choice for parents and carers?

Question 5b: Is there any criteria not included in the National Standard that is required to ensure a high quality service is provided to all children?