

PE2112/N: Conduct an independent review of childcare costs and availability in Scotland

Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise written submission, 6 November 2025

Thank you for your email of 11 September 2025 regarding petition PE2112: Conduct an independent review of childcare costs and availability in Scotland. Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding.

The Committee is seeking further information in relation to this petition, following the meeting of the Committee on 10 September. Specifically, you asked for:

- when the evaluation report for the 1,140 hours entitlement will be published, and what actions the Scottish Government intends to take in light of its recommendations;
- what preliminary conclusions the Scottish Government has drawn from the early adopter communities work, and what actions it will take based on this.

1140 Evaluation

The Scottish Government's Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) expansion programme [evaluation strategy](#) sets out how we are evaluating the impact of the ELC expansion programme to 1140 hours, covering the period 2018-2025. It is an outcomes-based evaluation strategy and the primary focus is on measuring outcomes for children, parents and carers, and families.

We now expect to publish the full report on the ELC 1140 expansion evaluation in early 2026. Evaluation of the 1140 hours expansion is a complex undertaking and it is important that we take the time to ensure the report is as robust as possible.

This report will draw together findings from across all the strands of the evaluation, including the Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare (SSELC) and parent and carer surveys carried out before, during and after the ELC expansion. Reports on each of the main individual elements of the evaluation, i.e. a SSELC final report, a report on the 2025 ELC parent research, together with the final 2018-2025 evaluation report, will be published on the Scottish Government website. It is important that the suite of final reports for the period 2018-2025 are published together to support clear understanding of the evaluation conclusions.

In the meantime, the learning from the baseline and interim evaluation reporting is being used to inform policy development and delivery. Further information about these reports is available on the Scottish Government's [Early Learning and Childcare \(ELC\) expansion evaluation](#) web pages.

It is important that we are able to publish the full report before drawing conclusions about the impact of the ELC expansion on child, parent and family outcomes.

Early Adopter Communities

Our six Early Adopter Community (EAC) projects are expanding access to affordable childcare for low-income families from early years through to the end of primary school and evaluating the difference this can make. Through targeted delivery of childcare and related support, the EACs are already improving the lives of over 1,000 children and their families, and are helping to build evidence and understanding of what it takes to provide local systems of childcare that meet the needs of families most likely to be living in poverty.

In 2023, Ipsos Scotland were contracted to undertake independent evaluation of the EAC projects and, in October 2024, we published a [process evaluation](#) and [evaluability assessment](#). The evaluation found that the implementation of EACs has happened as intended and there is evidence that projects are meeting the needs of families. Overall, families interviewed were very positive about their experiences, and there was evidence that the activities at EAC childcare met children's needs, including those with ASN, and that provision was supportive of parents' and carers' needs, including in terms of covering working hours. There were also early indications that some systems-level outcomes are being achieved and enablers included: Scottish Government support; governance structures that facilitate close relationships; a range of partners; committed staff with a common goal; and regular contact with partners.

As well as continuing to support the delivery of childcare and related services to families, we are now proceeding to the second phase of EAC evaluation. This includes evaluation of impact on short- to medium-term outcomes, process, and spend. Gendered and intersectional analysis has also been included as a requirement for phase two of the evaluation. This evaluation will cover the period from Spring 2025 to Summer 2026, with publication planned in the second half of 2026.

Alongside delivery and evaluation, we are supporting the EACs to undertake collaborative co-design work on an ongoing basis, so that their learning can be used to inform the development of future national childcare policy.

I hope this information is helpful. Please do write again if I may be of further assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Natalie Don-Innes MSP

Minister for Children, Young People and The Promise