

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE17 November 2022Report by Director of EducationRESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROVISION OF EARLY LEARNING AND  
CHILDCARE**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to:
  - a) Inform members of the results of the biennial consultation on the provision of early learning and childcare within East Renfrewshire; and
  - b) Set out the proposals to increase flexibility through the available models of provision in early learning and childcare settings from August 2023.

**RECOMMENDATION**

2. Education Committee is asked to:
  - a) Note the results of the early learning and childcare consultation; and
  - b) Note the department's proposals to further increase flexibility for families to address additional demand.

**BACKGROUND**

3. In line with the Scottish Government's expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC), all three and four year old children, in addition to eligible two year olds, have a statutory entitlement 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. This provision has been offered to families in East Renfrewshire since August 2020, a year ahead of the national implementation date of August 2021, having been delayed nationally by the Scottish Government due to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

4. Within East Renfrewshire, families benefit from having enhanced early access to their child's statutory entitlement, with children starting nursery from when they turn three after the beginning of the academic session. This is in advance of the [national legislation on eligibility](#).

5. Families have a range of different settings in which they can chose to access their child's statutory entitlement, across both the public and private, voluntary and independent sectors, as well as with a childminder. All settings within East Renfrewshire are organised on a community basis to provide flexibility and choice for families. The current communities are: Barrhead, Neilston and Uplawmoor; Busby, Clarkston and Eaglesham; Giffnock and Thornliebank; and Newton Mearns. Each community contains a range of different providers, offering families different options on how to access their child's entitlement.

6. Within local authority settings, a range of different models are currently available for families to choose from to best suit their own specific circumstances:

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

In addition, families can choose ‘blended provision’, using part of their child’s entitlement in a local authority setting and the remaining hours in a funded provider. Funded providers offer a variety of different models, further increasing the choice available.

7. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 sets out a requirement for local authorities to consult with families on the provision of ELC every two years and set out a plan for delivery. With the previous consultation having been undertaken throughout October and November 2020, and reported to Education Committee in January 2021, a further consultation has been required, as per the legislation.

## REPORT

8. A consultation exercise on the provision of ELC within East Renfrewshire was undertaken from 10 – 30 October 2022. The consultation was carried out online and was shared by individual establishments and through the Council’s social media channels.

### *Summary of Responses*

9. The following key points were noted from the consultation:

- a) A total of 411 consultation responses were received, with 90% of those responding currently having a child accessing early learning and childcare within East Renfrewshire.
- b) A significant majority (81%) of those who currently accessed ELC had children aged between 3 and 5 years old, accessing their statutory entitlement.
- c) When asked to rate how their child’s allocation meets the needs of their family (with 1 being not at all and 5 being extremely), the average score was 3.98. 70% of those responding scored this either as 4 or 5, with only 12% scoring 1 or 2.
- d) A higher number of respondents indicated that setting was the most important aspect of their child’s allocation (53%), as opposed to the model of attendance (39%). There was a fairly even split between term time (50%) and full year (48%) preferences for models of attendance.
- e) Both core provision (39%) and extended days (38%) were the most popular choices for those responding, with smaller numbers indicating a preference for half days (7%) or a mix of half and full days (16%).
- f) A significant number of those responding (73%) indicated that they would like to consider the option to purchase additional hours above their child’s statutory entitlement. Of those responding, 9% currently accessed additional hours as part of the initial rollout for session 2022/23. When asked if they would like to access a full time, 8am-6pm ELC place, 55% of those responding indicated that they would like to do so.

g) When asked about the likelihood of deferring their child's entry to primary school (1 being not at all likely and 5 being very likely), a variety of responses were received. Half of those responded with 1, with 21% responding with 5.

10. A report on the full findings of the consultation exercise is included as Appendix 1.

11. In response to the question on how the allocation meets their family needs, the most common reason for a lower score was where families had not received their first choice of provision or did not have the opportunity to purchase additional hours, above the statutory entitlement.

12. Settings across East Renfrewshire continue to be very popular and, therefore, it is not always possible for all families to receive their first preference of setting and attendance pattern. The variety of models made available seek to try and offer families a range of different attendance patterns to access their child's entitlement, however, given the need to manage the service, it is not possible for us to accommodate every individual set of circumstances. The department is continuing to make improvements to the current application process to ensure families can better indicate their preferences to get the best allocation available.

13. Core provision continues to be the most popular choice for families and across our settings we have been increasing the number of available spaces to try and better accommodate individual preferences. Whilst popular, core provision is not an efficient model of delivery and it is therefore essential to balance demand with the capacity available at each setting.

14. There was a strong preference amongst respondents to be able to purchase additional hours above their child's statutory entitlement, with over half indicating they would like to be able to access a full time place were it to be made available. Following on from an initial pilot exercise starting in March 2022, individual settings have made 'add on' hours available for families to purchase, where capacity allows. This has proven to be very popular with families looking to supplement their child's attendance pattern to help meet other commitments.

15. Whilst all parents and carers currently 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 session, from August 2023, new legislation will mean that any children deferring will automatically be able to continue to access funded early learning and childcare for an additional year. When asked about the likelihood they would choose to defer, just over 20% indicated that it was very likely they would look to do so.

16. The department is continuing to plan accordingly based on the new legislation to ensure sufficient capacity across all of the communities within East Renfrewshire and will be learning from the Scottish Government pilots undertaken across 10 other local authorities to ensure readiness for the new entitlement.

#### *Provision for Session 2023/24 and Beyond*

17. Through the responses received in the consultation exercise, families have indicated a strong preference for the continued availability of core and extended full day provision and the availability of increased additional hours to supplement their child's statutory entitlement.

18. Given the breadth of individual family circumstances, the high level of flexibility through the availability of a mix of both term time and full year provision, as well as the availability of both half and full day attendance patterns, remains popular for families accessing their child's entitlement.

19. In addition to the current models of provision, set out in paragraph 6, from August 2023, the department will be looking to increase the opportunities for families to access increased hours through the application process, across both nursery classes and family centres where capacity allows. Families choosing to access this model would supplement their child's statutory entitlement with additional purchased hours on a contractual basis, providing families with certainty and stability in their child's attendance pattern across the year.

20. As an initial pilot for session 2023/24, this model will not primarily be made available in every individual setting, however, it will be an option for families to apply for within each individual community.

21. In addition to the availability of the new 'full time' model, settings will continue to make 'add on' hours available for families to purchase where capacity allows. These will continue to be made available on a more flexible basis and will be communicated directly to families by the individual settings.

#### *Application Process for Session 2023/24*

22. The application process for all three and four year old nursery places will be available online from early December 2022, and will run until 31<sup>st</sup> January 2023, with families receiving notification of their child's allocation in early spring.

23. As noted above, given the introduction of funded ELC for children choosing to defer, the department is updating the existing early years and school admissions application processes. This will ensure families are able to clearly indicate their choice to defer their child's entry to primary school and continue to access funded ELC for a further year. By streamlining the process, it will ensure both an improved customer experience and earlier data to support provision planning across the ELC estate. For those without an automatic entitlement to defer (those already aged 5 by the beginning of the school session) this will continue to be assessed on an individual basis, as per existing arrangements.

## **FINANCE AND EFFICIENCY**

24. Elected members will note the continued financial uncertainty around the future funding arrangements for ELC as we await confirmation of the total allocation for the years ahead. The Education Department continues to engage with both COSLA and the Scottish Government on the distribution methodology to ensure that the Council receives a fairer funding settlement to meet the true costs of delivering the additional entitlement to children across East Renfrewshire. As we await the outcome of this ongoing review, we will continue to manage the costs of delivery carefully through the annual budget setting exercise.

25. In reviewing the provision for 2023/24, the department has sought to adopt more efficient models within each establishment. Whilst it is anticipated that the number of children accessing funded ELC will rise in 2023/24 due to the changes to the entitlement for those seeking to defer, the department will look to minimise any significant increases to staffing levels. Existing staffing allocations will continue to be reviewed to ensure the most efficient

deployment, whilst ensuring continued regulatory compliance, and minimise the need for significant additional recruitment.

26. The increase of full time provision availability within ELC settings will result in additional income for the Council. This will contribute towards the existing challenging targets already set out within the department's budget.

## **CONSULTATION**

27. As set out, the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires all local authorities to undertake a biennial consultation with families on the provision of ELC within their area.

28. The 2022 consultation exercise was undertaken from 10 – 30 October 2022 through an online survey. This was shared by each individual establishment and through the Council's wider social media presence. The number of people participating in the consultation increased by 22 on the previous 2020 exercise.

## **IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSALS**

29. In seeking to deliver enhanced flexibility and greater choice for families in accessing their child's entitlement and any supplementary hours, the department will continue to monitor staff levels to ensure ongoing regulatory compliance. Given the continuing financial challenges, the department will look to manage this within existing budgets, however, it is possible that this could limit the level of flexibility able to be made to families. It is not anticipated that this proposal will detrimentally impact on staffing across the authority.

## **PARTNERSHIP WORKING**

30. In delivering the statutory entitlement, the Education Department continues to work closely with the private, voluntary and independent sectors, as per the Scottish Government's *Funding Follows the Child* policy. The department will continue to engage with providers in the ongoing delivery ELC provision across East Renfrewshire.

## **CONCLUSION**

31. Following the introduction of the funded entitlement in August 2020, as per the legislative requirement, the Education Department has continued to engage with families to ensure the continued adherence to the principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability, and ensure we remain responsive to the needs of local families.

32. Through the consultation, whilst noting the flexibility available through the various existing models, families have specifically highlighted a preference for a greater availability of additional hours above the statutory entitlement, to help meet family circumstances. In response, from session 2023/24, in addition to the current models, families will be able to apply to access a new 'full time' model of provision, supplementing their child's entitlement with additional purchased hours. This new model of provision will be made available through the forthcoming application process for 2023/24, which opens in early December 2022.

## RECOMMENDATION

33. Education Committee is asked to:
- a) Note the results of the early learning and childcare consultation; and
  - b) Note the department's proposals to further increase flexibility for families to address additional demand.

Mark Ratter  
Director of Education  
17 November 2022

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## APPENDIX 1

**EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL  
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**REPORT ON THE RESPONSES TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE PROVISION OF  
EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE**

BACKGROUND

1. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to consult on early learning and childcare provision every two years and, having regard to the views expressed, prepare and publish a plan for how they intend to make early learning and childcare available.
2. The Education Department previously consulted with families throughout October and November 2020, with a report submitted to Education Committee in January 2021.

CONSULTATION PROCESS

3. The consultation was open from the 10<sup>th</sup> to the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2022, with responses submitted through an online survey. The survey was promoted by individual establishments through their own communication channels. In addition, the consultation was publicised through the Council's Facebook and Twitter social media channels.

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

4. A total of 411 responses were received to the consultation. The table below summarises the responses to each question:

<b>Question 1</b> – What is your postcode?	<b>G78</b> <i>Barrhead/ Neilston</i>	<b>G44 &amp; G76</b> <i>Busby/ Clarkston/ Eaglesham</i>	<b>G46</b> <i>Giffnock/ Thornliebank</i>	<b>G77</b> <i>Newton Mearns</i>	Outwith ERC
	22%	22%	17%	38%	1%
<b>Question 2</b> – Do you currently access Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)?	<b>YES</b>		<b>NO</b>		
	90%		10%		
<b>Question 3</b> – How old are the children you send or would send to ELC?	<b>Age 0-1</b>	<b>Age 1-2</b>	<b>Age 2-3</b>	<b>Age 3-4</b>	<b>Age 4-5</b>
	1%	6%	11%	52%	29%
<b>Question 4</b> – Which model of ELC does your child access?	<b>Core Hours – Nursery Class</b>	<b>Extended Hours – Nursery Class</b>	<b>Core Hours – Family Centre</b>	<b>Stretched A AM – Family Centre</b>	<b>Stretched A PM – Family Centre</b>
	22%	24%	10%	6%	6%
	<b>Stretched B – Family Centre</b>	<b>Childminder</b>	<b>Private or Voluntary Nursery</b>	<b>Blended Model</b>	<b>Other</b>

	20%	1%	6%	4%	1%
<b>Question 5</b> – How well does your child’s current allocation meet the early learning and childcare needs of your family?	<i>Not at all well</i> 1                      2                      3                      4 <i>Extremely well</i> 5				
	5%	7%	18%	25%	45%
<b>Question 6</b> – Please tell us more about the rating you gave above.	There were 285 responses received to this question.  A summary of the responses is detailed below.				
<b>Question 7</b> – When applying for ELC, we ask which setting you want i.e. the location, and model you want i.e. the pattern of days and hours.  Which of these is most important to you?	<b>Setting</b>	<b>Model</b>	<b>No preference</b>		
	53%	39%	9%		
<b>Question 8</b> – 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, on public holidays and in-service days.  Which of these do you prefer?	<b>Term Time</b>	<b>Full Year (48 weeks)</b>	<b>Other</b>		
	50%	48%	2%		
<b>Question 9</b> – Which of the models best suit your needs?	<b>School Days (9am – 3pm)</b>	<b>Full Days (8am – 6pm)</b>	<b>Half Days (8am – 12:45pm or 1pm – 5:45pm)</b>	<b>Mixture of full days and half days</b>	
	39%	38%	7%	16%	



<p><b>Question 10 –</b> Would you like to be able to purchase additional ELC over and above your child's 1,140 hours entitlement?</p>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Maybe</b>	<b>Already purchase additional hours</b>	
	49%	18%	24%	9%	
<p><b>Question 11 –</b> If it were made available, would you like to be able to access a full time place for your child at their nursery?</p> <p>This would be based on being able to access nursery from 8am – 6pm, 5 days a week.</p>	<b>Yes</b>		<b>No</b>		
	55%		45%		
<p><b>Question 12 -</b> All parents and carers in Scotland 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.</p> <p>From August 2023, new legislation will mean that any children deferring entry to primary school will automatically be able to continue to access funded early learning and childcare for an additional year.</p> <p>Thinking about your own child, how likely is it you would consider deferring when they are due to start primary school?</p>	<p><i>Not at all well</i> <span style="margin-left: 150px;"><i>Extremely well</i></span></p> <p>1                      2                      3                      4                      5</p>				
	50%	11%	11%	7%	21%
<p><b>Question 13 –</b> Are there any</p>	There were 128 responses received to this question.				

comments you wish to add to this survey?	A summary of responses is detailed below.
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### SUMMARY OF VIEWS EXPRESSED

5. Further information on the views expressed in each of the questions is detailed below.

- Question 1 – What is your postcode

Early learning and childcare provision is organised into four communities based on locality and address.

The greatest proportion of responses were received from those within the Newton Mearns community (38%). The smallest proportion were from the Giffnock/Thornliebank community (17%). This is the same pattern as with the 2020 consultation exercise.

A total of 3 responses were received from those with a postcode from outwith East Renfrewshire.

- Question 2 – Do you currently access Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)?

The vast majority of responses were received from those with a child currently accessing ELC provision within East Renfrewshire.

- Question 3 – How old are the children you send or would send to ELC?

The largest group of responses (81%) were from those with children aged 3-4 or 4-5, accessing funded ELC.

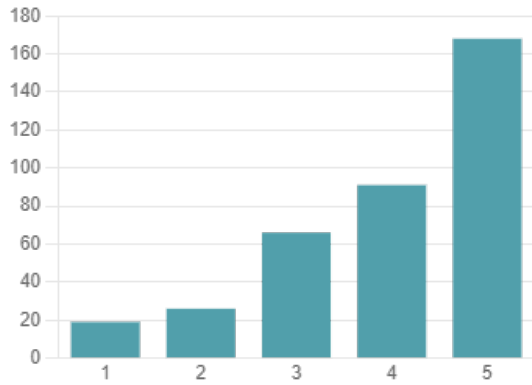
A smaller number of responses were received from those families accessing non-statutory provision.

- Question 4 - Which model of ELC does your child access?

The largest number of responses were received from families accessing either core or extended hours in a nursery class (46%). This was followed by those attending a family centre (42%), with a smaller number received from those accessing funded providers or a blended model of provision.

- Question 5 - How well does your child's current allocation meet the early learning and childcare needs of your family?

Individuals were asked to rate their allocation, from not at all well (1) to extremely well (5). The average rating was 3.89, with 70% rating either a 4 or a 5.



Satisfaction scores were highest in the Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham community with an average score of 4.2. This was followed by the Giffnock/Thornliebank and Newton Mearns communities scoring 4 and Barrhead/Neilston scoring 3.6. There remains more pressure on spaces within the Barrhead/Neilston community with less options for families to purchase additional hours which may have impacted on the score provided by respondents.

- Question 6 - Please tell us more about the rating you gave above.

A wide variety of responses were provided to this question, explaining the reasons for the scores submitted by individuals.

For those who scored highly, the most common reason was that the model of provision suited their family circumstances. In addition, many responses highlighted that the proximity to local schools was beneficial, with families specifically highlighting the ability to drop children off at both nursery at school at one single location. Notably, a significant number of responses also highlighted that their high scores were due to their children being happy with their nursery placement and the care provided by staff.

Of those who scored low, the most common reason was the model of provision, with individuals noting their unhappiness at not receiving their first preference choice. In addition, a number of individuals specifically highlighted that there was a lack of additional hours available to purchase to supplement their child’s statutory entitlement. Finally, some responses indicated that the lack of provision over holiday periods could make childcare difficult.

- Question 7 - When applying for ELC, we ask which setting you want i.e. the location, and the model you want i.e. the pattern of days and hours. Which of these is most important to you?

The majority of respondents indicated that setting was more important to them.

Community	Setting	Model	No preference
Barrhead/Neilston	53%	35%	12%
Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham	58%	33%	9%
Giffnock/Thornliebank	58%	36%	6%
Newton Mearns	47%	46%	7%

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In most communities there was a clear preference for setting, however, within Newton Mearns there was a more mixed response with only a slightly higher number selecting setting over model.

- Question 8 - 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, on public holidays, and in-service days. Which of these do you prefer?

There was a fairly even split between those preferring term time and full year provision. This is mirrored in the similar number of responses from those attending nursery classes or family centres in question 4.

- Question 9 - Which of the models best suit your needs?

Either core or extended provision was the clear preferred option expressed in responses, with 77% selecting one of the two. This demonstrates a clear preference for either full school day or full time hours within nursery provision.

Of those who selected full days (8am – 6pm), three quarters indicated that they would like to purchase additional hours to access full time provision (question 11).

- Question 10 - Would you like to be able to purchase additional ELC over and above your child’s 1,140 hours entitlement?

A total of 73% of responses indicated that they would either like to or may like to purchase additional hours above their statutory entitlement.

Following the launch of additional hours in August 2022, 9% of those responding indicated that they already purchase additional hours. Settings have been looking to make this available to families where capacity allows and this has been well received.

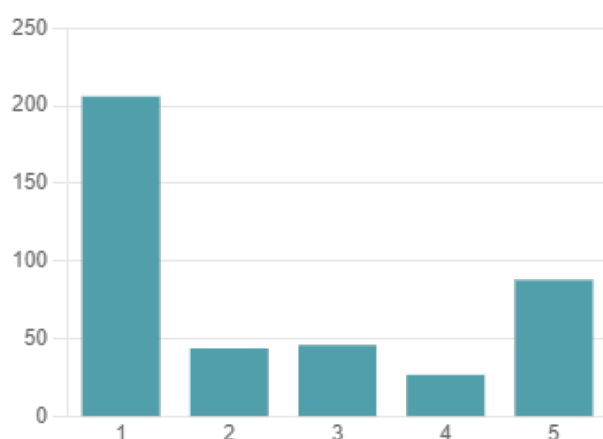
- Question 11 - If it were made available, would you like to be able to access a full time place for your child at their nursery? This would be based on being able to access nursery from 8am – 6pm, 5 days a week.

A significant number of responses indicated that they would be keen to access a full time place were it to be made available. Whilst not currently available, this highlights families would be keen to access more hours to meet family circumstances.

Community	Yes	No
Barrhead/Neilston	60%	40%
Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham	56%	44%
Giffnock/Thornliebank	46%	54%
Newton Mearns	52%	48%

- All parents and carers in Scotland 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. From August 2023, new legislation will mean that any children deferring entry to primary school will automatically be able to continue to access funded early learning and childcare for an additional year. Thinking about your own child, how likely is it you would consider deferring when they are due to start primary school?

Individuals were asked to indicate the likelihood that they would consider deferring their child's entry to primary school, ranging from not all likely (1) to very likely (5). The responses received to this question will support the Education Department's planning for provision given the new entitlement to funding coming in to place from August 2023.



Whilst the majority indicated that they would not be likely to defer, 21% indicated that it was very likely. This varied across the different communities:

Community	1	2	3	4	5
Barrhead/Neilston	59%	10%	8%	7%	17%
Busby/Clarkston/Eaglesham	42%	15%	12%	8%	24%
Giffnock/Thornliebank	54%	7%	14%	7%	17%
Newton Mearns	48%	11%	11%	6%	24%

It should be noted that whilst individuals may have indicated they would look to defer their child, this option is not automatically available for all children. Any children aged 5 years old at the beginning of the school session will require to make an application to the department should they wish to defer.

- Are there any comments you wish to add to this survey?

There was a wide range of different comments provided in response to this question, covering a significant number of different issues relating to ELC provision. Where individuals have raised specific concerns, these will be followed up to offer support to families.

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