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**Our Ref:** LMCA/CC

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Dear Parent/Carer,

### **Allocation of early learning and childcare places – academic year 2020/21**

Firstly, may I take this opportunity to apologise for the delay in the allocation of early learning and childcare (ELC) places. My statement on the Council website on 13 May 2020, advised parents that there would be a delay due to the priority to concentrate on the urgent task of providing critical childcare for those who need it most in partnership with other childcare services.

The national ELC framework guidance was published on Monday 15 June 2020 and provides practical guidance on implementing public health measures for ELC settings to reopen safely in phase 3 of the Scottish Government's Route Map. However, these measures will change the way that ELC settings deliver services and their operating model.

The hours and weeks of opening of ELC settings across East Ayrshire include term time only or all year services. The allocation of places needs to take account of available capacity in each ELC setting and this will vary from setting to setting. Considerations that need to be taken into account are the physical capacity both inside and outside which may be affected by public health measures, staffing capacity, the need to work in small groups, minimising contact between these groups, ensuring physical distancing between adults and ensuring enhanced hygiene practices and infection control procedures.

*The Strategic Framework for Reopening Schools and Early Learning and Childcare Provision in Scotland* has identified three groups who will have priority access to ELC provision where capacity is limited:

- Children who may be provided with access to daycare services under section 27 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Children eligible for the funded entitlement of 600 hours of ELC i.e. eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds
- Key worker families requiring critical childcare

On Thursday 11 June 2020, the Council's Executive Committee agreed 7 key principles for the allocation of ELC places for 2020/21. These are:

1. Every eligible child resident in East Ayrshire will be allocated a place
2. A small number of full time places will be provided in early childhood centres for key worker families requiring critical childcare, where capacity is available
3. Cross boundary applications will be allocated a place, if capacity is available

4. As a starting point, each ECC will aim to allocate every eligible child an initial 2 sessions per week.
5. Depending on overall numbers, staffing capacity and public health measures and advice, the number of hours or sessions may change over time as experience shows what can be safely managed
6. Every early childhood centre will work towards the delivery of 600 hours at a pace that takes account of the national ELC framework guidance and the three groups identified in the *Strategic Framework* who will have priority to that capacity.
7. We will work with our funded ELC providers to reopen and deliver ELC as per the national ELC framework guidance.

We are now in a position to confirm to you the early childhood centre where your child has been allocated a place so you will receive direct contact from the centre over the course of next week. Further detail about the pattern of hours of your child/ren's allocated place will be determined when we have reviewed the ELC guidance and considered the implementation of this in each ELC setting.

We will be discussing the ELC framework guidance with our funded ELC providers who in turn will assess their available capacity. Thereafter, funded ELC providers will be in touch with parents and carers re children who are returning to their service and with parents and carers who have applied for a place.

This period continues to be challenging for us all, particularly as we face an unknown future in regard to lockdown rules and when these may indeed change, so I thank you so much for your patience and understanding at this time.

Yours sincerely



LINDA McAULAY-GRIFFITHS  
**Head of Education**