

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1907](#): Provide funded early learning & childcare for all 2-year olds in Scotland, lodged by Claire Beats

Background

Expansion of funded early learning and childcare

From August 2021, local authorities were required to secure the provision of 1,140 hours of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) for eligible children. This was an increase from the previous statutory amount of 600 hours of funded ELC.

The [main aims of the expansion](#) are to:

- improve children's outcomes and help close the poverty-related attainment gap
- increase family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents
- support parents into work, study or training.

The cost of the expansion from 600 to 1,140 hours is over £500 million per year.

The [Programme for Government 2021-22](#) said:

“We have now set out our ambition to provide funded early learning to all one- and two-year-olds, starting in the course of this Parliament with children from low-income households. This year we will begin engagement with families, the early learning sector and academic experts to design how the new offer will work in practice.” (p40)

Eligibility

An eligible child is one who is three or four years of age, some pre-school five-year-olds and two-year-olds whose families meet certain criteria.

Eligibility for funded ELC for two-year-olds can be through the receipt of certain benefits. These are:

- Income Support
- Job Seeker's Allowance (income based)
- any income-related element of Employment and Support Allowance
- Incapacity or Severe Disablement Allowance
- State Pension Credit
- support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999.

In addition, two-year-olds are eligible from families in receipt of Child Tax Credit

- but not Working Tax Credit, with earnings of £16,480 or less
- and Working Tax Credit with earnings of £7,500 a year or less.

Two-year-olds from households in receipt of Universal Credit with an income threshold of £625 a month or less are also eligible. These income thresholds are normally up-rated annually.

Two-year-old children who are, or have been, looked after by the local authority, are the subject of a kinship care order or the subject of a guardianship order are eligible for funded ELC.

The Scottish Government is also seeking to provide funded ELC to any care-experienced parent.

Once a two-year-old is eligible for funded ELC, he or she will remain eligible regardless of whether the circumstances of the family change.

Take up

Over the past three years of data (2018-2020), the percentage of two-year-olds receiving funded ELC has been around 10% of the

population. The Scottish Government does not report on how many of the eligible two-year-old children access funded ELC as it cannot determine the overall population of eligible children.

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11/10/2021

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