

Early Learning and Childcare Division

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Early learning and childcare in Scotland

What is on offer to children in Scotland

Funding

Maintaining high quality early learning and childcare

Challenges



What does ELC look like in Scotland?

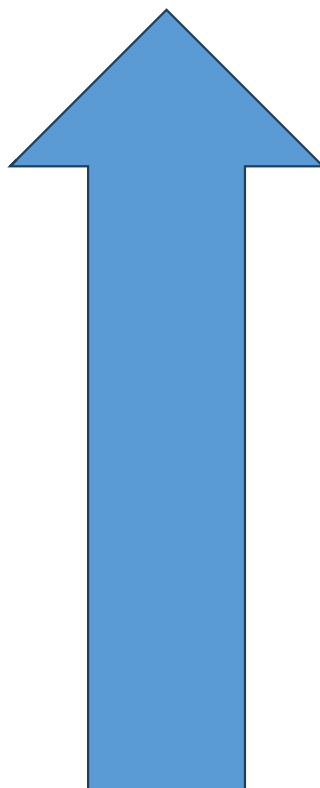
Funded hours per year

2021 – 1,140 hours

2014 – 600 hours

2007 – 475 hours

2002 – 412.5 hours



Offer for 3- and 4-year-olds is **universal**

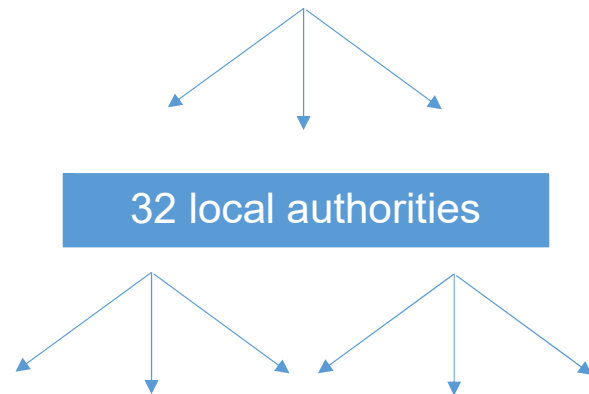
Offer for 2-year-olds is **targeted**

Can access hours in different settings, such as nurseries, childminders, outdoor settings and playgroups.

Can access different patterns of hours, such as full-days, half-days, term-time or year-round

Funding follows the child

Scottish Government
Almost £1billion



Sustainable rate to partner providers

Parents and carers can choose where to access their funded hours, from settings in the public, private or third sector, including from a childminder, as long as the setting:

- meets the National Standard;
- has a place available
- is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority



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Maintaining high quality early learning and childcare

High quality is at the heart of early learning and childcare in Scotland



90.1% of services offering funded childcare found to be good or better for all quality themes.



97% of parents and carers who had a 3-5 year-old child in funded ELC were satisfied with the quality of provision



85% of parents and carers with children with additional support needs in ELC were satisfied that the funded childcare offer is meeting their children's needs.



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The National Standard

Our quality standards are underpinned by The National Standard, which outlines what children and their families should expect from their ELC experience, regardless of whether they access their funded entitlement in local authority, private, or third sector settings, or through a childminder. This is to ensure that, as part of Funding Follows the Child, which is 'provider neutral', there is consistency of high quality provision across all funded provider types

- **Criteria 1:** Staffing, leadership and management
- **Criteria 2:** development of children's cognitive skills, health and wellbeing
- **Criteria 3:** the physical environment
- **Criteria 4:** self-evaluation and improvement
- **Criteria 5:** parent and carer engagement and involvement in the life of the setting
- **Criteria 6:** Inclusion
- **Criteria 7:** business sustainability
- **Criteria 8:** fair work practices
- **Criteria 9:** payment processes
- **Criteria 10:** food

What do we mean by quality?

Our [Quality Action Plan](#) was developed in close consultation with our Quality Reference Group, made up of stakeholders who best understand, not only what drives quality, but also how we can further strengthen provision of high quality early learning and childcare in Scotland.

The essential characteristics of quality identified in our Quality Action Plan were:

A high quality workforce

Strong pedagogical leadership

Warm and supportive interactions with children

A holistic curriculum

A focus on play-based learning

Good access to outdoor play

Supporting parents to engage in their children's learning

Transitions that are well managed

Professional collaboration

Provision that is accessible to all

High quality physical environments

Clear quality standards and robust self-evaluation and quality assurance regimes

Scrutiny and Inspection of ELC

Inspection is a tool to support settings to identify and implement improvement, ensuring safe and high quality settings



Care Inspectorate



His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education



Local authorities as 'guarantors of quality'



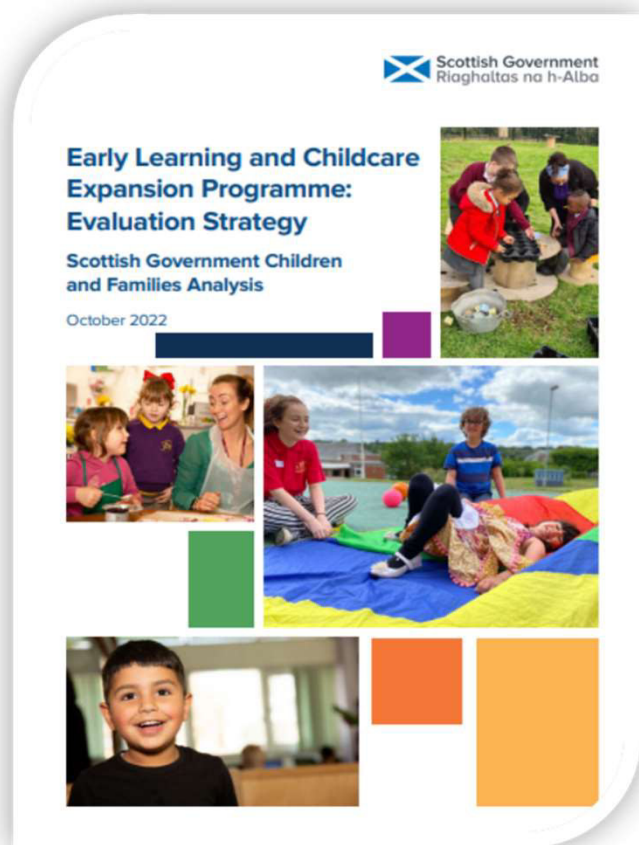
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Actions to Support Quality

- Work with relevant agencies to publish a **Support for Quality Plan** clarifying roles and responsibilities and how they will support high quality provision in ELC, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic
- Sponsorship of the **Care Inspectorate [ELC Improvement Programme](#)** – targeted support for services to meet the National Standard
- Investing in the recruitment of 6 Regional Leads for **Early Years Speech and Language** to help to build confidence and capacity of staff working in ELC settings, and join up efforts across other key public services, such as health visiting.



Actions to Support Quality (continued)



- ELC representation on the **Additional Support for Learning** Action Plan Programme Board and progressing recommendations from the [Scottish Centre for Children with Motor Impairments report](#)
- Support effective and consistent implementation of [Realising the Ambition](#) across early level curriculum
- Publish refreshed [Setting the Table](#) and [Space to Grow](#) guidance for the ELC sector, and a new chapter of [Out To Play - Caring for our Outdoor Places](#) guidance

Links to documents

- [Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Early learning and childcare expansion programme: evaluation strategy - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: operating guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Programme for Government 2023 to 2024 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland: Quality Action Plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Realising the Ambition | Resources | Education Scotland](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Annex A: Implementing the Real Living Wage Commitment - Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: transition options guidance on contracting - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Out to Play: Practical guidance for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland is changing | Parent Club](https://www.gov.scot)
- [Appendix B – Methodology - Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare: ELC Leavers \(Phase 2\) Report - Updated 2021 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

