

## **Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare COVID-19 Update** **No. 15 – June 2021**

### **Introduction from Alison Cumming, Director for Early Learning and Childcare**

Hello and welcome to our June update.

You may notice that we have changed our monthly updates. We will now aim to provide shorter, more concise updates with a focus on news items. This change is from the feedback provided in our communications and engagement survey to which we had a great number of responses – thank you to everyone who took part for your helpful contributions.

You may have seen our [letter in the Care Inspectorate provider notice on 21 June](#) that outlines our **new guidance** for ELC, SAC and childminders which will apply from Monday 5 July. The new 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. To allow time for planning and staff training and, if this is preferred, to allow settings to make changes gradually, settings can move to the new guidance over a 14 day period. This means that by Monday 19 July all settings should be following the new guidance. The current guidance on the SG website will be replaced with the new guidance on that date, but in the meantime, you can find the new guidance here: [ELC Guidance](#), [School Age Childcare Guidance](#) and [Childminder Guidance](#). School age childcare services will also see that the [current School Age Childcare Guidance](#) has now been updated to include a summer holiday Annexe, which will be in place until 18 August, to support holiday provision.

We are very grateful for the continued adherence to the risk mitigations in the COVID guidance, and appreciate the additional pressures that this has placed on teams in the last year.

Thank you for your continued care for Scotland’s children and families. I hope you all manage to enjoy some rest and relaxation over the summer.

Take care

Alison

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

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## 1. Delivery Progress Data

The latest [Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report](#) shows that more than seven out of ten children in Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) are now receiving the full 1,140 funded hours. Published by the Improvement Service on 15 June, the report shows that:

- The number of children accessing an expanded offer has increased since February 2021, with an additional 10,510 children now reported to be accessing 1140 hours funded ELC
- Data returned by local authorities indicates that 118,068 children were accessing funded ELC as of the end of April 2021
- There has also been an increase since February 2021 in the proportion of children receiving both expanded hours (from 86% to 87%) and the proportion of children accessing 1140 hours (from 65% to 72%).
- The local authority ELC workforce is reported to have increased by 7,178 FTE since academic year 2016/17, including an increase of 230 FTE since February 2021
- 73% of children who access most of their hours with funded providers are accessing 1140 hours, while in local authority settings this figure is 72%
- This is an increase compared to August 2020, when 56% of children in local authority settings were accessing 1140 hours. This indicates that expansion activities during this period have been primarily advanced in local authority settings. Access to 1140 in funded provider settings remains at the consistent and high level previously reported.
- As of April 2021, there were 918 projects in the capital programme, 69% of which are now complete



**Contact:** Hannah Keates at [Hannah.Keates@gov.scot](mailto:Hannah.Keates@gov.scot)

## 2. Asymptomatic Testing Offer

Thank you all for your support as we've rolled out the childcare asymptomatic testing programme to stand alone childcare settings. Your continued support in promoting testing and recording of results amongst staff in your settings is greatly appreciated.

As of this month most settings are participating in the programme and Childminders have access to the universal offer of at home testing. However, should any day care of children setting not currently participating in the targeted programme wish to be added at any time, we are able to do so – just get in touch.

As we progress with the programme, we are considering the value of it and how we might improve it to increase the impact. Testing will continue to play a crucial role in staff and parent confidence about the safety of settings, and will help us stop chains of transmission early thus preventing outbreaks. What follows are the key messages about the programme which mirror information we tweeted throughout the course of last week (@ELCScotGov). We'd encourage you to share this information as appropriate.

**Testing helps keep ELC settings as safe as possible for staff, children and families**



**Why continued testing is important for ELC staff**

Testing twice weekly and recording your results helps us all keep ELC settings as safe as possible by breaking chains of transmission and providing us with information about prevalence in ELC settings.

**Why recording test results is important**

It's important to record your results each time you take a LFD test. It helps us understand how testing is helping keep settings safe.

**Around a quarter of ELC staff are recording results of their LFD tests**



**Recording your test results is as important as taking your LFD test**



Recording your results, whether positive, negative or void, helps us break chains of transmission and understand how Covid is affecting ELC settings across Scotland.

**When to test**

It's important to continue taking your LFD test twice weekly. You don't need to test for 90 days if you've had a positive PCR test. You don't need to test if you are on holiday (although you can continue to do so if you wish) but should take a test before returning to work.

As the holiday season approaches staff may wish to consider whether they continue to test while not in settings and ensure they have an appropriate supply of kits for their period of leave.

**When to test and when not to test**



## Accuracy of LFD tests



Colleagues may have seen recent reporting on the accuracy of LFD tests and there is evidence suggesting that concern about the accuracy of these tests is one reason why people are reluctant to engage with the programme.

It is true that no test is 100% accurate, and testing on its own, does not reduce transmission. It only helps stop transmission through the actions taken following the result. However, analysis has shown that these tests are

accurate and reliable and have extremely low false positive rates: [UK Government press release on accuracy of LFD tests](#).

### A request for your help

As part of our work to increase uptake and reporting of testing, we would like to share “real world” case studies from individuals and settings, and would welcome any volunteers you may know who would be willing to help in that regard - including:

- settings willing to do a short video explaining how they've used testing, and the role it has played in setting safety and staff confidence.
- a practitioner willing to do a video of themselves taking the lateral flow test, through to reporting their result to show how easy it is to do and explain why they do it which can be shared on social media, sent directly to settings and shared on stakeholder social media channels.

The Scottish Government team can offer support and guidance on preparing and filming any such case studies.

Alternatively, if you're prepared to offer a staff photo from your setting, and/or a positive quote from a setting manager or practitioner about the testing which we can use in our social media and attribute, that would also be very welcome.

We are very happy to discuss any such contributions and assist with producing those if helpful. If you are able to help with this request, please send a message to [childcaretestingprogramme@gov.scot](mailto:childcaretestingprogramme@gov.scot)

### Uptake (reporting) and positivity figures

Finally on testing, the latest weekly uptake and reporting figures are now available on the [PHS education surveillance dashboard](#) for anyone wishing to see those.

For support on any part of the childcare testing programme, settings in Scotland can raise questions, concerns or report issues via the NHS NSS Helpline on:

- 0800 028 2816
- or by emailing [nss.Covid19TestingSupport@nhs.scot](mailto:nss.Covid19TestingSupport@nhs.scot)

### 3. ELC Winter Clothing Fund – Impact animation

On 22 December 2020 Scottish Government announced a new £1 million Outdoor Clothing Fund as part of the wider £100 million Winter Support Package.

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

The fund was open to all early learning and childcare providers delivering universal funded ELC, who had children in their settings with identified winter clothing needs. By its close, fund supported 23,506 children to access essential winter clothing for outdoor play in ELC.



A short animation which demonstrates the impact of this fund has been created and [has been shared on Scottish Government ELC Twitter account this month.](#)

**Contact:** Sophie Finlayson at [Sophie.Finlayson@gov.scot](mailto:Sophie.Finlayson@gov.scot)

#### 4. **'Get into Summer' - Summer Offer for Children and Young People**

The Cabinet Secretary for Education and Skills [announced the funding allocations](#) for the Summer Offer for Children and Young People which support them to 'Get into Summer' creating opportunities to focus on their wellbeing allowing them to socialise, play and reconnect.

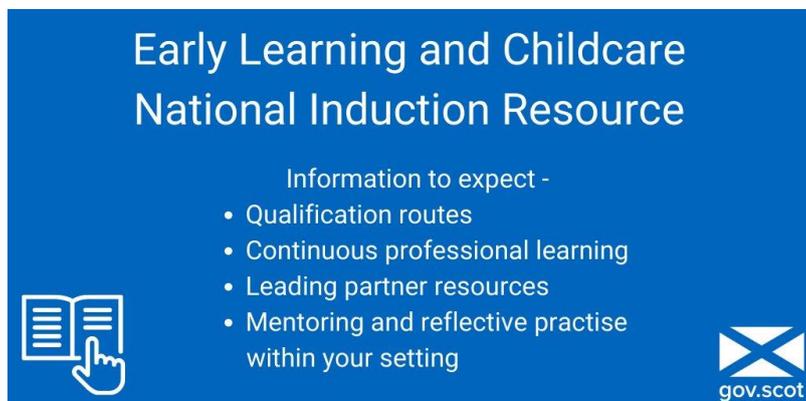


Local Authorities will receive £15 million with this provision targeted at children and young people most likely to be experienced continued disadvantage and have been particularly adversely affected by Covid. Children's Services Planning Partnerships are responsible for the delivery of the targeted offer to ensure joined up approach working with existing public and third sector partners. 18 National Partners will receive £5 million to enhance opportunities for all children and young people to participate in activities and experiences this summer. Parent Club is the one stop shop for information on [Get into Summer](#).

**Contact:** Julie Humphreys, Covid Recovery for Children and Young People at [Summer2021@gov.scot](mailto:Summer2021@gov.scot)

## 5. National Induction Resource

The [ELC National Induction Resource](#) has been refreshed to reflect the most recent updates in policy and best practice, including changes relating to COVID-19 (published on the Scottish Government website, 23 June 2021).



Early Learning and Childcare  
National Induction Resource

Information to expect -

- Qualification routes
- Continuous professional learning
- Leading partner resources
- Mentoring and reflective practise within your setting

With thanks to partners for their contributions, the refreshed content provides support for newly employed ELC staff during the initial months of their induction period. The resource provides a range of supporting information and advice, as well as links to leading partners' information and resources, a tool to support reflective practice, and continued learning and progression opportunities.

**Contact:** Sarah Guy at [Sarah.Guy@gov.scot](mailto:Sarah.Guy@gov.scot)

## 6. SEEMiS Early Years

Project delays continue and 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. Alscient (sub-contractors) are working closely with SEEMiS colleagues to agree on a revised plan. The new delivery date will allow for a more appropriate training plan for LA and establishment readiness.

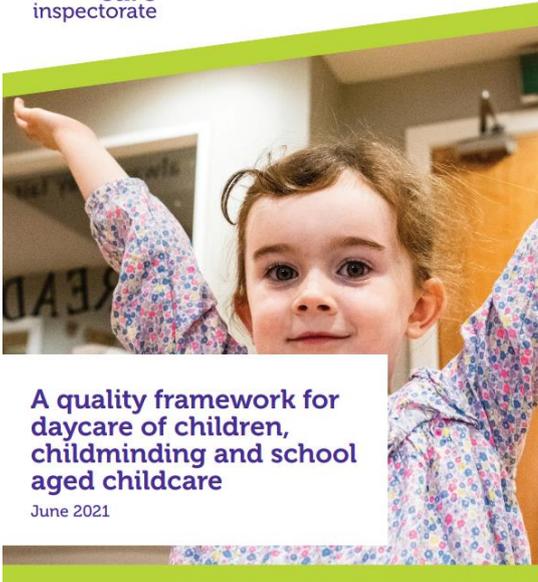
A fourth LA Readiness Event has been rescheduled from 17 June to 26 August 2021 where the project team hope to showcase a range of platform functionality developed since the last event. A technical assurance review is currently being commissioned which will take place during July 2021. This review will generate a number of recommendations to be managed by Alscient, SEEMiS and SG colleagues.

**Contact:** Raymond Buckley at [Raymond.Buckley@gov.scot](mailto:Raymond.Buckley@gov.scot)

## 7. Care Inspectorate

### 7.1 **Publication of the new Care Inspectorate draft Quality Framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare**

As settings may be aware, the Care Inspectorate published a [quality framework for daycare of children, childminding and school aged childcare](#) on 15 June 2021. While this has been published to allow the sector to become familiar with it, the new framework will not be used in inspections until it has been tested and reviewed, and the sector will be kept up to date with developments on that. In the meantime, the Care Inspectorate will continue to inspect under the existing quality theme framework.



Over the coming months, a small number of settings will be selected to take part in a test of the new framework. The Care Inspectorate will be in touch with those settings directly with further details.

## 7.2 Quality Improvement Support - Bitesize 'Quick Wins'

We know that high quality ELC provides children with the skills and confidence to carry into school education, improves children's outcomes and contributes to closing the poverty-related attainment gap. As we move towards full implementation of the 1140 expansion programme, it is therefore essential that settings are supported to deliver high quality ELC which meets the [National Standard](#).

A suite of improvement focused online resources are available to support settings with quality improvement.

Settings can view these sessions in their own time and select areas relevant to their own service.

Bitesize sessions on improvement support, available on the Care Inspectorate HUB, include:

- [Scrutiny and Assurance during Covid-19](#)
- [An introduction to Quality Improvement Methodology](#)
- [Key Question 5 self-evaluation](#)

In addition, 'Quick Win' sessions covering common, functional areas for improvement which have been identified through inspection are also available on the Care Inspectorate HUB, and include information on:

- [Medication](#)
- [Safe Recruitment](#)
- [Scottish Social Services Registration](#)
- [Notifications](#)
- [Quality assurance calendars](#)

**Contact:** Vicky Lamb, Senior Improvement Advisor at the Care Inspectorate at [elcimprove@careinspectorate.gov.scot](mailto:elcimprove@careinspectorate.gov.scot).

## 7.3 Care Inspectorate Provider Notices

Anyone who doesn't receive the [Care Inspectorate Provider Updates](#) can sign up for them with their email address.

Subscribers who already receive the Provider Update can now choose which of the three editions they now want to receive going forward. You may choose to receive all three editions if you wish or any combination of the three.

Your subscription topics can be chosen by [logging into your subscription account](#) and clicking 'Add subscriptions' which sits just under the 'Submit' and 'Cancel' buttons.

**Contact:** [enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot](mailto:enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot)

## **8. Funded early learning and childcare for two year olds: Eligibility due to Parents' Receipt of Working Tax Credits or Universal Credit – New Income Threshold**

In [May's ELC Programme Update](#), we made you aware that we were looking to make changes to Regulations to amend the eligibility criteria for funded early learning and childcare (ELC) for 2 year olds. This is in response to UK Government policy change relating to the increase in the National Living Wage (NLW).

Scottish Ministers have now laid Regulations in the Scottish Parliament under 'The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Amendment (No. 2) Order 2021'. This Order aims to amend the income threshold to £7,500 for those in receipt of both Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. The monthly threshold for Universal Credit will be amended to £625 (an equivalent annual income threshold of £7,500).

We anticipate the Regulations will be considered by the Scottish Parliament in Autumn 2021. The new thresholds will come in to force once approved and from that point the effected eligibility criteria for 2 year olds will be:

If a parent is in receipt of:

- Child tax Credit and Working Tax Credit and income is **£7,500** or less
- Universal Credit with household take-home pay, is **£625** a month or less

Alison Cumming, the Director for Early Learning and Childcare has written to all local authorities on the 24 June 2021 to confirm that Regulations have been laid, and to request that local authorities use the discretion available to them under the 1980 Act to bring in these new thresholds as soon as possible to ensure that no child misses out on their entitlement.

**Contact:** Kerrie Harkness at [Kerrie.Harkness@gov.scot](mailto:Kerrie.Harkness@gov.scot)

## **9. Spotlight on Quality - Transitions**

Children experience a huge number of transitions during their ELC journey. The transition from home to ELC, between practitioners, indoor to outdoor, room to room and then ultimately from ELC to primary school. We know that transitions this year are going to be different from usual, so for our first 'Spotlight on Quality', we have put together some resources that practitioners might draw upon to support transitions this summer term.

- This resource provides practitioners advice, guidance, signposting and practical resources to support children and young people through [transitions in the context of COVID-19](#).
- A helpful [Transitions Position Statement](#) to inform and support the further development of local policy and transitions practice.
- An example of innovative practice, demonstrating a range of transition activities to support children's [transition into Primary School](#)
- An example of a [partnership transition project](#) with the aim of raising attainment by engaging families. The video and reflective questions will give you an insight into how a family learning project can be developed, implemented and evaluated.
- An example of the use of an [Early Years Practitioner within Primary 1](#) to work with children through play to support effective transition from ELC to Primary 1, ensuring consistency and the continued creation of secure attachments to support all learners and address the poverty related attainment gap.

In addition, there are a substantial range of support for parents through the [Scotland Learns](#) catalogue and [Parentzone Scotland](#) website.

Practitioners should also refer to Section 8 of [Realising the Ambition](#), which provides further guidance on managing effective transitions that are well-prepared and child-centred.

**Contact:** Samantha Broadley at [Samantha.Broadley@gov.scot](mailto:Samantha.Broadley@gov.scot)

## 10. [Education Scotland](#)

### 10.1 **Renew, Refresh, Re-imagine! Scottish Learning Festival theme announced**

The Scottish Learning Festival (SLF) is taking place on Tuesday 21 September until Thursday 23 September 2021 and the theme for this year's event has been confirmed: 'Renew, Refresh, Re-imagine: Learning from our experiences and looking to the future.'

Delegates will be able to enjoy a range of live and recorded sessions and find a space to network with colleagues in a fantastic digital arena, all designed to support career long professional learning.

## Scottish Learning Festival

The **Scottish Learning Festival** (SLF) is the annual conference and exhibition for educational practitioners across Scotland and is completely free to attend. Organised by Education Scotland, SLF is the biggest professional learning event for Scottish education which aims to inspire, innovate and inform great educational practice.

Further details and instructions on how to register will be announced soon. In the meantime please save the date in your diary: Tuesday 21 September until Thursday 23 September 2021.

Make sure you get the latest information straight to your mailbox by [signing up for the SLF Delegate e-bulletin](#).

### 10.2 **Digital 1:1 Coaching offered to Early Learning and Childcare Managers**

Education Scotland and the GTCS have partnered to offer funded digital [1:1 Coaching sessions](#) to support Early Learning and Childcare Managers in navigating the current challenges caused by COVID-19.

Each coaching programme- delivered by practitioners, all of whom have experience of working and coaching within education- lasts up to 3 hours and can be split into several sessions. Participants will come away from coaching with new ways of understanding themselves and their situation, clarity of their strengths and further strategies available for staying on track.

The coaching offer has been developed through a collaboration of organisations involved in the Covid Education Recovery Workforce Support Group who plan and deliver work funded to support the health and wellbeing of the workforce through the pandemic.

**Contact:** Sian Neil at [Sian.Neil@educationscotland.gov.scot](mailto:Sian.Neil@educationscotland.gov.scot)

## **11. 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 for regulated pre-school childcare settings in Scotland from 1 August 2021.

Under the new Scheme, eligible childcare settings (day care of children services and childminders) which register with the Local Authority can access upfront payments to enable them to provide daily servings of milk (or specified alternative) and healthy snack (fruit or veg) to pre-school children attending for 2 hours or more. This will mean that eligible children will receive a free serving of milk (or specified alternative) and a healthy snack on each day that they attend the setting. Settings may charge for any additional snacks required during the session.

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](#).

All settings wishing to use the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme (including those that have previously claimed from the UK NMS) require to register with the local authority.

Settings should contact the local authority in which they operate to register (in the case of chains, registration must be where each individual setting is located).

Eligible settings are strongly encouraged to ensure that they register as soon as possible for the new Scheme to ensure that they can access the agreed funding to provide milk and healthy snack from the outset. Where you are already providing milk, please ensure that you continue to do so as we transition to the new arrangements!

More information (including on the ending of the UK NMS in Scotland) is available in the [statutory guidance for the operation of the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme for local authorities and participating \(registered\) day care settings](#).

**Contact:** The Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Team at [SMHSS@gov.scot](mailto:SMHSS@gov.scot)

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

<b>July 2021</b>	<b>Event</b>	<b>Information</b>	<b>Link</b>
19 July	New ELC, SAC and childminding guidance published and comes into effect (settings can apply from 5 July)	Our <a href="#">letter in the Care Inspectorate provider notice on 21 June</a> outlines our new guidance for ELC, SAC and childminders. The current guidance on the SG website will be replaced with the new guidance on 19 July.	<a href="#">Coronavirus (COVID-19): early learning and childcare (ELC) services - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>  <a href="#">Coronavirus (COVID-19): guidance for school age childcare services - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>  <a href="#">Coronavirus (COVID-19): childminder services guidance - gov.scot (www.gov.scot)</a>

### 13. Annex B – Publications

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