



## **Early Learning and Childcare Consultation with Parents and Carers 2023**

### **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.

From 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 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.

The consultation was open from Monday 5 June to Sunday 25 June 2023 inclusive.

The consultation received a total of **664 responses** after 3 weeks (+210 (46%) from 2021). Key headline points from the returns include:

- 79.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (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.

Responses to each question are detailed in the following pages.

**Question 1: What area of Aberdeen do you live in? (These are listed by Associated School Groups (ASGs) for Aberdeen City Council Secondary School zones).**

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

Associated School Group	Responses	Percentages
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Aberdeen Grammar School	50	7.5%
Bridge of Don	41	6.2%
Bucksburn	90	13.6%
Cults	57	8.6%
Dyce	13	2%
Harlaw	73	11%
Hazlehead	72	10.8%
Lochside	69	10.4%
Northfield	54	8.1%
Oldmachar	49	7.4%
St Machar	96	14.5%

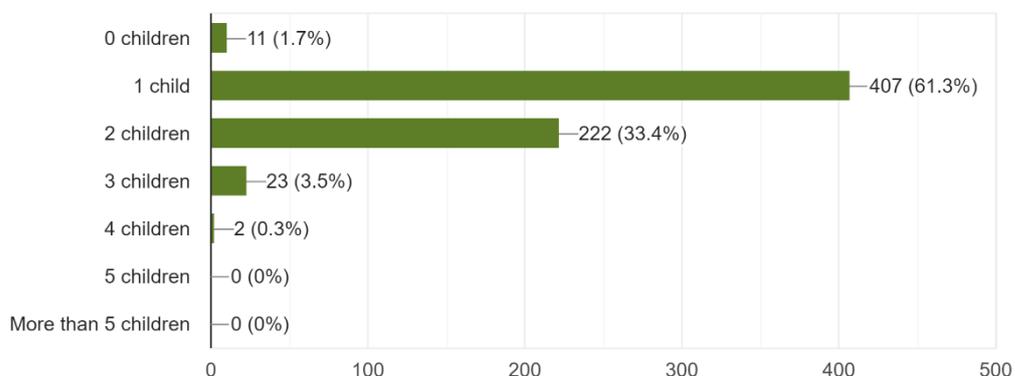
There was engagement from parents and carers across the city with most responses from the St Machar and Bucksburn ASGs, followed by Harlaw, Hazlehead and Lochside ASGs respectively. We should take into consideration that Dyce ASG is a very small ASG compared to others and that the consultation may have been better promoted and shared in some ASGs than others.

## Question 2: How many children do you have aged between 0-5 in your care?

Number of Children	Respondents	Percentage
0	11	1.7%
1	407	61.3%
2	222	33.4%
3	23	3.5%
4	2	0.3%
5	0	0%
More than 5 children	0	0%

### 2. How many children do you have aged between 0 - 5 in your care?

664 responses



We asked this question to determine a demographic regarding the household composition of each respondent. Responses to this question indicate that the majority

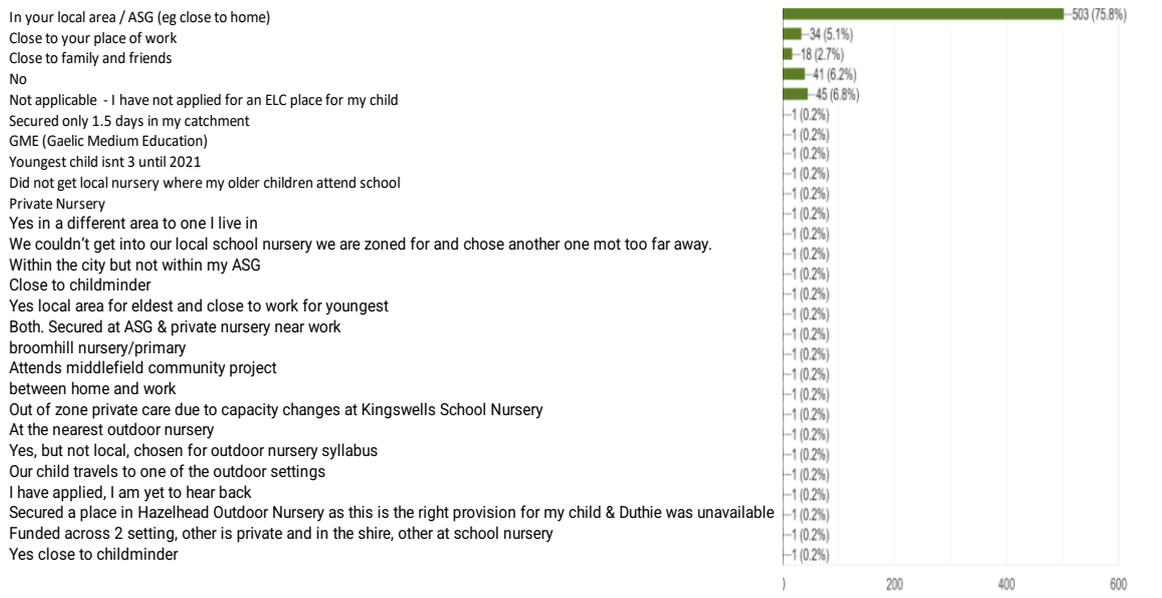
of respondents (61.3%) have one child, whilst a further 33.4% of respondents have 2 children. Less than 4% of respondents said they have 3 or more children.

This has changed quite significantly from 2021, when responses to this question indicated that the majority of respondents (55%) had 2 children, with just under 25% having one child and 15% having 3 children.

### Question 3: Have you secured funded Early Learning and Childcare in your local area / Associated School Group (ASG)?

- 503 respondents (75.8%) have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area / ASG.
- With 41 respondents (6.2%) unable to secure a local ELC placement.
- 34 respondents (5.1%) indicated that they had secured ELC close to their place of work.
- 18 respondents (2.7%) reported that they had secured ELC close to their family and friends.
- 45 respondents (6.8%) have either not yet applied or found the question not applicable.

3. Have you secured Funded Early Learning and Childcare for your child(ren)?  
664 responses



The vast majority of respondents, over three-quarters, have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area / ASG. This is exactly the same % as reported two years ago in our 2021 consultation – 75.8%, so it is reassuring to see this figure remain high, particularly with an increase in the number of responses received overall (+46% from 2021).

The feedback suggests that the majority of respondents have been able to secure a funded ELC place locally and a breadth of opinion that suggests there is a good mix of

ELC provision in Aberdeen to suit the needs of families, for example with some families preferring to access ELC closer their place of work or family and friends.

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

*We got what we wanted as we had an older son in the school.*

*My child was already in a nursery setting and the nursery applied for ELC funding for my child.*

*I was able to secure the desired ELC for my child.*

*My eldest attends local school nursery and a private nursery not within our area. My youngest only attends the private nursery.*

*First choice for the present academic year was not secured, however my first choice for the next session has been secured (2023-24).*

*First choice of setting but not first choice of hours.*

*I didn't manage to secure my first choice but I'm happy with the 2nd one where my child is currently in.*

*Technically I did get my first choice, but we moved house so couldn't get into the new catchment nursery.*

*I moved to Aberdeen midway through the term and so I didn't initially secure a place close to home, but was able to at a later date.*

*We applied for 2 options and we got 2nd one, no worries about that.*

*Love how flexible Middlefield Community Project are with accommodating hours for working parents-amazing!*

*One of my children has always had his place secured, however my other child is on the waiting list and is due to start in January. It would be good to receive updates as to where we are on the waiting list and how likely it is that he will get a place when he's due to start.*

*Was unable to access same school nursery at the school her siblings attends.*

*Nursery hours at one of my local schools could be better.*

*I would've preferred Mon to Fri 9-3 as have older children in school at these times.*

*I would have liked Mon-Fri 9-3 term time at Culter school nursery for 2023/24. So instead I've done 2 & 1/2 days but will put him in 9-3 for 2 of the days.*

*Childcare split over 2 providers – 2 days at school nursery in local area + 2 days at private nursery close to work from Aug 2023.*

*First choice was a private nursery, as school nurseries cannot cater for parents working more than 2.5 days per week.*

*Son has only ever been in private nursery and will be until school.*

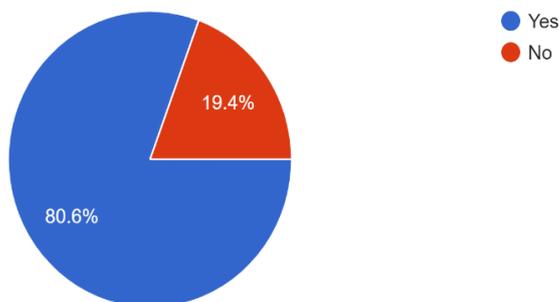
*All very simple and easy to apply for. Very happy with the options available.*

### Question 3a: Did you manage to secure your first choice of ELC provision?

- 80.6% of respondents were able to secure their first choice of ELC provision.
- 19.4% of respondents were unable to secure their first choice of ELC provision.

3a Did you manage to secure your first choice of ELC provision?

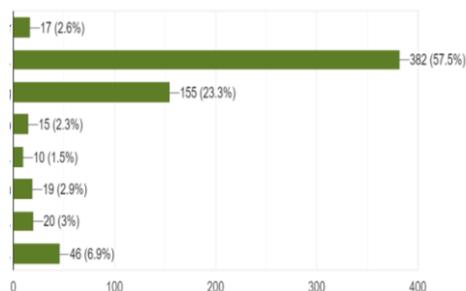
639 responses



### Question 4: We asked parents and carers which type of ELC provision their child currently attends?

4. Does your child currently attend?

- Childminder
- Local Authority ELC/Nursery setting
- Private ELC/Nursery setting
- Playgroup
- Third Sector ELC/Nursery setting e.g. Local Community Project
- Outdoor ELC/Nursery provision
- Blended placement (eg Childminder and Local Authority or Funded)
- My child(ren) do not currently attend ELC



This tells us that the majority of respondents to the consultation use a Local Authority ELC / Nursery setting (57.5%), followed by a Private ELC / Nursery setting (23.3%). A smaller number of parents and carers who use childminders, playgroups, local community projects, outdoor ELC and blended placements also responded to the consultation.

### Question 5: Which Early Learning and Childcare setting does your child currently attend?

We received responses from parents and carers across all ASGs whose children attend Early Learning and Childcare at Local Authority and Funded Provider settings including private, third sector and outdoor nurseries, playgroups and childminders.

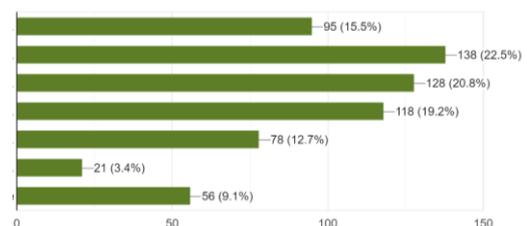
**Question 6: We were interested to find out if parents and carers use their full statutory ELC entitlement and asked them to select which models they currently use for their child(ren).**

- The majority of respondents (22.5%) use a 9am-3pm term-time model.
- This was followed by 20.8% of respondents using a local authority 46-weeks model x 5 morning sessions.
- 19.2% of respondents utilise the local authority 46-weeks model x 2.5 days.
- 12.7% of respondents use the local authority 46-weeks model x 5 afternoons.
- 15.5% of respondents use a fully flexible model of ELC delivered by a Funded Provider (private ELC / childminder or playgroup setting working in partnership with the Local Authority).
- Only 3.1% of respondents currently use a blended placement.
- 9.1% of respondents were not sure which model of ELC provision they currently use.

6. We are interested to find out if you use your full statutory Early Learning and Childcare entitlement (1140 hours per year).

Please select the Early Learning Childcare models you currently use for your child(ren). 614 Responses

Fully flexible Funded Provider, e.g. Childminder, Playgroup or Private Nursery  
 9am – 3pm term-time at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting  
 46 weeks provision at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting - Mornings  
 46 weeks provision at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting – Afternoons  
 46 weeks provision at a Local Authority school ELC / Nursery setting – 2.5 Full days  
 A combination of two (Blended model)  
 Not sure



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

*Anything you can do to reduce the burden on parents of young children under school age is amazing. Especially single parents.*

*Child is under 3 right now so we pay private currently.*

*Her hours are 9-3 term time but I can pay for her to attend additional hours and in the school holidays which is great for working parents.*

*9-3 is the better option so I can return to work.*

*ELC's should all become 9-3 term time.*

*I don't use the settings in the school holidays.*

*Perhaps some settings should go back to offering shorter sessions such as 2.5-3 hours and perhaps there should be less children in each nursery class.*

*Although we have a place for 5 mornings we only use 3 morning sessions.*

*My child goes 3 days per week 9-3 although has funding for 5 days.*

*Have never left my daughter full session, seems too long for me.*

*I cannot fully utilise my funded hours as school nursery and private nursery have different models. It would really benefit my daughter and myself from utilising the full entitlement but of course accept our situation. I do wish our school nursery could have a term time only model so that my daughter can have a more fully rounded educational programme during term time and have the holidays off. I understand the school cannot facilitate 2 different models but would rather it*

*provided term time only over the 46 week model. It would mean I could work more hours and my child has more opportunity to make friends with school nursery children who she will be going to school with which is the whole reason I have split her funding to both nurseries so she can make friends. The current model makes that difficult but I appreciate the funded hours that I do get to use. Other mums in different catchment areas can fully utilise their hours because it's term time and this seems much more preferable/sense than to waste all the hours I could be using but can't.*

*With the introduction of children now being able to defer school entry when they turn 5 after August, how will current nursery provision manage with this potential increase in demand?*

*The amount of hours is still insufficient.*

*If I could pay for extra hours at school nursery to get 3 full days at school nursery, this would be my preferred option rather than using a private nursery. I feel my child will find it harder going on to primary one being unfamiliar with the school and knowing very few children from school, than a child who has attended school nursery. However private nursery works much better for working parents.*

*More than 2.5 days needed but no option to increase hours at council facilities.*

*The council should consider a 07:30 drop off and 17:30 pick up.*

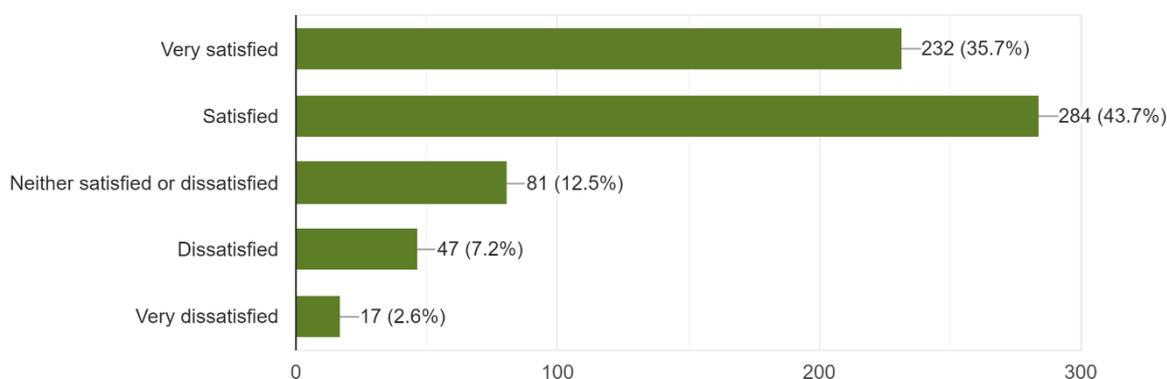
*Why do you have two nurseries in the 'Lochside' catchment running the exact same model? Giving no choice of Term Time, which could be suitable for parents who have other children who are already in primary or secondary school.*

*Not yet applicable, applying for funding when the youngest turns 3.*

### **Question 7a: We asked how satisfied parents and carers are with the range of providers and models of Early Learning and Childcare offered in their local area / ASG.**

7a. How satisfied are you with the range of providers and models of Early Learning and Childcare offered in your local area / ASG?

650 responses

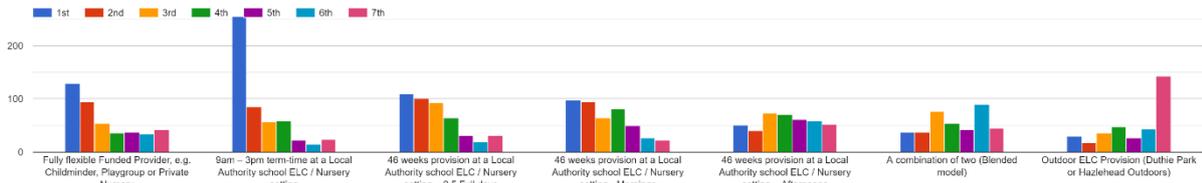


As can be seen from the responses in the table above, the majority of parents and carers who responded to the consultation (79.4%) are either satisfied or very satisfied with the range of providers and models of ELC offered in their local area / ASG. Less than 10%

of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. This demonstrates we have a good mix of delivery models across the city.

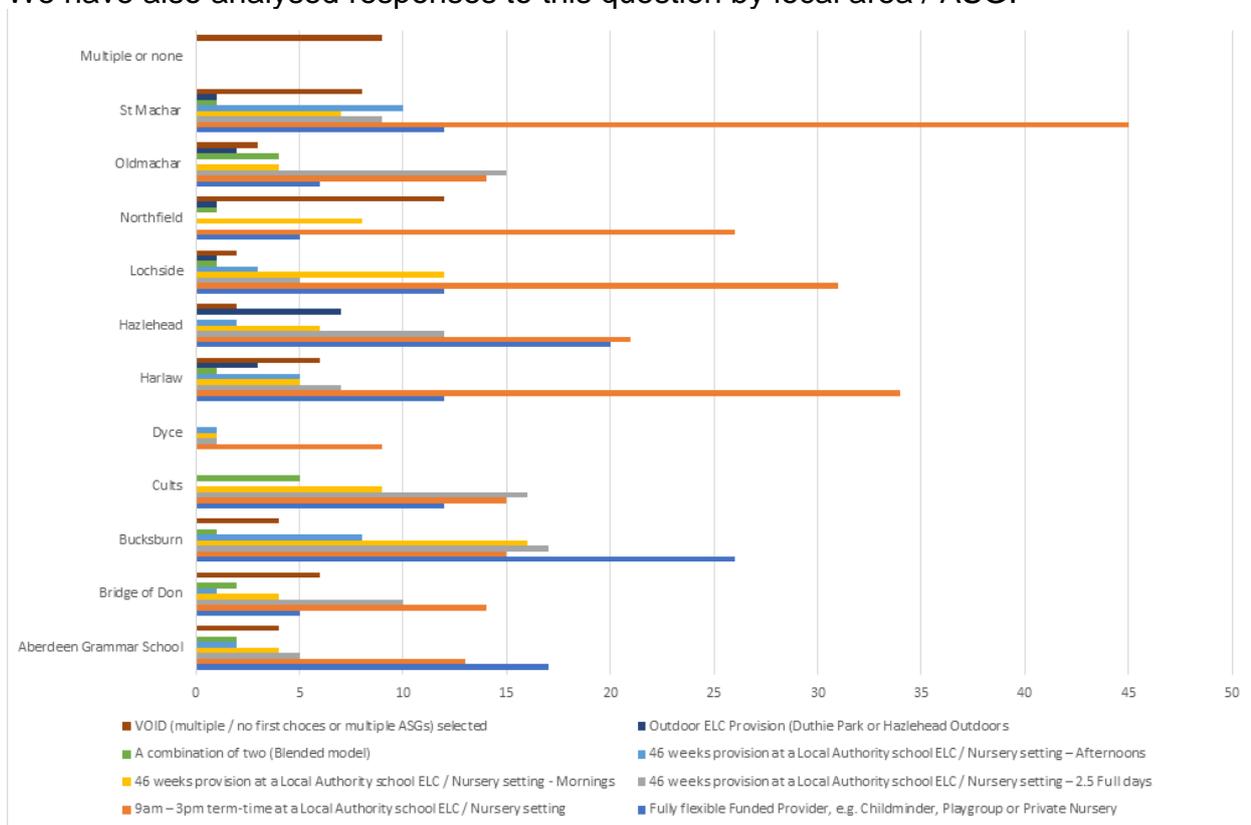
**Question 7b: We asked which models of Early Learning and Childcare best meet the needs of their family and asked parents and carers to rank each model in order of preference.**

7b. Which models of Early Learning and Childcare best meets the needs of your family? Rank in order 1-7



Responses to this question are shown in the graphs above and are very similar to the responses in Question 6 about current use of ELC. The first choice of model for the majority of respondents is the 9-3 term time model. This is followed by fully flexible funded provider model, then 2.5 days x 46 weeks, closely followed by 5 mornings x 46 weeks. Afternoons x 46 weeks, blended model and outdoor provision were least 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:



The following comments were made by some parents and carers show a mix of opinion in relation to this question, dependent on individual circumstances:

*Selected what I have and had been offered.*

*2.5 days, or just mornings, or just afternoons, are no use to anyone who works normal hours.*

*9-3 is not helpful for working hours.*

*Full day care essential for working parents.*

*I work full time so I rely heavily on the private nursery*

*I have family who can help with childcare. I am on maternity leave now, but when I worked, my son went to nursery in the mornings, and his grandparents collected him three afternoons a week.*

*9-3 I feel would have been a better option for my family and would have prepared my child for school hours when she transitions to P1. It's also easier when you have older children and can pick up and drop off at the same time.*

*I don't think there are enough 9-3 or morning sessions available. Some children are given afternoon spaces even though this doesn't work for the families.*

*It would be good to have the option of 9-3. Especially if you have an older child at school. Don't understand why somewhere who offers the 46 week models can't offer the 9-3 option.*

*Would be good see most nursery offer 9-3 places*

*It's hard to use the full allocation in afternoons as the kids are exhausted (most pick up at 5.15 which ends up losing a couple of hours a week).*

*Preference is local nursery open during school holidays*

*It would be great to have a system where we could pay for additional hours in the same setting even if it's council run.*

*Also it would be great to have some connection between council and private nurseries so that it would be easier to coordinate time in both (eg 2.5 days in each), possibly with other existing nursery friends.*

*Only fully flexible works for us, I work 8-4 for the NHS, I would have very little work options available to us if nursery time was reduced. We have no family or alternate childcare options available to us.*

*The schools and nurseries in our local area are very oversubscribed and more houses are getting put up every day. It concerns me that I may struggle to get my son into Primary 1 and my daughter into nursery next august.*

*I feel it would help parents more if the city changed the hours to what the Shire do. i.e. pick and choose sessions that they need and not set 5 mornings/afternoons*

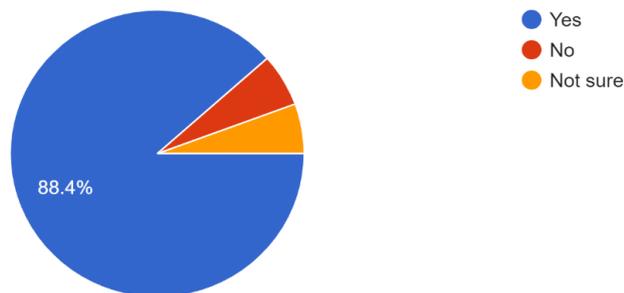
*Can't rank properly as only 1 options is possible for me.*

**Question 8: We asked parents and carers if they are satisfied with the current location of Early Learning and Childcare services? When we previously consulted with parents and carers in 2021, 83% of parents and carers were satisfied with the location of Early Learning and Childcare services, 6% were unsatisfied and 11% were unsure.**

8. When we previously consulted with parents and carers in 2021, 83% of parents and carers were satisfied with the location of Early Learning and Childcare services, 6% were unsatisfied and 11% were unsure.

Are you satisfied with the current location of Early Learning and Childcare services?

658 responses



As can be seen from the chart above, 88.4% of respondents are satisfied with the current location of ELC (+5.4%), with 6% unsatisfied and 6% unsure. This demonstrates that ELC is well located for the vast majority of respondents.

The following comments were made by some parents and carers in relation to this question:

*There are a range of options available, particularly if this is your first child, there is likely to be an ELC place which meets your needs or can be blended with private provision. With our second child we are more tied and may be less satisfied as it would be more helpful for us, for a range of models to be provided at Milltimber rather than just the 9-3 model.*

*Significant roadworks in multiple locations have made it more difficult to access. There is no direct public transport available between Torry and Duthie Park.*

*The walking distance is too long for the child.*

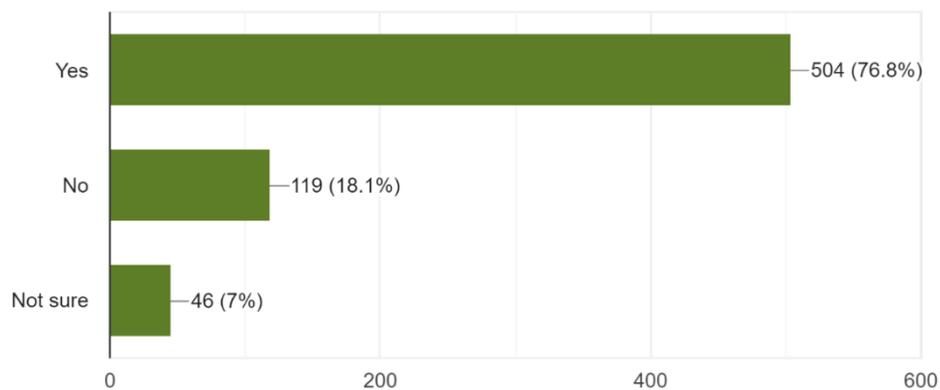
*Too far from home.*

**Question 9: We asked parents and carers if they are satisfied with the times ELC is currently available.**

- The majority of parents and carers (76.8%) indicated that they are satisfied with the times.
- 18.1% responded that they were not satisfied.
- 7% of respondents were unsure if they were satisfied or not.

9. Are you satisfied with the times Early Learning and Childcare services are currently available?

656 responses



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

*Great services.*

*It provides good flexibility for people's differing needs.*

*46 weeks at Local Authority school ELC works extremely well for us as working parents.*

*I am very happy with the times my private provider offers.*

*8am-6pm opening is necessary for working parents.*

*7.30am drop off would be beneficial for working parents.*

*1-6 just does not work for children under 5.*

*Afternoon wasn't first choice of times. 6pm finish is a little late.*

*For the most part 8-8.45 is a waste of resources for most. Likewise after school hours also seem to be under utilised.*

*3 full days would be great.*

*Full day care essential for working parents.*

*Ideally we'd want fully funded throughout the year rather than just school term time.*

*As part of a family who both start work before 9am, it makes some provision completely impractical.*

*9-3 is a great time as it sets nursery children up for school.*

*9-3 model would be more beneficial to parents already with children at school.*

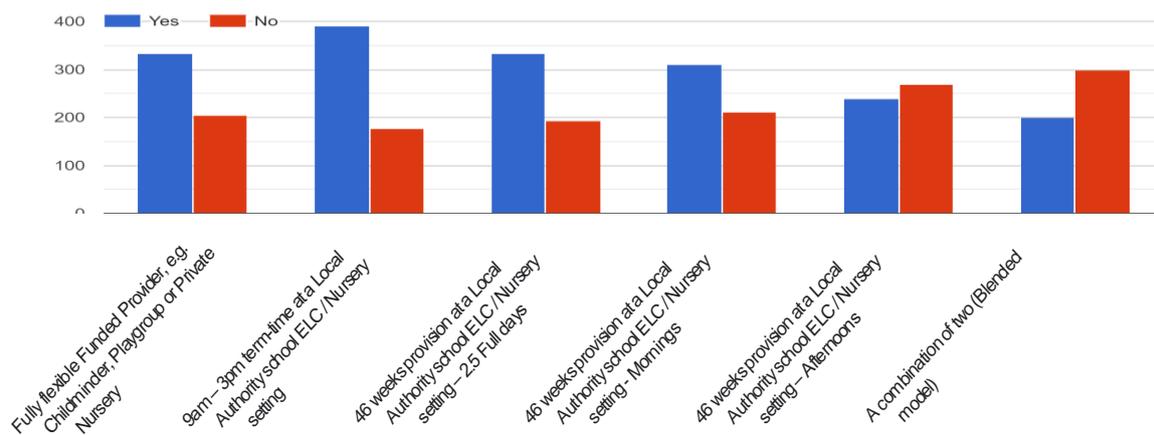
*I think a 9-3 option going forward would be beneficial. This isn't offered at all in Cove and would be far more beneficial for parents who have older children in school.*

*It's a struggle finding childcare for under 3s if you're not on benefits but can't afford to pay for a private nursery if you work.*

*I feel the private sector is more flexible and adaptable to families lives, but the location of my local authority ELC is a bonus but the hours are long for full days.*

**Question 10: We asked parents and carers if they had considered all available options. We were keen to ascertain that parents and carers were aware of the range of different ELC options which were available to them.**

10. Did you consider all the available options?



As can be seen from the chart above, parents and carers have considered all available options and have chosen the ones which best meet their needs, according to their family circumstances. This again demonstrates the importance of having a mix of options available in each local area / ASG, including Funded Providers.

The following comments were made in relation to this question:

*Due to working, term time only isn't great as well as morning and afternoon slots. But the 2.5 days or blended is amazing. Wish something like this was available for school.*

*I am happy with either AM or PM provision and stick to the general school hours for drop off/pick up.*

*Thankfully I was allocated 2.5 days both years which has been consistent and allowed me to work around this.*

*Working full time, only mornings or only afternoons are just not an option for me.*

*Too many options make it complicated.*

*9-3 or am or pm is not suitable for working parents.*

*I work full time and therefore the 46 week models do not meet my childcare needs. Nor do the 9am-3pm models*

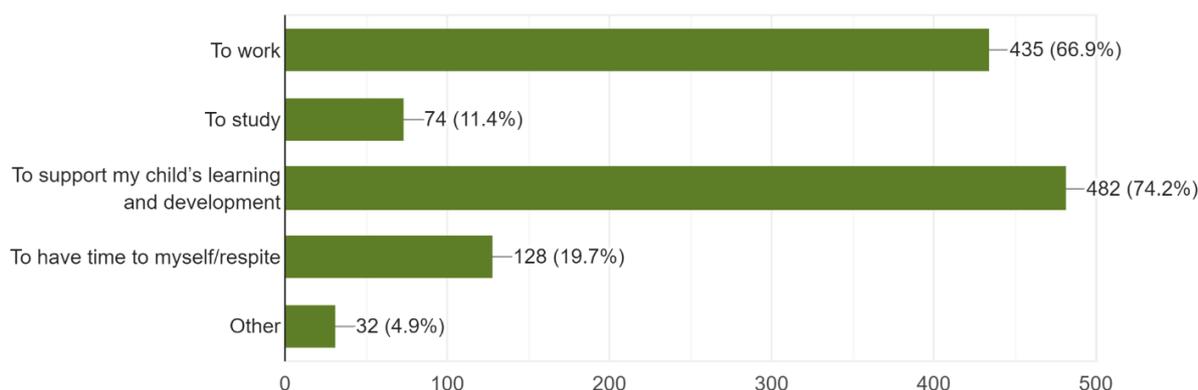
*I would have loved to do the 9-3 term time but our local nursery don't offer this option I considered the 9-3 option at another nursery, which is not my catchment, but it wasn't viable. I couldn't drop off both children at the same time in different places, and I wanted my daughter to make friends with children she would go to her catchment school with.*

*I work different hours each week so private nursery is the best option for me.*

## Question 11: We asked parents and carers what they currently use ELC for.

11. What do you currently use Early Learning and Childcare for? Please select all that apply.

650 responses



- Over two thirds of respondents (66.9%) reported that they currently use ELC for work and 11.4% use it to study.
- A large proportion of respondents (74.2%) highlighted that they used ELC to support their child's learning and development.
- Nearly one fifth (19.7%) indicated that they use ELC to have time to themselves or for respice.

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

*Although a main reason is for work, we love nursery and how much our daughter loves it. It's helped with her social skills and allows her to make great relationships with friends and teachers.*

*I feel like it is a stage of life going to nursery and starting their learning journey but it does also allow me to facilitate a work day and return to study in order to progress my career without having to rely on family.*

*I wanted my daughter to interact more with children her own age. Due to COVID she wasn't able to attend groups for a long time and attending nursery has helped build her confidence.*

*Allow time to focus on development of younger siblings as well.*

*To support my child's development and growth as well as her academics too.*

*For me personally my children going to the nursery that they will go to school at is hugely important. To make transition and relationships easier.*

*To clean, but mostly just to work or catch up on everything. As I'm a single Dad.*

*To volunteer, to care for a disabled friend, to spend time alone with my youngest child and to look for work.*

*Working parents require full day childcare.*

*I also work but still require family to help with childcare due to hours child is in nursery.*

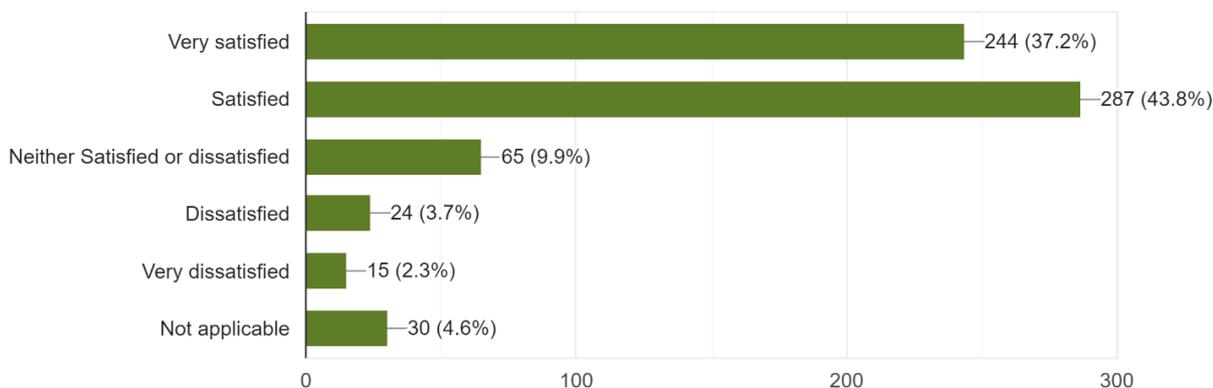
*My child has to go to nursery to learn to socialise and get into that setting before school. But it's a plus that I can work while my child is there.*

### **Question 12: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they were with the ELC application process.**

- The vast majority of respondents (81%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the ELC application process.
- Just under 10% were neither satisfied or dissatisfied.
- A very small number of respondents (6%) were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

12. How satisfied were you with the Early Learning and Childcare application process?

656 responses



The following are a selection of comments from parents and carers in relation to the ELC application process:

*Very efficient and easy online process. Quick response.*

*Application easy but needs more questions to help working parents.*

*Online application is easy and straightforward but you need to apply in January for the following year so sometimes I forget to do it on time.*

*Communication could be better during the application process, especially for first time parents who don't have a clue what happens or how it is done.*

*once the application is submitted there is no way of tracking / checking status. a simple portal showing basic application details, date submitted etc and current status, waiting list positions etc would make a big difference, particularly with multiple children at different stages.*

*It can be a lot better though great job!*

*My child is in the class this year and didn't need to apply again for next year. It was done automatically, which is good.*

*Private nursery did most of this for us so very helpful*

*Our nursery guided us through the application process and kept us informed of dates etc which was most helpful.*

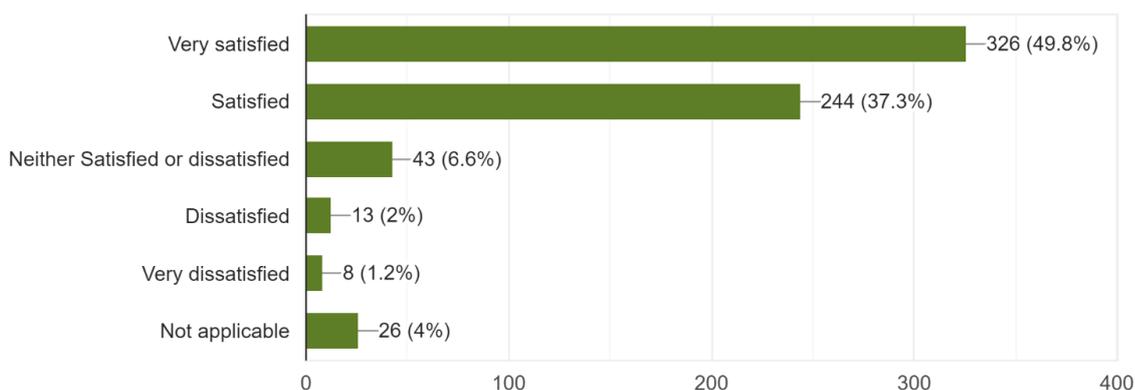
*The ELC team via email were absolutely fantastic - felt very supported after initial panic of missed deadline.*

### **Question 13: We asked how satisfied parents and carers are overall with their child's experience of ELC to date.**

- The vast majority of respondents (87.1%) stated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date.
- 6.6% were neither satisfied or unsatisfied.
- A very small number of respondents were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

13. How satisfied are you overall with your child's experience of Early Learning and Childcare to date?

655 responses



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

*The nursery has had a huge part to play in how my child has developed.*

*My child is not funded yet, but will be at the same nursery.*

*My childminder is fantastic.*

*Our daughter has really benefitted from the ELC at the LA nursery and has developed significantly.*

*Cornhill Nursery is an excellent nursery and provide my child with quality learning experiences.*

*Hazlehead Outdoor Nursery is brilliant! Our child comes home each day having had interesting and stimulating experiences and generally has a positive experience of the staff.*

*Middlefield community project has helped my child progress a lot while providing a lifeline when we couldn't find any childminders and couldn't afford a private nursery with us both working full time*

*Middleton park is a brilliant nursery with really supportive staff.*

*My son was at Woodside Nursery last year and it was an excellent experience for both him and me.*

*Rocking Horse Nursery is excellent, delighted with care.*

*The outdoor nursery my son attends is fantastic. We couldn't be happier with his experience there.*

*The staff and resources at Dyce ELC are excellent. My child has come on leaps and bounds since attending.*

*We love the nursery at Kittybrewster. The staff is loving and the atmosphere warm.*

*Stoneywood nursery and staff have been brilliant for the 2 years my child has attended.*

*We are extremely happy with her private nursery.*

*It's been slightly more difficult due to the class sizes and people coming and going at different time (in comparison to old system) but good on the whole.*

*The nursery has a lot of children can be chaotic more intimate groups would be nice.*

*My child's experience overall has been positive but with attending afternoons she misses out on experiences like visits etc that are only done in the morning when there is more staff.*

*Staff have gone above and beyond to enable my child to safely attend nursery. His care needs are high and the care planning process has been inclusive and thorough.*

*It is a brilliant experience for my son and he has grown so much in his learning and social skills. It is invaluable, especially following the disruption of Covid.*

*I understand that learning through play is the new way of learning. But my child needs more structure. My child isn't actually learning anything at nursery. We play all day at home so what's the point of nursery? I've taught my child to write her name, shapes, numbers.*

*Very satisfied with the service but dissatisfied with the timetable.*

*Extremely limited ASN provision throughout Aberdeen.*

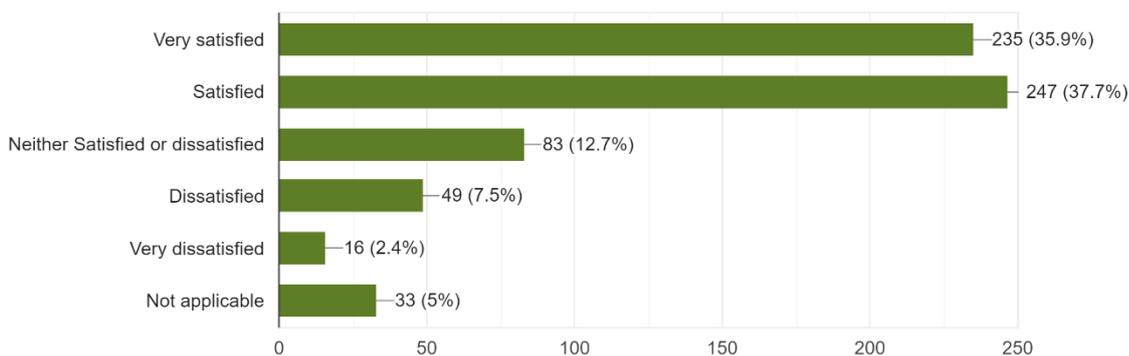
*I cannot begin to express my gratitude to the staff and setting. I will be forever grateful for their amazing dedication and support.*

**Question 14: We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC.**

- 73.6% of parents and carers were satisfied or very satisfied with the snacks and meals their child is offered whilst attending ELC.
- 12.7% of respondents were neither satisfied or dissatisfied and less than 10% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

14. How satisfied are you with the snacks and meals your child is offered whilst attending Early Learning and Childcare to date?

655 responses



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

*Always a variety of options and staff are happy to support fussy eaters.*

*He loves the food provided.*

*My daughter enjoys her lunch options. She usually chooses not to have snack. Maybe because it's optional?*

*Limited options and not much food for a child attending a full day. It equates to a piece of fruit and a small lunch and snack a day. For active children not very much no chance for extra food if hungry, my child comes home hungry a lot*

*Adaptation from school menu removes options available to ELC that primary children have. Menu is not varied enough with only a 3 week rotation & duplicates within that.*

*Better afternoon meals would be great.*

*Do not believe that fruit/vegetables alone are a healthy, fulfilling and nutritionally balanced snack which provides sufficient energy to young children between breakfast and lunch. Should also contain a carbohydrate and protein.*

*Halal meals should be added for Muslims.*

*Very small portions.*

*Menu should be the same as the school menu when you have a child in nursery and others in school and reading out the menu to them on a Sunday for the week ahead and school menu is different to nursery menu and nursery child wants what's on the school menu.*

*The meal options are very limited and in my opinion not child friendly for the age group, this could be improved.*

*The winter menu was better for my child offering more selection of hot meals rather than sandwiches*

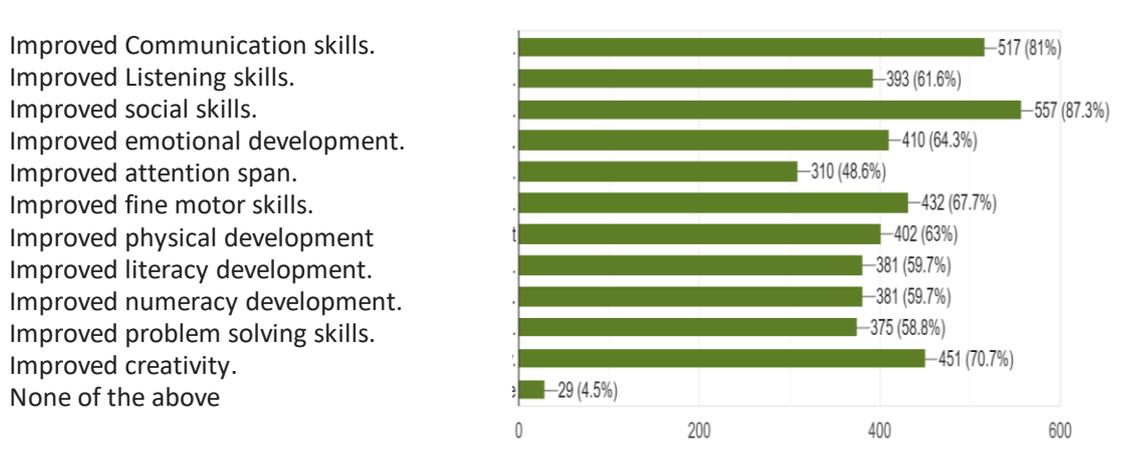
*Not yet in ACC ELC provision, the food my child receives in private nursery is excellent.*

*The meals are obtained from a private catering company. The selections are good and children always have a good choice and portions.*

### **Question 15: We asked parents and carers how ELC had influenced their child's development.**

Over 95% of respondents reported that ELC has had a positive influence on their child's development. From improved communication to listening skills, social skills and improved literacy and numeracy development, to emotional and physical development. A very small proportion of parents (4.5%) reported that ELC had had no influence on their child's development.

How has Early Learning and Childcare influenced your child's development? Please tick all that apply.  
638 responses



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

*Having my child in a nursery setting has helped her growth and development a lot, especially interacting with her peers and making friends.*

*Improved enjoyment of nature.*

*Improved speech.*

*Learn English.*

*It's helped my child to interact with other children in school.*

*My child loves her nursery and is very confident in her needs thanks to nursery and the team supporting her.*

*My child is autistic so he picks up at his pace.*

*I would have liked if nursery staff could encourage children to write a bit more, not all children have a passion to do so but I think it should be more encouraged rather than child led.*

*More emphasis needed on learning ie letters, numbers rather than just playing*

*It is hard to say which elements of my child's development are due to the ELC and which are down to growing from 3 to 3.5!*

*My child spoke very well and clearly anyway. I feel there needs to be more learning opportunities for them, more time writing etc.*

*My daughter has come on really well with numbers and letters and can write her own name thanks to the nursery teachers.*

*Our daughter has developed skills in writing/mark making and recognition of letters and numbers which has definitely been promoted during her time at the school nursery.*

*Due to the range of hours and variety of times that children can attend it makes it impossible to follow any form of curriculum as such nursery is now basic childcare. This has been compounded by nursery being overwhelmed with children whom require additional support yet the nursery are not given the additional resources needed. This results in the children who don't have additional needs suffering as staff have no option but to spend their time unequally.*

*I would say my daughters emotional development has taken a dip, probably due to the fact she was a covid baby and I'm not allowed into the peg area so it's very rushed and not every child can process things that quickly.*

*Positive impact on overall wellbeing because my kid is always happy to go to the nursery.*

*My child and us as parents would be lost without the childcare we've received.*

*My two children have both come on massively in ELC.*

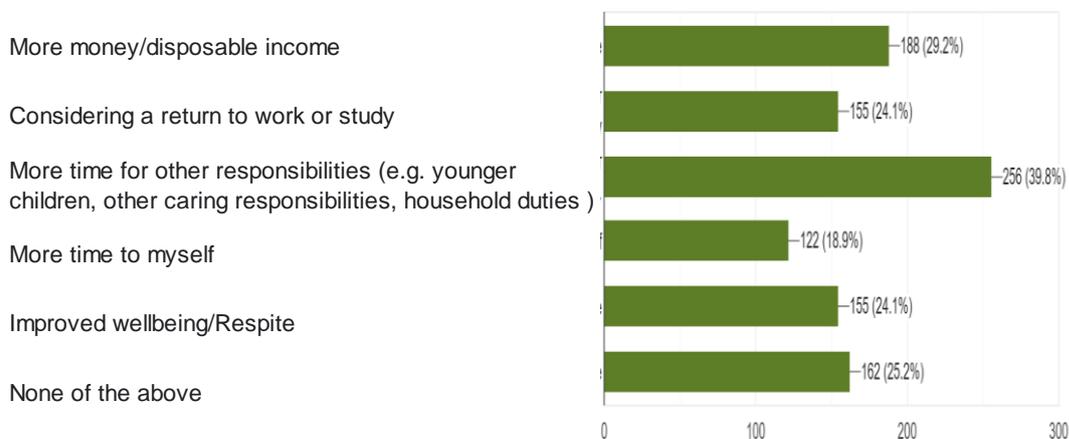
**Question 16: We asked parents and carers if their family circumstances had changed as a result of their child receiving funded ELC.**

As well as improving outcomes for children, the expansion of ELC aims 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 under half of all respondents indicated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of receiving funded ELC. Nearly one third of respondents reported they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family; and nearly one quarter of respondents are now considering a return to work or study. In addition, a further quarter of respondents stated improved wellbeing / respite as a result of receiving

additional hours of funded ELC, suggesting that the expansion of ELC has had a positive impact on families in Aberdeen overall.

- 29.2% of respondents reported more money / disposable income.
- Nearly one quarter (24.1%) indicated that they were considering a return to work or study.
- Nearly one quarter (24.1%) highlighted improved wellbeing / respite as a result of their child receiving funded ELC.
- Nearly 40% reported more time for other responsibilities, for example younger children, other caring responsibilities and household duties.
- A further 25% of respondents noted no change as a result of their child receiving funded ELC.

16. Have your family circumstances changed as a result of your child receiving funded Early Learning and Childcare? Please select all that apply  
644 responses



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

*Ability to work without stress of childcare.*

*Because my 5 years old little one attends nursery, I've time for house work and activities with my 3 years old son. He is going soon to nursery as well, and last month I've started looking for a work. It's possible because of ELC.*

*I can work full time now as opposed to part time.*

*I actually did return to study, rather than just consider it. Next year the childcare is enabling me to start university to study medicine.*

*I did have more disposable income until energy bills rocketed.*

*I don't know what we would have done without the funded hours my daughter has had. Being able to work has meant I've managed to keep the wolf from the door and it's meant I have kept my skills up to date.*

*I don't have funding yet so nothing has changed. Once received however it will massively help with finances.*

*I had the chance to be able to use an ELC childminder when she was 2 and that was great for my mental health. Nursery is great to get them ready for P1.*

*I have twin boys who are 16 months. We can't afford childcare for both of them so I just hope that ELC will start from 2 years old and I can go back to work.*

*I received treatment for cancer last year so it was such a relief to have the funded hours for our daughter so I could get some proper rest and not have to worry about the cost of something else while I was off work. It would have been nice to have the same for my 1year old and something I think you should consider offering in the future.*

*I went back to work when hours were increased.*

*It has given a grandparent more time to herself.*

*It is an extremely helpful scheme, fantastic to ease the costs of childcare which are so large.*

*Meant we were able to afford to live.*

*We use the Nursery to benefit our child not ourselves.*

*When our funded provision kicks in this will make a huge difference to finances and we very much hope the opportunity will be fantastic for our child's development*

*Would love to be able to pay for more hours at the same setting/have a seamless transition to a connected playgroup or childminder for pickup/drop offs.*

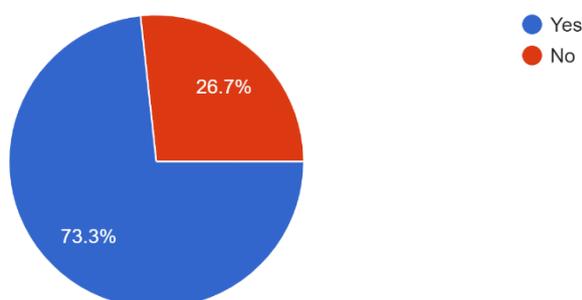
*Paying for his nursery placement would mean that one of us would just be working to cover the cost of the childcare. I can't express how much of a difference it makes to a working household to be able to access funded placements.*

*Thank you!*

**Question 17: We asked parents and carers if they are aware that Aberdeen City Council offer Eligible 2's ELC placements.**

17a. Are you aware that Aberdeen City Council offer ELC eligible 2's placements?

655 responses

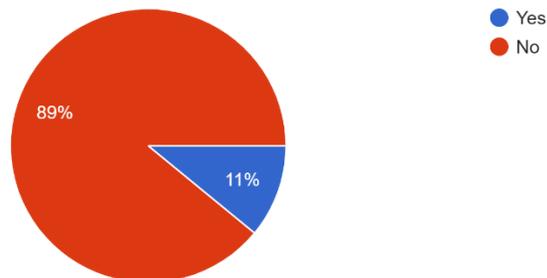


Increasing the uptake of children attending Eligible 2's ELC placements in the city is a key priority for Aberdeen City Council. We are pleased to glean from the consultation

that nearly three quarters of respondents (73.3%) are aware that Aberdeen City Council offer Eligible 2's ELC placements. And 11% of respondents reported that their child has attended an Eligible 2's placement.

17b. Has your child attended an ELC eligible 2's placement?

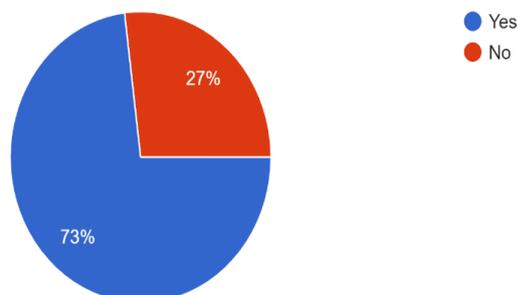
656 responses



**Question 18a: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of childminders across the city to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. 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?**

18a. Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of childminders across the city to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. Are you aware that you can also use your 1140 hours funded entitlement at a childminder, either in full or as part of a blended placement?

649 responses

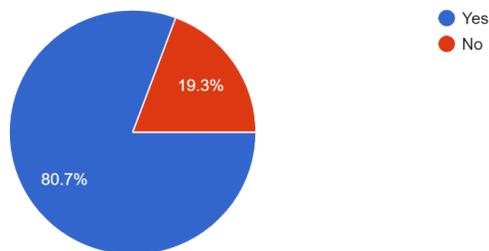


Nearly three quarters of respondents are aware that they can use the 1140 hours of ELC entitlement with a childminder (73%). This is an increase of 2% since 2021. This highlights the ongoing work to promote childminders as a potential ELC option to families across the city. We also need to continue to ensure that we have sufficient childminders across the city to meet demand for this type of ELC provision.

**Question 18b: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of private nurseries and playgroups across the city to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. 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?**

18b. Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with a number of private Nurseries and Playgroups across the city to deliver Early Learning and Childcare. Are you are aware that you can also use your 1140 funded entitlement at these settings, either in full or as part of a blended placement?

647 responses



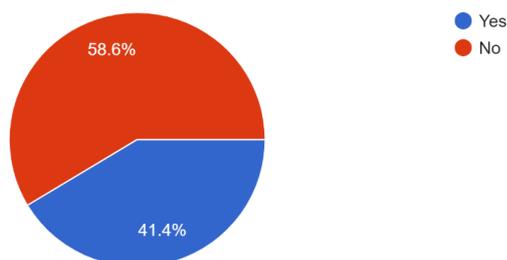
It is very positive and reassuring to see such high awareness that the 1140 hours funded entitlement can be taken in full or part at Funded Provider ELC settings (over 80%).

**Question 19a: We asked if parents and carers were aware that Gaelic Medium Education in Early Learning and Childcare, 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.**

19a. Gaelic Medium Education in Early Learning and Childcare, 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 fully immersive education option.

Are you aware of this?

648 responses



- 380 respondents (58.6%) are aware that Gaelic Medium Education is an option at Gilcomstoun school.
- 268 respondents (41.4%) indicated that they were unaware.

The response to this question tells us that slightly more than half of respondents are aware that Gaelic Medium Education is an option. This was very similar across all ASGs and therefore indicates that we need to keep promoting Gaelic Medium Education in ELC.

These figures are up 7% and down 7% respectively which shows there is greater awareness of Gaelic Medium Education in 2023 than in 2021.

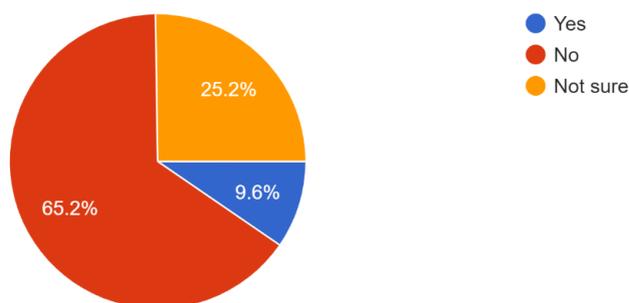
**Question 19b: We asked if Gaelic Medium Education in Early Learning and Childcare, Sgoil-Araich, is something parents and carers would be interested in for their child?**

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 that:

- The vast majority (421 respondents (65.2%)) would not be interested in a Gaelic medium education in ELC. (- 4.6% from 2021).
- 62 respondents (9.6%) indicated their interest in a Gaelic medium education in Early Learning Childcare (down 3.2% from 2021), while 163 respondents (25.2%) were unsure (up 12.4% from 2021).

19b. Is Gaelic Medium Education in Early Learning and Childcare, Sgoil-Araich, something you would be interested in for your child?

646 responses



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

*I believe other languages would be of use to young children. Things like Spanish, French and even Makaton would be useful at a young age!*

*I have Gaelic qualifications, which I have from living in the highlands, but I don't know how Gaelic applies in Aberdeen so not fussed about child attending Gaelic primary school.*

*I understand that a small number of the population do speak Gaelic but, realistically, I don't understand what benefit this would have to the majority of the population. It would be more beneficial to offer another modern language such as French or Spanish which are MUCH more widely used than Gaelic.*

*I would be interested in another language provision but not Gaelic.*

*The language is not widely used. Why is it even offered?*

*I sent my child there. Publicise this more!*

*We'd have been happy for her to receive this if it was closer to our home or a better nursery than one we were zoned for.*

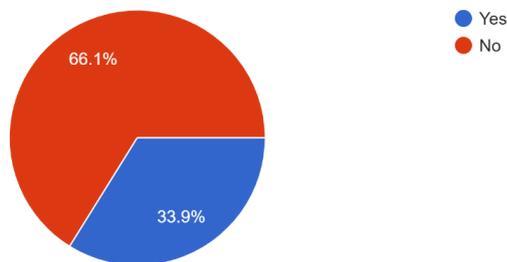
**Question 20: Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to offer cross-boundary placements, (e.g. living in the City but requiring Early Learning and Childcare in the Shire.) We asked parents and carers if they were aware this is an option for families?**

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

- The majority of respondents, 427 (66.4%), were unaware that they could apply for cross-boundary placements. (+4.7% from 2021)
- With approximately one third of respondents, 218 (33.9%) being aware of the cross-boundary ELC option.
- Less than 10% of respondents (8.4%) expressed an interest in a cross-boundary ELC placement for their child, whilst 72.6% were not interested and 19% were unsure.

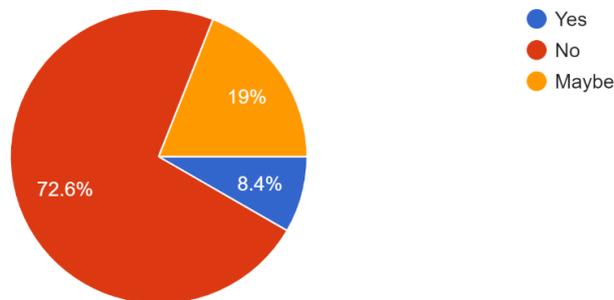
20a. Aberdeen City Council works in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council to offer cross-boundary placements, (e.g. living in the City but requiring Early Learning and Childcare in Aberdeenshire.) Are you aware of this?

644 responses



20b. Is a Cross Boundary Early Learning and Childcare placement something you would be interested in for your child?

646 responses



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

*I am already cross boundary placement set for my child and it's brilliant so we can make a choice to attend an outdoor nursery in a woodland setting which wouldn't be possible otherwise.*

*We are considering moving to Shire but would want my son to stay on at the same nursery as it's next to my work.*

*Wouldn't be interested in a cross boundary placement now but did consider it previously for my son.*

*I don't know what Cross Boundary Early Learning and Childcare placement means.*

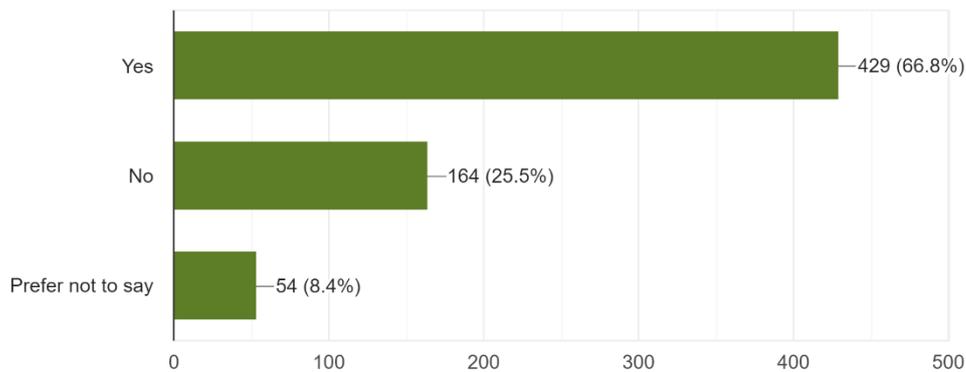
**Question 21 – We asked if parents and carers were able to access their ELC entitlement without additional support. This could include family and friends support and / or other professional agencies.**

We asked this question to determine if parents and carers could access their ELC entitlement without additional support.

- The majority of respondents (66.8%) said they accessed their ELC entitlement without requiring extra support.
- Just over one quarter (25.5%) indicated that they weren't able to access their ELC entitlement without additional support.
- 8.4% of respondents preferred not to say.

21. Are you able to access your ELC entitlement without additional support? This could include family and friends support and/or other professional agencies.

642 responses



The majority of respondents to this question indicated that they did not require additional support to access their ELC entitlement. On further analysis of the 25.5% of respondents who required additional support, in the majority of cases this was via family and friends who supported with drop offs, pick ups or supported with childcare for short periods outwith ELC sessions to fulfil working hours.

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

*Family assisting with drop off/pick up.*

*We have no relatives/family in the country so the ELC is a huge help and enables us to work.*

*Not enough hours to allow for both parents full time work.*

*I rely on family to drop my daughter at nursery at 8am because I start work at that time. A 0730 drop off would be ideal.*

*Half day sessions don't leave much flexibility for dropping children off due to work commitments.*

*I require half a day support from family for childcare while I'm working to take it up to 3 days.*

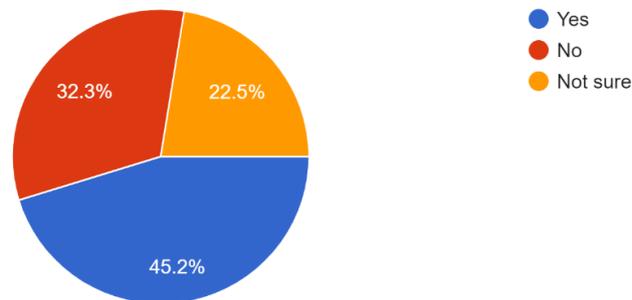
*My parents help out daily.*

**Question 22 – We asked parents and carers if they think they will require wraparound care (School Age Childcare / Out of School Care) once their child starts to attend Primary School?**

- 45.2% of respondents indicated that they will require School Age Childcare when their child starts to attend Primary School.
- Just under one third of respondents (32.3%) said they would not require School Age Childcare.
- 22.5% were unsure if they would require School Age Childcare.

22. Thinking ahead, do you think you will require wraparound care (School Age Childcare/ Out of School Care) once your child starts to attend Primary School?

650 responses



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

*Always required for typical working 8-6 parents.*

*This is an absolute must for most parents! School hours of 9-3 don't fit in most people's work schedules.*

*I will require after school club - minimal family support with after school childcare.*

*Our other daughter started school this year and uses Breakfast and after school club, with our daughter starting school in 2024 she will also require both options 3 days per week.*

*More after-school and holiday club provision would be very useful. It would be nice to go back to work full time now that my daughter started school.*

*The city needs more afterschool clubs, the one in Bridge of Don has an enormous waiting list. Out of School Club care will be essential for all holidays.*

*We are getting by with flexible working hours but this eats into family time significantly. Breakfast and after school clubs are prohibitively expensive when you have multiple kids.*

*Family to help with wraparound care.*

*Both sets of grandparents have offered to help if needed.*

## **Analysis**

664 parents and carers responded to the recent survey on our provision of Early Learning and Childcare in the city. This was an increase in 210 (46%) from the previous consultation undertaken in 2021. 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 majority of parents and carers who responded are satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision (88.4%

+5.5% from 2021); and with their child's experience of ELC to date (87.1% +4.7% from 2021).

Reassuringly, 80.6% of respondents were able to secure their first choice of ELC provision with 75.8% of parents and carers able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG. 79.4% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (ASG) (+7.4% from 2021).

Importantly, the majority of respondents, at over 95%, 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 9-3 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 number of respondents indicated that they were not aware of their full ELC entitlement, of Gaelic Medium Provision or the option to have a blended place. A large number of respondents indicated that they were not aware of the option to have a cross-boundary ELC placement. We have addressed this in ELC publicity and via Aberdeen City Council website and social media communications. However, there is clearly 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 available to them.

Feedback received from parents and carers in relation to the ELC application process will be taken on board to ensure we make the process clearer and smoother for everyone making applications.

In terms of transition 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 ongoing to monitor supply and demand and to develop new services where feasible.

The ELC Consultation with Parents and Carers 2023 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. Both reports will be presented to Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee in June 2024.

## **Focus Groups**

As part of the ELC Consultation 2023 we invited parents and carers to indicate their interest in participating in a Focus Group. We have subsequently written to all 133 parents and carers who initially expressed an interest in being involved (23 August 2023), proposing to hold a termly Focus Group. Of these, 18 have confirmed their involvement.

We held our first Focus Group meeting with representatives of the Parent Voice group at Links Nursery and Hub on 2 October 2023 and have two city-wide meetings scheduled for 7 November – one in person and one online.

## **Future Engagement and Consultation**

- The 2023 consultation follows on from our 2021 consultation with parents and carers and provides 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 2023 will be shared/published in a future Education Parent and Carer Newsletter, on Aberdeen City Council website and shared with our colleagues working across the ELC sector including our Childminders and Funded Providers.

## **Next Steps**

- A termly Parent and Carer Focus Group will be established so we have regular input from parents and carers. The next Focus Group will be held on 7 November, with both in person and online meetings scheduled.
- A new Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2024-26 will be developed and presented to Education and Children's Service Committee for approval in June 2024. This will be informed by our ELC Consultation with Parents and Carers 2023 and Parent and Carer Focus Group meetings.
- Through our ongoing engagement and communication with parents and carers, we will 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;
  2. Blended placements where parents and carers can choose more than one registered ELC provider; and
  3. 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 2025. 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 2024-25. Online applications for ELC / School session 2024-25 will open in January 2024.

## **Thanks**

Thank you very much to all the parents and carers who participated in this consultation. We strive to deliver a range of high quality 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 Service  
Aberdeen City Council

October 2023