

Scottish Government submission of 14 June 2022

PE1907/E: Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland

New commitment

1. In the Programme for Government, we set out our commitment to expand early learning and childcare to 1 and 2 year olds, starting in this Parliament with children from low income households. From early consideration of the evidence and engagement with the sector, it is clear that a simple roll-down of the expansion for 3 and 4 year olds is not appropriate. As such, this year (2022-23) we will begin engagement with families, the early learning and childcare sector and academic experts to design how the new offer can best support children and families.

Impact of COVID-19 on child development

2. During 2020 and 2021, protective measures related to COVID-19 curtailed many interactions young children would regularly have in early learning and childcare (ELC) settings and social contexts that provide learning experiences.
3. Studies have suggested negative short to medium term impacts on children's sleep, mood, behaviour and development – especially social and emotional, and speech and language development – among a large minority of young children.^[4]
4. We know that COVID-19 has impacted young children over the past two years in a number of different ways. For example, [a report from Scottish Directors of Public Health](#) earlier this year highlighted that the proportion of children recorded as having one or more developmental concerns (at 13–15 months and 27–30 months) has increased in 2021, having been more stable in 2020.

^[4] [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): Advisory Sub-Group on Education and Children's Issues - children, schools, early learning and childcare settings - evidence summary - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\); COVID-19 Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey](#)

5. We are continuing to engage with partners to identify and better understand these impacts on young children, so that we can respond to their needs.
6. Providing high-quality ELC services, including access to outdoor learning, will play an important role in mitigating some of the negative impacts.
7. To support the children who stand to benefit most from high quality ELC provision, the Scottish Government continues to provide funding for additional graduate level posts in our most disadvantaged communities across all 32 local authorities.
8. These Equity and Excellence leads support quality improvement by modelling pedagogical practice and upskilling other practitioners, as well as working directly with children to improve their learning experiences.
9. A range of quality improvement support is in place at the national level, complementing the support that is being delivered by local authorities, including the Care Inspectorate's Quality Improvement Programme, which is funded by the Scottish Government.
10. In addition, the Scottish Government is funding a range of professional learning resources for ELC practitioners, which are directly relevant to supporting COVID-19 recovery, including modules supporting: parents to further engage in their children's development; the development and progression of children's early language and literacy, and; building confidence in identifying and responding to additional support needs.