

Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update **No. 16 – July 2021**

Introduction from Alison Cumming, Director for Early Learning and Childcare

Hello and welcome to our July update.

We are fast approaching August when the statutory entitlement of 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds is rolled out. This is a tremendous achievement, only possible through the hard work, dedication and commitment of everyone in the ELC sector in Scotland. I'd like to say a huge and heartfelt thank you to you all for making 1140 a reality for children across the country, and I'm very much looking forward to when we can come together to celebrate this milestone in the way it deserves!

The new Covid-19 guidance for ELC, SAC and childminders has now fully come into effect from 19 July. The guidance introduces gradual relaxations to some of the public health measures introduced to support operation during Covid, based on the latest advice from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues.

We've had a couple of staffing changes in the Scottish Government team in the last month. Eleanor Passmore joined us as Deputy Director for Early Learning and Childcare on 1 July and will be getting to know you all over the next few months. Ellen Leaver has finished her year leading the Parents, Providers and Workforce Unit and is currently on a very well deserved break before taking up a new post in Scottish Government. Ellen has made a tremendous contribution to the ELC directorate and we wish her all the best for her future career. We're very excited to be welcoming Clare Furze back from maternity leave to resume leadership of the Parents, Providers and Workforce Unit from 16 August.

I hope you are having a great summer and if you're not taking a break at least had an opportunity to enjoy the sunshine!

Take care

Alison

[Find previous editions of the ELC Covid-19 update here.](#)

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1. Covid-19 Guidance

1.1 Covid-19 Guidance

The suite of childcare guidance has now been updated following advice from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues that we could align some of the COVID risk mitigations to protection levels.

Updated guidance was issued via the Care Inspectorate on 22nd June. Settings could begin to follow the new guidance from 5th July, with all settings using it by 19th July.

The updated guidance sets out how some of the risk mitigations can be adapted for protection levels in the strategic framework. These changes are incorporated into the relevant sections and cover:

- enhanced cleaning requirements
- sharing of resources between setting and home
- cohorts of children
- singing
- specialist visitors
- use of peripatetic/temporary staff
- blended placements
- an update to the requirement to quarantine items brought from home

There is also a change to the section on Personal Protective Equipment to include a change to the requirement for eye protection where a young person is suspected to have COVID-19.

The COVID-19 School Age Childcare guidance includes a Summer Holiday Annex which will remain in place until the end of the school summer holidays in Scotland. This annex provides mitigation measures which regulated providers of school age childcare should adopt during the 2021 summer holidays.

The updated guidance:

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for early learning and childcare \(ELC\) services](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for school age childcare services](#)

[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): guidance for childminder services](#)

1.2 Self-isolation for close contacts

The First Minister confirmed in her [statement to Parliament on 13 July](#), that when we move beyond level 0, the intention is to remove the blanket requirement for close contacts to self-isolate. This would apply where someone is double vaccinated - with at least two weeks having passed since the second dose - and takes a PCR test that comes back negative. Guidance on the practical operation of this policy will be published in due course.

As part of our wider preparations for the new academic term, the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues has been asked to provide advice on whether we can remove the self-isolation requirement for children and young people who are close contacts of positive cases. The guidance will be updated in due course to reflect this advice.

1.3 Physical Distancing

Additionally, in her statement to parliament on 13 July, the First Minister announced that following the review of physical distancing in Scotland, measures will be slowly eased to enable us to operate in a less restricted way. When areas move down to Level 0 on 19 July, where there isn't already a 1 metre rule in place, the physical distance requirement in indoor public places will reduce from 2 metres to 1 metre.

The Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues will be providing advice on whether it's appropriate to make this change in childcare settings and guidance will be updated in due course to reflect that advice. In the meantime, settings should continue to adhere to the 2 metres physical distancing between adults.

1.4 Baseline risk mitigations for the move beyond level 0

We are now considering what baseline COVID risk mitigations should apply to regulated childcare settings when Scotland moves beyond level 0. We will do that in collaboration with sector representatives and with advice from the Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues.

Contact: Debbie Silver at Debbie.Silver@gov.scot

2. ELC Statutory Guidance Update

We have published updated [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) Statutory Guidance](#). Although this guidance is issued to education authorities, and they are required to have regard to it when carrying out their statutory functions in relation to delivering the funded ELC entitlement, it is also intended to assist all those involved in the implementation and delivery of funded ELC, including providers in the private, third and childminding sectors.

This statutory guidance applies from 1 August 2021 and replaces previous guidance. It should be read in connection with the legislation to which it relates.

Statutory guidance relating to the delivery of ELC was originally published in 2014 to reflect the changes introduced through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The majority of the changes in the new guidance reflect previously announced legislative and policy developments since 2014. Drawing on feedback from stakeholders, changes have also been made to make the guidance clearer and more streamlined.

Contact: ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot

3. 1,140 Hours Delivery

In August, the statutory entitlement to 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds will come into effect. This expansion will improve children's outcomes, help to close the poverty-related outcome gap, increase family resilience and support parents and carers into work, study or training as we recover from COVID. As we have reported in previous updates, local authorities and the childcare sector across Scotland have worked extremely hard to deliver this commitment in the difficult circumstances of the pandemic.

More than seven out of ten children in ELC are already receiving the full 1,140 funded hours and over half of local authority areas are delivering 1,140 hours before the statutory duty comes into effect.

The next Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, providing detailed figures on delivery, will be published in late September.

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

4. Workforce and Professional Learning

4.1 Recognition of Prior Learning

We have refreshed our Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) tool for those wishing to work in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Scotland:

[Early learning and childcare qualifications: recognition of prior learning \(RPL\) - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot/Early-learning-and-childcare-qualifications-recognition-of-prior-learning-rpl-gov.scot)

We understand the value and importance of recognising prior learning and are working to ensure greater recognition of existing experience and qualifications, and to illustrate how these can be used towards obtaining the appropriate ELC qualifications which in turn will make the transition for people wishing to work in Scottish ELC settings smoother.

The Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework Partnership (SCQFP) are hosting a workshop, introducing learners to RPL on Tuesday 14 September 2021. The workshop is free and open to everyone with an interest. Further details can be found here: [RPL Workshops | Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework \(scqf.org.uk\)](http://scqf.org.uk/RPL-Workshops-Scottish-Credit-and-Qualifications-Framework)

Contact: Sarah Guy at Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

4.2 Student Placements

COVID-19 has meant some placement providers have been understandably anxious about having students in the workplace. However, without a placement, assessment requirements cannot be completed for these awards. We are hugely grateful to employers across the childcare sector for the commitment shown to accommodating students wherever possible throughout what was a challenging academic year in 2020-21.

For some students it has not been possible to secure placements during the academic year 2020-21. This means some centres and employers will be working together into the next academic year to support those students to complete placements. We understand this may not allow for the usual period where employers do not have students in their settings early in the academic year but the additional efforts are greatly appreciated to support the future of a highly skilled and qualified workforce.

Settings that are continuing to support student placements throughout the COVID-19 pandemic period should make sure they adhere to the Scottish Government's COVID-19 guidance for ELC settings to accommodate those students safely within wider staffing teams.

Employers should note that additional flexibility has been put in place around placement completion giving students the opportunity to show occupational competence and evidence they are ready for employment. Traditionally students would complete 60 days on placement, however, assessors will now work with students and placement providers to ensure occupational competence is achieved rather than a prescriptive number of days.

[A toolkit is available for employers](#) to support the safe accommodation of students within work settings. It includes resources, current guidance and FAQs.

Contact: Kathryn Chisholm at Kathryn.Chisholm@gov.scot

4.3 National Trauma Training

The National Trauma Training Programme, developed by NHS Education for Scotland (NES) to support a trauma informed workforce and services, has introduced a new Level 2 'Trauma Skilled e-module for the ELC workforce. This forms part of a range of actions to support the 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 course can be accessed by registering with Turas through the following link: [Trauma skilled | Turas | Learn \(nhs.scot\)](#)

Full details can be found at: <https://transformingpsychologicaltrauma.scot/resources/develop-your-trauma-skilled-practice/>

Contact: Sarah Guy at Sarah.Guy@gov.scot

5. Education Scotland

5.1 Sign up to Scotland Learns

Scotland Learns e-bulletin is a one-stop shop for all your Education Scotland news. Published fortnightly, content is specifically designed for education practitioners, leaders, parents and carers. [Subscribe](#) today for the latest news and guidance on early years practice, resources, professional learning and leadership; and much more.

5.2 National e-Learning Offer

Available as part of the National e-Learning Offer, Dug's Discovery Den has been developed to offer children across the early level of early learning and childcare and primary school an interactive collection of activities. Dug's Discovery Den presents an outdoor interactive and continually evolving learning space inspiring further learning and exploration beyond the screen. Find out more via [e-Sgoil](#).

5.3 Scottish Learning Festival 2021

This year's Scottish Learning Festival (SLF) online will take place on 21, 22 and 23 September. The theme is 'Renew Refresh Reimagine. Learning from our experiences and looking to the future' and for the first time the event will take place entirely online in a fantastic 3D digital arena. Visit the [SLF website](#) for more details and to book your place.

5.4 Digital Skills and Digital Literacy professional learning for ELC practitioners from DigiLearnScot

[Please visit this newly updated ELC professional learning pathway](#) to access a basic level introduction to practitioner digital skills and early level digital literacy learning experiences. It includes support on the tools available and pedagogical approaches you may want to consider. This is a flexible 'anytime, anywhere' pathway where you can watch all the sections or just the sections you need. It will also point you to further professional learning pathways and our live webinars.

5.5 Computing Science professional learning for ELC Practitioners from DigiLearnScot

[The Digi Learn Scot Computing Science blog](#) provides access helpful posts to provide you with some basic knowledge and understanding of key concepts for embedding Computing Science experiences and outcomes in your ELC establishment. The blog also includes ELC practitioner examples and learning pathways (including webinar recordings) to support professional development. It will also point you to further professional learning pathways and our live webinars.

5.6 Early Learning & Childcare Practitioner webinar with NCSC

There are a handful of steps you can take to minimise the potentially costly and disruptive effect of a cyber-incident, and better safeguard the children in your care, as well as your business's finances and reputation. [This short webinar with NCSC: Cyber Security for Childcare providers: why it matters and top tips is for anyone working in the early learning childcare sector in Scotland.](#)

Contact: ELC - Siân Neil at Siân.Neil@educationscotland.gov.scot

Contact: Digital - Eva Wilkinson at Eva.Wilkinson@educationscotland.gov.scot

6. SEEMiS Early Years

A communication was issued on 20 May 2021 by David McLelland to local authority ELC leads informing them that the platform will not be available before 2 November 2021. A fourth LA Readiness Event has been rescheduled from 17 June to 26 August 2021 where the project team hope to showcase a range of platform functionality developed since the last event.

Contact: Raymond Buckley at Raymond.Buckley@gov.scot

7. Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme – Launching 1 August 2021

The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme will replace the existing UK Nursery Milk Scheme in Scotland. Payments will be made under the new scheme from 1 August 2021.

Childcare settings who register will receive up-front payments from their local authority to purchase milk or specified milk alternatives and healthy snacks (fruit or vegetables) for pre-school aged children in their care for 2 hours or more per day. This is in addition to any other offer the childcare setting provides.

Settings are eligible for the new Scheme if they are registered with the Care Inspectorate and register with their local authority to receive payment.

Please refer to [Scottish Government website](#) for further information on the Scheme.

To register for the new Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme please contact the local authority in which you operate (in the case of chains this should be where each individual setting is located). If you have not already registered, we would urge you to make immediate contact with your local authority to ensure that you can benefit from the new Scheme.

More information is available in the [Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: guidance for local authorities and day care settings](#).

Should you have any questions about the new Scheme including how to register or if your local authority is not listed below, please contact your local authority or the Scottish Government Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Policy team directly at SMHSS@gov.scot.

In addition, every child attending a funded early learning and childcare (ELC) session – which is any session that includes funded hours, regardless of whether they are mixed with ‘paid for’ hours – will be provided with a free meal. More information on the ELC free meal commitment can be found in Section 3 of the [Funding Follows the Child Operating Guidance](#).

Providers in the private, third and childminding sector delivering funded ELC will receive funding, which is additional to the sustainable rate, for delivery of the ELC free meal commitment. Providers will also receive additional payments (i.e. additional to the sustainable rate) for delivery of the Scottish Milk and the Healthy Snack Scheme. More information can be found in the [guidance for setting sustainable rates for funded ELC providers](#).

7.1 Local Authority Contact Details

Local Authority	Email
Aberdeen City	SMHSS@aberdeencity.gov.uk
Website address	The Scottish Milk & Healthy Snack Scheme Aberdeen City Council
Aberdeenshire	earlyyears@aberdeenshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme – Aberdeenshire Council
Angus	ELC@angus.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: childcare providers Angus Council
Argyll & Bute	earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk
Clackmannanshire	kcarmichael@clacks.gov.uk
Dumfries & Galloway	EarlyYearsSupport@dumgal.gov.uk
Dundee City	smhss@dundeecity.gov.uk
Website address	smhss_information_sheet_1.pdf (dundeecity.gov.uk)
East Ayrshire	EarlyYears-Milk&Snacks@east-ayrshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish milk and healthy snack scheme · East Ayrshire Council (east-ayrshire.gov.uk)
East Dunbartonshire	SMHSSenquiries@eastdunbarton.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme East Dunbartonshire Council
East Lothian	fundedproviders@eastlothian.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Early Learning and Childcare East Lothian Council

East Renfrewshire	earlylearningandchildcare@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk
Edinburgh, City of	smhss@edinburgh.gov.uk
Falkirk	MilkandSnack@Falkirk.gov.uk
Website address	Early learning & childcare - Milk and Snack Scheme Falkirk Council
Fife	earlyyears.manager@fife.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Fife Council
Inverclyde	Lorna.Coote@inverclyde.gov.uk
Midlothian	Earlyyears@midlothian.gov.uk
Moray	childcare.info@moray.gov.uk
North Ayrshire	earlylearningchildcare@north-ayrshire.gov.uk
North Lanarkshire	SmithLou@northlan.gov.uk
Website address	New milk and healthy snack scheme North Lanarkshire Council
Renfrewshire	CSSUPPORT@renfrewshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - Renfrewshire Website
Scottish Borders	earlyyearsteamed@scotborders.gov.uk
South Ayrshire	Learning.RaisingStandards@south-ayrshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme Registration - South Ayrshire Council (south-ayrshire.gov.uk)
South Lanarkshire	earlyyears@southlanarkshire.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - South Lanarkshire Council
Stirling	eymilkscheme@stirling.gov.uk
Website address	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme - Stirling Council
West Dunbartonshire	Teresa.Devaney@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
West Dunbartonshire	Liz.Coles@west-dunbarton.gov.uk
Website address	Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme West Dunbartonshire Council (west-dunbarton.gov.uk)
West Lothian	milkandhealthysnackscheme@westlothian.gov.uk

Contact: The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Team at SMHSS@gov.scot

8. **Annex A – Forward Look Calendar**

August 2021	Event	Information	Link
1 August	New statutory ELC guidance comes into effect	The statutory ELC guidance applies from 1 August and replaces previous guidance. It should be read in connection with the legislation to which it relates and is intended to assist all those involved in the implementation and delivery of funded ELC, including providers in the private, third and childminding sectors.	Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Statutory Guidance
1 August	The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme launches	The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme will replace the existing UK Nursery Milk Scheme in Scotland and payments will be made under the new scheme from 1 August.	Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme
24 August	Children’s rights and engaging with parents and families event by Education Scotland	This Creative Conversation is aimed at practitioners and staff across all sectors who have responsibility or are involved in supporting children and families. This session will focus on what the UNCRC is and what it means for practice in Scotland.	Children’s rights and engaging with parents and families Tickets, Tue 24 Aug 2021 at 16:00 Eventbrite
25 August	Care Inspectorate Childminding Webinar - Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason	The Care Inspectorate are inviting providers, managers and inspectors to free sector specific webinars – these aim	Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason – August 2021 Webinars (careinspectorate.com)

		to provide staff with information and guidance that relate to some of the common issues identified during inspections and from discussions with services and inspectors over the past nine months.	
26 August	Care Inspectorate ELC day care services Webinar - Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason	The Care Inspectorate are inviting providers, managers and inspectors to free sector specific webinars – these aim to provide staff with information and guidance that relate to some of the common issues identified during inspections and from discussions with services and inspectors over the past nine months.	Covid-19: Right Choice, Right Time, Right Reason – August 2021 Webinars (careinspectorate.com)
30 August	Children’s Rights – What? Why? How? Train the Trainers opportunity event by Education Scotland	This is an interactive session which supports Local Authority officers to train practitioners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop their understanding of what children’s rights are • Become familiar with why rights are relevant and further understand the current policy and legislative context • Explore how to embed rights based approaches into practice. 	Children’s Rights – What? Why? How? Train the Trainers opportunity Tickets, Mon 30 Aug 2021 at 09:30 Eventbrite

9. Annex B – Publications

Date Published	Document Link
21/07/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for early learning and childcare (ELC) services
20/07/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for school age childcare services
20/07/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for childminder services
13/07/2021	Early learning and childcare: statutory guidance - July 2021
23/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare – National Induction Resource: Latest Version June 2021
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility - Income Threshold Change – June 2021- EQIA
22/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare: 2 year old eligibility – Income Threshold Change – June 2021- BRIA
21/06/2021	New ELC Guidance from 5 July, New School Age Childcare Guidance from 5 July and New Childminder Guidance from 5 July
16/06/2021	Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, May 2021
07/06/2021	Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme: guidance for local authorities and day care settings
06/04/2021	Early learning and childcare animation and guidance
06/04/2021	School age childcare animation and guidance
24/03/2021	Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: interim guidance - update March 2021
24/03/2021	Equity and excellence leads: Care Inspectorate findings
17/03/2021	Out to Play - creating outdoor play experiences for children: practical guidance - new chapters
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
15/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated school aged childcare services guidance
05/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated childminder services guidance
05/03/2021	Coronavirus (COVID-19): updated early learning and childcare (ELC) services guidance
17/03/2021	Nature-based early learning and childcare - influence on children's health, wellbeing and development: literature review
15/03/2021	Early Years providers helped to take first steps with cyber security - National Cyber Security Centre
03/02/2021	Coronavirus (COVID19): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues – advice on phased return to in-person learning in schools and early learning and childcare (ELC) settings
21/01/2021	Our commitment to childminding: report