

# Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy

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## Document Control

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## 1. Purpose Statement

- 1.1 The aim of the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy is to give clear guidance to staff and parents/carers on the admissions process and procedures for local authority ELC settings.
- 1.2 Aberdeen City Council is committed to expanding the provision of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 years olds, in line with Scottish Government Blueprint for 2020: Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. This expansion will increase the entitlement from 600 hours each year to 1140 hours in August 2020 and will include the provision of meals.

The expansion prioritises a high quality experience for each child, recognising the significant contribution that universally accessible ELC can make to a child's development.

- 1.3 Aberdeen City Council will offer choice and flexibility to families so that they can choose the options which best suits their family. A number of flexible models will be available within each Associated School Group (ASG).

## 2. Application and Scope Statement

- 2.1 This Policy applies to all Early Learning and Childcare Admissions for Aberdeen City Council.
- 2.2 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to secure Early Learning and Childcare for all eligible children. In addition, they also have a duty to provide an additional year of funded Early Learning and Childcare for children with a birthday in January and February where their parents request it.
- 2.3 Aberdeen City Council has a duty to secure Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for all parents who would like to access a place for their child. However, the 1140 hours is an entitlement and there is no obligation for parents to take up the full entitlement.

## 3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 Overall responsibility for managing this policy is held by the Chief Education Officer.

- 3.2 Any instances of non-compliance with the policy should be reported to Chief Education Officer.
- 3.3 Feedback on the policy should be communicated to the Chief Education Officer.

## 4. Policy Statement/s

### 4.1 Criteria for Early Learning and Childcare Admission

- 4.1.1 The Criteria for Early Learning and Childcare Admission will change from Primary School Zone to Associated School Group (ASG) Zone to reflect the range of flexible models which will be offered in each locality / Associated School Group (ASG).
- 4.1.2 All children continuing in an ELC setting, where the model offered there meets their needs, will be guaranteed a place.
- 4.1.3 For all new Local Authority applications, ELC places will be allocated according to the following list of criteria:
  1. All children looked after or assessed as 'in need' defined in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. A Professional Support for Application to ELC form must be completed to determine whether a child meets the criteria.
  2. All applications for children who are currently attending an Eligible 2's place. A limited number of places may be reserved for Eligible children who will turn 2 during the school session.
  3. All applications for children in the Associated School Group (ASG) zone, oldest first. In the event of there being more applications than places at a setting, priority will be given to children living in the Primary School Zone in which the setting is based.
  4. All applications for children who have a sibling in the school parents are applying for, including those not resident in the City, in accordance with section 23(3A) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The sibling criteria will only come into effect when children have a sibling in ELC or Primary 1-6 at the time of the application. Siblings from the same family, although not living together at the same address, can apply under this criteria.
  5. All other applications from children resident in the City. Places will be allocated in the first instance to children who have childcare in the ASG zone and then to children who live out of ASG zone, oldest first.

6. Children who are resident outwith the City. For children resident outwith the city boundary, not including children with a sibling (as they will come under band 4), the address of a childminder or carer within the city does not entitle the child to an ELC place. Places will be allocated oldest first.

PLEASE BE AWARE: Even though an ELC place may be offered based on a sibling being at the same school, this WILL NOT guarantee a place for Primary 1. A school placing request for out of zone children will still be required and no priority will be given to out of zone children who have attended ELC.

## 5. Supporting Procedures & Documentation

### Policy

#### 5.1 Age of children for enrolling

5.1.1 The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Order 2014, refers to three school terms namely, autumn, spring and summer.

5.1.2 Children who are age 4 are entitled to a full year of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). Children who are turning 3 are entitled to an ELC place for the following number of terms if their birthday falls within the following dates. (*Pro rata*)

Child's Date of Birth	ELC Entitlement	Duration
1 Mar 2017 to 31 Aug 2017	Three terms	From Term 1 August to December
1 Sep 2017 to 31 Dec 2017	Two terms	From Term 2 January to March
1 Jan 2018 to 28 Feb 2018	One term	From Term 3 April to July

#### 5.2 Early Learning and Childcare for Eligible 2-year old children

5.2.1 All Local Authorities in Scotland also offer ELC provision for eligible 2-year old children who are Looked After, subject to a Kinship Care Order or Parent Appointed Guardianship or whose families are in receipt of certain benefits.

- 5.2.2 Eligible 2-year old children are also entitled to up to 1140 hours of funded ELC. This is from the term after their 2<sup>nd</sup> birthday until the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday when they are entitled to universal Early Learning and Childcare.
- 5.2.3 Provision includes: Local Authority ELC settings and Children's and Family Resource Centres; Registered Childminders; and Funded Provider settings. This enables us to offer choice and flexibility to families in respect of location, type and hours of provision.
- 5.2.4 Children will be entitled to an Eligible 2's place if their family is in receipt of the following benefits:
- Income Support
  - Job Seekers Allowance (income based)
  - Any income related element of Employment and Support Allowance
  - Incapacity or Severe Disablement Allowance
  - State Pension Credit
  - Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit and your income is less than £16,105
  - Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit and your income is under £6,841
  - Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
  - Universal Credit and your household take-home pay, is £610 or less.

Or if the child is age 2 or over and is or, since they turned 2 has been (in terms of legal status):

- Looked After by a local council;
- The subject of a Kinship Care Order; or
- The subject of a Guardianship Order.

### **5.3 Early Learning and Childcare for children with additional support needs**

- 5.3.1 Aberdeen City Council has a policy of inclusion and where possible children will be supported to attend their local ELC setting. Parents may choose to have their child attend his/her local school ELC setting or Funded Provider. The Local Authority or Funded Provider will advise the parents as to their ability to meet the child's needs.
- 5.3.2 Orchard Brae School in Howes Road is an Aberdeen City Council setting for children with severe and complex additional support needs. The school has a 40 place developmental Early Learning and Childcare provision.

- 5.3.3 Parents who wish their child to attend mainstream provision should follow the general Early Learning and Childcare Admission process. With parental permission, Early Learning and Childcare staff can consult with the Educational Psychologist regarding meeting a child's additional support needs in the mainstream setting.
- 5.3.4 Access to specialist Early Learning and Childcare provision is made by application through a Child's Plan to a multi-disciplinary assessment panel that includes the NHS Child Development Team, a Health Visitor, an Educational Psychologist, and a Service Manager (Education). The panel meets three times per year.
- 5.3.5 An Early Learning and Childcare place will be offered that is considered the most appropriate available, to meet the needs of the child. **If the parent does not wish to accept the offer, it is open to the parent of a child with additional support needs to make a placing request to attend ELC provision including Funded Provider provision and special provision.**

## 5.4 Targeted Support

- 5.4.1 Aberdeen City Council has a range of services and expertise to support children in need of additional support. Given the wide range of additional support needs, the individual circumstances of the child have to be considered when determining how best to support. ELC teams are well placed to design interventions to support children in the first instance. In addition, advice and guidance can be sought from the Early Years Team who will help identify partners across the service or partnership best placed to support.

## 5.5 Deferred entry to Primary One

- 5.5.1 Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision in Aberdeen City is designed to offer children a continuum of early learning experiences from ELC into Primary 1. However, for a few children it may be beneficial to have an additional year in ELC.
- 5.5.2 Children who are 4 in January or February, whose parents request that their entry to primary school is deferred, are entitled to an additional year of publicly funded Early Learning and Childcare. No deferred entry request form is required, parents simply need to apply in the usual way for an ELC place.
- 5.5.3 Children who turn 5 between the start of the school year and the last day of December may request a deferred place but this is at the discretion of the Local Authority.



- 5.5.4 Parents considering deferred entry will be given a copy of the Deferred Entry leaflet. The deferred entry request form has been expanded to accommodate more detailed narrative.
- 5.5.5 The decision to apply for a deferred place should be a **joint** decision between parents and staff at the school. Where staff at the school do not support the parents' request, reasons must be shared with parents and given on the request form.
- 5.5.6 To ensure a consistent approach is taken throughout the city, decisions regarding deferred entry places are made by a multi-agency panel who meet each year in February. A decision to agree a deferred entry will only be made when the panel are certain that a deferred entry will be beneficial to the child. **In every case, where a parent wishes to request deferred entry, schools and ELC setting must work with the parent and submit a form on their behalf.**

## **5.6 Early entry to Primary One**

- 5.6.1 Children start Primary 1 aged between 4 and a half and 5 and a half depending on when the child's birthday falls. This is a matter of law. Some parents/carers whose child has a birthday after this date can request if their child can be admitted early. e.g. starting school the previous August. For those wishing to apply for Early Entry enrolment, application should be made in writing to the Head Teacher of the school you wish your child to attend, no later than 28th February of the year you wish your child to start school.
- 5.6.2 This is known as an Early Entry Request. It is not the same as a Placing Request as you cannot request in law that your child start early in a school other than your local catchment school.

## **5.7 Right of Appeal**

- 5.7.1 There is no right of appeal against a decision of Aberdeen City Council not to offer an Early Learning and Childcare place at a specified mainstream Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision. Section 28A of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 sets out the Local Authority duty to comply with placing requests to schools but specifically states 'not nursery schools or nursery classes in a primary school'.
- 5.7.2 As parents cannot make a placing request for a mainstream ELC place they have no right of appeal. The School Placings and Exclusions Appeals Committee therefore has no power to hear any appeals for mainstream ELC provision.

5.7.3 The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended does allow the parents of children with additional support needs to make placing requests for ELC. Where that ELC provision falls within the definition of a special school, any appeal against the refusal of a placing request is to the First Tier Tribunal for Scotland (Health and Education Chamber).

## 5.8 Non Attendance

- 5.8.1 Aberdeen City Council encourages parents/carers to take up the entitlement for Early Learning and Childcare. If an ELC place has been accepted and the child does not turn up on the expected date it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher/ELC Manager to contact the parent/carer as soon as possible. The Head Teacher/ELC Manager will consider if appropriate to make use of the Children Missing from Education Policy (see section 5.9). If the child has failed, or is failing to attend ELC, then it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher/ELC Manager to follow up non attendance and be assured that the child is safe.
- 5.8.2 If contact cannot be made with the parent/carer by phone/email then the Head Teacher/ELC Manager should send a letter to the home address, with a deadline for response, advising that if they do not respond by that date then the decision may be taken to withdraw the place. If the parent/carer fails to get back in touch by that date, then please discuss with the Early Years Team. If the evidence suggests that the parent/carer is not intending on taking up the offer then consideration will be given to withdrawing the place. Parents/carers can reapply at a later date if circumstances change.
- 5.8.3 For children who have enrolled and are attending regularly but whose families decide not to use the ELC place for family or holiday reasons, the authority will hold a place for **maximum period of 4 weeks**. If the parent/carer has not made contact with the school or Early Years Team, or the child has not returned to ELC within this 4 week period, the place may be withdrawn. The Head Teacher/ELC Manager has the discretion to extend this timescale based on individual family circumstances. Consideration should also be given to the need to apply the Aberdeen City Council Children Missing from Education policy if required.
- 5.8.4 If the parents/carers have not made contact regarding explanation for non-attendance at ELC the advice below relating to Children Missing from Education should be followed.**

## 5.9 Non Attendance and Children Missing from Education

- 5.9.1 If a child has failed, or is failing to attend ELC, with no explanation from the parent/carer then it is the responsibility of the Head Teacher/ELC Manager to contact the family and other professions supporting the child to determine if the child is safe.
- 5.9.2 When determining the welfare of the child and family proves impossible over a three day period **Aberdeen City Council's Children Missing from Education Policy** should be applied. When there are ongoing concerns for a child or young person's wellbeing action must be taken immediately. Where a child is open to Social Work the Lead Professional should always be contacted.
- 5.9.3 If attempts remain unsuccessful, the school should complete the Children Missing from Education (CME) and send it to the Authority CME Co-Ordinator. The CME Co-ordinator will undertake a further local search before linking with partners and national organisations.

### Guidance

## 5.10 Class Composition

- 5.10.1 The composition of ELC classes is **not** solely to be determined by children's chronological age.
- 5.10.2 It is the Head Teacher/ELC Manager's responsibility to compose classes taking account of the needs of all children. The following factors will also be considered when composing class groups:
- Achieving a balance of gender, age, children with additional support needs;
  - Children's existing friendships/peer groups;
  - Previous assessment information used to create learning groups; and
  - Parental preference.

## 5.11 Guidelines for Induction

- 5.11.1 Aberdeen City Council is committed to providing induction programmes that will ensure the happy and safe transition to ELC and which will support children to become confident, eager and enthusiastic learners.

### 5.11.2 Principles of induction

- Children need social and emotional support to help them cope with changes i.e. the people, the setting, the approach and the curriculum.
- Parents need to be well informed and involved.
- ELC staff must welcome each child and help them develop independence and a sense of belonging to the ELC setting and the wider school.
- Recognition should be given to children's previous experiences.

### 5.11.3 Processes of induction

- Induction is the educational process through which the child and the parents are introduced to the ELC setting and welcomed into the wider school community.

### 5.11.4 The special nature of induction at the Early Learning and Childcare stage

The following factors should be taken into account when planning ELC induction:

- **Parents** have a critical role to play as they are the children's prime educator in their early years. They provide the constant element in the child's experience of transition from one setting to another. Their in-depth knowledge of the child needs to be shared with the ELC staff.
- **Young children** have to learn to cope with people and settings outside their family. For this to be a positive process they require the social and emotional support from both parents and ELC staff to enable them to adjust to:
  - the temporary separation from the family;
  - the new social context; and
  - the range of learning experiences they encounter.
- **Early Learning and Childcare staff members** have a crucial role to play in welcoming parents and children by creating a safe and stimulating environment that will broaden and develop the children's learning experiences. They will promote genuine partnerships with parents to provide the best opportunities to discuss the child's achievements to date, which will help support programmes for learning.

### 5.11.5 Management of induction to Early Learning and Childcare

Schools should ensure that all ELC staff and parents are familiar with Aberdeen City Council's Policy on Early Learning and Childcare Admissions.

#### 5.11.6 All classes should:

- Have an agreed procedure for induction;
- Provide a prospectus/handbook that sets out the aims and information about Early Learning and Childcare and the curriculum in a clear and comprehensive manner;
- Organise a pre-entry visit and allocate time for **individual contact** with every parent and child. Discuss intake arrangements and explain the rationale behind this;
- Give due consideration to the order in which children are admitted e.g. whether children with additional support needs or twins are admitted first or join an established group;
- Consider children's previous early learning and childcare experiences and family circumstances when deciding on the induction pattern;
- Liaise with any other agencies involved with the child with agreement from families;
- Phase pre-school and deferred entry year children into the setting for a full session over a 3-week period. It would be expected that ante pre-school year children would attend a full session by the end of the fifth week or sooner. The Local Authority is required to provide a minimum of 38 weeks of Early Learning and Childcare;
- Involve parents in the settling process, welcoming their presence if they wish, until their child is confident with the ELC staff;
- Organise opportunities for parents to find out about the curriculum and how children learn e.g. open days, meetings, workshops and information pamphlets. This should be continued within the arrangements for reporting to parents which could take the form of an early October/November meeting to discuss the child's emotional, personal and social development and an end of year meeting to report on the child's progress and achievement; and
- Review induction procedures annually in the light of parental and staff comment and taking account of the particular circumstances of the incoming group.

General enquiries about the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy should be directed to:

Early Years Team  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor North  
Marischal College  
Broad Street  
Aberdeen  
AB10 1AB  
01224 764654

## 6. Definitions

- ACC :** Aberdeen City Council
- ELC :** Early Learning and Childcare
- Customer :** All 3 and 4 year old children and eligible 2 year old children who access an Early Learning and Childcare Place, and their parents, carers and families.
- Funded Provider :** Any Registered Early Learning and Childcare setting which delivers ELC in partnership with ACC. For example, Private Nursery, Playgroup, Childminder.
- ASG :** Associated School Group (Secondary School Zone)

## 7. Risk

- 7.1 This policy aims to ensure that all families in Aberdeen have access to ELC provision, in line with statutory duties, set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and that allocations are made in a lawful and consistent way.
- 7.2 This will be achieved through the consistent implementation of this policy. Implementation of this policy will be monitored by the Early Years Team with any emerging risks escalated to the Chief Education Officer for action.

## 8. Policy Performance

- 8.1 Early Learning and Childcare admissions can be measured by the total number of places allocated per setting and by the percentage of places allocated by choice.

## 9. Design and Delivery

- 9.1 The policy is aligned to supporting the delivery of the Target Operating Model :

**Customer Service:** The Policy will help ensure a customer centred approach offering a range of flexible models which will be offered in each locality / Associated School Group (ASG).

**Organisational Design:** Admissions will be managed by a central team, with a streamlined digital solution anticipated in 2021 to allow a more efficient Admissions process.

**Governance:** The policy on all Early Learning and Childcare Admissions will ensure a fair and consistent approach and ensure choice and flexibility for our customers. Day to day responsibility for the policy will be held by the Chief Education Officer

**Processes :** The Policy is designed to reflect the range of flexible models which will be offered in each locality / Associated School Group (ASG) to provide choice for families.

## 10. Housekeeping and Maintenance

- 10.1 This Policy replaces all other policies relating to Early Learning and Childcare Admissions. The Policy will be reviewed annually with relevant dates updated. The guidance documents which support this Policy will also be reviewed and updated on an annual basis to reflect any changes to dates, settings, national best practice and learning from implementation of this policy.

## 11. Communication and Distribution

- 11.1 The policy will be shared and communicated via Local Authority Early Learning and Childcare Settings, Funded Providers, Aberdeen City Council website and The Zone.

## 12. Information Management

12.1 Data relating to Early Learning and Childcare Admissions will be collected via the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions system, and is processed, stored and managed in accordance with the Council's Corporate Information Policy. A separate Data Protection Impact Assessment is available.

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