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Early Learning and Childcare

Parent Consultation Jan 2022

Education & Children's Services

In October 2016, the Scottish Government published '[A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland](#)', setting out the vision to expand the entitlement of funded ELC. The funded hours increased from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year for all three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds from August 2020. The aim was to provide high quality, flexible ELC which is accessible and affordable for all families. The statutory requirement for local authorities to deliver this entitlement was postponed to August 2021 due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Since February 2021, Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) has been meeting the requirement to deliver up to 1140 hours funded hours of ELC to all eligible children. Perth & Kinross Education and Children's Services has developed 11 ELC communities with each offering a range of ELC options including local authority, partner provider and childminder settings. These settings aim to offer high quality learning experiences and flexible hours that suit families' needs.

Statutory Consultation – March and April 2021

Local authorities have a statutory duty to consult every two years on the provision of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), to inform the planning and delivery of services. Perth & Kinross Council (Education and Children's Services) consulted with the public in March 2021 and the full report can be viewed here: <https://consult.pkc.gov.uk/ecs/elc-consultation-2021-2/results/elcconsultation2021-finalreportforhub.pdf>.

In response to the findings of this statutory consultation, the decision was made to undertake further engagement with parents to understand why the term-time ELC models are so popular and why uptake of the extended year models is lower than expected. The form also included questions to understand overall parent satisfaction with the expansion to ELC within PKC.

Additional ELC Consultation – January and February 2022

This secondary consultation took place between 24 January 2022 and 5 February 2022.

In January 2022, we sought the views of parents and carers through a face-to-face ELC Consultation to gain insight around:

- Parent and carer satisfaction with the range of ELC options within their ELC community
- Potential improvements to the accessibility and flexibility of the ELC options available
- The effect of the 1140 hours expansion on families and any positive impact

Information about the survey was posted at [1140 hours - Early Learning & Childcare Consultation - Perth & Kinross Council Citizen Space - Citizen Space \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#) and was launched on 24 January 2022 and closed on 5 February 2022. Parents from across Perth and Kinross were engaged on a face-to-face basis at drop off and pick up times at their child's ELC setting to respond to the survey. In local authority nurseries, Early Years Family Learning

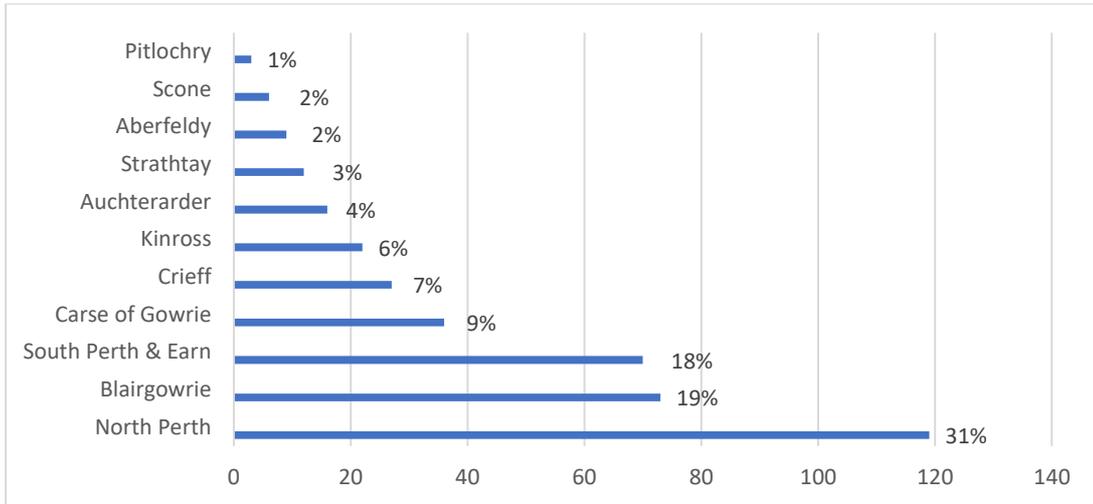
Practitioners engaged parents within all 11 ELC communities. Staff from non-authority funded providers such as private nurseries and childminders were also selected from all 11 communities to engage parents and support the consultation to ensure that the views of parents accessing different forms of 1140 ELC provision were represented within the consultation.

During this period, settings were still adhering to the strict infection control guidance issued by the Scottish Government in place to mitigate the spread of the Omicron variant of the Covid-19 virus. Paper questionnaires were not distributed due to health and safety restrictions. All responses were therefore submitted online by staff and only families with a child accessing their 1140 entitlement were approached to participate. Additional precautions, such as social distancing and the wearing of face masks, were taken by staff when engaging parents/carers face-to-face. Where individual setting policies or staffing issues prevented the staff from engaging face-to-face, the link to the survey was forwarded to parents and carers through the settings' normal communication channels.

Within this report the order of questions is consistent with the online survey. The order of questions is dictated by a question/skip logic to direct respondents to their area of interest. We would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in the consultation. The results will help to shape how ELC is delivered across Perth and Kinross. Results for specific geographic areas will be analysed in more detail to inform the development of local childcare services and any improvements that can be made to the accessibility and flexibility of the ELC options available. However, such analysis should be treated with caution due to low rate of responses.

Profile of All Respondents

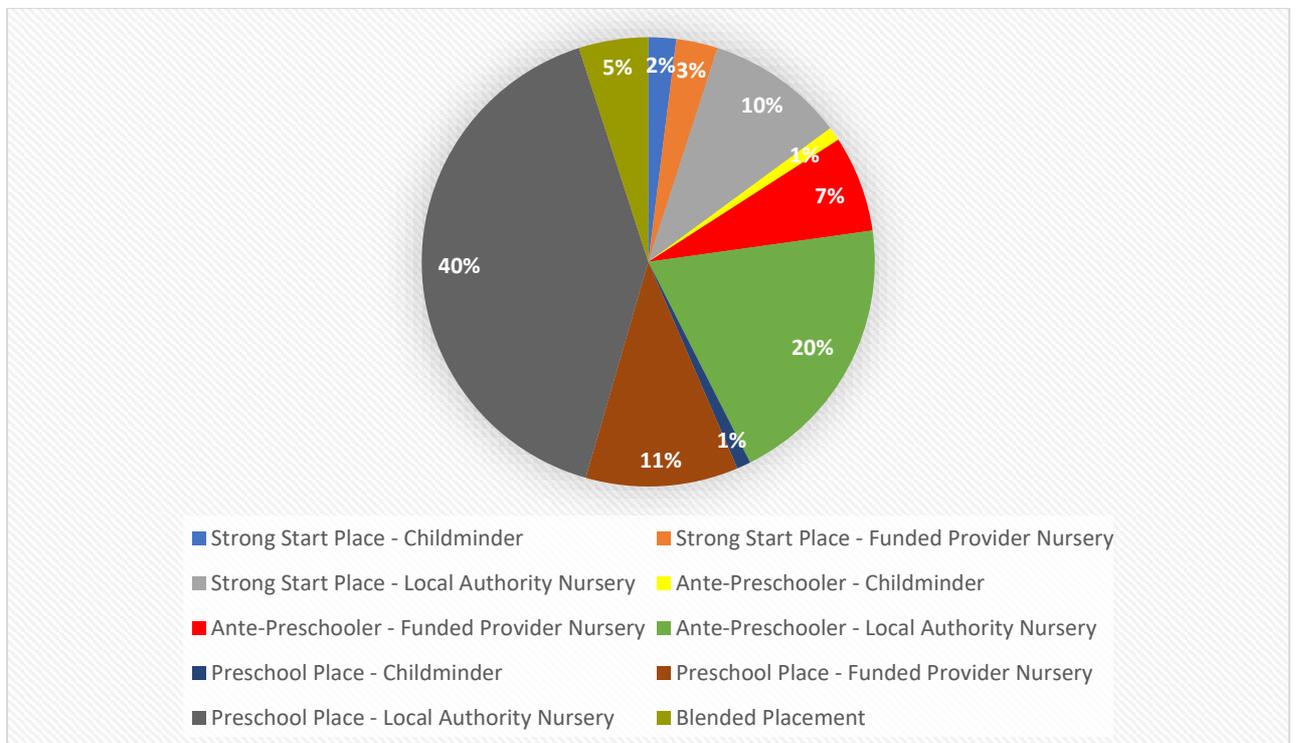
- 393 people responded to the consultation.
- Responses were received from across the whole Perth and Kinross area and from residents in all 11 ELC communities (Fig 1)
- The highest proportion of responses came North Perth (31%) and South Perth and Earn (18%) and Blairgowrie (19%).
- The more rural communities of Pitlochry, Strathtay, Aberfeldy, and Scone, each had a response proportion of less than 4%.
- Fig 1. Respondents by ELC communities



Part 1 of Survey: Accessing ELC

Accessing 1140 entitlement

- 387 (98%) out of 393 responded to this question.
- 41% of respondents were accessing the 1140 entitlement as a preschool place in a local authority setting.
- Fig 2. How Families are Accessing 1140 Entitlement



- Those accessing their entitlement through blended placements (accessing funded ELC through 2 or more settings) were asked to advise how this offer was delivered. Of the 21 blended placements, 13 (62%) were split between a local authority and funded provider nursery, and 5 (24%) were split between a local authority and childminder setting. One respondent said that they were not taking up their full entitlement and choosing to keep their child at home one day per week in addition to 4 days at a nursery. Two answers were ineligible.

Opinions on ELC options within the Community

- 327 (83%) of 393 responded to this open question with a legible answer.
- Of these responses, 228 (70%) used positive language about the options within their community such as “good”, “excellent”, “happy with them”, “lots of choice” and “suits my needs”.
- 36 (11%) responses were considered as using neutral language about the options available in the community such as “fair”, “ok”, “there are some options”, and “adequate”.
- Of the remaining 63 (19%) answers, more than half (38) said that they found the ELC choices in their communities to be limited. 13 respondents highlighted the lack of Wrap Around Care (WAC) options in their community and 5 respondents were dissatisfied with the ELC models available to them within local authority settings. 3 respondents felt that the inability to get a place in the nursery of their catchment school was a problem, and 1 respondent felt that the range of options was ‘confusing’.
- Respondents in Blairgowrie community were more likely to say that ELC options in their community are limited (13) than in any other. This was followed by South Perth & Earn (6), North Perth (4), and Kinross (3), Crieff (3), Carse of Gowrie (3) and Strathtay (3). 2 respondents in Auchterarder community said this was an issue, and 1 in Aberfeldy. No respondents within Scone or Pitlochry ELC communities mentioned this was an issue.
- The 13 respondents highlighting the lack of WAC within their ELC communities were distributed as follows: South Perth & Earn (6); Carse of Gowrie (3); Aberfeldy (2); and North Perth (1) and Kinross (1). Within the South Perth & Earn respondents, 3 mentioned Abernethy specifically as a place where lack of WAC is an issue.
- The models within local authority settings were unsatisfactory to 5 respondents, of which 3 were based within North Perth, 1 in Kinross, and 1 in Blairgowrie. The comments were as follows:
 - “Not enough 9-3 spaces” (North Perth)
 - “Would have preferred five half days” (North Perth)
 - “I don't think they suit working parents very well.” (North Perth)

- “Rubbish as it is only 9am till 3pm” (Blairgowrie)
- “There should be more 9am to 3pm weekday term time places available at Kinross Primary School Nursery.” (Kinross)
- The 3 responses from those concerned about catchment were as follows:
 - “It doesn’t work for RC schools that children from school catchment are not offered a place in their school nursery due to ‘communities.’ Hugely important in my opinion for transition that children can attend their catchment school nursery where they have that provision. E.g., Scone/Bridge of Earn/Luncarty children are not offered St John’s nursery and should technically attend RDM/Dunbarney/Luncarty even if their school of choice (and catchment) is St John’s. Same situation for other RC schools.”
 - “I think that there should be more placements for more children if you have children in the school then the younger child should be able to attend the same school nursery. This will prevent less stress for families in the morning trying to get to two different places at the same time.”
 - “Catchment areas still need to be addressed. It is unfair that parents in Oakbank are offered the choice of either Viewlands or Oakbank while some parents in Craigie are not in catchment for their local ELC/school. New developments at Cherrybank and Broxden are putting a burden on small ELC/schools like Craigie and pushing families in the actual neighbourhood of Craigie out of what should be their local ELC/school. These new developments also make placing requests unlikely to be accepted. This has been a problem for years and isn't being addressed. Viewlands always seems to have space every year and yet it is closer to the developments and yet not their catchment ELC/school.”

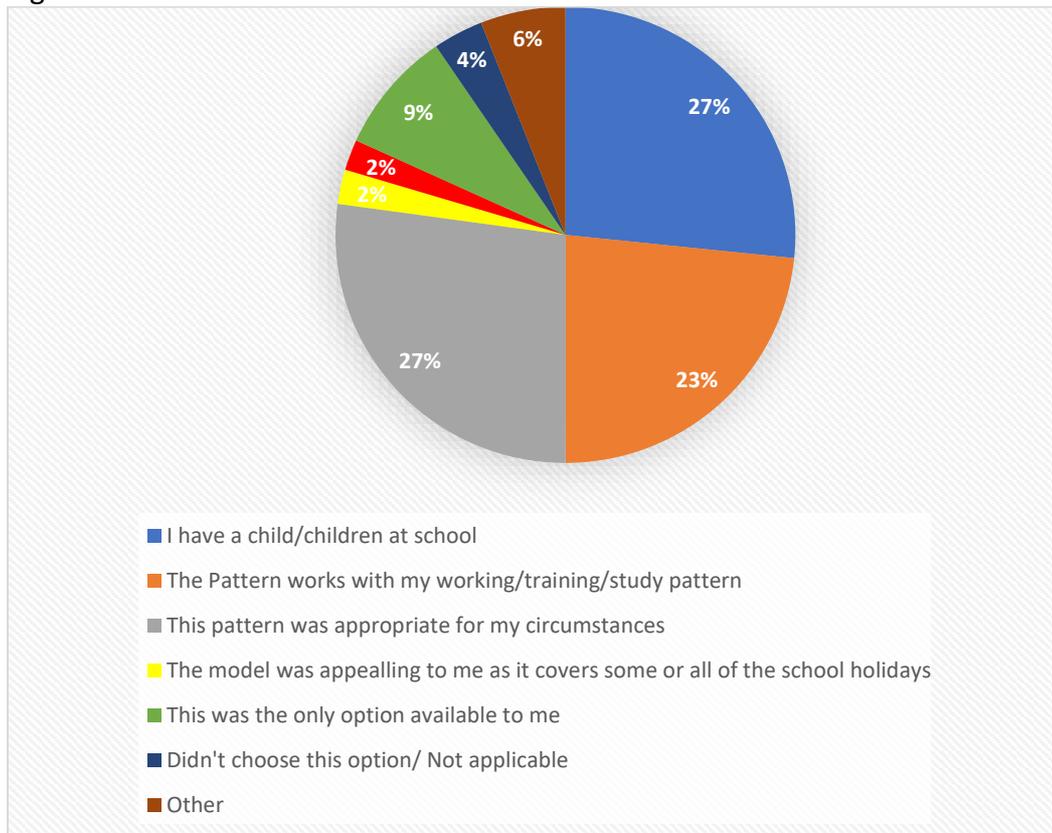
Attendance Patterns Chosen in 2021/22

- 368 (94%) of 393 responded to this question. Of these responses, 261 (71%) chose the Term-Time model of 9am – 3pm, 5 days per week, during school term dates for their child.
- The next highest response chosen was *Other* with 54 (15%) selecting this option. Respondents specified a wide range of different attendance patterns accessed through blended placements and within funded provider and childminder settings. No more than 5% chose any of the other 45- and 50-week models available within local authority settings.
- 320 (87%) of those who responded indicated that the pattern selected was their first choice. 48 (13%) responded that their child was not accessing the attendance pattern that they would prefer.

Reason Behind the Choice of Attendance Pattern

- Reasons varied, with “I have a child/children at school” (27%) and “this pattern was appropriate for my circumstances” (27%) being selected most often, followed closely behind with “this pattern fits with my working/training/study pattern” (23%).

- No respondents said that they chose the model to access Gaelic provision.
- Figure 3. Reason for Attendance Pattern



- 21 out of 22 respondents who selected *Other* in response to this question, chose to elaborate on their choice. 10 said that the attendance pattern was not ideal but that it fitted best within their circumstances. 4 chose their attendance pattern to prepare their child for school, 4 said that it was just plainly what they wanted, and 3 chose the pattern because of their child’s additional support needs.

Satisfaction with the Current Attendance Pattern

- 367 (93%) of 393 responded to this question. Of those 367, 326 (89%) said that they were happy with their current attendance pattern. 11% were not.
- 35 of the 41 respondents who were not happy with the attendance pattern they are currently accessing specified why.
 - 15 respondents said that the pattern did not meet the needs of parents and carers who work and would like longer hours, or some form of WAC offered.
 - 5 respondents would like their child to access ELC in setting more frequently.
 - 5 respondents said they would like more term-time places to be made available.
 - 3 respondents would prefer their child to only do half-days.
- The 3 remaining reasons given as to why respondents were unsatisfied with their child’s current attendance pattern were as follows:
 - “Would have liked to be able to access hours via my childminder.”

- “Looking to drop one day per week.”
- “I would prefer to do less and spend more time with my child, but also feel pressured to put my child to nursery.”

More Attractive Attendance Models

- Respondents could select more than one answer to this question so overall there were 424 responses to this question. Of the 424 responses, 212 (50%) selected not applicable.
- Of the remaining 212, 63 (30%) said that a 45-week attendance pattern over 5 days per week would make the extended models of attendance a more attractive choice.
- 11% (40) of respondents said that the opportunity to pay for additional hours would make these options more attractive, followed by 7% (23) saying that later finishing times for the 45-week model would.
- Less than 5% of respondents answered that each of the other options would make the 45- and 50-week models more attractive to them:
 - 45-week model with earlier opening times (5%)
 - 50-week attendance pattern over 3 days a week (4%)
 - 50-week attendance pattern over 4 days a week (4%)
 - 50-week attendance pattern with earlier opening times (3%)
 - 50-week attendance pattern with later finishing times (3%)
 - 50-week attendance pattern in more local authority ELC settings (2%)

Ideal Options to Suit Families’ Needs

- There were 255 respondents to this open question and of those, 103 (40%) respondents stated that they were happy with the ELC option that they are currently accessing.
- 97 (38%) respondents gave a range of answers that indicated that they would ideally like ELC settings to offer longer hours or WAC options. Examples of these comments are:
 - “Opportunity to pay for extra hours out with term time - in local authority ELC setting”
 - “Monday- Friday 8:30-4”
 - “8-6 Mon-Fri for all 52 weeks as my husband and I work full time”
 - “Earlier opening or later finishing times (funded or paid by us)”
 - “Longer days opening all year round”
 - “7am start”
 - “If a breakfast club and afterschool club were offered”
 - “We require childcare from 8am until 5:30pm minimum to accommodate both parents working full-time jobs, although longer hours would give us a cushion in case of traffic etc.”
 - “8–5.30 options for working days”
- 22 (10%) respondents said that they would prefer to access the term-time option of 9am -3pm Monday to Friday.
- Access to ELC provision during school holidays was an option that 13 (6%) respondents felt would better suit their family circumstances.

- The remaining respondents gave the following answers:
 - An offer of 5 half-days across the week would be an ideal option for 6 respondents, and 2 respondents said they would like to keep their child home more than they do at the moment.
 - 3 respondents said that, ideally, they would be able to access the nursery and/or school of their choice regardless of ELC community, and 3 others said that they would ideally like to access the setting closest to their house.
 - 2 respondents said that they would prefer to choose their own hours and 4 others said that they would prefer more flexible start and finish times to suit taking older siblings to school.

Part 2 of Survey: Benefits Realisation

347 out of 393 respondents chose to answer the following questions regarding the 1140 hours expansion to ELC across PKC.

Flexibility

- 82% of respondents agreed that provision within their ELC community offers flexible options for accessing their funded entitlement.
- Of those who disagreed, 21 respondents live within the Blairgowrie ELC community, 15 live in North Perth, 10 in South Perth & Earn, and 8 in the Carse of Gowrie.
- The remaining 9 responses that disagreed were split between Crieff, Auchterarder, Pitlochry and Aberfeldy.
- Respondents in Scone, Strathtay, and Kinross fully agreed that their ELC communities offered flexible options.

Accessibility

- 81% of respondents agreed that they could access their preferred provider and attendance option within their ELC community.
- Of those who disagreed, 19 were located within Blairgowrie ELC community, 15 in North Perth, 10 in South Perth & Earn, and 7 within the Carse of Gowrie.
- The remaining 22 responses that disagreed were split between the remaining communities with only respondents from the Strathtay ELC community fully in agreement that they could access their preferred provider and attendance option.

Affordability

- 93% of respondents agreed that childcare is more affordable now that there is 1140 hours of funding for all three- and four-year-olds and some two-year-olds.

Quality

- 99% of respondents agreed that their child has access to high quality ELC within Perth and Kinross

Pursuing Work or Educational Opportunities

- 70% of respondents agree that the expansion to ELC has supported them to pursue work or educational opportunities that they would not otherwise have been able to.

Learning Opportunities

- 89% agree that their child accesses additional learning opportunities within an ELC setting that they may not have experienced otherwise.

Learning and Development

- 95% agree that the expansion to ELC has had a positive impact on their child's learning and development.

ELC Options

- 86% agree that the ELC options satisfactorily meet the needs of their family.

Part 3: Considering Responses in this Survey in Correlation with the Statutory Consultation of 2021

As was found in this survey, respondents in the 2021 Consultation were more likely to choose the term-time model. 53% of respondents who expect to use a local authority nursery are most likely to choose term time attendance patterns (38 weeks), 21% an extended year (50 weeks). 18% would use a full year pattern (45 weeks) Over half of parents/carers said that their choice of attendance pattern is to fit in with their working pattern. Preparing a child for school and an older child attending school are also popular influential factors indicated by over a third of respondents. Over a quarter of respondents said that availability of others to pick up/drop off their child was of importance in their choice.

68 additional comments were given with regards to influence over types of childcare considered. Responses indicate the complexity of the decision according to personal circumstances and preference. Hours, availability, and eligibility are recurrent themes. Hours offered by ELC settings not fitting work patterns was highlighted and reflects the importance of working patterns in making decisions about childcare. This corresponds with the responses gathered in 2022, where parents have expressed that they would prefer longer hours, or the option to pay for hours, as well as ELC models that fit better with work schedules.

Non-Early Years Findings (2021):

- Childcare - Almost three quarters of respondents feel that childcare services are of importance, with around a third of parents of primary-aged children surveyed stating that they would use before and after school provision if it was available, and over half of parents of secondary aged children willing to consider using Kids' Clubs.

- Family Learning - Respondents were asked about their interest in bitesize sessions currently delivered by the PKC Parenting and Family Learning Team. Over a half of respondents are interested in internet safety sessions. The next most popular topic was peer pressure (44%). A third are interested in sessions on praise, rewards and boundaries and healthy life choices. Additional topics of interest suggested including emotions/psychology, learning and development, communication, and relationships, ASN (Additional Support Needs), safeguarding, puberty, and money management. Emotions/psychology is the most common theme with several requests for sessions specifically about bullying and anxiety. Around two thirds of respondents are interested in sessions around peer pressure and/or drugs and alcohol. Internet safety was also popular with 59% of respondents selecting this as being of interest. Just under a half of respondents would appreciate sessions on sex education.

Recommendations

The feedback received through this consultation shows that most parents are satisfied with the offer within PKC. 89% of respondents said that they are happy with the ELC attendance model that their child is currently accessing, and 82% agreed that their ELC community offers flexible options for families. However, the intention of this survey was to identify areas that may need further consideration and review and so the following recommendations for action are to:

- Review the ELC models available in each community to consider if they can be made more attractive to families and better meet their needs. *
- Investigate the feasibility of implementing a charging policy within local authority nurseries to allow parents to pay for additional hours of ELC above their funded entitlement.
- Consider the feedback received in line with the expected WAC strategy from the Scottish Government upon the release of any formal guidance.
- Communicate the wide range of learning opportunities now available to families in areas highlighted by the 2021 Consultation, with a review into whether these should be extended or include other topics.

* Within the first phase of ELC applications for school year 2022/23, more than 86% of families are still opting for the term-time model. Overall, more than 90% of families received their first choice of model in phase one, with the offer of an alternative accepted by most of those who did not receive their first choice.