

East Dunbartonshire Council

Early Learning and Childcare Charging Policy

Updated April 2019

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 East Dunbartonshire Council is committed to providing flexible, affordable early learning and childcare for all children. The aim is to implement a charging policy that is open and transparent to all parents and carers accessing early learning and childcare.
- 1.2 The Children and Young Peoples (Scotland) Act 2014 introduced an increased entitlement of funded early learning and childcare to all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds of 600 hours. A further increase is planned which will see the entitlement to 1140 hours by 2020. The Scottish Government vision to support families is underpinned by the principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.
- 1.3 This charging policy sits within the context of the Education Service's Early Years Strategic Plan and the Early Years Admissions Policy. Further information about East Dunbartonshire Council's vision and plan to deliver the 1140 hours expansion by August 2020 is available on the East Dunbartonshire Council website at www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/earlyyears.

2. CRITERIA FOR FUNDING

- 2.1 All children aged 3 or 4 years old and eligible 2 year old children, who meet the criteria, are currently entitled to a funded nursery place for a maximum of 600 hours per year. Charges only apply to nursery provision over and above the funded entitlement.
- 2.2 From August 2020 the entitlement will increase to a yearly maximum of 1140 hours for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds. There is phased implementation of this entitlement, which is detailed in Section 12 of this policy.

3. ENTITLEMENT FOR THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

- 3.1 Funding is allocated from the day following the child's third birthday from 1 August to 31st July.
- 3.2 The table below indicates the starting date in accordance with a child's birthday:

If a child's birthday is on or between these dates:	Your child will be eligible from these school terms listed below:
1 st August – 31 st July	Day after 3 rd Birthday

4. CHILDREN UNDER TWO YEARS

- 4.1** The Council provides provision for babies from 6 weeks to two years old and this is currently available in Cleddens ELC at the hourly rate of £4.93. Hillhead and Lennoxton provision will commence during 2018/19 session.
- 4.2** Funding is also available for these children if they meet the eligibility criteria detailed in Section 5 of the policy. Hours will be allocated through the Locality Admission Panel and will be subject to termly review.

5. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA FOR FUNDED PLACES

- 5.1** As part of East Dunbartonshire Council's commitment to supporting children and families additional free hours may be provided for children following under the following categories:

- Any child who is considered to be in need of protection.
- Any child with additional support needs considered by the Psychological Services to be in need of nursery provision. (All requests for consideration will be considered by the Early Years Community Assessment Team (EYCAT).
- Any child who has been identified as requiring support with their development or whose family circumstances are considered to be difficult by a GP, Health Visitor or other professional who has requested assistance. All requests for assistance will be considered by the Locality Admissions Panel (LAP). A criteria and weighting scale is implemented when considering these request to ensure families get support that is appropriate and timely.

- 5.2** All requests for assistance for places within EDC Early Years Services will be subject to a three monthly review by the Locality Admissions Panel whereby the multi-agency panel will have the right to modify the placement offered. This review will consider any changes in circumstances. Where circumstances have changed, resulting in a change in the banding priority, the placement allocated will be reviewed accordingly.

- 5.3** There is no entitlement for early years' provision for children under 3 years old unless they meet the eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria is detailed below:

Eligible 2 year olds can access funded hours from the term after their 2nd birthday if the live in a household which meets the criteria listed below and are in receipt of:

- Income Support(IS)
- Any income related element of Employment and Support Allowance
- Incapacity or Severe Disablement Allowance
- State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit and income is less than £16,105
- Both maximum CTC and maximum Working Tax Credit and income is under £6,900
- Support under part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- Universal Credit (can be claimed if income is less than £610 a month)

5.4 Funded early learning and childcare is also available if a child is 2 or over and is:

- looked after by a local council
- the subject of a kinship care order
- the subject of a guardianship order

5.5 If a child is not eligible for funding and is assessed as requiring support by Health or another agency, an application can be made to the Early Years Community Assessment Team (EYCAT) or Locality Admission Panel for a funded place. Parents can contact Health or any other agency, including the Early Years centre to start this process.

5.6 Places for 2 year olds can also be purchased depending on the centre availability. To purchase a place within two year old provisions; parents should contact their chosen Early Years Centre directly and then submit an application. The hourly rate of £4.50 will apply.

5.7 East Dunbartonshire have areas of *Place* within different localities across the authority. Place areas support families and children where multiple deprivation exists. These areas are Hillhead/Harestanes, Lennoxton and Auchinairn. All of these centres are now delivering extended day and year provision under to Scottish Government 1140 expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. Refer to Section 12.

6. DEFERRED ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

6.1 Children with January/ February birthdays are entitled to defer entry to school should their parents wish. They will receive a continued funded place within the child's nursery.

6.2 A child whose birth dates fall out-with the months of January and February are not entitled to defer entry. Further information about deferred entry can be found on the Early Years Admission policy.

7. EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE EXTENDED HOURS

7.1 Parents can purchase additional hours over and above their funded entitlement at an extended day / year centre in the local authority. There are extended day centres in each locality within East Dunbartonshire. Some of these operate all year and others are open term time only.

7.2 Extended contract hours will not begin until the week after the child's funded hours begin to facilitate transition and settling in visits.

7.3 When children share a place between a Local Authority centre and a funded/partner provider, funding is allocated in the first instance to the local authority.

8. CONTRACT FOR EXTENDED HOURS PROVISION

8.1 A contract of placement will be drawn up and must be signed by the parent/carer before the child can start their extended contract in the chosen service. Parents are expected to pay for any additional hours of childcare allocated within their contract of placement,

whether or not the child attends. Confirmation of all hours purchased will be outlined within the contract of placement.

- 8.2** Only one change may be made to your contract per term. A minimum of four weeks' notice must be given to make any changes to the agreed hours.

Note: Exceptions may be made in extreme individual circumstances.

9. CHARGES FOR PROVISION

9.1 Fees at 1 August 2019 are as follows:

- The hourly rate for children aged birth to 2 years is £4.93.
- The hourly rate for 2-5 year olds is £4.50.
- Two children attending nursery: a discount of 15% is applied to the fees for the older child.
- Three or more children attending nursery a discount of 15% is applied to the fees for the two older children.
- 10% discount is applied for any child attending a full time place (50 hours per week)
- Charges will apply for all hours allocated to children under 3 (unless exempt) and to children who are deferring entry as a result of parental choice (i.e. not entitled to a continued funded place and not supported by EYCAT)

9.2 How Hours are Allocated

- A maximum of 8 hours funding can be used per day. This must be taken in 4 hour blocks. This means that depending on the child's hours there may be an additional charge.
- If the child attends between 12.00 - 13.00 and 17.00 - 18.00 this would be charged at the hourly rate.

Example: If a child attends nursery from 8am to 6pm 8 hours of funding would be 08:00 – 12:00 and 13:00 - 17:00 and there would be an additional charge for two hours from 12:00 - 13.00 and 17:00 - 18:00.

9.3 Lunches

- Nutritious lunches are provided within all local authority extended day and extended year centres. The cost of the 2-course lunch as at August 2018 is £2.43. This fee is reviewed annually.
- Families who are in receipt of Income support or Job Seekers Allowance or other government benefits are eligible to a free lunch. (Evidence of eligibility will be required).

10. PAYMENT

- 10.1** Full details of ways to pay are available on the back of the invoice or at www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk. Invoices are issued monthly and in advance.

10.2 Direct Debit

- Direct debit is the easiest way to pay and is the preferred method. When parents receive the invoice they will be advised of the date of payment.

- Direct debit mandates can be accessed at the Early Year's establishment or from the Council. This mandate must be received at least 2 weeks before the first direct debit uplift date is due. Direct debits must be set up at **4 weekly intervals** (not monthly or fortnightly).
- Once a direct debit is set up it will continue to be used to pay invoices until the placement ceases.
- Children that start funded ELC place the day after their 3rd birthday will not start any extended contract hours until the following week to facilitate settling in.

10.3 Refunds

- Refunds will be made using the same format as payment was made in, for example if paid using childcare vouchers, the refund will be repaid to the voucher company.

10.4 Absence

- If a child is absent due to long-term illness (over 3 weeks), no charge will be applied and the place will be held open for their return subject to the terms of the Admissions Policy. Parents must notify the nursery where they anticipate their child being absent due to long-term illness and may be required to provide evidence (e.g. a doctor's statement). This will be reviewed on an individual basis. (Note: This relates only to the child being absent through long-term illness)

10.5 Arrears

- If an account is in arrears when an application for a further extended place is received, the application will be put on hold until the arrears are cleared.
- If an account remains in arrears a separate action may be undertaken in line with the EDC Corporate Debt Policy and could lead to external debt recovery process being invoked.

11. OTHER WAYS TO PAY FOR EXTENDED HOURS

11.1 Childcare Vouchers

- Parent/Carers should contact their Childcare Voucher Provider to register for voucher payments.
- Invoices can be settled using such vouchers in the following way:
- When submitting vouchers, the unique customer number (found on the top right corner of the invoice) along with the child's name and establishment should be included. Allocation of payments will be delayed without this information.
- When using childcare vouchers, it can take 3/5 working days for payment to reach the bank account and from the date vouchers are received; it can take up to 7 working days to process the payment to an account.
- If the value of the vouchers is less than the amount on the invoice, the balance of the invoice must be settled immediately. Failure to do this will result in arrears, this could result in a placement to be withdrawn, or in the case of eligible three and four year olds, reduced to the statutory entitlement.
- Please note childcare vouchers are unable to be used toward lunch costs.

11.2 Tax Free childcare

- Working parents with children under 12 (or under 17 for children with additional support needs) can open an online account to pay for registered childcare. The

Government will top up the money paid into the account. For every £8 paid in, the Government will add an extra £2. Up to £2000 per child is available– that is up to £500 every three months. Up to £4000 per is available for disabled children – that is up to £1000 every three months.

<https://www.gov.uk/help-with-childcare-costs/tax-free-childcare>

12. EXPANSION OF 1140 HOURS OF FUNDED ELC

- 12.1** The Council has a clear strategy for the expansion of early learning and childcare over the next two years.
- 12.2** The majority of local authority centres will move to provide extended day and year provision by 2020.
- 12.3** The expansion will provide a high quality and flexible service for families and the charging policy to reflect the increased funded entitlement by August 2020.
- 12.4** From August 2018 four centres in the priority Place areas will provide 1140 hours. Parents in these centres will be charged for the hours over the increased entitlement. These are Hillhead, Auchinairn, Lennoxton and Twechar.
- 12.5** With effect from August 2019, a number of centres will move to the new delivery model for 1140 hours. Where there is capacity, children from families in the following categories will be eligible for 1140 hours funding:
1. Children on the child protection register or looked after;
 2. Children who live in an area which is SIMD 1 and 2;
 3. Children from households in receipt of these benefits as detailed in Section 5
 4. Parents returning to work or training and that meet the above criteria.

13. REVIEW OF POLICY

- 13.1** The policy will be reviewed annually.