

COSLA submission of 10 February 2022

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

Thank you for your letter of 3rd December 2021 and sincere apologies for the delay in our response.

COSLA works on behalf of Councils to focus on the challenges and opportunities they face, and to engage positively with governments and others on policy, funding and legislation. Therefore we welcome the opportunity to respond to the petition highlighted on expanded funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

At present all 3 and 4 year olds, and 2 years old who meet certain criteria, are eligible for 1140 hours of funded ELC. This is a result of an agreement between Scottish Government and Local Government to almost double the number of funded hours of ELC, which included a multi-year funding agreement worth over £1bn annually.

Over the past few years, local authorities and their partners have worked hard to increase capacity in ELC settings to meet the increased demand of the ELC expansion. This included the unavoidable delay in the implementation of the additional hours as a result of the pandemic.

Detailed information on the progress to deliver the expansion – including the additional spaces created, the need for an increased staffing and the building or upgrading of physical ELC settings, throughout the expansion through the [Delivery Progress](#) reports published by the Improvement Service.

In terms of the 2 year old offer, we have welcomed the increased uptake of these places, as evidenced by the Delivery Progress Report from September 2021. At the same time, we know that there are additional steps that we must take to fully engage the families of children eligible for the 2 year old offer. We are aware of areas of good practice and councils are looking to build on this. We are also hopeful that the UK Government's [consultation on data sharing to support ELC](#) in Scotland could be a helpful step to boost uptake.

We note the Scottish Government have committed 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” in their most recent Programme for Government. We look forward to engaging the Scottish Government on this commitment. As with the expansion for 3 and 4 years olds, it will be crucial to take a planned and considered approach to create additional capacity and the associated workforce, infrastructure and funding required.

We hope that this information is helpful to the Committee in their consideration of this petition.