



Early Learning and Childcare Consultation with Parents and Carers 2025

Report

Background

Aberdeen City Council is committed to offering high quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to all three to five year old children and eligible two-year olds. ELC is about learning and development through play, exploring and having fun! ELC can make a significant positive contribution to a child's development. We believe that all children deserve the best start to life so they can grow into healthy, happy and confident adults who, in turn, achieve great things.

Since August 2021, all three and four-year-old children and eligible 2-year olds, have been entitled to 1140 funded hours of ELC per year. This has almost doubled from the previous entitlement of up to 600 hours of ELC per year. Families can access up to 1140 funded hours of ELC at a local authority ELC / nursery setting and from private nurseries, playgroups and childminders working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver high quality ELC.

ELC also has economic benefits for families and for the city. ELC can give parents and carers more time for work, training or study and can benefit families by reducing the costs of childcare.

The purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of parents and carers, and future parents and carers, in order to:

- Review ELC uptake and models of delivery across the city;
- Contribute to a review of the impact of the implementation of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to date;
- Inform the development of our Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan which is published every two years and sets out the strategic direction for the delivery of Early Learning and Childcare in the city, responding to local need and reflecting the diversity of communities in Aberdeen; and
- Meet our statutory consultation duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

We asked a range of questions under the following headings: Demographics; Usage of ELC; Accessibility; Awareness; Satisfaction; and Wider impacts. The consultation was open from Thursday 1 May to Sunday 8 June 2025 inclusive and received a total of **365 responses** after 5 weeks (-299 (-45%) from 2023).

We are disappointed that our 2025 consultation had a lower return rate from previous consultations. However, we are assured that our promotion and engagement strategy to reach parents and carers, and future parents and carers, was successful as we had **2842 visitors** to the site. Unfortunately just under 13% of those visits translated into actual responses. It is possible that the reduction in responses this year could be attributed to the following reasons:

1. Using a new consultation platform rather than Google form used previously in 2021 and 2023. It is possible that potential respondents viewed this as being more complex, less straightforward and more time consuming to complete.
2. Fear of not being anonymous. The consultation was anonymous, but the platform asked respondents to enter their email address. Whilst this was not for Aberdeen City Council purposes and we emphasised, in the introduction and again at the beginning of the survey, that respondents would be anonymous, we feel that respondents may have been wary of completing it.
3. Possible consultation fatigue due to recent Community Planning consultation which was also widely publicised and promoted.
4. Overall satisfaction with our ELC offer in Aberdeen meaning that some parents and carers felt no need to respond.

Key headline data from the responses received include:

- 81% of respondents secured their first choice of ELC provision (+0.4% from 2023).
- 68% of respondents have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG (-8% from 2023). It should be noted that 26% of respondents had not yet applied for an ELC place or did not apply for an ELC place in their local area.
- 88.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the location of ELC provision (-4.8% from 2023). 11% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 68.1% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the times ELC services are currently available (-8.7% from 2023), with 21% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 34% of respondents told us that a fully flexible Funded Provider was the best model of ELC to meet their family's needs. This was closely followed by 9am-3pm term-time model at a Local Authority School ELC / Nursery setting with 31% of respondents saying this best met their needs. 18% of respondents said that the 2.5 days model at 46 weeks provision best met the needs of their family.
- Of those who currently access 46 weeks provision (either mornings, afternoons or 2.5 days), 61% confirmed that they use their ELC place during holiday periods. 22% of respondents children did not attend ELC provision during holiday periods. Around 17% of respondents said they accessed their ELC place during either Easter or Summer holiday periods.
- A significant majority of respondents (83%) said they are aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded ELC entitlement at a private, voluntary or independent (PVI) Funded Provider ELC setting (+2.5% from 2023).

- Furthermore, 81% of respondents are also aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded ELC entitlement with a childminder, either in full or as part of a blended placement (+8% from 2023).
- The vast majority of respondents (89%) confirmed that their child(ren) attend one ELC / Nursery setting. Only 11% of respondents use a blended placement for their child(ren).
- 87% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date (no change from 2023).
- The majority of respondents, at over 93%, identified Early Learning and Childcare as having a positive impact on their child's development with:
 - ✓ 84% identifying improved listening skills;
 - ✓ 65% identifying improved social skills;
 - ✓ 65% identifying improved creativity;
 - ✓ 65% identifying improved attention span;
 - ✓ 61% identifying improved literacy development;
 - ✓ 61% identifying improved fine motor skills;
 - ✓ 61% identifying improved physical development;
 - ✓ 60% identifying improved numeracy development;
 - ✓ 58% seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills;
 - ✓ 53% identifying improved problem solving; and
 - ✓ 42% identifying improved emotional development.
- 68.1% of respondents are satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC (-5.5% from 2023), with 21% neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- 78% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the ELC application process.
- 41% of respondents stated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (+1% from 2023).
- 39% of respondents indicated that they felt better off (e.g. more money/disposable income) as a result of receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC (+10% from 2023).
- 14% are now considering a return to work or study (-10% from 2023).
- 29% of respondents highlighted improved wellbeing/respite as a result of their child(ren) receiving funded ELC (+5% from 2023), whilst 24% of respondents found they now have more time to themselves (+5% from 2023).
- 86% of respondents stated that they are aware that Aberdeen City Council offers Eligible 2's funded ELC places (+12.7% from 2023).
- 55% of respondents anticipated that they would require wraparound care once their child(ren) starts Primary School (+10% from 2023).

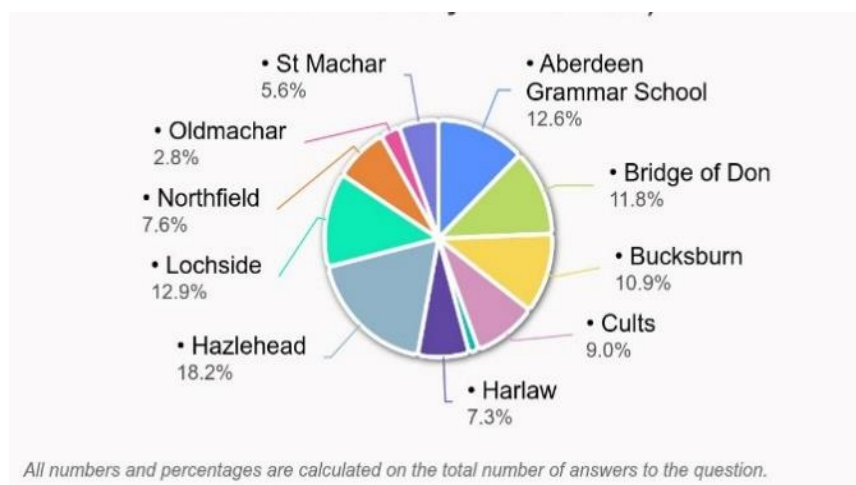
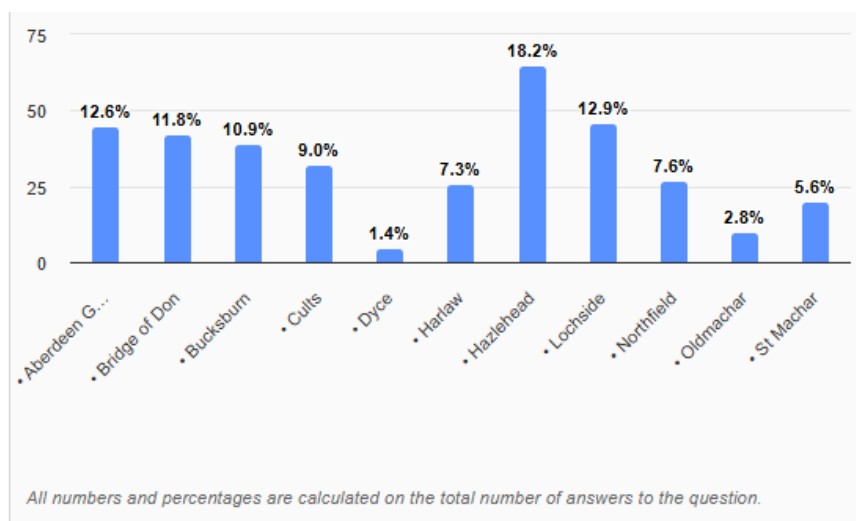
Responses to each question are detailed in the following pages.

Section 1: Demographics

Question 1: We asked parents and carers what area of Aberdeen they live in? (These are listed by Associated School Groups (ASGs) for Aberdeen City Council Secondary School zones).

We received responses from all of Aberdeen City's Associated School Groups (ASGs).

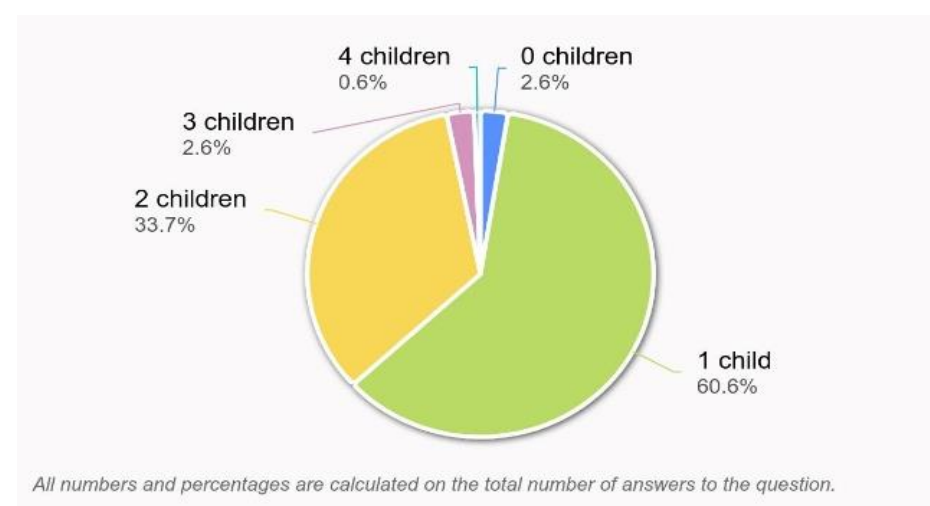
Associated School Group	Responses	Percentages
Aberdeen Grammar School	45	12.6%
Bridge of Don	42	11.8%
Bucksburn	39	10.9%
Cults	32	9%
Dyce	5	1.4%
Harlaw	26	7.3%
Hazlehead	65	18.2%
Lochside	46	12.9%
Northfield	27	7.6%
Oldmachar	10	2.8%
St Machar	20	5.6%



There was engagement from parents and carers, and future parents and carers, from across the city. The most respondents were from Hazlehead ASG 18% (65), followed by Lochside 13% (46) and Aberdeen Grammar School 13% (45) respectively. Bridge of Don 12% (42) and Bucksburn 11% (39) also have significant representation, whilst fewer responses were received from the other ASGs. We should take into consideration that Dyce ASG is a very small ASG compared to others and also that the consultation may have been better promoted and shared in some ASGs than others.

Question 2: We asked parents and carers how many children they have aged between 0-5 in their care?

Number of Children	Respondents	Percentage
0	9	2.6%
1	212	60.6%
2	118	33.7%
3	9	2.5%
4	2	0.6%



We asked this question to determine a demographic regarding the household composition of each respondent. Responses to this question indicate that the majority of respondents have one child aged between 0-5 (60.6%), whilst a further 33.7% of respondents having two children and 2.5% have 3 children. 0.6% of respondents have 4 children aged between 0-5 in their care.

These figures are fairly similar to the responses to our previous consultation. In 2023, the majority of respondents (61.3%) had one child, whilst a further 33.4% of respondents had two children. Less than 4% of respondents said they had 3 or more children.

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Section 2: Usage of ELC

A pie chart illustrating the distribution of ELC hours used by children. The chart is divided into five segments: a large yellow segment for 21-30 hours (56.0%), a green segment for 11-20 hours (7.8%), a small light green segment for 1-10 hours (0.6%), a purple segment for None (5.3%), and a teal segment for children not sure of hours (12.8%).

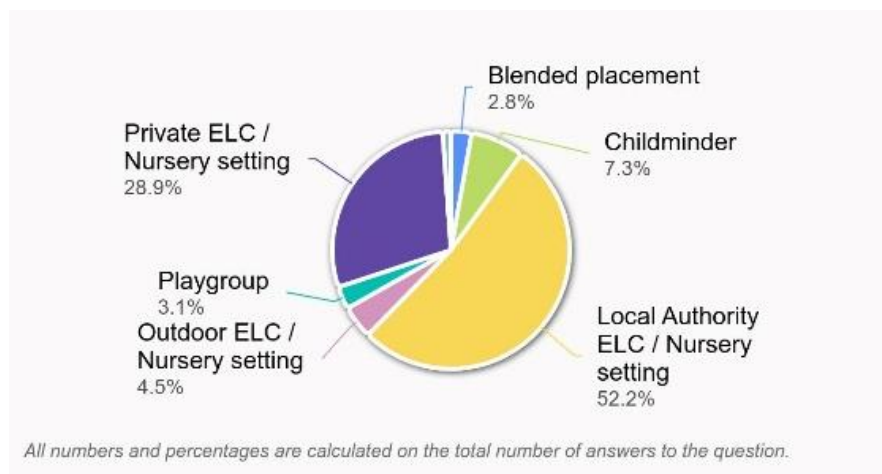
Category	Percentage
21-30 hours	56.0%
11-20 hours	7.8%
1-10 hours	0.6%
None	5.3%
My child uses funded ELC but I'm not sure how many hours	12.8%

All numbers and percentages are calculated on the total number of answers to the question.

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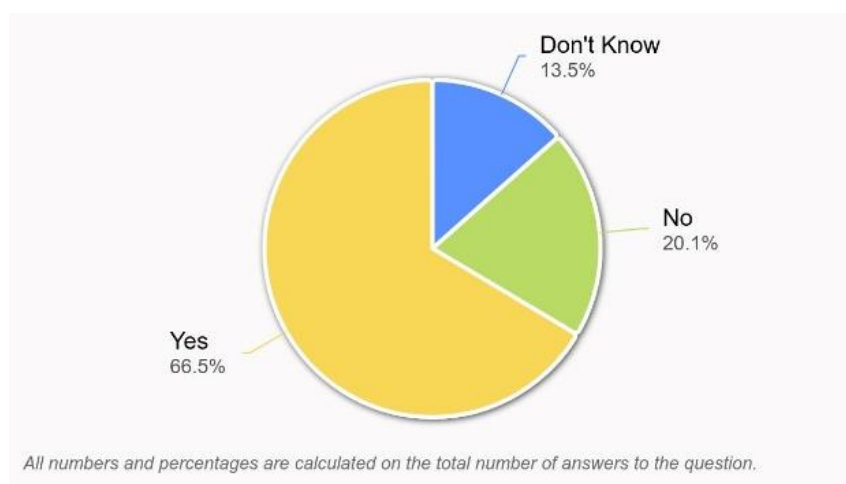
not entitled to any funded ELC yet, 5.3% said none and 12.8% were unsure how many hours their child accessed.

Question 2: We asked parents and carers if their child(ren) currently attends one or more of the following funded ELC provisions?



The majority of respondents, 186 (52%), have children attending Local Authority ELC / Nursery settings, followed by 103 (29%) in Private ELC / Nursery settings. 26 respondents (7.3%) chose a childminder for their children, 16 (4.5%) chose an Outdoor ELC / Nursery setting with 9 (3%) respondents choosing a Playgroup for their funded ELC place.

Question 3: We asked parents and carers if they use the full statutory ELC entitlement (1140 hours per year)?

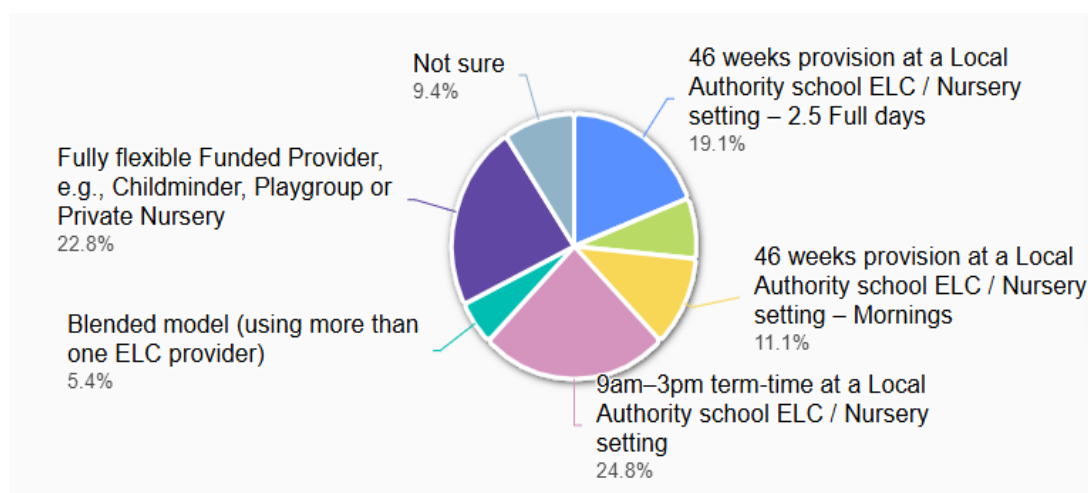
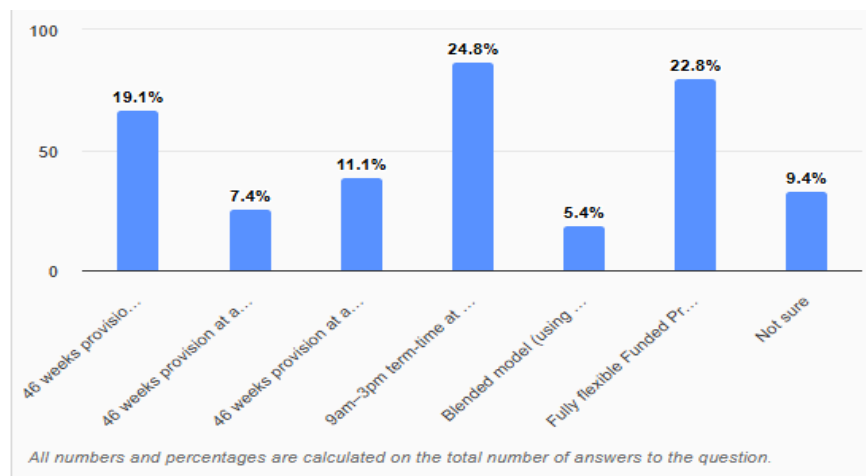


The majority of respondents, 222 (66.5%) use their full statutory entitlement, whilst 67 (20%) do not). 13.5% of respondents (45) were unsure.

We asked this question to check awareness of statutory ELC entitlement and uptake. Whilst we have a duty as a Local Authority to ensure that we have enough ELC provision

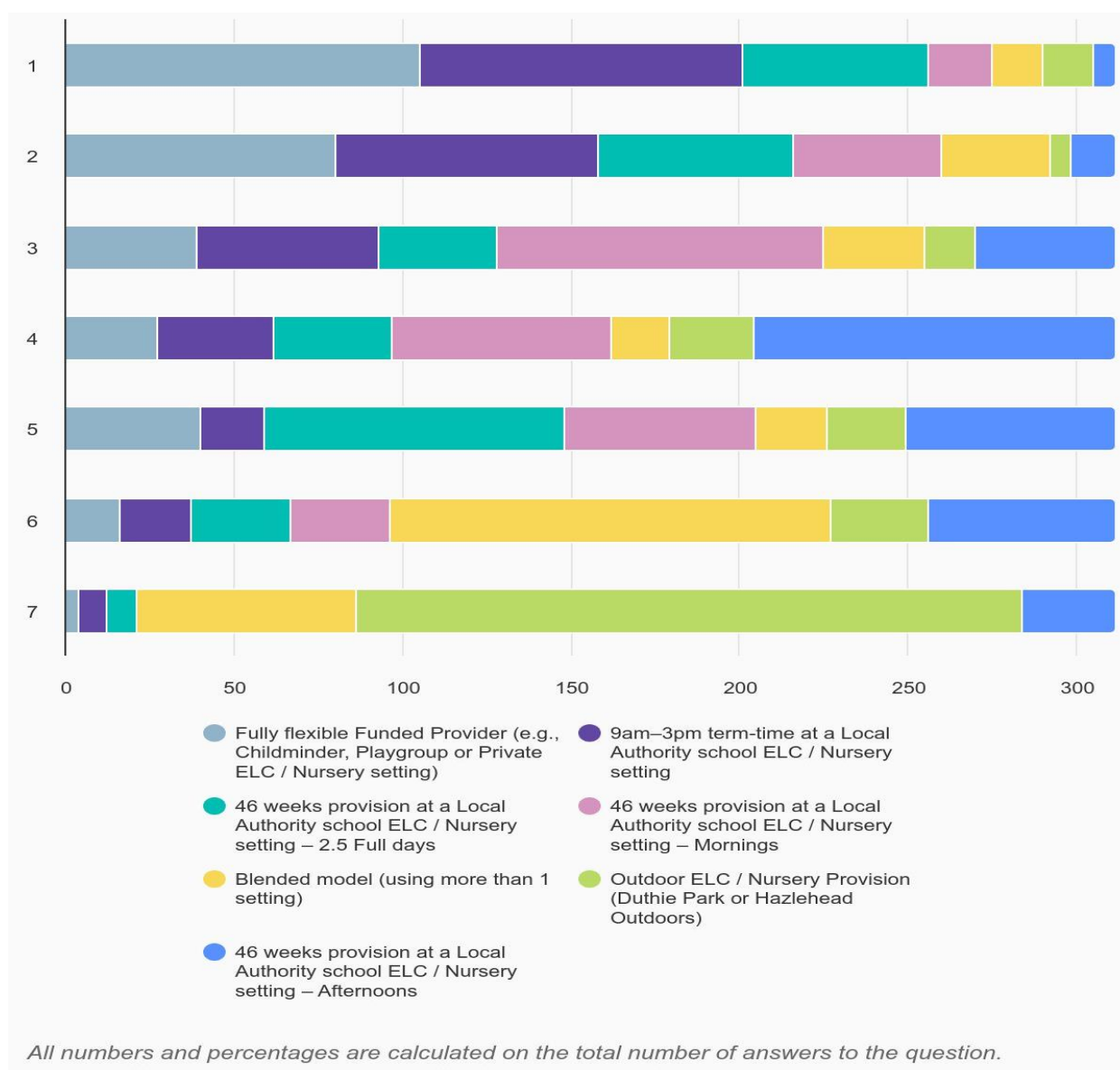
available for every child whose parent and carer wishes them to have a place, it is personal choice and children do not have to attend or take up their full ELC entitlement.

Question 4: We asked parents and carers to select the ELC models they currently use for their child(ren).



The most commonly used ELC model, from those responding to the consultation, is 9am–3pm term-time provision at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting with 25% of respondents (87) currently using this model. This was followed by 23% of respondents (80) currently using a fully flexible Funded Provider and 19% of respondents (67) using 46 weeks provision at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting for 2.5 days. Other models received fewer responses. For half day (morning or afternoon sessions) at Local Authority school ELC / Nursery settings, mornings are more popular than afternoons with 11% of respondents (39) using mornings compared to 8% (26) in afternoons.

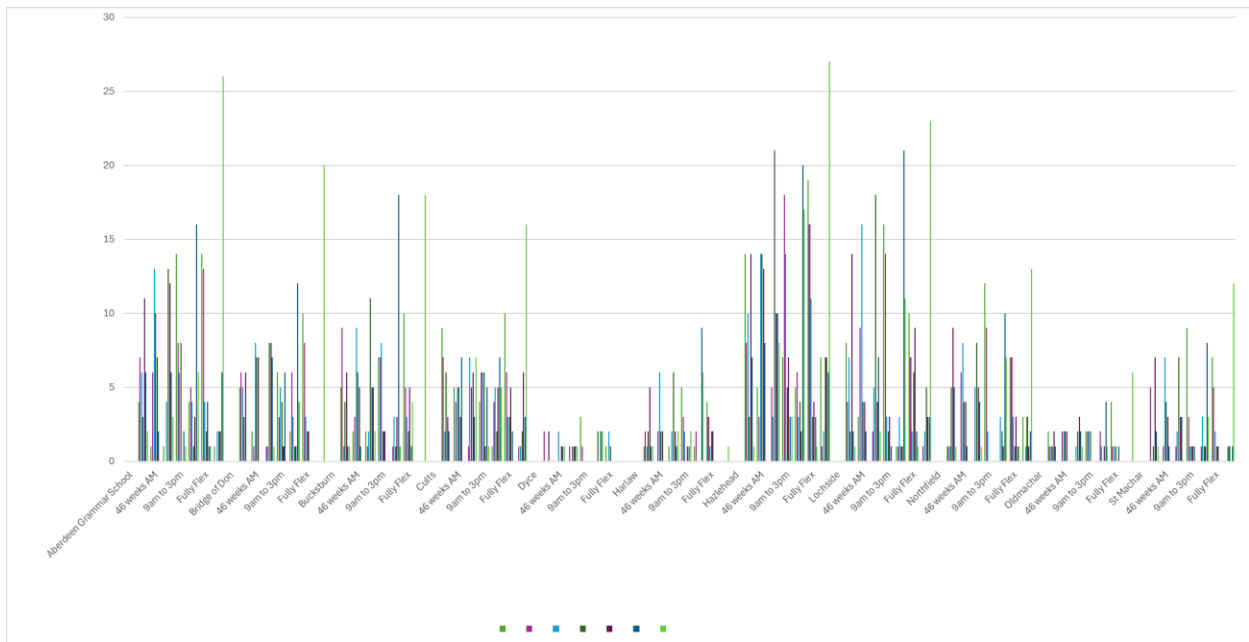
Question 5: We asked parents and carers which models of ELC best meet the needs of their family and to rank them in order from 1-7.



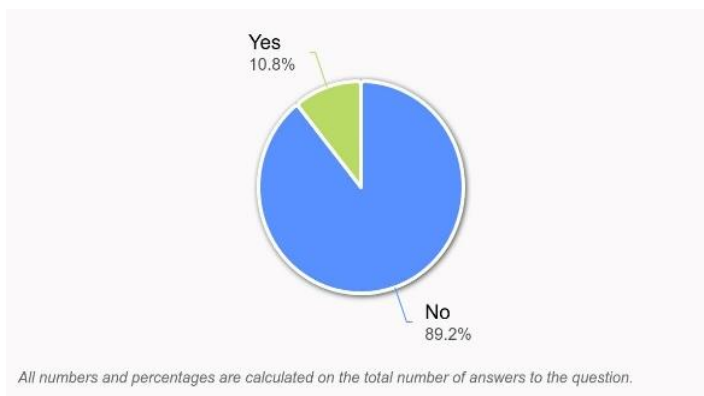
Responses to this question give us a clearer picture of which ELC models best meet the needs of families. Fully flexible (34%), term-time (31%) and full day all year round placements (18%) are the most popular in terms of best meeting the needs of families. For half day placements, morning places still continue to be more highly sought after than afternoon places (6%), with afternoon placements being the least popular out of all the delivery models offered (2%).

Blended model and outdoor provision were also less favoured options, though these models are popular with some families, with outdoor ELC highly sought after. This shows it is important to have a mix of options available, in each local area / ASG in order to meet all families' needs and circumstances across the city.

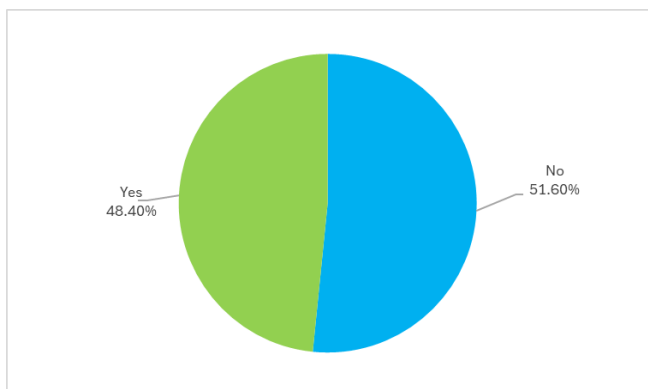
We have also analysed responses to this question by local area / ASG:



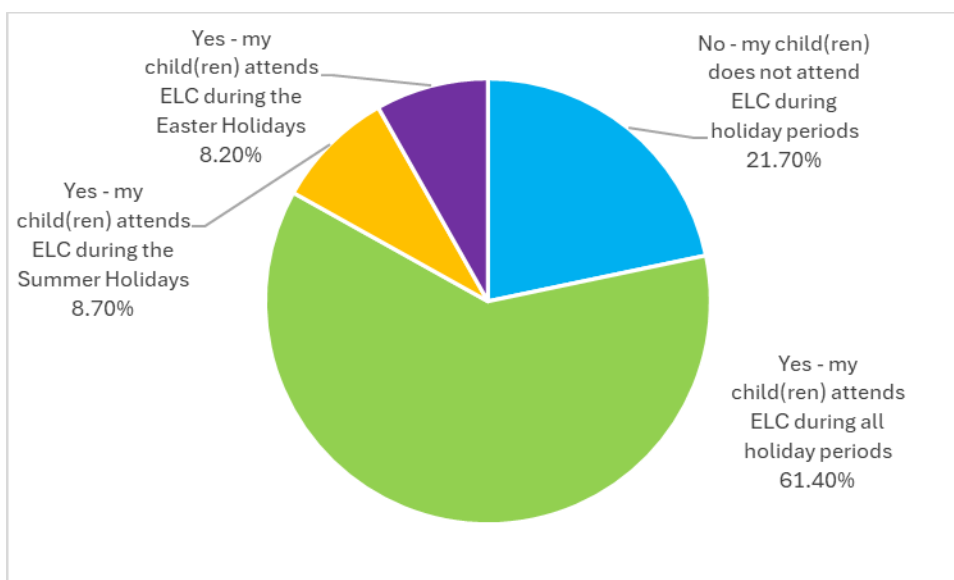
Question 6: We asked parents and carers if they use a blended placement? (child attends more than one ELC / Nursery setting (including childminders))



Question 7: We asked parents and carers if they currently access 46 weeks provision (either mornings, afternoons or 2.5 days)?

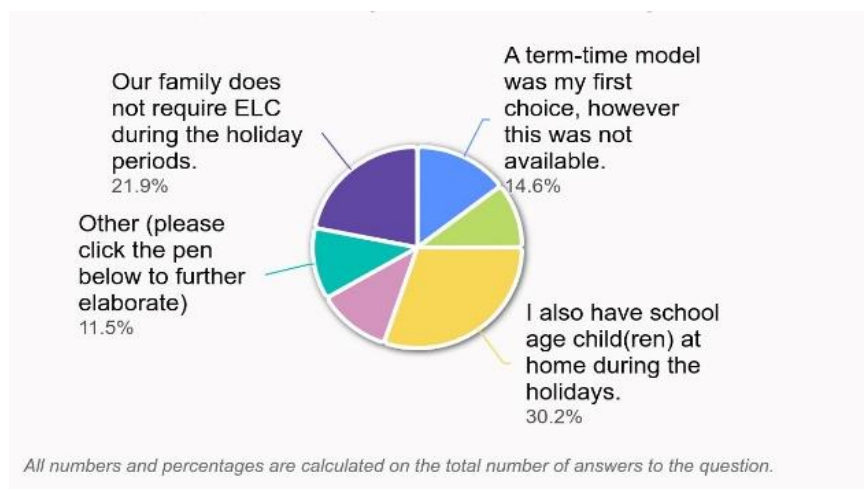


Just under half of respondents access 46 weeks provision. Of those, 61% confirmed that they use their ELC place during holiday periods. 22% of respondents said their children did not attend ELC provision during holiday periods. Around 17% of respondents said they accessed their ELC place during either Easter or Summer holiday periods.



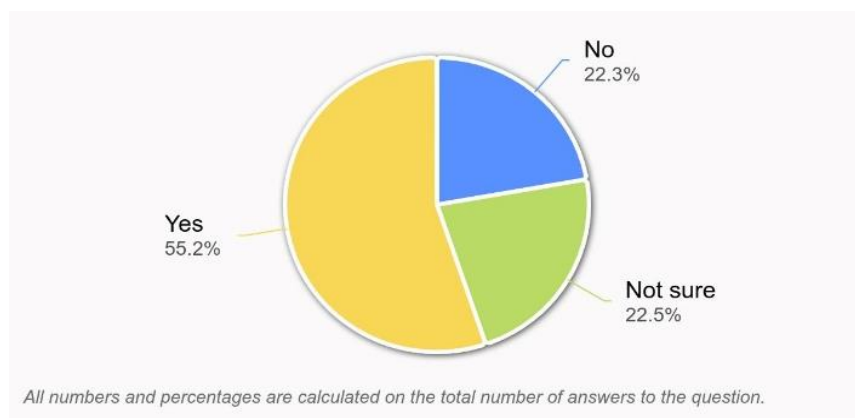
In terms of uptake during holiday periods, we have undertaken more detailed analysis in this year's ELC consultation. We asked parents and carers about their use of ELC during these times as we were keen to better understand the reasons for decrease in uptake.

Question 7b: We asked parents and carers if their child(ren) do not attend ELC during holiday periods could they please tell us why?



- 30% of respondents stated that the primary reason for their children not attending ELC during holiday periods is due to having other children of school age at home;
- 22% of respondents confirmed that their family did not require ELC during the holiday periods;
- 15% of respondents advised that a term-time model was their first choice of ELC provision but was not available; and
- Other reasons for not attending ELC during holiday periods included one or more parents working term-time (12%).

Question 8: We asked parents and carers, thinking ahead, if they think they will require wraparound care (School Age Childcare / Out of School Care) once their child(ren) starts to attend Primary School?



The majority respondents, 55% (191) indicated that they will require School Age Childcare when their child starts to attend Primary School. This is up by 10% from our ELC Consultation in 2023. Just under one quarter of respondents, 22% (77) said they would not require School Age Childcare. This is down by 10% from 2023. 22.5% (78) said they were unsure if they would require School Age Childcare. This figure remains unchanged from 2023.

The following are a selection of comments from parents and carers:

Both my partner and I work full time and will require wraparound care.

I cannot continue my job without it. I work in healthcare

In 2025 when both parents are required to work full-time wrap around care is a necessity.

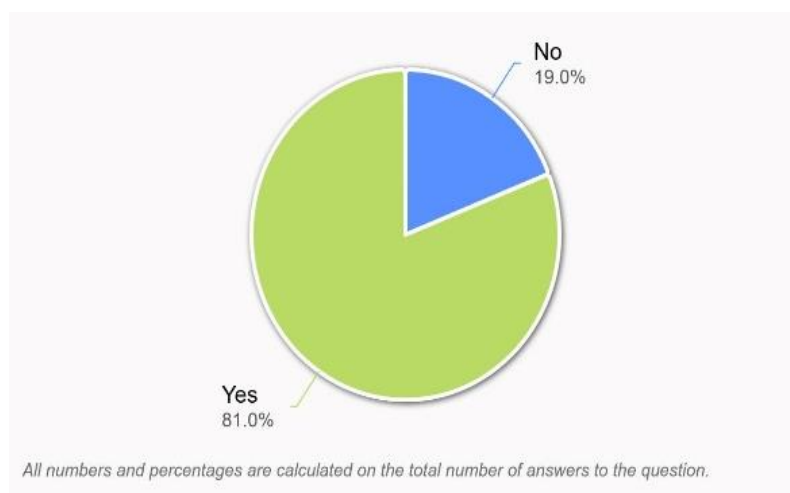
Wrap around care for primary school children is in short supply and a massive worry for working parents.

My eldest son is in p1 he attends out of school club due to my/my husband's working hours.

Yes mornings and potentially after school.

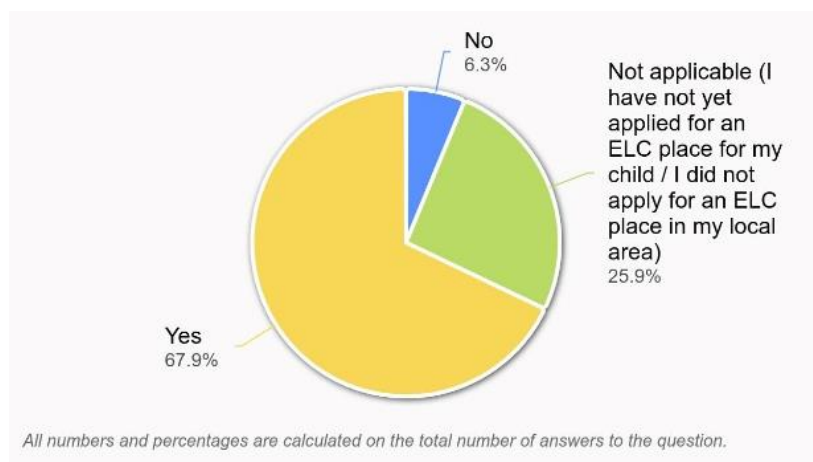
Section 3: Accessibility

Question 1: We asked parents and carers if they had managed to secure their first choice of funded ELC provision?



A significant majority of respondents, 277 (81%) managed to secure their first choice of funded ELC provision which is really positive. This is an increase of 0.4% from 2023. 19% of respondents were unable to secure their first choice of ELC provision.

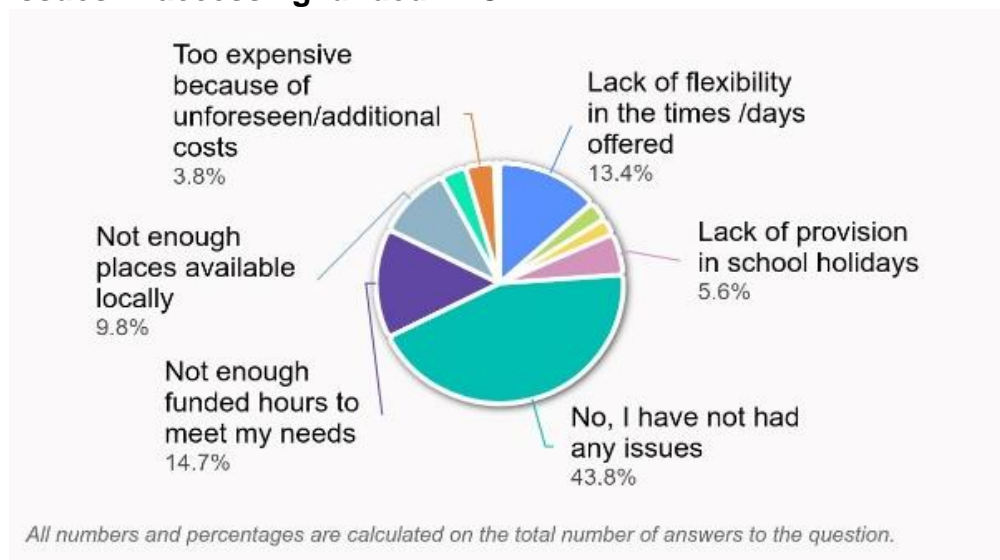
Question 2: We asked parents and carers if they had been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area / Associated School Group (ASG)?



- 239 respondents (68%) confirmed that they had been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area / ASG.
- 91 (26%) indicated that this question was not applicable to them as they had either not yet applied for an ELC place or they did not apply for an ELC place in their local area.
- 22 respondents (6%) were unable to secure a local ELC placement. (Same % as 2023).

The feedback suggests that the majority of respondents have been able to secure a funded ELC place locally and that there is a good mix of ELC provision in Aberdeen to suit the needs of families, with some families preferring to access ELC closer to their place of work or to family and friends.

Question 3: We asked parents and carers if they had encountered any specific issues in accessing funded ELC?



Whilst a notable 44% of respondents stated that they had not encountered any specific issues in accessing funded ELC, 56% of respondents to this question highlighted the following concerns:

- Not enough funded hours to meet needs (15%);
- Lack of flexibility in the times / days offered (13%);
- Not enough places available locally (10%);
- Lack of provision in school holidays (6%);
- Too expensive because of unforeseen / additional costs (4%);
- Lack of providers I could trust to provide a high quality service (2%);
- Lack of provision for preferred type of childcare provider (2%);
- Transport difficulties (1%); and
- Other issue (3%)

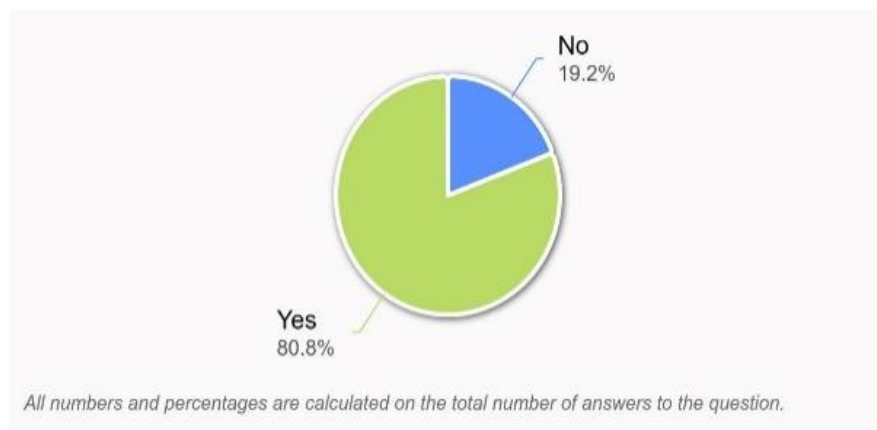
Section 4: Awareness

Question 1: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of private, voluntary and independent (PVI) ELC / nursery settings and playgroups across the city to deliver ELC. We asked parents and carers if they were aware that they can also use their 1140 hours funded entitlement at these ELC settings, either in full or as part of a blended placement?



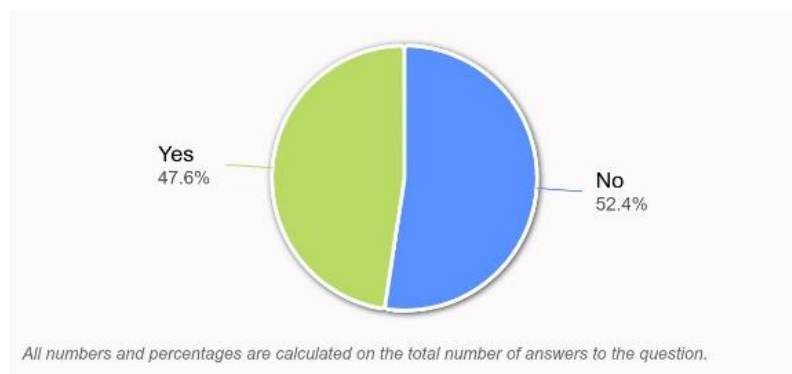
A significant majority of respondents, 83% (300), are aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded entitlement at PVI ELC settings. This is an increase of 2.5% since 2023. It is very positive and reassuring to see such a high awareness that the 1140 hours funded entitlement can be taken in full or in part at Funded Provider ELC settings.

Question 2: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of childminders across the city to deliver ELC. We asked parents and carers if they were aware that they can also use their 1140 funded entitlement at a childminder, either in full or as part of a blended placement?



Again, a significant majority of respondents, 81% (286), are aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded entitlement at a childminder. This is an increase of 8% since 2023 and highlights the ongoing work to promote childminders as a potential ELC option to families across the city. We also need to continue to ensure that we have sufficient childminders across the city to meet demand for this type of ELC provision and this work is ongoing in partnership with Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA).

Question 3: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to offer cross-boundary placements, (e.g., living in the City but requiring ELC in Aberdeenshire) We asked parents and carers if they were aware this is an option for families?



We are aware that many parents and carers regularly commute to work between the city and Aberdeenshire and were interested to see how many parents are aware of cross-boundary placements. Cross-boundary placements can be invaluable when supporting families to work full-time hours while incurring extended travel to and from work.

The majority of respondents, 52% (184) indicated that they are not aware of the option for cross-boundary placements offered by Aberdeen City Council in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council. 48% (167) of respondents said they are aware this is an option.

This figure has increased by 14% since 2023 which shows we have increased awareness levels somewhat, but more can be done.

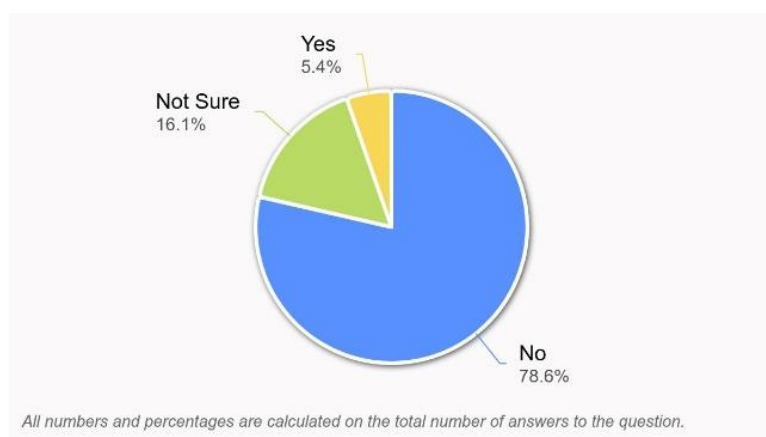
Question 4: We asked if parents and carers were aware that Gaelic Medium Education in ELC, Sgoil-Araich, is an option at Gilcomstoun School / Bun-sgoil Gilcomstoun. You do not have to be a Gaelic Speaker to send your child to Gaelic Medium Education. Gaelic Medium Education is free and a Council run bilingual education option.



- 149 respondents (42%) are aware that Gaelic Medium Education in ELC is an option at Gilcomstoun School.
- 205 respondents (58%) said they are unaware.

The responses to this question, which are the same as in 2023, tells us that slightly more than half of respondents are unaware that Gaelic Medium Education in ELC is an option. This indicates that we need to keep promoting it.

Question 5: We asked parents and carers if Gaelic Medium Education in ELC, Sgoil-Araich, is something they would be interested in for their child?



We have a duty to provide Gaelic Medium Education in ELC for families who would like this for their child. This is provided at Gilcomstoun School. Aberdeen is not a traditional Gaelic speaking city and this may be reflected in the overwhelming majority of responses

from parents and carers who said they would not be interested in Gaelic Medium Education in ELC for their child. The consultation highlighted:

- The vast majority, 79% of respondents (279), would not be interested in Gaelic Medium Education in ELC for their child (+14% from 2023);
- 5.4% of respondents (19) indicated their interest in Gaelic Medium Education in ELC for their child (-4.2% from 2023); and
- 16% of respondents (57) were unsure (-9% from 2023).

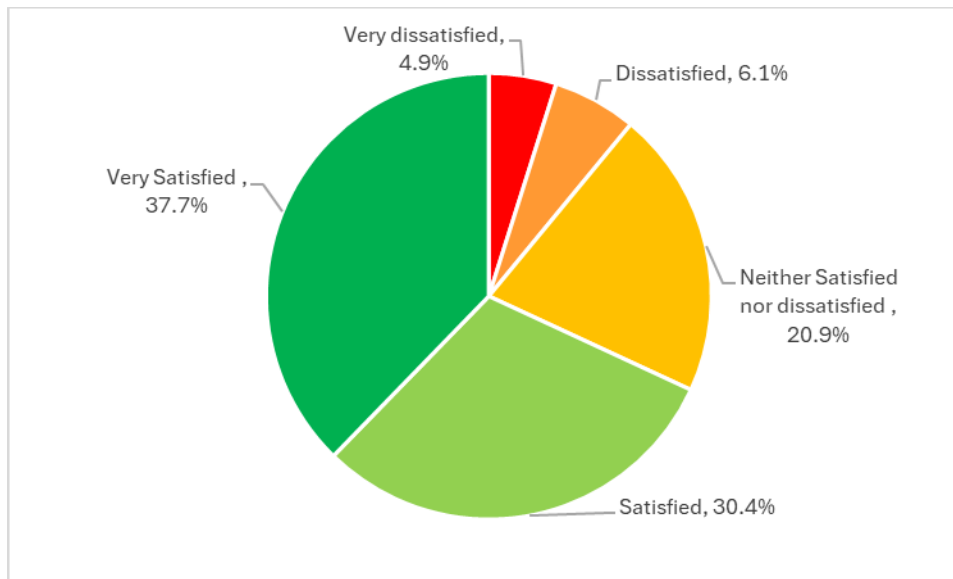
Question 6: Children aged 2 may be eligible for 1140 hours of funded ELC if their family is in receipt of certain benefits or they meet other qualifying criteria (e.g. universal credit). We asked parents and carers if they are aware that Aberdeen City Council offer Eligible 2's ELC placements?



Increasing the uptake of children attending Eligible 2's ELC placements in the city is a key priority for Aberdeen City Council. We are pleased to learn from the consultation that over 85% of respondents (302) are aware that Aberdeen City Council offers Eligible 2's ELC placements. This is an increase of 12% from 2023 which reflects the ongoing work to promote Eligible 2's provision, including via our Health Visitor partners and Data Pipeline project. Uptake in Eligible 2's provision has also increased significantly during this period.

Section 5: Satisfaction

Question 1: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with the times ELC services are currently available.



- The majority of respondents, 68% (235), said that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the times.
- 21% of respondents (72) said they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the times.
- 11% of respondents (38) indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the times ELC services are currently available.

The following feedback was received from parents and carers in relation to - What is working well?

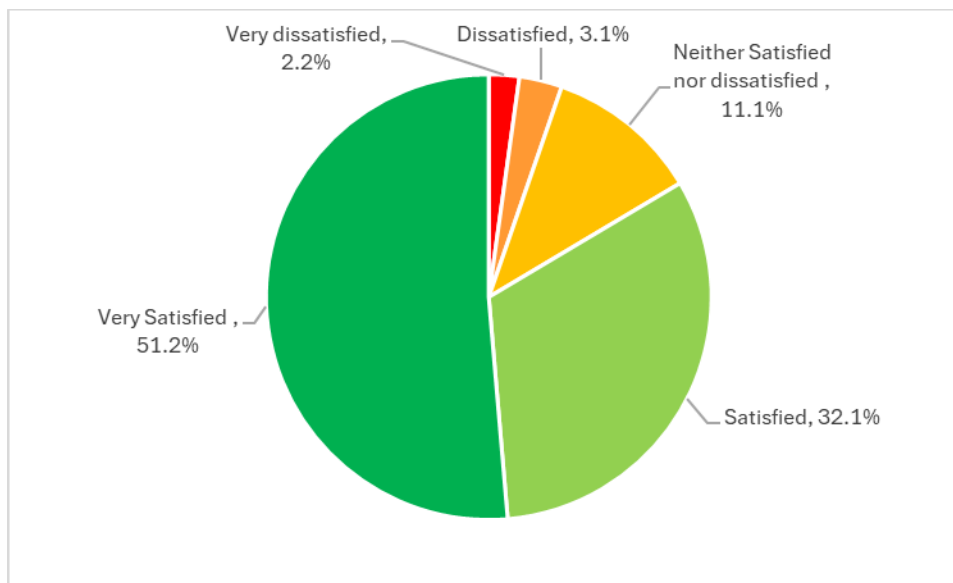
- *2.5 days over 46 weeks is invaluable to working families.*
- *8-6 model allows me to go back to work.*
- *9-3 model suits our family.*
- *9-3 suits our family & work needs. I think it creates a good home and nursery life balance.*
- *9-3 works well for us as I have an older child in school.*
- *Based on previous experience, the option for full days, across 46 weeks is really useful for supporting working parents.*
- *Being open over the school holidays. Offering long days. Both of these make it possible for me to work part time.*
- *Big number of hours compared to previous years.*
- *Both the nursery and hours work well for us.*
- *Child at Culter and I can pay to top up half a day each week as they are part of the pilot scheme.*
- *Childminder is so flexible.*
- *Compared to other cities, nursery places do seem to be available for all ages. When we lived in Edinburgh, places were nearly impossible to find.*

- *Current times work well with the hours of my job.*
- *Days, hours and location work well for us.*
- *Eases pressure on parents and allows parents to return to work.*
- *Easier that they do 9-3 for people who have to work and fits in perfect with my other child who's in school.*
- *I can fit it in with my current working hours.*
- *I can split my placement so that my child can access the nursery in our area where she will attend school but also continue with her private nursery where she was already settled.*
- *I can use the funding at my child's current private nursery, which her younger sibling will soon start, so don't have to have 2 drop offs/pick-ups.*
- *I like that I can send my son to school nursery for 2 full days while I'm at work without needing wrap around care.*
- *My children in nursery attend the same days and times as my child at school making drop off and pick up much easier.*

And the following feedback was received in relation to - What could be improved?

- *Able to pay to top up days.*
- *Affordability of private nurseries and/or childminder groups outside of the fully funded 1140 ELC hours*
- *Additional funded hours for during the summer for parents that work.*
- *Additional funding to help all young families and assist mothers back to work.*
- *Additional hours to be provided or an earlier start (2 year olds) for working parents not in receipt of benefits.*
- *Better availability of 9-3 options at all nurseries and more eligibility for 2 year olds.*
- *Full days would be better 9-3 to match school hours as we are back and forth to nursery & school.*
- *Funding to help under 3s parents return to work.*
- *In perfect world, nurseries available from 9 months old.*
- *More flexibility on how to use the hours. I require 3 full days term time which isn't an option. I know it has been trialled at Culter nursery to pay for additional sessions which would be amazing if it became a permanent option.*
- *Option of earlier drop-off for parents working standard 9am starts. Option of holiday cover/club in same setting*
- *Some flexibility in the times when things come up.*
- *Start earlier. Not term after (child turns 3).*
- *The costs out with the funded hours are still quite crippling to working families.*
- *We have no family in Aberdeen and spend almost £1500 a month on childcare at the moment. More support for working families would be so helpful*

Question 2: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with the current location of ELC services.



- 84% of respondents (271) were satisfied or very satisfied with the current location.
- 11% of respondents (36) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the current location.
- 5% of respondents (17) indicated that they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the current location of ELC services.

This demonstrates that ELC is well located for the vast majority of respondents.

The following feedback was received from parents and carers in relation to - What is working well?

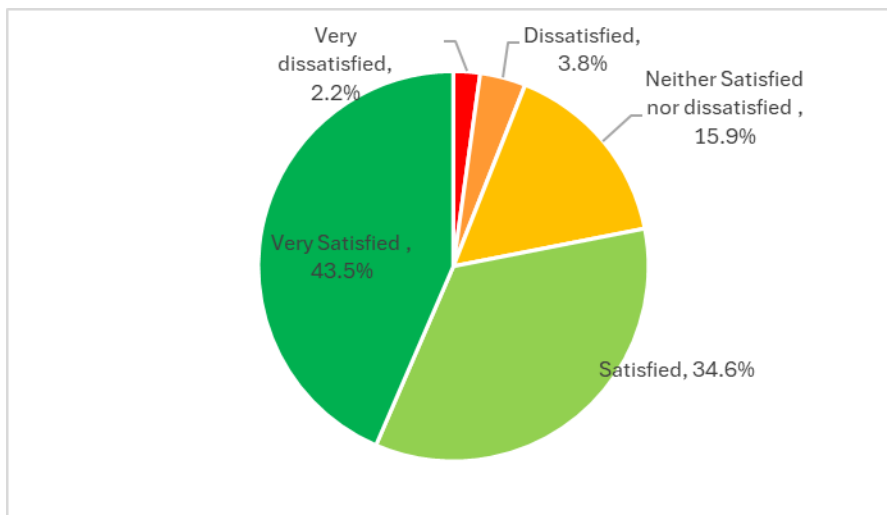
- *5 minutes from my home, not a far walk. Especially in bad weather.*
- *Attached to school where we already have children attend. Great for transitioning into P1.*
- *Big area and many staff.*
- *Brilliant location for outdoor learning.*
- *Close to home – walkable.*
- *Close to home and work.*
- *Close to main primary school so it is more convenient when dropping off older child.*
- *Closely located to where we live.*
- *Easily accessible, easy to park.*
- *Easy to access lots of choice in BOD.*
- *Easy to get to, located in excellent grounds.*
- *ELC close to home and within walking distance.*
- *Excellent that LA nursery is available at the school our child will attend. This will assist greatly with the transition to P1.*
- *Lots of ELC in this area and near buses for people who don't drive.*
- *We live not far from Duthie Park so it's nice being able to walk, we also have the option of Broomhill within walking distance so I think we're in a good area for this.*
- *We love that it is an outdoor nursery near the woods.*

- *We love that it's an outdoor nursery around the woods. We want our children to be outside as much as possible and play with whatever stuff they can find.*

And the following feedback was received in relation to - What could be improved?

- *Between Hazlehead school, the Outdoor Nursery and the recycling centre Hazlehead Avenue gets highly congested at pick up times. This might be improved by formalising the parking next to the running track so that there aren't long runs of cars to get past, or having a one-way system around Hazlehead Avenue and Groats Road.*
- *A number of roads around it (including to/from residential areas) are very busy and there is not enough speed/traffic/parking restrictions or enforcement.*
- *Parking can be difficult depending on timings.*
- *More transport options for those that live out of walking distance.*

Question 3: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with the ELC application process.



- The majority of respondents, 78% (246) were satisfied or very satisfied with the ELC application process.
- 16% (50) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- A very small number of respondents, 6% (19) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The following feedback was received from parents and carers in relation to – What is working well?

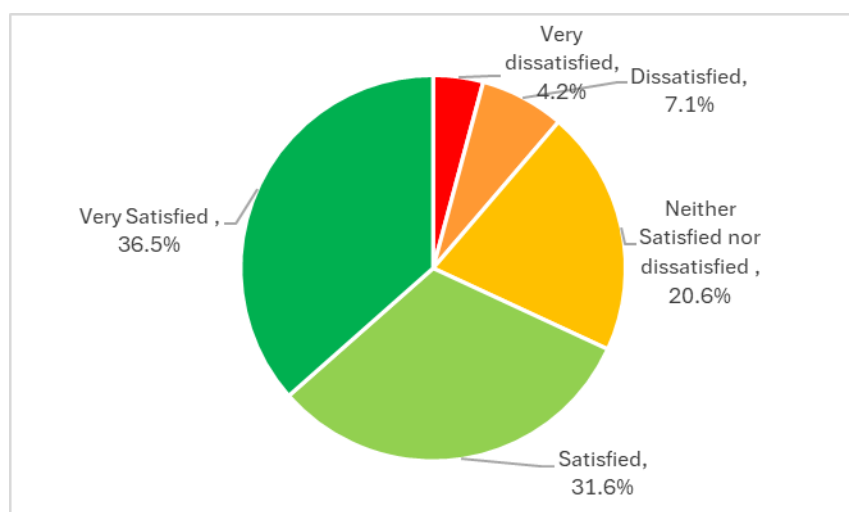
- *Application was easy, straight forward and easy to follow.*
- *Easy enough to understand and fill out*
- *Easy to apply, quick and fast response. From eligible 2â€™s to term time nursery, I didn't have to apply as nursery did this for me. It was a lot of stress off my shoulders.*
- *Easy to do and was given plenty of notice when to apply.*
- *Easy to sort, even with a move between nurseries*
- *I always get a response always without delay.*
- *Nice and easy, very user friendly application. Quick response, hassle free for parents*

- Nursery supported our daughter's application as our children go to nursery from 10/11 months old
- Second time around I'm much more proactive and aware of the deadlines and conditions for applying which makes the process a lot easier.
- Smooth transitions from year to year if remaining with the same provider, even for those opting to defer entering primary school.
- The form is easy to fill with clear instruction. When my child could not have the space for my first choice of nursery, I got a call from ELC (Team) informing this and they asked me to confirm whether I am happy enough if my child get into my second choice of nursery. I think getting a call (or direct email) to confirm about parent's decision is more assuring.
- We got our first choice which we were delighted about and the online application wasn't too long.

And the following feedback was received in relation to - What could be improved?

- A comment section would be helpful for parents to leave a note on their application. For example when selecting 2.5 days, it would be good to select your preferred days, but also leave a comment saying you would be open to discussing other combinations of days before moving on to your next option on the form.
- Dates for applications could be better advertised especially if children are not already in childcare.
- Maybe give a list of nurseries where are still spaces for parents to change for different options.
- More prompting / publicity re timing of applications.
- Parents on a waiting list for Jan/Feb children are notified to reapply.
- Very little opportunity to explain any circumstances on application form.

Question 4: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC.



- 68% of respondents (211) were satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC.

- 21% of respondents (64) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied whilst 11% (34) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The following feedback was received from parents and carers in relation to – What is working well?

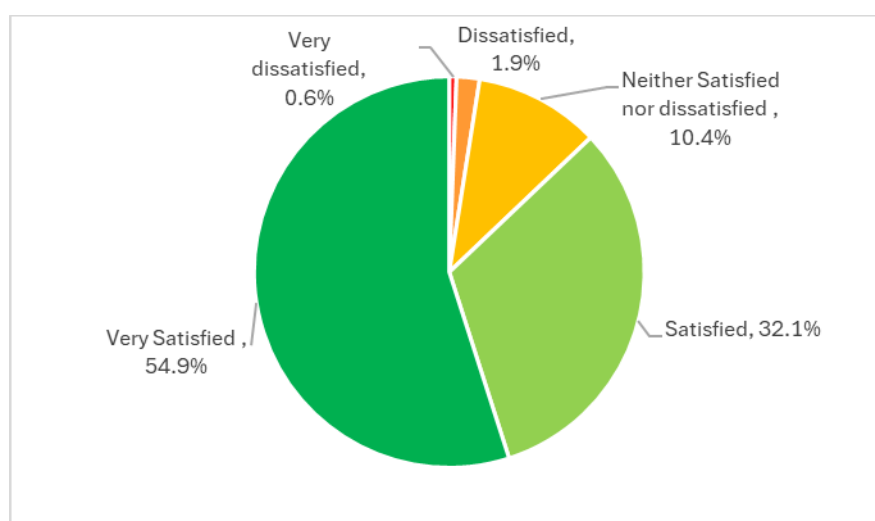
- *Access to fruit all day and home baking options. Chances for children to explore local area and gather fruit for making jams.*
- *At my child's private nursery the snacks and meals are of a high quality. However, there is an extra charge for this.*
- *At the private nursery my son got breakfast and great lunches that he likes. Always 2 options to select from.*
- *Availability of meals and snacks.*
- *Balance diet, always a choice to choose between two meals. Milk available all day. Our little one is very happy with nursery meals.*
- *Big improvement made in recent years.*
- *Children get the choice.*
- *Eating school meals together with friends.*
- *Everything generally.*
- *Fantastic that snacks are no longer ultra processed or full of sugar.*
- *Fruit snacks.*
- *Fussy eater so doesn't often like what's on offer but the nursery team always make sure she has something.*
- *Good choice - my son is straying to different food and I am very happy because he was eating only macaroni cheese.*
- *Good choice of food, kids like to choose their own meals.*
- *Good to have vegetables and fruit included daily.*
- *Good varied food.*
- *Great that Outdoor setting children get packed lunches in the warmer months so they can spend all day off site.*
- *Great that these meals are included.*
- *Lots of snacks provided. Kids use the dining room is great for transition to school.*
- *Lots of variety. Helpful that I can see the meals in advance in parent pay.*
- *My child's learning to eat more foods when seeing others do so.*
- *My daughter is always happy with her food and snacks and loves to try new things.*
- *My daughter's diet has improved massively while attending nursery, she eats a well-balanced diet and has access to fresh fruit all day.*

And the following feedback was received in relation to - What could be improved?

- *Afternoon sessions only offer tea time meals which is very limited, mostly to bread. Wish there were more varieties like lunch meals.*
- *Allowing children to take in a pack lunch if they are picky eaters. My son comes home many days and not ate anything.*
- *Bigger portions, meal sizes are far too small.*
- *Could be more varied.*
- *Ensuring children eat their lunch. Our daughter is a slow eater and often gets distracted meaning she has come home hungry. Frequently remind children to stop and have a drink of water.*
- *Having a daily sandwich option would be helpful for fussy eaters.*

- *More catering for allergies, child misses out at times even in instances of baking.*
- *More variety or better encouragement to try new food within that peer group scenario.*
- *Offer bigger portions/extra snacks for hungrier children.*
- *While I understand there are guidelines around nutrition I think the meals could be more representative of something that would be more recognisable to a 3-5 year old living in Scotland today. Where it is super to try new things, some days the menu seems inaccessible to my now 5 year old who is not a particularly fussy eater. More 'classic' options available. Also it should not be an issue to provide a pack lunch at a LA nursery if you provide a cool pack etc.*

Question 5: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with their child's experience of ELC to date.



- The vast majority of respondents, 87% (268), told us they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date. This is the same high satisfaction rate as the 2023 Consultation.
- 10% (32) were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.
- A very small number of respondents, 2.5% (8), said they were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The following feedback was received from parents and carers in relation to – What is working well?

- *Amazing staff care. Both my sons have had a really positive experience.*
- *Staff are very caring and fun, loads of different activities, learning lots.*
- *Can't fault the setting, child loves it.*
- *Children are settled and staff are amazing. Seniors very approachable.*
- *Everything.*
- *Friendly and supportive staff.*
- *Good communication between the nursery team and us as parents.*
- *Good guidance. Good friendships. They are happy.*
- *Good play/toy options, great outdoor space. My daughter enjoys planting and learning about fruits and vegetables due to a volunteer teaching her. Free flow access to arts and crafts that my daughter enjoys. Staff friendly and communicate effectively.*

- *Very positive experience in terms of induction, the staff know my child well and he is very happy there! My daughter loved it too when she attended.*
- *Very stimulated and involved in my child's development.*
- *Watching her confidence grow has been wonderful.*
- *We get regular pictures through the day.*
- *We were lucky to get a place at what I think to be the best experience for my child in your best outdoors nursery at Duthie Park. We are exceptionally pleased with the staff and their approach to early learning.*
- *Good resources, nice outdoor area.*
- *Good selection of activities.*
- *Great environment, kids doing well.*
- *Great staff and lovely nursery.*
- *Great staff and well encouraged.*
- *Great staff who communicate so well with parents. I enjoy the daily updates on Seesaw and the opportunities we get to go and spend time at nursery. Great facilities and imagination from the staff.*
- *Great staff, homely setting.*
- *Great staff, well run.*
- *Great staff. Nice environment.*
- *Happy with progress and child happy to go to the setting.*
- *He likes to go and seems to enjoy a lot.*
- *He loves nursery and is always happy to go.*
- *I absolutely love my daughter's nursery it has been such a positive and nurturing environment for her. Hazlehead outdoor nursery and staff has done wonders for her confidence, independence, and overall happiness. Being able to explore nature, learn through play, and build friendships in such a beautiful setting has helped her grow in so many ways.*
- *The staff are incredible so gentle, patient, and genuinely caring. They take the time to really understand each child and support them with kindness and encouragement. It gives me so much peace of mind knowing she's in such safe and nurturing hands every day. I couldn't be happier with the care she's receiving.*
- *I see them developing as there is improvements in their learning.*
- *I've lucked out with the nursery they're in.*
- *Level of care is good and our setting organises plenty of activities for the children.*
- *Little one has improved significantly in this setting and now has more friends than he knows what to do with.*
- *Lots of toys . Approachable staff.*
- *Love the staff and the updates we get on their progress.*
- *Lovely staff and a beautiful setting for him to learn and grown in. He seems very happy when he is there and complains I pick him up too early!*
- *Lovely, caring teachers who have welcomed my daughter from day one.*
- *Makes him feel safe to explore and make friends. Helped with independence and learning.*
- *My child absolutely loves nursery. The provision is incredible and the amount of experiences and opportunities he gets through nursery is amazing. The team are caring, kind and patient. Their knowledge and experience shines through everything they do. We know our child is well cared for and is thriving in his ELC environment.*
- *My child has come on leaps and bounds thanks to nursery.*
- *My child is happy to go to Nursery and I have seen a huge increase in confidence. The staff are welcoming and I feel supported.*

- *My child is more independent and he enjoys playing at his nursery. He learns a lot and seems like teacher's approach make him more interested in science.*
- *My child is more independent, learn to navigate his emotion, talks more confidently, develops friendships, doing lots of imaginative play, knows more about plants and animals around.*
- *My child loves attending.*
- *My daughter has really enjoyed a blended experience - 3 days with a childminder and 1.5 days at a school nursery. It's worked so well for our family.*
- *My daughter loves nursery. The setting, staff and peers have made it a very enjoyable experience for us all.*
- *My son is happy at Kingswellies. They share a lot of his learning via ILD which is lovely to see.*
- *My son loves his nursery and staff. He's made friends with a few children and is thriving in the setting.*
- *Our childminder provides a real home away from home experience for our child.*
- *This year the nursery have worked really hard on improvements, which has been great.*
- *A place to take the child. Place for learning. Place to meet other children and build social life.*

And the following feedback was received in relation to - What could be improved?

- *Get some nursery trips out.*
- *Handover at the end of the day would be useful.*
- *Handover/ communication.*
- *More outdoor exploring with the children. More play on pedals.*
- *Schedule frequent open days to discuss one on one child progress with learning as well as encouraging children to show works done at home to teachers/ support staff.*
- *There is just such a lot of children in the setting I think it can be quite overwhelming and overstimulating.*
- *Variety of activities, etc cooking, trips out of the nursery to local parks, shops.*
- *Water break reminders.*
- *Offer more outings.*
- *More funding for nursery garden/crafts/activities etc. more staff.*

Section 6: Wider Impacts

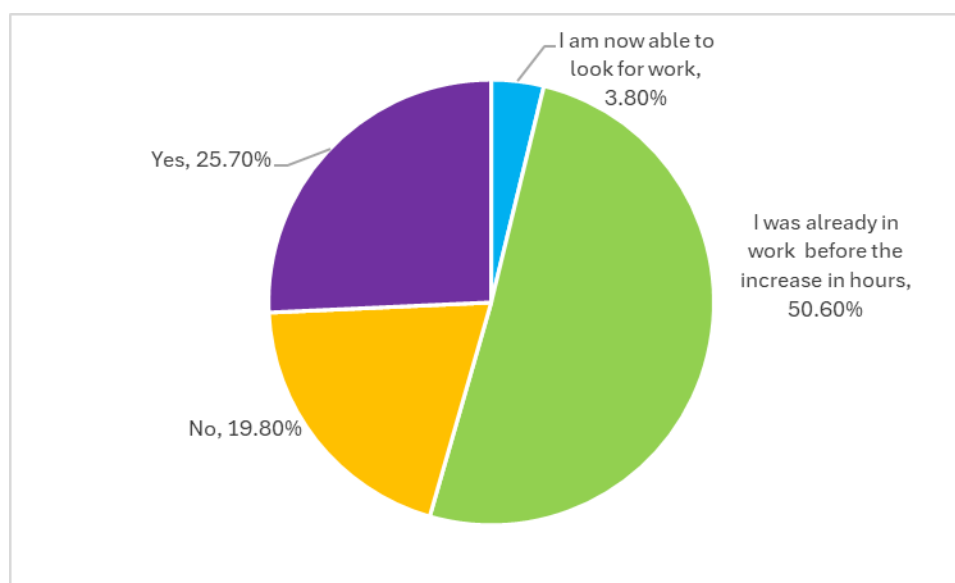
Question 1: We asked parents and carers what they currently use ELC for.

What do you use ELC for?	Total	Percentage
To Work	240	68.5%
To Study	16	4.6%
To support Child's learning and development	257	73.4%
Other caring responsibilities	45	12.8%
Time to self / respite	59	16.8%
Other	10	2.8%

**Please note that totals do not equal 100% as some respondents chose more than one option.*

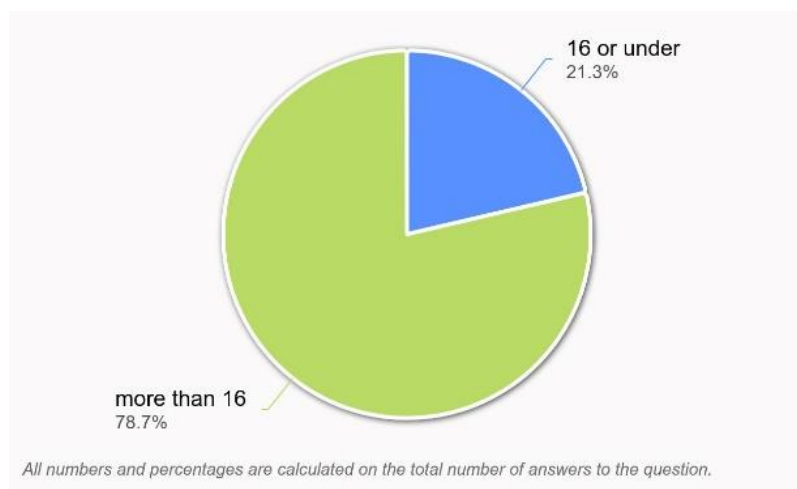
- A large proportion of respondents, 73.4% (-0.8% from 2023), highlighted that they use ELC to support their child's learning and development.
- Over two thirds of respondents, 68.5% (+1.6% from 2023) reported that they currently use ELC for work and 4.6% use it to study (-6.8% from 2023).
- Just under one fifth, 16.8% (-2.9% from 2023) indicated that they use ELC to have time to themselves or for respite.

Question 2: We asked parents and carers if they had been able to return to work as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.



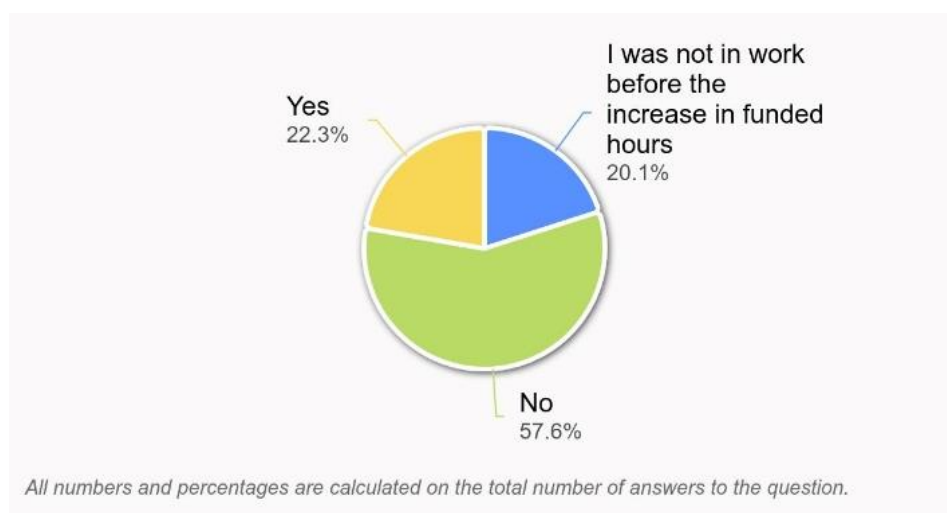
- A majority of respondents, 51% (171), said they were already in work before the increase in funded hours.
- 26% of respondents (87) said they had been able to return to work as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.
- 4% of respondents (13) said they were now able to look for work.
- 20% of respondents (67) said no to this question.

Question 2(a): For those parents and carers that had been able to return to work as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC, we asked how many hours they worked.



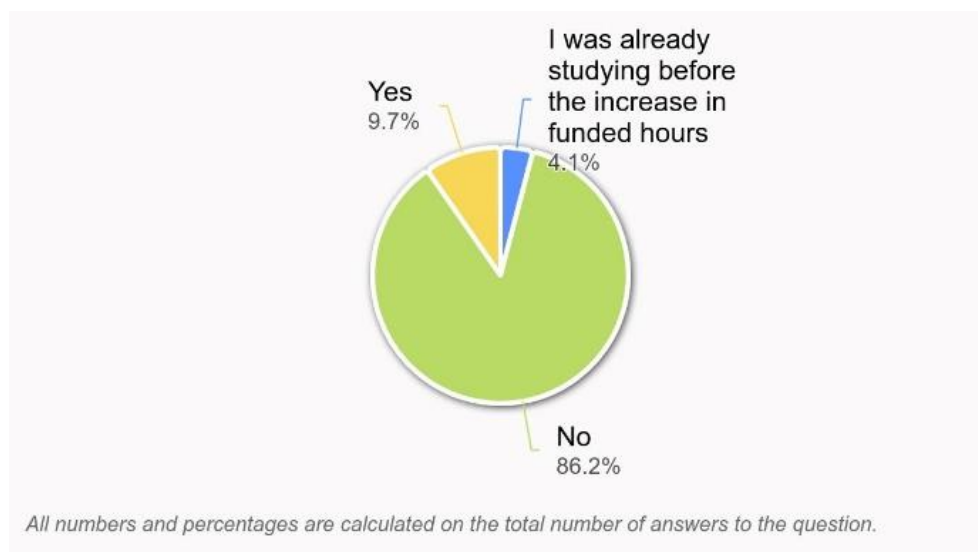
- A significant majority of respondents, nearly 79% (140), said they work more than 16 hours per week.
- 21% of respondents (38) work 16 hours or under.

Question 3: We asked parents and carers, if they were already in work, had they been able to increase their hours as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.



- 22% of respondents (70) said they have been able to increase their hours of work as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.
- The majority of respondents, 58% (181) had not.
- 20% of respondents (63) said they weren't in work before the increase in funded hours.

Question 4: We asked parents and carers if they had been able to return to study or training as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.



- The majority of respondents, 86% (231) said they didn't return to study or training as a result of their child receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.
- 10% of respondents (26) said they had been able to return to study and 4% (11) said they were already studying before the increase in funded hours.

Question 5: We asked parents and carers if they had noticed any of the following in their child(ren) as a result of them attending ELC and asked them to select all that apply.

The majority of respondents, at over 93%, identified Early Learning and Childcare as having a positive impact on their child's development with:

- 84% identifying improved listening skills;
- 65% identifying improved social skills;
- 65% identifying improved creativity;
- 65% identifying improved attention span;
- 61% identifying improved literacy development;
- 61% identifying improved fine motor skills;
- 61% identifying improved physical development;
- 60% identifying improved numeracy development;
- 58% seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills;
- 53% identifying improved problem solving; and
- 42% identifying improved emotional development.

From improved listening, social skills and creativity to improved literacy and numeracy development, fine motor skills and physical development. A small proportion of respondents (6.7%) reported that ELC had had no influence on their child's development.

Question 6: We asked parents and carers if their family circumstances had changed as a result of their child receiving funded ELC.

Changed circumstances	Total	Percentage
More money / disposable income	126	38.8%
Considering return to work	46	14.2%
More time for other responsibilities	133	40.1%
More time to myself	79	24.3%
Improved wellbeing/respite	93	28.6%
None of the above	54	16.6%
Other	14	4.3%

**Please note that totals do not equal 100% as some respondents chose more than one option*

As well as improving outcomes for children, the expansion of funded ELC aimed to support parents into work, study or training. We asked this question to determine what impact the provision of funded ELC had on families in the city.

Just over 40% of all respondents indicated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of receiving funded ELC (same figure as 2023). Over one third of respondents (38.8%) reported they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family (+9.6% from 2023); and 14% of respondents are now considering a return to work or study (-9.9% from 2023). In addition, a further 28.6% of respondents stated improved wellbeing / respite as a result of receiving additional hours of funded ELC (+4.5% from 2023), suggesting that the expansion of ELC has had a positive impact on families in Aberdeen overall.

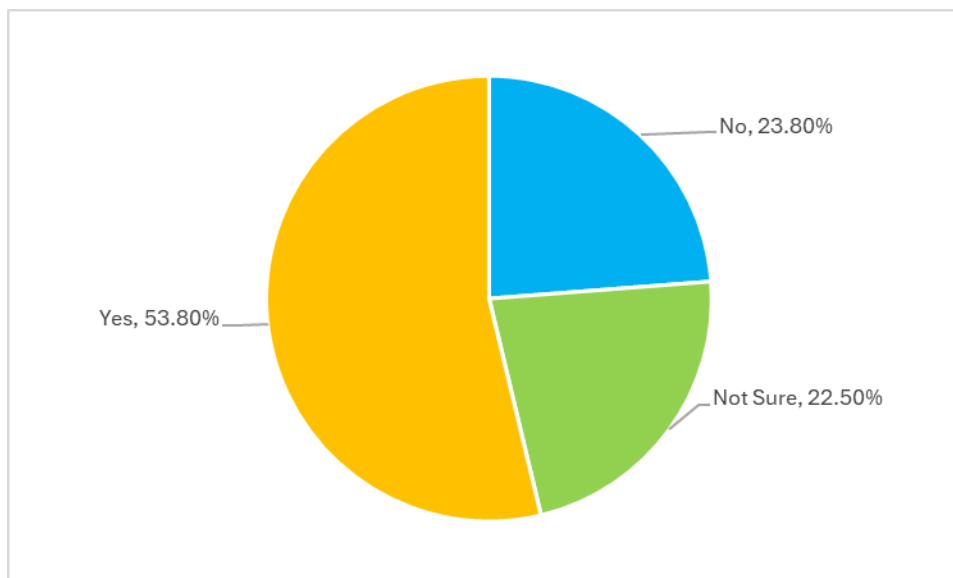
- 38.8% of respondents reported more money / disposable income.
- 14.2% of respondents indicated that they were considering a return to work or study.
- 28.6% of respondents highlighted improved wellbeing / respite.
- Just over 40% of respondents reported more time for other responsibilities, for example younger children, other caring responsibilities and household duties.
- 16.6% of respondents noted no change in their circumstances as a result of their child receiving funded ELC.

The following are a selection of comments from parents and carers in relation to this question:

- *We do not have a funded placement yet but with my older children it was an absolutely game changer! Kids were getting stability with being at nursery 5 days a week 9-3. Easy settlement, continuity. I could work more. Financially it saved us! We were struggling with everything. Having funded ELC put food on our table...literally!*
- *Able to go back to work full-time and start paying off some debt accrued whilst paying for nursery and working part-time.*
- *Being able to work for actual money and not just to pay for childcare.*
- *Cost of living and paying private nursery fees on top of ELC funding means very little to no disposable income.*

- *Due to a lack of financial support, we do not have more money as it's had to go to other bills, but it's taken a pressure off of having another private childcare bill.*
- *I have been able to work full-time, but this is only due to having Grandparents who also provide child care alongside the 1140 hours and also paying for extra hours for my child at nursery.*
- *I would not use the term 'disposable income' quite yet but it has at least enabled us to avoid giving up a job to do the childcare ourselves and have a second child.*
- *My child was with grandparents before the increase (in funded hours).*
- *Our child is not old enough to receive funding yet and our nursery fees have got up by 20% since our child started. When we receive funding it will help our financial struggles.*
- *Son still too young to receive funded hours. We look forward to having less financial stress when we receive them.*
- *The funded hours have allowed us to have a second child, without this financial help we would have only been able to have 1 child.*
- *We were already working full-time with or without the funding*
- *We would really struggle to pay for childcare if it wasn't funded and would have to probably work 2 jobs or 60+ hours a week to pay childcare or other bills.*
- *Able to continue to develop career and increase working hours.*
- *Have been able to increase my working hours and decrease the amount we rely on family members for childcare.*
- *If funded ELC started as early as 9 months old then it would ease a lot of financial pressures.*
- *Without funding hours, we will not be able to afford to have a second child. Both myself and my husband earn more than 75k each a year and find it ridiculous that childcare will cost us £20,000 a year, which is £1700 a month - more than our mortgage. if (funded) hours was not offered, we would not be able to afford to have more than one child.*

Question 7: We asked parents and carers if they feel they are better off (e.g. more money / disposable income) as a result of receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.



- A majority of respondents, 54% (172) stated that they felt they were better off as a result of receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.

- 24% of respondents (76) do not consider themselves to be better off and 22% (72) of respondents are unsure if they are better off as a result of receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC.

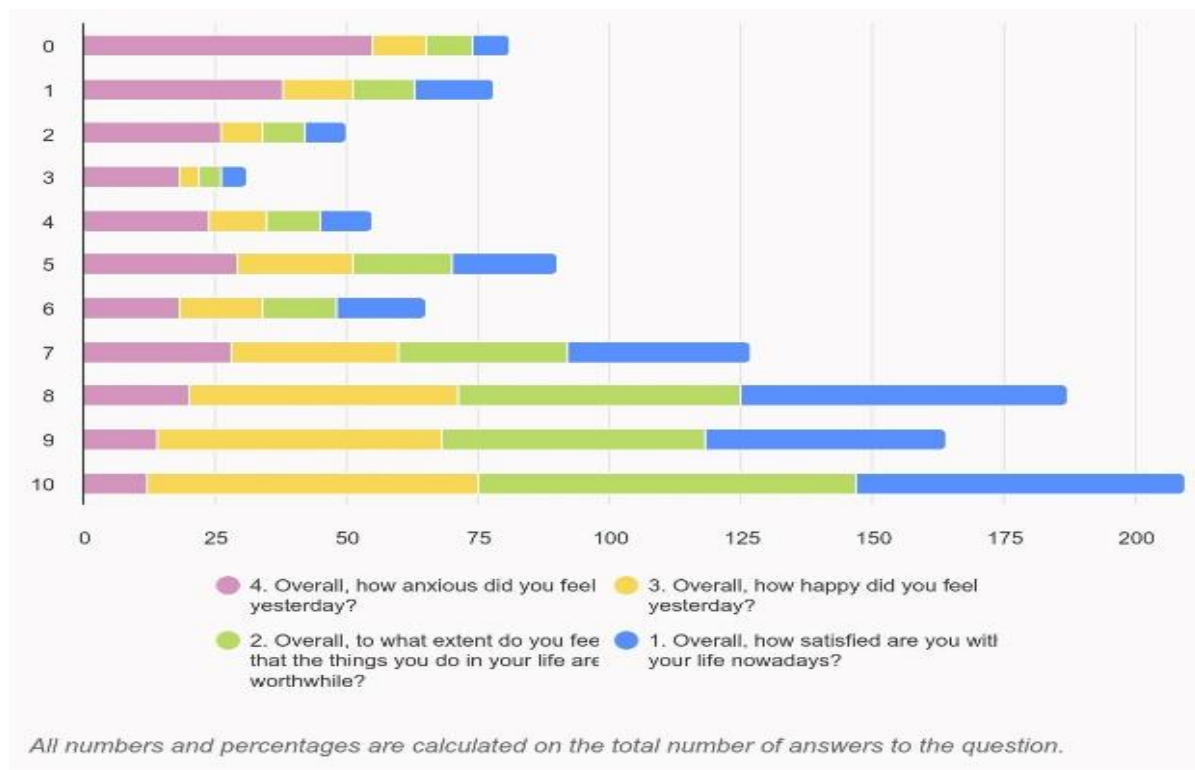
Question 7(b): We asked parents and carers, who stated that they felt they were better off, how much better off they are per week.

How much?	Total	Percentage
Under £100	22	10.8%
£100 - £150	28	13.7%
£151 - £200	25	12.3%
£201 - £250	20	9.8%
£251 - £300	12	5.9%
£301 - £350	4	2.0%
£351 - £400	10	4.9%
Over £400	18	8.8%
Rather not say	65	31.9%

**Please note that totals do not equal 100% as more than 172 respondents (from previous question) answered this question.*

- The largest group of respondents to this question (31.9%) preferred not to disclose their weekly financial situation.
- Among those who did respond, 13.7% feel £100-£150 per week better off, 12.3% feel £151-£200 per week better off and 9.8% feel £201-£250 per week better off.
- 10.8% of respondents feel they are better off by less than £100 per week.
- 4.9% of respondents feel they are better off by £351-£400 per week and 8.8% of respondents feel they are better off by over £400 per week.

Question 8: We asked parents and carers if they had experienced improved wellbeing as a result of their child(ren) receiving 1140 hours of funded ELC. We asked them to answer four questions on a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is “not at all” and 10 is “completely”.



Responses to this question indicate that:

- A large proportion of respondents are satisfied with their life nowadays.
- A large proportion of respondents felt happy yesterday.
- A large proportion of respondents felt that the things they do in life are worthwhile.
- A large proportion of respondents did not feel anxious yesterday.

Analysis

365 parents and carers responded to the recent survey on the provision of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in the city. This was a decrease in 299 (45%) from the previous consultation undertaken in 2023. Responses were gleaned from all 11 of the Aberdeen City's ASGs with responses from those accessing provision through the Local Authority as well as from Funded Providers.

The consultation findings demonstrate that the vast majority of parents and carers who responded, 87%, are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date. This is the same level of high satisfaction as received in our 2023 Consultation.

Reassuringly, 81% of respondents were able to secure their first choice of ELC provision with the majority of parents and carers able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG (68%). Feedback from respondents suggests there is a good mix of ELC provision in Aberdeen to suit the needs of families, with some families preferring to access ELC closer to their place of work or to family and friends.

Importantly, the vast majority of respondents, at over 93%, identified Early Learning and Childcare as having a positive impact on their child's development.

There is clear evidence of a range of choices across all ASGs. Some parents are very satisfied with the longer hours available whilst many parents indicated they would prefer more 9am-3pm places. Indeed some parents indicated shorter sessions and smaller classes would be their preference. Understandably, the views and needs of parents and carers are very much dependent on their individual family circumstances. However, the feedback overall is very balanced with no feedback on gaps in provision.

A significant majority of respondents, 83%, are aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded entitlement at Private, Voluntary and Independent (PVI) ELC settings. This is an increase of 2.5% since 2023. It is very positive and reassuring to see such a high awareness that the 1140 hours funded entitlement can be taken in full or in part at Funded Provider ELC settings.

Similarly, a significant majority of respondents, 81%, are also aware that they can use their 1140 hours funded entitlement with a childminder. This is an increase of 8% since 2023 and highlights our ongoing work to promote childminders as a potential ELC option to families across the city. We also need to continue to ensure that we have sufficient childminders across the city to meet demand for this type of ELC provision and this work is continuing in partnership with Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA).

A large number of respondents indicated that they were not aware of the option to have a cross-boundary ELC placement (between City and Aberdeenshire). We have addressed this in ELC publicity and via Aberdeen City Council website and social media communications. Whilst we have increased awareness by 14% since the 2023 Consultation, there is clearly still a need to continue to promote this information to ensure that families have all the information available to them in order to make an informed choice on options.

A number of respondents indicated that they were not aware of Gaelic Medium Education in ELC, so this is an option we will continue to further promote.

A significant majority of respondents (85%) are aware that Aberdeen City Council offers Eligible 2's ELC placements. This is an increase of 12% from 2023 which reflects the ongoing work to promote Eligible 2's provision, including via our Health Visitor colleagues and the Data Pipeline project. Uptake in Eligible 2's provision has also increased significantly during this period.

The majority of parents and carers who responded are satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC. Feedback received will be taken on board and shared with our Facilities and Catering colleagues.

Feedback received from parents and carers was overall very positive in relation to the ELC application process. Comments received will be taken on board to ensure we make the process as clear and smooth as possible for everyone making applications, including reminders of when to apply for an ELC place.

In terms of transition from ELC into Primary School, we need to ensure we have sufficient School Age Childcare to meet demand when children transition from ELC into Primary School. Work is undertaken on a regular basis to monitor supply and demand and to support the development of new services where feasible and sustainable.

The ELC Consultation with Parents and Carers 2025 will contribute to a future evaluation of the impact of the implementation of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to date and the next Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2026-28. Both reports will be presented to Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2026.

Future Engagement and Consultation

- The 2025 consultation follows on from our 2023 consultation with parents and carers and continues to provide a positive platform from which to further engage as we continue to deliver statutory Early Learning and Childcare for all 3 and 4-year olds and eligible 2-year olds in the city.
- It is also essential that all Early Learning and Childcare providers continue to engage and consult with children, parents and carers on a regular basis as part of their ongoing self-evaluation and planning for service development and improvement. It is vital that we give children the opportunity to express their views and experiences in ELC.
- The report from the Early Learning and Childcare Parent and Carer Consultation 2025 will be shared in a future Education Parent and Carer Newsletter, published on Aberdeen City Council website and shared with our colleagues working across the ELC sector including our Local Authority ELC teams, Childminders and Funded Providers, and our Community Planning partners.

Next Steps

- Just over one quarter of respondents indicated that they were willing to participate in future research. We are now in contact with those respondents and their feedback will inform the development of a future longitudinal study.
- A new Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2026-28 will be developed and presented to Education and Children's Service Committee for approval in June 2026. This will be informed by our ELC Consultation with Parents and Carers 2025.
- Through our ongoing engagement and communication with parents and carers, we will continue to regularly promote all ELC options available in the city to help parents and carers make informed choices to best meet the needs of their child and family. In particular we will further promote:
 1. Gaelic Medium Education in Early Learning and Childcare; and
 2. Cross Boundary ELC placements.
- In order to meet our ongoing statutory obligations and our commitment to engaging with children, parents and carers, another city-wide Early Learning and Childcare consultation will be undertaken in Spring/Summer 2027. It would be our preference to use a different consultation platform in future to secure a higher number of responses. Meanwhile we will continue to monitor our current models of provision across the city in line with supply and demand on an annual basis.
- Any changes to our current models of provision will be communicated with parents, carers and ELC providers in advance of the ELC Admissions process for 2026-27. Online applications for ELC / School session 2026-27 will open in February 2026.

Thanks

We would like to extend our thanks to all the parents and carers, and future parents and carers, who participated in this consultation. We strive to deliver a range of high quality, flexible Early Learning and Childcare provision in Aberdeen which meets the needs of all children, families and local communities. Your input and views are invaluable in supporting us to achieve this.

Early Years Team
Education and Lifelong Learning Service
Aberdeen City Council

October 2025