



A Guide to Early Learning and Childcare in Perth and Kinross 2026 - 2027

A Perth and Kinross where everyone can live
life well, free from poverty and inequality

Enabling
children and
young people
achieve full
potential

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

Please note, this information is correct at time of going to print.

Updated information is available from the PKC Early Learning and Childcare Team:

Tel **01738 476200**

Email ELC@PKC.gov.uk

or on the Perth & Kinross Council website www.pkc.gov.uk

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Introduction

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) is an important stage in a child's development and helps children to learn as they play. A high-quality early learning experience builds on the valuable learning that takes place in and around the home, before children start primary school.

In Scotland, all 3–5-year-olds, and eligible 2-year-olds, are entitled to 1140 hours of funded ELC per year.

In addition to local authority managed nurseries, Education & Children's Services is currently in partnership with several childminders and funded provider settings which provide quality ELC within the private, voluntary, and independent sector. The term "*funded provider*" refers to public, private and third-party providers, including childminders, who meet the [National Standard](#) and work in partnership with the local authority to provide ELC places. A full list of both local authority-managed ELC settings, and funded providers is given at the end of this guidance.

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 and Guidelines for Admission to Nursery Schools and Classes is available to view at [Funded early learning and childcare for 3-5 year olds - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Questions and Answers

1. What does 1140 hours of funded ELC mean for my child?

All 3–5-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds are entitled to access up to 1140 hours of funded ELC per year with a funded provider. You can access the entitlement in a funded provider setting of your choice, depending on availability, and there will be a variety of attendance options across Perth and Kinross.

While we recognise the great job parents and carers are doing, these funded hours are intended to support child development and enable children to have fun and learn outside of their home with experienced and trained staff. The ELC settings are a safe environment where every child will be well looked after, giving parents and carers the opportunity to return to work, or access training or study opportunities.

The ELC offer in Perth and Kinross is driven by the following principles set out by the Scottish Government:

- **Quality** - *a high-quality experience for all children, which complements other early years and educational activity to close the attainment gap and recognises the value of those we entrust to give our children the best start in life.*
- **Flexibility** - *more parents and carers in work, training or study, through greater choice of provider and patterns of provision that are better aligned with working patterns whilst delivering this in a way that ensures a high-quality experience for the child.*
- **Accessibility** - *ELC capacity is sufficient and is as conveniently geographically located as possible to support families and enable parents and carers to work, train and study, while also appropriately meeting the needs of children who require additional support and parents who request ELC through the medium of Gaelic.*
- **Affordability** - *the expansion will increase access to affordable ELC which will help to reduce barriers to participating in the labour market for parents and carers*

2. Is my 2-year-old eligible for a funded place?

Some 2-year-olds can also access 1140 hours of funded ELC. Your 2 year old may be eligible for a Strong Start place if you are in receipt of the eligible benefits listed on the [Strong Start](#) page.

Your 2-year-old child may also be eligible from the point they are looked after, under a Kinship Care order, or with a parent appointed guardian. Eligibility for a Strong Start place also includes children of parents who are care-experienced.

Further information can be found through the Strong Start page link above, or from your allocated social worker.

3. Choosing the right Early Learning and Childcare for your family.

There are a variety of options when choosing ELC for your child. To help you make the right decision, the Scottish Government Parent Club has prepared a guide on [Things to consider when choosing ELC](#).

Perth & Kinross Council understand every family's circumstances are different and have ensured that a variety of funded ELC options are available. By working closely with funded providers, the Council has tried to ensure parents can access funded hours in the way which best meets their family's needs. An overview of where you can access a funded ELC place is below:

Childminders

A childminder looks after children in the childminder's own home and can often provide very flexible care. Most childminders look after children from a few months old up to primary school age.

Local Authority Nurseries

A local authority nursery provides care for children across the age range of 2 to 5 years using funded hours.

Funded Provider Settings

A Funded Provider setting provides care for young children across the age range birth to 5 years. There are different types of nurseries with different ways of operating, so it is essential that parents look for one which best suits the needs of both child and family. Funded provider settings can often provide more flexibility than local authority settings.

There are 11 ELC communities within Perth and Kinross. The communities ensure there are choices available across the authority providing a mix of attendance options in local authority, funded provider and childminder settings:

- Aberfeldy
- Auchterarder
- Blairgowrie
- Carse of Gowrie
- Crieff
- Kinross
- North Perth
- Pitlochry
- Scone
- South Perth and Earn
- Strathtay (Bankfoot, Luncarty, Murthly, Stanley)

All funded providers must enter into a contract with Perth & Kinross Council and meet the [National Standard](#) to deliver these hours, ensuring high quality ELC across all settings.

Details of what providers are available to you in your community can be found at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#). Children are entitled to a maximum of 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare per year and you can contact funded providers and childminders directly to discuss their individual offer and application process. Some funded provider settings and childminders can offer the purchase of additional hours of childcare to support family circumstances, and you should talk to them directly about this.

Parents are entitled to apply for an ELC place in more than one setting, sometimes referred to as a “split” funding place, where your child’s funded entitlement is used by both settings up to the full 1140 hours. The allocation of split funding places will be dependent on both settings being able to offer the hours requested.

Local authority settings offer a variety of attendance patterns including term time, 45-week or 50-week options as appropriate, some of which will be open 8.00 am - 6.00 pm. Not all ELC settings will offer all attendance patterns, but non-term-time options are available in all ELC communities.

Attendance Patterns | Local Authority ELC Settings

Options	Weeks per Year	Hours per Week	Sessions	School Holiday Entitlement
Term-time	38	30	9am-3pm x 5 Days	None
Extended year	45	26	8.30am-4.30pm x 2 Days And 8am-1pm or 1pm-6pm x 2 Days	1 week in October 1 week in Spring 3 weeks in Summer
Full Year	50	23	8am-1pm x 3 Days And 8am-12pm x 2 Days	2 weeks in October 2 weeks in Spring 6 weeks in Summer

Please note that all ELC settings are closed during in-service days and for two weeks over Christmas and New Year. More information on what attendance patterns settings in your ELC community offer can be found at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Applications for funded ELC places in local authority nurseries can be made at [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Nursery classes in the Community School of Auchterarder, Inch View, Letham, Pitlochry, Luncarty and St Dominic's primary schools offer additional wraparound childcare provision at the beginning and end of the day during term-time, and various sessions during school holidays. Separate guidance on all aspects of the wraparound care provision within Perth and Kinross is available at [Kids clubs and wraparound care services - Opening times, booking places, costs and holidays - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

You can also email Childcare@pkc.gov.uk.

To provide more flexible Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision for parents and families, applications can be made to purchase (in some PKC nurseries, where available) non-funded ELC sessions for children aged 3-5 years old. More information can be found at [Purchasing non funded Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) sessions for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

4. Does my child have to access and attend the full 1140 hours of ELC?

No, all 3–5-year-olds and eligible 2-year-olds in Scotland are entitled to 1140 hours of funded ELC; unlike primary and secondary education, it is not mandatory for your child to use the hours should you wish not to take them. You may decide to use less hours, or none at all. However, a quality experience of early learning and childcare can bring many benefits, including a smoother transition into primary school, as well as an enhanced opportunity for success in learning.

The maximum number of funded hours your child can access in a day is 8 hours in a local authority nursery and 10 hours in a funded provider setting.

Please note that should you choose not to use your full entitlement, funded hours cannot be banked and used at a later date.

5. Funding Follows the Child.

Funding Follows the Child is guidance from the Scottish Government which ensures parents will not be required to pay any upfront or top-up fees in relation to their child's 1140 funded hours. You are not required to purchase additional hours beyond the funded hours to access your child's funded entitlement at a setting.

You may choose to purchase additional hours, where this option is available, to fit around your own work patterns, or other circumstances.

6. When can my child begin accessing funded hours?

Your child is entitled to access the funded hours starting the term after their third birthday. For children eligible for a Strong Start place, they can access the funded hours starting the term after their second birthday.

Funded places begin at three times throughout the year: August, January and April. The PKC Nursery Registration webpage provides further detail: [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

For more information regarding start dates within funded provider settings or childminders, please contact them directly.

7. My child already has an ELC place, do I have to register again?

Yes. To secure your child's place for the next school session, you are required to confirm your intentions to retain the place from the January before. More information

can be found at [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

For children accessing ELC in funded provider settings and childminders, please discuss your intentions with them directly.

8. Will my child receive meals and snacks?

Each child is entitled to one meal and a healthy snack per day during their funded ELC session. Each meal and snack adheres to the [Setting the Table](#) guidance provided by the Scottish Government.

The [Scottish Healthy Milk and Snack Scheme](#) enables every child to access a portion of milk and a portion of fruit or vegetables each day they attend the setting. This is complemented by an additional protein or carbohydrate snack item(s) provided by the setting.

9. Can my child attend more than just the 1140 hours?

Your child can attend more than the 1140 funded hours in a funded provider setting and childminder setting, however these will be chargeable and based on the provider's availability. Please contact your provider of choice directly who can advise further.

Nursery classes in the Community School of Auchterarder, Inch View, Letham, Pitlochry, Luncarty and St Dominic's primary schools offer additional wraparound childcare provision at the beginning and end of the day during term-time, and various sessions during school holidays. Separate guidance on all aspects of the wraparound care provision within Perth and Kinross is available at [Kids clubs and wraparound care services - Opening times, booking places, costs and holidays - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

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To provide more flexible Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision for parents and families, applications can be made to purchase (in some PKC nurseries, where available) non-funded ELC sessions for children aged 3-5 years old. More information can be found at [Purchasing non funded Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) sessions for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

10. Can my child access their funded hours at more than one setting?

Yes, this is called a '*Split Funded Place*'. In Perth and Kinross your child's funding can be accessed in several different settings, to best accommodate your family and your child's needs. This can be across all funded provider types – childminders, local authority settings, and funded provider settings.

More than one funded provider can be accessed per day, however this must be at the end of the session. Should another funded provider be used before the session ends the funding for these hours will be sacrificed. For example, if using a term time attendance pattern (9.00 am - 3.00 pm) and the child is collected by a childminder or funded provider setting at 1.00 pm, the two hours of funding would be sacrificed.

If a parent is seeking a split funded place, they will be required to complete an application form for each establishment they are seeking a place within. Please note that if splitting local authority places you can do so by applying to both settings, via the [one online application form](#). You can find more information and apply at [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#). Please see Application Guidance and FAQs prior to completing the form, which is accessible through the above webpage.

Parents should be made aware that although every effort will be made to meet their needs, there is no guarantee that it will be possible to offer split funded places in every case. The allocation of a split funded place will be dependent upon both establishments being able to offer the hours requested.

Places with funded provider settings and childminders are allocated in accordance with the provider's own Admissions Policy and a copy can be obtained from the individual setting.

11. Can my child access their funded hours in another local authority area?

The funded hours can be taken anywhere in Scotland with a local authority registered funded provider who is compliant with the National Standards, based on availability of places. This means that parents may send their children to early learning and childcare settings outside Perth and Kinross and still qualify for a funded early learning and childcare place.

You will need to check with the relevant setting regarding the availability of places and funding arrangements.

12. Does my 3–5-year-old need to be toilet trained before starting nursery?

No, this is not a requirement for accessing funded ELC, but it would help staff greatly if you can begin to support your child to toilet train in preparation for beginning their place. Please see NHS Tayside's [“Let's Go Potty”](#) resource for information and tips on how to get started.

As initial registration is in January, your child may not be toilet trained at this time; however, it is quite possible that by the start of the school session in August they will be so do not worry about this at registration or enrolment.

If the situation is that your child is not yet fully toilet trained when they start their ELC place, please do discuss this with the staff at your chosen setting who will deal with this sensitively. All funded ELC providers will be equipped for changing children, and toileting procedures, including changing, will be shared with parents.

13. Additional Support Needs and Inclusion

Children might need extra help to be able to take part in ELC or get the most from their time there. Some children may need a lot of support while others may need only a small amount as each child is an individual.

There is no one way to support children in ELC but working in partnership with families is vital so you will be involved right from the start. The support will depend on your child's needs and also what they enjoy doing. Support is usually provided by the nursery team through normal play experiences that take place. Depending on your child's needs, support may include:

- *Making changes to the environment to suit a child's needs e.g. having quieter areas for a child with a hearing impairment;*
- *Using visuals to help a child understand their day and manage transitions;*
- *Providing strategies or a quiet space for children to manage their emotions;*
- *Simplifying or adapting of language used by the adults to help children's understanding*
- *1-1 or small group time with a teacher, early childhood practitioner, play assistant or pupil support assistant for targeted support and playful learning experiences*

Some children will also have other professionals involved, e.g. Speech & Language Therapist, Hearing Impaired Teacher, Early Years Inclusion staff, or Occupational Therapists. All professionals will work closely with yourself and the ELC team to ensure that your child is being well supported at both home and in their setting. For further information please see: [Advice for parents and carers in Scotland - Enquire.](#)

14. How do I apply for a funded place?

If you wish to apply to a funded provider setting and/or childminder for a funded place, please contact them directly to find out how to apply.

If you wish to apply for a local authority nursery place, the application process can be accessed online at [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

The initial application process will open on 5 January 2026 until 28 February 2026, and places will be allocated on 23 March 2026 if you meet the 28 February deadline above.

You can continue to apply for nursery places throughout the year. Please use the link above to find out more information or email ELCApplcations@pkc.gov.uk.

15. When does my child need to start primary school?

In Scotland, children who turn five years old before the start of the school session in August **must** start school in August. Alternatively, parents can make arrangements to home educate their child.

Parents whose child will be five years of age between the start of the school session in August and the last day of February in the following year have the choice of when their child will start school. Please see below:

Where a child's 5 th birthday falls between the following dates:	Child will cease to be eligible for ELC from:	Eligibility for an Additional Year of ELC?
1 st March 2026 and 17 th August 2026	August 2026	No
18 th August 2026 and February 28 th 2027	August 2027	Yes – can go to school in August 2026 or August 2027

16. Early Learning and Childcare Funded Providers

An up to date list of funded providers is available to view at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Each ELC setting offers something slightly different in terms of environment and some offer a variety of attendance patterns. To find out more regarding your chosen setting, please contact the setting directly.

Each nursery provision will have a defined community please note that this may differ from the primary school catchment area. Communities are agreed and registered with the Schools' Support Team within PKC's Education & Learning Services. All nurseries managed by PKC are nondenominational.

Please be aware that a place in a nursery class does not give children priority in gaining a place in the same school when enrolling for primary one.

How do I find out more about early learning and childcare for my child?

Funded provider settings and childminders establish their own priority categories and dates for registration. Details of their admission procedures can be obtained by contacting the individual setting. Please contact the funded provider directly to discuss any matters in relation to their setting. You can find the contact details for all funded providers in Perth and Kinross at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

Further information regarding any aspect of ELC can be obtained from the Education & Learning Service:

Tel **01738 476200**

Email: ELC@pkc.gov.uk

In addition, our Childcare & Family Information Service can supply further details of the full range of childcare services within Perth and Kinross including childminders and out of school care:

Tel **0845 601 4477**

Email: Childcare@pkc.gov.uk

The Council also offers an Early Years Inclusion Service providing educational support to children with additional support needs including working with their families, ELC establishments and agencies. More information can be found at [Schools - additional support - Perth & Kinross Council](#) and [What support is available in the early years? - Leaflet 6](#)

You can also email ASN@pkc.gov.uk directly.

National Regulators

Our funded provider settings and local authority nursery classes are currently inspected by the [Care Inspectorate](#), and [Education Scotland](#).

All staff follow national guidelines for the education of children aged 3-5 years, and eligible 2-year-olds, which encourage learning through play. Each service must meet standards laid down by both bodies in the [Quality Improvement Framework for the Early Learning and Childcare Sectors](#).

Funded childminders are currently inspected by the Care Inspectorate.

Useful Links

[Quality improvement framework for the early learning and childcare sectors | Inspection frameworks | Inspection and review | Education Scotland](#)

[Early learning and childcare - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

[My child is under 5 - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

[Funded early learning and childcare for 2 year olds \(Strong Starts\) - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

[Early Years Scotland](#)

[Supporting Childminding Across Scotland | SCMA](#)

<https://www.parentclub.scot/>

[realisingtheambition.pdf](#)

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: operating guidance - gov.scot](#)

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

BSL users can contact us via Contact Scotland BSL, the online British Sign Language video relay interpreting service. Find out more on the Contact Scotland BSL website <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>