



# Early Learning and Childcare Consultation 2025-26

A Perth and Kinross where everyone can live  
life well, free from poverty and inequality

Enabling  
children and  
young people  
achieve full  
potential

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## Introduction

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's (PKC) Education and Learning Service consulted with the public between 23 November and 14 December 2025

The consultation took the format of an online survey aimed to gain insight around the following areas:

- The future delivery of ELC across Perth and Kinross
- Anticipated needs around childcare into the future
- The impact of poverty on the lives of children and families in Perth and Kinross
- The use of and digital technology to support children and young people's education and learning

The survey was accessible at [Early learning and childcare consultation 2025 - Perth & Kinross Council Citizen Space - Citizen Space](#) and sought the views of parents and carers regarding early education provision and childcare, school-aged childcare, digital learning and other services available in their local area. People planning to have children were also invited to give their views.

The survey was promoted across Perth and Kinross through the council's social media accounts and through school and ELC settings' communication channels. Those signed up for news distribution lists were also invited to participate.

### Previous Consultation

Early Learning and Childcare Consultations also took place in 2018/19 and 2021, and 2023/24. Previous reports regarding the findings were published on the Consultation hub.

Following the full expansion of 1140 hours of funded ELC from August 2020, PKC undertook further engagement with parents and carers of children aged 2-5 years old accessing their funded ELC place to understand overall parent satisfaction with the expansion to ELC within PKC and the current offer available within their community in a further consultation in 2022.

## Purpose of Early Learning and Childcare Consultation 2025/26

We would like to thank all those who took the time to participate in the consultation. The results will help to shape how ELC and other services are delivered across Perth and Kinross. The results for specific geographic areas in the authority will be analysed in more detail to inform the development of local childcare services, family learning opportunities and other support from the council.

### Profile of Respondents

This consultation received a total of 423 responses which is a fall in response to previous consultations in 2018 (744 responses) and 2021 (677 responses) and 2023/24 (500 responses). This is higher, however, than those received in the 1140 Consultation in 2022 which received 393 responses.

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 from North Perth (21%) and South Perth and Earn communities (14.4%).
- The more rural communities of Pitlochry, Auchterarder, Strathtay, and Aberfeldy, each had a response proportion of less than 3%.
- Six respondents reside out with the Perth and Kinross local authority area, and seven respondents preferred not to say where they lived.

Fig 1: Respondents by ELC Community

Area	Number	Percentage
North Perth area	92	21.7%
South Perth and Earn area	61	14.4%
Blairgowrie area	58	13.7%
Kinross area	53	12.5%
Scone area	40	9.5%
Carse of Gowrie area	33	7.8%
Crieff area	33	7.8%
Pitlochry area	12	2.8%
Auchterarder area	11	2.6%

Strathtay area	11	2.6%
Prefer not to say	7	1.7%
Aberfeldy area	6	1.4%
Out with Perth & Kinross	6	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>423</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Of the 423 respondents, 39% chose to respond to questions about a 3–5-year-old; 31% about a school-aged child; and 29% about a child under 3.

The respondents were asked if they received any financial support towards the costs of childcare:

- 139 respondents stated that they claimed tax-free childcare
- six respondents use childcare vouchers
- 57 stated that they used Universal Credit
- eight respondents advised that their college or university contributed funding towards childcare costs.

## Children Aged Under 3 Years Old

Overall, 112 respondents opted to answer questions for this age group, with 90 stating that they pay for childcare places for their child.

Of these, only five respondents indicated that their child currently accesses a funded Strong Start place in ELC. More information about Strong Start Places for two year olds can be found at [Funded early learning and childcare for 2 year olds \(Strong Starts\) - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](https://www.pkc.gov.uk/strong-start-places)

Although statistically insignificant due to the small number of responses, parents of children accessing Strong Start places were asked to identify the benefits to their individual circumstances of accessing these spaces:

- Four parents/carers are able to cope better with home life.
- Three have improved mental health.
- Two have more time to spend with other children in the household.
- There was one response each that identified the Strong Start place had enabled the parent/carer to access new learning or employment opportunities, focus on their own wellbeing, or attend groups or appointments,

Parents and carers choosing to respond to questions for children under 3 years old were next asked to respond to questions around family learning opportunities:

- 124 responses were received to the question: *Have you accessed any family learning groups or activities at your child's setting?* Of those responses, 29 (23.4%) responded yes.
- Of those who had accessed family learning sessions, they rated the sessions as follows:

Fig 2: Rating of Family learning Sessions Accessed (0-poor; 5 – excellent)

Rating	Count	Percentage
5	12	41.4%
4	7	24.1%
3	8	27.6%
2	2	6.9%
1	0	0%

- Of those who responded no to accessing family learning opportunities at their child's setting, 27 families had not heard of the offer or were unaware the sessions were available; 15 respondents were unable to attend the day or time offered, and three were not interested in attending.

There were a range of answers to the following question: *The Parenting and Family Learning Team currently run a wide range of family learning opportunities, could we offer anything else that would be beneficial to you or your family?* Common themes included:

- Take home activities to reinforce learning at home.
- More information about children's daily routines at nursery
- Sessions offered on different days and times and at weekends

The 90 respondents who stated they use paid-for childcare for their child aged under 3 years old were asked if there any challenges or obstacles to accessing this childcare.

- Of those responding no,
  - 37 advised that childcare costs are unaffordable or they have no access to financial support.
  - Five responded that attendance options did not match their working patterns.
  - Five responded that there were limited options or a lack of suitable transport in their location.
  - Three respondents stated that childcare options do not meet their child's needs.

Most respondents (110 of 117, or 94%) advised that they would be interested in using funded childcare for a child aged under 3 years old if it was available to them.

## Children Aged 3-5 Years Old

Overall, 174 respondents opted to answer questions for children aged 3-5 years old.

Out of 169 who responded to the question, *Does your child currently access the full 1140-hour ELC entitlement?* 139 (83.7%) responded yes. The remaining 29 were asked to state why they were not accessing their full entitlement. The responses were as follows (respondents could choose more than one option):

Fig 3: Reasons for not accessing full ELC funded entitlement.

Category	Count
Prefer child to stay at home or with family	13
Personal Choice	12
Limited operating hours that don't match work schedules	5
No access to financial support	4
Inconvenient location or transport issues	2

The following responses were provided to indicate which factors are considered most important when choosing an ELC setting or attendance pattern for an ELC funded place (Fig.4). There was the option to select more than one answer, and there were 282 total selections.

Fig 4: Factors of Importance in Choosing an ELC Setting

Category	Count	% of selections
The ELC setting is close to my child's home address	90	31.8%
The attendance pattern offered at the ELC setting is best suited to a parent/carer's working pattern or education/training hours	53	18.7%
The ELC setting is located within my child's primary catchment school	49	17.3%
The ELC setting offers the option to purchase further hours of childcare to support parent/carer's working pattern or education/training	23	8.1%
The ELC setting is located within the primary school where older siblings attend	21	7.4%

The ELC setting offers an attendance pattern that works best with other sibling’s school/childcare attendance patterns or daily routines	17	6.0%
The ELC setting is close to a parent/carer’s workplace or further education site	13	4.6%
The ELC setting offers an attendance pattern that aligns well with another form of childcare used before or after funded sessions (e.g. childminder, family member, wraparound care)	10	3.5%
The availability of public transport links between a parent/carer’s place of work or study and the ELC setting	3	1.2%
The availability of public transport links between my child’s home address and the ELC setting	3	1.2%
<b>Total selections</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

- Respondents advised that accessing the ELC setting closest to their home address was the most important factor (31.8%)
- the second most important factor was that the attendance pattern best suited a parent/carer’s work or education patterns (18.7%)
- the third most important factor was that the ELC setting is located within their child’s catchment primary school (8.1%)
- Least important factors were the availability of public transport links (six responses total)

There was also the option for respondents to identify other factors that are important to them when considering which ELC setting to access their funded ELC hours. The following responses were received:

- Care Inspectorate gradings and quality of education
- Well-trained staff or consistency of staff
- Access to the full 1140 hours in one setting
- Flexibility in drop-off and pick-up times
- Access to outdoor learning and play opportunities
- The “feel” of the setting and a nurturing environment

Out of 169 respondents whose children access the full 1140 funded hours of ELC, 45 of those stated that they also accessed hours beyond the 1140 funded by the Scottish Government.

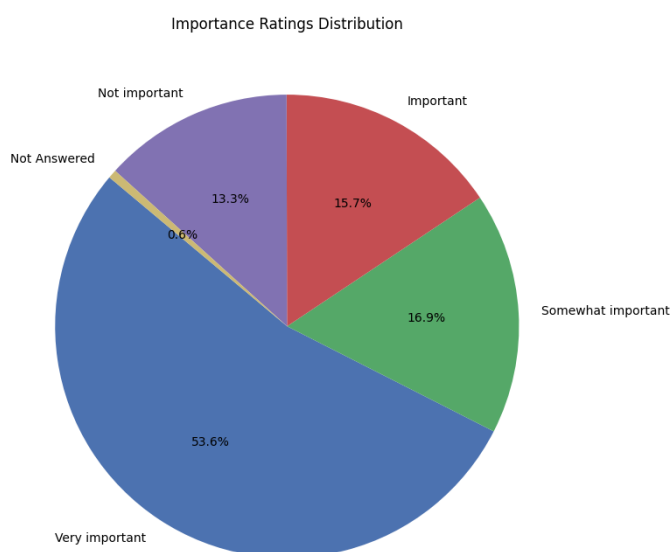
Of those who do not access additional non-funded childcare for their 3–5-year-old, 23 reported that friends or family provide them with additional childcare as needed,

19 responded that there was no suitable childcare available, and 18 advised that they could not afford to pay for any additional childcare.

Respondents were asked if their child accessed their ELC in what will be their primary one catchment school. 113 (68.1%) stated that they did.

When asked *How important is it to you that your child has an ELC place in a nursery attached to their catchment school?* the following responses were distributed (Fig.5):

Fig 5: Importance of accessing ELC in P1 Catchment Primary School



Approximately three quarters (76.5%) of respondents agreed that ELC intake should align more with school intake whereby those residing in the catchment area should be given higher priority, 16.3% disagreed and 6.6% were unsure.

There were 166 responses received to the question: *have you accessed any family learning groups or activities at your child's setting?* These were split fairly evenly between yes (79 responses or 47.6%) and no (85 responses or 51.2%).

Of those who had not accessed a family learning group or activity at their child's setting, respondents agreed to advise why not. There was the option to choose more than one response:

- 41 respondents were unaware or had not heard that these sessions were available to them
- 61 were unable to attend on the days or times offered
- 8 were not interested in the offer

The option to advise on other reasons why family learning sessions were not accessed was given. A small number of responses were given, mainly advising that work patterns were a barrier to attending.

When asked to rate the experience from 0 (Poor) to 5 (excellent) of family learning sessions attended, there were 79 responses, with most (89.9%) rating a four or five:

- 47 respondents rated 5
- 24 respondents rated 4
- Six respondents rated 3
- One respondent rated 2
- One respondent rated 0
- No respondents rated the experience 1.

There were 59 responses amongst those answering questions for children aged 3-5 years old to the question: *There is a wide range family learning opportunities available, however could we offer anything else that would be beneficial to you or your family?* Common themes included:

- Offering sessions at different times and days to support attendance by working parents/carers, or more online resources
- Support for children who may have ASD or ADHD
- Sessions that could include older and younger siblings, including during school holidays
- Use of different communication methods to inform parents/carers of the offer

## Primary School Aged Children

Respondents were asked to rate how important local childcare availability is to them. There were 59 responses with 47 (79.66%) stating that it is very important or important.

In response to the question, *Did you know you could use the Kids Clubs or Wrap Around Care listed below during holiday periods for childcare, even if you do not use it during term-time?* 41 responded yes, and 18 responded no. The remaining 107 chose not to respond to this question.

Of 166 respondents, 19 (11.4%) are currently using out of school care for their child(ren). Ways in which respondents felt their child(ren) is benefitting from accessing the service are outlined below (Fig. 12). Respondents could select more than one option.

### Fig 6: Benefits For Child Accessing Out of School Care

Benefit Category	Count
Opportunities for my child to interact with children of different ages	14
A safe and welcoming environment to spend time	13
Access to a diverse range of play and learning activities	10
Boost in confidence and self-esteem	7
Encouragement of creativity and curiosity	7
Support for emotional growth and communication skills	4

There were four further responses under ‘other’, three of which outlined further benefits to attending Out of School Care:

- “Developing independence”
- “A safe place to play with their friends and not be on a screen”
- “Continuity of care”

Respondents were then asked *How has your child’s participation in Kids Clubs or Wraparound Care positively impacted your family?* Multiple options could be selected.

Fig 7: Benefits For Family of Child Accessing Out of School Care

Outcome	Count	% of selections
Provided childcare that allowed me to remain in work	12	34.3%
Reduced stress and pressure in daily life	9	25.7%
Helped me return to work or take up new employment	5	14.3%
Improved my overall wellbeing and happiness	4	11.4%
Enabled me to access education or training opportunities	2	5.7%
Provided more time for self-care and personal needs	2	5.7%
Given me time to plan or reflect on future goals	1	2.9%

Respondents were then asked if there were any challenges or obstacles to accessing Kids Clubs or Wraparound Care. 33 parents/carers responded to this question and multiple selections were available. A breakdown of selections is below:

Fig 8: Challenges to Accessing Out of School Care

Barrier category	Count	% of selections
Child prefers to stay at home or with family	12	22.6%
Lack of availability or limited spaces	12	22.6%
Inconvenient location or transport issues	10	18.9%
Not aware the service is available during holidays	8	15.1%
Limited operating hours that don't match work schedules	6	11.3%
Cost is too high or not affordable	5	9.4%

Under *Other*, 10 responses were received of which identified themes included:

- Childcare offer is not available for younger siblings
- No options within the local community

Respondents were asked if there were any further comments regarding childcare provision for primary school children. There were 14 responses with the most common theme being a lack of childcare provision and wraparound care in specific schools.

## Digital Learning

Further information around the Education Scotland's Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy can be found at [Enhancing Learning and Teaching Through the Use of Digital Technology: A Digital Learning and Teaching Strategy for Scotland - English Summary \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/digital-learning-and-teaching-strategy-for-scotland-english-summary/pages/1_to_4.aspx).

166 respondents answered questions in this section, with 95.2% stating that their ELC setting uses a digital platform to communicate information about children's progress. The *Learning Journals* app was the most popular used in settings.

Respondents were then asked to rate satisfaction with the following features of the digital platform used:

- Ease of access to information shared – 91.2% are satisfied or very satisfied
- Ability to upload child's work or observations from home – 80.5% are satisfied or very satisfied
- Ability to communicate with ELC staff – 82.4% are satisfied or very satisfied
- Regularity of Updates – 83% are satisfied or very satisfied

The opportunity to provide further comments on the digital platforms in use in ELC settings was provided. 42 responses were received with the most common themes concerning

- functionality of the platforms in use, and
- the quality and quantity of observations shared by settings.

## Children’s Rights

Two new questions regarding the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child were included for parents and carers of children accessing ELC. As of 2024, the Rights of the Child were incorporated into Scots Law and local authorities are legally required to uphold and respect children’s rights. More information and further links can be accessed at [Elected Member Briefing - UNCRC incorporation into Scottish law - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

The questions asked during consultation were regarding the following articles of the UNCRC:

- Article 12 – I have the right to be listened to and taken seriously
- Article 31 – I have the right to rest, relax and play

Respondents were asked *How well do ELC staff take account of children’s views when making decisions?* The responses were as follows:

Fig 9: Children’s Views

Response Category	Percentage
Completely	50.6%
Mostly	37.5%
Somewhat	7.5%
A little	3.1%
Not at all	1.2%

Respondents were then asked *How well do ELC staff ensure children have the chance to relax and play in a safe and stimulating environment?* The responses were as follows:

Fig 10: The Right to Rest and Play

Response Category	Percentage
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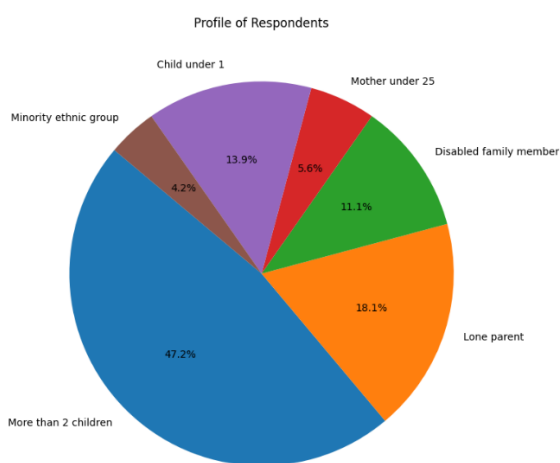
Completely	67.7%
Mostly	26.7%
Somewhat	3.7%
A little	1.2%
Not at all	0.6%

## Other Services and Support

This was section introduced in the ELC Consultation in 2023/24 to identify further community and family needs and target support and services where they are needed most across Perth and Kinross.

There were responses to a question which aimed to identify further the profile of respondents, of which 72 respondents, chose a category:

Fig 11: Profile of Respondents



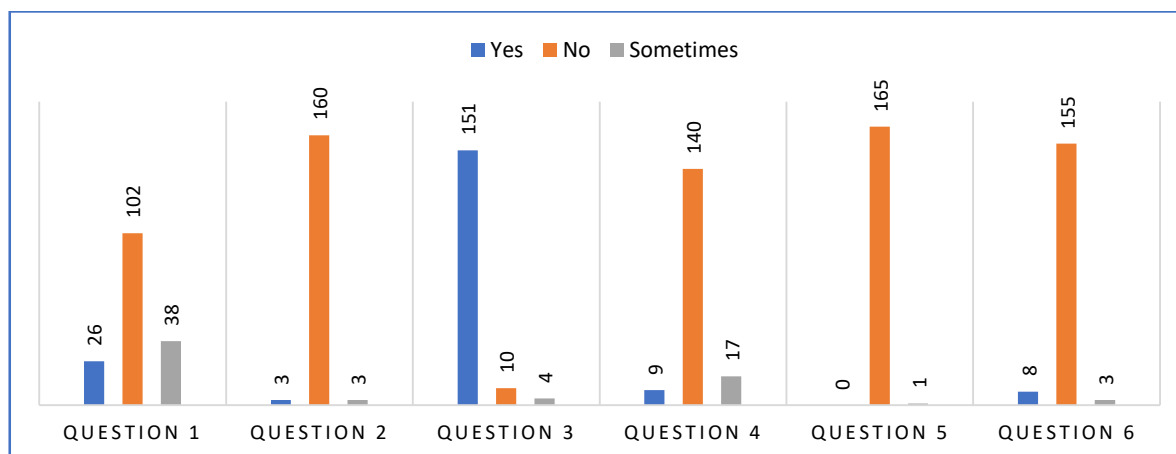
There was an option to answer yes, no, or sometimes to the following 6 questions:

- Question 1: Do you have difficulty making ends meet in the week/days before payday?
- Question 2: In the past year, was there any day when you or someone in your house went hungry because you did not have enough food?
- Question 3: Does your home have enough internet access/devices to enable all your school age children to learn from home?

- Question 4: Do you struggle to pay energy bills (electricity/gas or fuel to heat your home)?
- Question 5: Do you think you are at risk of becoming homeless?
- Question 6: In the last 12 months has lack of transportation kept you from medical or other appointments, work or getting things for daily living?

The responses received to each question are outlined below (Fig 12).

Fig 12: Responses to Cost-of-Living Questions



#### Optional Comments

All respondents were offered the chance to provide any further comments or information before the consultation ended. There was a total of 31 responses to this offer with the main themes as follows:

- 11 respondents provided positive feedback for particular ELC settings and schools.
- Seven respondents commented about specific policies and procedures within education settings.
- Six respondents were concerned about the ELC offer including attendance patterns, eligibility criteria, accessibility, and wraparound care availability. This included availability of ELC Gaelic Medium Education and Scottish Government policy.
- Three respondents advised that they would appreciate more opportunities for their children to rest during the day.
- Two respondents provided positive comments about the flexibility of the ELC offer in PKC.
- Two respondents provided positive comments regarding their child's rights.
- One respondent commented that feedback on their child's progress could be improved.

## ELC CONSULTATION 2025/26

- One respondent found the consultation difficult to complete as they felt their experience for each of their children differed greatly.

## Analysis

Due to the low number of responses, any conclusion and analysis should be treated with caution.

The total responses received in this consultation was 423. This is equivalent to 2.7% of families across Perth and Kinross (National Records of Scotland, 2022).

## Trends

To streamline the consultation, and make it less onerous for families to complete, not all questions asked in previous consultations were included in the 2025/26 consultation. However, where possible, the findings in this consultation were compared with previous findings to identify trends.

- The distribution of responses across ELC communities remains similar to previous years with the highest number of responses coming from North and South Perth communities, and the lowest from rural communities.
- The percentage of respondents confirming they had attended a family learning session for a child aged under three years old has increased from 18.6% in 2023/24 to 23.4% in 2025/26. For children aged 3-5 years old, the percentage has dropped slightly from 50% to 47.3%.
- When asked to rate the experience from 0 (Poor) to 5 (excellent) of family learning sessions attended, most (89.9%) rated a four or five in 2025/26, an increase from 83.97% in 2023/24.
- In 2021, 2022 and 2023/24, parents and carers advised that they make the choice of their child's ELC setting or attendance pattern based primarily on *working pattern, preparing a child for school, and older siblings attending the same school*. This year, the ELC setting *closest to the child's home address, parent/carer working pattern, and location within child's primary catchment school* were the most popular responses.
- In accordance with all previous consultations, for most children who are not accessing their full funded entitlement of ELC this is primarily down to parent preference and choosing to keep children at home or with family members.
- Similar to the 2021 (74.3%) and 2023/24 (73.2%) ELC Consultation, approximately three quarters of respondents of primary school aged children (79.66%) feel that access to childcare is important or very important.
- Key benefits of accessing out of school care remained consistent with the 2021 and 2023/24 ELC Consultation with parents commonly agreeing it is a safe place to spend time and an opportunity to mix with children of different ages.
- The percentage of respondents reporting that they are unaware of family learning opportunities has fallen from 43% in 2023/24 to 24.7% in 2025/26.

- Under the Cost-of-Living section, the number of respondents choosing to respond fell from 460 in 2023/24 to 166 in 2025/26, impacting upon any conclusions that can be drawn regarding trends.

## New Findings

Some new questions were included in the 2025/26 Consultation. A summary of the findings is outlined below:

- Respondents were asked if they agreed that ELC intake should align more with school intake whereby those residing in the catchment area should be given higher priority. Approximately three quarters (76.5%) of respondents agreed, 16.3% disagreed, and 6.6% were unsure.
- Respondents of primary school aged children were asked *How has your child's participation in Kids Clubs or Wraparound Care positively impacted your family?* Multiple options could be selected with the most common response being that childcare allowed the parent/carer to remain in work (34.3%).
- Under Digital Learning, 95.2% of respondents stated that their ELC setting uses a digital platform to communicate information about children's progress. Satisfaction is high for identified benefits (80.5% – 90.2%).
- Under Children's Rights, respondents are mostly in agreement that ELC staff take account of children's views when making decisions (88.1%), and ensure children have the chance to relax and play in a safe and stimulating environment (94.4%).

## Conclusion

Due to the low response rate, Perth and Kinross Council's Education and Learning service will move cautiously towards making any decision for change and will consult further on specific themes if deemed necessary. The following actions have been drafted following an initial analysis of the data provided through the consultation:

- Analyse the data by responses from each ELC community to determine if there are themes and challenges in particular communities regarding access to ELC or school-aged childcare that can be addressed.
- Share the data collected with the relevant PKC officers to support relevant workstreams and highlight findings.
- Consider how to increase participation in the next ELC consultation to improve the reliability of the data collection.

## You Said, We Did...

In response to findings in previous consultations, the following actions were taken:

- Service redesigns have taken place in North Perth and Auchterarder communities to increase the wraparound childcare offer to families and support working families access childcare that suits their context.
- A system to purchase additional hours of ELC in local authority extended-year nurseries has been expanded to support the offer of childcare for working parents/carers.
- Education and Learning Officers have supported implementation of digital communication platforms and high-quality digital learning experiences throughout ELC settings.
- A pilot to offer a Gaelic ELC offer at Goodlyburn PS Nursery is currently underway with a goal to expand this as a full offer in the future.

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