

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update **No. 11 – January 2021**

Happy new year and welcome to our first update of 2021.

It has been a challenging start to the year for everyone, both professionally and personally. Daycare of children's services are only open to vulnerable and key worker children just now, and most of Scotland is subject to Level 4 restrictions. The First Minister has made clear that wider reopening of schools and childcare is a key priority for the Government and we're continuing to work with clinical and scientific experts to understand the evidence on transmission of the new variant and how we can support as early a return for all children as safely as possible. I know that it's an anxious time, including for those of you in the sector who continue to work "on the floor" in childcare services. We've been sharing messages from senior clinicians, including Professor Jason Leitch, National Clinical Director for NHS Scotland, through our communications channels to provide reassurance that ELC and other childcare settings remain low risk environments, and will continue to share the available evidence with you all.

We've confirmed new financial support schemes for daycare of children's services and for childminding services over the last couple of weeks, and more information on those can be found later in this update.

I'm also delighted that the legislation to expand the statutory early learning and childcare entitlement to 1140 hours from August 2021 is now working its way through Parliament. Everyone in the sector has worked incredibly hard to support this and shown real dedication to improving children's outcomes throughout the expansion programme. Thanks again for all that you're doing to support children and families in these most challenging of circumstances. We really appreciate it.

As you'll be aware, we are replacing our monthly Programme Updates with regular COVID-19 newsletters for the duration of the pandemic response. We'll send these to you as often as we have news to share. [Find previous editions of the ELC Covid-19 update here.](#)

Take care

Alison Cumming
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Interim Director, Early Learning and Childcare

1. Key information, guidance and contact points

Throughout this update, we have provided links to the latest guidance and information. **As you will appreciate, the situation continues to change so [please continue to check the Scottish Government's website regularly for the latest guidance and information here.](#)**

If you have any questions or issues you would like to raise with the team, please use the contact details below and we will respond as soon as we can. Please email:

- ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot for enquiries about support for providers and parents;
- outofschoolcare@gov.scot for enquiries about school age childcare provision;

- ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot if you work in a local authority team looking for advice or support about early learning and childcare, or contact your link person in the delivery team;
- outdoorELC@gov.scot for outdoor play and learning queries in ELC.
- ELCProgrammeOffice@gov.scot for any other queries.

To keep up to date with all the most relevant information and guidance, follow us on Twitter @ELCScotGov and @OSCScotGov or join the Knowledge Hub.

Local authorities can register [on the Knowledge Hub here](#) and request to join [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Expansion Scotland: Local Authorities Knowledge Hub page](#).

2. ELC Statutory Duty and the Expansion

Following the [joint statement from the Minister for Children and Young People and COSLA](#) on 14 December 2020 in relation to all eligible children benefiting from 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare by August 2021, the legislation to reinstate the duty was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 22 January.

This legislation places a duty on education authorities to make available 1140 hours of funded ELC to all eligible children from August 2021. This legislation reconfirms the Scottish Government’s ambition for every single one of Scotland’s children to grow up in a country where they feel loved, safe and respected, and able to reach their full potential. It is this ambition that is at the heart of the Scottish Government’s commitment to expanding the funded ELC entitlement. This will help secure positive outcomes for children across Scotland.

Our delivery assurance team will continue engagement to support councils in implementing their expansion plans. 15 authorities are now offering 1140 hours to all eligible children.

Contact info: Hannah Keates’ Delivery Assurance Team at ELCDeliverySupport@gov.scot

Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard

Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. [Interim Guidance on the delivery of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard from August 2020](#) was published on 30 July. As we now work towards implementation in August 2021, we will look to review this guidance as required.

Contact info: Euan Carmichael’s Team at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

3. COVID-19

In response to a new Variant of Concern (202012/01), mainland Scotland entered into Lockdown at midnight on 4 January and the Scottish Government COVID-19 Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children’s Issues considered the risks of a return to education across all stages, in the context of the new variant, in an extraordinary meeting held on 31 December. The advice from the sub-group was that schools and early learning and childcare settings should remain closed to all but the children of key workers and other priority groups beyond 18 January on a precautionary basis, and that there should be a fortnightly review of that decision.

The Sub-Group has committed to producing and publishing an updated evidence report on children, schools, early learning and childcare and transmission by the end of January. In the meantime, [the note of the Sub-Group's meeting on 6 January](#) provides an overview of the evidence that has informed the decision to close early learning and childcare settings to all but the children of key workers and other priority groups, in the context of the Variant of Concern 202012/01.

Following the [First Minister's statement on 19 January](#) that further public health measures in response to the new variant of COVID-19 are to stay in place, the updated guidance will continue to apply until at least mid-February 2021. The situation will be reviewed again on 2 February.

Key points to note:

- Childminders (other than those caring for 12 or more children) can continue to stay open to all children and should operate in accordance with Level 4 guidance (or Level 3 in Island authorities except Barra and Vatersay and other designated island communities in Argyll and Bute and Highland). There are no additional restrictions placed on childminding services, other than to follow the existing safe operating guidance relevant to their local authority protection level.
- Nurseries and all other regulated childcare providers, including childminding services caring for 12 or more children, should continue to open to key worker and vulnerable children only.
- Informal childcare can continue in accordance with Level 4 guidance (or Level 3 in Island authorities except Barra and Vatersay and other designated island communities in Argyll and Bute and Highland).

The exceptional arrangements currently in place are designed to ensure that workers performing an essential role in the Covid-19 response can request access to key worker childcare when alternative options, such as home working or access to informal childcare in line with current guidance, are unavailable.

Individual nurseries and other childcare settings should determine eligibility to continue attending childcare services, [and we have provided childcare provision guidance to aid this decision making](#). All settings should be mindful that the purpose of these restrictions is to reduce household mixing as far as possible in order to suppress the virus and take firm preventative measures.

Supplementary guidance on current restrictions

At present, all of mainland Scotland is under Level 4 restrictions, with childcare settings open with limited access to only vulnerable children (including eligible 2 year olds) or the children of keyworkers. New guidance has been issued in response to the First Minister's announcement of 19 December 2020 and was updated following the statement to Parliament on 4 January 2021. The guidance can be found here:

[Guidance for childcare provision for early 2021](#)

This guidance provides clarity on arrangements for day care of children settings during January and until at least mid-February 2021. It includes:

- Detailed definitions of vulnerable children and key workers
- Guidance on implementation of the arrangements, including approach to groupings
- Guidance on arrangements for clinically vulnerable staff and pupils

- Guidance on communication with families and online resources
- Information on financial support for impacted childcare providers

Relationship between the supplementary guidance and existing COVID-19 sector guidance

The supplementary guidance is specifically intended to support childcare settings over the period from 26 December 2020 until at least mid-February 2021. All aspects of the existing guidance and accompanying mitigations continue to apply while childcare settings are open. The existing COVID-19 sector guidance for ELC settings and school age childcare services is:

- [Guidance for early learning and childcare services](#)
- [Guidance for school aged childcare services](#)

Childminding services currently caring for 12 or more children should follow the supplementary guidance above, alongside the existing guidance:

- [Guidance for childminding services](#)

COVID-19 sector guidance updates

In light of the Variant of Concern 202012/01, the existing COVID-19 sector guidance (linked above) for ELC settings, Out of School Care providers and childminders is under review, and revised guidance will be published in the week commencing 25 January. Any necessary revisions to the [Frequently Asked Questions that accompany the guidance](#) will be published shortly afterwards.

Guidance Infographics

We have created infographics to complement the ELC guidance, childminder guidance and school age childcare guidance. These visually outline what to do if there is a suspected outbreak, information on physical distancing and face coverings and flow charts on what to do if a staff member or child becomes ill. You can share these with colleagues and families and it may be useful to have copies in your setting.

You can find the infographics through the links below and these can be found on each of the guidance pages under 'supporting files' on the right hand side.

[Early Learning and Childcare Guidance Infographic](#)

[Childminder Guidance Infographic](#)

[School Aged Childcare Guidance Infographic](#)

Informal childcare

Our [Parent Club website](#) details all of our advice to families around using informal childcare as safely as possible.

It is recommended under Level 4 restrictions and in the current stay at home guidance that informal childcare from friends, family members, or babysitters only be used where essential. This may include to support parents working from home, parents with new babies, or for children with additional support needs. We also include advice to families who may be using nannies.

You may find it helpful to signpost parents to the website which details further advice around travel, precautions that can be taken and other practicalities.

Link: [Your guide to childcare on the Parent Club website.](#)

Organised activities for children

On 24 September 2020 the Scottish Government released [guidance for organised unregulated activities and services provided indoors and outdoors for children and young people, babies and toddlers](#). This includes voluntary, third sector, parent or peer led or unregulated providers delivering a service or activity directly to children under 18.

The guidance covers training, working environment, risk assessments, infection prevention and control, and includes advice about maximum numbers of adults and children involved.

The guidance was updated on 12 November to include maximum numbers and organised activities permitted at each level in line with the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Scotland's Strategic Framework](#). This includes advice that no indoor organised children's activities are permitted in areas at Level 4.

In relation to the First Minister's announcement on the 19 December, [supplementary guidance was issued for organised activities for children from 5 January 2021](#).

At Level 4, outdoor organised activities for children aged 12-17, that do not fall under any other guidance, are not permitted at this time unless the group contains no more than 2 people from two different households, including the facilitator/service provider.

At Level 4, outdoor organised activities for under 12s can continue where there are no more than 2 adults at any one time and the overall group size, including facilitators, is no more than 15. This permitted where the work cannot be carried out by working at home and the gathering restrictions for this age group.

At Level 4 Parent/baby and toddler groups, where parents are expected to attend can continue outdoors where there are no more than 7 adults present at any one time and the group is for children under 5. Facilitators are included in the adult numbers. There is no restriction on the number of under 5s who can attend these groups.

This guidance will continue be updated in line with ongoing public health advice.

If you have any questions about the organised activities for children, please contact COVID-19MaternityandChildHealth@gov.scot

4. Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues

At its next meeting on 26 January, the Advisory Sub-Group on Children's Issues will consider a range of evidence and our current assessment that ELC settings are lower risk. The group will also be invited to consider whether there are any additional risk mitigations that are required in the context of the new variant. Any resulting changes to the guidance will be communicated to sector as soon as possible.

5. Access to testing for childcare staff

[We wrote to all local authorities and childcare providers on Monday 24 August to highlight the change to Testing and set out the options for ELC or childcare, including school age childcare, staff to access testing for COVID-19.](#)

It addresses the circumstances where testing is essential as well as situations where staff who are concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 may consider accessing testing. At the present time access to this testing route is not available for childminders.

6. Quarantine

[The Scottish Government's Chief Medical Officer, Chief Nursing Officer and National Clinical Director wrote to all childcare providers on 19 August with a note outlining that those self-isolating after recently returning from countries not exempt from quarantine should not go out to work, childcare, school or visit public areas.](#)

They asked that all Childcare providers familiarise themselves with the information and guidance around self-isolating on the return from non-exempt countries. The note also asked that providers ensure safeguarding measures are in place and that they communicate and engage these requirements immediately to all families to ensure adherence to the legal requirements.

[The Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): international travel and quarantine guidance is here](#) and [the list of exempt countries is here.](#)

7. Information for parents and carers

[The Parent Club website](#) continues to be updated regularly to give parents and carers updated information relating to Covid-19 restrictions or changes. If you work with parents and carers, you might find the FAQs helpful, and/or may wish to share them directly with parents.

Key links for sharing social media:

- [Parent Club Scotland Facebook page](#)
- [Parent Club Instagram page](#)

We are working with local authorities to share promotional materials around the 1140 offer, as for many parents we are aware that this is the time when they will be thinking about their August 2020 application.

For families with children at home, we have created [a new page on Parent Club to share resources that might be helpful](#). Parent Club are also sharing useful videos – e.g. from Dr Janet Goodall – that we would encourage you to share with families.

Specific resources have been created for parents to support understanding of outdoor learning, and to support families to take up outdoor play opportunities. Please see below section on outdoor learning for more information and links.

Please **contact Katherine Tierney's ELC: Access and Parental Communications team** through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot mailbox with further suggestions for the Parent Club FAQ or other parental communication.

8. Extension of the Nursery Rates Relief Scheme

The Scottish Government announced on 4 December that the Nursery Rates Relief Scheme will be extended until at least June 2023.

The Nursery Rates Relief Scheme provides 100% relief on non-domestic rates (NDR) for premises used only as a day nursery or mainly as a day nursery. The Scheme was introduced in April 2018 and was initially due to end on 31 March 2021.

The extension will allow for a full evaluation of the impact of the Scheme on providers, parents and carers – which was a recommendation of the Barclay Review of non-domestic rates.

[You can read the news about the Nursery rate relief extended until 2023 here.](#)

Contact info: Euan Carmichael's Team at ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

9. Temporary Restrictions Fund for Childcare Providers

We have published [further information on the Temporary Restrictions Fund for Childcare Providers](#) which will support services who are currently only permitted to operate for vulnerable children or those of key workers.

This includes day care of children's services operating at any registered capacity, including out of school care providers; and, childminders who currently care for 12 or more children.

We have set out further details on the level of grants that will be available to providers and the eligibility criteria for the Fund on our web pages.

Providers will need to confirm for each of the weeks within the restrictions period that they were open to deliver childcare to children of key workers and vulnerable children.

Services will need to have been open in each week of the 4 week period to receive the full grant for that application period. Where services were only open for part of the restrictions period then grants will awarded on a pro-rata basis and calculated based on the number of weeks open.

Further details will be provided as more information becomes available, including confirmation of the date on which applications can be made.

Contact info: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

10. Support for Childminders

The vast majority of childminders (other than those caring for 12 or more children) are not subject to the same temporary restrictions as day care of children providers and are currently able to remain open, if they choose to do so, to all children.

Childminders caring for 12 or more children are eligible for the Temporary Restrictions Fund.

However, we are aware that many childminders of all sizes continue to encounter challenges and that some may experience a drop in demand for their services despite being able to remain open.

That is why we have made [funding of £1 million available for childminders](#) who have been financially impacted by the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

Grants of between £500 and £1,000 each will be made to eligible childminding providers and work is now underway with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to finalise the details of the scheme, and further information on how to apply will be published shortly.

Contact info: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

11. Our Commitment to Childminding - Action Plan

Thank you to all who supported us in the development of a Childminding Action Plan to capture our commitments to childminding in Scotland. This has now been published and can be found at [Our commitment to childminding: report](#).

Contact Info: Luke McPherson at Luke.McPherson@gov.scot

12. Other Financial and Business Support for childcare providers

A range of financial and business support measures have been made available by the UK and Scottish Governments since March. Information about the different schemes that may be available to private and third sector providers and childminders is available on the Scottish Government's website and updated regularly at:

[Information for private and third sector childcare providers about business support](#)
[Information for Childminders about business and financial support](#)

It was announced on the 17 December that the [Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme, which is a UK Government Scheme, will now operate until 30 April 2021](#).

Please continue to share your questions with Euan Carmichael's Team through the ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot mailbox. We are working through them as quickly as we can.

13. Strategic Framework for School Age Childcare

We remain committed to further developing our policy on School Age Childcare (following our consultation on a [School Age Childcare draft framework](#) in 2019), in collaboration with providers and the wider public. We were due to publish our strategic framework by the end of March 2021. However, recognizing the challenges which the Covid-19 pandemic has presented for both children and families and providers of school age childcare, we have decided to delay the publication of the full framework. We feel that it is best to support the sector through the current period and to take the time to fully understand the impacts of the pandemic and how this influences our final strategic framework.

We will publish a progress report which reiterates our commitment to school age childcare. This will highlight the key themes in our draft framework consultation response, the wider policy landscape, and will detail the actions we are taking.

We would like to thank all who have contributed to this work so far - we'll continue to engage key stakeholders over the coming weeks as we finalise our progress report.

14. Childcare Sector Working Group (CSWG)

The CSWG convened its first meeting on Thursday, 17 December 2020. At the inaugural meeting the terms of reference, the group's objectives and membership were agreed. These together with the future proceedings of the group will be published in the Knowledge Hub.

The CSWG will convene its second meeting, the first of 2021, on 28 January. As reported in our December 2020 update, while the work of the ELC and Childcare Sector Working Group (SRG) has largely been stood down it was felt that a regularly recurring meeting of the childcare representative bodies should continue. The SRG members which include the childcare sector representative bodies – CALA, EYS, NDNA, SCMA and SOCN - felt that the valuable lessons and experiences of working together as a group on matters of mutual interest would be beneficial to retain in another form. The CSWG would take this work forward.

The CSWG has a broader remit, longer term vision and will have different meeting schedule. With areas of business structured around areas of mutual interest where the representative bodies, in particular, should identify topics for discussion. This should also allow a more fluid approach, where attendance could be more properly shaped around the proposed business item(s) for discussion. The work of the CSWG will also allow its learnings to be brought to the other engagement platforms such as the ELC Partnership Forum, the work of which we also hope to recommence in the months ahead. This will also allow for consistency across all of these platforms through the involvement of representative bodies.

The CSWG's Terms and Conditions are available in the Knowledge Hub, as will its future proceedings.

Contact info: For more information please contact

ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

15. Primary 1 deferral and ELC eligibility – SSI laid before Parliament and pilot authorities announced

In October 2019, the Scottish Government committed to legislate in this parliamentary session, to ensure that all children who defer their primary 1 start are able to access funded ELC.

On 7 December 2020, we laid a Scottish Statutory Instrument (SSI) before the Scottish Parliament, to ensure that this would become legislation in the current parliamentary session.

The SSI ([The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare \(Specified Children\) \(Scotland\) Amendment Order 2020](#)) is subject to the affirmative procedure in Parliament and will set August 2023 as the date that the obligation comes into force.

For now, there is no change in the rules around ELC for children who defer. All children who are still 4 years old at the start of the school year can be deferred and start primary one the following year. Children with a birthday in January or February who defer school entry are automatically entitled to another year of funded ELC.

For children with a birthday between the school commencement date in August and December, parents continue to have an automatic right to school deferral, but local authorities decide whether another year of funded ELC will be made available. Local authorities may wish to communicate locally about their policy to help parents and carers understand their options. All local authorities will continue to have discretion to deliver funded ELC in a deferred year, and the wellbeing of the child should remain at the centre of these decisions.

Pilot Authority Approach to Deferral Implementation

On 16 December 2020, we announced that the Scottish Government has committed £3 million to support five local authorities to pilot early implementation of the new deferral legislation in 2021-22.

These pilot authorities will be: Angus; Argyll and Bute; Falkirk; Scottish Borders; and the Shetland Islands. The Scottish Government intends to increase the number of pilots in August 2022, prior to full implementation of the policy from August 2023. More information is set out in the Scottish Government and COSLA Joint Implementation Plan.

The pilots will provide us with a better understanding of likely uptake of the entitlement, and a Working Group of the pilot authorities has been established to monitor and evaluate their progress. The first meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday 3 February. All pilot authorities will attend the group, and each Regional Improvement Collaborative has also been invited to nominate a local authority to participate. Further information is now available on the deferral page of the Parent Club website – please share this resource with practitioners and parents.

If you have any questions on this work please contact Debbi Ramsay at:
Debbi.Ramsay@gov.scot

16. Analysis and Evidence

The [COVID-19 Childcare Monitoring survey](#) continues and your participation in this is much appreciated. The survey should be completed by all childcare providers, although some local authorities have opted to provide data on behalf of their local authority run services (namely: Aberdeenshire, Argyll & Bute, Clackmannanshire, East Lothian, Edinburgh, Falkirk, Midlothian, Perth & Kinross, Stirling, West Lothian). A link to the survey is circulated by the Care Inspectorate each Tuesday as part of their daily update email.

Please also ensure that you complete the **Care Inspectorate COVID-19 notification regarding staff absences** each Tuesday. This return should be completed by all childcare providers (excluding childminders).

You can find [some of the information from the survey and information received from the Care Inspectorate on which settings are open is published](#) as part of a dashboard on schools and childcare provision.

We are continuing to use this information to update Ministers and the Education Recovery Group weekly on the current situation in childcare services, so please understand the value of this information. The usefulness of this information will increase if we manage to improve the response rate to the survey, **so please do provide the information required, or encourage your members or colleagues to complete these returns.**

17. SEEMiS Early Years

The **SEEMiS Early Years project** is continuing to progress, working towards the system delivery date of end of March 2021 and a roll out date of July 2021. Information continues to be added to the restricted local authority SEEMiS Early Years Knowledge Hub site, and more information on go live and training plans will be provided once dates have been finalised.

18. Workforce and Professional Learning

We recognise that the current measures have resulted in increased anxiety and concern for many of those working in childcare at this time.

For that reason we have developed a series of communications to the sector which set out the existing evidence and why that evidence shows that, where appropriate safety measures and mitigations are put in place, ELC settings remain low risk environments. Following a series of tweets on the topic (links below), we released a video by National Clinical Director, Jason Leitch which seeks to provide staff working in childcare with reassurance, from a clinical perspective, about the risk in their settings.

Tweets from 6 January:

[ScotGov Childcare tweet that Current arrangements for childcare settings are in place as a precautionary measure in light of developments in the virus and levels of community transmission](#)

[ScotGov Childcare video from National Clinical Director Jason Leitch for all childminders and ELC workers](#)

Wellbeing Support for Childcare Staff

To support the wellbeing of the childcare workforce during these challenging times, the ELC Directorate has worked with Early Years Scotland to develop a new [#TeamELC Wellbeing Hub](#) which launched on 7 July. The Hub hosts a wealth of information and practical advice on managing wellbeing and features a function which allows practitioners and childminders to be connected with others in the sector. Alongside the website, a series of free online wellbeing events took place throughout July. Feedback from the events has been hugely positive with many finding the practical tips on how to manage personal wellbeing, really useful. So much so that a further series of wellbeing events has now been scheduled. [You can book a place on one of these events at the Team ELC Wellbeing Hub Event page.](#)

One of the previous sessions was recorded and has been uploaded to the website, so staff can access the session at a time that suits them. We would encourage everyone to take some time to visit the site and look after themselves and each other at this difficult time.

We would also welcome good practice examples from local partners showcasing measures that have been put in place to support the wellbeing and professional learning of staff during these challenging times.

If you have any questions on this work please contact Scott Sutherland at: Scott.Sutherland@gov.scot

HNC Childhood Practice Placements for 2020-21

In recognition of the challenges that childcare settings experienced around re-opening over the period of Summer 2020, and with implementing the national guidance on safe operation in the context of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, for this academic year, we indicated to colleges that HNC Childhood Practice placements shouldn't commence until after the October break.

To support colleges and childcare settings to commence offering placements from that point onwards, SSSC published on 16 October a joint national position statement with SQA, Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government on placements for the childcare sector, which stressed the importance of time on placement for HNC students, and encouraged centres and placement providers to work together to offer placements to students, making clear the importance of taking forward full risk assessments when doing so. [You can find information on HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice – starting work placements here.](#)

SSSC have now published an Employer Toolkit to provide further information to support placement providers, students and centres to support the safe return of students to placements.

The toolkit provides guidance and links to more information to support the safe completion of the placement element where possible. It also contains links to risk assessment tools, current national guidance, frequently asked questions and an example contract. [Read the HNC Social Services and HNC Childhood Practice toolkit here.](#)

ELC Directorate are working with college representatives, SQA and the SSSC to identify solutions for any students who are not able to complete placements within this academic year, to ensure they are not disadvantaged in terms of future employment or study opportunities. We will ensure we engage with employers across the sector as this work develops.

If you wish to discuss issues around HNC placements, please contact Kathryn Chisholm, Workforce Team Lead at kathryn.chisholm@gov.scot

Funded Advertising for Private and Third Sector Settings on myjobscotland

In acknowledgement that childcare employers in the private and third sectors have faced barriers to carrying out recruitment in 2020 due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, we have worked closely with COSLA and myjobscotland to agree an extension to our existing arrangement.

This means that until 31 March 2021, private and third sector colleagues will continue to be able to advertise their posts on myjobscotland for free, and with the added benefit of also appearing on other job boards that they have relationships with.

[You can follow a complete "How-to" guide on how to register as an Early Learning and Childcare Advertiser.](#)

If you have questions about accessing or using this free service, please contact the myjobscotland Team at advertising@myjobscotland.gov.uk

Free Continuous Professional Learning (CPL)

Our suite of free online CPL modules continue to be available, including *'Understanding the social factors which may impact on children's outcomes in the early years'* which has a specific focus on how a range of social factors, relationships and environments can impact children's early brain development, health, wellbeing, and behaviour.

It also considers the importance of relationships and attachment-led practice, and how practitioners can build on the unique assets and strengths of each family to further support the child. This may be of particular interest due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Further work is also underway to develop modules focusing on 'Developing understanding of curriculum rationale' and 'Tracking and monitoring children's learning'.

[Full details about our suite of CPL modules and access to the courses is available.](#)

[These modules are also accessible from the Care Inspectorate Hub Directory of CPL for ELC, alongside a \[range of other flexible and part-time further learning and development opportunities.\]\(#\)](#)

The SSSC has also recently developed a new system and [SSSC 'MyLearning' App](#) to support staff record learning - formally referred to as Post Registration Training and Learning (PRTL).

[Full details for workers and employers about the new CPL process, including an easy step guide, can be found on the SSSC website.](#)

Trauma Training

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to supporting a trauma informed workforce and services through investment in our National Trauma Training Programme, led by NHS Education for Scotland (NES). This is part of a wide range of actions to support prevention of adverse childhood experiences and trauma across the life-course; and to develop trauma-informed responses to support children, young people and adults affected by adversity and trauma.

The programme provides key trauma training resources available for all sectors of the Scottish Workforce, categorised under 4 Practice Levels.

Due to ELC workers possibly working alongside or serving people who may be affected by trauma, the ELC sector overall is categorised as Level 2: 'Trauma Skilled'.

[Full details relating to Trauma Skilled workers – including managing their own wellbeing - can be found on the NHS NES website.](#)

Further resources are available from the [UK Trauma Council website](#), including a dedicated [section on the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic](#).

If you have any questions on this work please contact Sarah Guy at: Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

Education Scotland

Education Scotland is working remotely with practitioners across Scotland to support recovery. Many opportunities are being offered at local level, in collaboration with local authorities, and details of these are being shared through targeted communication.

Links to national webinars and 'blethers' can be found on the [National Improvement Hub](#). Over the next few months these include a strong focus on outdoor learning and using digital resources to support both communication and learning.

Support for using Realising the Ambition during recovery is also available on the [National Improvement Hub](#). In early December this will be complemented by a webinar to help practitioners gain a deeper and shared understanding of the key messages contained in Realising the Ambition: Being Me.

This professional learning session is aimed at all practitioners and leaders who support children in their early years - in local authority, private, voluntary and independent sector ELC settings (including childminders) and schools. This session will be repeated on a number of occasions and at different times. [Details of the professional learning sessions can be found on the website here.](#)

In addition to Education Scotland's live webinars and 'blethers', a number of sessions have been recorded and are available to watch on demand.

New opportunities are continually being added in response to practitioner demand, so [if you are looking for professional learning please check this website for updates.](#)

If you have any questions on this work please contact Sian Neil at:
Sian.Neil@educationscotland.gov.scot

19. Outdoor Learning

Outdoor Winter Clothing Fund in ELC

On 22 December we announced a new £1 million Outdoor Clothing Fund as part of the wider £100 million Winter Support Package.

The fund will enable providers of funded early learning and childcare to purchase outdoor winter clothing for the children in their settings who need it most. By providing appropriate outdoor clothing, to children who do not currently have access to these items, we hope to reduce inequalities and improve access to outdoor experiences in ELC.

The fund is open to all early learning and childcare providers delivering universal funded ELC, who have children in their settings with identified winter clothing needs. The targeted nature of this fund means that it cannot be used to purchase clothing for general use, or for children who have not been identified as facing barriers or inequalities to accessing outdoor play in ELC.

The fund opened for applications of the 15 January and will close on the 29 January at 12 pm. More information about eligibility and the application process is available on [Inspiring Scotland's website.](#)

Virtual Nature School Programme: Winter Play

We are very pleased to announce that places have been awarded to more than 500 setting teams on the winter programme of the Scottish Virtual Nature School.

This 3rd cohort will be aimed at supporting outdoor nature based play over the winter months, when the weather can be more challenging and practitioners often less confident in providing outdoor opportunities.

Settings who take part in the programme will receive 6 weeks of guided support to improve and develop their winter outdoor learning. As in previous cohorts, the programme requires a daily commitment from practitioners to engage with the training videos (streamed over YouTube) and weekly pedagogical discussions with Virtual Nature School staff and learning community.

Due to the current restrictions on settings, and feedback from practitioners, the programme has taken the decision to postpone its start date from 18 January until after the February break. We hope that this will allow the most children and practitioners to benefit from the work.

In the meantime, the Virtual Nature School are providing a suite of outdoor play and learning resources which can be used by practitioners and parents as part of their home learning package. These materials are available through the [Virtual Nature School Website](#) and are signposted on [the Parent Club website](#). There are:

- Activity ideas and tips shared regularly on [the Virtual Nature School Facebook](#) and Instagram
- A downloadable nature diary which can be used to celebrate learning, support reflection and improve literacy
- A regular newsletter. Each edition answers a question asked by parents and helps to support discussions with children around outdoor play
- A regular [Virtual Nature School parent podcast](#) focusing on myth busting and ideas to get outdoors. Episode 1 is tips for parents on dressing children warmly for outdoor play.
- A regular practitioner podcast exploring outdoor pedagogy
- Access to the Virtual Nature School videos which provide outdoor learning ideas or inquiries to start of the day's learning

Outdoor Play Marketing Campaign

We have commissioned a marketing campaign with colleagues from across Scottish Government to encourage children and families to play outdoors over the winter months. The campaign, which is now live, features videos and activity ideas to support parents with all-weather play.

The campaign promotes outdoor experiences, not only as a restriction compliant way for children to be with their friends, but as a fun activity for the whole family.

[Activity cards and information for outdoor play can be found on the Parent Club website.](#)

[The Parent Club videos encouraging outdoor play can be found on social media.](#)

If you have any questions on this section, please contact Sophie Finlayson at sophie.finlayson@gov.scot

20. Fairer Scotland action plan: progress report 2020

[The Fairer Scotland Action Plan Progress Report](#) details the achievements and ongoing work in relation to the Fairer Scotland Action Plan, published in 2016, and an update on the actions taken in relation to two reports published by the Independent Poverty and Inequality Advisor, *Shifting the Curve* and *The Life Chances of Young People in Scotland*. This report follows similar reports published in 2017, 2018 and 2019.

JANUARY 2021			
29 January	Last day to apply for the Scottish Government Outdoor Clothing Fund	The Scottish Government announced a new £1 million Outdoor Clothing Fund to enable providers of funded early learning and childcare to purchase outdoor winter clothing for the children in their settings who need it most. It is open to all early learning and childcare providers delivering universal funded ELC, who have children in their settings with identified winter clothing needs. The fund is open for applications from 15 - 29 January at midday and is managed by Inspiring Scotland's Thrive Outdoors on behalf of the Scottish Government.	Scottish Government Outdoor Clothing Fund - Inspiring Scotland
APRIL 2021			
24 April	SCMA Annual Conference	Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the SCMA Conference scheduled for this year has been postponed until April 2021. The theme for the conference will be "Making a Difference," with a particular focus on wellbeing and full details can be found in the link attached.	SCMA Annual Conference update
MAY 2021			
15 May	EYS Annual Conference	Unfortunately due to COVID-19 the EYS annual Conference has been postponed until May 2021.	EYS Annual Conference

Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
21/01/2021	Our commitment to childminding: report
13/01/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childcare provision for January 2021
22/12/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): support to childcare sector
22/12/2020	Scottish Government Outdoor Clothing Fund - Inspiring Scotland
25/11/2020	The impact of COVID-19 on children and young people - 2-4 year olds
24/11/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): impact on children, young people and families - evidence summary October 2020
18/11/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - evidence on children, schools, early learning and childcare settings and transmission from COVID-19 - summary report
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID19) Early Learning and Childcare Services
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID 19) Childminder Services Guidance
30/10/2020	Coronavirus (COVID 19) School Age Childcare Services Guidance
24/10/2020	Halloween and Bonfire Night - Advice on safe and enjoyable celebrations
23/10/2020	Scotland's strategic framework
24/09/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): organised activities for children
11/09/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on preparing for the start of the new school term in August 2020 - version 3
24/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): public health measures at borders (international travel)
23/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): local advice and measures
21/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services - frequently asked questions
21/08/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on re-opening school age childcare services - frequently asked questions
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminding services guidance
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance on reopening school age childcare services
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): fully outdoor childcare providers guidance
30/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues – advisory note on physical distancing in early learning and childcare settings (ELC)
30/07/2020	Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance
03/07/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening school aged childcare services
24/06/2020	Further route map detail announced
15/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19) Phase 3: guidance on reopening early learning and childcare services
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): fully outdoor childcare providers guidance
01/06/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance
26/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): schools, early learning and childcare settings - scientific evidence
21/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): strategic framework for reopening schools, early learning and childcare provision

15/05/2020	Coronavirus (COVID-19): physical distancing in education and childcare settings
31/03/2020	Joint statement issued by Ms Todd and Cllr McCabe on the 1140 hours revocation
31/03/2020	Social distancing in education and childcare settings guidance
30/03/2020	Childcare providers: closure information
30/03/2020	Information for private and third sector childcare providers about business support
30/03/2020	Information for Childminders about business and financial support
30/03/2020	Childcare closures and emergency provision
24/03/2020	Implementing social distancing in education and childcare settings
24/03/2020	School and ELC closures - guidance for key workers
20/03/2020	Guidance on critical childcare and learning provision for key workers