

Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents



Early Years
Service

The term 'Early Learning and Childcare' is used in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. This term has been used in place of Pre-School Education in recognition of this. The abbreviation 'ELC' (Early Learning and Childcare) will be used throughout this document.

Throughout this guidance, the word 'parent' should be interpreted as including the child's carer or legal guardian.

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Introduction – A Guide to Early Learning and Childcare in Argyll and Bute

The Argyll and Bute Early Years Service would like to welcome you and your child as you take your first steps into Early Learning and Childcare.

The provision of a good quality Early Learning and Childcare experience builds on the valuable learning that takes place in and around the home before children start Primary School. It also develops the learning and other essential skills that they will rely on in later life.

There are currently 53 pre 5 units based in Primary Schools, which offer hours in the morning and afternoon. Separate guidance on all aspects of childcare provision within Argyll and Bute is available from the Family Information Service.

In addition to local authority managed nurseries, Argyll and Bute Early Years Service is currently in partnership with 23 Partner Provider centres who provide quality ELC within the private, voluntary and independent sector.

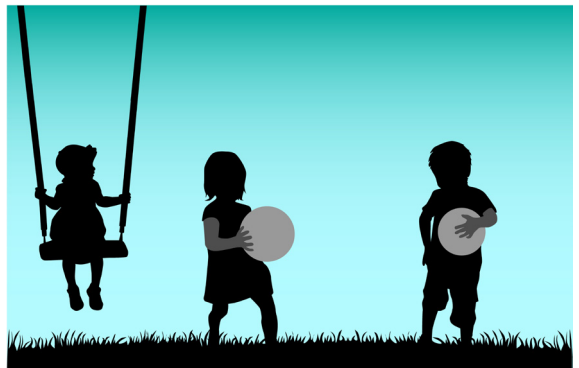
A full list of Local Authority managed pre 5 units and Partner Provider centres can be found at <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/childcare-and-pre-school-education>.

All 3 and 4 year olds are entitled to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and for the first time some 2 year olds will be eligible. It will help young children gain vital language and learning skills, improve their social development and help them do better at school when it comes. It will also support parents to work, train or study.

ELC can be provided by a range of services including Playgroups, Nurseries, Local Authority ELC and Childminders.

This information is intended to help you and your child get the most out of the ELC experience by answering the most frequently asked questions we receive.

Full details of the Council's policy on early learning and childcare are contained in the Education Management Circular available to view on the Council's website:
www.argyll-bute.gov.uk.



When is my child eligible for a place?

3 year old children are eligible to start the Monday after their 3rd birthday, unless their birthday falls between March and June, when they will start the following August – the same as school.

Children must be 3 years of age by the first in-service day of the new school term in August to start on the first day of term; otherwise it will be the Monday after their 3rd birthday.

ELC providers reserve the right to postpone a child's start date after discussion with you if it falls close to a holiday period. This is to ensure the needs of the child are met and that settling in periods are sufficient.

A child's entitlement to free ELC will be 600 hours generally arranged as 5 x 3 hour and 10 minute sessions over a minimum of 38 weeks within the school year. However some units are offering a different pattern of provision. Information on what nurseries are offering can be obtained from each provider or school or on the Council website. Contact details are on the back of this leaflet.

4 year old children not currently attending an ELC Provider will be eligible for their ELC starting immediately subject to agreement by the Head Teacher/ Nursery manager.

If your child is only accessing part of your ELC hours and you wish to increase or change your hours, please let the provider know.

Children who are 4 years of age in January and February are automatically entitled to an additional year of nursery. If you choose to take up this entitlement you must inform the nursery during registration week.

If your child turns 4 years of age between 1st September and 31st December



you can apply for an additional year of ELC, however it is at the Council's discretion if it is granted. This is referred to as a deferred entry. Applications for a deferred entry must be made during registration week.

For more information on deferred entries, please contact the Early Years Service.

Some 2 year old children are eligible for a funded placement of Early Learning and Childcare

Are you in receipt of one of the benefits below?

If yes, your 2 year old child will be eligible for an ELC funded place.

- Income support
- Job seekers allowance (income based)
- Any income related element of employment and support allowance
- Incapacity benefit or severe disablement allowance
- Pension credit
- Universal credit - where household earned income is £610 or less per month
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit, and your income is less than £16,105
- Both maximum Child Tax Credit and maximum Working Tax Credit and your income is under £6,420
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

Those aged 2 or over who are (or have been at any point since turning 2) either looked after by a local authority, the subject of a kinship care order or a child with a parent-appointed guardian are also entitled to 600 hours of ELC.

2 year old children become eligible for funded ELC dependant on their month of birth as outlined below:

1 March – 31 August	August term*
1 September – 31 December	January term
1 January – 28/29 February	April term

* Children whose birthday falls after the first day of term in August (including in-service days) will start in the October term following their 2nd birthday.



Applying for an Early Learning and Childcare place.

How do I apply for ELC for my 3 year old child?

Registration week for ELC usually takes place the first week in February. If you would like to register your child for ELC please visit the provider of your choice. Details of the registration week and where places are available for ELC can be obtained from:

- Adverts in the local press prior to registration week
- Social networking sites
- Posters displayed in council offices, libraries, community education offices, primary and secondary schools, private, voluntary and independent providers
- Our helpline service – details under ‘Contact Information’.

On the application form you will be asked to identify your first, second and third choice of nursery. Every effort will be made to meet your first preference but this will depend on the number of places that are available and on the priority given to applications. You only need to fill in one application.

Please remember to bring along your child’s birth certificate when registering! ‘The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended, allows parents of a child who has been assessed as having additional support for learning needs, to make a placing request for their child to attend any centre under the management of an education authority which includes both local authority Early Childhood Centres and partner providers.

If a placing request is refused, the parent will have the right to formally appeal as set out in the Code of Practice as defined by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended.’

How do I apply for ELC for my 2 year old child?

- Parents/carers should contact the Early Years Helpline on 01369 708503 and request an application pack.
- When you have chosen your preferred provider, please phone to check whether there are available spaces.
- Completed packs should be given to the nursery manager, childminder or head teacher.
- Your application will be checked by someone from the Early Years Service and confirm your place in writing.
- If you require support to fill out the forms please contact us on the number on this leaflet, speak to your Health Visitor or Jobcentre Plus.



How are places offered?

The Early Years Service will inform you by letter if your application for ELC has been successful. This is usually confirmed by the end of May.

Sometimes, especially in areas where there are more children, the demand for places within a nursery can be greater than those available.

If there are not enough places at your chosen ELC setting, difficult decisions have to be made. It has been agreed there are some family and geographical circumstances which will give children priority for admission. If there are not enough places to meet demand, a ballot will be held. If you are unsuccessful in the ballot for your preferred provider, you will be offered another ELC place, and you will be informed of this following the ballot.

The same priorities are used for all ELC settings whether Local Authority or recognised Partner Providers.

Please see appendices one and two for further information on this process.

How do I change your child's ELC place?

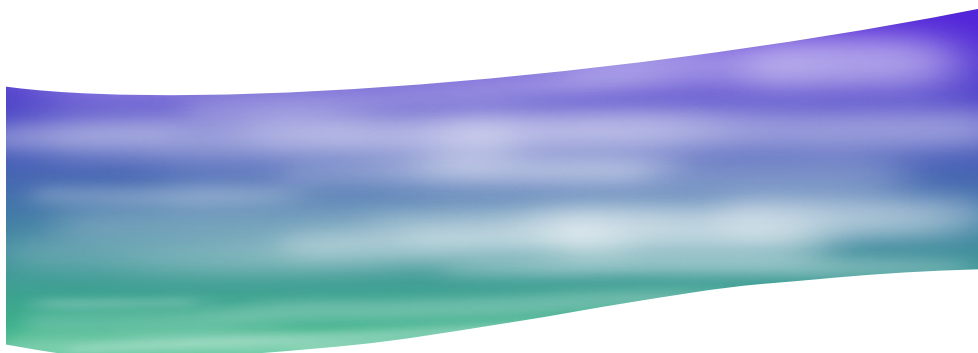
Continuity is always seen as being an important part of high quality ELC, therefore careful consideration should be given when changing your child's ELC placement.

- Children can change provider by parents giving the nursery 4 weeks written notice.
- If you require to make a change to your child's ELC provider and are unable to give 4 weeks written notice due to unforeseen circumstances you must contact the Early Years helpline on 01369 708503 or email earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk explaining the reason for your request.

What do I need to know if my child accesses a place at a Partner Provider of ELC?

A Partner Provider nursery or playgroup is commissioned by the local authority to provide Early Learning and Childcare.

- You will be asked to sign a form at nursery each month confirming your child's placement. Although we recognise that this process can be inconvenient it is important that you sign the forms every month as this ensures your nursery receives their funding for ELC.
- Once a year you will receive a code from the Early Years Service which needs to be passed to your child's nursery. Once again this is a very important process to ensure your nursery receives their funding.
- When you receive your code please check your letter for accuracy. If the nursery name or placement details are wrong please inform Early Years Service immediately.



What happens if I want my child to access ELC in a different authority?

A parent who resides in Argyll and Bute Council area who wishes to access ELC in another authority should contact that authority or if you require further guidance please contact the Early Years helpline (see under 'Contact Information').

Can my child attend more than one Early Learning and Childcare setting (known as a shared placement)?

“The aim is that children experience consistent high quality early learning and childcare. This means consistency of relationships with staff and other children; and consistency of experiences”. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 Early Learning and Childcare, Statutory Guidance.

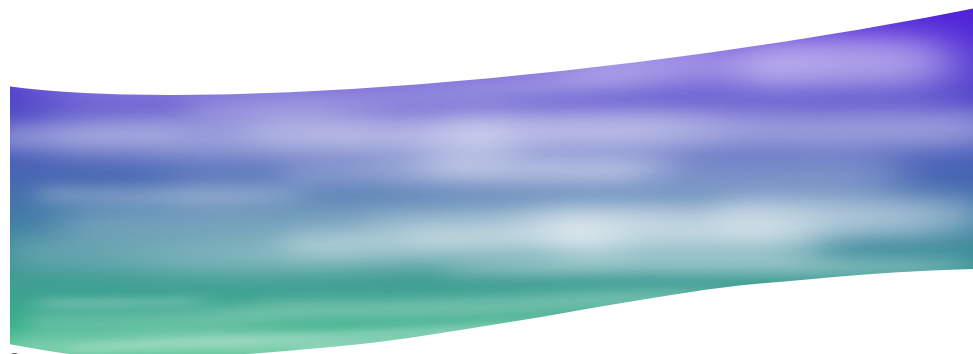
However, a range of settings can also be beneficial for children and parents and Argyll and Bute Council will accommodate shared placements across 2 different providers more widely across the week where this meets the needs of the child and parents or carers.

The Local Authority has a strong expectation that ELC Providers will share information on attendance patterns and anything else that might have an impact on a child's wellbeing, development and learning. This could be through visits, telephone contact, email or any other suitable means of regular communication.

Parents can expect to be kept informed of how ELC settings are sharing progress and working together to ensure continuity in learning and care for their child and, through their own active engagement, will have an important role to play in this.

Is transport provided for ELC?

ELC provision has no entitlement to transport, unless in exceptional circumstances. For public transport provision please visit <http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/transport-and-streets/journey-planning-and-timetables> for information on bus times.





Contact Information

Early Years Helpline.....01369 708503 Monday-Friday 9-5pm
 Family Information Service*01369 708517 Monday-Friday 9-5pm
 Email.....earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk
 Address.....Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, PA23 8AJ
 Web page.....www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/education-and-learning
 Family Information Services.....www.families.scot
 List of nurseries within Argyll and Bute.....
<http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/content/childcare-and-pre-school-education>

*The Scottish Family Information Service provides online, local information about nurseries, childminders, out of school care and local events/activities. It also provides details of organisations offering support, information and guidance at local and national levels including vouchers, tax credits and child benefit.

Complaints Framework

If you have a complaint about your child’s ELC talk it over with the Head Teacher, Manager or Childminder. If the matter is not resolved to your satisfaction then contact the Early Years Team on 01369 704000 and they will discuss the matter with you, advise you on your options and if appropriate, where you should direct your complaint.

Appendix One

Administration of the Ballot for ELC provision

1. If, after registration week, an ELC setting has received more application forms than capacity available a ballot will be required.
 2. Early Years Team must be contacted to advise a ballot is required. A meeting will be arranged to categorise application forms by the Manager or Head Teacher.
 3. Set the date on which the ballot is to take place.
 4. Inform the parents concerned of the ballot date. On the ballot day the names of the children on separate ballot slips should be laid out for checking by those present.
 5. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to place the ballot slips into the ballot box.
 6. From the parents or staff present a person is to be nominated to draw out the slips.
 7. Places should be allocated as slips are drawn out.
 8. Once all the places are allocated, slips should continue to be drawn out and the Nursery Application Management System (NAMS) waiting list amended.
 9. In the event of any child selected for a place not taking up that place, the place will be offered to those children on the waiting list in the order of the draw.
 10. Those children not receiving a place need to be moved to the 2nd choice provider therefore the Early Years Helpline should be notified with the details of the children in order for this to be carried out.
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Appendix Two

Priority Criteria

Priority 1

For children deferring entry from P1 and staying at nursery an additional year of funding has been agreed by Argyll and Bute Council.

Priority 2

- (i) Children on the child protection register or identified through child protection procedures.
- (ii) Referral from social work department where the child is deemed to be in need where:
 - The placement would help the child remain within the family environment rather than be looked after by the local authority.
 - The child is subject of a statutory order.
 - The placement would support the child's return to the family.

Priority 3

Referrals from the undernoted professionals where there are concerns about the development of the child, parent or family.

- Education establishments
- Health agencies
- Education psychology services
- Social work services
- Voluntary sector agencies.

This priority refers to children who require support as a result of circumstances which are placing the child, parent or family at an education, social or health disadvantage. This includes children who are adversely affected by the disability of any other person in the family or it may include children with English as an additional language where a high level of support is needed.





Priority 4

Elder sibling attends same ELC setting/school.

Priority 5

Reside within catchment area of school.

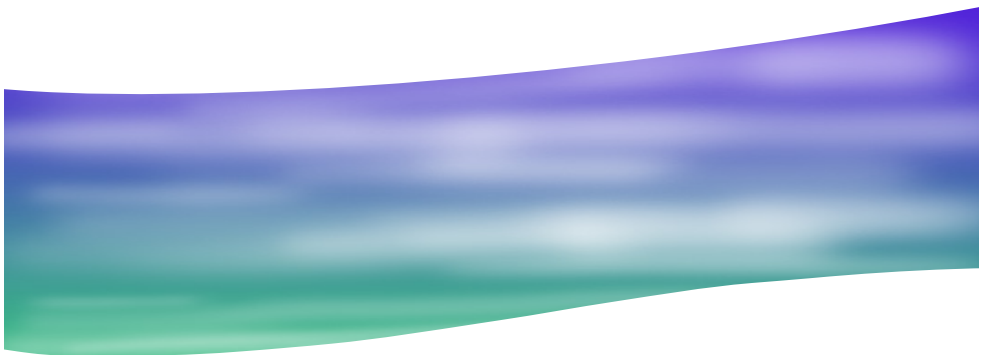
Priority 6

Children whose parents are required to purchase a regular pattern of additional day care from the same provider.

Priority 7

- (i) Children outwith Argyll and Bute requesting an ELC place within Argyll and Bute will be placed only once all eligible children residing within Argyll and Bute have been placed.
- (ii) Children outwith Argyll and Bute will not be placed within Argyll and Bute if placing them incurs extra costs for Argyll and Bute.

Notes



Argyll and Bute Council – Community Services: Education
Argyll House, Alexandra Parade, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 8AJ
Telephone: 01369 704000 Fax: 01369 708584
Email: earlyyears@argyll-bute.gov.uk
www.argyll-bute.gov.uk

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This information leaflet can be supplied in other languages and formats. Please contact the Early Years helpline.