# North Lanarkshire Council
# Report

## Education, Children and Families Committee

**Does this report require to be approved?** ☐ Yes ☒ No

**Ref** JMcP/JOH **Date** 09/09/25

## Early Learning and Childcare

**From** James McParland, Chief Officer (Education - South)

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### Executive Summary

This report provides Education, Children and Families Committee with a progress update and further recommendations on the delivery of Early learning and Childcare (ELC) within North Lanarkshire.

*'Deliver in partnership, by a skilled workforce, in stimulating and nurturing environments, high quality and flexible Early Learning and Childcare which is affordable and accessible for all.'*

### Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee.

(1) Acknowledge the changes in the annual admissions timeline, in response to the need to implement the annual ELC staffing exercise earlier in the academic session.
(2) Acknowledge the implementation of an attendance policy within ELC.

### The Plan for North Lanarkshire

| | |
|---|---|
| Priority | All priorities |
| Ambition statement | (7) Enhance collaborative working to maximise support and ensure all our children and young people are included, supported, and safe |
| Programme of Work | Statutory / corporate / service requirement |

## 1. Background

1.1 North Lanarkshire has been delivering 1140 hours for all eligible children since September 2020 in accordance and compliance with Scottish Government policy and guidance.

1.2 The service continues to review processes across ELC to ensure best practice in terms offering flexible, accessible, and affordable high-quality provision to children and families.

1.3 A recent review was undertaken in collaboration with Human Resource (HR) team which focused on the need to update processes regarding the annual ELC staffing exercise. In turn this impacted on the need to review of the ELC admissions timeline.

1.4 In addition and in response to the launch of the School Attendance Policy it is also essential to monitor the attendance within the ELC sector, albeit ELC provision is non-statutory, it is important that absences and any concerns around child safety or family wellbeing are addressed. We recognise that establishing positive routines in the early years will impact and reinforce the links between regular attendance and positive outcomes for children. As such, the development and implementation of an ELC Attendance Guidance will allow us to capitalise on opportunities to strengthen early level transitions.

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## 2. Report

### Early Learning & Childcare Annual Staffing Exercise / Admissions Timeline

2.1.1 The Early Learning & Childcare Team (ELCT) provide the Human Resource Business Partner Team (HRBPT) with admission data on agreed number of children for each Early Learning and Childcare establishment on an annual basis.

2.1.2 The HRBPT and ELCT review admission data to ascertain impact on staffing models across the ELC estate as per agreed staffing ratios. Consequently, this may result in an increase/decrease in staffing level entitlement, managed as part of the annual workforce staffing programme of work.

2.1.3 The priority is to realign affected staff members to alternative vacancies across the ELC estate, supported by ongoing engagement with our three signatory trade unions.

2.1.4 Committee are asked to note that due to the time required to implement the annual staffing exercise process, both the ELCT and HRBPT require to have admission data, for the following academic session at the earliest point, in line with other sectors, for example, pupil numbers for enrolment to primary 1 are gathered by the end of January. The ELC updated admissions timeline will enable ELCT and HRBPT to gather the required data and begin the annual staffing exercise mid-February, in time for the next academic session.

2.1.5 The change in the timeline will also have a positive impact on children transitioning to ELC, providing more time and opportunities to participate in transition activities.

2.1.6 Committee are asked to review and endorse **Appendix 01**, which outlines the recommended changes to the annual admission timeline, to support the annual staffing exercise. This exercise will commence mid-February once all on time applications have been allocated a placement for session 2026-2027.

2.1.7 The change to the admission timeline, will see the deferred entry process being brought forward also. In previous years deferral applications would be submitted at the point children are enrolled for school. Head of Establishments will be updated on the changes.

2.1.8 The service will work closely with the Corporate Communications Team to ensure families; providers and all relevant agencies are well informed of the changes to the timeline. Committee is asked to note that the ELC website will be updated, and an enhanced admissions campaign for 2026/27 will be undertaken.

Early learning and childcare | North Lanarkshire Council

**Early Learning and Childcare Attendance Guidance - Appendix 02/03**

2.2.1 North Lanarkshire Council is committed to high-quality Early Learning and Childcare where regular attendance is vital to children's learning, development, and wellbeing. Though attendance in ELC is non-statutory, it is important to monitor absences and address any concerns around child safety or family wellbeing. In addition, we recognise that establishing positive routines in the early years will impact positively and reinforce the links between regular attendance and positive outcomes for children. As such, this guidance will allow us to capitalise on this opportunity and strengthen early level transitions.

2.2.2 Strengthened guidance will ensure that attendance is closely monitored, that absences are followed up promptly, and that families are supported in overcoming barriers to regular attendance. This proactive approach will strengthen safeguarding children, particularly those who may be more vulnerable or at risk of harm. This will also allow establishments to provide additional support to families if required.

2.2.3 Although attendance is non-statutory, it is important that families are made aware of the procedures for reporting absences and encouraged to support regular attendance. Clear expectations should be communicated from the outset and reinforced throughout the year, within a supportive and inclusive environment.

2.2.4 Staff must maintain accurate daily attendance records using SEEMiS and remain vigilant to patterns of irregular or repeated absences. Any concerns should be discussed with the Senior Leadership Team and documented to inform appropriate support. Responses should align with the principles of the GIRFEC framework and follow staged intervention processes, involving multi-agency partners where necessary to address underlying issues and provide sensitive, tailored support.

2.2.5 In cases of unexplained absence, staff must make prompt contact with parents or emergency contacts on the first day. If contact cannot be established, the matter should be escalated to the setting's management team and the child's Named Person, typically their Health Visitor.

2.2.6 Where appropriate, child protection procedures should be initiated to ensure the child's safety. All actions taken must be clearly recorded in line with policy.

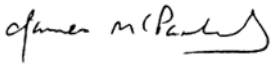
## 3. Measures of success

3.1 To sustain the delivery of 1140 hours for all eligible children and families.

3.2. To provide safe, high quality ELC for children across NLC.

## 4. Supporting documentation

Appendix 01: Admissions Timeline
Appendix 02: ELC Attendance Guidance
Appendix 03: ELC Attendance Matters Leaflet



**James McParland**
**Chief Officer (Education-South)**

## 5. Impacts

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| **5.1** | **Public Sector Equality Duty and Fairer Scotland Duty**<br>Does the report contain information that has an impact as a result of the Public Sector Equality Duty and/or Fairer Scotland Duty?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?<br><br>If Yes, has an assessment been carried out and published on the council's website? https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/your-community/equalities/equality-and-fairer-scotland-duty-impact-assessments<br>Yes ☐ No ☐ |
| **5.2** | **Financial impact**<br>Does the report contain any financial impacts?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, have all relevant financial impacts been discussed and agreed with Finance?<br>Yes ☐ No ☐<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? |
| **5.3** | **HR policy impact**<br>Does the report contain any HR policy or procedure impacts?<br>Yes ☒ No ☐<br>If Yes, have all relevant HR impacts been discussed and agreed with People Resources?<br>Yes ☒ No ☐<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?<br><br>HR and ELC will continue to work closely to ensure the annual staffing exercises are untaken in line with due processes, in partnership with trade unions |
| **5.4** | **Legal impact**<br>Does the report contain any legal impacts (such as general legal matters, statutory considerations (including employment law considerations), or new legislation)?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, have all relevant legal impacts been discussed and agreed with Legal and Democratic?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? |
| **5.5** | **Data protection impact**<br>Does the report / project / practice contain or involve the processing of personal data?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, is the processing of this personal data likely to result in a high risk to the data subject?<br>Yes ☐ No ☐<br>If Yes, has a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) been carried out and e-mailed to dataprotection@northlan.gov.uk<br>Yes ☐ No ☐ |
| **5.6** | **Technology / Digital impact** |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Does the report contain information that has an impact on either technology, digital transformation, service redesign / business change processes, data management, or connectivity / broadband / Wi-Fi?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?<br><br>Where the impact identifies a requirement for significant technology change, has an assessment been carried out (or is scheduled to be carried out) by the Enterprise Architecture Governance Group (EAGG)?<br>Yes ☐ No ☐ |
| **5.7** | **Environmental / Carbon impact**<br>Does the report / project / practice contain information that has an impact on any environmental or carbon matters?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact? |
| **5.8** | **Communications impact**<br>Does the report contain any information that has an impact on the council's communications activities?<br>Yes ☒ No ☐<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact?<br><br>Work is being progressed with the corporate communications team, to ensure an enhanced admissions campaign is undertaken for session 2026/27. |
| **5.9** | **Risk impact**<br>Is there a risk impact?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the key risks and potential impacts, highlighting where the risk(s) are assessed and recorded (e.g. Corporate or Service or Project Risk Registers), and how they are managed? |
| **5.10** | **Armed Forces Covenant Duty**<br>Does the report require to take due regard of the Armed Forces Covenant Duty (i.e. does it relate to healthcare, housing, or education services for in-Service or ex-Service personnel, or their families, or widow(er)s)?<br>Yes ☐ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the provision which has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the particular needs of the Armed Forces community to make sure that they do not face disadvantage compared to other citizens in the provision of public services. |
| **5.11** | **Children's rights and wellbeing impact**<br>Does the report contain any information regarding any council activity, service delivery, policy, or plan that has an impact on children and young people up to the age of 18, or on a specific group of these?<br>Yes ☒ No ☒<br>If Yes, please provide a brief summary of the impact and the provision that has been made to ensure there has been appropriate consideration of the relevant Articles from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).<br><br>If Yes, has a Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (CRWIA) been carried out?<br>Yes ☒ No ☐ |

**Appendix 01**

**ELC Admissions Timeline 2026-2027**

| **DRAFT TIMEFRAME 2026-2027<br>ELC ADMISSIONS** | |
|---|---|
| **Actions** | **Dates** |
| ELC Flexible Framework Closes | September 2025 |
| Launch Admissions | 6 October 2025 |
| Closing Date for Admission | 28 November 2025 |
| DEFERRED ENTRY DEADLINE (HT to discuss with parents) | 5 December 2025 |
| All Applications added to NAMS by close of business | 5 December 2025 |
| Letters to be issued to all on time applications Cat 1-5 (LA) & Cat 7 (funded providers/childminders) | 27 February 2026 |

Appendix 02

# Early Years' Attendance Guidance

## Additional Guidance for Establishments

LIVE
LEARN
WORK
INVEST
VISIT

| Document control | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Title** | Early Years' Attendance Guidance | | |
| **Owner** | James McParland | **Contact** | Daniel Murray |
| **Governance Group** | E&F SMT | | |
| **Author** | Daniel Murray | **Contact** | murrayda@northlan.gov.uk |

| Revision History | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Number** | **Originator** | **Date Review Commenced** | **Revision description/record of change** |
| V1 | D Murray | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Document Approvals | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Number** | **Governance Group** | **Date approval granted** | **Date approval to be requested** (if document still draft) |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

| Consultation Record (for most recent update) | |
|---|---|
| **Status of document consulted upon** | |
| **Stakeholders consulted/date** | |

| Strategic Alignment |
|---|
| |

| Next review date | |
|---|---|
| **Review Date** | |

## Introduction

North Lanarkshire Council is committed to providing high-quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), recognising that regular attendance is fundamental to children's learning, development, and overall wellbeing. While we acknowledge that families may occasionally face challenges that affect nursery attendance, this updated process aims to reinforce effective partnership working, fostering early and proactive support to reduce barriers and promote consistent attendance.

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) staff work collaboratively with parents and carers to create a positive attendance culture. Although attendance in ELC is non-statutory, tracking absence patterns and addressing concerns remains vital—particularly when a child's welfare or family circumstances may be impacted, and for establishing good attendance habits at the earliest opportunity in a child's learning journey.

This guidance outlines our shared commitment to encouraging regular attendance and provides clear procedures for identifying, monitoring, and responding to absences. This guidance should be read alongside North Lanarkshire's Managing Attendance and Absence policy.

## Aims

- Promote and sustain regular attendance across Early Years settings as a foundation for children's learning, development, and learning.
- Identify and respond early to patterns of irregular attendance, ensuring timely and appropriate support for children and families.
- Work collaboratively with families to understand and address barriers to attendance, offering sensitive, confidential support tailored to individual circumstances.

## Attendance Expectations

Regular and consistent attendance during agreed hours is strongly encouraged to support children's learning, development, and wellbeing. Families are expected to report any planned absences to the setting by 9:30am, even if their child starts later in the day. This ensures that staff can monitor attendance effectively and respond to any concerns promptly. Families will receive regular updates on their child's attendance and progress, and settings will actively promote good attendance through ongoing communication, reminders, and positive reinforcement. Attendance expectations will be clearly outlined during enrolment and reviewed annually.

## Roles and Responsibilities

To support the wellbeing and safety of all children, parents and carers are expected to:

- Keep the setting informed of up-to-date telephone numbers and emergency contacts.
- Notify the setting in advance of any planned absences.
- Notify the setting by 9:30am on the day of any unexpected absence, even if your child starts later in the day.
- Respond promptly to any contact from the setting regarding their child's absence.
- Share any concerns about their family circumstances with ELC practitioners or the child's Named Person to ensure appropriate support is provided.

To support the wellbeing and safety of all children, early years staff will:

- Foster a welcoming and inclusive environment to encourage regular attendance.
- Respond sensitively to concerns raised by children or adults and support reintegration following prolonged absences.
- Ensure the contact details of each child's Named Person are readily accessible.
- Inform parents/carers of the various communication methods available for reporting absences (e.g., in person, phone, text).
- Provide regular reminders about the importance of following the absence reporting procedure.

## Monitoring and Tracking Attendance

Attendance patterns will be reviewed regularly by the Senior Leadership Team as part of the setting's ongoing monitoring and quality assurance processes. Any signs of irregular or declining attendance will be addressed appropriately.

All Early Years' settings are responsible for:

- Maintaining accurate and up-to-date attendance records for all children using SEEMiS.
- Monitoring unplanned absences and identify any patterns of concern, sharing these with the setting's management team, parents and where appropriate, the child's Named Person and/or other agencies, if required.
- Documenting repeated absences and related actions in a chronology to support the child and family.

## Support for Families

We understand that families may experience challenges that impact attendance. Support will be offered in a sensitive and confidential manner. Where appropriate, we will work in partnership with the child's Names Person, Cluster Integration and Improvement Lead (CIIL), health services, social work, and whole family support teams, in line with the principles of the GIRFEC (Getting It Right for Every Child) framework and staged intervention process.

## Procedures for Unexplained Absences

Should a child be absent without explanation, and there is no known risk around the child and family, the following procedure will be followed:

Day 1 of absence:

- The setting will attempt to contact the parent/carer and/or listed emergency contacts to confirm the child's safety and reason for absence.

If contact cannot be made the establishments will take appropriate action, including:

- Contacting emergency contacts and any known family members.
- Notifying the child's Named Person and, if applicable, the Lead Professional.
- Implementing Child Protection procedures when that is thought to be appropriate.

**Note: For ELC children, the Named Person is the child's Health Visitor.**

## Safeguarding

If a child is absent and there are known concerns around the family, immediate contact should be made with the Named Person and partner agencies, including Social Work for further advice. All actions should be recorded within the child's chronology.

DID YOU KNOW

# MISS NURSERY, MISS OUT

## Did you know...?

All eligible children are entitled to up to **1140 hours** of childcare

Regular attendance in an Early Learning & Childcare setting provides a wonderful foundation for children's learning, development and wellbeing

Some Children find it hard to attend Nursery.

Tell the Nursery as soon as you can if there is a problem.

**Working Together**

we can do it and make sure your child does not MISS OUT

**Don't Worry...**

You are not on your own. We are here to help and to work with you and your family.

**This document can be made available in a range of languages and formats, including large print, braille, audio, electronic and accessible formats.**

To make a request, please contact Corporate Communications at: corporatecommunications@northlan.gov.uk

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Gus iarrtas a dhèanamh, cuir fios gu Conaltradh Corporra aig: corporatecommunications@northlan.gov.uk

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براہ کرم درخواست کے لیے کارپوریٹ کمیونیکیشنز سے اس پر رابطہ فرمائیں:

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NORTH LANARKSHIRE

# NURSERY ATTENDANCE MATTERS

## SUPPORT FOR PARENTS AND CARERS

EMPOWERING OUR CLUSTERS | LEARN HERE

For a child under 5 years of age, nursery can be the most wonderful environment to set them on the path to becoming the people they will be. They are provided with a safe and comfortable environment where they are encouraged to be themselves and develop many of the skills that will help them in later life.

However, we recognise that many families will encounter a variety of difficulties in trying to access and regularly attend their child's nursery provision. North Lanarkshire Council's Early Learning & Childcare staff are here to help parents and carers overcome any and all challenges they may encounter that affect their child's ability to get the most out of their nursery placement.

**What we provide:**

- Regular attendance in an Early Learning & Childcare setting provides a wonderful foundation for children's learning, development and wellbeing.
- A wide range of support for children and families is available to ensure your child attends the setting that most suits their needs.
- Our staff work collaboratively with families to understand and address any issues, offering sensitive, confidential support tailored to individual circumstances.
- Staff will foster early and proactive support with your child, to reduce any barriers they may face in getting the best possible experience from their nursery place. Support will always be offered in a sensitive and confidential manner.
- Whilst attendance in a nursery setting is not mandatory, tracking absences is a vital tool for our staff so that any concerns around a child's welfare or family circumstances can be addressed urgently.
- All our staff hold a shared commitment to encouraging regular attendance for children in their nursery setting by creating a welcoming and inclusive environment.
- Staff will respond sensitively to concerns raised by children or adults and support reintegration following any prolonged absences.
- A variety of communication methods are available for parents/carers to speak to staff regarding any concerns you may have.
- When children are experiencing difficulties, our staff will work in partnership with your Health Visitor and other family support personnel to ensure that we are getting it right for every child.

**How you can help:**

- Keep your nursery setting informed of up-to-date telephone numbers and emergency contacts.
- Notify your setting in advance of any planned absences, such as appointments and pre-planned holidays.
- Notify your setting on the day, of any unexpected absence. For staffing purposes, we would ideally be informed of your child's absence before 09:30 on the day.
- Respond promptly to any contact from your setting regarding your child's absence.
- Engage in regular discussions and share any concerns about your family circumstances with ELC practitioners or the child's Health Visitor to ensure appropriate support is provided.
- Discuss any problems or difficulties with the nursery setting. Staff are there to help and will be supportive of any assistance you or your child may need.