



Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Delivery Plan 2022-24

Report on Review of Improvement Activity and Actions – June 2024

Our vision is to provide ELC which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and is available up to 50 weeks of the year. Provision will be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community and will support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles inform our practice. All ELC provision across Aberdeen City will:

- Capitalise on intergenerational support;
- Offer a level of personalisation to ensure maximum gains for children;
- Be nurturing, inclusive and offer a holistic service to children and families in keeping with GIRFEC;
- Feel owned by the community;
- Fully utilise outside space to promote wellbeing;
- Be staffed by skilled practitioners who have opportunities to develop their skills further through a suite of professional learning suited to their needs and situation; and
- Be quality assured across a locality by one skilled practitioner who will have a key role in supporting parents to fully capitalise on the local offer.

Key Themes for Development

Based on the outcomes of our Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC (2022), our consultation with parents and carers in 2021, and our engagement with key stakeholders, including staff voice, the key themes for development over the past 2 years were:

- Workforce Support

- Community Partnerships
- Transitions
- Family Support

The ELC Delivery Plan 2022-24 detailed planned improvement activity and actions. Progress under each of these has been reviewed and are detailed in the following pages:

How will we deliver Early Learning and Childcare?

Improvement Activity	What we said we'll do	By Who	Evidence of Impact	RAG Status
Maintain a mix of Local Authority and Funded Provider delivery models across all Associated School Groups (ASGs)	<p>Continue to monitor demand across the city and in individual ASGs.</p> <p>Ongoing consultation and engagement with families to establish any changing patterns in-service usage.</p> <p>Continue to monitor uptake with Funded Providers.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Funded Providers</p>	<p>Families are able to access a range of delivery models within their ASG.</p> <p>% of first choice applications.</p> <p>ELC Parent and Carer Consultation.</p>	

What we did?

There are currently 53 Local Authority ELC settings and 41 Funded Provider ELC settings. There are also 63 Funded Provider childminders working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver the funded ELC entitlement, with a range of flexible options, for 3-5 year old and Eligible 2 year old children across the city. A map has been produced which shows a visual of the location of our ELC provision across the city and ASGs:

[Early Learning and Childcare provision](#)

The Early Years Team continue to monitor demand across the city and in individual ASGs. This is in order to meet the needs of families and to achieve best value. We know from parent and carer feedback that while a large majority of respondents (79.4%) were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area/Associated Schools Group (ASG); and (75.8%) were able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ ASG, some delivery models are more popular than others and there are slight changes in

demand across each ASG. At the time of the ELC Parent and Carer Consultation in 2023, term-time, full-day and fully flexible placements were most popular. For half day placements, morning places continue to be more highly sought after than afternoon places, with afternoon placements the least popular out of all the delivery models.

Alongside feedback from parents and carers, detailed work on capacities has been undertaken in 2022 and 2023. It showed that we have an oversupply of 'afternoon' places available. Officers have taken this learning into account in planning delivery models for 2023/24 and 2024/25 and these have been amended accordingly in order to meet demand and fully maximise resources.

The full ELC offer across each ASG ensures a good mix of 8am-6pm all year round ELC provision and 9am-3pm term time provision. Our ELC Funded Providers also offer fully flexible funded ELC across the city and can meet the needs of families who require wrap around care and additional hours.

All Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) ELC providers who request to enter into partnership with Aberdeen City Council come into partnership.

As part of our statutory duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, we are required to consult with parents and carers every two years on the provision of ELC. The Early Years team consulted with parents and carers again in June 2023. The consultation received a total of 664 responses after 3 weeks (+210 (46%) from 2021).

Key headline data is below and the full report is published on Aberdeen City Council website:

- 79.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (Associated School Group (ASG)) (+7.4% from 2021).
- 75.8% have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG.
- 80.6% of respondents were able to secure their first choice of ELC provision.
- 88.4% of respondents were satisfied with the location of their ELC provision. (+5.4% from 2021).
- 76.8% of respondents were satisfied with the times ELC services are available (+9% from 2021).
- 87.1% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date (+ 4.7% from 2021).
- 73.6% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC (+4.8% from 2021)
- The majority of respondents, at over 95%, identified Early Learning and Childcare as having a positive impact on their child's development with:
 - 87% identifying improved social skills;
 - 81% seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills;
 - 71% identifying improved creativity;

- 68% identifying improved fine motor skills;
 - 64% identifying improved emotional development;
 - 63% identifying improved physical development;
 - 62% identifying improved listening skills;
 - 60% identifying improved literacy development; and
 - 60% identifying improved numeracy development.
- 39.8% of respondents stated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (-11.4% from 2021).
 - 29.2% of respondents indicated that they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family (-9.5% from 2021).
 - 24.1% are now considering a return to work or study (-4.4% from 2021).
 - 24.1% stated improved wellbeing/respite as a positive impact from the expansion of ELC (-2% from 2021), with 18.9% of respondents finding they now have more time to themselves (-5.4% from 2021).
 - 73.3% of respondents stated that they are aware that Aberdeen City Council offers Eligible 2's ELC placements.

<p>Continue to offer all children attending ELC regular and routine access to high quality learning outside.</p>	<p>Ongoing development of Duthie Park and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries.</p> <p>Provision of professional learning (including at Duthie and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries).</p> <p>Opportunities for staff to visit Duthie Park and Hazlehead Nurseries to engage in professional dialogue and observe practice.</p> <p>Promotion and Quality Assurance of Outdoor Learning across all ELC settings.</p>	<p>Outdoor Manager</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Outdoor Manager ELC</p> <p>Locality Lead Officers</p>	<p>Provision of and evaluations of professional learning.</p> <p>Evaluations from Quality Improvement Visits.</p> <p>Number of staff engaging in visits.</p> <p>Number of childminders participating.</p>	
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	Childminders – Promoting environmental and community work.	Childminders		
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What we did?

Outdoor ELC

A cornerstone of the ELC expansion programme was the investment in outdoor learning, and this is keenly reflected in the establishment of two new outdoor nurseries at Duthie Park and at Hazlehead. Both have an outdoor focus in their education and provision, with each offering unique and varied experiences for children, families, staff and the wider communities. The establishment of the two new outdoor nurseries is a first for Aberdeen city and a pioneering provision for the Early Years sector.

Outdoor ELC provision at both Duthie Park and Hazlehead is now fully up and running, with both receiving Very Good evaluations following Care Inspectorate inspections in 2023.

Across all ELC settings, good use is also made of outdoor and green spaces where practicable and feasible to do so. To further support practitioners in their outdoor practice, several training opportunities have been offered such as sessions on woodwork and creativity, which were delivered by Pete Moorhouse in May 2022. Furthermore, our outdoor practitioners at Hazlehead Outdoor Nursery were empowered to deliver focus workshops during an Outdoor Expo to staff across the city in November 2022, showcasing and utilising their outdoor pedagogy skillset to support colleagues to develop their practice around natural resources, creative materials, den-building and woodwork. The feedback from the session was overwhelmingly positive, centred around the value of professional collaboration and motivation to improve experiences and outcomes for learners.

Certificate in Outdoor Practice

In 2023/24, Aberdeen City Council has been the first Local Authority in Scotland to pilot the innovative, 12-month training programme *Certificate in Outdoor Practice: Developing excellence in wellbeing, play and learning outdoors*. This has been created and delivered by Outdoors Thinking, with the aim to empower educators to enact effective early childhood outdoor pedagogies in their work setting and build their identity as outdoor specialists. This is strongly linked to our delivery plan drivers of workforce support and high quality professional learning, our LOIP stretch outcomes around children's wellbeing, development and progress and national framework outdoor play priorities.

The participant study group is made up of twenty practitioners from select Local Authority and Funded Provider settings across the city and from a variety of roles and levels of experience. The blended approach of experiential in-person learning, online discussion and guided study, coaching and small-scale action research has already had tremendous impact on the wellbeing and outcomes for both children and staff. Ongoing [evaluation](#) of the programme can be found in the link. Once participants have completed the course (September 2024) we plan to

develop ways that they can share their learning and practice with other colleagues and feed into future professional development opportunities.

To continue this work around outdoor practice professional development, an audit has been completed in February 2024 inviting feedback from practitioners across the city to inform future training needs. This information will be used to shape the training offer for the next academic session.

Case Study - Links ELC and Hub

In January 2024, an initial consultation took place with outdoor nurseries after discussion with staff, children and families that indicated outdoor learning was an area of development within the setting:

- 10% of families attend parent voice and input their thoughts and ideas to the outdoor learning plan development plan.
- Children shared their views “Little people big voice”.
- Through further consultation we gathered data that informed our decision to make outdoor learning a priority as 87% of children attending Links ELC and Hub have limited access to outdoor learning .
- In line with World Health Organisation advice that children should have 3 hours outdoor play per day, this informed our promise and commitment to provide this opportunity.
- Through staff observations, questionnaires and Continuous Review and Development (CRD) the setting recognised that **most** of our practitioners identified having gaps in understanding and confidence when delivering curriculum outdoors. This informed our offer of learning, and this was shared with Outdoor ELC Lead (expert) where Manager and Lead created a robust plan and timeline of support. This included support with planning and ordering resources, role modelling practice, 1-1 outdoor learning focus supervisions, to date over 100hours of support, signposted to relevant training, allotment action plan, continues to monitor and mentor.
- Almost all staff have spent the day at the outdoor nurseries with a focus from their supervisions to upskill and bring back findings to embed in Links ELC and Hub.
- Both Senior Early Years Practitioners (SEYPs) from Links have spent a week at outdoor learning provisions to be able to better support Early Years Practitioners.
- Outdoor Lead has spent a week at Links ELC and Hub further delivering guidance and support.
- 2 Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) have been identified as ‘Outdoor Champions’ with delegated responsibility for outdoor environment and allotment.

Childminders

Local childminders have worked in partnership with Aberdeen City Council and NHS Health Improvement Fund to manage green spaces and improve the health and wellbeing of children, families and communities, working together to grow flowers, fruit and vegetables. A recipe book has been produced through the Planting and Growing Project. This links with Curriculum for Excellence, Realising the Ambition and Health and Social Care Standards. The Project, which was recognised as part of a number of community projects which won a Green Workplace Award at Aberdeen City Council Star Awards in 2022, commenced in 2021 and is still going strong.

Play on Pedals

Funding has been secured from Cycling Scotland to deliver the Play on Pedals initiative in Aberdeen. Play on Pedals is an early years resource that links into the national Bikeability Scotland training programme. The scheme aims to give all pre-school children the opportunity to learn how to ride a bike before starting school.

Aberdeen City Council started delivering this initiative in 2017 in the Bridge of Don and Oldmachar ASGs. We are delighted to now roll out Play on Pedals to around 30 ELC settings across the city, further enhancing our outdoor learning offer. One or two members of staff from each of the ELC settings have participated in Cycling Scotland training to become a Play on Pedals Instructor. Over a 6-8 week period, the children are taught the skills to ride a pedal bike, through the use of balance bikes, games and play within safe off-road environments. They will work in small groups of up to 6 together with a trained Play on Pedals Instructor. The games link to the Curriculum for Excellence.

Increase the number of childminders to promote choice	Monitor demand for childminders. Target recruitment activity according to demand and in priority regeneration areas. Devise new systems for childminders applications in partnership with Legal Services. Continue to evaluate and improve the support afforded to funded provider childminders.	Early Years Team Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) ELC Locality Lead Officers	Monitor application process. Secure current numbers of funded providers. Increase in the numbers of Childminders and Funded Provider Childminders across the city. Increase in the numbers of Childminders Funded Provider Childminders in priority regeneration areas.	
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What we did?

Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) work in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to recruit, support and retain childminders. As at June 2024, there are a total of 114 Childminders in the city.

During 2022-23, SCMA supported 25 people to start the process of registering as a childminder. Of those, 12 are now registered, with the others at various stages of the registration process.

During 2023-24, SCMA supported 26 people to start the process of registering as a childminder. Of those, 7 are now registered, with the others at various stages of the registration process.

Approximately 25% of childminders (29) currently deliver funded Eligible 2 placements.

Three new childminders entered into partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver funded ELC entitlement bringing total number to 63.

During 2023-24, Scottish Childminding Association started undertaking Quality Assurance of our Funded Provider Childminders in line with the National Standard, further strengthening our long established and valued partnership with the national organisation.

<p>Increase uptake for eligible 2 year old children</p>	<p>Monitor demand for eligible 2 places.</p> <p>Secure places at Local Authority and Funded Provider ELC settings including childminders.</p> <p>On-going collaboration with multi-agency partners to identify eligible 2s.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>All ELC settings</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p>	<p>Monitor application process.</p> <p>Families are able to access delivery models within their ASG which meet their needs and any change in demand.</p> <p>Increase in % of eligible 2 year old children taking up their ELC entitlement.</p>	
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What we did?

The application process for Eligible 2 places has been refined, streamlined and is now online, bringing it into line with the application process for ELC places for 3-5 year olds at Local Authority ELC settings. This has enabled us to better monitor the volume of applications and demand for places.

The Scottish Government have introduced the Data Pipeline project which gives Local Authorities access to data identifying possible eligible families. Aberdeen City Council signed up to this project in 2023 and families in the city have been sent information, via flyer and incorporating a QR code, about the Eligible 2's service and how to apply. We continue to monitor application numbers to gauge the impact this has had. The number of children allocated an Eligible 2's place has increased by 12% from 183 in 2022/23 to 205 in 2023/24. Population projections suggest that we have increased % of eligible population from 31.66% to 38% in the same period.

We also work in partnership with multi-agency partners, for example Health Visitors, to identify Eligible 2 children and we continue to receive a number of applications for discretionary placements which are considered on a case-by-case basis.

2022/23 Eligible 2s – May 2023

Funded Providers	102
Childminders	26
Local Authority	55
Out of Authority children	0
Total ACC	183
eligible population projections*	578
% of eligible population placed	31.66%

2023/24 Eligible 2s - May 2024

(NON VALIDATED)

Funded Providers	136
Childminders	25
Local Authority	44
Out of Authority children	0
Total ACC	205
eligible population projections*	540
% of eligible population placed	38.00%

Provision of top up hours to support families to study and work	Identify capacity for selling hours. Promotion of top up hours. Pilot in one or two ASGs	Early Years Team ELC Settings	Uptake of top up hours. Income generated.	Closed
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	initially.			
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What we did?

Following our 2021 ELC Consultation with parents and carers, we explored the possibility of offering top up hours to support families to study and work. As a result of identifying capacity for selling hours, we deduced that hours available for selling were predominantly in the afternoons, the least favoured option by the majority of parents and carers. Therefore this was not pursued but instead led to a review of ELC delivery models in order to meet demand and maximise resources.

How will we ensure quality?

Improvement Activity	What we said we'll do	By Who	Evidence of Impact	RAG status
Deliver a comprehensive Quality Assurance programme	<p>Alignment of Quality Improvement visits with school Quality Assurance calendar for all ELC providers, including the work of triogroups supporting Local Authority settings across the city.</p> <p>Implementation of robust Quality Improvement Framework for Local Authority and Funded Provider settings incorporating reference to national guidance documents such as Realising the ambition - Being me.</p> <p>Identification of areas for targeted support, pre and post inspections.</p>	ELC Locality Lead Officers	Improved evaluations from HMle and Care Inspectorate	

What we did?

Overall, there has been an upward trend of improvement in inspection evaluations, with almost all ELC settings improving in at least one Quality Indicator following reinspection.

The Education Service presented an updated ELC Quality Improvement Framework to the Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2023. The service's own self-evaluation had determined that early gains were evident but that some variation remains as the framework is being implemented.

There has been significant collaboration with officers and Head Teachers to work on improvement through a Collaborative Improvement model. Following a three-day visit in November 2023 which involved visits to ELC settings and focus groups, the Collaborative Improvement Team (CIT) recognised the commitment of Local Authority senior leaders to realise high quality ELC provision and endorsed the ambitious aims of the ELC expansion programme believing that the Plan is likely to improve outcomes in the longer term. The establishment of a wider range of roles and development of a clear workforce progression pathway as part of the expansion programme was thought to be particularly impactful. The CIT saw clear evidence of both Support Workers and Modern Apprentices seizing opportunities to further their skills and qualifications in order to secure positions with more responsibility. The team identified that the public health restrictions in place at the time 1140 was fully implemented will have contributed to the variation currently being experienced.

The collaborative improvement process has been exceptionally beneficial to the Education Service. In general terms the team has validated our own self-evaluation and endorsed our long-term ambition. They have helpfully shared national best practice that can now be used to enhance our approaches and these areas will be taken forward with support from the team where beneficial. The team has also provided a helpful reminder to pause and take stock of how far many have come and guided us to start to consider arrangements to support good or very good settings to drive their own on-going journey to excellence. It has also provided a central monitoring role to allow wider team support for individual schools to provide quality teaching and learning.

Support and enhance smooth transitions	<p>Review transition processes with early in person transition and early engagement with staff, where practicable.</p> <p>Pilot some more creative transition processes within Local Authority ELC settings.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>ELC Settings</p>	<p>Feedback from children, parents/carers and staff.</p> <p>Increased wellbeing of children – using Leuven Scale to evaluate this in observations.</p> <p>Reflective dialogue on transitions with practitioners during visits and ASG meets.</p> <p>Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.</p>	
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What we did?

An audit of current transition arrangements has been carried out and actions identified to ensure consistency across LA and Funded Provider settings.

Child's Planning support system

Through the child's planning support system, an enhanced transition may be coordinated to support children make the move from ELC to Primary one. This ensures the continuity of care and learning as well as opportunities for professionals/parents to meet and discuss the model that best meets the needs of the child. It may also include a member of staff moving with the child for the initial settling in period.

Request for Assistance

Request for Assistance (RfA) applications increased by 36% between 2022/23 and 2023/24:

Number of RfA applications received in 2022/23 – 30

Number of RfA applications received in 2023/24 – 41

In around 70-75% of cases, additionality (by way of an extra member of staff) is provided to enhance ratios to provide support for the child identified as in need of additional support, but also to support the wider staff team within the ELC setting. Other supports offered include input from Autism Outreach Team and training to upskill staff and increase capacity and confidence across ELC teams.

Deferred Entry Applications

	2022/23 Pilot	2023/24	2024/25
August to December	138	142	208
January and February	150	170	183
Total	288	312	391

The change in eligibility dates for automatic deferrals has led to a sharp increase in children deferring entry to P1. Aberdeen City Council piloted the change in 2022/23 this saw 288 children defer entry into P1. By 2024/25 this had risen by 36% to 391.

<p>Work in partnership with families and communities including through a Peep offer in all settings as part of a partnership Family Support offer</p>	<p>ELC and Peep colleagues will work together to ensure that at least one member of staff from each ELC setting has been Peep trained and support will be given to staff when delivering Peep sessions.</p> <p>Monitor uptake to identify if there are any barriers preventing these from taking place in order to remove them.</p> <p>Liaise with colleagues from Family Learning to ensure that settings are maximizing Family Support sessions offered.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers / Peep</p> <p>Family Learning Team</p>	<p>Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.</p> <p>Increase in the number of parents and carers who have awareness of how to support their children's learning and development at home.</p> <p>Improved relationships with families.</p>	
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What we did?

Peep

The Peep offer has been aligned to Quality Framework. Meetings have taken place with the Peep Co-ordinator to look at ways of increasing the Peep offer across the city. The plan includes videoing a current Peep session in a LA setting to share in the fortnightly communications. Links to How good is our Early Learning and Childcare and Quality Framework for Daycare of Children are also being created.

Work is underway to deliver joint Peep sessions within the Tillydrone Campus. There will be input from two Funded Provider ELC settings, Aberdeen City Library Service and Riverbank School staff.

Every Child a Library Member (ECALM)

Aberdeen City Libraries (ACL) encourages children to become library members from birth and does not charge children for reservations, nor are there penalties for the late return of items borrowed on a child's card. The Scottish Government ECALM initiative is supported in Aberdeen and mechanisms are being investigated by which all children may be registered as library members at enrolment in ELC and/or Primary 1. We are delighted to report that 1051 children aged 0-5 became library members in 2023-24.

Bookbug

Bookbug is the Scottish Government funded gifting programme which ensures every child in Scotland receives a free bag of books at key points between birth and 5. The programme is managed nationally by Scottish Book Trust, delivered in Aberdeen by ACL, and a key element in our early years offer. The Bookbug Explorer bag is gifted to every child aged 3 years – 3 years 11 months in the ante pre-school year and the Bookbug Primary 1 bag to every child in Primary 1. ACL is responsible for the delivery of the bags to schools and ELC settings and for providing support to practitioners around gifting the bags to encourage parental engagement.

In 2023 - 2728 Explorer bags and 2215 Primary 1 bags were delivered

In 2024 - 2156 Explorer bags were delivered.

Support and upskill ELC Teams to provide a fully inclusive offer.	Build capacity and confidence through observations, shadowing and training.	Early Years Team ELC Locality Lead Officers Autism Outreach Team VSA Additional Support Needs Advisory Project (ASNAP)	Increased staff confidence. Reduction in Requests for Assistance.	
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What we did?

VSA ASNAP (Additional Support Needs Advisory Project) has been commissioned by Aberdeen City Council to support the Funded Provider ELC settings to meet the needs of all children. ASNAP offers specialised support to Funded Providers, for example through observations, mentoring and training. This means that children, with Additional Support Needs (ASN), can take up their Early Learning and Childcare entitlement in a Funded Provider setting in a pattern to suit the needs of their families.

The Service:

- Supports local ELC Funded Providers to facilitate the inclusion of children with Additional Support Needs;
- Assists staff with the development of strategies that will support the child / children they are working with;
- Delivers training to staff in settings which ASNAP has supported, to ensure the sustainability of inclusion; and
- Offers training as part of the annual ELC Continuous Professional Learning (CPL) offer.


Referrals had been received to observe and support children in ELC settings. Nearly 50% of ELC Funded Providers have been supported by ASNAP over the past two years. A resource pack and online training materials have been further developed and promoted. This has resulted in greater awareness and uptake of the service.

The online training course has been rolled out (following pilot in 3 ELC settings) and feedback rating is a very high 9.2 out of 10. Behavioural strategies used in the training sessions indirectly benefit all children and staff in ELC settings, not just the children who are identified as in need of additional support. The ASNAP service is delivered in response to demand from ELC settings and Quality Assurance visits from ELC Locality Lead Officers.

In order to maintain support for children with ASN in ELC settings with an emphasis on early intervention, awareness raising and upskilling staff to manage the emotional and behavioural support needs of children, training will continue to be promoted and delivered online and in person. The feedback to date has been extremely positive.

ASNAP is a valued service and remains the first point of referral for our ELC Funded Providers requiring support to facilitate and sustain the inclusion of children with ASN.

From the ELC Learning Festival, ELC Locality Lead Officers identified a training need around ASN from Practitioner feedback. Following this, ASNAP were commissioned to offer various training sessions for Local Authority staff, as well as work on a pilot programme to support staff with their inclusive practice in a selected Local Authority provision.



<p>Offer opportunities for collaboration locally and cross-boundary to increase capacity and maximise resources</p>	<p>Work in partnership across ASGs and Authorities where appropriate.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers Northern Alliance</p>	<p>Staff will have access to relevant and meaningful learning opportunities which will upskill them to continue to be able to provide the most current best practice.</p> <p>This will be evidenced by both internal quality assurance and external inspection reporting ensuring that settings are meeting the national standard.</p>	
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What we did?

ELC staff benefit from the fortnightly newsletter and remain committed to participating in professional learning. The provider neutral approach taken to the majority of professional learning made available was noted as positive by Collaborative Improvement Team (CIT). Networking opportunities are provided through the management and leadership programme and are highly valued by participants. Opportunities for other staff to network are in the early stages of implementation.

How will we support and develop our workforce?

Improvement Activity	What we said we'll do	By Who	Evidence of Impact	RAG Status
<p>Create positive pathways into careers in ELC and provide access to funding for accredited qualifications</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers will use the ABZworks platform to link with ELC employers and training providers to promote positive pathways into ELC careers.</p> <p>Continue to offer Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in Local Authority ELC settings, building this role into our staffing model in a variety of settings that deliver different models of ELC.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>ABZworks</p> <p>Training Providers</p>	<p>Increase in number of applicants for vacancies.</p> <p>Increase in applicants for Foundation Apprentice in Early Years course.</p> <p>Supply staff moving into permanent posts providing continuity for children and staff.</p>	<p>Amber</p>
	<p>Partnerships with local training providers to widen the offer of the Foundation Apprenticeship Children and Young people in Aberdeen City Council secondary schools.</p> <p>Collaborating with People and Organisation to create an internal 'Introduction to ELC' course to be available to young people in secondary schools.</p>		<p>Increase in the number of staff attaining accredited qualifications across all levels.</p> <p>Number of young people accessing the 'Introduction to ELC' course.</p> <p>Supply staff reporting increasing confidence.</p>	<p>Green</p>
	<p>Offer Workforce Development and Expansion funding annually to support workforce, across the city, to undertake accredited qualifications and meet Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements. Additionally, supporting staff to gain qualifications above what is required to allow for further career progression.</p>			<p>Green</p>

	Promote grants for those undertaking qualifications to support routes out of poverty and maximize funding available.			
	<p>Development and expansion of supply pool support workers in order to create additional pathway into the sector, supporting their progression into permanent posts in order to complete qualifications.</p> <p>Development of professional learning opportunities for supply staff to enhance understanding of the sector and opportunities for progression.</p>	ELC Locality Lead Officers	<p>Increase in number of relief Early Year Practitioners</p> <p>Increase in number of relief Support Workers</p> <p>On going adverts and recruitment</p>	 

What we did?

	2023/24		2022/23	
	Applied	Successful %	Applied	Successful %
BA Degree	68	76	65	85
Professional Development Award (PDA)	6	83	3	100
Social Services (Children & Young People) SSCYP 2	10	90	4	100
SSCYP 3	38	84	25	100
SSCYP 4	10	40	0	0
Play 2	0	0	5	100
Play 3	5	100	3	100

Play 4	0	0	1	100
Bolt On	2	100	1	100
Units	0	0	6	100
Total	139	78	113	91

Workforce Development and Expansion

2023/24 saw an increase in applications for Workforce Development and Expansion Funding across all the majority of qualifications. We anticipate that 2024/25 will see similar increases as our workforce expands and candidates seek to progress their professional learning and meet SSSC Registration requirements.

Aberdeen City Council introduced a Modern Apprentice role into the ELC staffing structure. The aim of this is two-fold: firstly to grow our own workforce; and secondly to support our Funded Providers with a pipeline of suitably qualified practitioners. Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with three local training providers to offer a positive pathway for young people to develop their experience working in an ELC environment while gaining an SVQ3 Health and Social Care (Children and Young People). As an employer, we have 34 modern apprentice positions in our local authority ELC settings. This is a rolling programme and once candidates have completed their qualification the opportunity becomes available for another prospective modern apprentice. Candidates who complete their qualification are able to apply for internal opportunities in the ELC workforce and to support the transition into a permanent post we have developed a system in which the modern apprentices current line manager can endorse the candidate to join our ELC Casual Workers list without interview. Since the start of the programme in August 2021 we have had 30 candidates who have successfully completed the programme and have moved onto either further study or employment.

Internship Placements

The Early Years Team have worked in partnership with ABZworks to provide 12 week internship placements for various groups of people looking to return to work or indeed start off their career. Recent internships included LTU(long term unemployed), Care experienced young people and parents who wanted to return to work. On successful completion of the programme, the participants are encouraged to seek a career in ELC. They are guaranteed an interview for support worker posts or Modern apprenticeships, and, if recommended by school staff, can be placed on the relief support worker pool. These internships have been a great success and will continue for as long as funding allows.

Following the Collaborative Improvement visit in November, an induction for new ELC managers was recommended. Education Scotland have offered Aberdeen the opportunity to be part of a four-day training that they have developed around Pedagogical Leadership. Members of the central team will also attend and co-deliver which will ensure this training can be part of the induction for all new managers in the future.

A highly successful Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Learning festival took place on 13th February 2024. Over 500 practitioners from across the city, from both Local Authority and Funded Provider ELC settings attended. The event included opportunities for collaborative working as well as three keynote speakers. Feedback has been extremely positive and has informed the professional learning programme for 2024/25. Participants were also given the opportunity to volunteer to be part of focus groups to drive future developments.

From feedback gathered from the ELC Learning Festival, the following themes were identified as key areas for CLPL from Early Years staff: Outdoor Training, Transitions, Additional Support needs, Planning & Tracking. These areas will inform training opportunities for the next

delivery plan.

How will we communicate, engage and consult?

Improvement Activity	What we said we'll do	By Who	Evidence of Impact	RAG Status
Regular engagement and consultation with parents and carers	Statutory consultation with parents and carers every 2 years Regular engagement across ASGs	Early Years Team / Autumn 2023 Locality Lead Officers	Consultation Report ASG Feedback	
<p>What we did?</p> <p>Statutory ELC Consultation with parents and carers was undertaken in June 2023. Report shared widely with key stakeholders and published on Aberdeen City Council website.</p>				
Regular engagement and consultation with all Partners and Key Stakeholders	Regular engagement city-wide and across ASGs	Early Years Team ELC Locality Lead Officers	Feedback from Partners and Key Stakeholders	
<p>What we did?</p> <p>A stakeholder engagement exercise was undertaken with Aberdeen City Council ELC workforce in August 2023 which received over 100 responses. Feedback has been addressed via meetings with ELC teams, at training sessions and the Aberdeen Learning Festival held in February 2024.</p> <p>Locality Lead Officers offer a variety of ongoing engagement opportunities, for example regular informal and formal QA visits, fortnightly ELC updates and ASG meetings. In addition, ELC Locality Lead Officers are available for ongoing, responsive support as required.</p>				
Provision of accurate and up to date	Communicate key information through social media channels.	Early Years Team / Webmonitor	Number of views and shares	

information on ACC communication channels.	Maintain and update ELC pages on Aberdeen City Council website			
<p>What we did?</p> <p>Key information shared via Aberdeen City Council social media channels (Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)) include: information on ELC application process and timelines; information on Gaelic Medium provision; information on childminders and blended ELC offer; details of Parent and Carer consultations; national guidance from Scottish Government and Care Inspectorate; CPL and training opportunities; Parent Club Scotland posts signposting families to ideas and resources; and local good news stories.</p> <p>Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2024, the Early Learning and Childcare pages of Aberdeen City Council website have received 36,108 views. These include: How to apply for ELC; how to apply for Eligible 2's place; ELC Delivery Plan; expanding ELC; Parent and Carer consultations and update on changes to ELC delivery models. The Family Information Service received 2,778 views during the same period, signposting visitors to a variety of ELC provision and family support services.</p> <p>On X, our social media posts providing parents and carers with information on how to apply for an ELC place in January and February 2024, attracted just under 6,000 views.</p>				
Ongoing promotion of ELC models, options and Gaelic Medium provision	Promote all ELC models across the city. Promote Gaelic Medium provision. Promote blended ELC offer. Ensure Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents and Carers booklet is maintained, updated and accessible.	Early Years Team	Evidence of uptake Increased uptake of Gaelic Medium provision Increased uptake of blended ELC offer	
<p>What we did?</p> <p>We have promoted all ELC models via our Guide to ELC which is updated annually and published on Aberdeen City Council website.</p> <p>We have had social media campaigns to specifically promote uptake of Gaelic Medium provision and blended ELC offer. We continue to promote, advertise and deliver Gaelic Medium provision, however uptake continues to be low. Between 1 April 2022 and 31 March 2024, information on the Gaelic Medium provision received 44 views on the Aberdeen City Council website.</p>				

In 2022/23 9 new children applied for and were offered the Gaelic Unit – 2 late applications were placed on waiting list.
In 2023/24 5 new children applied for and were offered a place – this represents a significant reduction in uptake.