The Highland Council

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	EDU/7/25

Committee:	**Education**
Date:	**26 February 2025**
Report Title:	**Person Centred Solutions Portfolio Board Update: Early Learning & Childcare Progress**
Report By:	**Assistant Chief Executive - People**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Delivery Plan 2024-27 consists of 64 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 9 May 2024. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when for example circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.

1.2 This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme:
The content and structure of the report is intended to:
- assist Member scrutiny and performance management
- inform decision making and aid continuous improvement, and
- provide transparency and accessibility

1.3 The project is embedded in the Person Centred Solutions portfolio, working in conjunction with other portfolios – 'Workforce for the future' and 'Reconfiguring our Asset Base', to deliver a streamlined, innovative, effective and sustainable early learning and childcare service which meets the needs of children, families and communities.

1.4 The project is to create flexible and sustainable early learning and childcare solutions and, working in partnership with other programmes and projects such as the Highland Investment Plan (HIP), the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP), the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP) to deliver place-based childcare approaches.

A key outcome for rural and island communities will be to develop sustainable Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) solutions which meet the needs of communities, including childcare for under 3s and school age children across the full year. This is likely to require new models of delivery such as subsidised childminding.

For new ELC provisions, this will include developing an options appraisal and procurement system which will provide potential opportunities for Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) partners to deliver the ELC and expanded childcare in new settings.

We have engaged with PVI partners and have invited representative members onto the ELC taskforce to collaborate in taking forward the project. Where demand is sufficient, Highland Council will work with partners to facilitate childcare solutions to meet the need of parents and carers with under 3s and school age childcare alongside the funded ELC provision.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

i. Scrutinise and note the report. Including progress to date and next steps.

3. Implications

3.1 Resource
The project is intended to realise savings of £500k by year 3.

3.2 Legal
This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of; Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.

Any major change to Local Authority ELC provision will require statutory consultation to meet the requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010.

Statutory consultation – To replace local authority run services with PVI provision requires a statutory consultation to be undertaken to achieve closure of the local authority's 'stage of education' provision (approximately 18-month timescales).

3.3 Risk
Legal and political barriers may prevent settings closing and savings being achieved.

3.4 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)
There are no specific health and safety implications arising from this report.

3.5 Gaelic
GME ELC provision will be considered as described above.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 This is a monitoring report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.

5. Background

5.1 Childcare policy and delivery contribute to national and local outcomes on children and young people, health, education and poverty, consistent with Scottish Government requirements as set out in: [Best Start](#)

5.2 This project is part of the Person-Centred Solutions Portfolio within the capacity building workstream and is the ELC project – to create innovative and sustainable solutions to early learning and childcare, with a focus on not only the statutory provision of funded ELC (1140hours) but also considering wider childcare demands such as; provision for babies; funded ELC for longer hours and holidays; and school age childcare across the whole of Highland.

5.3 Much of this work is business as usual for the Early Years team however, the project is formalising structures and governance, cross portfolio and programme links, working with a task force in partnership to support development, testing and roll out of ELC, at an increased pace of change. Once enrolment figures are received consideration will be given to taking forward the actions outlined in this report.

5.4 The intention is to design and test flexible models of ELC delivery, in collaboration with our PVI partners, which are high quality, sustainable and meet the need of remote and rural communities. There is an expectation from families and communities to maintain what is currently delivered, alongside the challenge to offer wider flexibility and choice in a landscape of falling rolls and budgets. The ambition is that changes to provision will meet the needs of communities whilst also being more efficient and sustainable.

5.5 This work is being undertaken in the following context: -
   - falling school rolls
   - rising expectations of parents and carers for flexibility and choice in childcare
   - the need to make financial savings and efficiencies
   - increasing scrutiny and inspection and stringent registration requirements through Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland

   For session 23/24 (baseline data) there are 217 active settings across Highland,

      - 156 in Local Authority (LA),
      - 44 Private, voluntary and independent providers (PVI)
      - 17 commissioned childminders (CC).

   - 16 settings are delivering through the medium of Gaelic, all but 1 operated by LA.
   - 45 settings (not including childminders) have a roll of fewer than 8 children
   - 13 LA settings are currently inactive or mothballed
   - The number of PVI settings has almost halved over the last 20 years
   - Number of childminders has significantly decreased in the past 15 years
   - Childminders appear reluctant to become commissioned
   - Barriers to childminding (PSR 2010)- childminding is defined as 'looking after one or more children on domestic premises for reward for a period of more than two hours in any day.'

5.6 Overall RAG

Reason for Project RAG Rating and Corrective Action:

| M9 24/25 |

Task force has been set up with partners to move projects forward. Others parts of project are also moving forward including additional resource.

5.7   Key Milestones and Request for Change

MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS
Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24	ELC/Childcare: Commence Engagement	M3 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24	ELC/Childcare: Launch Assertive Highland Campaign	M3 24/25 Completed
Starts Aug24 / Completes Jan 25	ELC/Childcare: Implementation plan in place	M9 24/25 On Target
Starts Dec24 / Completes Feb25	ELC/Childcare: Support for business development & compliance	M9 24/25 Some Slippage
Starts Dec24 / Completes Jan25	ELC/Childcare: Agree governance for changes to provision and delivery model	M9 24/25 On Target
Starts Jan25 / Completes Mar25	ELC/Childcare: Engagement to agree next steps/solutions for settings with falling rolls	
Starts Mar25 / Completes Apr25	ELC/Childcare: Engage with procurement to develop a robust procurement and contracting process for ELC partners	
Starts Apr25 / Completes Aug25	ELC/Childcare: Offers giving flexibility and choice in delivery models available to communities	
Start TBC / Completes May25	ELC/Childcare: Community wealth building	M8 24/25

Requests for change

a. "ELC/Childcare: More sustainable delivery model" This measure of success was removed and replaced by the "Increased innovative models of delivery" measure as this more accurately reflects what the project is trying to achieve.

b. New Milestones added: -
• 01/25 Agree governance for making changes to provision and delivery model in communities
• 03/25 Engage with members and communities to agree next steps and solutions for settings under pressure due to falling roles
• 4/25 Engage (with whoever it is in procurement team) to develop a robust procurement and contracting process for ELC partners to have it in place from August 2025
• 8/25 Offer flexibility and choice where possible in delivery models available community by community

c. Change milestone completion date from 11/24 to 01/25. Implementation plan draft to be ready for consultation with wider stakeholders and agreement of timelines

5.8   Financial Summary

Portfolio: Person Centred Solutions Financial Summary	M9 24/25					
	Savings Forecast Total	Savings Target Total	Income Forecast Total	Income Target Total	Investment Forecast Total	Investment Amount Total
	£ 7,900,000	£ 7,900,000			£ 111,306	£ 23,200,000

i)   Savings – The savings target of £0.5M is not expected to be realised until FY26/27

ii)   Investment – There is no Delivery Plan investment directly associated with this project.

iii)   Mitigations – Not applicable

5.9 Key Risks

The key risks have been identified and assessed. The outcome of this is currently under review prior to being made available in PRMS.

6. Project objectives

6.1
- Collate and analyse data from current parental/carer childcare survey
- Engage communities to map need
- Research how ELC and wider care can and is delivered in other countries/ regions (ADAP)
- Map out the legislative and regulation challenges and propose practical policy tests of change
- Develop and test innovative early learning and childcare solutions
- Engage with SCMA to support retention of childminders through the mentoring scheme
- Ensure settings delivering from THC premises have current and appropriate licence to occupy or lease
- Increase numbers of commissioned childminders, particularly in rural areas
- Develop a funded childminder model to support recruitment and retention in rural and island communities (ADAP)
- Improve quality ELC
- Work with employers/business to discuss and develop childcare solutions
- Work with employability services and reducing child poverty working group to develop further joint working and collaboration focussing on childcare as an enabler.
- Develop contracting and procurement arrangements for PVI providers, especially for new school provisions where ELC can be outsourced.

7. Progress

Task force has been established with LA Early Years officers and PVI partners to take the work forward as follows:

- Draft Project brief developed – See Appendix 1
- Baseline Data agreed for 2023/24

- Updated Service map developed – see link here
- Expanded services:
  - Additional 2s provision – an additional 11 LA ELC settings have been registered to take children from age 2 across the North and West.
  - New Daycare – private provider opening in Inverness
  - Ardersier – Private provider opened (replacing what was Country Bumpkins)
- Effective data tracking system developing to track progress of settings, providers and delivery models
- Parental Survey undertaken and analysed – See Appendix 2
- ADAP:
  - Draft subsidised childminder model developed – See Appendix 3
  - Research into alternative models and systems underway
- School estate strategy developed to support governance
- SCM (CALA) - See Appendix 4

8. Next Steps

1. Following ELC enrolment arrange follow up for settings with 5 for fewer children for review
2. Engage with contracts and procurement services to establish how PVI providers will be considered and selected for ELC provision in new settings.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People

Date: 12/02/24

Author: Hayley Brown Snr Manager EY

Background Papers:

Appendices:
Appendix 1 – Draft Project brief
Appendix 2 – Parental Survey
Appendix 3 – ADAP update including subsidised childminding model
Appendix 4 – Single Care Model Progress

The Highland Council
Early Learning and Childcare

Credit: Crown Primary School Nursery

Project Brief

DOCUMENT DETAILS

DOCUMENT		AUTHOR
Ref: Revision: Status:	ELC – Childcare Version 4 Draft	Hayley Brown Senior Manager Early Years Education & Learning
CONTROL DATES		**APPROVED BY**
Sponsor Review: ICT Review:	tbc tbc	Kate Lackie ACE

DISTRIBUTION

NAME	TITLE	SERVICE
Anne MacPherson	Senior Lead Resources	E&L
Kate Lackie	Assistant Chief Executive	People
Fiona Malcolm	Chief Officer Integrated Services	E&L
Project Taskforce	ELC Taskforce Working Group	ELC & Partners

CHANGE HISTORY

REVISION	DATE	AUTHOR	CHANGE SUMMARY
V2	2.10.24	Hayley Brown	Re-drafting initial proposal with further details in references, terminology and project brief.
V3	17.10.24	Hayley Brown	ELC Commissioner input update following first team meeting.
V4	16.12.24	Hayley Brown	Formatting, hyperlinks, updated tables, contacts, team structure and role descriptions. Appendices links and summaries, inclusion of co-dependencies, ELC Survey results, 2 year old provision, data on LA settings.
V5	15.01.25	Hayley Brown	Updates following Task Force meeting with partners

MAP OF ELC PROVIDERS IN HIGHLAND
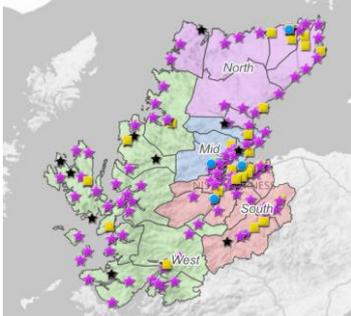
Experience - Early Learning and Childcare Providers in Highland

REFERENCES

The following items are referenced [n] in the text or are associated with this document and should be read in conjunction with this document. Links to the documents at Section 7.

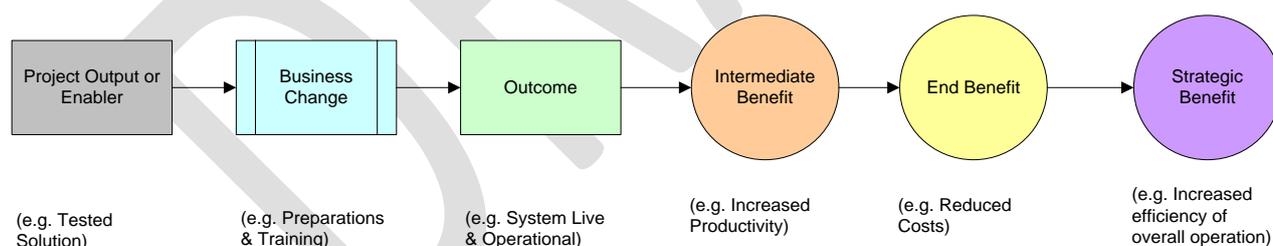| Reference	Title
C&YP 2014	Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, specifically **C&YP 2014 Part 6, Section 49**
Schools Consultation 2010	Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010
Schools Standards 2000	Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000
Best Start 2022-26	Best Start: Strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-26
FFC 2018	A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland, Funding Follows the Child (FFC) and the National Standard for ELC providers: Principles and Practice
Safer Staffing 2024	Health and Care (Staffing)(Scotland) Act 2019
HOIP 2017-27	Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027 Community Planning Partnership
ADAP 2024	Addressing Depopulation Action Plan Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: action plan to address depopulation
PSR 2010	Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act

SUPERSEDED DOCUMENTS

The following items are superseded by this document; they should be withdrawn from current use and destroyed or retained as per their retention requirements.

REFERENCE	TITLE	REVISION

GLOSSARY & ABBREVIATIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
A	sn
ADAP	Addressing Depopulation Action Plan
ACE	Assistant Chief Executive
CALA	Care and Learning Alliance
CI	Care Inspectorate
ELCC	Early Learning and Childcare
ELCC	ELC Commissioner
GIRFEC	Getting it Right for Every Child
HIE	Highland and Islands Enterprise
HOIP	Highland Outcome Improvement Plan
LA	Local Authority
PCS	Person Centred Solutions Portfolio
PVI	Private, Voluntary and Independent
REP	Regional Economic Partnership
SCMA	Scottish Childminding Association
SG	Scottish Government
SSSC	Scottish Social Services Council
SMEY	Senior Manager Early Years
SCM	Single Care Model
THC	The Highland Council

KEY TO TERMINOLOGY

Project Output or Enabler	→	Business Change	→	Outcome	→	Intermediate Benefit	→	End Benefit	→	Strategic Benefit
(e.g. Tested Solution)		(e.g. Preparations & Training)		(e.g. System Live & Operational)		(e.g. Increased Productivity)		(e.g. Reduced Costs)		(e.g. Increased efficiency of overall operation)

APPENDICES

Appendices	Title
Appendix 1	Single Care Model Development Session (Final Report)
Appendix 2	NW2045 Early Years Childcare Community Toolkit
Appendix 3	HIE Directorate Childcare Update May 2024
Appendix 4	HIE Childcare, Communities in Crisis Paper July 2024
Appendix 5	ELC Parental Survey Results

Contents

1. Project Definition

Develop flexible and place-based solutions, working in partnership with other programmes and projects such as the Highland Investment Plan (HIP), the Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP) and the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP), to create sustainable early learning and childcare solutions.

The project is embedded in the person-centred solutions portfolio, working in conjunction with other portfolios – 'Workforce for the future' and 'Reconfiguring our asset base', to deliver a streamlined, innovative, effective and sustainable early learning and childcare service which meets the needs of children, families and communities.

Design and test alternative models of ELC delivery which are high quality, sustainable and meet the need of remote and rural communities.

The project aims to deliver £500,000 savings by year 3.

1.1. Background

Childcare policy and delivery contribute to national and local outcomes on children and young people, health, education and poverty. **_Best Start 22-26_**

Early learning and childcare, formally known as nursery education, has been in a constant state of development and change over the last 20 years. This table outlines the significant national changes and developments.

Year	Act	Outline
1980	The Education (Scotland) Act	Gave local authorities the power to secure pre-school education for pre-school children in their areas.
1996		UK Government childcare voucher scheme in Scotland.
2000	Standards in Scottish Schools Act	Places a duty on local authorities to secure a pre-school education place for all three and four year olds.
2002		Pre-school education introduced: 412.5 hours (2.5 hours per day over 33 weeks per year).
2007		Pre-school education increased to 475 hours (2.5 hours per day over 38 weeks).
2012		Pre-school education is offered to 'Looked After' two year olds.
2014	Children and Young People (Scotland) Act	Pre-school education re-defined as early learning and childcare and increased to 600 hours (flexible delivery) and extended to any two year olds with parents in receipt of out of work benefits. Requirement to consult with parents and carers and publish results/plans every 2 years.
2015		Further extension to all two year olds who qualify for free school meals under the passported benefits eligibility criteria.
2020		Planned full rollout of 1140 hours for all three and four year olds, and eligible two year olds – delayed due to Covid.
2021		Roll-out of 1140 hours for all three and four year olds, and eligible two year olds.
2023		From August deferral legislation changed to enabled parents to have the choice to defer entry to P1 provided their child will not turn 5 before starting school.
2023		December - Funding Follows the Child and The National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Operating Guidance. Key aspects – GIRFEC, Provide Neutral, Clear and Accessible information for parents, delivery free at the point of access; LA has statutory responsibility to ensure entitlement is available to all children and are principal guarantors of quality, partnership working, commitment to Real Living Wage for all staff, funded meal for all children accessing funded ELC, all services to meet the National Standard.

This project is part of the Person-Centred Solutions Portfolio within the capacity building workstream and is the ELC project – to create innovative and sustainable solutions to early learning and childcare, with a focus on not only the statutory provision of funded ELC (1140 hours) but also considering wider childcare demands for provision for babies, funded ELC for longer hours and holidays and school age childcare, across Highland – urban, rural and remote.

Much of this work is business as usual for the Early Years team, however this project will focus on formalising structures and governance, cross portfolio and programme links, working with a task force in partnership, to support development, testing and roll out of ELC, at an increased pace of change.

This work is being undertaken in a landscape of significant: -

- falling school rolls
- rising expectations of parents and carers for flexibility and choice in childcare
- falling funding from Scottish Government for funded ELC
- increasing scrutiny and inspection, and stringent registration requirements through Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland
- For session 24/25 there are 217 active settings across Highland
    - 156 in Local Authority (LA)
    - 44 Private, voluntary and independent providers (PVI)
    - 17 commissioned childminders (CC)
- 16 settings are delivering through the medium of Gaelic, all but 1 operated by LA
- 45 settings (not including childminders) have a roll of fewer than 8 children
- 13 LA settings are currently inactive or mothballed
- The number of PVI settings has almost halved over the last 20 years
- Number of childminders has significantly decreased in the past 15 years
- Childminders appear reluctant to become commissioned and preference to take non funded children where spaces are limited
- Barriers to childminding (PSR 2010)- childminding is defined as 'looking after one or more children on domestic premises for reward for a period of more than two hours in any day.'
    - This does not include: • caring for children closely related to you • fostering children • caring for children in their own home.
    - But it may include caring for children over weekends and holiday periods who attend boarding school

1.2. Project Objectives

- Collate and analyse data from current parental/carer childcare survey (Appendix 5)
- Engage communities to map need and consider solutions
- Research how ELC and wider childcare can be, and is, delivered in other countries/regions (ADAP)
- Map out the legislative and regulation challenges and propose practical policy tests of change and get agreement to 'test' solutions
- Develop and test innovative early learning and childcare solutions
- Engage with SCMA to support retention of childminders through the mentoring scheme
- Ensure settings delivering from THC premises have current and appropriate licence to occupy or lease
- Increase numbers of commissioned childminders, particularly in Rural/island areas
- Develop a funded childminder model to support recruitment and retention in remote and rural communities (ADAP)
- Improve quality ELC
- Work with employers/business to discuss and develop childcare solutions
- Work with employability services and reducing child poverty working group to develop further joint working and collaboration focussing on childcare as an enabler

A Fair and Caring Highland

Working together to improve quality of life and opportunities for Highland people.

1.3. Desired outcomes

- Communities/parents/children have quality, affordable ELC services that meet their needs
- Services are more sustainable and resilient
- Delivery models adapt and innovate, offering place-based solutions that meet the needs of parents, communities and carers, and increase opportunities to take up or sustain work, training and/or study
- Parents are aware of eligibility to tax free childcare, universal credit childcare voucher schemes - to support take up of non-funded childcare (see results of parent engagement in Appendix 5)
- Improved cross working across/with link schemes/programmes – portfolios, ADAP, Adult social care, ELC PVI providers, poverty reduction/welfare team, employability team, developing the young workforce
- Children with ASN received their full entitlement in settings which can meet their needs
- Shift the balance of provision from LA delivery to PVI delivery, particularly childminders
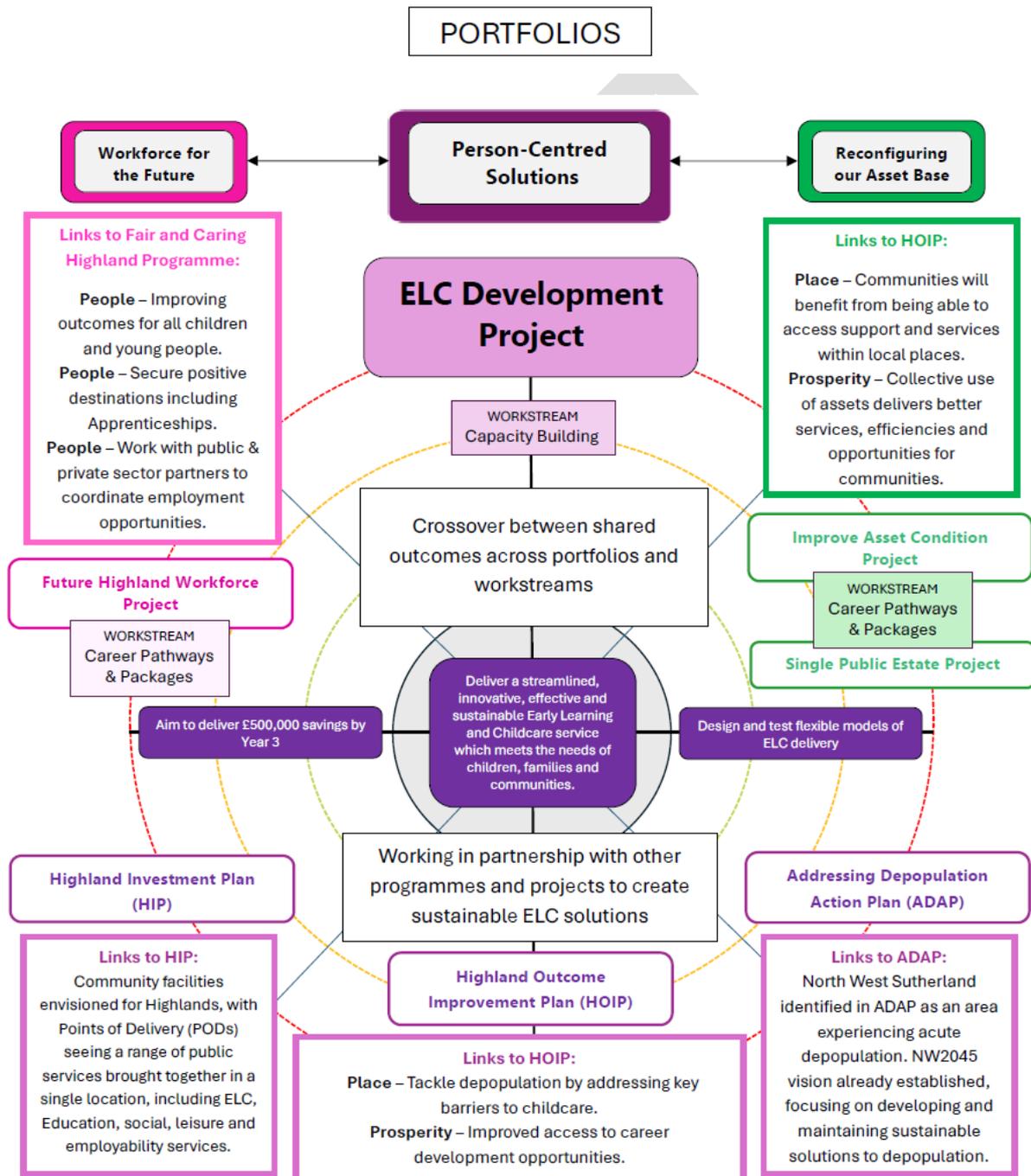- All staff working in ELC are employed within fair work practices and have a voice

Resilient and Sustainable Communities

Helping our communities to be prosperous, sustainable and resilient, making a positive difference to the lives of people.

1.4. Co-dependencies and Links

Map of co-dependencies

The ELC Project shares links with other portfolios from the 2024-27 Highland Council Delivery Plan and will work in parallel with the workstreams highlighted, to achieve shared outcomes.
The diagram below represents the co-dependency and inextricable links between these workstreams, as well as external programmes and projects which will inform decision making surrounding the project objectives and desired outcomes.

PORTFOLIOS

Workforce for the Future

Person-Centred Solutions

Reconfiguring our Asset Base

ELC Development Project

Links to Fair and Caring Highland Programme:

People – Improving outcomes for all children and young people.
People – Secure positive destinations including Apprenticeships.
People – Work with public & private sector partners to coordinate employment opportunities.

Links to HOIP:

Place – Communities will benefit from being able to access support and services within local places.
Prosperity – Collective use of assets delivers better services, efficiencies and opportunities for communities.

WORKSTREAM
Capacity Building

Crossover between shared outcomes across portfolios and workstreams

Improve Asset Condition Project

WORKSTREAM
Career Pathways & Packages

Single Public Estate Project

Future Highland Workforce Project

WORKSTREAM
Career Pathways & Packages

Aim to deliver £500,000 savings by Year 3

Deliver a streamlined, innovative, effective and sustainable Early Learning and Childcare service which meets the needs of children, families and communities.

Design and test flexible models of ELC delivery

Working in partnership with other programmes and projects to create sustainable ELC solutions

Highland Investment Plan (HIP)

Addressing Depopulation Action Plan (ADAP)

Highland Outcome Improvement Plan (HOIP)

Links to HIP:
Community facilities envisioned for Highlands, with Points of Delivery (PODs) seeing a range of public services brought together in a single location, including ELC, Education, social, leisure and employability services.

Links to HOIP:
Place – Tackle depopulation by addressing key barriers to childcare.
Prosperity – Improved access to career development opportunities.

Links to ADAP:
North West Sutherland identified in ADAP as an area experiencing acute depopulation. NW2045 vision already established, focusing on developing and maintaining sustainable solutions to depopulation.

1.5. Project Scope and Exclusions

All ELC services, with particular focus on remote and rural. All providers of ELC services.

1.6. Constraints and Assumptions

- Legislation and regulation
    - including Care Inspectorate requirements for registration and variation
    - Statutory consultation on school closure (including closure of an ELC class (stage of education) **Schools Consultation 2010**
- Parental and community expectations
    - Preference for group settings if only 1 provider
    - Preference for LA delivery (as per ELC parental survey)
    - Requests for baby and school age childcare which is not statutory and not funded by SG
- Geography
    - Large area with numerous remote and rural communities
- Transport
    - Lack of public transport and travel times/distance can be considerable
- Buildings
    - Requirements of Care Inspectorate demand significant upgrading to existing buildings often at very high cost
- Workforce
    - Staff recruitment and retention
    - Staff with fluent Gaelic
    - Challenge for PVI greater given pay and condition differences
- Care Inspectorate
    - Registration requirements
    - Variation requirements
    - Staffing and deployment levels expected – above and beyond ratio
- Expectations on staff
    - SSSC qualifications and CPL – for all ELC practitioners including those in school age childcare

1.7. Project Tolerances

Although the focus of delivery is around funded 1140 ELC, there is parental and community demand for wider ELC including for babies, to suit working parents (extended hours/weeks) and for school age childcare. Currently the only centrally funded and statutory element is the 1140 hours for eligible 2s and 3-5s.

Priority 2 of **Best Start 2022** is to progress the expansion of childcare offer, including a system of school age childcare and new ELC offer for one and two years olds – awaiting further detail and information from SG.

Staffing requirements and expectations are set by Care Inspectorate. Safer Staffing 2024 has put emphasis on staff wellbeing and deployment, as such staffing ratios are considered a minimum requirement, with increases in ratio being required following inspection in some settings. Registration requirements with SSSC to gain qualifications have increased pressure to achieve a qualification within a tight timeframe.

Parental demands and needs vary and change, and it is unlikely that we will meet all demands and expectations of parents and carers or provide flexibility and choice in small communities, where it is not viable to operate full day, full year settings for 0–12 year olds. It is, however, possible that a childminder could provide this, if communities accept a non-group setting.

Deliver a Single Care Model – lead by CALA but out with the span of control of the project.

Alongside increased delivery of alternative models of ELC is the challenge of budget savings to be achieved.

1.8. The user(s) and any other known interested parties

Scottish Government – directorates including Children and Families, Early Learning and Childcare, Economic Development, Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice

Highland Council – teams in early years, employability, workforce planning, welfare/child poverty reductions, health and social care, communities and place, elected members

Care Inspectorate – Registration and Inspection

Education Scotland

Scottish Social Services Council – Registration of staff

Childminders, Scottish Childminding Association

PVI ELC providers

Highland and Islands Enterprise – Economic Development

Care and Learning Alliance

NW2045

Community Councils

Community Development Trusts

Parents, carers and children

1.9. Interfaces

- Community engagement – (will follow parental consultation and where needs/demand highlights specific intervention (for example request from parents for school age childcare provision) – EY team and partners.
- ELC business engagement – ongoing ELC PVI monthly engagement with THC
- Business engagement with employers - TBC
- Current biannual (**C&YP 2014**) parent and carer consultation running across Highland. Analysis and publication of data by December 2024 EY team.
- PVI participants identified to join a 'Project Taskforce' to develop the project:
    - EY team – Hayley SMEY and Liz, Caroline, Jenny and Tracy ELCC, Jaci – CALA, Kenny – Stramash, Beth – Cairngorm ELC, Tina – Commissioned Childminder

    First meeting to be scheduled Jan 2025

Development of the project brief in its initial phase to be shared and explored further with the project taskforce with the aim of restructuring milestones and measures of success to ensure they are achievable and measurable (SMEY & the Project Taskforce), first meeting **7th January 2025.**

- Establish relationship/link to other improvement plan portfolios 'Workforce for the future' and 'Reconfiguring our asset base' including the Highland Investment Plan, to ensure no duplication of effort/double counting/recording of 'successes' for PCS Board to discuss
    - Reconfiguring our Asset base – Highland Investment Plan workstream - an integrated approach to all future capital investment, including existing commitments.
    - Workforce portfolio – Future Highland Workforce workstream - we will build on Developing the Young Workforce approaches, to embed work-related learning and employability skills in the 3-18 curriculum.
    - Person Centred Solutions – Digital market – recruitment of childminders
- Work ongoing around Single Care Model with CALA leading the work, linking in with SG, SSSC and CI – out with the span of control of this workstream
- Establish link with procurement to review contracting of PVI ELC partners (Strategic Lead Resources)
- Settings/communities mapped with very low roll, review ELC settings following enrolment February 2025 enrolment to consider sustainability of service, demands for alternative provision/service (ACE, SMEY and ELCC)
- Some aspects of work of this project being undertaken through ADAP funding coordinated by THC economic development team – Michelle Hardie:
    - Single Care Model (CALA)
    - Rural care practitioner (TBC)
    - Funded CCM business model development (Colin McNally)
- Regional economic partnership – working with other Authorities to develop and share good practice and ensure different authorities/regions 'test' different models/policy.
- This project will feed into the HOIP objective to create sustainable early learning and childcare solutions.

- Statutory consultation – shifting the balance from LA provision to PVI, particularly Commissioned Childminders, pressure from families, communities and elected members to maintain what is currently delivered yet offer wider flexibility and choice in a landscape of falling rolls and budgets. To shift from LA to PVI, Statutory consultation must be undertaken for closure of LA stage of education (approximately 18-month timescales).
- Covid – demand for childcare has shifted since Covid with more people working from home, despite that some pockets of demand exist which are currently unmet.
- Staffing challenges significant for all sectors, particularly GME and PVI staffing challenges - recruitment, retention, sustainability, terms and conditions
- CI expectations across provisions – for settings with 1 child or 100, the same expectation in terms of physical provision of specific spaces such as nappy changing – reality in remote and rural settings is that there is no capacity for adaptation, therefore requiring an extension and significant cost.
- Employability – working with the employability team to attract, recruit and retain childminders to support both employment and childcare in rural communities. (ELCC team, employability team and developing the young workforce team)
- Cost of living crisis impacts on family income/spending power – ensure that families are aware of the benefits available for childcare – working tax credit, childcare vouchers and universal credit.
- PVI procurement and contracting – currently PVI are contracted each year, consider the benefits to move to a 3-5 year procurement and contracting strategy to provide security and assurance to partners.
- Transport – limited public transport, challenge of travel from one community to another for childcare provision – the cost for those who have transport, also the availability of alternatives.
- Increase of children attending with ASN – meeting their needs and balancing entitlement to
- provision with what the child needs/can manage. Consider alternative provision where appropriate, additional staff training and guidance and amend the ELC design brief to
- include multipurpose quiet/low stimulus spaces.
- Increase of children attending with intimate care needs – still in nappies and stringent CI nappy changing protocols and physical space requirements.
- 2-year-olds- increase in demand – consider where provision can be extended to include provision for 2 year olds, likely requirements to adapt/retrofit physical spaces. Different staffing ratio and floor space requirement from CI.
- ELC buildings often not fit for purpose – no room for nappy changing or expansion without significant cost – budgetary pressures
- Lunches for ELC children; with children attending all day, specific requirements to deliver appropriate snacks in ELC with associated costs and demands of Setting the Table and Care Inspectorate guidance.

2.   Outline Business Case

The ELC Project has agreed savings of £500,000 by Year 3. In order to achieve this, the closure of unsustainable provisions and development of sustainable models of delivery will be a key focus, better supporting the needs of families whilst also meeting the budget saving target.

Our ambition is to meet the wider childcare needs of parents and communities – enabling children to have a quality childcare provision and parents to work, train or study. We aim to support business sustainability and seek to address depopulation, encouraging repopulation in remote areas.

We will explore different ELC delivery models to best meet the needs of all stakeholders. Work has already been started on this target, with testing on a temporary basis, paying parents to deliver ELC activities (where recruitment had not been successful), supporting a 'nanny' to deliver learning and childcare for a child who has ASN and for whom there was an established relationship and service.

We will consider and develop other innovative models, which are place based and specific to the needs of the community. If demand is higher during tourist season, then part year provision could be considered. Currently C&YP 2014 stipulates provision must be over a minimum of 38 weeks for a maximum of 10 hours per day from a provider registered under the Daycare of Children with Care Inspectorate. (**C&YP 2014 Part 6, Section 49**). In order to support longer delivery hours, we will consider a 'Test of Change' which looks at alternative provision permitted in legislation for two year olds who are 'care experienced', and whether that could be extended.

Working with colleagues in Employability, this project will support parents and carer's ability to return to work, by using childcare as an enabler.

3.   Project Product Description

Supporting parents, children, families and communities.

The ambition is for childcare to be accessible and flexible; we will develop place-based solutions to meet needs of the communities and stakeholders, encouraging innovation.

Support parents' understanding of the breadth of possibilities of ELC services offered.

Encourage and support knowledge and uptake of childcare vouchers, tax free childcare and universal credit – see Appendix 5 for details of baseline knowledge from parental engagement surveys.

4.   Project Approach

Create a Taskforce to develop the project plan with clear timelines and accountability.

Ensure consistent and relevant reporting to PCS board and other boards/structures as outlined at 1.8 Interfaces.

5.   Project Management Team Structure

Kate Lackie – Assistant Chief Executive – Person Centred Solutions Portfolio Sponsor

Fiona Grant – Chief Officer, Education – Portfolio Senior Responsible Officer

Anne Macpherson – Strategic Lead, Resources E&L – Capacity Building workstream, ELC Project Responsible Officer

Hayley Brown – SMEY - ELC Project Lead

Brian Scobie – Portfolio Manager, Person Centred Solutions

Jacqueline McGuigan – HIE Senior Development Manager, Housing, Skills and Population

Fiona Webster – Client Services Co-ordinator, Employability Team, Economy and Regeneration

Colin McNally – Director, CJM, Research Lead for ADAP Research Project

Project Taskforce:

ELC Commissioners

Liz Scott – ELCC South Area

Caroline Green – ELCC North Area

Tracy McIlvar – ELCC West Area

Jenny Stark – ELCC Mid Area

(with others as required)

PVI

Jaci Douglas – CALA

Kenny Forsyth – Stramash

Beth Rodgers – Cairngorm ELC

Tina Strain – Commissioned Childminder

6. Role Descriptions

<u>Person Centred Solutions Portfolio Sponsor</u>
The PCS Portfolio Sponsor, Kate Lackie

<u>Senior Responsible Officer</u>
The Senior Responsible Officer, Fiona Malcolm

<u>Workstream Responsible Officer (ELC Project)</u>
The Workstream Responsible Officer, Anne MacPherson

<u>ELC Project Lead</u>
Hayley Brown, Senior Manager for Early Years, will lead the ELC Development Project, liaising with partners, heading the Project Taskforce, making strategic decisions and reporting to the programme board.

<u>ELC Team</u>
From within the ELC Team, all four ELC Commissioners form part of the Project Taskforce, alongside co-opted members, with project support provided by David Taylor. They will attend taskforce working group meetings and feed into ongoing project work to meet the outlined objectives.

<u>PVI & Childminders</u>
The following partners are members of the Project Taskforce: Jaci Douglas, CALA, Kenny Forsyth, Stramash, Beth Rodgers, Cairngorm ELC and Tina Strain, Commissioned Childminder. Their input will help to inform the direction of the ELC Project, providing invaluable insights from PVI settings, and helping to steer discussions surrounding community solutions.

7. References

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 (legislation.gov.uk) 4.The Act's provisions cover three main areas: the consultation procedures for school closures, and other proposals affecting schools, which local authorities must follow; a new local authority duty to take into account certain prescribed factors before deciding to consult on a proposal to close a rural school; and replacement of the system of referring certain local authority decisions to the Scottish Ministers for consent with a power to call in decisions, but only in decisions relating to closures.

Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

[Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (legislation.gov.uk)](#)

PART 6 Early learning and childcare

46.Early learning and childcare

47.Duty to secure provision of early learning and childcare

48.Mandatory amount of early learning and childcare

49.Looked after 2 year olds: alternative arrangements to meet wellbeing needs

50.Duty to consult and plan on delivery of early learning and childcare

51.Method of delivery of early learning and childcare

52.Flexibility in way in which early learning and childcare is made available

Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000

[Standards in Scotland's Schools etc. Act 2000 (legislation.gov.uk)](#)

Pre-school children

Section 32 – Provision of education for pre-school children etc.

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010

[Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010](#)

Section 59 - Registration of Daycare of children and childminding services

Schedule 12 – Definitions of Care services

Best Start: Strategic early learning and school age childcare plan for Scotland 2022-26

[Best Start - strategic early learning and school age childcare plan 2022 to 2026 - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](#)

The plan sets out how we will embed the benefits of our transformational investment in 1140 hours of high quality funded early learning and childcare. It also explains our approach to expanding our childcare offer over the next four years.

A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland, Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for ELC providers: Principles and Practice

[A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland (www.gov.scot)](#)

This document sets out the Funding Follows the Child approach and the National Standard which will underpin it and which all providers wishing to deliver the funded entitlement will

have to meet from 2020. It also details the next steps we will take to support the transition to implementing the approach by August 2020. This document should be read in conjunction with 'A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland – Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Operating Guidance' and 'A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland – Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Frequently Asked Questions for Local Authorities and Providers'.

Health and Care (Staffing)(Scotland) Act 2019

https://www.gov.scot/publications/health-care-staffing-scotland-act-2019-statutory-guidance/pages/15/

The Health and Care (Staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019 brings into legislation requirements and guiding principles for those who commission and deliver health and social care. It states that staffing is to provide safe and high-quality services and to ensure the best health care or care outcomes for people experiencing care. While this is the main purpose, health and care services should promote an efficient, effective and multidisciplinary approach which is open with and supportive of staff.

The Act also places a statutory duty on care service providers to ensure that, at all times, suitable qualified and competent individuals are working in such numbers as are appropriate for the health, wellbeing and safety of people using the service, and the provision of safe and high-quality care and in so far as it affects those matters the wellbeing of staff. Providers are also required to ensure staff are appropriately trained for the work they perform.

Highland-Outcome-Improvement-Plan-2017-2027

Highland-Outcome-Improvement-Plan-2017-2027.pdf.pagespeed.ce.yKzqetxvqR.pdf (highlandcpp.org.uk)

Affordable childcare is a significant factor in the cost of living in Highland. For those households, working or looking for work, access to affordable childcare is necessary in order to remain economically active or enter work as these costs have the potential to neutralise the benefits of work.

Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: action plan to address depopulation

Supporting and enabling sustainable communities: action plan to address depopulation - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

This Action Plan newly establishes a strategic policy position for Scottish Government around addressing depopulation and maps a range of new and existing supportive activity being undertaken across Scottish Government and by local and regional delivery partners.

Health and Social Care Standards: My support, my life 2017

Health and Social Care Standards: my support, my life - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)

These Health and Social Care Standards (the Standards) set out what we should expect when using health, social care or social work services in Scotland. They seek to provide better outcomes for everyone; to ensure that individuals are treated with respect and dignity, and that the basic human rights we are all entitled to are upheld.

Scottish Social Services Council

[The Scottish Social Services Council - Scottish Social Services Council (sssc.uk.com)](#)

We are the regulator for the social work, social care and children and young people workforce in Scotland.

Our work means the people of Scotland can count on social work, social care and children and young people services being provided by a trusted, skilled, confident and valued workforce.

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

[Children's rights - Human rights - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](#)

The [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)](#) is the base standard for children's rights and sets out the fundamental rights of all children. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world and sets out the specific rights that all children have to help fulfil their potential, including rights relating to health and education, leisure and play, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard.

Funding Follows the child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Operating guidance

[Funding Follows The Child and The National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Operating Guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)](#)

This document sets out how the Funding Follows the Child approach operates, including how settings meet the National Standard criteria and the role of local authorities in delivering the approach.

Care Inspectorate Practice notes and guidance

[Early learning and childcare (ELC) | Care Inspectorate Hub](#)

Including:

>Setting the table - [hub.careinspectorate.com/media/6013/setting-the-table.pdf](#)

>Quality Framework - [A quality framework for childcare agencies introducing and supplying childcare staff | Care Inspectorate Hub](#)

>Nappy Changing for ELC settings - [nappy-changing-guidance-2024.pdf](#)

8.   Parental Consultation – Childcare Survey

In 2024 a Highland-wide Parental Consultation took place surrounding all aspects of ELC provision. There was a very strong engagement from the public, with 316 responses received, giving feedback on how childcare was currently being used and how well it was meeting the needs of parents.

Only one third of those parents surveyed are currently working full-time, with the vast majority of respondents within this category working Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm. Nearly 10% of parents responding were unaware of what ELC services were available in their local area. The survey highlighted a number of other areas in which parents were unaware of services and/or funding which may be available to them. This project seeks to improve parents' awareness of their statutory rights and provisions such as blended placements, funding following the child, purchase of additional hours, help with childcare costs, eligible two year old funding, enhanced transition for children with ASN. The parental consultation highlighted that there was a lack of understanding and awareness surrounding these and many other provisions available to parents and their children. By highlighting this gap, we are now able to target information in order to support parents' awareness of their entitlements.

EXAMPLE RESPONSES

QUESTION ASKED	DID YOU KNOW THIS?	
	YES	NO
Cross-boundary placements are available, (e.g., living in Highland but requiring ELC in another local authority area).	41.3%	**58.7%**
'Funding follows the child'. At any point in the year, with a month's notice, funding can move from one provider to another.	70.2%	**29.8%**
At some settings, in addition to your funded ELC entitlement, subject to availability, you can purchase additional hours.	72.3%	**27.7%**
Parents working more than 16 hours per week who don't receive Tax Credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers could be eligible for up to £2,000 per child per year on childcare costs.	46%	**54%**
Enhanced transitions can be provided to children with additional support needs.	66.6%	**33.4%**

The following statistics represent some of the responses received in the 2024 ELC Parental Consultation. The full results are published in the appendices at the end of this document.

OVERVIEW OF USAGE

Family's current usage of ELC	Total	Percentage
Funded ELC only	139	44%
Non-funded (paid) ELC only	26	8.2%
Both funded and non-funded (paid) ELC	69	21.8%
Neither funded nor non-funded (paid) ELC	82	25.9%

FUNDED ELC

Out of the 138 respondents to the question surrounding funded ELC usage, 108 said they don't need more than the 1140 funded hours available.

33 parents would like to use more hours but find it too costly. This project will seek to educate parents about funding streams available to them.

78% DON'T NEED MORE THAN 1140 HRS
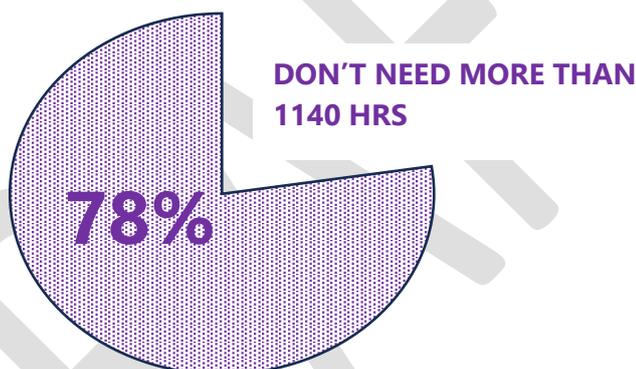
ACCESSING CHILDCARE

From the 80 respondents to the question surrounding their reasons for not accessing any form of childcare, only 6 parents said there was a lack of provision for what they require, with 2 people citing distance or transport issues. According to these survey results, the vast majority of those who are not accessing childcare are doing so out of choice, with just 10% describing any barriers to access.

Reasons for not accessing childcare

■ Distance/transport ■ Lack of provision ■ No of responses
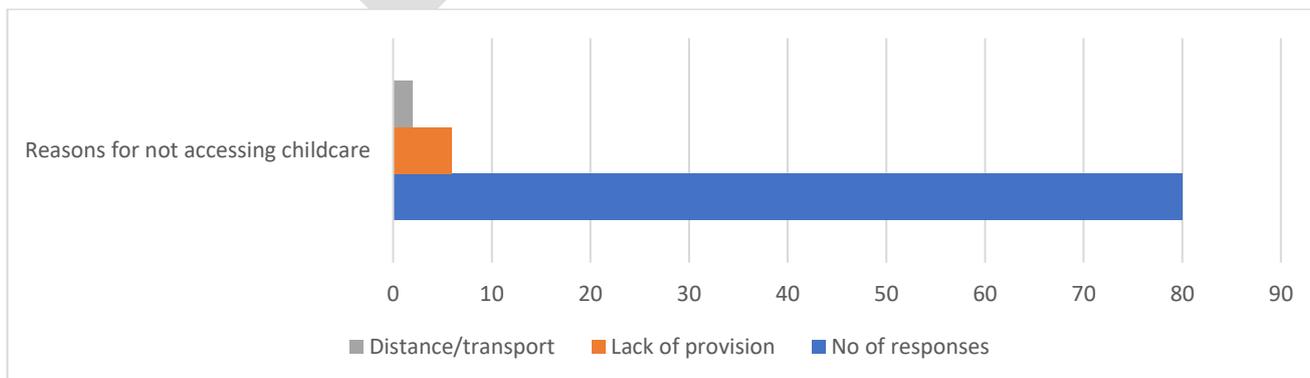
SATISFACTION

When asked about their satisfaction with the number of ELC hours they were accessing, parents responded as follows:

Are you satisfied with your child/ren's hours and attendance pattern?	Total
Yes	192
No	21
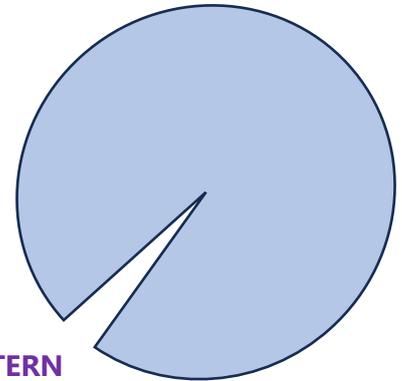
95% ARE SATISFIED WITH HOURS AND ATTENDANCE PATTERN

71%

MOST PARENTS EITHER ALREADY USE, OR DON'T WANT TO USE, EXTRA HOURS OUTSIDE OF THE SCHOOL DAY

OUT OF SCHOOL HOURS

When asked about their preferences/requirements for using ELC outside of the school day, the majority of those responding were seeking additional hours no later than 5pm:

Preferences for out of school hour care

Children aged 2-5yrs

before 8am · from 8-9am · from 3-4pm · until 5pm · until 6pm · after 6pm
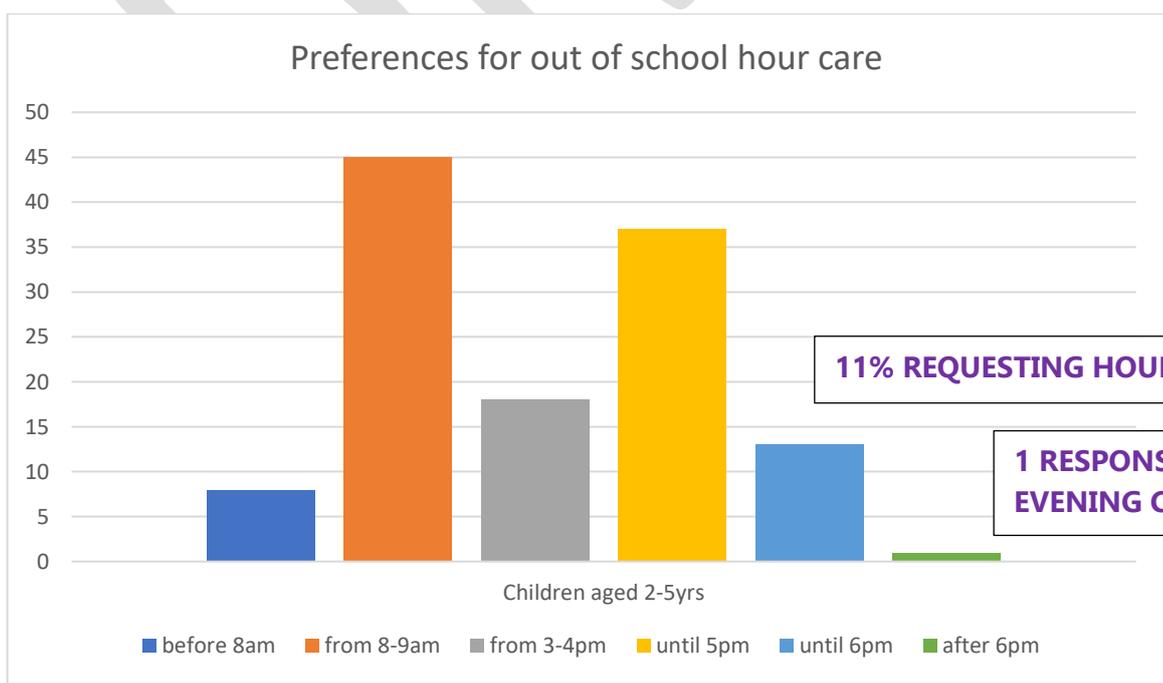
11% REQUESTING HOURS AFTER 5PM

1 RESPONSE WANTED EVENING CHILDCARE

9.   Two Year Old Provision

The majority of two year old ELC places are provided by our partner centres, with the total number of partner centres who accept two year olds now standing at 41 settings:

PARTNER CENTRES ACCEPTING 2YR OLDS	SOUTH	MID	WEST	NORTH	TOTAL
	20	10	6	5	41

Whilst, in some remote and rural areas (highlighted below), The Highland Council has opened up provision to pre-3s, the majority of local authority settings remain unable to accept two year old requests and therefore the expanding PVI sector remains vital in meeting the needs of these younger children.

Percentage of partner centres which take 2yos – **89%**

Percentage of LA which take 2yos – **26%**

Number of 2yos in Local Authority Settings

2023/24
64

2024/25
60

Number of 2yos in Partner Settings

2023/24
163

2024/25
112
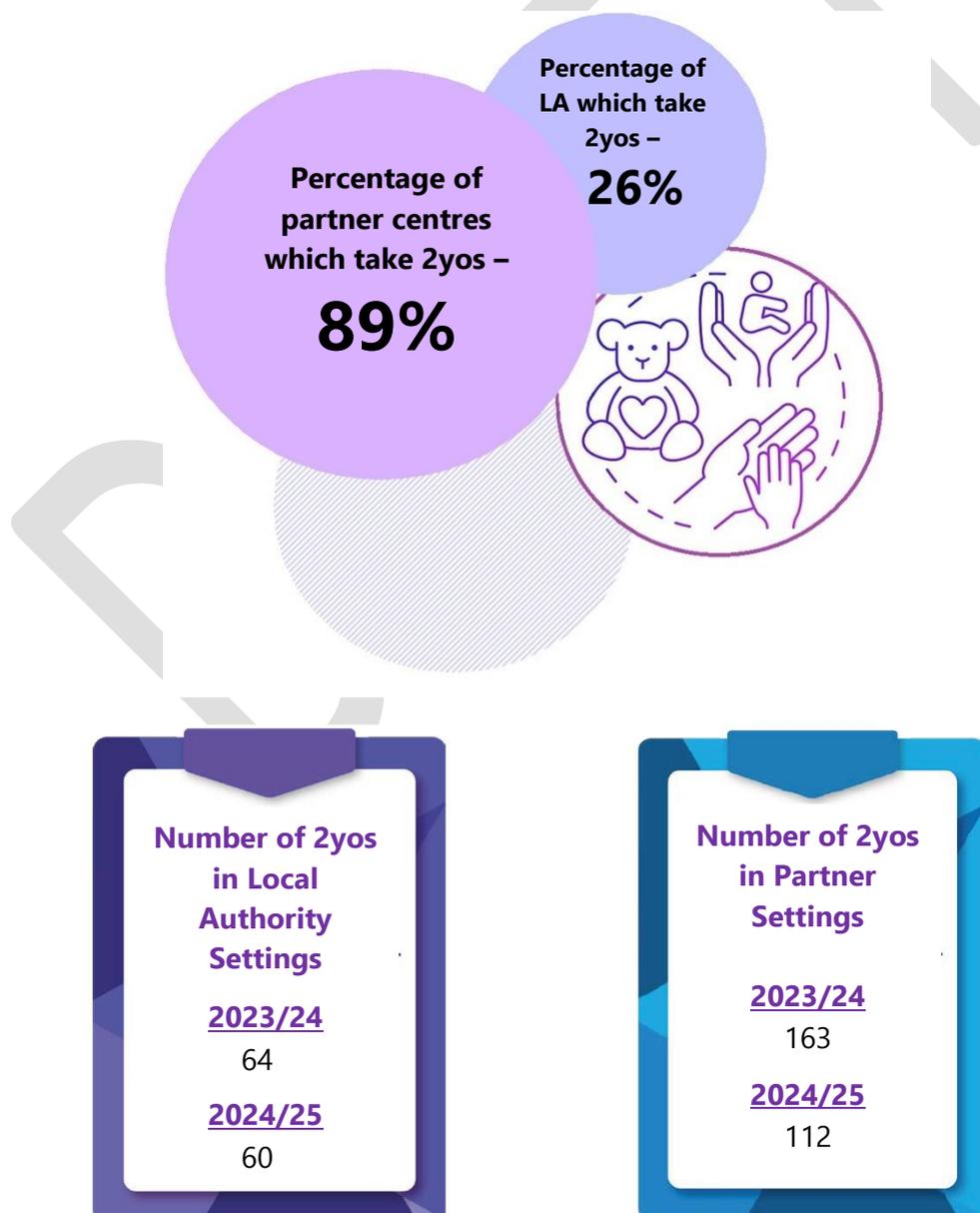
Remote and Rural – 2 year old provision within Local Authority settings

In some of the more remote and rural areas in the far North and West of Highland, where there is a lack of PVI nurseries to provide two year old places, The Highland Council has reviewed the offering across its estate of local authority nurseries. Where possible in these areas, a variation has been submitted to provide two year old places in local authority settings, in order to support families who would otherwise have no alternative provision. This has led to a year on year increase in the number of LA settings being registered to accept two year old nursery places. Despite this, the current trend (Sept 23 – Sept 24) shows a decline in the overall applications for two year olds places, Highland wide, within both local authority and private/partner nurseries.

There have, however, been a number of settings which have seen a substantial increase in the uptake of two year old places, demonstrating a demand for provision in specific regional areas. Pennyland Primary School ELC, which lies in an area of depravation, expanded its registration to include two year old places from August 2024. This saw their nursery roll expand from 29 to 37, an increase of 24%. A peripatetic Senior Early Years Practitioner oversees provision in this setting, whilst also supporting newly established two year old provision across the region.
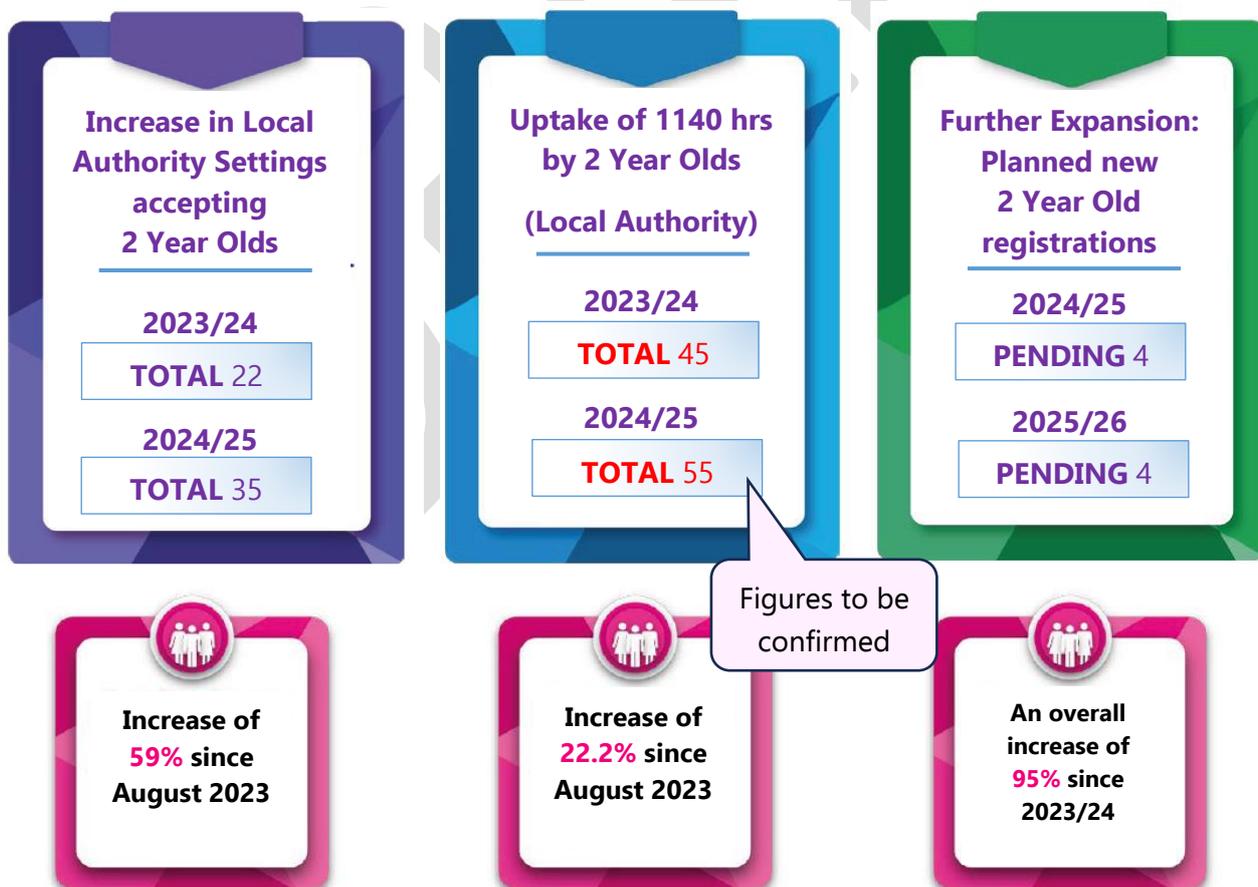
Across the North and West regions, which contain the fewest number of partner centres, ten additional settings have registered to accept two year olds from August 2024. There are further expansion plans, with four nurseries pending for registration in the coming months and a further four in consideration by the next academic year.

Increase in Local Authority Settings accepting 2 Year Olds	Uptake of 1140 hrs by 2 Year Olds (Local Authority)	Further Expansion: Planned new 2 Year Old registrations
2023/24 TOTAL 22	**2023/24** TOTAL 45	**2024/25** PENDING 4
2024/25 TOTAL 35	**2024/25** TOTAL 55	**2025/26** PENDING 4
Increase of **59%** since August 2023	Increase of **22.2%** since August 2023	An overall increase of **95%** since 2023/24

Figures to be confirmed

Variations will also be submitted to the Care Inspectorate prior to August 2025 to increase capacity for two year olds at Pennyland and Noss ELCs in time for the 2025/26 session starting, due to the popularity of the settings.
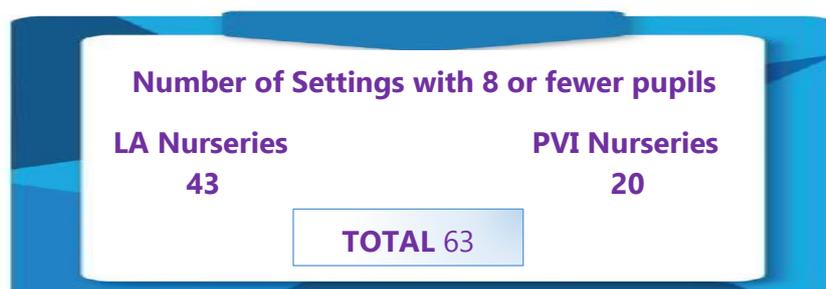
Across the West region, the distances between settings and the fewer number of partner centres had left a number of key rural settlements with no access to two year old provision. Since 2022, 19 settings in total are now registered, including all nurseries situated on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, supporting early learning and childcare provision in one of the most remote and rural localities.

In addition, The Inverness Family Centre provides fully funded early learning and childcare provision for eligible two year olds, with 66 children attending over a one-year period.

NB. The above changes and enhancements to two year old provision, however, represent an attempt to support areas where there would otherwise be no alternative, as opposed to an expansion of two year old provision per se across local authority settings. In fact, across the vast majority of the region, two year old provision is catered for by a breadth of partner and private providers and the vision for the future is the continued expansion and enhancement of provision in this sector.

10. A Changing Landscape – Mapping ELC Provision

The challenges of meeting the project's three year savings target will inevitably mean the need to consider mothballing and closure of settings which have become no longer viable. However, as has become evident through community and parental consultation across a wide range of settings previously under consideration for closure, it is often the case that in these remote and rural areas a traditional 9am – 3pm ELC offering does not meet the needs of any of the stakeholders. By diverting resources towards alternative forms of provision it should be possible to make year on year savings whilst also offering a form of ELC provision which is better suited to the family circumstances of these communities. In other areas it may be necessary to integrate or consolidate services to best meet the needs of all stakeholders.

Number of Settings 2024/25

LA Nurseries
143
PVI Nurseries
45
Childminders
24

TOTAL 212

Active vs Inactive –
24 are in operation. Currently only 12 have children on roll.

Number of Settings with 8 or fewer pupils

LA Nurseries	PVI Nurseries
43	20

TOTAL 63

*Data source: IS Data Collection return September 2024

Current Out of School Provision

In order to better meet the needs of working parents, and to support those wanting to return to work, the project will explore current out of school and breakfast club provision. We will look at current provision and uptake and make use of data from parental consultations to highlight areas in which either more provision would be welcomed, or where current provision is not being made use of due to lower demand.

Total number of Holiday Clubs in 2024/25

12

NUMBER OF HOLIDAY CLUBS OPERATING -	SUMMER	EASTER	CHRISTMAS	HALF TERMS	INSET DAYS
	12	12	1	12	12

Number of Holiday Clubs open full day (8am-6pm)

3

Breakfast Clubs

Data from ELCCs re. Breakfast club provision here.

NUMBER OF BREAKFAST CLUBS OPERATING -	NORTH	SOUTH	MID	WEST	TOTAL
2024/25	1	14	TBC	TBC	
2023/24	1	14	TBC	TBC	
2022/23	1	14	TBC	TBC	

Data from ELCCs re. Breakfast club provision here.

11. Appendices

Downloads

Appendix 1	Appendix 2	Appendix 3	Appendix 4	Appendix 5
SCM Development Session Final Report	NW2045 Early Years Childcare Toolkit	HIE Directorate Childcare Update	HIE Communities in Crisis Paper	Parental Survey Results

Document	Title
Appendix 1	Single Care Model Development Session (Final Report)
Appendix 2	NW2045 Early Years Childcare Community Toolkit *
Appendix 3	HIE Directorate Childcare Update May 2024
Appendix 4	HIE Childcare, Communities in Crisis Paper July 2024
Appendix 5	ELC Parental Survey Results 2024

* The NW Repopulation zone covers the same area as the NW 2045 that covers the Community Council Areas of:

- Coigach
- Assynt
- Scourie
- Kinlochbervie
- Durness
- Tongue
- Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra

Section One: Questions about You and Your Family

1. What is your relationship with your child/ren?		Total	Percentage
	Parent/Carer	299	95.8%
	Grandparent	13	4.2%
	Other		
		312	

2. How many children do you have and/or care for?		Total	Percentage
	1	93	29.9%
	2	138	44.4%
	3	54	17.4%
	4	16	5.1%
	more than 4		
	Other		
		311	

3. How old are your children/the children you care for? Please select all that apply:

312 responses

pre-birth — 3 (1%)
0-11 months — 28 (9%)
1-2 years — 45 (14.4%)
2-3 years — 45 (14.4%)
3-4 years — 87 (27.9%)
4-5 years — 70 (22.4%)
5-6 years — 66 (21.2%)
6-9 years — 95 (30.4%)
9-12 years — 85 (27.2%)
13+ years — 49 (15.7%)
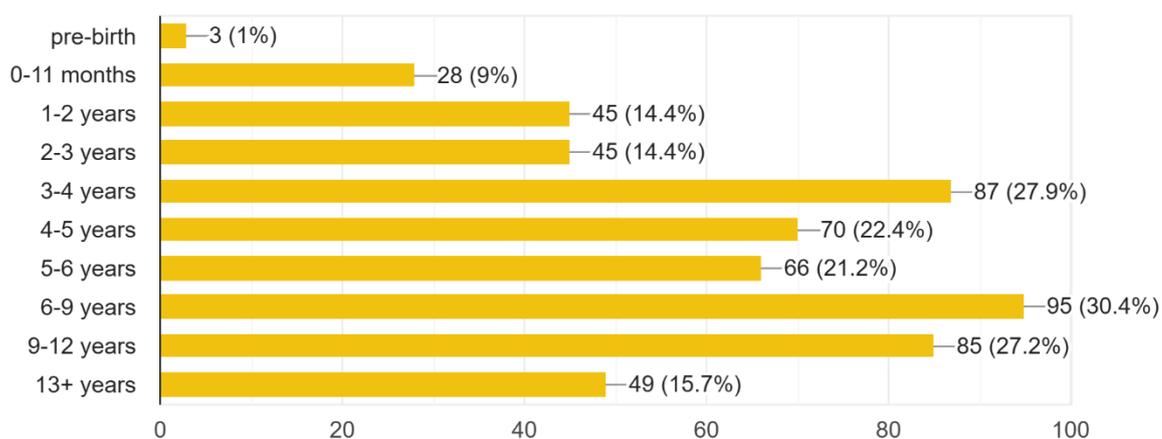
4. Do you live The Highland Council area?		Total	Percentage
	Yes	312	99.7%
	No	1	0.3%
		313	

5. Which of the following options best describe the area where you live?		Total	Percentage
	Village	119	38%
	Rural	82	26.2%
	Town	79	25.2%
	City	41	13.1%
	Island	9	2.9%
	Other	2	0.6%
		313	

		Total	Percentage
6. Which area do you reside in?	North	55	17.4%
	South	122	38.6%
	West	68	21.5%
	Mid	68	21.5%
	unsure of area	3	0.9%
		316	

NORTH Associated School Group	Total	Percentage	Primary	
Dornoch Academy	5		Bonar Bridge	2
			Dornoch	3
Farr High School	2		Farr	2
			Melvich	
			Tongue	
Golspie High School	15		Brora	1
			Golspie	11
			Helmsdale	
			Lairg	1
			Rogart	1
			Rosehall	1
Kinlochbervie High School	2		Durness	
			Kinlochbervie	2
			Scourie	
Thurso High School	18		Castletown	2
			Crossroads	2
			Halkirk	3
			Miller Academy	3
			Mount Pleasant	3
			Pennyland	4
			Reay	1
Wick High School	13		Bower	
			Canisbay	4
			Dunbeath	
			Keiss	1
			Lybster	4
			Newton Park	1
			Noss	
			Thrumster	2
			Watten	1

2024 Parental Consultation Responses

SOUTH Associated School Groups	Total	%	Primary	
Charleston Academy	4		Beauly	1
			Dochgarroch	
			Kinmylies	1
			Kirkhill	
			Muirtown	1
			Teanassie	
			Tomnacross	1
Culloden Academy	25		Ardersier	2
			Balloch	9
			Cradlehall	2
			Croy	3
			Duncan Forbes	4
			Smithton	5
Glen Urquhart High School	10		Balnain	
			Cannich Bridge	2
			Glenurquhart	8
Grantown Grammar School	18		Abernethy	5
			Carrbridge	1
			Deshar	3
			Grantown	9
Inverness High School	4		Bishop Eden's	
			Central	
			Dalneigh	
			Merkinch	3
			St Joseph's RC	1
Inverness Royal Academy	18		Aldourie	2
			Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis	3
			Cauldeen	9
			Farr (Inv)	1
			Foyers	
			Hilton	1
			Holm	1
			Lochardil	1
			Ness Castle	
			Stratherrick	
Kingussie High School	9		Alvie	1
			Aviemore	7
			Kingussie	
			Newtonmore	1
Millburn Academy	12		Crown	6
			Daviot	
			Drakies	1
			Inshes	3
			Milton of Leys	2
			Raigmore	
			Strathdearn	
Nairn Academy	21		Auldearn	8
			Cawdor	6
			Millbank	
			Rosebank	7

WEST Associated School Group	Total	Percentage	Primary	
Ardnamurchan High School	8		Acharacle	3
			Ardgour	1
			Kilchoan	1
			Lochaline	
			Strontian	3
Gairloch High School	4		Bualnaluib	
			Gairloch	4
			Kinlochewe	
			Poolewe	
			Shieldaig	
Kilchuimen Academy			Kilchuimen	
Kinlochleven High School			Ballachulish	
			Duror	
			Glencoe	
			Kinlochleven	
			St Bride's	
Lochaber High School	14		Banavie	
			Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar	4
			Caol	5
			Invergarry	1
			Inverlochy	1
			Lundavra	3
			Spean Bridge	
			St Columba's RC	
Mallaig High School	2		Arisaig	
			Eigg	
			Inverie	
			Lady Lovat	
			Mallaig	
			Muck	1
			Rum	1
Plockton High School	8		Applecross	2
			Auchtertyre	
			Glenelg	2
			Kyle	3
			Kyleakin	
			Loch Duich	
			Lochcarron	
			Plockton	1
Portree High School	16		Broadford	
			Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Righ	8
			Bun-sgoil Shlèite	
			Bun-sgoil Stafainn (Staffin)	1
			Carbost	
			Dunvegan	1
			Edinbane	
			Kilmuir	1
			Knockbreck (Skye)	
			Macdiarmid	1
			Portree	4
			Raasay	

Ullapool High School	16		Achiltibuie	1
			Lochinver	3
			Scoraig	1
			Ullapool	11

MID Associated School Group	Total	Percentage	Primary	
Alness Academy	25		Ardross	1
			Bridgend	19
			Coulhill	
			Kiltearn	
			Obsdale	5
Dingwall Academy	17		Ben Wyvis	1
			Dingwall	10
			Ferintosh	
			Marybank	
			Mulbuie	
			Strathconon	
			Strathgarve	
			Strathpeffer	
			Tarradale	6
Fortrose Academy	13		Avoch	6
			Cromarty	4
			Culbokie	
			Munlochy	
			North Kessock	2
			Resolis	1
			Tore	
Invergordon Academy	3		Milton	
			Newmore	2
			Park	
			South Lodge	1
Tain Royal Academy	10		Craighill	2
			Edderton	
			Gledfield	
			Hill of Fearn	
			Hilton of Cadboll	5
			Inver	
			Knockbreck	1
			Tarbat Old	2

		Total	Percentage
7. What is your age?	under 20	2	0.6%
	20-30	26	8.2%
	30-40	156	49.4%
	40-50	105	33.2%
	50-60	18	5.7%
	over 60	5	1.6%
	prefer not to say	4	1.3%
		316	

8. Which of the following options best describes your gender?

315 responses
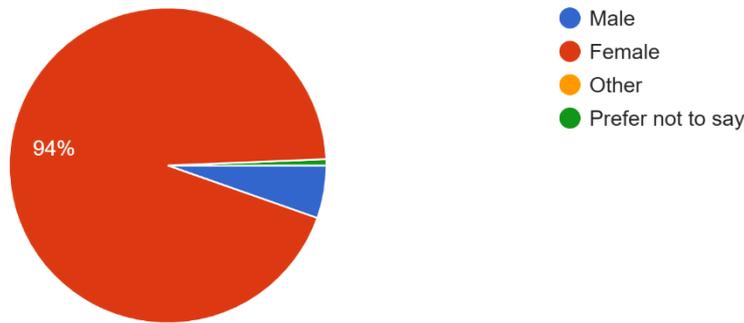
		Total	Percentage
8. First language used at home	English	294	93%
	Scots	8	2.5%
	Gaelic (Scottish)	5	1.6%
	Polish	3	0.9%
	Hungarian	2	0.6%
	Czech	1	0.3%
	Gaeilge (Irish)	1	0.3%
	German	1	0.3%
	prefer not to say	1	0.3%
		316	

		Total	Percentage
9. Other language(s) used at home	Gaelic (Scottish)	41	36.9%
	English	38	34.2%
	Scots	5	4.5%
	Spanish	4	3.6%
	German	3	2.7%
	French	2	1.8%
	Polish	2	1.8%
	Turkish	2	1.8%
	Cantonese	1	0.9%
	Dutch	1	0.9%
	Filipino	1	0.9%
	Greek	1	0.9%
	Hungarian	1	0.9%
	Italian	1	0.9%
	Latvian	1	0.9%
	Mandarin	1	0.9%
	Norwegian	1	0.9%
	PECS – picture exchange communication	1	0.9%
	prefer not to say	7	6.3%
		111	

		Total	Percentage

10. Which of the following options best describe your ethnicity?	White	302	96.1%
	Asian	3	1%
	Mixed	3	1%
	Maori	1	0.3%
	South African Indian	1	0.3%
	prefer not to say	4	1.3%
		314	

		Total	Percentage
11. Which of the following options best describe your religion?	None	210	66.5%
	Christian - Other	60	19%
	Christian – the Episcopal Church	11	3.5%
	Christian – Roman Catholic	11	3.5%
	Protestant	1	0.3%
	Spiritual	1	0.3%
	Wiccan	1	0.3%
	no response	3	0.9%
	prefer not to say	18	5.7%
		316	

		Total	Percentage
12. Which of the following options best describe your national identity?	Scottish	212	67.1%
	British	79	25%
	English	5	1.6%
	Hungarian	3	0.9%
	Polish	2	0.6%
	Northern Irish	1	0.3%
	Scots/Irish	1	0.3%
	Australian	1	0.3%
	Czech	1	0.3%
	Dutch	1	0.3%
	German	1	0.3%
	Irish	1	0.3%
	Italian	1	0.3%
	Latvian	1	0.3%
	Malaysian	1	0.3%
	New Zealander	1	0.3%
	South African	1	0.3%
	South African/Italian	1	0.3%
	Spanish	1	0.3%
		315	

		Total	Percentage
13. Are you an Asylum Seeker or Refugee?	Yes		
	No	312	99.4%
	Prefer not to say	2	0.6%
		314	

15. What is your current personal relationship status

316 responses

- 🔵 Single
- 🔴 Married/civil partnership/in a relationship
- 🟠 Separated/divorced
- 🟢 Prefer not to say

89.9%

6%

		Total	Percentage
14. What is your current employment status?	part-time or casual	159	50.5%
	full-time	105	33.3%
	stay at home parent	12	3.6%
	self employed	9	2.7%
	unable to work due to health problem or disability	8	2.4%
	retired	4	1.2%
	maternity leave	3	0.9%
	seeking employment	2	0.6%
	career break	2	0.6%
	in full-time education	1	0.3%
	full-time carer	1	0.3%
	prefer not to say	9	2.9%
		315	48.8

		Total
15. What is your current employment pattern? Please select all that apply:	Office hours (Monday-Friday, 9-5)	178
	Outside office hours (early mornings and/or evening work)	60
	Weekends/school holidays	24
	Casual contract	17
	Specific shift pattern 24/7 e.g. offshore or emergency services	10
	Seasonal work	7
	Full-time education	4
	Other	29
	prefer not to say	22

18. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months? (include any problems related to old age).
314 responses

Legend:
- No
- Yes, limited a little
- Yes, limited a lot
- Prefer not to say
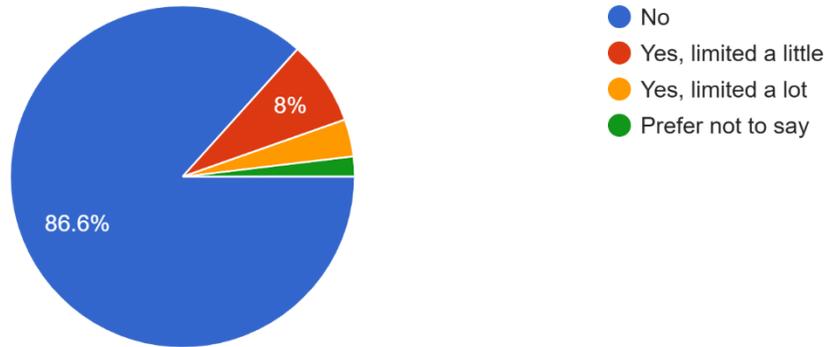
		Total	Percentage
16. Are you a member of the Armed Forces?	Yes		
	No	315	99.7%
	Prefer not to say	1	0.3%
		316	

Section Two: About Early Learning & Childcare (ELC)

	Did you know this?	
	Yes	No
1. Funded ELC is free to parents, funded by the Scottish Government. If your child is 3 or 4 years old, you can get up to 1,140 hours of funded ELC a year (around 30 hours a week in term time or 23 hours a week over the whole year). Funding is available from the term after your child turns 3 (August, January or April) and depending on their start date (if not starting in August) they will get pro-rata hours.	95.6%	4.4%
2. ELC is not statutory, and it is for you to decide whether you want your child/ren to participate and for how many hours from those available.	91.1%	8.9%
3. There is a maximum of funded ELC hours which can be provided by a setting (per day 10 hours, per week 30 hours).	85.1%	14.9%
4. Your 1,140 hours funded entitlement can be taken either in full at one setting or as part of a blended placement.	89.2%	10.8%
5. Cross-boundary placements are available, (e.g., living in Highland but requiring ELC in another local authority area).	41.3%	58.7%
6. 'Funding follows the child'. At any point in the year, with a month's notice, funding can move from one provider to another (the relevant registration and deregistration forms would need to be completed with both providers).	70.2%	29.8%
7. Learning in the Gaelic language is offered in some settings and parents/carers who do not speak Gaelic can choose Gaelic Medium Education (GME) for their child/ren. Many children learning GME do not come from homes where Gaelic is spoken.	77.5%	22.5%
8. At some settings, in addition to your funded ELC entitlement, (please consult directly with individual settings) subject to availability, you can purchase additional hours. Please consult with the provider for the current rates charged. Highland Council currently charge £5.05 per hour.	72.3%	27.7%
9. Parents working more than 16 hours per week (including those who are self-employed) who don't receive Tax Credits, Universal Credit or childcare vouchers could be eligible for up to £2,000 per child per year on childcare costs.	46%	54%
10. If your child/ren attends ELC for 4 or more hours, they are entitled to a funded meal.	78.5%	21.5%
11. When your child/ren attend ELC for 2 hours or more they will be provided with a serving of milk (or a suitable alternative) and a healthy snack.	82.8%	17.2%
12. Children are typically aged between 4.5 and 5.5 years old when they start school. If your child turns five after the school commencement date in August and up to the end of December you have the option to defer entry to primary school.	86.4%	13.6%
13. Funded ELC is available in certain situations for some eligible 2-year-olds? (this includes if you or your child/ren has experience of care).	79.4%	20.6%
14. Enhanced transitions can be provided to children with additional support needs.	66.6%	33.4%

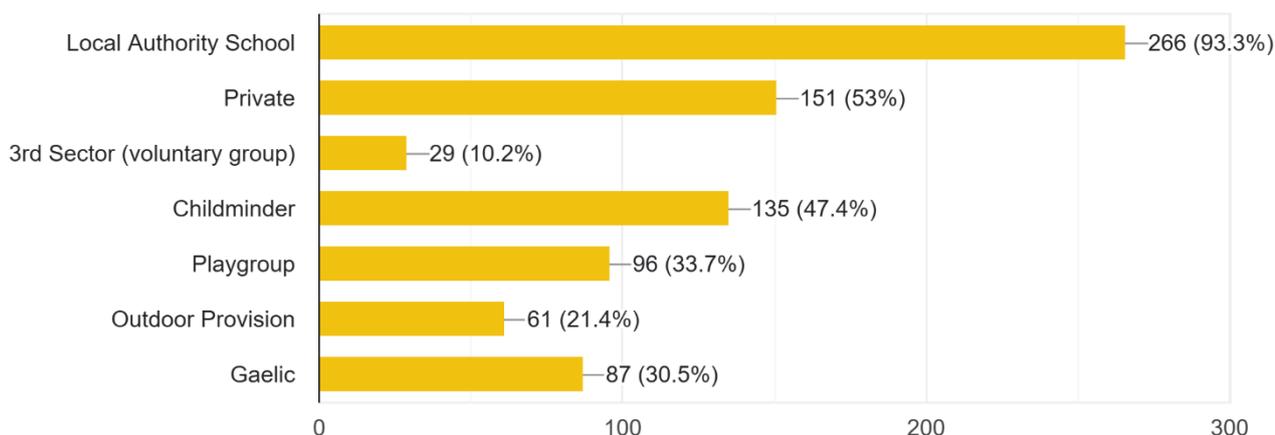**Section Three: Your experience (and preferences) of ELC – past & present**

1. Do you know what ELC services are/were available in your local area?
313 responses

Yes
No

90.7%

9.3%
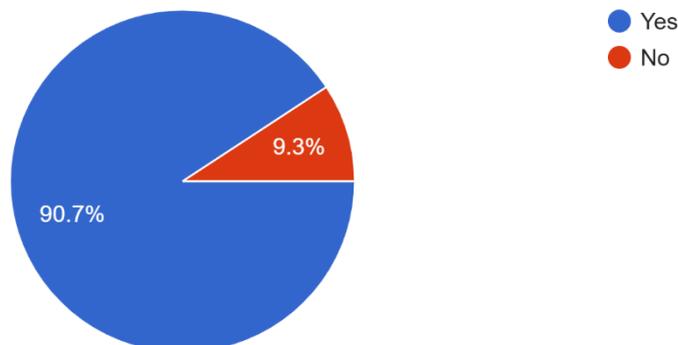
If you selected 'Yes' please select all options that apply:
285 responses

Local Authority School	266 (93.3%)
Private	151 (53%)
3rd Sector (voluntary group)	29 (10.2%)
Childminder	135 (47.4%)
Playgroup	96 (33.7%)
Outdoor Provision	61 (21.4%)
Gaelic	87 (30.5%)

		Total
1. What do you consider to be important when choosing an ELC setting/provider?	To give my child/ren the opportunity to learn and socialise	259
	Reputation/recommendation	253
	Good quality/Inspection Report/staff qualifications	210
	It is closest to home/work/study	186
	Flexible in opening hours e.g. before and after school, school holidays	150
	Affordability	117
	The option of Gaelic Learner Education/Gaelic Medium Education	41
	Other	19

3. What is your preferred type of ELC service? Please select all that apply:

313 responses

| Category	Value
Local Authority School	250 (79.9%)
Private	99 (31.6%)
3rd Sector (voluntary group)	22 (7%)
Childminder	58 (18.5%)
Playgroup	46 (14.7%)
Outdoor Provision	75 (24%)
Gaelic	38 (12.1%)
Cross boundary	2 (0.6%)
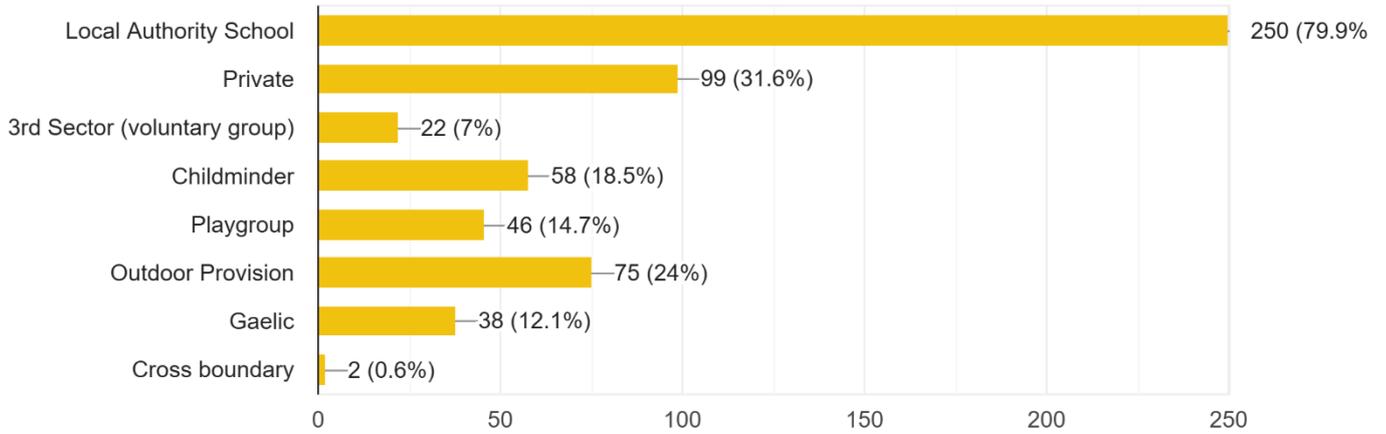
For 'Cross Boundary' please specify the other Local Authority area: Dochgarroch from invernsss

4. Is/was your preferred ELC service available in your local area?

309 responses

- Yes — 83.8%
- No — 16.2%
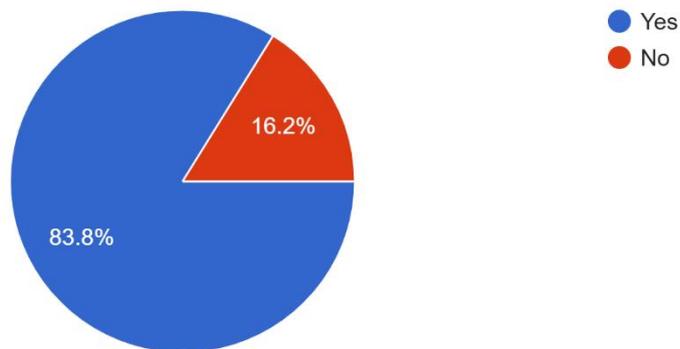
Comments for those who selected 'No'

5. For locally available ELC services, were you satisfied with their location?

309 responses

- Yes
- No

93.9%
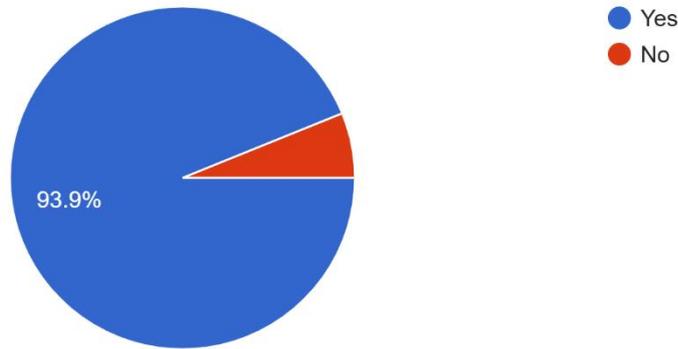
If you selected 'No' please select all options that apply:

22 responses

The locations aren't convenient	10 (45.5%)
They are too far away from wh…	12 (54.5%)
I don't have access to transport	6 (27.3%)
There's limited public transport…	1 (4.5%)
My almost 3 year old can't get t…	1 (4.5%)
They were unsuitable for small…	1 (4.5%)
N/A	1 (4.5%)
I sought a nursery place in may…	1 (4.5%)

0.0   2.5   5.0   7.5   10.0   12.5
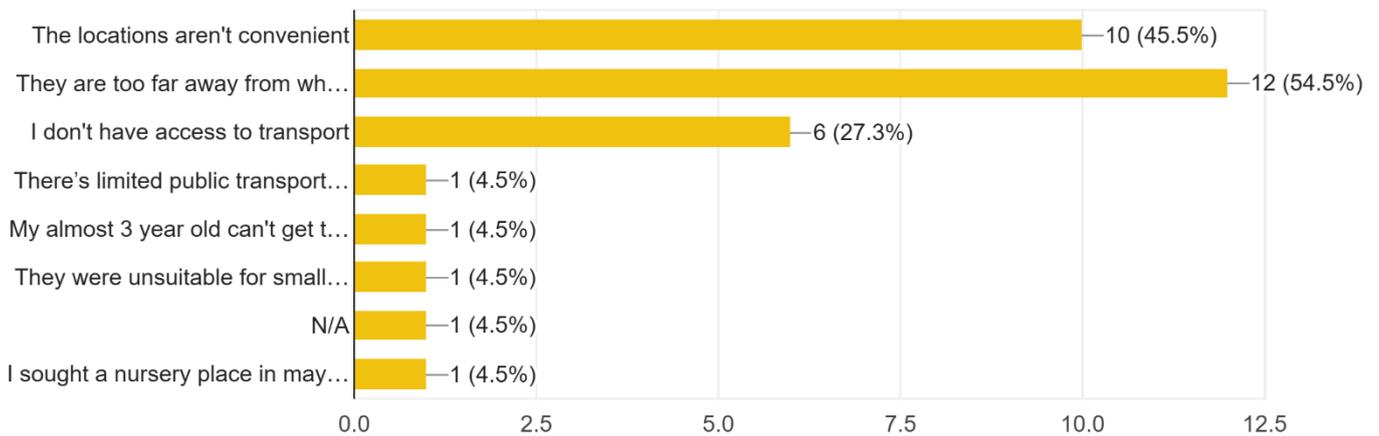
6. Would you prefer a blended placement (using more than one setting)?

305 responses

- Yes
- No

77%

23%
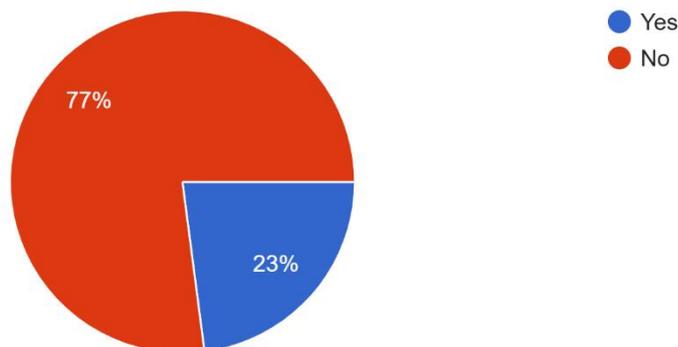
		Nunber
2. For non-funded (paid) childcare - if your child/ren attended/currently attends or if they were to attend, what sort of activities would you like them to take part in?	Arts & Crafts	243
	Music	238
	Sporting activities	234
	Gardening	205
	Dance	205
	Reading	200
	Cooking	192
	Bushcraft skills	160
	Drama/Performing Arts	154
	Computer games	142
	Homework club	88
	Gaelic language activities	67
	Watching films	27
	Other	5

Section Four: Your usage of ELC

		Total	Percentage
Your family's current usage of ELC	funded ELC only	139	44%
	non-funded (paid) ELC only	26	8.2%
	both funded and non-funded (paid) ELC	69	21.8%
	neither funded and non-funded (paid) ELC	82	25.9%
		316	

		Total	Percentage
reason/s using funded ELC only	I don't need any more than the funded hours I'm entitled to.	108	
	I don't know how to pay for childcare.	4	
	Lack of provision for what I require.	14	
	It's too costly.	33	
	It's too far away and/or I don't have transport.	6	
	Pick up of children to escort to additional settings isn't available.	6	
	Other	7	
		138	

		Total	Percentage
reason/s using non-funded ELC only	I am not aware of the availability of funded ELC or how to register my child/ren		
	My child/ren are too young to be eligible for funded ELC.	17	
	My child/ren are 2 - 3 years and I think they are too young.	8	
	My child/ren are 3 - 5 years and I think they are too young.		
	I prefer to look after my own child/ren	1	
	I prefer for a family member to look after my child/ren	1	
	Other	7	
		26	

		Total	Percentage
reason/s not using any ELC	My child/ren are too young to be eligible for funded ELC.	18	
	My child/ren are under 2 and I think they are too young.	3	
	My child/ren are 2 - 3 years and I think they are too young.		
	My child/ren are 3 - 5 years and I think they are too young.		
	My child/ren are no longer eligible for funded ELC (aged over 5 years)	64	
	I am not aware of the availability of ELC or how to register my child/ren.	1	
	I don't know how to pay for childcare.		

	Lack of provision for what I require.	6	
	It's too costly.	3	
	It's too far away and/or I don't have transport.	1	
	Pick up of children to escort to additional settings isn't available.	1	
	Other	6	
		80	

		Total	Percentage
Would you like to start using ELC?	Yes, funded ELC only	15	
	Yes, non-funded (paid) ELC only	2	
	Yes, both funded and non-funded (paid) ELC	4	
	No, neither funded and non-funded (paid) ELC	61	
		82	

		Total	Percentage
The usual school day is 9:00am - 3:00pm. Would you like to use ELC before and/or after the usual school day?	Yes	10	
	No	11	
		21	

ELC and Your Family - Access/Application Process

		Total	Percentage
1. Were you able to access ELC without extra support?	Yes	216	
	No	14	
		230	

Comments

		Total	Percentage
2. How satisfied were you with the ELC application process?	very satisfied	112	
	somewhat satisfied	46	
	neutral	24	
	somewhat dissatisfied	25	
	very dissatisfied	21	
		228	

Comments

		Total	Percentage
3. How satisfied were you with your child/ren's induction process at their ELC setting?	very satisfied	123	
	somewhat satisfied	36	
	neutral	28	
	somewhat dissatisfied	21	
	very dissatisfied	19	
		227	

Comments

		Total	Percentage
4. How satisfied were/are you with your child/ren's experience of ELC?	very satisfied	121	
	somewhat satisfied	39	
	neutral	20	
	somewhat dissatisfied	24	
	very dissatisfied	23	
		227	

Comments

		Total	Percentage
5. How satisfied were/are you with the snacks and meals offered to your child/ren?	very satisfied	114	
	somewhat satisfied	43	
	neutral	27	
	somewhat dissatisfied	21	
	very dissatisfied	21	
		226	

Comments

		Total
6. What impact has ELC had on your child/ren?	Improved social skills	193
	Improved communication	173
	Improved creativity	145
	Improved emotional development	143
	Improved fine motor skils	140
	Improved literacy development	134
	Improved numeracy development	134
	Improved gross motor skills	131
	Improved listening skills	127
	Improved problem solving	119
	Improved physical development	117
	Improved attention span	96
	None of the above	9

Comments

		Total	Percentage
7. If your child/ren has Additional Support for Learning needs, how satisfied were you with your funded provider/setting?	very satisfied	15	
	somewhat satisfied	9	
	neutral	10	
	somewhat dissatisfied	6	
	very dissatisfied	3	
		43	

Please comment on any difficulties you have experienced, and if you are comfortable with sharing this information, please also include the type of ASL your child/ren has:

ELC and Your Family - Your Experiences

		Total	Percentage
1. The type of service your family currently use	Local Authority Provider	177	
	Private Provider	61	
	3rd Sector (voluntary group)	8	
	Childminder	15	
	Playgroup	12	
	Outdoor Provision	15	
	Gaelic Medium Education	14	
	Blended (in more than one setting)	9	
	Cross boundary (in more than one Local Authority area)		
	Other	6	
		228	

		Total	Percentage
2. Were you able to access ELC without extra support?	Yes	203	
	No	25	
		228	

		Total	Percentage
If 'No' select the option which applies	my preferred type of service wasn't offered.	16	
	my preferred setting was full.	7	
	Other	9	

		Total	Percentage
3. Please select the option which best describes your child/ren's attendance pattern:	usual start – before 8:00am	6	
	usual start – 8:00am	45	
	usual start – 9:00am	145	
	usual start – after 9:00am	17	
	other		
	usual finish – 3:00pm	123	
	usual finish – 4:00pm	29	
	usual finish – 5:00p,	24	
	usual finish – after 5:00pm	23	
	other		

		Total	Percentage
3. Are you satisfied with your child/ren's hours and attendance pattern?	Yes	192	
	No	21	
	Other		
		228	

		Total	Percentage
2. During the school term do you currently use or would you like to use ELC outside of the school day?	I currently use	51	
	I don't currently use but would like to	69	
	I don't currently use and don't want to use	114	

		Total	Percentage
Current usage outside of school day	before 8:00am	7	
	from 8:00 – 9:00am	23	
	from 8:00 – 9:00am		
	until 5:00pm	16	
	until 6:00pm	11	
	after 6:00pm	1	
	other		
	5 days per week	11	
	4 days per week	9	
	3 days per week	16	
	2 days per week	9	
	1 day per week		
	other		

Preferences for using ELC outside of the school day:

		Total	Percentage
for child/ren under 2:	before 8:00am	9	
	from 8:00 – 9:00am	32	
	from 3:00 – 4:00pm	11	
	until 5:00pm	21	
	until 6:00pm	4	
	after 6:00pm	1	
	other		
	5 days per week	15	
	4 days per week	8	
	3 days per week	14	
	2 days per week	8	
	1 day per week	1	
	other		

		Total	Percentage
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	before 8:00am	8	
	from 8:00 – 9:00am	45	
	from 3:00 – 4:00pm	18	
	until 5:00pm	37	
	until 6:00pm	13	
	after 6:00pm	1	

	other		
	5 days per week	40	
	4 days per week	14	
	3 days per week	17	
	2 days per week	2	
	1 day per week		
	other		

		Total	Percentage
for child/ren over 5:	before 8:00am	10	
	from 8:00 – 9:00am	37	
	from 3:00 – 4:00pm	13	
	until 5:00pm	34	
	until 6:00pm	17	
	after 6:00pm	1	
	other		
	5 days per week	46	
	4 days per week	10	
	3 days per week	7	
	2 days per week	2	
	1 day per week	1	
	other		

Currently usage outside of School term time - in the school holidays

		Total	Percentage
Do you currently use or would you like to use ELC outside of School term time - in the school holidays?	full days	68	
	half days – mornings	11	
	half days – afternoons	1	

Preferences for using ELC outside of School term time:

		Total	Percentage
for child/ren under 2:	full days	23	
	half days – mornings	15	
	half days – afternoons	4	
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	full days	47	
	half days – mornings	19	
	half days – afternoons	7	
for child/ren over 5:	full days	42	
	half days – mornings	11	
	half days – afternoons	6	

School holidays

		Total	Percentage

in APRIL	currently use - 1 week	14	
	currently use - 2 weeks	27	
for child/ren under 2:	would like to use - 1 week	12	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	11	
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	would like to use - 1 week	40	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	23	
for child/ren over 5:	would like to use - 1 week	28	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	12	

		Total	Percentage
in OCTOBER	currently use - 1 week	16	
	currently use - 2 weeks	22	
for child/ren under 2:	would like to use - 1 week	13	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	10	
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	would like to use - 1 week	40	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	20	
for child/ren over 5:	would like to use - 1 week	26	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	13	

		Total	Percentage
in DECEMBER	currently use - 1 week	10	
	currently use - 2 weeks	10	
for child/ren under 2:	would like to use - 1 week	8	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	3	
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	would like to use - 1 week	21	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	3	
for child/ren over 5:	would like to use - 1 week	15	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	3	

		Total	Percentage
in SUMMER	currently use - 1 week	4	
	currently use - 2 weeks	6	
	currently use - 3 weeks	1	
	currently use - 4 weeks	10	
	currently use - 5 weeks	6	
	currently use - 6 weeks	18	

in SUMMER		Total	Percentage
for child/ren under 2:	would like to use - 1 week	1	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	4	
	would like to use - 3 weeks	9	
	would like to use - 4 weeks	7	
	would like to use - 5 weeks	2	
	would like to use - 6 weeks	13	

in SUMMER		Total	Percentage
for child/ren aged 2 - 5:	would like to use - 1 week	4	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	20	
	would like to use - 3 weeks	14	
	would like to use - 4 weeks	13	
	would like to use - 5 weeks	9	
	would like to use - 6 weeks	16	

in SUMMER		Total	Percentage
for child/ren over 5:	would like to use - 1 week	2	
	would like to use - 2 weeks	13	
	would like to use - 3 weeks	10	
	would like to use - 4 weeks	15	
	would like to use - 5 weeks	11	
	would like to use - 6 weeks	7	

Comments

ADAP update

Addressing Depopulation Funded projects:

Funding from Scottish Government, Coordinated and supported by Michelle Hardie Economic Adviser, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy Service working with colleagues in early years, CALA and HIE

Rural Childcare Practitioner feasibility:

Work has recently commenced on this project which aims to explore the possibility of new type of childcare provider – a new model which has the nurturing nature of a childminder but also the ability to deliver childcare within the local community such as running holiday clubs in the local village hall. Current legislation in Scotland does not allow for this hybrid model but there is significant interest to see if this role is viable and if it could be salaried/subsidised.

It is worth noting that the UK Gov Department of Education recently announced that it was looking into a number of changes to childminder regulation as part of its efforts to improve the recruitment and retention of childminding professionals and has confirmed plans to introduce new flexibilities for childminders including a new category of childminder that can work 100% of their time from non-domestic premises: 'Childminder without domestic premises'.

Single Care Model feasibility (including international research on Integrated Care Models):

Work ongoing on this project which is looking at possible options for care provision across the age spectrum within a rural community where there have been difficulties with recruitment of staff within adult care as well as childcare. This would not be intergenerational – but a care service within a community which can provide child and adult care due to small numbers, and ensuring a viable service. Could also include shared intergenerational staff team based in care home with childcare provision on site.

These pieces of work are well underway and expected to be completed in January 2025.

Subsidised Childminder feasibility:

This project is looking into the feasibility of providing a subsidy to a rural childminder to bring their income up to the value of the Living Wage and ensure a viable business which doesn't depend on the number of children in their care.

This work is underway and, following very recent discussions between Scottish Government and the project partners, will now also explore if 'payment for own children' could be part of the subsidised model and to find a way of working round the legislation which currently does not allow for this.

If funding is confirmed for 25/26, it is anticipated that this project will be piloted.

Single Care Model

Purpose - To develop a high-quality integrated care service within rural areas delivered by a sustainable and valued workforce who can work across sectors without barriers and be rewarded fairly for that work, and that provides positive outcomes for children, families and adults to support sustainable, resilient and thriving communities.

The Single Care Model is an innovative, multi-generational model of integrated care, delivered by skilled professionals working across ages within a discrete rural or island community. It recognises that each community has different care needs and provides a model of flexible person centred care that fits those specific needs rather than one which is constrained by current regulations or processes. This could be either within the community where staff provide both adult social care and childcare under a single service, organisation and registration - or within a setting such as a care home with a childcare setting as part of that and with staff that work across the ages to provide care and support.

As the model sits outside current regulatory and legislation frameworks, it has been vital to work closely with bodies such as Care Inspectorate, Scottish Social Services Council and Scottish Government to develop a pathfinder that allows the proposal to be tested and developed in a way that provides robust evidence to influence regulatory and legislative change and provides sustainable care solutions for rural and island locations.

Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) working with key partners, is leading the work and there is a welcome open approach from the regulatory bodies to the innovative approach of the pathfinder and to provide an oversight of the work to ensure a safe quality and effective pathfinder can be undertaken.

The Highland Steering Group, of which Highland Council is a key member, is currently exploring 2 locations for the testing of the pathfinder and plans to start the engagement with communities to implement the pilot in the ground by Spring.