

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update

No. 17 – August 2021

Introduction from Alison Cumming, Director for Early Learning and Childcare

Hello and welcome to our August update.

Well, Team ELC, we did it! All eligible children are now able to access up to 1140 hours of high quality, nurturing, funded ELC. It is fantastic to see this transformational policy brought to life all over the country through the passion, hard work and dedication of the ELC sector. This would be a phenomenal achievement in normal times, but to make a reality of 1140 for children and families across Scotland whilst dealing with the myriad challenges of the pandemic is testament to the commitment of Team ELC. You truly are amazing and I can only, again, offer my heartfelt thanks. We will be celebrating by sharing examples of funded childcare in action on our [Twitter page](#) and beyond.

I appreciate that you all continue to face daily challenges as a result of Covid-19, and we are committed to continuing to work with you to find solutions to those. I am particularly grateful to those settings that have remained open over the summer and have continued to adhere to the Covid guidance. The number of cases in ELC and other childcare settings has remained very low thanks to your continued vigilance and effort.

We will be monitoring very carefully how the return of more children at the start of the new academic year impacts on cases, outbreaks and, most importantly, health harms. That analysis will inform any further revisions to our guidance. By the end of September, we expect that all adults will have been offered both doses of the vaccine with 14 days having passed since their second dose. That may be an opportunity to further ease the mitigations but that decision will be made on the advice of the Advisory Sub-group on Education and Children's Issues. As ever, any changes will be made cautiously and in consultation with sector representatives.

On behalf of the Scottish Government, my thanks again for all you are doing to provide high quality early learning and childcare to Scotland's children and families. I hope you have managed to find some time for rest and relaxation this Summer.

Take care

Alison

[Find previous editions of the ELC Covid-19 update here.](#)

Contents

1. Covid-19 Guidance	3
1.1 Childcare Guidance	3
1.2 Strengthening access to CO2 monitors	3
1.3 The Care Inspectorate weekly staff absence survey	4
1.4 Scottish Government Public Consultation on Covid Recovery	4
2. 1140 Hours Delivery	4
3. ELC Statutory Guidance	5
4. Delivery of Funded Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement Without the Payment of Fees	5
5. Financial Sustainability Health Check	6
6. Workforce and Professional Learning	6
6.1 Wellbeing Support for Workforce	6
6.2 Place2BE Training	7
7. Education Scotland	7
7.1 CYPMH Professional Learning Resource	7
7.2 Creative Wellbeing fund launched	7
7.3 Learning for Sustainability and COP26	7
8. Review of Parent Club	8
9. SEEMiS Early Years	8
10. Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme	8
10.1 Local Authority Contact Details	9
11. Annex A – Forward Look Calendar	11
9. Annex B – Publications	13

1. Covid-19 Guidance

1.1 Childcare Guidance

The suite of childcare guidance has been updated following the changes to policy on self-isolation for children and adults who are close contacts that the First Minister set out in her [statement of 3 August](#). The rationale for and impact of these changes for schools and registered childcare settings is explained in a [self-isolation and contact tracing information sheet](#).

Other recent changes to the guidance include:

- physical distancing requirements in settings will be at least 1 metre;
- parents/carers can visit settings, in a carefully managed way, to support children's transition to a new setting;
- an enhanced approach with respect to ventilation;
- in level 0 and below, groups can be mixed when outside, if this allows settings to maximise time spent outdoors where risk of transmission is lower.

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): early learning and childcare \(ELC\) services - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for school age childcare services - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): childminder services guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

The intention is to retain the guidance in its current form until at least the end of September - by which point all over 18s will have been offered two doses of the vaccine and 14 days will have passed. However, we will keep this under constant review, depending on the data and evidence.

A [checklist of mitigations](#) has been developed to help settings familiarise themselves with the updated guidance as quickly as possible, highlighting key mitigations that have changed since the end of the summer term in June.

We hosted an Early Learning and Childcare bletcher earlier this month, which gave staff working in the ELC sector an opportunity to have their questions about the guidance answered by public health professionals and our policy lead on Covid safety in ELC settings. The session was recorded and can be viewed at this link: [Public health information | COVID-19 education recovery | National Improvement Hub](#).

1.2 Strengthening access to CO2 monitors

We are working with local authorities (via ADES and COSLA) to ensure that all day care of children services have access to CO2 monitoring, whether via mobile or fixed devices. How this applies to ELC settings, childminding settings and school-aged childcare is set out in the separate guidance for these settings.

Local authority teams will work with providers known to the authority wherever possible to provide CO2 monitors. However, day care of children services that are not funded to provide statutory ELC will be asked to contact their local authority to arrange provision of devices. We provided details of some local authority contacts in our [Childcare Provision Notice of 16 August](#) and will provide contact details for the remaining local authorities as soon as possible.

1.3 The Care Inspectorate weekly staff absence survey

Although children no longer have to self-isolate as close contacts (provided they remain asymptomatic), the requirement for staff to have a negative PCR test before they can be released from this requirement will continue to have an impact on capacity in settings.

We regularly monitor staff absences in the sector that are due to Covid to help us assess the impact of our Covid policy and risk mitigations. Our main source of data on staff self-isolation is the Care Inspectorate's weekly staff absence survey. Please encourage your settings to respond to this survey. We know this is an additional ask of busy staff but it is an important source of data on capacity challenges within the sector.

Contact: Debbie Silver at Debbie.Silver@gov.scot

1.4 Scottish Government Public Consultation on Covid Recovery

Scottish Government have launched a 12 week public consultation entitled "[Covid recovery: a consultation on public health, public services and justice system reforms](#)" which runs until 9 November 2021.

The consultation focuses on reviewing the legislative powers that have supported the Government's response to Covid. The paper begins with discussion of the Government's ambitions for Covid recovery and ends with an open question, to invite comments on the action that respondents think is required to support a fair, safe and secure recovery.

Topics most relevant to ELC and other registered childcare providers include Education: powers to make directions to close educational establishments, and to ensure the continuity of education, Virtual public meetings under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and Care services: giving of notices by the Care Inspectorate. Your views on these proposals will inform any future legislation to be brought forward on these topics for full scrutiny and debate in Parliament.

Please respond to this consultation online at <https://consult.gov.scot/constitution-and-cabinet/covid-recovery/>. Views on these proposals will inform any future legislation to be brought forward on these topics for full scrutiny and debate in Parliament.

Contact: Catherine Hodgson at Covid.Leg.Consultation@gov.scot

2. 1140 Hours Delivery

All councils are providing 1140 hours of funded ELC to all eligible children. Legislation came into effect on 1 August that places a statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of funded ELC available to eligible children and all councils have reported delivery from the start of term in August. This expansion will improve children's outcomes, help to close the poverty-related outcome gap, improve family wellbeing and support parents and carers into work, study or training as we recover from COVID. As we have reported in previous updates, local authorities and their partners in the private, third, independent and childminding sectors across Scotland have worked extremely hard to deliver this commitment in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

The next Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, providing detailed figures on delivery, will be published in late September.

Contact: Hannah Keates' Delivery Assurance Team at ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot

3. ELC Statutory Guidance

The updated [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Statutory Guidance](#) came into effect from 1 August 2021. A Gaelic version is also available under 'Supporting Documents'.

The guidance is issued to education authorities, and they are required to have regard to it when carrying out their statutory functions in relation to delivering the funded ELC entitlement. It is also intended to assist all those involved in the implementation and delivery of funded ELC, including providers in the private, third and childminding sectors.

As well as covering the ELC legislative framework, the document also sets out additional guidance on key related legislation and policy including Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard.

Contact: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

4. Delivery of Funded Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement Without the Payment of Fees

We have recently received enquiries regarding payments relating to funded ELC hours. To clarify, and as set out in the legislation, the entitlement to funded early learning and childcare must be provided without the payment of fees. This includes where funded ELC is delivered through a third party (i.e. providers in the private, third, independent or childminding sectors).

This means that:

- parents are not asked to make any upfront payment, including a deposit or any other payment, in respect of the funded early learning and childcare entitlement;
- no top-up fees are charged to parents relating to the funded early learning and childcare entitlement; and
- parents are not required to purchase additional hours beyond the funded early learning and childcare entitlement in order to access their child's funded early learning and childcare entitlement.

It is important to highlight that this is the long-standing legal position - under section 33(1) of the Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000.

There may be optional additional services (i.e. in addition to the funded ELC hours) that parents may wish to purchase from the child's setting. Any charges which are in addition to the funded ELC entitlement must only be for optional extras, and limited to, for example, costs of outings or extracurricular activities, and snacks (excluding snacks provided through the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme).

Further information is set out in the ELC Statutory Guidance and the [Funding Follows the Child and National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Operating Guidance](#).

Contact: Euan Carmichael's Sector Sustainability and Partnership Team at: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

5. Financial Sustainability Health Check

The findings from the Financial Sustainability Health Check will be published on 31 August 2021.

The Financial Sustainability Health Check has collected evidence on the sustainability of the childcare sector, in particular in light of the impacts of COVID-19. The Health Check has been informed by evidence and analysis from: detailed surveys of childcare providers; in-depth case study interviews with a range of providers; discussions with provider representative bodies; and analysis of trends in registration data.

Updated information will also be published on the sustainable rates that local authorities have set for private, third and childminding services delivering funded early learning and childcare (ELC).

We are very grateful for all the providers who contributed to this exercise.

We will send further information including links to the documents to all registered services.

Contact: Euan Carmichael's Sector Sustainability and Partnership Team at: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

6. Workforce and Professional Learning

6.1 Wellbeing Support for Workforce

Wellbeing webinars for childcare professionals will return on 3 September to provide all colleagues with practical advice and techniques to manage their personal wellbeing, as well as ideas for colleagues to consider the collective wellbeing of staff in their workplace.

Following up on the hugely popular wellbeing events offered last year, Early Years Scotland has worked with the Scottish Government to develop a further wellbeing session. This free webinar is open to everyone working in childcare and will be delivered on 6 different dates, and at different times of day, to ensure there will be a slot that suits everyone. One of the events will be filmed and placed on the website, so even if the dates and times prove tricky, colleagues can still access the advice provided at the events.

The pandemic has been an extremely challenging time for everyone and ELC professionals have often gone above and beyond in their support for the children and families they work with. These webinars are therefore designed to provide colleagues with practical advice and strategies to help ensure you're looking after yourself, your team and those you support every day.

Previous events proved hugely popular and feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with colleagues appreciating the practical nature of the advice provided. You can book a place now for one of the events at www.teamELCwellbeinghub.org.

These events will complement the resources available on the [website](#) to support personal wellbeing. The Hub contains lots of advice and support as well as the facility to connect with colleagues across the sector.

Contact: Scott Sutherland at scott.sutherland@gov.scot

6.2 Place2BE Training

Place2Be is offering all ELC and teaching staff access to their free 5 week Mental Health Champions Foundation programme. This programme is broken down into 15 minute manageable sections to fit around professionals' working day, and looks to enhance professionals' understanding of children's mental health and introduce approaches that foster positive wellbeing.

They have 1000 places available across Scotland, with the first course running from 8 September, and a second to be offered for early 2022.

[Further details and information on how to apply can be found from their website here.](#)

Contact: Sarah Guy at Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

7. Education Scotland

7.1 CYPMH Professional Learning Resource

Scottish Government recently published a new professional learning resource for school staff, supported by the Mental Health in Schools Working Group. The resource will provide essential learning required to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing. Although aimed at school staff, the resource is free and available to anyone who wishes to access it at: [CYPMH – Professional Learning Resource](#).

7.2 Creative Wellbeing fund launched

With learners' mental health and wellbeing a top priority across Scotland, [the Creative Wellbeing fund has been created](#) to offer six grants of £12-15,000 to support schools and funded early learning and childcare settings to take a creative approach to addressing wellbeing. One project will be selected in each Regional Improvement Collaborative area.

Schools and funded early learning and childcare providers are invited to apply for this unique funding opportunity which is designed to help partnership groups work together with a creative partner to find innovative solutions to increasing learner wellbeing and wider sense of achievement.

All you have to do is identify your partnership group (schools, services, community/locality partners) and the challenge you want to address, and tell Education Scotland about your context.

The project runs from September 2021 to June 2022. The deadline for applications is 5pm Tuesday 31 August 2021.

7.3 Learning for Sustainability and COP26

As Scotland prepares to host 200 world leaders for the United Nations COP26 Climate Summit, we want to celebrate your work to promote Learning for Sustainability and climate education.

Nominate for the [Learning for Sustainability Awards](#) by 12 September so we can share your achievements nationally and globally. Visit the [Countdown to COP26](#) page to find out about all the support and resources available to support climate justice education.

Contact: Siân Neil at Siân.Neil@educationscotland.gov.scot

8. Review of Parent Club

We are currently reviewing the [ELC pages on Parent Club](#). We are particularly keen to make sure that parents and families understand how to access their funded entitlement and what Funding Follows the Child means. In the short term, this will include new/revised FAQs about food, fees and covid safety. In the medium term, we'll be adding more video case studies – including childminder case studies and 2-year-old case studies. We're hoping to collect a range of diverse case studies, with a range of children, families and settings. If you've got any feedback on the website or case study suggestions, please get in touch with Luke.

Contact: Luke McPherson at luke.mcpherson@gov.scot

9. SEEMiS Early Years

The new system is currently under development and is scheduled for delivery within the 2021/22 academic session. The SEEMiS project team will continue to engage with local authorities, and make arrangements for roll out as soon as delivery timescales become clear. It is not expected the system will be released in 2021.

Contact: Raymond Buckley at Raymond.Buckley@gov.scot

10. Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme

The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme launched on 1 August 2021, replacing the existing UK Nursery Milk Scheme in Scotland and providing pre-school childcare settings with milk and a portion of fruit or vegetables.

All pre-schoolers who spend two hours or more a day in eligible childcare settings registered with the scheme will be entitled to a serving of fresh milk. Unlike the UK scheme, a piece of fruit or portion of vegetables will also be offered and children who cannot drink cow's milk for medical, ethical or religious reasons will be offered a specified non-dairy alternative.

Initial data shows that 3,101 childcare settings and 116,293 eligible children are registered to the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme. If you have not already registered, we would urge you to make immediate contact with your local authority to ensure that you can benefit from the new Scheme.

For further guidance on the operational aspects of the Scheme, please refer to: [Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: guidance for local authorities and day care settings](#).

Should you have any questions about the new Scheme including how to register or if your local authority is not listed below, please contact your local authority or the Scottish Government Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Policy team below.

Contact: The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Team at SMHSS@gov.scot

10.1 Local Authority Contact Details

Local Authority	Email
Aberdeen City	SMHSS@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Website address	The Scottish Milk & Healthy Snack Scheme Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire	earlyyears@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme – Aberdeenshire Council
Angus	ELC@angus.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: childcare providers Angus Council
Argyll & Bute	earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Clackmannanshire	kcarmichael@clacks.gov.uk
Dumfries & Galloway	EarlyYearsSupport@dumgal.gov.uk
Dundee City	smhss@dundeecity.gov.uk
Website address	smhss_information_sheet_1.pdf (dundeecity.gov.uk)
East Ayrshire	EarlyYears-Milk&Snacks@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish milk and healthy snack scheme - East Ayrshire Council (east-ayrshire.gov.uk)
East Dunbartonshire	SMHSSenquiries@eastdunbarton.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian	fundedproviders@eastlothian.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Early Learning and Childcare East Lothian Council
East Renfrewshire	earlylearningandchildcare@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk
Edinburgh, City of	smhss@edinburgh.gov.uk
Falkirk	MilkandSnack@Falkirk.gov.uk
Website address	Early learning & childcare - Milk and Snack Scheme Falkirk Council
Fife	earlyyears.manager@fife.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Fife Council
Glasgow	ELC@glasgow.gov.uk
Inverclyde	Lorna.Coote@inverclyde.gov.uk
Midlothian	Earlyyears@midlothian.gov.uk
Moray	childcare.info@moray.gov.uk
North Ayrshire	earlylearningchildcare@north-ayrshire.gov.uk
North Lanarkshire	SmithLou@northlan.gov.uk
Orkney	elc@orkney.gov.uk
Website address	New milk and healthy snack scheme North Lanarkshire Council
Perth and Kinross	EarlyLearnChildcare@pkc.gov.uk
Renfrewshire	CSSUPPORT@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - Renfrewshire Website
Scottish Borders	earlyyearsteamed@scotborders.gov.uk
Shetland	ELC@shetland.gov.uk
South Ayrshire	Learning.RaisingStandards@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Registration - South Ayrshire Council (south-ayrshire.gov.uk)

South Lanarkshire	earlyyears@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - South Lanarkshire Council
Stirling	eymilkscheme@stirling.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - Stirling Council
West Dunbartonshire	Teresa.Devaney@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
West Dunbartonshire	Liz.Coles@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
Website address	Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme West Dunbartonshire Council (west-dunbarton.gov.uk)
West Lothian	milkandhealthysnackscheme@westlothian.gov.uk

11. Annex A – Forward Look Calendar

August 2021	Event	Information	Link
25 August	Care Inspectorate Childminding Webinar - Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason	The Care Inspectorate are inviting providers, managers and inspectors to free sector specific webinars – these aim to provide staff with information and guidance that relate to some of the common issues identified during inspections and from discussions with services and inspectors over the past nine months.	Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason – August 2021 Webinars (careinspectorate.com)
26 August	Care Inspectorate ELC day care services Webinar - Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason	The Care Inspectorate are inviting providers, managers and inspectors to free sector specific webinars – these aim to provide staff with information and guidance that relate to some of the common issues identified during inspections and from discussions with services and inspectors over the past nine months.	Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason – August 2021 Webinars (careinspectorate.com)
30 August	Children’s Rights – What? Why? How? Train the Trainers opportunity event by Education Scotland	This is an interactive session which supports Local Authority officers to train practitioners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop their understanding of what children’s rights are • Become familiar with why rights are relevant and further understand the current policy and legislative context 	Children’s Rights – What? Why? How? Train the Trainers opportunity Tickets, Mon 30 Aug 2021 at 09:30 Eventbrite

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore how to embed rights based approaches into practice. 	
31 August	Making the links between the UNCRC, Morgan Review and The Promise	This Creative Conversation is aimed at practitioners and staff across all sectors who have responsibility or are involved in supporting children and families.	Making the links between the UNCRC, Morgan Review and The Promise Events News and events Education Scotland
September 2021	Event	Information	Link
Multiple dates throughout September	Online Wellbeing Webinar	Free wellbeing webinars for all childcare professionals. These workshops will provide attendees with the knowledge, skills and understanding to support them to begin to have powerful wellbeing conversations within a team environment.	Event (teamelcwellbeinghub.org)
28 September	Numeracy and mathematics - a series of webinars for newly and recently qualified ELC and primary teachers	Education Scotland is hosting a series of webinars designed specifically to support ELC and primary newly and recently qualified teachers (NQTs and RQTs) in delivering effective approaches to learning, teaching and assessment in the area of numeracy and mathematics.	Numeracy and mathematics - a series of webinars for newly and recently qualified ELC and primary teachers Events News and events Education Scotland

9. Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
13/08/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for school age childcare services - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
13/08/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
12/08/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
11/08/2021	Warn+and+Inform++-+information+sheet.pdf (www.gov.scot)Warn and Inform information sheet.pdf (www.gov.scot)
03/08/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services - checklist of mitigations for Level 0 and below - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)
20/07/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for school age childcare services
20/07/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for childminder services
13/07/2021	Early learning and childcare: statutory guidance - July 2021
23/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare – National Induction Resource: Latest Version June 2021
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility - Income Threshold Change – June 2021- EQIA
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility – Income Threshold Change – June 2021- BRIA
21/06/2021	New ELC Guidance from 5 July, New School Age Childcare Guidance from 5 July and New Childminder Guidance from 5 July
16/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, May 2021
07/06/2021	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: guidance for local authorities and day care settings
24/03/2021	Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance - update March 2021
24/03/2021	Equity and excellence leads: Care Inspectorate findings
17/03/2021	Out to Play - creating outdoor play experiences for children: practical guidance - new chapters
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
15/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated school aged childcare services guidance
05/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated childminder services guidance
05/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated early learning and childcare (ELC) services guidance
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
21/01/2021	Our commitment to childminding: report