

# A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020: THE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND

DELIVERY SUPPORT PLAN FOR EARLY LEARNING  
AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS



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## INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government and local authorities have committed to making an unprecedented level of investment in early learning and childcare (ELC) through the near doubling of the funded entitlement from 600 to 1140 hours per year from August 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds.

We want this to be high quality, flexible early learning and childcare that is accessible and affordable for families.

Investment in the earliest years of life is crucial to a child's development and has a lasting impact on outcomes in health, education and employment opportunities later in life. It is widely acknowledged that the provision of universally accessible and high quality early learning and childcare can play a vital role in helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

It is important that the funded entitlement is delivered through a mix of providers across the public, private and third sectors, including childminders, so that parents and carers can choose the provision that is best for their child.

To ensure that the funded entitlement is delivered in high quality settings we will introduce a new [Funding Follows the Child approach](#) in August 2020 alongside the statutory roll-out of the expanded entitlement.

Funding Follows the Child will empower parents and carers to choose from a range of high quality ELC providers.

This approach is 'provider neutral' and will be underpinned by a National Standard that all providers – regardless of whether they are in the public, private, or third sectors, or are a childminder – will have to meet from 2020. It will bring consistency and clarity, so all providers know they will have to meet the same requirements to offer funded ELC, wherever they are based in the country and whatever sector they operate in.

Providers across all parts of the sector are vital to enabling the delivery of the expanded entitlement.

However, we understand that this level of investment and change in the sector creates challenges for providers.

We already provide a range of support to ELC providers. For example, from April 2018 we removed the burden of non-domestic rates through the 100% rate relief for premises wholly or mainly used as day nurseries; and we are continuing to increase the number of ELC Modern Apprenticeships by 10% each year to 2020.

Our multi-year funding agreement with COSLA (Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) includes funding for the payment of sustainable rates to providers – as a result the hourly rates paid to providers across the country will increase significantly over the period to 2020.

Local authorities also provide tailored support to their local providers.

In recognition of the scale of the challenge ahead, in the Programme for Government we committed to building on these actions to ensure that ELC providers, including childminders, are supported through the transition to the implementation of the expanded entitlement in 2020.

We are now setting out the Delivery Support Plan for Early Learning and Childcare Providers, which will:

- Support the financial sustainability of providers;
- Strengthen partnership working;
- Support workforce recruitment and training; and
- Improve communications with parents and carers.

We intend to keep the Delivery Support Plan as a live document which will be updated as more support becomes available, and to allow us to reflect any further challenges or opportunities that emerge in the transition to 2020. The Delivery Support Plan will be available on a new website which will bring together useful information for providers, including guidance on the new Funding Follows the Child approach, and will be aligned with the dedicated ELC spaces within the Knowledge Hub.

The actions set out in this Delivery Support Plan are intended to complement those already being undertaken by local authorities for their providers.

## **SUMMARY OF THE DELIVERY SUPPORT PLAN FOR EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVIDERS**

The expansion to 1140 hours from 2020, and the introduction of the new Funding Follows the Child approach, will bring about transformational changes in the ELC sector.

It is underpinned by our [A Blueprint for 2020 Action Plan](#), published in March 2017, which set out the policy vision and framework for delivering the expansion.

The delivery of high quality ELC will help all children reach their potential and contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.

Providers from all parts of the sector will be vital to delivering this ambitious policy – regardless of whether they are in the private, public, or third sector, or whether they are childminders.

We understand that this level of change can create challenges for providers and that the nature of these challenges can vary across providers. Whilst this Plan sets out actions to benefit all providers it has a particular focus on measures to support providers in the private and third sectors, including childminders.

We have committed to supporting providers to prepare for the transition to 2020, and set out a range of actions in this Delivery Support Plan. This builds on support that is already available, and sets out further actions that will be introduced. It is important that this Plan remains flexible and is able to adapt to any emerging challenges or opportunities.

We are grateful for the input from a range of providers which has helped shape this Delivery Support Package and we will continue to engage with providers to inform its further development, building on existing support measures to ensure that it addresses the key challenges that providers are facing.

ELC providers in the private and third sectors, including childminders, have raised the following key challenges in their engagement with us:

- **Financial pressures, with concerns regarding their sustainability.**
- **A lack of genuine partnership between local authorities** and funded providers in some local authority areas.
- **Staffing and workforce, in particular the loss of experienced staff to local authority settings;** and

- **A need for improved communication with parents and carers**, in particular making them more aware of the options available to them when accessing the funded entitlement.

We have focused the Delivery Support Plan on actions which offer support in those areas. Table 1 provides a summary of key actions in each area, with more details in the following sections.

**Table 1: Summary of the Key Actions to Support Providers**

<p><b><u>Actions to support the financial sustainability of providers:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 100% business rate relief for premises wholly or mainly used as day nurseries introduced in April 2018.</li><li>• Local authorities encouraged to utilise the final £6 million ELC revenue allocation for 2018-19 to provide immediate support to funded providers.</li><li>• Through the multi-year funding agreement supporting the payment of sustainable rates to funded providers by 2020.</li><li>• Raising awareness of business support for providers, and working with delivery partners to help providers more easily access this support.</li><li>• Provide Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland with additional resource to support providers to meet the quality aspects of the National Standard.</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Actions to strengthen partnership working:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• ELC Partnership Forum established in October 2018, with COSLA, to drive action and promote more meaningful partnership working across the ELC sector.</li><li>• A Partnership Summit in early summer to bring together providers and local authorities to showcase good practice partnership working.</li><li>• Creating the mechanisms for sharing good practice partnership working, including through dedicated ELC spaces within Knowledge Hub.</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Actions to support workforce recruitment and training challenges:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working with COSLA to enable providers in the private and third sectors to post job opportunities for free on My Jobs Scotland in the period up to 2020.</li><li>• ELC Modern Apprenticeships (MAs) increasing by 10% each year to 2020, and from April 2018 the contribution for over 25s ELC MAs increased to £1,700.</li><li>• Working with delivery partners to identify further opportunities to incentivise more older workers to take-up training opportunities in ELC.</li><li>• Ensuring that there is appropriate training support for childminders, in particular through flexible training options.</li><li>• Providing targeted advice and support to providers to help them to implement Fair Work practices and to deliver the real Living Wage commitment.</li></ul>
<p><b><u>Actions to improve communication with parents and carers:</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Develop an online resource to empower parents and carers to make informed choices about the right ELC setting for their child.</li><li>• Work with providers and local authorities to develop a national information resource that all settings and local authorities can share with parents locally.</li><li>• Hold a childminding summit with the SCMA by March 2019 focused on ensuring parents and carers understand the potential benefits of accessing all or part of their child's entitlement from a childminding service.</li></ul>

## SUPPORTING THE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF PROVIDERS

The ELC sector in Scotland operates as a mixed economy model including public, private and third sector providers, and childminders. This variety is important as we want parents and carers to be able to choose the type of provision that best meets their child's needs.

The majority of providers in the private and third sector are small, often independent businesses. Delivery of the funded entitlement is an important aspect of their business. We appreciate that the level of transformative change underway and ahead is particularly challenging for these providers, and that there are concerns about financial sustainability as the balance of funded and bought provision shifts over time.

The [Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland](#) highlighted that, in 2016, funded providers in the private and third sector received around 23% of their income from delivering the funded hours. The remainder of their income (around 77%) was from fees paid directly by parents and carers.

The share of income accounted for by the funded entitlement in these providers is expected to increase with the roll-out of 1140 hours as settings allocate more of their capacity towards delivering the funded hours.

Analysis produced using data from the Financial Review highlighted that in 2016 the funding rate paid by local authorities to around 40% of funded providers in the private and third sectors did not cover their costs for delivering the funded hours.

With regards to the funded entitlement there are two key aspects that impact on financial sustainability: (1) the funding rate that providers receive for delivering the funded hours; and (2) a setting's ability to meet the new National Standard for all providers from 2020.

### How will we support the Financial Sustainability of Providers?

- **We are already providing support through the 100% business rate relief for premises wholly or mainly used as day nurseries that we introduced in April 2018.** It is estimated that the relief will remove the burden of rates for over 600 businesses, with an average saving of £13,000 per year. More information on the relief can be found at: <https://www.mygov.scot/business-rates-relief/day-nursery-relief/>.
- **We are encouraging local authorities to provide immediate support to funded providers by utilising the final £6 million revenue to be allocated in**

**2018-19 to support funded providers.** We wrote to local authorities on 2 November 2018 to highlight that authorities may wish to use this funding to provide training or business support, or to offer grants to providers and that they should consider consulting with providers on the use of the funding. As set out in the letter we will request an update from local authorities at the end of the Financial Year on the actions that they have taken to support providers, including information on the hourly rates being offered.

- **As part of the multi-year funding agreement to deliver the expansion we are substantially increasing the level of investment in the sector, including supporting the payment of sustainable rates to funded providers.** Many local authorities are already using the additional resource available in 2018-19 to increase rates being paid to funded providers, with further increases expected in 2019-20 as they transition towards the sustainable rates for full roll-out of 1140 hours from August 2020.
- To support local authorities to establish an affordable and sustainable rate for delivery of funded hours across all settings, **Scotland Excel have been working with providers, and local authorities to develop guidance on setting sustainable funding rates.** Scotland Excel have set out their initial analysis and will continue to work closely with providers and local authorities as they work towards finalising the guidance by March 2019.
- We understand that sustainability extends beyond just the funding rate that providers receive. The competitiveness and business sustainability of funded providers may be impacted by policy and investment decisions taken by local authorities. The recruitment activity of local authorities can also impact on the sustainability of funded providers. **As part of our new [Funding Follows the Child](#) approach local authorities will give appropriate consideration to these potential impacts in exercising their statutory duties, undertaking recruitment activity, and in applying ELC expansion planning principles.**
- There is already a range of business support available to providers – through for example, Business Gateway; Just Enterprise; Social Investment Scotland, and some local authorities provide their own tailored support. We are exploring how to raise awareness of this support within the ELC sector, and are continuing to work with COSLA and other delivery partners to help providers more easily access business support. **By March 2019, we will also bring together all the information on the current support that is available in a clear format that allows ELC providers to access the information.**
- **We have asked local authorities to share examples of support schemes that they are offering to providers through the ELC Expansion Knowledge Hub**

**and other networks.** Local authorities are permitted to use the additional capital funding that they have received to support the expansion to 1140 hours to provide support to funded providers in the private and third sectors where a need to create additional capacity has been identified in local expansion plans. This support is subject to any legal and financial restrictions on local authorities' ability to use capital funding to create assets owned outside the public sector. We know that a number of authorities, including Angus, Dumfries and Galloway and Moray, have developed their own support schemes for local providers, whilst others are developing schemes.

- It is vital that funded providers are paid promptly and efficiently by local authorities for the delivery of the funded hours, in order to ensure that their cash flows are healthy. Prompt and efficient payment to providers is an important aspect of the Funding Follows the Child approach. There are already examples across local authorities of prompt payment practices, and we will continue to encourage local authorities to share these examples of good practice with others **to ensure that funded providers in the private and third sectors, including childminders, receive payments for the funded hours in a prompt and efficient manner.**
- Delivering the funded entitlement makes an important contribution to the business, and sustainability, of ELC providers in the private and third sectors. This contribution will increase with the introduction of 1140 hours. However, we appreciate that for some settings the requirements to become a funded provider under the National Standard will be higher than those they currently face. **To support providers to meet the quality aspects of the National Standard we will provide additional resource to both the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland.** Further details on this support is set out in **Box 1.**

### **Box 1: Supporting Providers to Meet the Quality Aspects of the National Standard**

At the heart of the National Standard is a focus on quality. Elements of the quality criteria draw on Care Inspectorate evaluations, with settings required to be evaluated at 'Good' or above. Settings are also required to have a clear plan to continuously improve the quality of provision and outcomes for children and families. In developing these plans settings are expected to draw on the evidence from both Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate scrutiny activities.

The latest Care Inspectorate statistics highlight that, at December 2017, around 83% of private nurseries and 93% of third sector nurseries were delivering the funded entitlement. Of these providers, 85% of those in the private sector, and 89% in the third sector, currently had evaluations of 'good' or better across all Care Inspectorate evaluation themes.

**In order to support providers, in particular existing funded providers, to meet the Care Inspectorate evaluation elements of the Quality criteria in the National Standard we will provide additional funding to the Care Inspectorate to enable them to recruit additional Improvement Advisors.** These Advisors will work closely with providers, in particular those who do not yet meet the relevant National Standard criteria, to improve the quality of ELC provision.

Under the Care Inspectorate's general duty to furthering improvement, settings achieving an evaluation of 'Adequate' or below will already be offered a level of support from the Care Inspectorate to improve. This additional resourcing for providers already offering funded hours will increase the level of support they receive promoting high quality ELC which is at the heart of the funded entitlement.

These additional Improvement Advisors will be in place for an initial 2 year period to cover the transition to August 2020 and the first months following the introduction of the National Standard. We will work closely with the Care Inspectorate to review and evaluate the progress of this support throughout this period.

**We will also provide additional funding to Education Scotland to provide follow-up support to those settings where inspectors evaluate the quality of learning and education provision to be less than 'good' ( i.e. to include "satisfactory" evaluations).** This will provide an expert check on the local authority's assessment of whether the setting's improvement plan was adequately addressing feedback from Education Scotland inspections, and also support settings to implement change to help improve children's learning and progress.

## STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We expect local authorities and funded providers to work together meaningfully and in genuine partnership to deliver flexible ELC provision, while continuing to ensure a high quality experience for children is maintained and accessible to all.

There are already good examples of partnership working between local authorities and funded providers in the private and third sector, including childminders, which we encourage everyone to build upon so that best practice becomes standard practice across Scotland.

Following discussion with the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) and Association of Directors of Education in Scotland COSLA's Children and Young People's Board agreed partnership principles regarding the expansion of ELC in September 2018. The principles include transparency, accountability and communication between councils and providers, with all stakeholders being involved in the expansion plans.

It is apparent from our engagement with the sector that there remain challenges and concerns for both providers and authorities, and that some providers do not currently feel as though they are in a genuine partnership.

Partnership working is a key aspect of the 'provider neutral' Funding Follows the Child approach. The National Standard sets out the requirements for all funded providers, regardless of whether they are in the public, private or third sectors, including childminders. Whilst there is, rightly, a high expectation on providers delivering the funded entitlement, settings should also have high expectations of the support that they can expect to receive as part of their agreement with the local authority.

Under this approach there should be a clear and consistent level of support that funded providers across all settings can expect from local authorities. More details on this support can be found in [Funding Follows the Child and National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Operating Guidance](#).

### How will we strengthen partnership working?

- The Scottish Government wrote to local authority Directors of Education on 7 August 2018 to highlight **the key role for local authority leaders to promote meaningful and genuine partnership working and to build trust; to strengthen communication with providers; and to encourage the development of networks for sharing good practice.**

- **The Scottish Government has worked with COSLA to establish the ELC Partnership Forum, which met for the first time on 23 October 2018.** Further details on the Forum are provided in **Box 2**.
- **To build on the work of the ELC Partnership Forum we will work with COSLA to host a Partnership Summit in early summer 2019.** This will bring together all local authorities and a range of providers and will focus on showcasing good practice partnership working, and implementing a provider neutral approach. In particular, it will provide an opportunity for engagement for those providers who have not yet had an opportunity to attend a meeting of the Partnership Forum.
- **We are creating mechanisms for sharing good partnership working practice.** We are increasing our use of the ELC Knowledge Hub, a web-based sharing portal (where all papers and minutes from the Partnership Forum are publicly available), and drawing on good practice from authorities where partnership working is stronger. We are working with COSLA and delivery partners to build on this to promote good practice in partnership working, including the development of case studies.
- Although there is a range of good practice in partnership working across the sector, and this will grow as this practice is shared, we are aware that, in some cases, additional support may be required to strengthen partnership working. **We are exploring the potential to offer access to training, where required, to local authority commissioners and to funded providers to enhance and support meaningful and genuine partnership working across the sector.** We will set out more details by spring 2019.

## **Box 2: Early Learning and Childcare Partnership Forum**

The Scottish Government and COSLA have worked together to establish the ELC Partnership Forum. The Forum is focused on driving action with its objectives:

- To promote meaningful partnership working across the ELC sector;
- To provide a forum for the sharing of best practice along with exploring new ideas and perspectives, both in meetings of the Forum, and by promoting this across the sector by appropriate means; and
- To identify, and propose solutions to specific issues raised by providers and/or authorities.

Membership of the Forum has been designed to be representative of the ELC sector, and provides an opportunity for as many providers as possible to be involved. Forum meetings will be held in locations across Scotland to maximise its accessibility to providers. Whilst there will be a limit on the number of attendees who can attend each meeting, to ensure that meetings are manageable, it is important that there is open access to the Forum and that providers from all sectors feel included.

Providers who wish to participate in the Forum can sign up to join the Providers Membership Pool. Any provider can sign up to participate in the Forum at [ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot](mailto:ELCPartnershipForum@gov.scot).

The Forum has a 'core membership' of 18 from across local authorities and providers (6 local authority representatives; 4 representative groups (NDNA, CALA, SCMA and Early Years Scotland); and 8 providers from across the ELC sector), which is then supported by COSLA, Scottish Government and Scotland Excel officials. We are also encouraging broader representation from the third sector.

The key messages from each Forum meeting are tabled at the new Joint Delivery Board which is chaired by the Minister for Children and Young People and the COSLA Spokesperson for Children and Young People. The Forum held its first meeting on 23 October, where it focused on Principles and best practice in partnership working, and on the draft National Standard for all providers (in particular the Food and Inclusion criteria).

The second meeting of the Forum was held on 12 December in Aberdeen and focused on workforce issues. The next meetings are scheduled for February and April.

All the agendas, papers and minutes for the Forum are available in the dedicated ELC space within the Knowledge Hub.

## **SUPPORTING PROVIDERS WITH WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING CHALLENGES**

The single most important driver of the quality of a child's ELC experience is a high quality workforce. There are few more important jobs than caring for, and educating, our youngest children. We are proud to have an ELC sector full of individuals who are hugely committed to nurturing our youngest children and helping them to reach their full potential.

To ensure that we have enough funded places to deliver the expanded entitlement by 2020, we need more people to join our ELC workforce. So far this growth has been concentrated in local authority settings.

We realise that whilst the overall growth in the ELC workforce has created a range of new and exciting opportunities in the sector it has also created challenges for some providers.

The ELC Partnership Forum meeting on 12 December focused on workforce. At this session providers raised challenges regarding the loss of staff from private and third sector providers to local authority settings, and the impacts this has on a setting. These impacts are not just financial, and include capacity concerns (with more time focused on recruitment activity), continuity of care, and potentially quality of provision, given that many of the staff leaving are the most experienced.

There is a gap between average earnings in local authority settings and settings in the private and third sectors. For example, the [Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare](#) in Scotland found that, in 2016, around 80% of practitioners and 50% of supervisors in private and third sector settings delivering the funded entitlement were paid an hourly rate below the real living wage. Public sector staff working in ELC settings already receive at least the real Living Wage.

### **How will we support providers with workforce recruitment and training challenges?**

- **We are working with COSLA to enable providers in the private and third sectors to post job opportunities for free on My Jobs Scotland (MJS) in the period up to 2020.**
- **In recognition of the growing popularity of the Modern Apprenticeship (MA) route, Skills Development Scotland (SDS) have committed, through their Skills Investment Plan for the ELC expansion, to increasing ELC MAs by 10% each year to 2020, subject to employer demand.** This includes an initial assumption of 1,700 MA starts in the 2018-19 academic year. However, SDS have advised that they expect to see a further rise in demand for apprenticeships

in the course of 2018-19 and beyond. Information on ELC Modern Apprenticeships can be found at <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/for-employers/modern-apprenticeships/>.

- To create new opportunities for people to join the ELC workforce, and to encourage a broader age profile, **we have increased the financial contributions for ELC related Modern Apprenticeships for those aged 25 and over**. From April 2018 the contribution increased from £700 to £1,700.
- We are currently working with delivery partners to identify further opportunities to **incentivise more older workers to take-up training opportunities in ELC**, and in particular the over 25s Modern Apprenticeship route. Our ongoing national recruitment campaign is targeting older career changers and parental returners as one of the key audiences, in recognition of the valuable role which older workers with experience in other fields could play in the ELC workforce.
- The National Standard will introduce a requirement that all childminders delivering the funded entitlement have either obtained, or are working towards, the benchmark qualification for ELC practitioners. **Box 3** sets out the support that will be available to help childminders to meet this requirement.
- The promotion of Fair Work practices is central to the Funding Follows the Child approach. Ensuring that staff are fairly remunerated – through, for example, supporting payment of the real Living Wage – is a key aspect of demonstrating commitment to fair work practices. To support this the Scottish Government will provide local authorities with sufficient funding to allow them to set rates with providers in the private and third sectors that enable providers to pay all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement the real Living Wage from August 2020. **We will provide targeted advice and support to providers on implementing Fair Work practices. This includes working with the Poverty Alliance, and the wider sector, to develop sessions for providers to support them in meeting the ‘real’ Living Wage commitment.** As part of these sessions we will look to involve providers who are already paying the real Living Wage.

### **Box 3: Support for Childminders with Training and Qualification Requirements**

The National Standard, which will be introduced from August 2020, will require childminders delivering the funded entitlement to either have obtained the benchmark qualification for ELC practitioners or, if they are still within their first 5 years of delivering the funded hours, be working towards achieving this qualification.

**To support childminders to meet this requirement we are working with training providers and colleges to explore how relevant prior experience, training and qualifications can be recognised and accredited towards a mandatory qualification.**

As a first step, the Care Inspectorate's '[Your Childminding Journey – a Learning and Development Resource](#)' (a learning and development resource for childminders) is being further developed. These developments will help childminders gather evidence of prior learning, understand what evidence might be relevant to present to colleges and training providers and identify any gaps in their knowledge and areas for further study before deciding on a route to qualification.

We will work with Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQ) training providers to ensure that adequate infrastructure is in place that allows childminders to access training in a flexible way that does not require them to take time away from delivering their services to parents. The SVQ Social Services (Children and Young People) is already offered by several colleges in a flexible way that meets the needs of childminders.

The [Scottish Childminding Association](#) (SCMA) have also developed a workplace award that offers 12 credits at SCQF level 7. This qualification has been mapped by the SQA (Scottish Qualifications Authority) to the SVQ practitioner level qualification which means that childminders who complete units, or the whole workplace award, will generate evidence that can be used as recognition of prior learning and give them some credits towards the full benchmark qualification.

Provided the applicant's individual income does not exceed £25,000 per annum, fee grants for part time courses are available from the [Student Awards Agency Scotland](#) (SAAS). Another source of part-funding is the [Skills Development Scotland](#) Individual Training Account.

We will explore whether other dedicated funding needs to be made available to help childminders to fund their qualifications during this transition period.

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS AND CARERS

The Funding Follows the Child approach places choice in parents' and carers' hands allowing them to access their child's funded entitlement from any setting – in the public, private or third sector, including from a childminder – who meets the National Standard, has a place available and is willing to enter into a contract with their local authority.

We know that parents and carers are really pleased that the expansion will mean increased choice and flexibility. We also understand that picking the right ELC provider is an important decision for parents and carers. We will therefore work in partnership to support families and give them the guidance that they need to make informed decisions – to help families decide what matters to them and to support them to judge quality for themselves.

This includes making parents and carers more aware of the options available to them when accessing the funded entitlement – including the potential to use their funded hours with a childminder.

High quality ELC should also support parents and carers in their role as the primary influence on children's outcomes. That is why engagement with parents and carers is key aspect of the new National Standard that all funded providers will have to meet from 2020. Promoting parent and carer engagement and involvement in children's learning while they attend ELC is an important opportunity to make parents and carers feel valued, instil them with confidence in their role and demonstrate that settings involved in their child's life are accessible and approachable.

### How will we improve Communication with Parents and Carers?

- **We will develop an online resource for parents and carers to empower them to make informed choices about the right ELC setting for their child.** We will work closely with parents, carers and parent organisations to develop the resource, which will be available by March 2019.
- It is important that consistent messaging is available to parents and carers through the communications that they receive from providers, local authorities and the Scottish Government. **We will work with providers and local authorities to develop a national information resource that all settings and local authorities can share with parents locally, to help ensure clear and consistent messaging about the funded entitlement.**
- We know how important childminders are, particularly for our younger children. Childminders can provide a nurturing setting for young children where they can provide creative, personalised care and learning through play. Our recent

parental survey indicates that there is considerable demand from parents to increase their use of childminders as we move towards the introduction of the expanded early learning and childcare entitlement in 2020. Whilst the latest figures from the SCMA highlight an encouraging increase in the number of childminders who have become funded providers, the numbers are still relatively low and there is more that can be done. **To identify actions to ensure parents and carers understand the potential benefits of accessing all or part of their child's ELC entitlement from a childminding service we have committed to holding a childminding summit with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) by end of March 2019.** We will host the summit on a Saturday to ensure that it is easier for childminders to attend.

- As set out in legislation, the funded hours must be free at the point of access regardless of which setting the hours are being delivered in. This duty applies to local authorities and is extended to funded providers when they enter into partnership to deliver the funded hours. Where parents and carers are accessing a mixture of funded and non-funded hours from a setting, any charges must be presented clearly and transparently to parents and carers. **We will work together with providers and Scotland Excel, drawing on existing good practice, to develop templates that funded providers may wish to utilise to support clear and transparent information for parents and carers on fees and charges.**



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