



Early Learning and Childcare

Enrolment Information for Parents and Carers

**Highland Council Early Learning and
Childcare Settings, Partner Centres
and Commissioned Childminders**

Academic Session 2025-26

Who can have Funded Early Learning and Childcare?

The eligibility for entitlement to funded early learning and childcare (ELC) follows the same birth date bandings as school entry i.e. from 1 March to the end of February in any year. For 2025/2026 the eligibility dates for 3 and 4 year olds to have funded places are as follows:

Eligibility for Funded Early Learning and Childcare	"Three Year Olds" Eligible Birth Dates	"Four Year Olds" Eligible Birth Dates
19 th August 2025	01/03/2022 – 31/08/2022	01/03/2021 – 28/02/2022
7 th January 2026	01/09/2022 – 31/12/2022	
20 th April 2026	01/01/2023 – 28/02/2023	

Where there is space, settings may be able to provide a place in ELC as soon as the child reaches their third birthday, the parent will however, have to pay until the child is eligible for their funded entitlement/place (see above). Hourly charge for full hours is currently £5.05 in local authority settings but this may be subject to change.

Eligible 2 Year olds – *i.e. those from households in receipt of certain benefits**, children who are looked after or the subject of a kinship care or guardianship order, can take up their funded place at a partner setting or childminder. A few local authority ELC settings also take funded 2 year olds (contact setting for more details). Other ELC settings can take funded 2s as soon as they reach their **third birthday**. Please contact your local ELC team for further information or to request for an application form:-

*Benefit information and application is available at [School enrolment files and guidance | ELC 2 Year Old Funding Application Form \(highland.gov.uk\)](#)

South Highland	elc-south@highland.gov.uk
West Highland	elc-west@highland.gov.uk
Mid Highland	elc-mid@highland.gov.uk
North Highland	elc-north@highland.gov.uk

The entitlement to hours for 2025-26 will run from 19th August 2025 to 2nd July 2026 for term time or 1st August 2025 to 31st July 2026 for full year provisions.

What is the funded entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds?

Eligibility for Funded Early Learning and Childcare	"Three Year Olds" Eligible Birth Dates	"Four Year Olds" Eligible Birth Dates	Entitlement of No of Hours 2025-26
19 th August 2025	01/03/22 – 31/08/22	01/03/21 - 28/02/22	1140
7 th January 2026	01/09/22 – 31/12/22		666
20 th April 2026	01/01/23– 28/02/23		312

- In any setting the maximum funded entitlement of hours that can be taken each week is 30 hours per week. Currently, the maximum number of funded hours in a session is 10 hours.
- Additional hours (over entitlement) can be taken but are chargeable.
- If your child uses the maximum hours per week (30) in an ELC setting during term time, this will equate to the full entitlement leaving no funded hours available for holiday periods.
- As per the Enrolment Form, if you do wish to split your child's entitlement between settings then this needs to be stated from the outset as we will not be able to fund the other setting if you have used your full entitlement at an ELC setting.
- **If you are thinking of splitting your entitlement between two settings, then you should contact your local Early Years team and a Highland Council Officer will contact you to discuss further.**

Enrolment Procedures

Enrolment Week for 2025-26 will take place in the week beginning 10th February 2025

To enrol for a place in a School (www.highland.gov.uk/enrol), partner provider or childminder ELC setting ([What is ELC all about and is it for us? | Enrol your child for early learning and childcare | The Highland Council](#)) you should apply online through the Highland Council website

You can find ELC partners on our interactive map on The Highland Council website: ([Experience - Early Learning and Childcare Providers in Highland](#))

Admission procedures

- All children are required to enrol for their **initial** ELC place at their preferred ELC setting. If your child has attended as a funded 2 year old you are still required to enrol for their 3 year old funded place. If you wish to enrol at a local authority ELC setting, then it is recommended that you enrol at your catchment school online.
- If you wish your child to remain at the same local authority ELC setting for their four year old provision, then you can simply confirm this to the ELC setting. However, for capped schools - if you have moved out of the catchment then a place cannot be guaranteed until all other enrolments have been processed.
- If you wish your child to remain with the same partner provider as a four year old, then you should confirm this to them and complete a new R1 form.
- **Birth certificate or other official confirmation of birth must be checked at enrolment. As enrolling online for any ELC setting, the birth certificate needs to be scanned in at the time of submission.**

- Parents should enrol during enrolment week. However, enrolments may be accepted throughout the year where places are still available.
- Please note that enrolment does not guarantee you a place in your preferred setting, or guarantee the hours/days preference, your place, days and hours will be confirmed as soon as possible following enrolment.
- ***Please note, if you are enrolling at a setting(s) which is registered for children age 3+, and your child has their birthday between August 1st and August 31st they cannot attend until after their 3rd birthday.***

Admission Policy for School ELC Settings

Priority is given to children living within the catchment area and also to any children that are assessed as “in need” defined in the Children Scotland Act 1995. If after allocating the places to children as stated above, there are still places remaining, then those places may be allocated to children out-with the catchment according to the following criteria in order of priority to:

1. four year olds with siblings attending the school
2. three year olds with siblings attending the school
3. four year olds
4. three year olds

Non-catchment enrolment applications

If you enrol your child in a local authority ELC setting that is out-with your catchment there is no guarantee that another year in that ELC setting will automatically be provided or that your child will get a primary place at that school. You will have to make a placing request at the time your child is due to enrol for Primary 1. Attendance at the ELC setting **does not** guarantee a place in Primary 1.

A placing request is **not** required for an ELC aged child.

Deferred entry to Primary 1 i.e. additional year at an ELC setting

The guidance regarding deferred entry within Highland changed in 2020, parents are currently advised:

If your child’s birthday falls between 19th August 2020 and the end of February 2021 (e.g. still 4 years old on the school start date in August 2025) you are entitled to defer entry to primary school. If you believe your child is not ready for school, you should discuss this with your child’s ELC setting. The final decision on deferred entry is with the parent. This additional year will be fully funded by the Highland Council.

Further information can be accessed via the following link [Deferral and Early Entry Guidance](#)