

APPENDIX 1

Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026
Scottish Government Briefing Paper

[Best Start: Strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-26](https://www.gov.scot/Best-Start-Strategic-early-learning-and-school-age-childcare-plan-for-Scotland-2022-26)
(www.gov.scot/)

Briefing - Summary of Key Points

Purpose of this plan (summarised) (P.4)

This plan sets out vision for early learning and school age childcare over the rest of this Parliament, the three outcomes expected that policies will deliver, strategic priorities, and the principles that will guide the approach to working with partners in the sector, and what families can expect from services.

Under existing legislation and guidance, local authorities have a number of important responsibilities relating to childcare and Scottish Government will continue to work closely with local government to support delivery of the shared objectives.

Plan on a Page (key aspects of vision, priorities and outcomes) (P.5)

1. Realising the benefits of the expansion to 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare.
2. Progressing the expansion of the childcare offer, including building a system of school age childcare and developing a new offer for one and two year olds.
3. Ensuring that the delivery of priorities is supported by a sustainable, diverse and thriving sector and profession. A strategic framework for the profession will be provided later in 2022.
4. Ensuring that ambitions are underpinned by fair funding and outcomes frameworks, robust data and organisations that work together to regulate services and support quality improvement. This is a reference in part to the review of inspection agencies taking place.

Key outcomes to consider in relation to measures:

- Children's development improves and the poverty-related outcomes gap narrows.
- Family wellbeing improves.
- Parents' and carers' opportunities to take up or sustain work, training, and study increase.

Priority 1 (P.8 onwards)

Realising the benefits of the expansion to 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare

- Uptake of funded ELC for 3 and 4 year olds is 97%. Some families of eligible 2 year olds are opting not to use this. Figures for this are not available. New Regulations should allow this data to be available to Scottish Local Authorities before the end of the 2022-23 financial year. This data will enable local authorities (working with SG) to maximise the uptake for eligible 2s, through an improvement programme by summer 2023. (P.8)
- Services with all "Good" (or above) ratings of quality have fallen between 2014 and 2021 from 93.2% to 89.4%.
- Full implementation of the national standard is planned for August 2023 but a final decision is yet to be made

- The commitment to Realising the Ambition as the key guidance is reiterated
- SG will work with all agencies to ensure there is better alignment and strategic direction for improvement work. The Equity and Excellence Leads network is specifically mentioned
- The vision is outlined that children will spend as much time outdoors as they do indoors, with time outdoors in every setting, every day. Mention made of the Out to Play improvement programme and Virtual Nature Schools.
- Setting the Table, the guidance for nutrition within ELCC is to be updated
- The work of the ELC Inclusion fund is to be built upon and there will be investment in a new programme of work to support early intervention in Speech and Language for children and their families.
- From August 2023, the entitlement to the right to an additional funded year of ELC (deferral) will be expanded.
- Embedding family wellbeing within ELC services, including through use of the Equity and Excellence Leads and through PEEP trained staff
- Evaluation of the impact of 1140 hours through the “Early learning and childcare expansion programme: evaluation strategy (2022)”. A final report to come in 2025.

Priority 2 (P.13 onwards)

Progressing the expansion of the childcare offer, including building a system of school age childcare and developing a new offer for one and two year olds.

New offer of ELC for 1 and 2 Year olds. Phase one (2022-23) is collaboration and engagement with families to understand needs, as well as mapping current provision across Scotland, and also working with partners in the sector to identify innovative ways to deliver these services

- Phase two (2023-24) will publish the findings of phase 1 and start to develop, trial and evaluate models of provision
- There is also a commitment to develop the provision of school aged childcare beginning by identifying targeted early adopter communities across Scotland.

Priority 3 (P.16)

Ensuring that the delivery of priorities is supported by a sustainable, diverse and thriving sector and profession.

- A strategic framework for the profession will be provided later in 2022
- Continuation of the Nursery Rates Relief Scheme for eligible Day Nurseries.
- A commitment to reviewing the rates-setting process to ensure that the hourly rate reflects the cost of providing ELC and to ensure the payment of the Living Wage to staff
- Statistics about the day-care of children workforce: 34% increase in total since 2011, and between 2017 and 2021 a 52% increase in the number of graduates with relevant degrees
- Initial projections were that expansion would result in 25% of funded hours being provided by private/voluntary/third sector that number is now around 30%. The number of childminder services have declined by 29% (2016-2021). There has been an increase in the proportion of services run by local authorities. The forthcoming Strategic Framework for the Childcare Profession will aim to support a diverse and skilled workforce

Priority 4 (P.21)

Ensuring that ambitions are underpinned by fair funding and outcomes frameworks, robust data and organisations that work together to regulate services and support quality improvement. (A reference in part to the review of inspection agencies taking place)

- The number of ELC age children in Scotland has fallen 7% below projections made at the start of expansion. It is projected to fall further over the next 10 years. On P.23, the Scottish Government have indicated a New Deal with Local Authorities in respect of fair funding, including of ELC. There is also an indication of a new CYP Wellbeing Outcomes Framework to be developed by 2025 to measure ELC outcomes.
- The results of the consultation on the national framework for inspection will be published by early 2023.
- There is an emphasis on the service design principles of Co-design (with communities), Innovation and Partnership

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Succinct summary of evidence for the positive impacts of high quality ELCC. It is stated that the evidence base for the benefits of ELC for children aged 2 or under is mixed.

► Annex B - Scottish Government childcare policy: the story so far

