

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE14 November 2024Report by Director of EducationRESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROVISION OF EARLY LEARNING AND
CHILDCARE AND OUT OF SCHOOL CARE SERVICES**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee on the results of the biennial consultation on the provision of both early learning and childcare (ELC) and out of school care (OSC) services available across East Renfrewshire.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the results of the consultation on both early learning and childcare and out of school care services.

BACKGROUND

3. In line with the national expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC) services, from August 2021, all children aged 3- and 4-years old, in addition to eligible 2-year olds, have had a statutory entitlement of up to 1,140 hours of funded provision per year. The expansion of ELC has been based on the principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

4. Within East Renfrewshire, families have a range of different settings in which they can choose to access their child's statutory entitlement, across the public; private, voluntary and independent sectors; or with a childminder. All settings in East Renfrewshire are organised on a community basis: Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor; Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham; Giffnock and Thornliebank; and Newton Mearns. Each community contains a range of different providers offering families choice on how they wish to access their child's entitlement.

5. Within local authority settings, a range of different models are currently available, as detailed below. Following on from the last consultation, undertaken in autumn 2022, a new full-time option was made available for families to select, enabling families to supplement their child's statutory entitlement with paid-for additional hours. This has proven to be a very popular choice for families over the last 2 years, supporting them to meet different circumstances, including work, training or caring responsibilities.

Provision	Attendance Pattern	Term Time/Full Year
Core	9am – 3pm, 5 days per week	Term Time
Extended	8am – 6pm, 3 days per week	Term Time
Stretch A	Morning or afternoon sessions, 5 days per week	Full Year
Stretch B	2 full days and one half day per week	Full Year
Full time	8am – 6pm, 5 days per week	Term Time OR Full Year

6. Private, voluntary and independent settings and childminders, known collectively as funded providers, offer a range of different models and patterns for families to choose from. In addition, families can choose ‘blended provision’, using part of their child’s entitlement in a local authority setting and the remaining portion in a funded provider, offering further flexibility.

7. Whilst the majority of families residing within East Renfrewshire access their child’s statutory entitlement within a local nursery, in line with the Scottish Government’s *Funding Follows the Child* approach, families are able to access funded hours in other local authorities where they wish to do so. Alongside our neighbouring authorities, the Council is a member of the West Partnership Cross-Boundary Funding Protocol, establishing the appropriate mechanisms for families accessing their child’s funding in a setting located in a different authority.

8. Out of school care (OSC) services are non-statutory and operate across a range of different schools and settings across East Renfrewshire. A range of different services are available across East Renfrewshire, including breakfast clubs, after school services and holiday provision. These services are operated by a range of different providers across the third and private sectors and are not available at all schools within East Renfrewshire.

9. Recognising the particular challenges around OSC provision for children and young people with ASN, the department has been working in partnership with Council colleagues around the development of an OSC provision at Isobel Mair School. This scheme is being reported on separately through a report to the Council’s Cabinet in November 2024.

REPORT

10. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out a requirement for local authorities to consult with families on the provision of ELC and OSC every 2 years and to outline the plans for service delivery. The previous consultation was undertaken in autumn 2022 and reported to Education Committee in November 2022.

11. A consultation exercise was undertaken from 20 September – 20 October 2024 on both ELC and OSC provision across East Renfrewshire. The consultation was available online and was shared by individual establishments, funded providers, OSC providers and through the Council’s social media channels.

12. A total of 541 responses were submitted to the consultation, an increase from the 411 submitted to the 2022 exercise. Of the 541 responses, 98% were from families residing within East Renfrewshire.

Early Learning & Childcare Consultation

13. A summary of the responses to the consultation on ELC is outlined below:

- a. The largest number of responses on ELC provision were received from families with a child accessing their statutory entitlement, with almost 70% of respondents having a child aged 3-4 years old.
- b. When asked to rate how their child’s ELC allocation meets the needs of their family (with 1 being ‘not at all’ and 5 being ‘extremely well’), the average score was 3.9. 68% of those responding selected either “very well” or “extremely well”, with only 14% selecting “not at all well” or “not well”. This is broadly in line with the results from the 2022 consultation.
- c. Almost half of respondents (49%) indicated that setting was the most important factor when applying for ELC, with 31% selecting model of attendance and 20%

having no preference. This is in line with the results of the previous consultation. Two-thirds (66%) of respondents indicated a preference for full-year provision over term-time (34%). This is a significant change from the previous consultation where there was a more even split between term-time (50%) and full-year (48%).

- d. Both full-days (45%) and core (29%) were the most popular choices for families to select, with smaller numbers selecting half days (6%) or a mix of full and half days (20%).
- e. When asked about purchasing additional hours above their child's statutory entitlement, 23% of respondents indicated that they currently do this already. Whilst 42% indicated that they do not require any additional hours, 35% of respondents stated that they would like to access more hours but that they were not available in their child's setting.
- f. When asked about the likelihood of deferring their child's entry to primary school, 47% of respondents selected "not at all likely", with 25% selecting "very likely".

14. In response to the question about how the allocation meets their family needs, the most common reasons for a lower score were: where a family had not received their first choice preference; the availability of ELC provision for children aged 2-years old and under; and the affordability of additional hours above and beyond the statutory entitlement. A significant number of the responses were very positive, with many respondents very positive about their children's experiences in ELC settings within East Renfrewshire.

15. As noted in the consultation, setting remains the most important factor for families when applying for ELC provision and can, for example, often be related to the attendance of other children at the school or due to wider childcare arrangements. In recognising how important this is for families, ahead of each of the last two sessions, officers have been able to allocate over 90% of applications received on time to their first choice of setting.

16. Following on from the 2022 consultation, more flexible options for families were introduced, including the wider rollout of add-on hours and the launch of a new full-time model of attendance. Both options have been very popular over the last 2 sessions, increasing the flexibility and choice for families, as well as increasing the income generated by the service. Whilst every effort is made to make this additional provision available as widely as possible, there are finite spaces available based on staffed capacity of each individual setting. The department will continue to review the availability of spaces ahead of each session and ensure as wide availability as possible, whilst ensuring the efficient delivery of services.

17. Over recent years, following the change to the legislation around deferrals, the department has seen a gradual increase in the number of families choosing to defer their child's entry to primary school. With almost three-quarters of the responses to the question being "not at all likely" or "very likely", it would suggest that, at this stage, a significant proportion of parents have already determined whether or not they wish their child to defer entry to primary school. The department will continue to monitor applications through the annual school admissions cycle.

Out of School Care Consultation

18. A summary of the responses to the consultation on OSC is outlined below:

- a. Families indicated that their children attended a wide range of different OSC services, with after school provision and breakfast clubs being the most popular options. A smaller number attended holiday provision.

- b. When asked to rate how the provision before and after school services met the needs of their family (with 1 being 'not at all well' and 5 being 'extremely well'), the average score was 4.1. Over 70% of the responses were either "very well" or "extremely well", with 17% being "not at all well" or "not well".
- c. When asked to rate how holiday provision met the needs of their family (with the same ratings), the average score was 3.5. There was a much greater mix of views on holiday provision, with 49% being "very well" or "extremely well" and 30% being "not at all well" or "not well".
- d. When respondents were asked whether they wished to access out of school care provision for their child but currently could not, only 21% indicated that this was the case, with 79% saying they did not. Given the responses to questions around holiday provision, it is possible that most respondents only referred to before and after school provision when considering this question.

19. In response to the question about how before and after school services meet the needs of families, a wide variety of comments were received. A large number of comments provided positive feedback on the provision available, with specific recognition often provided for particular individual services. The most common reasons for a lower score included: the availability or lack of provision in certain communities or settings; the affordability of services; and the ability for it to meet the working patterns of parents, with comments requested earlier start times for breakfast club services and later finishes for after school services. Similarly, the most common reasons for a lower score when responding to the question about holiday provision were: the affordability of holiday services and the lack of provision for different age groups in single services.

20. Specifically, a number of responses related to provision of OSC services for children and young people attending Isobel Mair School. The department has been working closely with the school community and partners around the provision of suitable services, recognising concerns around affordability. A report is due to be considered by the Council's Cabinet on specific proposals about this service.

21. The department continues to support the provision of OSC across establishments and works closely with providers to increase availability where possible.

22. Following publication of the Scottish Government's *School Age Childcare Delivery Framework* in October 2023, six early adopter local authorities have been undertaking pilots on the design of new community level systems of out of school care provision. The future course of this work will inform a new, nationally-determined approach to OSC provision. The department will continue to engage at a national level in this area and will, of course, consider any implications for East Renfrewshire.

FINANCE & EFFICIENCY

23. The department continues to carefully manage the provision of ELC through existing departmental budgets, ensuring efficient service delivery and maximising the utilisation of capacity through a careful, well-managed allocations process. Existing staffing allocations continue to be reviewed on an ongoing basis to ensure efficient deployment of resources whilst continuing to ensure regulatory compliance.

24. The expansion of add-on and full-time provision over the last two sessions has enabled the department to meet significant, challenging income targets. Future income targets will be developed as part of the Council's annual review of charges and the wider budget setting exercise.

25. As a non-statutory service, the Council does not directly provide OSC services and receives no direct funding for this purpose. The department has a role in facilitating agreements between private providers and individual school communities to support provision of this type.

CONSULTATION

26. As outlined above, the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires all local authorities to undertake a biennial consultation with families on the provision of ELC and OSC services within their area. The 2024 consultation was undertaken from 20 September – 20 October 2024, with a total of 541 responses submitted.

CONCLUSION

27. Following the expansion of the ELC statutory entitlement from August 2020, the Education Department has continued to engage with families to ensure continued adherence on the key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability, and ensure we remain responsive to the needs of families. Following on from previous consultations, the department has expanded the flexibility provided to families and will continue to monitor this over the coming years to ensure choice on the types and level of provision available.

28. The department recognises the importance of OSC services for families within East Renfrewshire to support employment, training and wider family commitments and, whilst concerns have been expressed around the availability and affordability of services, the department will look to continue to engage with our partners nationally around any wider Scottish Government commitments.

RECOMMENDATIONS

29. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the results of the consultation on both early learning and childcare and out of school care services.

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14 November 2024

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Appendix

1. Responses to Consultation on ELC & OSC, Autumn 2024

RESPONSES TO CONSULTATION – SEPT/OCT 2024

Which community were responses received from?

G78 <i>Barrhead/Neilston</i>	G44 & G76 <i>Busby/Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	G46 <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	G77 <i>Newton Mearns</i>	Outwith ERC
39%	17%	20%	23%	2%

What services do you have children currently accessing within East Renfrewshire?

Early learning and childcare only	Out of school care service only	Both early learning and childcare setting and out of school care services	Neither early learning and childcare or out of school care services – but may in future	Other
48%	29%	13%	8%	2%

Section 1 – Early Learning & Childcare

Question 1

How old are your children attending early learning and childcare (ELC) provision?

0-1 years old	2 years old	3-4 years old	5 years old	None currently
7%	15%	69%	3%	5%

Question 2

Which model of early learning and childcare (ELC) does your child access?

Core Hours – Nursery Class	Extended Hours – Nursery Class	Core Hours – Family Centre	Stretch A (AM) – Family Centre	Stretch A (PM) – Family Centre
11%	16%	8%	8%	3%

Stretch B (2.5 days) Family Centre	Childminder	Private or voluntary nursery	Blended model	Other
28%	4%	12%	5%	5%

Question 3

How well does your child's allocation meet the early learning and childcare needs of your family?

Respondents were asked to select a score ranging from 1 (not at all well) to 5 (extremely well). The average score given was 3.9.

The average score across each community was as follows:

G78 <i>Barrhead/Neilston</i>	G44 & G76 <i>Busby/Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	G46 <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	G77 <i>Newton Mearns</i>
3.9	4.2	4.0	4.2

Question 4

Please tell us more about the rating you selected above.

In answering this question, those providing a high rating tended to be those who: were expressing positive views about the staffing, environments and service at individual settings; received preferred options when applying for provision; or those who were accessing additional hours to support with meeting individual family circumstances.

As noted in the report, those selecting lower scores tended to be where they did not receive a preferred option, were unable to access additional hours, or where they were unable to access local authority under-3 provision.

Question 5

When applying for ELC, you are asked to select both a preferred setting and a preferred model of attendance. Which of these is most important to you?

Model	Setting	No preference
31%	49%	20%

Question 6

Term time provision is available in our nursery classes which are closed during the school holidays. Full year (48 week) provision is available in our family centres which only close over Christmas, public holidays and in-service days. Which of these do you prefer?

Full year (48 week) Provision	Term Time Provision
66%	34%

Question 7

Which of the currently available models best suit your circumstances?

Full Days 8am – 6pm	Half Days 8am – 12:45pm OR 1pm – 5:45pm	Mixture of full and half days	School Days 9am – 3pm
45%	6%	20%	29%

Question 8

Many settings across East Renfrewshire offer families the option to purchase additional hours above their child's entitlement of 1,140 funded hours. This is available through individual add-on sessions, allowing families to buy extra sessions, or through the availability of full-time provision, allowing

children to attend 8am-6ppm, 5 days per week. Is this something which you either currently do or would like to do?

I currently access add-on sessions	I currently access full-time provision	I do not need to access additional hours	I would like to access more hours but they aren't available
16%	7%	42%	35%

Question 9

All parents and carers have the legal right to defer their child's entry to primary school if they are not yet 5 years old at the beginning of the school year, being able to access an additional year of funded early learning and childcare. Thinking about your own child, how likely is it that you would consider deferring when they are due to start school?

Respondents were asked to select a score to indicate the likelihood they would defer their child's start of primary school, ranging from 1 (not at all likely) to 5 (very likely). The average score given was 2.5.

The average score across each community was as follows:

G78 <i>Barrhead/Neilston</i>	G44 & G76 <i>Busby/Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	G46 <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	G77 <i>Newton Mearns</i>
2.5	2.2	2.6	2.7

Question 10

Do you have any additional comments about early learning and childcare within East Renfrewshire?

A wide range of views were expressed in this free comment section. A significant number of the comments expressed very positive views about provision within East Renfrewshire, with respondents often highlighting how satisfied they and their children were with their provision.

A number of additional other comments were expressed by respondents across a wide-range of issues:

- Availability of local authority provision for children below the age of 3;
- The Council's admissions policy for ELC provision, including requests that allocations should take in to account the individual working patterns of parents;
- Availability of additional hours across all local authority settings;
- Support for the introduction of greater flexibility for parents through add-on and full time models;
- The affordability of ELC provision within East Renfrewshire;
- The availability of holiday provision for children attending ELC provision;
- The introduction of the delay in the date from which children can access their statutory entitlement, aligning with the national criteria.

Section 2 – Out of School Care

Question 1

What type of out of school care service does your child currently access?

After school service in my child's school	After school service in another school	Other after school service (for example voluntary sector)
36%	1%	5%

Breakfast club service	Holiday provision	Other
48%	4%	6%

Question 2

How well does the current provision before and after school care meet the childcare needs of your family?

Respondents were asked to select a score ranging from 1 (not at all well) to 5 (extremely well). The average score given was 4.1.

The average score across each community was as follows:

G78 <i>Barrhead/Neilston</i>	G44 & G76 <i>Busby/Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	G46 <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	G77 <i>Newton Mearns</i>
4.2	4.2	4.5	3.7

Question 3

How well does the current provision of holiday care meet the childcare needs of your family?

Respondents were asked to select a score ranging from 1 (not at all well) to 5 (extremely well). The average score given was 3.5.

The average score across each community was as follows:

G78 <i>Barrhead/Neilston</i>	G44 & G76 <i>Busby/Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	G46 <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	G77 <i>Newton Mearns</i>
3.7	3.7	3.0	3.3

Question 4

Do you wish to access out of school care for your child but currently can't?

Yes	No
21%	79%

Question 5

Do you have any other comments about out of school care provision within East Renfrewshire?

Comments provided to this question covered a range of different issues related to OSC provision.

A number of positive comments were received, some examples of which are included below:

- *“Our after school care provision offers top quality care in a nurturing and supportive environment. The activities they offer are educational, child based and diverse and the staff are attentive and inclusive. I couldn’t ask for more.”*
- *“Breakfast Club and After School Care are a great support to working families who are not in a position to have family support for drop offs and pick ups.”*
- *“OSC in the school is incredible flexible and supports us to be responsive to changing work demands. Holiday club access is challenge to access.”*

A majority of comments related to a small number of additional issues raised by families:

- Affordability of services
- Availability of services – both in terms of services only operating in certain locations and, where they do operate, it often being difficult to get a space. In addition, some respondents indicated they would like to see earlier access in the morning and later availability in the evenings.
- The provision of holiday cover for families.
- Requests for the Council to operate a universal service both pre- and after-school in each establishment.

A number of comments related to the availability of OSC services for children and young people with ASN, with a number of respondents specifically referring to Isobel Mair School. As noted above, this is subject to a report to the Council’s Cabinet.