

Early Learning and Childcare Expansion in Aberdeen

Parental Consultation Report 2016

Introduction

The Early Years Team, Aberdeen City Council, carried out a statutory consultation exercise between September and October 2016, linked to the Scottish Government's Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland.

Background

The Scottish Government will expand the offer of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours per annum for eligible two year olds and all three and four year olds, whose parents want such a service, by 2020.

The four guiding principles of the Government's expansion plans are:

- Quality
- Flexibility
- Affordability
- Accessibility

Context of Consultation

In order to deliver the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare by 2020, it is very important that we gather information from parents, carers and potential future parents regarding how best services can be provided and delivered in Aberdeen. We have a statutory duty, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to consult with parents and carers on a regular basis.

The Early Years Team carried out a two-step approach to engaging and consulting with parents and carers on the Scottish Government's programme to increase Early Learning and Childcare entitlement to 1140 hours from 2020. The consultation was carried out between September and October 2016.

Firstly, a series of 12 consultation events were held in each of the Associated School Groups (ASGs) to share information with parents and carers and to seek views directly from parents in small focus groups. Secondly, a Survey Monkey questionnaire was launched widely during the same period to gather as many views as possible from across the city.

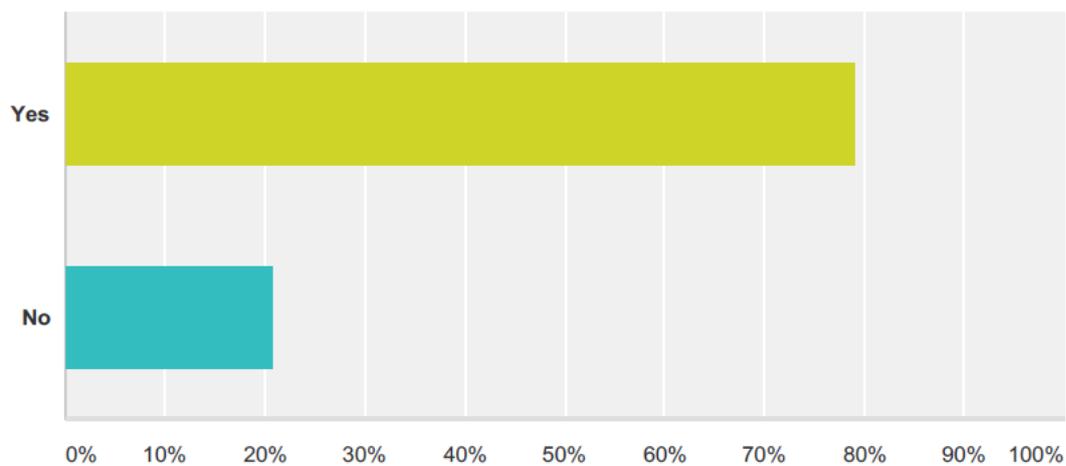
Outcomes of Consultation

Results from Parent/Carer Survey Monkey Questionnaire

- A total of 486 responses were received.
- The majority of responses were received from individuals living in Deciles 7 to 10 of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) where Decile 1 is the most deprived and Decile 10 the least.

Q4 Do you currently use early learning and childcare?

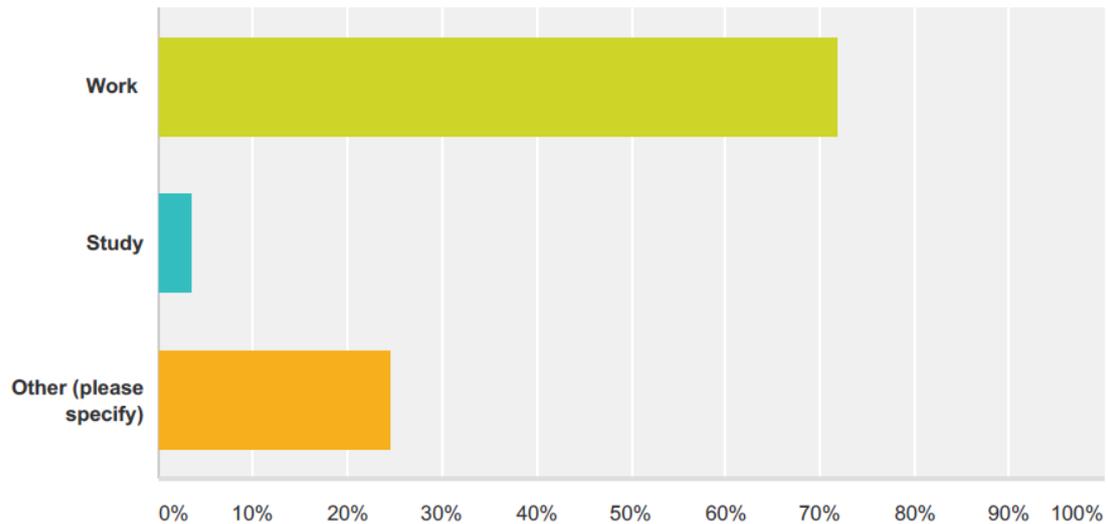
Answered: 486 Skipped: 3



- Approximately 80% of respondents currently use early learning and childcare.
- Approximately 20% of respondents currently do not use early learning and childcare.

Q5 If yes, why do you currently use early learning and child care?

Answered: 390 Skipped: 99



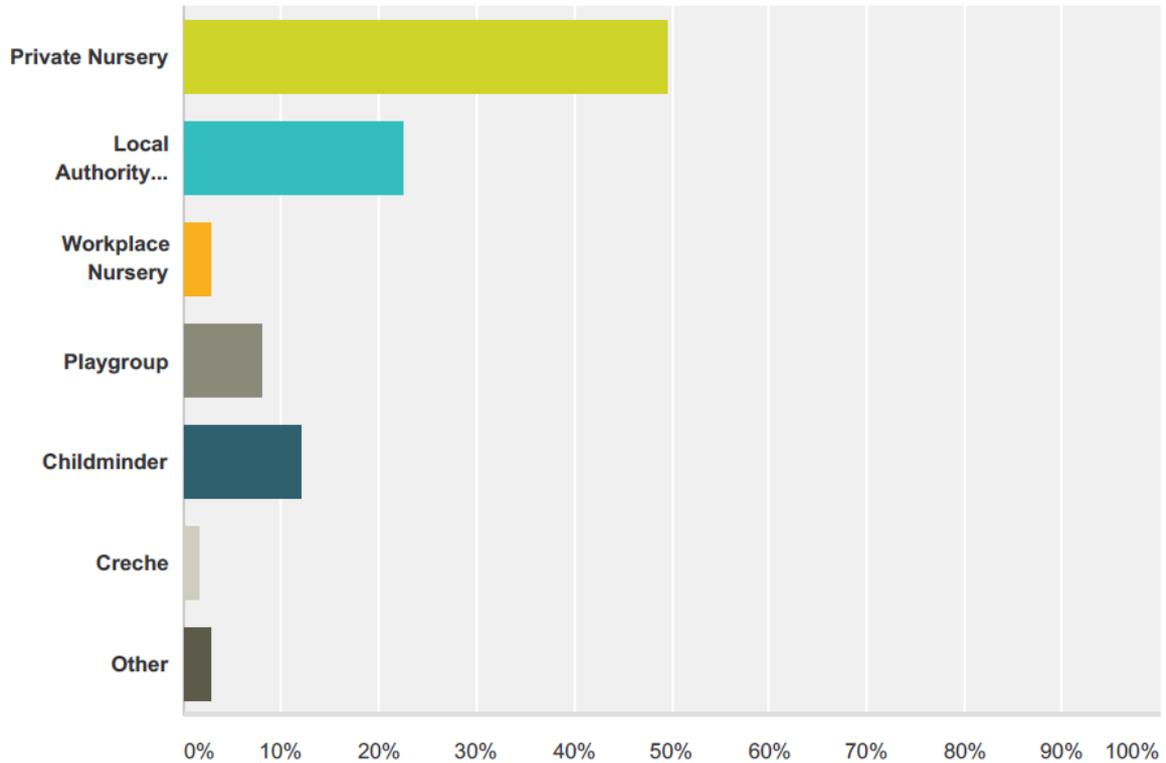
- 72% of respondents use early learning and childcare for work.
- 3% of respondents use early learning and childcare for study.
- 25% of respondents answered other.

Other reasons given by parents and carers for using early learning and childcare were:

- School nursery
- Work and Study
- Childs Development / Early Learning
- Socialisation/Interaction with other children
- Good introduction into school system
- Entitlement / because it's available.

Q6 What type of early learning and childcare do you currently use?

Answered: 414 Skipped: 75

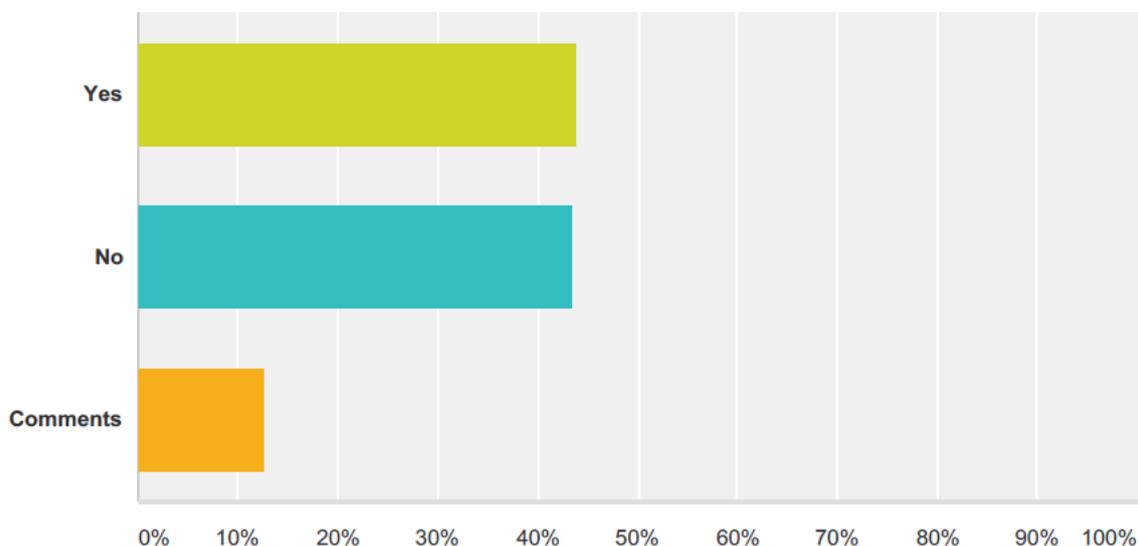


- 50% of respondents use a Private Nursery
- 22% of respondents use a Local Authority Nursery
- 3% of respondents use a Workplace Nursery
- 8% of respondents use a Playgroup
- 12% of respondents use a Childminder
- 3% of respondents use a Crèche.

This question asked the respondents to identify the primary provider of early learning and childcare. There is some evidence that some families use a mix of provision and this is potentially an area for further research.

Q7 Do you use family members/friends/neighbours for childcare?

Answered: 474 Skipped: 15



- Yes 44%
- No 44%
- Other * 12%

Amongst those that responded 'other', a number highlighted Grandparents in addition to other early learning and childcare, e.g. for wraparound before or after school nursery.

The responses to this question highlight the split between those who use family members and those who indicated they do not use family members. The latter group may not use family members because of choice or they are not available for other reasons e.g. health, demographics, etc.

Currently how is your early learning and childcare spread across the week?

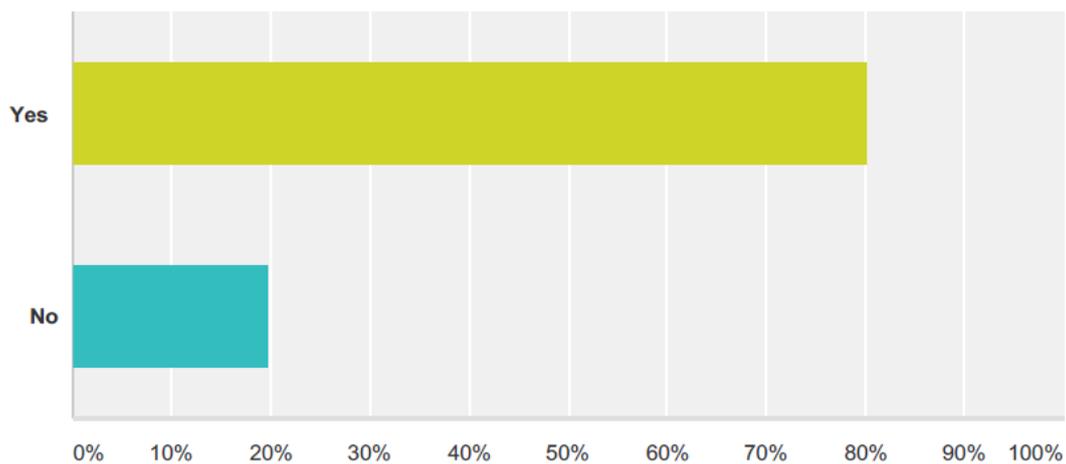
- We asked respondents to tick which days they currently use early learning and childcare.
- There were a large variety of responses to this question which has made it very difficult to analyse.
- However, the busiest days of the week highlighted were Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.
- Followed closely by Monday and then Friday.
- Only 17% of respondents used early learning and childcare at weekends and, from the responses received, it would appear this is provided predominantly by grandparents.

Many respondents have a mix of early learning and childcare arrangements in place. For example:

- School nursery then grandparents
- School Nursery then childminder
- Play Group then school nursery
- Grandparents then school nursery then nanny.

Q9 Thinking forward to 2020, the proposed expansion of early learning & child care will increase the number of free hours from 600 to 1140. Would you use additional allocated funded child care hours?

Answered: 474 Skipped: 15



- 80% indicated they would use the additional allocation of funded Early Learning and Childcare.
- 20% indicated they would not use the additional allocation of funded Early Learning and Childcare.

The percentages of yes and no are similar to the response in Q4 which asked parents/carers if they currently use early learning and childcare. This would seem to indicate a majority of respondents that currently use Early Learning and Childcare would also use the additional hours entitlement.

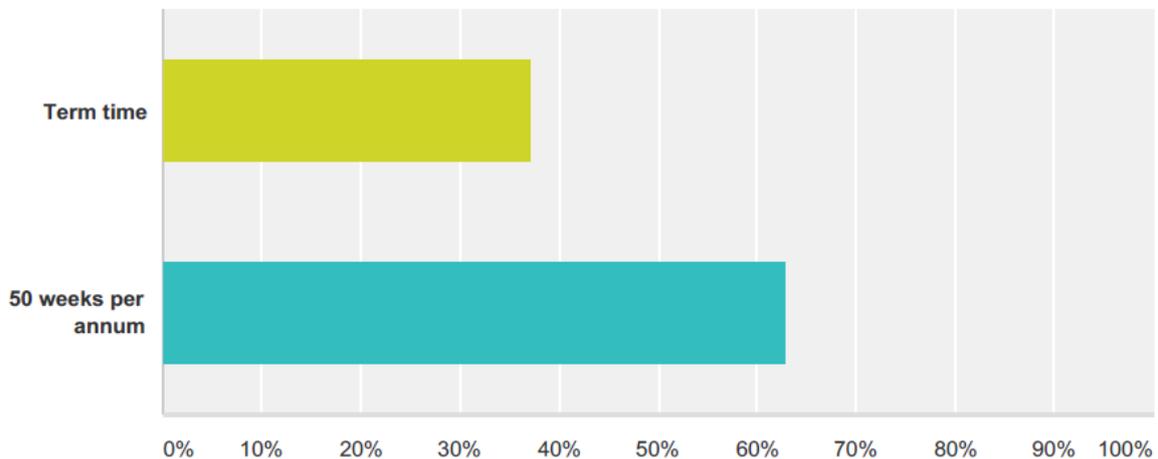
When asked how would you prefer the hours to be spread across the week?

- The majority of respondents said Monday to Friday and whole days (8–10 hours)
- A number of respondents indicated during the school day 9am-3pm
- A smaller number of respondents said a half day morning or afternoon – 4 hours

- A number of respondents said before and after school
- Only 1 response wanted whole day Sat/Sun.

Q11 Would you want the hours?

Answered: 439 Skipped: 50



- The majority of respondents want the additional Early Learning and Childcare hours over 50 weeks of the year.

Main Themes

- The majority (80%) of Survey Monkey respondents currently use Early Learning and Childcare.
- Many parents use childminders and grandparents 50/50 for wrap around care alongside the current early learning and childcare entitlement.
- Respondents were equally divided between those reliant on family, friends and neighbours and those not.
- A small number of respondents live outwith Aberdeen but use Early Learning and Childcare in the city.
- The majority (80%) of Survey Monkey respondents indicated that they would use the additional hours of funded early learning and childcare.
- The majority (63%) of Survey Monkey respondents said that they would want the additional hours over 50 weeks of the year.

Key Information from Consultation Meetings

- Approximately 40 participants attended the consultation meetings which were organised in each of the 12 ASG areas.
- Although the meetings were attended in small numbers, the quality of discussion in each of the focus groups was rich.
- An even distribution of working and non-working parents attended the meetings.

- It was widely agreed that the increase in entitlement to 1140 hours would be very good for working families but we need to get it right for very young children.
- Many non-working parents expressed doubt about using the full extended entitlement (1140 hours). Some felt that this would impact on their own quality time with their children and some had opted to work part-time to allow for this.
- Balance must be achieved between children's learning and attachment with careful balance required to maintain parental involvement.
- "Happy for my child to go to nursery for a few hours each day but not all day if I'm not working" - Parent.
- Some parents may choose to increase their ELC hours as their children grow older, e.g. closer to Primary School entry, or if their peers are also going.
- It was acknowledged that the added flexibility would reduce costs for parents, especially parents with more than one child.
- "Six hours a day or full day provision would be incredibly useful as a working mum. But I wouldn't want that on the days I'm not working" – Parent.
- Strong preference was expressed for ELC provision to be at a single site.
- Need for separate provision for 2-year olds / younger children raised.
- Childminders were seen as a strong element of possible delivery methods due to wrap around, flexibility and strength of parent / provider relationship.
- A member of staff in a school nursery highlighted that many parents use childminders and grandparents 50/50 for wrap around care alongside their current Early Learning and Childcare entitlement, e.g. before or after session.
- The importance of parental choice, entitlement and flexibility was emphasised at all the meetings.
- More consideration needs to be given to children with Additional Support Needs and inclusion.
- Concern was raised about the staff turnover in private sector nurseries.
- The downturn in the oil industry in Aberdeen has had an impact on the private nursery sector with the majority of places now part-time.
- Private sector raised concern about impact on their sector – where will staff come from?
- Need to consider co-occurrence of times in school settings, for primary and ELC pupils.
- A member of staff highlighted that ELC staff in schools feel isolated from other colleagues and removed from day to day school business due to the times of morning and afternoon sessions.
- It was also noted that the flexibility in drop-off and pick-up times, whilst good for parents, can be unsettling for children who are being dropped off late or picked up early.
- Suggested that an increased entitlement is based on a more relaxed, play based model, rather than the current very structured model.
- Across all of the focus group discussions, there was strong feeling that 6 hours per day or full day early learning and childcare would be "incredibly useful" to working parents. However, non-working parents said they would be "happy for children to go to nursery for a few hours each day, but not all day if not working".

- It was suggested consideration is given to an Early Learning and Childcare model for non-working parents, for example increasing the hours gradually as the children grow older.
- “One size does not fit all, but people will use provision if easy to use” – Parent.

Next Stages / Plans for Further Consultation

- 75 Survey Monkey respondents left their name / contact details and indicated that they would be willing to be involved in future focus group discussions.
- This is a very positive response so we can follow this up.
- Plans for further consultation include engagement with parents, carers and families in areas of deprivation in the first instance, as these areas were under represented in the initial consultation – Survey Monkey questionnaire and consultation meetings.
- Specifically, the next round of engagement will be undertaken in the Community Planning Partnership priority areas of: Northfield, Tillydrone and Torry. This will commence between May and June 2017 and will be in conjunction with Locality Teams.
- Responses from the initial consultation can inform the questions asked in the next round of engagement and consultation, e.g. use of mix of provision.
- Ensure that any future Survey Monkey type questionnaires are accessible / representative of geographic population and SIMD areas.
- Facebook was suggested for advertising / engaging with parents.
- Engagement and consultation with children.

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March 2017