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Early learning and childcare consultation 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 about ELC between May 2021 and April 2021.

An online survey aimed to gain insight around the following areas:

- The future delivery of ELC
- Anticipated needs around childcare

The survey was promoted across the Perth & Kinross area via social media and posted on the [Perth & Kinross Council Consultation Hub](https://consult.pkc.gov.uk/ecs/elc-consultation-2021-2/) at <https://consult.pkc.gov.uk/ecs/elc-consultation-2021-2/>.

The survey was launched on 18 March 2021 and closed on 18 April 2021. During this period of time, Perth & Kinross was transitioning through lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents were asked to respond as they would outwith the circumstances/ and restrictions imposed during the pandemic. Paper questionnaires were not distributed due to health and safety restrictions. All responses were therefore submitted online.

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.

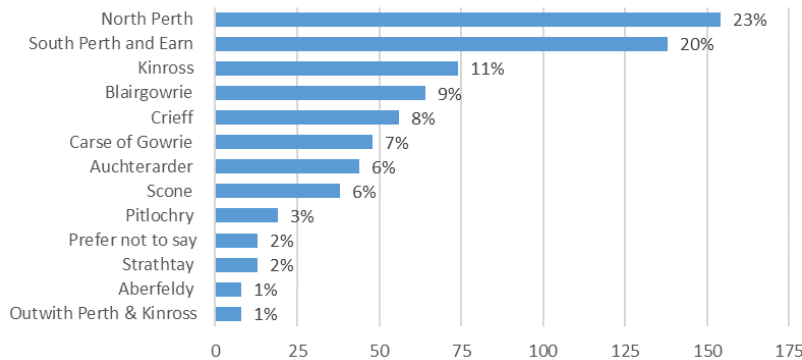
We would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in the consultation. The results will help to shape how ELC is delivered across Perth and Kinross. Results for specific geographic areas will be analysed in more detail to inform the development of local childcare services and the promotion of childminding as a career opportunity. However, such analysis should be treated with caution due to low rate of responses.

Profile of All Respondents

- 677 people responded to the consultation. This is a slight fall in response in comparison to a total of 744 responses in 2018 and 774 responses in the 2016 consultation. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic may have had an impact on the interest in this consultation and survey fatigue may have lowered the response rate.

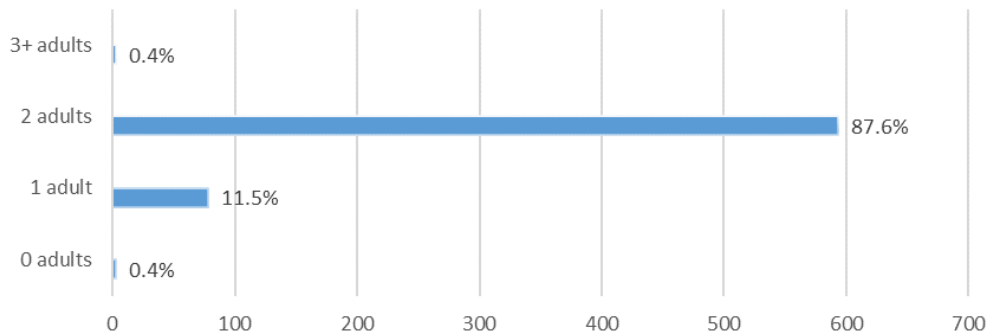
- Responses were received from across the whole Perth and Kinross area and from residents in all 11 ELC communities (Fig 1).
- As would be expected, the highest proportion of responses came from the more densely populated ELC communities.
- The highest proportion of responses came North Perth (23%) and South Perth and Earn (20%) and Kinross-shire (11%). The more rural communities of Pitlochry, Strathtay and Aberfeldy each had a response proportion of less than 4%.

Fig 1. Respondents by ELC communities.



- 78 households responded that they live in a household with one single adult in the responsible for children living there. This equates to 12% of the responses of all responses.

Fig 2. Number of adults in household with responsibility for children living there.



- 3 responses indicated that there were no adults in the household and responsible for children living with them. These responses came from a childcare professional, a person who works with children and a respondent who is expecting or planning to have a child/children.

Figure 3. Responses by stage of child(ren)

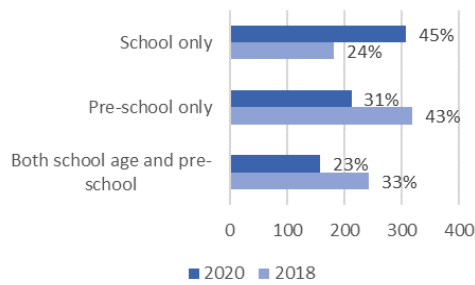
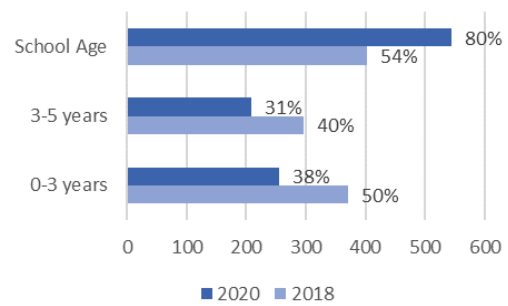
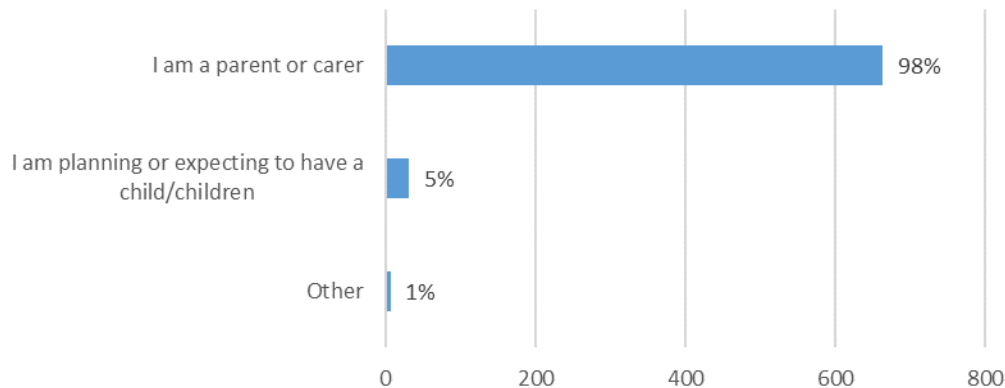


Figure 4. Responses by age group of interest



- Responses represented a broad range of family stage and age groups of children. (Figures 3 and 4).
- Responses indicated a reduced interest in ELC from those with pre-school children and an increased response from those with children of school age when compared to the profile of respondents in 2018.
- 663 responses were from parents or carers.
- 31 responses came from parents who are planning or expecting to have a child/children. 30 of these responses were from households where 2 adults currently have responsibility for children living there. 1 of these responses came from a household with no responsibility for children at present.

Fig 5. Interest in completing the consultation



- 5% of respondents who answered about pre-school aged children chose to continue to some additional questions regarding a child with Additional Support Needs (ASN).
- Responses from parents and carers with children and young people with ASN accounted for 23% of the responses regarding school age children (total responses = 465).

Children Aged 0-3 Years; General Questions

256 responses were received to general questions about children aged 0-3 years, this equates to 37% of all responses to the consultation.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

- The main sources of information about ELC options available are word of mouth (66%), the PKC website (57%) and social media (50%).
- Almost a quarter of respondents identify national websites as a main source of information.
- The majority of respondents (82%) were aware that all 3-5 year olds in Scotland (and some eligible 2 year olds) are entitled to 1140 hours per year of funded (free) ELC prior to the consultation. 2% were unaware of this provision prior to this consultation.
- Respondents were asked about their interest in bitesize sessions currently delivered by The PKC Parenting and Family Learning Team. Almost a half of respondents are interested in toilet training sessions. A third are interested in sessions on praise, rewards and boundaries. Other popular topics are fussy eating, sleep, internet safety, healthy life choices and choking. Additional topics of interest and not currently delivered include activities, ASN, emotions/psychology, first aid, siblings, speech and language and toddler behaviour.

Children Aged 0-3 Years; Child Specific Questions

244 people responded that they had one child or more and were directed to subsequent pages with the opportunity to answer questions about each of their individual children. 268 responses were received about individuals were received.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

- Private/Independent/Voluntary nursery is accessed by 45% of children and is the most common form of childcare indicated.
- Almost a half of parents/carers rely on grandparents or other family for childcare. 40% of respondents said they had assistance from a grandparent.
- Local authority and childminder are the next most popular forms of childcare and accessed by 17% and 13% of children respectively.

- Choice of childcare provision broadly reflects the information collected for pre-school aged children in the 2018 ELC consultation.
- Whilst almost a half of parents/carers use only one form of childcare for their child, 39% of children are cared for in blended childcare options.
- 8% of children are cared for in a blend of 3 or more types of provision.
- The responses indicate that many families use a patchwork of formal and informal care during the week, most likely to minimise costs.
- 12% of respondents don't use any of the childcare provisions listed. These are likely to be parents who can care for their own children full-time.
- Most respondents (89%) are likely to access full 1140 hours of entitlement for their child as they approach the age to access funding. 78% said this was very likely.
- Nursery provision is the most preferred option for accessing 1140 hours. Two thirds of respondents said they will consider accessing all or part of their child's 1140 entitlement via a local authority nursery and a half of respondents said they will consider using a private/independent nursery.
- 8% of respondents said they would consider a childminder.
- The most influential factors influencing preference to use/not use a nursery were hours, availability, and location. These factors were of greater influence in responses regarding private nurseries (over 40%) than local authority nurseries (around 35%).
- A quarter of people considered eligibility when considering whether to use/not use a local authority nursery.
- Availability, hours, and location are also highly influential factors in considering whether to use/ not use a childminder (over 40%).
- My child's friendships/social interactions/community are far more influential in consideration of whether to use/not use a childminder (42%) in comparison to a considering a private/independent (27%) or local authority nursery (9%)
- Cost is a more influential factor in considering a private/independent nursery (35%) or childminder (27%) when compared to considering a local authority nursery (8%).
- Quality/Information from Care Inspectorate is of much more influence in consideration of a private/independent nursery (28%) when compared to considering a child minder (17%) or local authority nursery (11%).
- Reliability is of much more influence in consideration of a child minder (28%) when compared to considering a private/independent nursery (18%) or local authority nursery (10%).
- Recommendation is of much more influence in consideration of a private/independent nursery (21%) when compared to considering a child minder (10%) or local authority nursery (7%).
- 60 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, eligibility

are recurrent themes in these comments and reference to outdoor play is also mentioned frequently.

- 41% of respondents who expect to use a local authority nursery are most likely to choose term time attendance patterns (38 weeks). 17% would use a full year pattern (45 weeks) and 14% an extended year (50 weeks). These results indicate that in comparison to 2018 ELC, interest in term time and extended year patterns have fallen from 30%.

Children Aged 3 – 5 Years; General Questions

209 responses were received to general questions about children aged 3-5 years, this equates to 31% of all responses to the consultation.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

- The consultation highlighted that parental involvement and engagement is crucial to a child's learning and development and what delivery options are most supportive. The Seesaw app was selected by over two thirds of respondents and is the most popular method. Other popular methods are e-newsletter (47%), drop-in sessions (39%) and e-learning journals (37%).
- Respondents were asked about their interest in bitesize sessions currently delivered by the PKC Parenting and Family Learning Team. The most popular topics are praise, reward and boundaries and/or fussy eating with over a third of respondents indicating interest. Internet safety and healthy life choices are also popular and selected by over a quarter of respondents. Additional topics of interest not currently delivered include identity, emotions/psychology, learning and development, speech and language, and behaviour.
- 4 people (2%) said they would consider Gaelic provision at Goodlyburn for one child. 2 respondents (1%) said they would consider provision in Breadalbane for 2 children in total.

Children Aged 3 – 5 Years; Child Specific Questions

191 people responded that they had one child or more and were directed to subsequent pages with the opportunity to answer questions about each of their individual children. 195 responses about individuals were received.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

- 171 respondents (90%) access funded ELC.
- 92% of respondents said that their child benefits from improved social development by attending ELC setting/s. Increased confidence (85%), improved emotional and communication development (82%) and increased creativity (81%).
- Other benefits are identified in comments however there are no overriding common themes.
- 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) and 14% an extended year (50 weeks). These results indicate that in comparison to 2018 ELC consultation, interest in term time and extended year patterns has fallen from 30%.
- Over a 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.
- Other benefits are identified in comments however there are no additional overriding common themes. Hours offered by ELC settings not fitting work patterns was highlighted and reflects the importance of working patterns in making decisions about childcare.
- 126 respondents (66%) said they do use the full number of hours allocated to their child.
- Almost a half of children attend a local authority nursery only and just over a third attend a private or independent nursery. 16% of children are cared for in a blend of nursery and childminder provision. Only 1% of the children attend a childminder only.
- The most influential factors influencing preference to use/not use a nursery or childminder are hours, availability, and location although the order in which these have influenced decisions varies between ELC options.
- Location and availability are the most influential factors in when considering a local authority nursery (55%), hours are less influential (44%).
- Hours (45%) are more influential than location (39%) and availability (37%) when considering private/independent nursery.
- Availability is more influential than (38%) and hours (31%) and location (29%) when considering a childminder.
- Quality/Information from Care Inspectorate is of much more influence in consideration of a private/independent nursery (34%) when compared to considering a local authority nursery (22%) or child minder.

- As would be expected, cost is a more influential factor when considering a childminder (24%) or private/independent nursery (20%) than when considering a local authority nursery (10%).
- Over a third of respondents said that a child attending other activities is influential when choosing a local authority nursery. This in contrast to just 4% of respondents when considering a childminder and 2% when considering a private/independent nursery.
- 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.
- Of those not making full use of their child's 1140 entitlement, over a half said this is because they can look after their child or have alternative arrangements. 35% said there is a reason other than "alternative arrangements". Other reasons are availability (17%), hours (12%), location (6%) and quality (2%).
- The most common reason cited for not using full entitlement was the belief that a child of this age is too young to be at nursery for the full complement of hours that they are entitled to.

Additional Support Needs; Child Specific Questions

20 responses were received to general questions about children of pre-school age with additional support needs (ASN); this equates to 3% of all responses to the consultation.

Due to the low numbers of responses the data received is not statistically robust but responses have been shared internally with those responsible for children with ASN.

Primary School Aged Children

443 responses were received to general questions about children of primary school age, this equates to 66% of all responses to the consultation.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

Approximately, two thirds of respondents have one child of primary school age, (298 respondents). 15 (3%) have no children of primary school age and the remainder have 2-3 children in this age group.

- 80 respondents (88%) have children of primary school age with an Additional Support Need, 3 respondents (1 %) of these respondents had 2 children with ASN.
- Almost three quarters of respondents feel that childcare services are of importance, of which 43% said they are very important.
- 15% of respondents said that childcare services are not of importance.
- Over a half of respondents know they can use PKC Kids Clubs or Wrap Around Care during holiday periods for childcare, even if they do not use it during term-time. Over a quarter are unaware and 16% are somewhat aware.
- 164 (37%) of respondents currently use out of school care.
- A safe place to spend time was the most commonly selected benefit of spending time in out of school care (87%). Opportunities to mix with children of other ages is also widely thought to be beneficial and selected by almost three quarters of respondents.
- Just under a third of respondents would use a before school provision if available.
- Just over a third of respondents would use after school provision if available.
- "Word of mouth" is the most common way that people find information about additional recreational activities (71%). Social media is a popular forum (64%) and over a half of respondents seek such information on the PKC website.
- When asked which method of communication is most supportive for parental involvement and engagement, over 90% of respondents indicated communication from staff. Other popular options are options E-newsletters (54%), E-learning journals (40%) and drop-in sessions (37%).
- 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 include emotions/psychology, learning and development, communication and relationships, ASN, safeguarding, puberty and money management.
- Emotions/psychology is the most common theme with several requests for sessions specifically about bullying and anxiety.
- 2 additional comments were received regarding the lack of out of school provision in Errol.

Secondary School Aged Children

101 responses were received to general questions about children of primary school age, this equates to 15% of all responses to the consultation.

Percentages given in the summary of responses below are calculated according to the number of responses to the relevant question.

- Approximately three quarters of respondents have one child of secondary school age, (73 respondents). 17 (77%) have no children of primary school age and the remainder have 2-3 children in this age group.
- 25 (26%) of respondents have a child with ASN.
- Activity clubs are be considered by over a half of respondents to be suitable for their child and this is the most popular option presented.
- Almost a half of respondents would consider using Perth & Kinross Council's Kids Clubs up to the age of 14 as a childcare option. A fifth are unsure whether they would use this provision.
- When asked which method of communication is most supportive for parent/carer involvement and engagement in secondary school education, almost three quarters of respondents opted for an e-newsletter. Microsoft Teams was indicated as being a good option by almost a half of respondent and just under a third opted for drop-in sessions and e-learning journals.
- Respondents were asked about their interest in bitesize sessions currently delivered by the PKC Parenting and Family Learning Team. 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.