

Dumfries and Galloway Council Early Learning and Childcare Plan

Update 2022



National Context

The Dumfries and Galloway Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan takes account of the National guidance which sets out a vision for Early Learning and Childcare which is underpinned by the principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility, and affordability.

The Scottish Government's aim is to make Scotland the best place to grow up with policies designed to give children the best possible start in life, close the attainment gap and deliver excellence and equity for all.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 defines Early Learning and Childcare as 'a service, consisting of education and care, of a kind which is suitable in the ordinary case for children who are under school age, regard being had to the importance of interactions and other experiences which support learning and development in a caring and nurturing environment'.

The aim of the Act is to improve and integrate the role of early years support in children and families' lives by increasing the amount and flexibility of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC); developing a high quality and flexible system which is accessible and affordable for all children, parents, carers and families.

Since August 2021 all eligible children have been entitled to 1140 hours per annum of ELC; Dumfries and Galloway have been delivering on this commitment since August 2020.

Local Context and Current Position

Dumfries and Galloway's strategy for ELC aligns with the priorities of the Council, specifically in:

- providing the best start in life for all our children, ensuring early intervention, in particular to keep our region's most vulnerable children safe
- raising ambition and attainment, in particular to address inequalities and
- supporting children to be healthy and active

ELC is underpinned by the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child. Accessible, affordable and flexible ELC will ensure that our youngest children will benefit from high quality care and learning experiences to improve outcomes.

Service Aims

Early Learning and Childcare in Dumfries and Galloway embraces a play pedagogy approach in high quality enabling learning environments that fully support all children to play, learn and develop skills and knowledge, building on previous experiences through a supportive, inclusive, nurturing ethos.

Flexible, accessible, affordable, quality services for families

- Ensuring families have a choice of quality provision that best suits their needs in a provider neutral approach
- Ensuring children experience high quality care, support and learning provision
- Ensuring families have confidence in the quality of service provision
- Ensuring providers meet the National Standard and the terms and conditions set out within the Dumfries and Galloway Council's ELC framework
- Ensuring flexible service delivery models options within each geographical area including term time, all year round provision and blended approaches across more than one provider
- Ensuring services are accessible to support families to work, train and study
- Enabling access to provision in rural areas
- Guaranteeing ELC will be free at the point of access
- Provides suitable access to provision and resources for children with additional support needs

High quality, stimulating physical environments inside and out:

- Ensuring children have daily access to outdoor physical play and learning opportunities
- Providing learning environments and resources which support all aspects of learning and development and fosters curiosity, inquiry and creativity
- Providing opportunities for children to follow their interests and shape their learning experiences through play
- Promoting developing skills in early literacy, numeracy and mathematics
- Providing appropriate spaces and time for children to rest and eat
- Developing infrastructure reflecting national best practice design guidance

A nurturing ethos which supports children's wellbeing, learning and development:

- Working in partnership with parents and carers to ensure effective planning to meet children's individual needs and stage of development taking account of all wellbeing indicators: Safe, Healthy, Active, Nurtured, Achieving, Respected, Responsible and Included
- Ensuring that all children are able to progress appropriately towards their developmental milestones building on their previous experiences
- Securing children's wellbeing and rights and acknowledging children as capable and competent learners
- Being flexible, responsive and provide opportunities for children to take forward their own ideas and interests
- Providing professional learning opportunities for staff including the Solihull approach
- Supporting a Key Person approach to ensure secure attachments
- Promoting an inclusion, supporting equity for all children

- Providing effective, supportive transitions into ELC and across the Early Level promoting continuity and progression in learning

A skilled, qualified workforce:

- Ensuring all staff working are appropriately qualified and registered with Scottish Social Service Council
- Ensuring regular opportunities for quality professional learning for all staff
- Providing experiences and a curriculum that focuses on challenge and enjoyment, breadth, progression, depth, personalisation and choice, coherence and relevance within their local context

Ensuring that children benefit from getting the right support at the right time:

- Ensuring Early Learning and Childcare is underpinned by the principles of Getting It Right for Every Child.
- Providing universal services and targeted support where appropriate, including through the Educational Visitor Service
- Working in partnership with parents and carers to plan for children's individual needs
- Working in partnership with other agencies such as the National Health Service

Effective partnerships with parents and carers:

- Recognising the role of parents and carers as 'first teacher'
- Involving parents and carers in creating effective Personal Plans to support their child's needs
- Strengthening parental engagement in children's learning and development
- Supporting parents and carers through opportunities for family learning

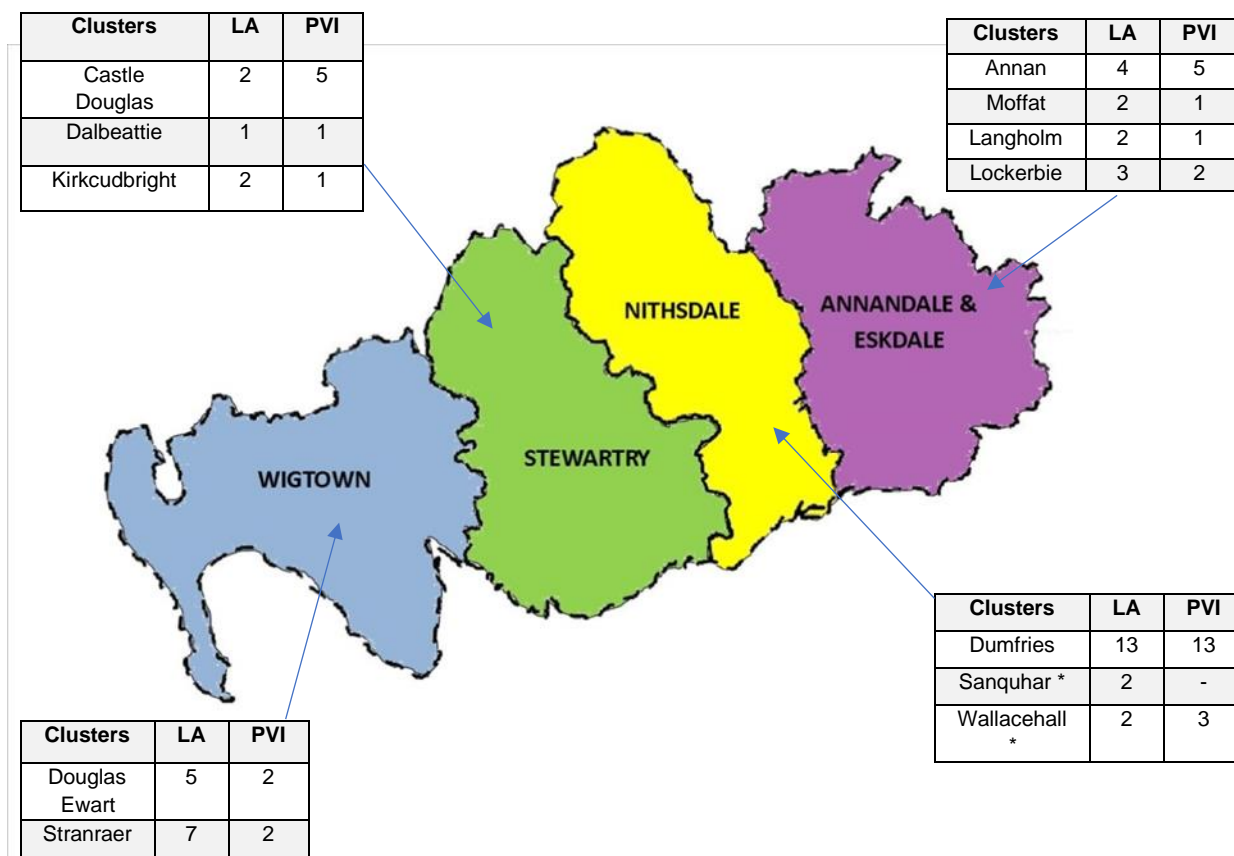
Current Provision in Dumfries and Galloway

Early Learning and Childcare is provided for approximately 2,900 children of which 63% access their funded entitlement in 45 school nurseries and 37% in 36 funded providers and 32 childminders. In Dumfries and Galloway all Local Authority provision is within primary schools. Most Local Authority nurseries operate between 8:30 and 15:30 each day with 7 larger nurseries open between 8:00 and 18:00. Funded providers offer arrange of models over term time or all year round.

Provision of Early Learning and Childcare August 2022:

ELC Establishment	% of children
Local Authority	63%
Private and Voluntary Providers	34.5%
Childminders	2.5%

Map of District Areas within Dumfries and Galloway



Local Authority (LA)

Private and Voluntary Providers (PVI)

Childminders operate across the region with numbers of childminders fluctuating.

A cluster refers to a Secondary School and associated Primary Schools, including all Early Learning and Childcare providers within that geographical area.

Delivery Models

Within a geographical area (cluster), families are able to choose from a range of providers offering a variety of delivery models, including term time, all year round provision and blended approaches across more than one provider. The local authority operates two delivery models as set out below

- **Delivery Model A** - All day provision during term time, aligned with the school day 08:30-15:30
- **Delivery Model B** - All day provision during term time 08:00–18:00

Funded providers may also offer these models with private providers and childminders also offering:

- **Delivery Model C** – All day provision throughout the year

The table below shows the proposed number of services for each delivery model. This will be subject to change; for example if more funded providers, including childminders, are accepted onto the Early Learning and Childcare framework.

Table 10 - Service Delivery Models:

ELC Establishment	Term Time Delivery Model A	Term time Plus Delivery Model B	All Year round Delivery Model C
Local Authority	38	7	
PVI*	14	-	22
Childminders	-	-	32

The full list of providers and operating hours can be found here.

[Early learning and childcare - Dumfries and Galloway Council \(dumgal.gov.uk\)](https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/early-learning-and-childcare)

Based on 27% of the two-year old population being eligible for funded Early Learning and Childcare around 55% are currently accessing their entitlement with this number increasing as enrolments take place throughout the year. From August 2021 children with parents who have experience of care were also eligible for funded hours. Regular campaigns promote the benefits of ELC for eligible two year olds and colleagues work in partnership across the Council and with NHS to promote the offer to eligible families.

Funded Providers

Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to a provider neutral approach, giving parents and carers increased choice and flexibility in the way they uptake the entitlement to 1140 hours.

All existing and potential providers, (including childminders) must apply to deliver Early Learning and Childcare on behalf of the Council. through the Early learning and Childcare Framework. Services will apply to the new framework in the Autumn of 2022 ahead of enrolment in the new year for children accessing ELC from August 2023. The Framework embraces a provider neutral approach ensuring as much flexibility and choice for parents and carers as possible.

Scottish Government published an interim guidance update on the Funding Follows the Child and National Standards for Providers in May 2022 which included interim guidance on setting sustainable rates for August 2022. The guidance includes uplifting rates for 2022-23 to ensure that they reflect the costs of delivery (including inflationary increases) of a high quality ELC experience, provide scope for reinvestment (reflecting a measure of profit in a private sector setting or surplus in a third sector organisation) and enable delivery of the Real Living Wage commitment

within the scope of the ELC quantum, as set out in the priorities and outcomes for 2022-23 received from Scottish Government.

The current rates for providers are set out below:

	3 / 4 Year Olds	2 Year Olds
Rate per hour per child	£5.71	£6.73
Meal per day	3.00	3.00
Milk and Snack per day	0.582	0.582

Rates may be uplifted taking account of any increases to the Real Living Wage and Inflation however these will need to be affordable within the funding quantum.

Officers have established a Collaborative forum to meet with providers to discuss aspects of ELC provision including approaches to setting sustainable rates for providers.

Care Inspectorate

The table below details the Care Inspectorate Evaluations as at August 2022 for all providers. Where themes were not assessed in the most recent inspection the previous grades (all good and above) have been included in the figures.

Care Inspectorate Grades:

	Grades Awarded of Good and Above							
	Care and Support / Care play and Learning		Environment / Setting		Management and Leadership		Staffing	
45 LA	43	95.5%	44	98%	43	95.5%	43	95.5%
36 PVI	34	94.5%	33	91.5%	33	91.5%	35	97%
32 ELC Childminders	32	100%	32	100%	32	100%	13*	100%

* Not all Childminders are inspected under this theme

The local authority is the guarantor of quality ensuring that services are meeting the National Standard as set out in [Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: principles and practice - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-the-child-and-the-national-standard-for-early-learning-and-childcare-providers-principles-and-practice/pages/1_to_4.aspx).

All services may access regular, tailored support from a local authority officer. Where Care Inspectorate grades are evaluated as adequate or below or where a provider fails to meet the criteria set out in the Standard, the provider enters into a service improvement period. Officers provide support and challenge to the provider to ensure that progress towards improvements is made and families are reassured of the quality of care and learning.

Consultation

Every two years in line with statutory duties, consultation is held seeking the views of families to ensure their needs are reflected in service planning and delivery.

In January 2022 an online survey to ascertain the views of existing and future parents/carers on the provision of funded Early Learning and Childcare, purchased childcare and Out of School Care/Holiday Clubs was undertaken. You can read more about the consultation here.

[Early Learning, Childcare and Out of School Care Consultation - Dumfries and Galloway Council \(dumgal.gov.uk\)](http://dumgal.gov.uk)

A total of 261 responses were received. Respondents completed the questions that were relevant to their family circumstances. Findings from the consultation are set out below.

137 families using funded Early Learning and Childcare.

- 113 (82.5 %) said it currently meets their needs.
- 15% talked about more need for wraparound care across the region.
- 25 (18%) of families said it does not meet their needs, reasons included lack of availability, extended childcare, and cost.
- Of the families receiving funded Early Learning and Childcare 59% choose the provider because it is close to their home.
- 19% choose the provider for flexible services and all-round care.

70 families not receiving funded Early Learning and Childcare but accessing childcare.

- 43% choose the provider because it is close to their home.
- 17% choose the provider for its flexibility and all-round care.
- 14% choose the provider because it is close to their work or training.

141 families responded in relation to future needs of Early Learning and Childcare.

- Around half of the respondents indicated they would use Local Authority with the remaining choosing Private/Voluntary/Independent Providers and Childminders.
- 50% of families are looking for care out with the school day and
- 52% are seeking all year-round provision.

261 families responded in relation to Out of School Care.

- 37 families currently use this provision with 25 (68%) reporting that it meets their needs.

173 (66%) families who do not currently use Out of School Care, said they would use this if it was available.

- 114 families reported that they would like this provision provided in schools, indicating they would use breakfast clubs, after school care and provision during the school holidays.

Families were asked for additional comments. There were several other issues identified for families through the questionnaire including the following.

- Lack of provision in rural villages where there are no childminders for wrap around care.
- Lack of wrap around care around the school day is still a barrier for working parents.
- Lack of information on what care is available in the holidays.

- Parents reported it is more difficult to access wrap around care for primary age children.
- Inflexible hours, for example fixed sessions does not align with working patterns for families who work shifts.

Based on the feedback received from parent there are no planned changes to the delivery of Early Learning and Childcare. Most families are able to access ELC in their first choice of provider, officers contact families direct who are unable to access their choice of provision and work with families to ensure suitable, accessible alternatives are found.

Officers have been working in partnership with the Scottish Childminding Association to increase the number of childminders with a focus on rural areas and this work is planned to continue to further improve the access to wider childcare to support families in rural communities. The framework for School Aged Childcare is expected later this year, on receipt of this officers will plan for the roll out in line with Scottish Government guidance, building on recent holiday care programmes, once further detail has been received.

Infrastructure

The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare required a range of refurbishments from small projects to full scale refurbishments developing underutilised school estate capacity.

Three local authority projects remain outstanding due to delays caused by the pandemic.

Cluster	School	Planned completion date
Stranraer	Park expansion refurbishment	
Castle Douglas	Springholm indoor/outdoor nursery	
Dumfries	Noblehill expansion new build	

Park and Noblehill nurseries will continue to be operated by the local authority. Funded providers may apply to tender to operate from Springholm Nursery in 2023. During the expansion programme five funded providers were supported build capacity through Capital grants.

Two projects remain outstanding but are due to complete this year Moniaive Playcare will relocate into a larger premises and Kids Ahoy open a second outdoor Nursery on the outskirts of Dumfries.

All of these projects will support further choice and flexibility for families, increasing capacity across the region.

Workforce

To ensure that there are sufficient staff suitably trained to deliver high quality ELC a wide range of professional learning is offered to all providers, you can read more about it here

[Education and Learning Directorate Annual Report \(moderngov.co.uk\)](https://www.moderngov.co.uk/education-learning-directorate-annual-report)

To ensure that there continues to be sufficient numbers of staff and for succession planning the Council will continue to offer Trainee posts where required with practitioners undertaking SCQF Level 6 and 7 Children and Young People through Dumfries and Galloway College whilst working in ELC.

The Council will also continue to support staff to undertake the necessary qualification for nursery managers through University West of Scotland. 13 staff are due to complete their qualification in 2023 and a further seven are undertaking the BA Childhood Practice Course part time and due to complete in 2026.

Officers will explore the issues around staff recruitment and retention in funded providers as part of the Collaborative Forum.

Early Learning and Childcare Plan 2022-2025

Theme	What are we going to do?	What is the expected impact ?
Delivery Models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to keep under review the current delivery models to ensure that they meet families' needs across the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families have a choice of provider and access to range of accessible delivery models to best suit their needs including blended provision across two or more providers
Two Year Old Uptake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to promote the offer of ELC to eligible families through biannual publicity campaigns and through targeted support to families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased uptake of eligible children improving outcomes and supporting parents/carers to access work, train or study
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to work with funded providers to support payment of sustainable rates Offer trainee posts and access to appropriate qualification Continue to offer BA Childhood Practice and Graduate Diploma qualifications to existing staff to develop future leadership opportunities Continue to explore options in partnership with providers to address recruitment/retention issues across the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sustainable, thriving ELC sector offering choice and flexible options for families Sustainable, skilled and qualified workforce to ensure high quality provision for all children
Improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to offer bespoke support on a needs led basis to all providers Continue to offer a minimum of four quality improvement and assurance visits to every provider Continue to deliver programme of professional learning including access to Froebel in Childhood Practice Liaise with Care Inspectorate to support improvement with a focus on services not yet meeting the Standard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All provision is of high quality with providers maintaining Care Inspectorate grades of Good or above across all themes ensuring that children receive high quality care and learning wherever they access their entitlements

	<p>and promote engagement with Care Inspectorate Quality Improvement Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support all services pre and post inspection by regulatory bodies 	
Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to consult widely with families across the region through the consultation process every two years • Continue to support individual families to access funded entitlement at services which suit their needs/circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service design meets the needs of children and families
Building Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete infrastructure programme at Park, Noblehill and Springholm Primaries • Continue to work in partnership with Employability colleagues, Business Gateway and SCMA to increase the number of childminders • Open the ELC Framework through Public Contract Scotland on an annual basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased capacity and choice of provision in Stranraer, Castle Douglas and Dumfries cluster areas. • Increased flexibility and choice through childminding offer including access to further wrap around care • Increase range of providers across Dumfries and Galloway

