

Department of Business Operations and Partnerships

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Date: 30 May 2024

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TO: Councillors A. Anderson (Chair), K. Pragnell (Vice Chair), T. Buchanan, K. Campbell, D. Devlin, C. Merrick, O. O'Donnell and G. Wallace; Ms F. Gilchrist; Ms D. Graham; Mr D. Morris; and Ms E Yedd.

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

A meeting of the Education Committee will be held in the Council Chamber, Council Headquarters, Eastwood Park, Giffnock, on **Thursday, 6 June 2024 at 10.00 a.m.**

The agenda of business is as listed below.

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DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence.**
2. **Declarations of Interest.**
3. **Presentation to June Comrie, Catering Manager, Facilities Management, in recognition of Catering Manager of the Year PSC Award 2024.**
4. **SEF Workstream 3 (Spotlight Presentation – Literacy and Numeracy).**
5. **Early Learning and Childcare Annual Report – Report by Director of Education (copy attached, pages 3 – 24).**

This document can be explained to you in other languages and can be provided in alternative formats such as large print and Braille. For further information, please contact Customer First on 0141 577 3001 or e-mail customerservices@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

A recording of the meeting will also be available following the meeting on the Council's YouTube Channel <https://www.youtube.com/user/eastrenfrewshire/videos>

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EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE6 June 2024Report by Director of EducationEARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services. The report outlines the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Education Committee is asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC and comment on the contents as outlined in this paper.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda to almost double the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds, with underpinning key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

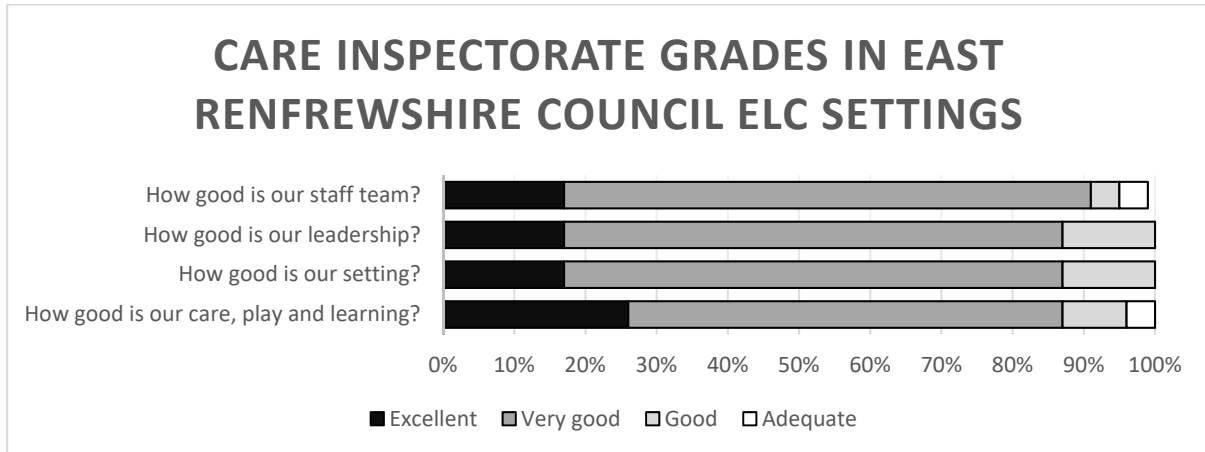
4. The Scottish Government delayed the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, with a new implementation date of August 2021.

5. In East Renfrewshire, all families applying for 1140 hours of funded ELC for eligible children have been able to access this since August 2020. Full implementation, which includes the provision of food at lunchtime, has been ongoing since August 2021.

REPORT***Quality***

6. The quality of ELC in our local authority settings continues to exceed the National Standard in most settings with (88%) achieving evaluations of very good or better across all key questions as shown in Chart 2 below. This compares very favourably with data published by the Care Inspectorate which shows that nationally 29% of settings, up to 31 March 2024, had evaluations of very good or better across all key questions.

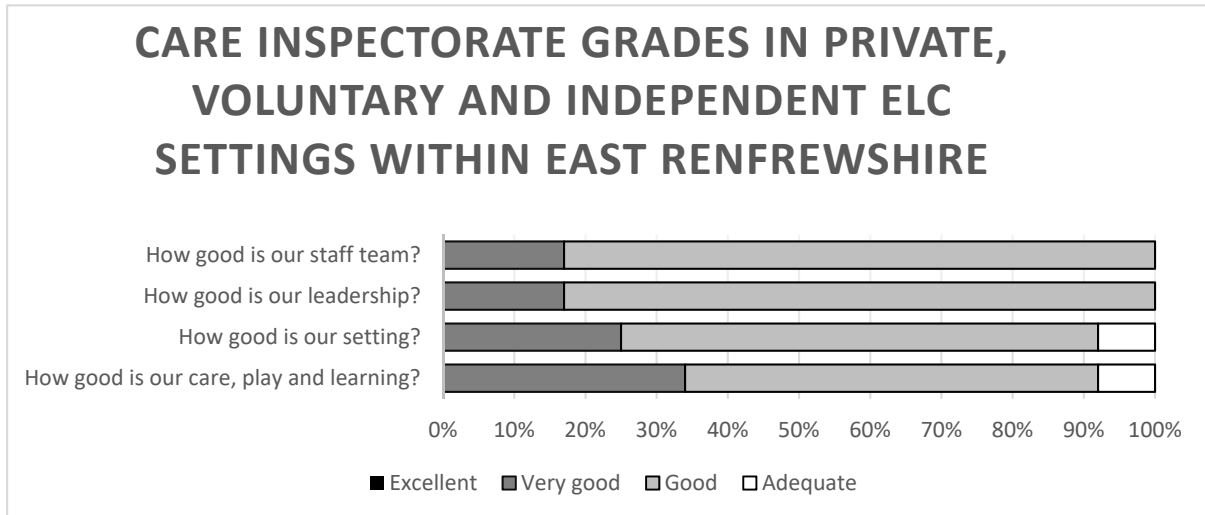
Chart 1



7. These grades reflect all 23 local authority settings which have now been inspected by the Care Inspectorate. Overlee Family Centre, which opened in August 2020, was inspected for the first time in June 2023 and was awarded ‘Excellent’ for How good is our leadership? and ‘Very Good’ for the remaining themes.

8. Almost all Funded Providers delivering funded ELC in East Renfrewshire also meet and, in some cases, exceed the National Standard requirement to achieve grades of good or better, as illustrated in Chart 2 below. This reflects the 12 Funded Provider settings who continued to work in partnership with the local authority this session. This is 2 less than previous, as one setting has closed and one failed to meet the National Standard at the end of an extended Service Improvement Period.

Chart 2



9. As a result of Care Inspectorate evaluations which are below the National Standard, and on-going quality assurance by the Education Department, there are currently 3 settings on Service Improvement Periods. This includes 1 local authority setting and two funded providers. Each of these settings are being supported by the department and engaging in the Care Inspectorate’s ELC improvement programme that has been made available for local authority, private and third sector settings which do not currently meet the quality evaluations.

Flexibility

10. The models available across nursery classes and family centres seek to provide flexibility and choice for families whilst also ensuring efficient service delivery through the maximisation of our staffed capacity. Core placements which mirror the school day, from 9am-3pm continue to be a popular choice for parents. Family Centres have offered Core hours since 2021/22, however the biggest uptake is in Nursery Classes.

11. From the 22/23 session, responding to parental demand, families have had the option to access a Full Time place in either a Nursery Class or a Family Centre, enabling them to purchase additional hours, where space was available, to meet their full time childcare requirements. This further maximises the efficient use of capacity across all of the available ELC provision. This model has proven to be very popular with families, with 80 children accessing this model throughout the 23/24 session. In addition to supporting families, this has generated an income of approximately £260,000 contributing towards meeting the existing income target for the service.

12. All nursery places are allocated using the published priorities with a ballot being held where demand exceeds space available. In session 2023/24 the majority of parents indicated that the setting was more important to them than the model they were allocated. 95% of families applying for ELC were allocated their first choice of setting, rising from 94% in the previous year. 84% also received their first choice of model which is an 8% increase from 2022/23.

Accessibility and Affordability

13. In the 2023/24 session, 173 individual children have accessed 'add-on' through families purchasing additional hours above their child's entitlement. In addition to providing greater flexibility and choice to families, this has generated income of approximately £133,000 by utilising vacant sessions across different ELC settings.

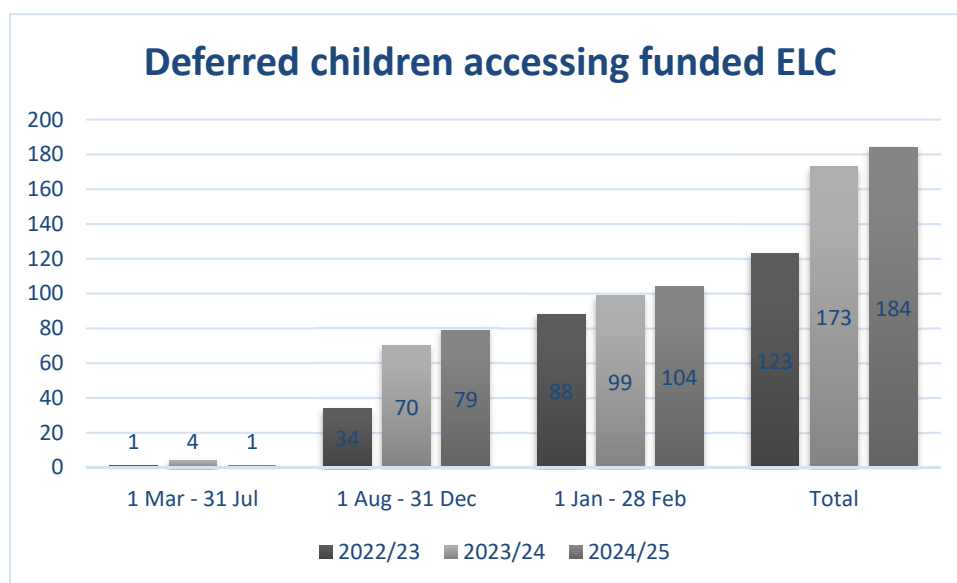
14. The Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) allows the department to respond and support children and families who need our help most, through the allocation of a range of services and resources. To date, in session 2023/24, 245 referrals have been made through the EYIG. This is a slight increase of 3% on the previous year which continues to demonstrate the high level of demand for support for children and families facing challenges. Health Visitors make the most referrals to the EYIG for children on their caseload, followed by the Educational Psychology Service and family centres. From session 2022/23 all referrers have been able to request an affordability check through the Money Advice and Rights Team (MART), this has enabled families to access funded early learning and childcare which they may otherwise not have been eligible for. Of all referrals to the EYIG 7% received additional free early learning and childcare hours over their entitled 1140 hours, 38% were allocated a funded nursery place prior to their entitlement and 3% were supported with funding to access Early Learning and Childcare.

15. In August 2023 all children deferring entry to primary 1 automatically became entitled to funded early learning and childcare in their deferred year. This followed a change to legislation which means that parents of children who are still 4 years old on the date they are eligible to start school (i.e. children with birth dates on or between the day after the school commencement date in August – last day in February) can choose to defer their child's start at primary school for a year and continue to access funded ELC. Prior to August 2023 only children born in January and February were automatically entitled to an additional year of funded ELC, with those born between August-December able to apply for funding on a discretionary basis.

16. When submitting an application for entry to primary one, families are asked to indicate whether they wish to defer their child's entry to school by the deadline at the end of January each year. This process enables the department to support with continuation of an ELC place. Where parents do not indicate at this time, and subsequently make a request to defer at a later date, there is no guarantee that their existing ELC provision will remain available, however an alternative nursery place will be offered.

17. For session 2024/25, 183 children have applied for an additional year of funded ELC through this process, an increase of 10 applications compared to 2023/24. Chart 3 below shows the increase in deferrals over the past 3 years.

Chart 3



18. When the new legislation came into effect in August 2023 the number of deferral applications for children born between the start of term in August and the end of December more than doubled, increasing from 34 in 2022/23 to 70 in session 2023/24. This figure rose by a further 13% this year with 79 applications being made for this age group representing 43% of all requests.

19. A further 8 applications were made for children to defer whose birthday is before the start of term in August, one of these has been granted, with the others being allocated suitable school age provision. Each year since 2020 there has been an average of 4 requests for exceptional deferrals such as these, with each case being assessed on a case by case basis to establish whether an additional year of ELC is more beneficial to the child than going to school. Our schools are well placed to meet the needs of all pupils, therefore it is only in very exceptional circumstances that these discretionary requests are granted. The deferral guidance has been updated to clarify this point, detailed in Appendix 2.

20. Further information outlining the approaches to ensure the 4 key principles outlined in paragraph 6 can be found as part of Appendix 1 of this paper.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

21. The department continues to deliver ELC through efficient models within each establishment, seeking to provide flexibility and choice for families. The deployment of staff

across settings continues to be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the service is being delivered efficiently, whilst ensuring continued regulatory compliance, and minimise the need for significant additional recruitment.

22. The introduction of full-time provision, add-on hours and the Early Access scheme have resulted in increased commercial opportunities for the service, allowing the department to meet the challenging income target already set out within the department's budget.

23. The provision of a free hot lunch is budgeted to cost £3.40 per child, per day. All local authority settings are registered with the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme which provides free milk and snack for children attending nursery, 87% of funded providers delivering funded ELC are benefitting from this scheme. This scheme is fully funded by Scottish Government grant.

24. Local authorities commission ELC places from funded providers. Following approval at Education Committee in April 2024, a rate of £6.32 per hour is paid to funded providers for the delivery of the statutory entitlement. The Education Department has committed to reviewing this rate on an annual basis, however, it should be noted that there should be no assumption of continual annual increases. As noted by the Scottish Government, any rate must be sustainable for both funded providers and the authority and, on this basis, the department will continue to carefully monitor ongoing revenue costs in this area.

25. Currently charging arrangements are in place across the West Partnership to take account of children who reside in one local authority but access ELC within another council area (where this equates to a net cost to that authority). Within East Renfrewshire, given our proximity to Glasgow, this historically has resulted in a net cost to the Council, met from within the existing revenue budget. These arrangements are now subject to ongoing discussion both nationally and locally given the revised overall ELC funding model which now considers the setting at which children access their entitlement and not simply their residency status, as was previously the case.

26. The capital required to fund the new St John's nursery class is included in the Council's capital plan and revenue costs to manage the initial required capacity have been approved as part of the department's budget for 2024/25. Future increases in capacity will be factored into the budget setting process in future years.

CONCLUSION

27. The 1140 hours policy continues to be successfully implemented in East Renfrewshire, with evidence gathered highlighting continuous improvement in terms of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

28. The increase in entitlement of early learning and childcare is a mitigating factor on the impact of Covid-19 and reducing the poverty related attainment gap, with performance showing evidence of recovery and a return to pre-pandemic levels.

29. There is a strong commitment and capacity for continuous improvement.

RECOMMENDATION

30. Education Committee is asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC and comment on the contents as outlined in this paper.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2024

Convener Contact Details

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Additional Information

Quality

1. Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. ELC settings are subject to scrutiny by two separate inspection bodies. The Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland. This session 1 local authority setting and 4 Funded Providers have been inspected by the Care Inspectorate to date. Education Scotland (HMIE) have announced their intention to inspect Clarkston Nursery in the week beginning 13 May for a short-model inspection. This is the first Funded Provider setting to be inspected by Education Scotland in East Renfrewshire since 2018.

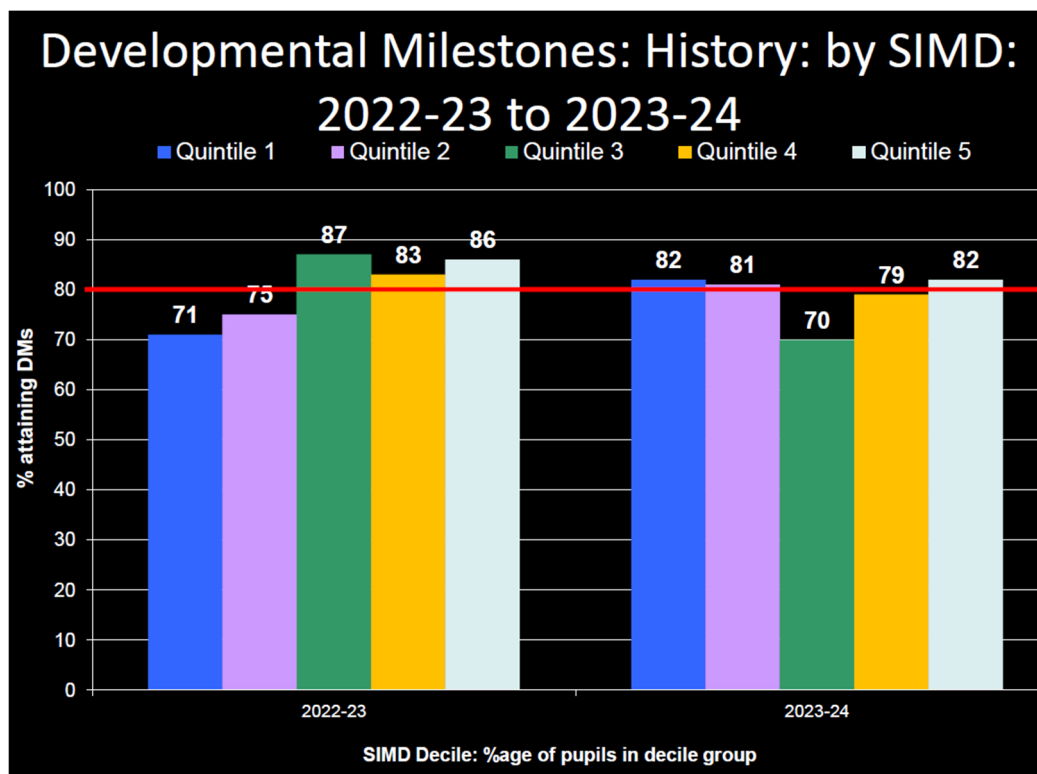
2. In order to deliver funded places ELC settings are required to meet the National Standard which includes achieving grades of good or better across the range of criteria reported on by the Care Inspectorate. In recognition of the challenges posed by the pandemic, the Scottish Government provided some flexibility for providers, through publication of Interim Guidance on Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard which remained in place until new Operating Guidance on Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare providers was published in December 2023. The new document is based on previous versions of the Operating Guidance and includes clarification on some of the details underpinning the Funding Follows the Child Approach and the National Standard.

3. The main change in the Operating Guidance is in relation to settings who enter into a Service Improvement Periods as a result of their Care Inspectorate evaluations falling below the level required in the National Standard of 'good' or better. This gives the setting time to access improvement support, undertake improvement activity and achieve sustained improvement. Service improvement periods apply to local authority, private and third sector providers. During this period the setting receives an enhanced level of support from the Early Years Development Officer using 'East Renfrewshire Council's 'Support Materials for Meeting the National Standard' to assist the Funded Provider to make sufficient improvements. The National Standard guidance requires that the Funded Provider is, at all times, responsible for making all necessary improvements to meet the National Standard Criteria, however the local authority retains the role as guarantor of quality with responsibility for assessing and monitoring compliance with the national standard in all funded providers.

4. In the years following the pandemic, data published by Public Health Scotland shows that an average of 16% of children in East Renfrewshire undergoing a 27/30 month assessment with their Health Visitor had one or more concerns recorded, compared to 16.8% nationally. Health Visitors now also assess children at age 4/5years as part of the Universal Health Visiting Pathway, for this age group an average of 17% of children in East Renfrewshire have one or more concern recorded compared to 16% nationally.

5. Since 2013-14 data has been gathered in schools on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following developmental components are assessed: Social, Emotional, Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour. This session 80% of children achieved their developmental milestones, this is a decrease of 3% on the previous year as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1

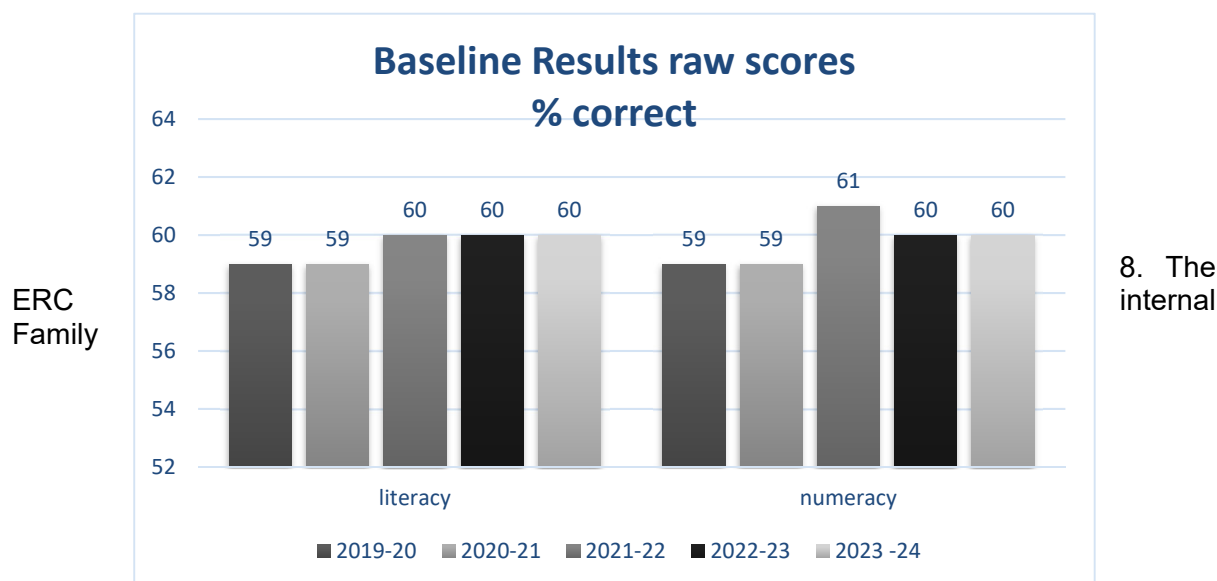


6. For the first time, the proportion of children living in more affluent communities achieving their developmental milestones has fallen, with those in Quintile 1 achieving the same as those in Quintile 5. These results are not easy to explain, however a number of factors may be considered as potential factors:

- These children would have been between 12-24 months old when the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic came into effect in March 2020. Public Health reports have shown that children's social, emotional and language development were impacted as a result of the pandemic.
- Children in Quintile 1 are eligible for Early Learning and Childcare from two years of age.
- Children in Quintile 1 had greater access to hub provision during the pandemic.
- The Excellence and Equity lead supports children in Quintiles 1 and 2.
- Family First has been focussed on families in Quintiles 1 and 2.

7. A Baseline Assessment has been in place since 2005-06 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one. In contrast to the Developmental Milestones, overall performance in literacy and numeracy remains consistent with previous years as shown in Chart 2. There is a persistent gap of approximately 8 points between children in Quintile 1 and those residing in Quintile 5 in both literacy and numeracy.

Chart 2



Centred Approaches Accreditation Framework was introduced in 2014. This peer review model provides an opportunity for all ELC settings to measure how well they support parent and carer engagement and involvement in the life of their setting, which is now one of the criteria within the National Standard. This is reflected in the increase of ELC settings achieving Gold Family Focused status. A further 6 settings have successfully achieved Gold status bringing the total accredited to this level to 14 (61%). At present, 50% of existing Funded Providers have achieved Silver Family Centred status and are being supported to progress through the framework. This will ensure that they continue to meet this element of the National Standard.

Quality of the Early Years Workforce

9. Quality of staff teams in East Renfrewshire ELC settings is a major strength, almost all (91%) have evaluations of very good or better from the Care Inspectorate for this theme compared to the national average of 54%. The Public, Voluntary and Independent sector has faced increasing challenges in staff recruitment and retention as a result of the ELC expansion to 1140 hours. This is reflected in Care Inspectorate's evaluations of our funded providers where 17% have grades of very good.

10. East Renfrewshire Council continues to invest in its current workforce to ensure that all our staff are highly skilled and motivated. This investment continues to take various forms including a focus on Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and professional inquiry.

11. Throughout 2023/24 ELC practitioners have continued to make effective use of the '0-6 Pedagogy' online hub which was introduced in 2017/18 as part of the ELC expansion plan. This online resource provides staff in schools, local authority and funded provider settings with a wide range of high-quality learning materials created by practitioners and senior leaders across East Renfrewshire. Usage data continues to show a high level of engagement with the materials with 3,283 views in the past year bringing the total number of views to 14,230.

12. Middle leaders in ELC settings continue to be supported through leadership forums. These are positively evaluated by the Depute Heads of Centre and Senior Child Development Officers who attend. The forum enables leaders to consider national developments in ELC, share practice and support each other with effective self-evaluation, however pressures on staffing as a result of long term absences have meant that attendance this session has fallen.

13. Senior leaders benefitted from a bespoke leadership seminar for all head teachers working in ELC. This was supported by Education Scotland with contributions from our own

leaders who shared their improvement journeys with others. All in attendance evaluated the event positively and welcomed the opportunity to learn from their peers, 100% agreed that it was a worthwhile use of their time as head teacher. In addition to gaining ideas to implement in their own settings, they also suggested follow up professional learning sessions for staff which will be facilitated next session.

14. East Renfrewshire ensures all children have access to a teacher. This is extended to all children who attend a Funded Provider nursery in East Renfrewshire. Each setting is supported on a flexible basis, with delivery of aspects of learning and teaching in line with their improvement plans. Contributions are highly valued by the Funded Providers who report that everyone benefits from her visits as “a great source of information and support”, bringing “lots of new ideas to our setting”.

15. Our staff continue to benefit from our involvement in the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative). From September – November a series of online CLPL sessions were offered to all practitioners across the west with a high level of uptake from settings in East Renfrewshire.

16. In addition the West Partnership has formed a relationship with Edinburgh University, allowing us to access high quality professional learning linked to current research, policy and theory underpinned by the principles of Friedrich Froebel. A further 2 practitioners from our schools and nurseries benefitted from this opportunity in 2023/24, bringing the total number of Froebelians currently working in East Renfrewshire to 60, with 10 going on to develop their practice further by participating in the Froebelian Futures Leadership programme.

17. Through this programme practitioners and leaders have increased opportunities to look outwards and connect with networks of ELC settings across Scotland. The professional inquiry and evaluation work undertaken enhances participant’s knowledge of child development leading to improved experiences in nursery and primary classrooms for children. This group of knowledgeable and nurturing educators worked with their children and teams to create cardboard box displays illustrating the developments in each of their settings inspired by their Froebelian practice. Topics included Unity and Connectedness, Creativity through blocks, sewing and clay, The central importance of play, Engaging with nature and The value of childhood in its own right. These were shared through an exhibition which attracted a hundred visitors including children, families and practitioners from East Renfrewshire and authorities across the west.

18. Further partnerships with East Renfrewshire Culture and Leisure Trust, Starcatchers and Community Playthings enabled us to provide a range of in person training sessions for practitioners. These sessions gave the practitioners practical skills to promote children’s physical and emotional development and improve children’s experiences.

19. There remain challenges across the sector with regards to staff attendance, with ELC seeing significantly higher rates of absence than the wider Education Department. In seeking to ensure efficient delivery, Head Teachers and Heads of Centre have limited capacity to cover such absence from within their existing staff and this can be a risk to service delivery. All settings work within their communities to provide cover and support where required. However, it should be noted that the requirement for staff to cover absence can also place restrictions on the ability to ‘release’ staff for professional learning and strategic improvement work. The department and settings work closely with colleagues in Human Resources to ensure the Council’s Maximising Attendance Policy is being implemented effectively and all staff are encouraged to attend work.

20. The current structures for management and staffing in our ELC settings have been in place since the introduction of 1140 hours in August 2023 and comply with [Care Inspectorate](#)

[Guidance on Adult:Child Ratios](#). Since the introduction of 1140 hours, Heads of Centre and Head Teachers have reported challenges concerning staffing capacity. Many of these challenges are aligned to the Covid legacy, with high numbers of staff absence in the sector. Other factors such as local decision of granting annual leave during traditional school holiday periods has also put a strain on the operation of the setting.

21. Against this background, the Head of Education Services (Quality Improvement and Performance) has established and chaired a review team, to look at the existing structures for management and staffing in ELC provision and assess fitness for purpose.

22. Although this review provides an opportunity to suggest options that would mitigate against some of the reported challenges, any proposals must be within the current devolved ELC budget. This is particularly challenging in current times of austerity, however it is incumbent on us that we use our limited resources to support high quality ELC provision, whilst ensuring best value for the Council.

Flexibility

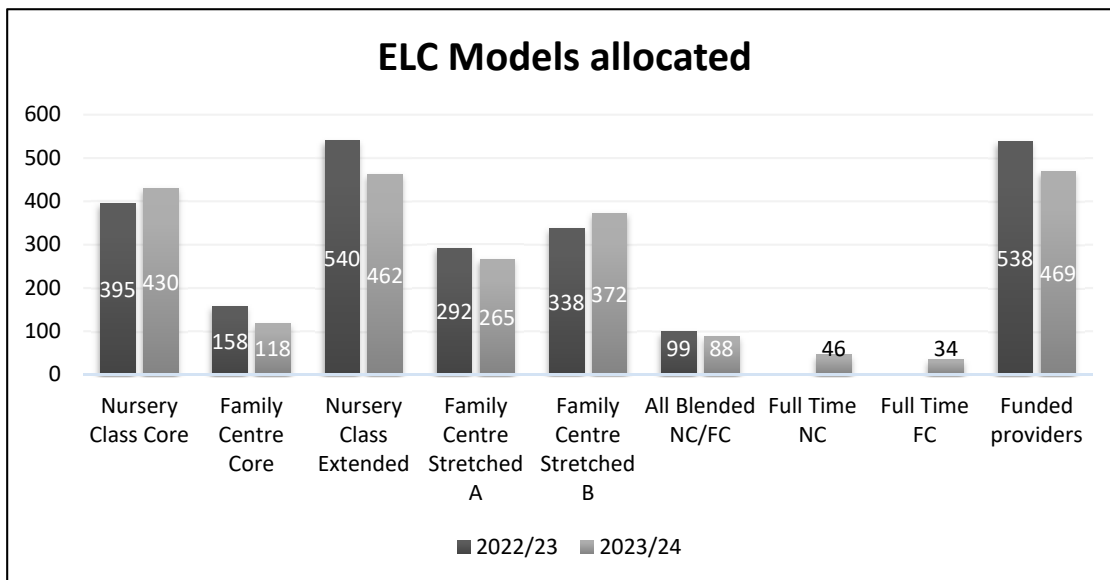
23. Families in East Renfrewshire can choose from a variety of attendance patterns in order to access their entitlement to 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare. These are reviewed every two years in line with the duty to consult with parents outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. As a result of the latest consultation in November 2022, the following models were available for families to choose for session 2023/24:

- a. Core Provision - 5 sessions of 6 hours per week
(school days over the school year)
- b. Extended Day Provision - 3 sessions of 10 hours per week
(longer days over the school year)
- c. Stretched Provision A - 5 sessions of 4 hours 45 minutes per week
(half days over a longer year)
- d. Stretched Provision B - 2 sessions of 9 ½ hours and 1 session of 4 hours 45 minutes per week
(mix of full and half days over a longer year)
- e. Full Time - 8am - 6pm 5 days per week.
(Term Time - 38 weeks in Nursery Classes and 48 weeks in Family Centres)
- f. Blended Provision - entitlement split between 2 ELC providers
- g. Funded Provider Provision - 30 hours per week (school year) fully funded provision with a funded provider working in partnership with ERC, including private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector providers and childminders or 23 hours 45 minutes over 48 weeks

24. A total of 2,284 children were provided with funded ELC in 2023/24.

25. Chart 3 shows how these places were allocated across each of the models available in each year.

Chart 3



26. The Education Department undertakes regular evaluation, ensuring that models offered continue to meet the choice and flexibility needs of the children and families in East Renfrewshire. To support with this moving forward, Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class will become a family centre, offering additional full year provision to families in the Newton Mearns community from August 2024. For children already attending Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class, they will be able to continue to attend on the existing basis as the nursery class transitions towards becoming a family centre. This hybrid approach will continue to operate until such time as existing children complete their time at nursery.

27. In response to the feedback provided through regular consultation with families, the option of 'add-on' hours has been available to families over the last 2 sessions. This option enables families to purchase additional sessions, above their child's statutory entitlement, where there is additional unused capacity available. This provides families with additional flexibility, helping support wider family circumstances.

28. Reflecting the increase in provision for children with additional support needs 13% of children referred to the EYIG were given support by the Preschool Assessment and Development Unit (PSADU) across their sites at Carlibar and Arthurlie, with a further 11% benefitting from the new temporary Early Years Outreach Service. An additional 8% were referred for further assessment / intervention with Educational Psychology Service, 5% were allocated to the Sensory Support Service, and 3% received support within their community, for example through Stay and Play visits within a family centre. Through the EYIG, 82% of referrals were successful in their request for further support throughout 2023/4, an increase of 6% on the previous year.

29. Eligibility for early learning and childcare is determined by the date of the child's birthday, local school term dates and, where relevant, whether the parent has chosen to defer the child's start at primary school for a year.

30. The Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) Order 2014 sets out starting and stopping dates for eligibility to access funded ELC. Eligible 2 year olds and all 3 year olds are eligible for funded early learning and childcare from the beginning of the first term after the child's 2nd or 3rd birthday. Where a child's birthday falls on or between the following dates, the child will become eligible from the terms set out below:

- Child's birthday: 1 March – 31 August
Eligible from: August (autumn term) occurring in that year
- Child's birthday: 1 September – 31 December
Eligible from: January (spring term) following their birthday
- Child's birthday: 1 January – last day February
Eligible from: March/ April (summer term) following their birthday.

31. From August 2023 children within East Renfrewshire have been able to access their statutory entitlement in line with the Scottish Government's national guidance. To ensure continued support for families, the Early Access scheme has been introduced, enabling families to purchase hours to bridge the gap between their child's third birthday and the commencement of their eligibility for 1140 hours. Throughout the 2023/24 session, 146 children took advantage of this new scheme.

32. This year, the department did not receive any applications from parents wishing to apply for early entry to primary school. In the previous 3 years 2 applications for early entry were received each year.

ACCESSIBILITY

33. Digital applications for ELC are open throughout December and January each year, publicised through the Council's social media channels and directly across education establishments. For session 2024/25, 863 applications were received within the application window. Of the total applications received, 825 were allocated a place for next year. The remainder were either withdrawn or were from families seeking a change in their child's existing allocation which we was unable to be accommodated.

34. Since the expansion to 1,140 hours in 2020, there has been continued pressure on ELC places within the Barrhead/Neilston community. In seeking to ensure the Council to meet its duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, a new nursery class is being developed in St John's Primary School, providing additional capacity for 3 and 4 year old children from August 2024. Initially St John's nursery class will have an operating capacity of 60, with scope to further increase to 95 including provision for 2-year old children.

35. All eligible 2 year olds continue to be offered 1,140 hours of ELC with the majority accessing the Stretched A and B family centre models which allow 2 children to take up one place. For this reason the Council has been able to meet the demand for places for eligible 2 year olds for the tenth consecutive year.

36. In partnership with the Scottish Government and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Education Department has been proactively targeting families who may have an eligibility to a 2-year old place, based on benefit and income data. Over the last year, 180 children have been allocated through the Local Admissions Panel or EYIG this session to date, an increase of 15% on the previous year.

37. In addition to providing Early Learning and Childcare for eligible and vulnerable 2 year olds, where there is capacity to do so we continue to support other working families who have no eligibility, with the offer to purchase nursery places. Demand for this service increases year on year. This session a further 164 children and families with children aged under 3-years old and benefitted from this service. This is a 7% increase on the previous year.

38. Table 3 below details the registered capacity for 2 year olds in each local authority nursery for session 2024/25. The delivery models determine how these places are used, with the actual number of children accommodated varying depending on specific models.

Table 3

Establishment	Available Places
Arthurlie Family Centre (0 - 3 provision)	79
Cart Mill Family Centre (2 year old provision)	25
Glen Family Centre (0-3 provision)	71
Isobel Mair Family Centre (0-3 provision)*	15
Madras Family Centre (2 year old provision)	25
McCready Family Centre (0-3 provision)	76
St John's Nursery Class (2 year old provision)**	25

* Isobel Mair Family Centre provision is for children with Additional Support Needs, with flexibility of age range, therefore capacity for different ages may alter to meet needs.

**Under 3 provision will commence following the initial opening of the nursery class for 3-5 year old provision from August 2024.

39. Detailed in Table 4 is the number of available places for 3 and 4 year olds in each local authority setting, as determined by the delivery models, from August 2024. To maximise efficiency, staff budgets for each setting are determined according to the number of children who are allocated a place. Where capacity allows additional spaces will be available for parents to purchase.

Table 4

Establishment	Available Places
Arthurlie Family Centre	216
Busby Nursery Class	72
Braidbar Nursery Class	72
Calderwood Lodge Family Centre*	121
Carlubar Nursery Class	101
Carolside Nursery Class	72
Cart Mill Family Centre	72
Crookfur Family Centre	168
Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class	76
Eaglesham Nursery Class	93
Giffnock Nursery Class	40
Glenwood Family Centre	168
Hazeldene Family Centre	112
Isobel Mair Family Centre**	24
Madras Family Centre	136
Maidenhill Nursery Class	114
Mearns Nursery Class	72
Netherlee Nursery Class	93
Overlee Family Centre	72
St Cadoc's Nursery Class	72

St John's Nursery Class	58
Thornliebank	42
Total	2066

**From August 2024 Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class will begin transitioning to a family centre and, as such, will operate on a bespoke model basis for the forthcoming 2 sessions, enabling children to maintain their current provision.*

***Within Isobel Mair Family Centre there is provision for children with Additional Support Needs, with flexibility of age range, therefore capacity for different ages may alter to meet needs.*

40. As referenced in paragraph 16 of this report, partnership status is determined by quality and meeting the National Standard. For 2024/2025 East Renfrewshire will work with 12 providers, one less than previous years. Orchard Park Nursery at Newton Mearns has been purchased by Kirktonholme and is currently closed. New providers, or previous partners who meet the National Standard during this 3 year period, can apply for partnership status at any time. Table 5 below, details the current partners.

Table 5

Provider	Status
Belmont Nursery Class	Independent
Broom Nursery	Voluntary
Clarkston Nursery	Voluntary
Elmwood Nursery	Private
Greenbank Woodland Play	Private
Happy Days Too (Busby)	Private
Happy Days Too (SF)	Private
Innocence Nursery	Private
Kirkhillgait Nursery	Private
Kirktonholme @Mearnswood	Private
Kirktonholme Nursery Thornliebank	Private
Railway Cottage	Private

41. In addition to the nurseries listed above, 9 childminders will also work in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare in session 2024/25. At present 15 children are accessing funded placements with these childminders.

Appendix 2

East Renfrewshire Council Education Department

Deferring Entry to Primary School Guidance for Early Learning and Childcare Settings and Primary Schools

Introduction

The Education Department understands the importance of the decision for parents to send their child to school. For the purpose of children commencing their primary education, children who turn 5 years of age between 1 March and the last day in February (of the following calendar year), it is anticipated that the child will commence their primary education from August; this means that for many children, they will commence primary education when they are 4.

Legislation

Children who are 4 at the start of term

If a parent of a child who turns 5 years of age after the start of the school year in August decides to defer the child's entry to school for another year, they can automatically access an additional year of funded early learning and childcare. <https://www.gov.scot/publications/early-learning-childcare-statutory-guidance-july-2021/pages/11/>.

Children who are 5 at the start of term

Parents of children with a birth date on or after 1 March and before 1 August, are **not entitled to defer their child's** start at primary school for a year, as the child has reached school age, as defined in [Section 31 of the Education \(Scotland\) Act 1980](#). However, there may be exceptional circumstances where the education department considers that a further year in early learning and childcare would be more appropriate than the child transitioning to primary education at that time. In these circumstances, the department will use their powers under section 1(1C) of the 1980 Act, to provide discretionary funded early learning and childcare. However, we expect that this would only be in **exceptional circumstances** and these decisions must take into account the wishes of the parent.

Rationale

The purpose of this paper is to clarify the processes in place in the context of East Renfrewshire so that parents and early years staff are clear about their duty and responsibility in matters pertaining to deferring entry to primary school.

Decision making

The decision whether or not to defer a child's entry to school is made by the parent. This is part of [the school admissions process](#). Where a child is due to start primary school in August, their parent/carer **must** record their child as being of school age for a Primary One place, at their preferred catchment school. At that time, it will be possible to note the intention to defer (if the child would be 4 on starting school), or to note the intention to apply for an exceptional deferral (if the child would be 5 on starting school).

Where a child is 4 years old, the intention to defer is noted by the department and the child is allocated another year of ELC matching their current attendance pattern. If families wish to change their ELC allocation they must also complete a new ELC application which will be considered as a Priority 2.

Where a child is 5 years old at the start of term parents have no automatic right to defer their child's entry to school. It is expected that all children aged 5 before 1 August would start Primary 1 in that year in line with the Scottish Government legislation. Where a child has turned 5 prior to 1 August and the parent wishes to defer entry to primary school, an exceptional application must be made. All exceptional applications are considered by a panel to decide if a further year of early learning and childcare is appropriate for the child. Decisions for exceptional deferrals are based on an assessment of wellbeing putting the child at the centre and rely on ELC settings working in partnership with families.

Where a parent applies for exceptional deferral they may or may not discuss this with the nursery in advance of the application being made. The ELC administration team will inform the setting of the exceptional application and request the following information from the nursery:

- Child's wellbeing plan
- Child's care plan
- Information related to the child's learning with an emphasis on Health & Wellbeing, literacy and numeracy (available from Early Years Tracking Tool)

- Statement indicating whether or not the nursery head teacher supports the exceptional deferral with evaluative evidence aligned to their position.
- Reports from other professionals
- SELF assessment.

This range of high quality evidence will support the Education Department to assess, understand and define the needs of the child and to record the outcomes of that assessment. Decisions about the provision of discretionary funded early learning and childcare should be separate from considerations about children's additional support needs and the support that they may need to fully benefit from their education. Children with additional support needs (as defined by the 2004 Act and including those children with additional support needs arising from a disability within the meaning of the Equality Act 2010) will be supported in school through the provisions of the 2004 Act.

Future P1 applications for children who deferred commencement of primary education

Whilst a parent/carer must record their child's deferral at a preferred catchment school, this will not result in an automatic application for the P1 year stage in the following academic year.

In the case of a child whose commencement of primary school education is deferred, parent/carers must note that in order to be considered for a P1 place in the following year, a new P1 application **must** be made to the preferred catchment school in December.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee of P1 place at the school in the following year, and there is no priority given to deferred children for a place at a catchment school, in the case of oversubscription.

Partnership with parents

Good quality communication is central to building strong relationships with parents and ensuring that parents get the support and information they need in appropriate formats and at the right times to support, and be fully involved and engaged with, their children's learning.

Settings should consider how they make parents aware of the deferral process and the support children will receive when transitioning to school. This should be included in each setting's handbook.

Parents are often balancing competing demands for their time and we need to be mindful of this by providing information with sufficient time, in advance of key deadlines, to allow parents to respond effectively. Typically this means that parent meetings in October/November each year provide the ideal opportunity to share this information with parents and discuss their child's progress ahead of the school applications opening on 1 December.

Parents may seek advice from nursery staff about deferring entry to school. Although the decision to defer is one to be made by the parents, nursery staff can discuss the child's developmental progress linked to key milestones, since starting nursery. The information contained in the child's profile should be used to inform the discussion. In particular early years staff should be prepared to discuss the key aspects of the child's learning and development such as their:

- approach and attitude to learning
- ability to communicate own needs, feelings and ideas
- levels of independence and self help
- emotional and personal development, including self-confidence and esteem
- relationships and friendships with other children and adults.

Parents should be made clear about their option to defer but it should be stressed that any such decision should be made in terms of the educational benefit to the child. Where no clear benefit can be identified, parents should be encouraged to make the decision to send their child to primary school. Parents seeking an exceptional deferral must be made aware that their child will have reached statutory school starting age, and discussions should focus on support available for the child to ensure a smooth transition to school.

Where a parent who wishes his/her child to start primary school but who has concerns over “readiness”, the early learning and childcare setting should advise the parent of the developmentally appropriate approaches taken in Primary One to ensure that all children are supported to learn at their own pace and in ways that are right for them. **Our schools are ready to meet the needs of all children who come join them, children don’t need to be ready for school.**

Where possible, it is considered best practice to involve the associated primary school in such discussions.

Principles

- Education and learning underpin wellbeing; therefore, any discussion about deferring a child’s entry to primary school should highlight the educational benefits to the child.
- Children do not need to be ready for school, our schools are ready to meet the needs of all children who come join them.
- Deferred entry considerations must be separate from the assessment of additional support needs.
- In profiling children’s progress and achievements, early learning and childcare staff should have a sound awareness of the needs, abilities and dispositions of individual children.
- Early Learning and Childcare settings should have mechanisms by which they share assessment information about children’s progress with parents and carers.
- Early Learning and Childcare settings work with parents to promote children’s learning at home which includes key aspects of children’s development
- Learning in the early stages of primary school is organised and planned to support an active and playful approach to learning and teaching, whilst capitalising on children’s prior learning and previous experiences.
- There are effective arrangements in place between early learning and childcare settings and associated primary schools to share information about children’s learning and embed playful pedagogy across the early level to ensure continuity and progression for children in their learning.
- All parents are made aware of their right to defer entry to primary school for their child, and understand the Application for Deferral is a request for funding for an additional year of early learning and childcare.
- Parents are given information about deferring entry to school as part of the induction programme to nursery.

Making an Application for Exceptional Deferral

The deadline for exceptional deferral applications is the same as the Primary 1 Catchment deadline, typically mid-January, each year. Applications received by 15 March which are

granted will be considered as priority 2 at the March admissions panel, any late applications received after 15 March will be considered as Priority 7 and cannot be guaranteed.

The Early Learning and Childcare Administration team will collate the online applications received and notify the ELC establishment of the supporting evidence required as outlined above. Applications will be processed within 6 weeks of the deadline and the officer who oversees school placement and placing requests will be advised of the outcomes.

Late Applications

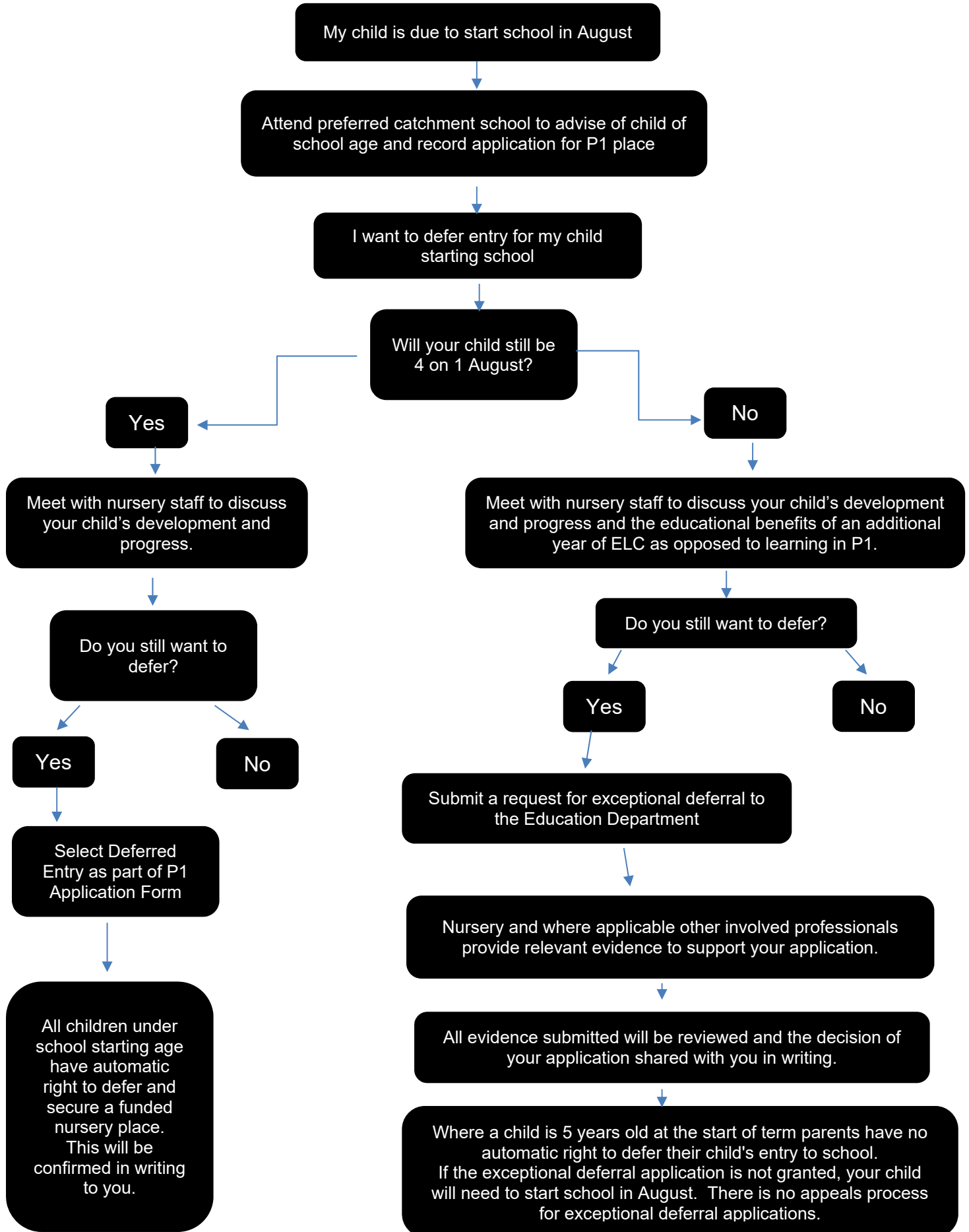
Once parents have applied for a school place for their child, either in their catchment school, or via a placing request the department will assume that it is their intention that their child start school in August. This means that late applications will not be considered, unless the child's circumstances have changed significantly in the intervening period. Any parents choosing to make a late application after their child has been allocated a place at school must be aware that Early Learning and Childcare places will already have been allocated by this time. Therefore it is highly unlikely that their child would be able to continue to attend the same setting with the same pattern of attendance and their application would only be considered as a priority 7.

Planning for children in their deferred year

- When a child accesses an additional year of early learning and childcare then it is important that the child's learning needs are appropriately met.
- Consideration should be given as to how best to plan for the child's needs and whether the child would benefit from having identified learning targets (for support or challenge) through, for example an individual wellbeing plan. This is likely to be essential for any children granted an exceptional deferral.
- The impact of the additional year of early learning and childcare should be monitored closely in terms of the child's developmental progress and learning.

Deferred Entry to School

Process Map



Timeline for deferral applications

	Entitled (4 year olds)	Exceptional (5 year olds)
October - November	ELC settings discuss children's progress with families considering deferral	
December	School application window opens – all children who would be eligible to start school the following August must apply for a catchment place and note their request to defer.	School application window opens – all children who would be eligible to start school must apply for a catchment place and note their request to defer.
	Families wishing to access their existing attendance pattern – no further action required.	
	Families wishing to change their attendance pattern must submit a new ELC application	
January	Application window closes	
		School catchment applications window closes. ELC admin team will contact parents/settings to submit evidence for panel
February		Deferral panel meet within 6 weeks of closing date to make decisions – giving consideration to ERG outcomes
March		Exceptional deferral decisions communicated to families and ELC settings
		Educational Psychologists ensure families and ELC settings aware of ERG outcomes prior to deferral decisions being communicated
	ELC admissions panels allocate places for applications received on time – letters sent to families by end of the month	School catchment allocations made and parents/carers advised of school allocated. ELC admissions panels allocate places for applications received on time and granted – letters sent to families by the end of the month
April		School placing requests processed and outcomes advised to parents/carers.

		Respond to any complaints received with support of ELC settings
	Parents involved in planning for deferred year re support/challenge	Granted – parents involved in planning for deferred year re support
		Not granted – parents involved in transition planning for school