Early Learning and Childcare Service Model for 2020

Analysis of the public consultation

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Executive summary

Introduction

Between 29 March 2018 and 29 June 2018, the Scottish Government ran a joint consultation with COSLA on the "Early Learning and Childcare Service Model for 2020: Consultation Paper". The consultation document set out a proposed range of criteria that would form the National Standard underpinning a new 'Funding Follows the Child' approach to early learning and childcare (ELC) service provision.

The consultation consisted of a combination of closed and open ended questions covering eight issues. The online consultation was supplemented by eight consultation events facilitated by the Scottish Government ELC Service Models Team at various locations across Scotland where the majority of attendees were ELC service providers.

There were a total of 219 written submissions; 129 from organisations and 90 from individuals. The type of organisations that responded most often were private nurseries (48 respondents), followed by local government respondents (29 respondents) and representative bodies (14 respondents).

This report presents the findings from an analysis of all written submissions and notes from the eight consultation events. The main findings are summarised below.

The process for becoming a funded provider

Respondents highlighted that the process for becoming a funded provider had to be accessible, that there should be a clear application process and guidance to support applicants. It was argued that local authorities had a key role in supporting this process. Respondents raised that the quality inspection process should involve regular, consistent monitoring and that further clarification was required on the respective roles of local authorities and the Care Inspectorate.

Many respondents raised that the funding rate for service providers should be sustainable. Some felt that the funding rate should be standardised, however the higher cost structure of private and third sector providers should be considered.

The partnership between different local authorities and funded providers

Respondents highlighted the importance of regular, effective communication between local authorities and service providers. It was also argued that the relationship should be underpinned by equity, trust and transparency in order for provider neutrality to be realised. The availability of support and training that is equally accessible to all provider types was said to be another guiding principle as well as payment of the living wage. Finally, repondents felt that is was important that all parties worked towards positive outcomes for children, specifically the aims and principles outlined under Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC).

Childminders

Minimum qualification requirement for childminders

Respondents felt that there were a number of advantages to the proposed minimum qualification requirement for childminders (SCFQF Level 7), including improved knowledge of child development, increased status in the ELC sector and greater opportunities for professional development. Wider benefits of the proposal were argued to be higher quality and more consistent care provision which could be more easily monitored and provide reassurance for parents. Respondents also felt that parity of qualifications across different provider types could aid movement between services and continuity of care.

Some raised concern that the care provided by childminders was already of high quality and that highly qualified, experienced childminders may be inclined to leave the sector, hindering the intended expansion of ELC provision.

Access to funding for training

Of the 187 respondents who answered the question on childminders' ability to access funding for training 55% did not know, 40% felt that funding was available and 5% felt that it was not. In the open text questions, respondents described the funding opportunities that were currently available, however it was argued that these had previously been harder to access for childminders.

Access to flexible training

Almost half (47%) of respondents felt that there were flexible training options available for childminders which they could engage with whilst running their businesses. Respondents emphasised the importance of flexibility for childminders and the need for further exansion of the options available.

Physical environment and outdoor learning

Over half of respondents felt that criteria three of the National Standard captured the ambition for outdoor learning and play to become a defining feature of funded ELC in Scotland. Respondents emphasised the positive impact that outdoor learning and play had on children's development but felt that more clarity was needed on the definition of outdoor play and regularity of access.

The majority of respondents outlined various challenges linked to criteria three including access to outdoor space, health and safety, attitudes of parents, weather conditions and staffing. Suggestions for strengthening outdoor learning and play included investment in capital funding, shared access to outdoor spaces and transport for providers that would have to travel.

The National Standard as a whole

Consistency across funded provider settings

Whilst some respondents welcomed the proposed criteria, most were unsure as to whether the criteria set out in the draft National Standard would ensure consistency across funded provider settings in terms of quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability and requested more information about each of the criteria. Many felt that the National Standard must be supplemented by sustainable funding rates and that the funding rates, once announced, will be a deciding factor.

Increased choice for parents

Just under half of respondents said that they did not know whether the criteria set out in the draft national standard would support increased choice for parents and carers but most of the remaining respondents felt that it would. It was argued that a provider neutral approach should help to ensure there is increased choice for parents but that this would rely on equal promotion of all ELC funded providers by local authorities. There was some concern that supply and demand could limit choice in certain areas.

Criteria not included

Nearly half of all respondents felt that some criteria had been left out and that a range of issues were not sufficiently addressed or clarified within the draft National Standard. These included audit structures, appeal procedures, involvement of parents and carers and blended models of ELC.

Fair and proportionate for all

Written respondents were asked whether they felt that the proposed criteria were proportionate and fair for all. Most respondents said yes, with 25% saying no. Respondents argued that in order for the implementation of the criteria to be fair and proportionate for all the approach needs to be consistent across the sector and there needs to be a fair funding rate for different provider types. There was concern that partner providers face disadvantages compared to local authority providers in relation to infrastructure, cost and workforce issues and this should be acknowledged when setting the funding rate for private and third sector providers.

Fair and proportionate for childminders

Respondents were largely unsure whether the criteria was fair and proportionate for childminders. Individuals, many of whom may be childminders, were more likely to say that it is not. Respondents raised concern that the smaller size of childminding services and limited capacity would mean that childminders would need more support and some requirements could threaten the sustainability of their businesses.

Living Wage

When asked which areas they would look to be addressed in the technical guidance note for implementing the Living Wage commitment, most respondents used this as an opportunity to raise concern that the Living Wage should apply to all funded and non funded staff in the ELC sector. Respondents felt that the technical guidance note was less of a concern than ensuring the funding rate was high enough to allow providers to pay the Living Wage. There was felt to be a need for clarity on if and how the Living Wage commitment applied to all staff working in the ELC funded sector and concern that implementing the Living Wage could threaten business sustainability.

Inclusion of a probationary period for new settings

Just over half of respondents who answered the question on introducing a probationary period for new services agreed with this proposal, with organisations more likely to agree than individuals. It was argued that a probationary period would support the expansion of funded ELC provision by enabling new services to begin operating but that conditions should be introduced to distinguish between services which are entirely new and established businesses in the non funded sector. Respondents sought clarity on the length of the probationary period and felt that an inspection should be conducted by local authorities within 12 months.

Support during the introduction of the National Standard

When asked about the support that providers would need during the introduction of the National Standard, respondents referred to the need for flexible training that was accessible to all provider types. Respondents also raised the need for unambiguous, realistic funding that is paid in advance and covered all relevant costs. The importance of clear, consistent guidance on implementing the National Standard for all provider types shared ahead of the deadline for expansion was also highlighted. Finally, respondents felt that providers needed support to deal with workforce challenges such as staff retention and the need for upskilling.

Representative and public bodies emphasised the need to support parents to understand the processes underpinning the expansion of ELC funded provision so they could make more informed choices.

Chapter 1 Introduction

The Scottish Government and local authorities are committed to additional investment in early learning and childcare (ELC) to increase the funded entitlement from 600 to 1140 hours per year from August 2020. This applies to all 3 and 4 year olds, as well as eligible two year olds.

Along with the expansion of the funded ELC entitlement, a new "Funding Follows the Child" approach will be introduced which will be underpinned by a new "National Standard". All providers (local authority settings, private and third sector providers and childminders) wishing to deliver the funded ELC entitlement from 2020 will need to meet the National Standard.

Between 29 March 2018 and 29 June 2018, the Scottish Government and COSLA ran a joint consultation on the "Early Learning and Childcare Service Model for 2020: Consultation Paper". The consultation document set out a proposed range of criteria that would form the National Standard that will underpin the new model.

The online consultation asked a combination of closed and open-ended questions, covering:

- The factors that should be considered in developing a process for becoming a funded provider
- The key shared principles that should underpin a positive and effective partnership between local authorities and funded providers
- A range of questions on specific aspects of different criteria of the National Standard, including the criteria on:
    - Outdoor learning
    - Fair Work, and payment of the 'real' living wage
- A range of general questions about the criteria set out in the National Standard:
    - Whether it ensures high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable ELC is delivered in all funded provider settings
    - Whether it increases the choice for parents and carers
    - Whether there are any criteria missing in the National Standard which are required to ensure that a high-quality service is provided to all children
    - Whether they seem fair and proportionate for all, and for childminders
- Whether newly established ELC settings should be able to deliver the funded hours on a probationary period
- What support ELC providers will require to prepare for the introduction of the National Standard.

A full list of the consultation questions can be found in Appendix 1.

In addition to the online consultation, the Scottish Government ELC Service Models Team held a total of eight consultation events in different locations:

- Glasgow (around 80 attendees)
- Dundee (around 30 attendees)
- Stirling (around 25 attendees)
- Edinburgh (around 40 attendees)
- Kilwinning (around 20 attendees).
- Two consultation sessions held at the ELC National Learning Event which were chaired by COSLA and Scotland Excel
- One consultation even in Inverness hosted by the Care and Learning Alliance (around 12 attendees)
- One consultation event in Glasgow hosted by the Glasgow Council for Voluntary Sector and targeted at providers in the voluntary sector (around 15 attendees).

Most attendees at the events were ELC providers. The notes from these eight consultation events are reflected in the consultation analysis (i.e. each event is counted as one response).

Rocket Science UK Ltd was commissioned by the Scottish Government to analyse the responses to the online consultation and write-ups of the consultation events and report on its findings.

Methodology

This section outlines the methodology underlying this report: the research, analysis and reporting process.

Rocket Science downloaded the responses to the online consultation from Citizen Space. A further 16 responses, which were not submitted through Citizen Space, were sent to Rocket Science by the Scottish Government as well as the notes from the eight consultation events.

Rocket Science checked all responses for potential duplicates. There were a few IP-addresses from which multiple responses were submitted and numerous responses that provided very similar comments. However, all of these responses were submitted from individuals and were not identical in how they answered the closed nor open-ended questions. As such, all responses were counted as individual submissions. Finally, all responses were uploaded onto NVivo for analysis. NVivo is a qualitative analysis programme that enables the coding of responses to themes and sub-themes (“nodes” and “sub-nodes”). Firstly, a coding framework – outlining the different themes and sub-themes – was developed after reviewing 65 responses. The coding framework was then agreed with the Scottish

Government. All the remaining responses were then coded with this coding framework as a basis. However, it should be noted that throughout the coding process, the coding framework was continuously refined, with themes and sub-themes being added.

The consultation asked questions on eight issues (some of which were a combination of closed- and open-ended questions) which built the basis of the coding framework and the reporting. It should be noted, however, that respondents often raised similar points across different questions. In such cases, the comments were coded to the most relevant theme or sub-theme of the coding framework, as opposed to the themes falling under the question in answer to which the comment was made. There are a range of topics that were raised that did not directly relate to a question. These were coded separately and recorded in an additional Chapter covering “Other issues”.

When discussing the frequency with which a certain point was raised – either across all respondents or a particular respondent type - the report uses the following terms:

- “Few” means between 5% and 9%
- “Some” means between 10% and 19%
- “Many” means between 20% and 49%
- “Most” or the “the majority of” means between 50% and 74%
- “Large majority” or “broad agreement” means 75% to 90%
- “Consensus” means 90% or more.

Where there is a clear, identifiable pattern in responses to particular questions by respondent type, this has been reported.

This report explores the whole range of views that were raised by respondents. It does not necessarily reflect the views of the Scottish Government, COSLA or Rocket Science.

Report Structure

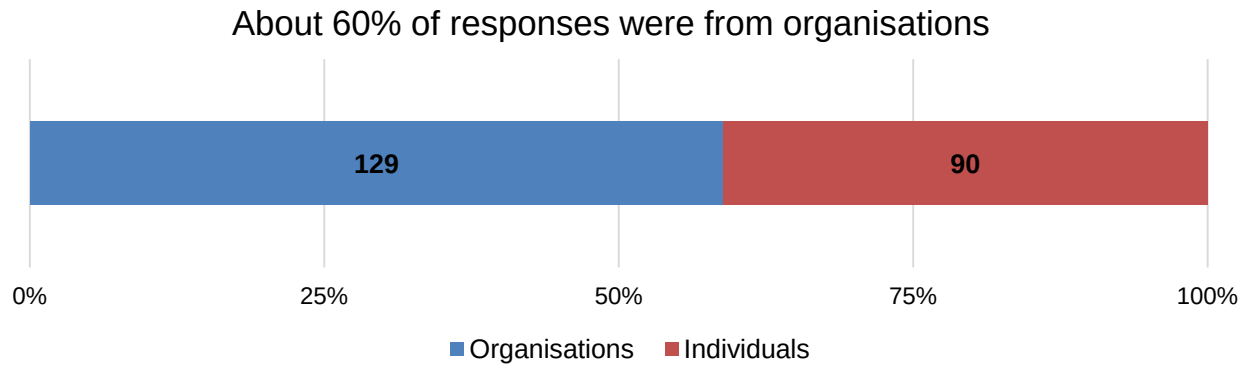
This report is structured in the following Chapters:

- Chapter 2 Who responded
- Chapter 3 Process for becoming a funded provider
- Chapter 4 The partnership between local authorities and funded providers
- Chapter 5 Childminders
- Chapter 6 Physical environment and outdoor learning
- Chapter 7 The National Standard as a whole
- Chapter 8 The living wage
- Chapter 9 Inclusion of a probationary period
- Chapter 10 Support during the introduction of the National Standard
- Chapter 11 Other issues.

Chapter 2 Who responded

There were a total of 219 written responses to the consultation: 129 responses were from organisations and 90 responses from individuals (see Figure 1).

Figure 1 – The number of individual and organisational responses



Of the 90 individual written submissions, we were unable to robustly identify whether they were childminders, parents or other members of the public. Therefore, no analysis of individual written submissions is broken down by respondent type.

Figure 2 breaks down the organisational respondents into different organisational types. Nearly half of all organisational were from providers.

Figure 2 – The types of organisations that responded

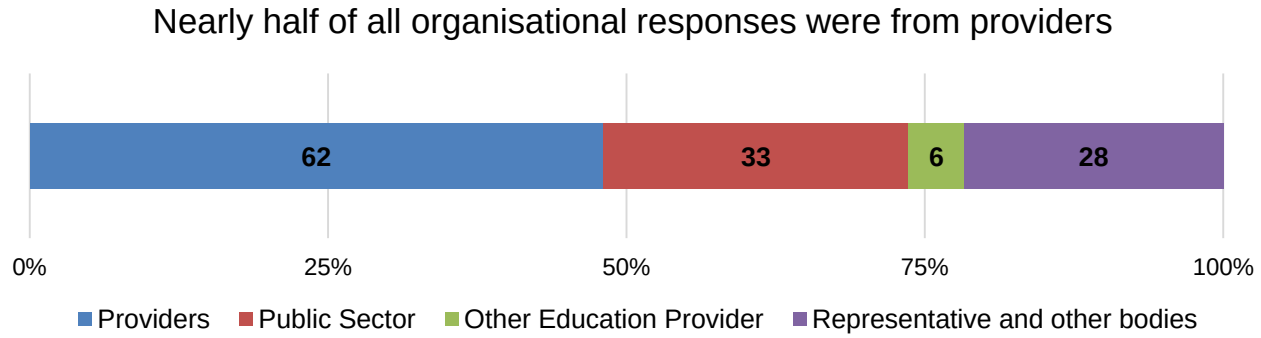
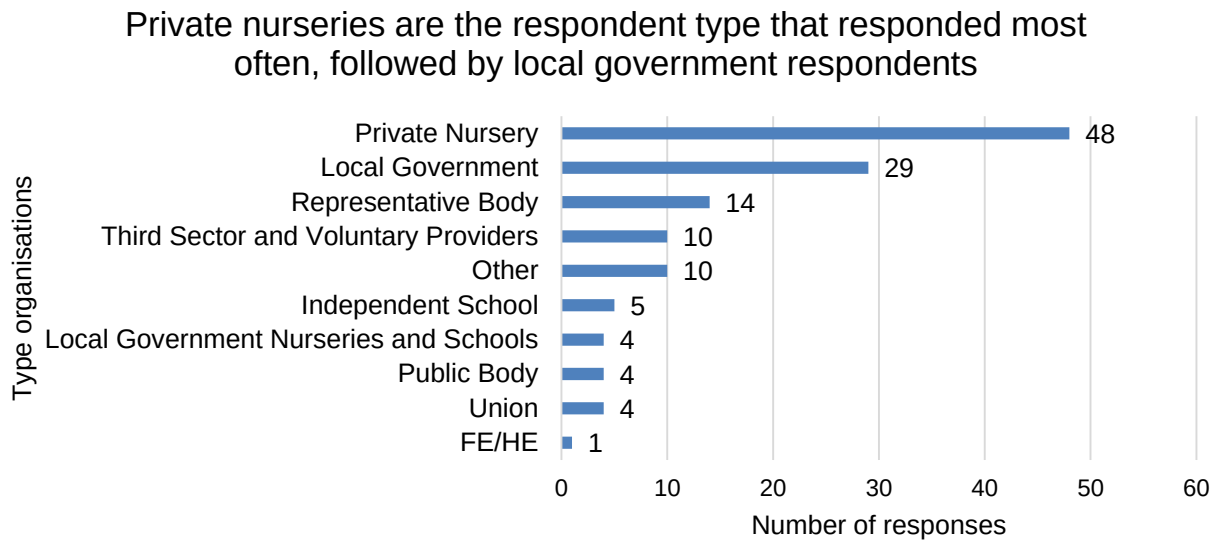


Figure 3 provides a more detailed breakdown of written organisational respondents. The type of organisations that responded most often were private nurseries (48 respondents), followed by local government respondents[1] (29 respondents) and representative bodies (14 respondents).

Figure 3 – Further breakdown of organisational responses



The full list of organisational respondents can be found in Appendix 2.

As already described in Chapter 2, there are notes from eight consultation events included in the analysis. The events were largely attended by providers.

[1] These include responses on behalf of the whole council or education teams/services of the council.

Chapter 3 The Process for becoming a funded provider

The consultation document outlined the process for becoming a funded provider:

- Meeting the criteria within the National Standard, as assessed by the local authority
- Receiving the offer of a locally set sustainable funding rate from the local authority
- Signing a contract to become a funded provider.

The consultation document then asked respondents what factors they think should be considered in developing a simple, standardised yet flexible process for becoming a funded provider.

Respondents raised the following points in their answers:

- Procurement process for becoming a funded provider
- The contract
- Quality inspection
- The need for standardisation
- Funding rates.

Each of these points is discussed in greater detail below.

3.1 Procurement process for becoming a funded provider

Respondents raised the following points with regards to the procurement process for becoming a funded provider:

- Respondents highlighted the importance of providing clear and transparent guidelines to providers about the requirements they need to meet (i.e. the National Standard) as well as the process for becoming a funded provider. It was suggested that providers should be provided with detailed guidelines as soon as possible in order to prepare for the expansion of funded ELC entitlement and the introduction of the National Standard.
- It was suggested that the procurement process should be accessible and “bureaucracy-light”.
- Respondents felt that there should be clarity about when providers could apply to their locality authority to become a funded provider. It was suggested that applications should be ongoing and not restricted to an annual or three-year tender cycle.
- Respondents proposed that local authorities should support providers, and particularly childminders, with their application process.

3.2 Contract

Respondents highlighted the importance to have a contract between the local authority and the funded providers which sets out the responsibilities and accountabilities of both parties. Respondents were unsure as to how long the contract would be for and had different suggestions for its length, ranging from two years to an open-ended contract as long as the quality standards are upheld.

3.3 Quality inspection

Respondents noted the importance to uphold quality under the expansion of funded ELC entitlement and raised the following points regarding the quality inspection process:

- It was suggested that there should be consistency in how the quality of a particular provider is evaluated. This was raised in the context of respondents being under the impression that there is currently a lack of consistency in how inspectors of the Care Inspectorate grade different providers.
- Respondents highlighted the need for the quality of a service to be regularly monitored.
- It was felt that the respective roles of local authorities and the Care Inspectorate under the new service model for 2020 should be further specified with regards to quality control. The importance for these two parties to work in close partnership was emphasised.
- Respondents highlighted the need to withdraw the funded provider status from providers who are not meeting the quality criteria as outlined in the National Standard. Regarding this, respondents suggested that further information should be provided on how providers would be de-commissioned.
- Respondents had a concern that the reference in the National Standard to “good” grades of the Care Inspectorate creates a focus on minimum standards as opposed to a strive for improvement and excellence. Suggestions were made to incentivise providers to move towards “very good” or “excellent” grades.

3.4 Standardisation

Respondents highlighted the importance of standardisation across a range of points related to the process for becoming a funded provider:

- It was suggested that the process for becoming a funded provider and quality standards should be standardised across different provider types, i.e. local authority, private, third sector providers or childminders.
- Some respondents suggested that there should be a standardised process for becoming a funded provider and a standardised application of the National Standard across local authorities and there should be no post-code lottery when it comes to funded ELC services.

3.5 Funding rates

Following on from the previous point, the following points about the funding rate were suggested:

- Many respondents highlighted the importance of providing a sustainable funding rate which considers the running costs of delivering the funded entitlement of 1140 hours per child as well as the need to pay the living wage for staff (an issue further explored in Chapter 8). Regarding this, it was proposed that there should be a transparent process of how local authorities arrive at the hourly rate.
- Some respondents, primarily individuals and private providers, suggested that there should be the same funding rate for different providers types, as it was felt that this would lead to provider neutrality. Regarding this, it was felt that the higher non-staff related cost structure of private and third sector providers, as compared to local authority providers, should be considered.
- Seven respondents, five of which were local authorities, suggested that there should be a national funding rate, i.e. a standardised rate across all local authorities.

Chapter 4 The partnership between local authorities and funded providers

The consultation document asked respondents about what they consider to be the key shared principles which should underpin an effective and positive partnership between local authorities and funded providers. Respondents raised the following points in answer to this question:

- Communication
- Quality
- Equity, trust and transparency
- Support and training
- Living wage for staff.

Each of these points will be further explored below.

4.1 Communication

The majority of respondents highlighted the importance of effective and regular communication and a professional dialogue between local authorities and funded providers as one of the key principles that should underlie their partnership. It was suggested that local authorities should consult ELC providers during the roll-out of the new service model as well as with regards to the setting of the funding rate.

4.2 Quality

Many respondents regarded high quality of ELC services as a central guiding principle underlying the partnership between local authorities and funded providers.

4.3 Equity, trust and transparency

It was suggested that equity, trust and transparency should be a key guiding principle underpinning the relationship between local authorities and partner providers. In addition, it was highlighted that there should be equity between different provider types for provider neutrality to be realised.

4.4 Support and training

Respondents suggested that funded providers should receive support and training/professional development from local authorities. It was considered important that all providers have equal access to the training provided by local authorities. The types of support mentioned also included access to IT management as well as access to resources for children with additional support needs.

4.5 Living wage

Respondents felt that being able to pay staff delivering ELC services the living wage should be a key guiding principle of the local authority-funded provider partnership.

4.6 GIRFEC

Respondents furthermore suggested that Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and, more generally, working towards ensuring positive outcomes for children, should be one of the key principles underlying partnerships in the ELC sector.

Chapter 5 Childminders

The consultation document proposed that the National Standard includes a training requirement for childminders delivering the funded entitlement to be qualified or working towards the same qualification level as is required for an ELC practitioner (SCQF level 7).

This chapter covers a range of questions associated with this proposal:

- The advantages of this proposal
- Risks of this proposal
- The extent to which childminders can access adequate funding to pay for training to SCQF level 7
- The extent to which childminders can access training to SCQF level 7 in a way that is flexible enough to allow them to continue running their business.

Respondents' comments to these questions are explored in further detail below.

5.1 Advantages of this proposal

The majority of respondents outlined different advantages of the proposed qualification requirement for childminders, including:

- Respondents felt that this qualification requirement would bring a range of benefits to childminders, including having:
    - A better understanding and knowledge of child development
    - An increased status and raised profile in the ELC sector
    - Greater opportunities for professional development opportunities.
- More generally, the qualification requirement was regarded as ensuring high quality and consistency of service provision across the ELC sector. Respondents pointed out that there is evidence that a higher skilled workforce leads to positive outcomes for children.
- It was suggested that this qualification requirement would ensure that there is a parity of qualification between childminders and other ELC practitioners. Being familiar with the same resources and framework as ELC practitioners was seen as allowing for better partnership working and, ultimately, continuity of care for children that receive care in a nursery and a childminding setting. The latter was seen as providing the opportunity for local authorities and the Care Inspectorate to monitor quality across different services more consistently.
- It was felt that this parity in qualifications opens up the possibility for professionals to move between different services, eg childminding and nursery services.

- Respondents highlighted the importance for all staff in the ELC sector to be registered with the Scottish Social Services Council.
- It was highlighted that the training requirement has the benefit of giving parents and carers additional reassurance about the quality of ELC their children receive. It was suggested that this may ultimately lead to more parents and carers taking up the services of childminders.

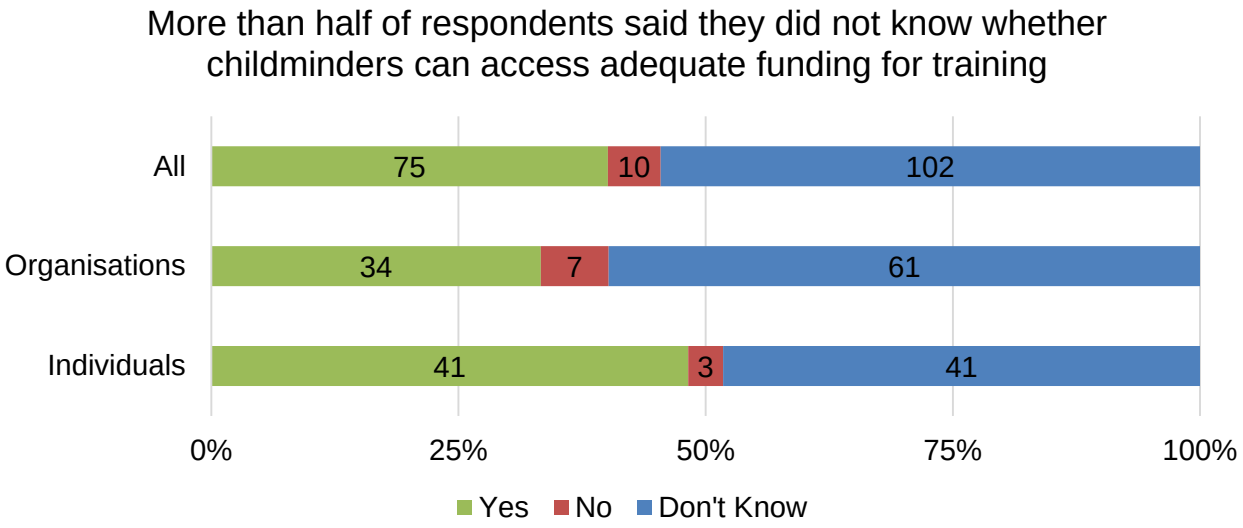
5.2 Risks of the proposal

Some respondents pointed out a risk associated with the proposed qualification requirement. They felt that childminders are already delivering high quality care and they had the concern that highly qualified and experienced childminders may decide not to pursue the training and ultimately not offer funded ELC. This would, as respondents pointed out, counteract the goal of expanding childcare services in Scotland.

5.3 Childminders' access to funding for training

Respondents were asked whether childminders can access adequate funding to pay for training to SCQF level 7 (see figure 4). Of those that answered, 40% thought that childminders were able to access adequate funding. 45% of individuals (some of whom are likely to be childminders themselves) answered yes that they felt childminders could access adequate funding. Other than Local Government respondents, most organisations said that they did not know whether childminders were able to access adequate funding. Around 60% of Local Authority respondents said yes, with the remaining saying that they didn't know.

Figure 4 – The extent to which respondent groups agree that childminders can access adequate funding to pay for training to SCQF level 7



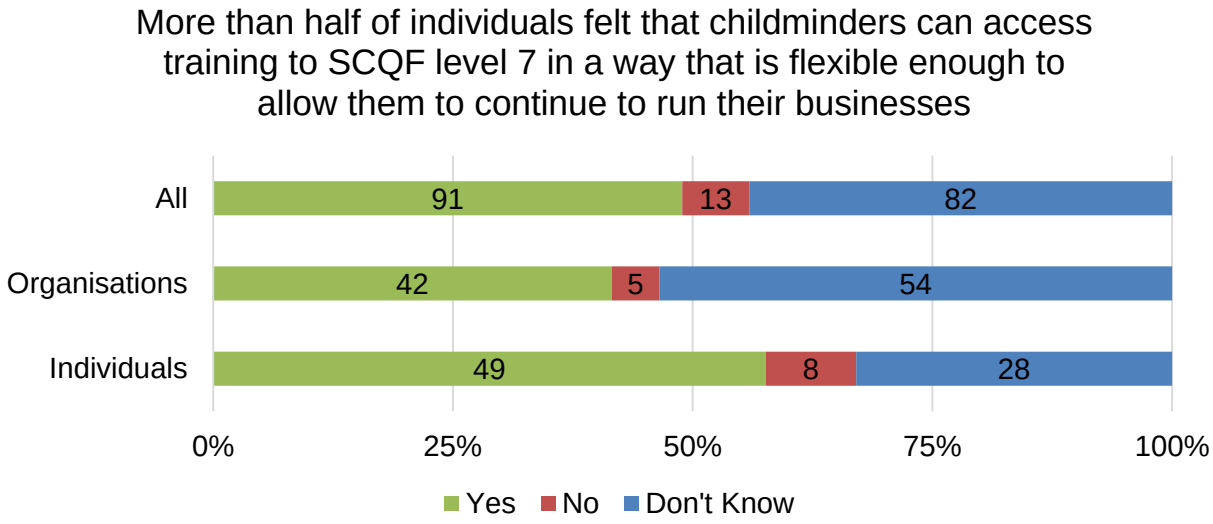
In their open-text comment, respondents suggested that there are funding opportunities for training that childminders can access by local authorities, colleges, the Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) or Individual Training Accounts. However, it was felt that the funding was previously more targeted at those practitioners requiring a qualification and therefore harder to access for childminders.

With the training requirement potentially coming into place, respondents hoped that childminders would then have equal access to funding that is available to other ELC practitioners.

5.4 Childminders' access to flexible training

Respondents were asked whether they felt that the access to training was flexible enough to enable them to continue to run their businesses (see Figure 5). More than half of the individual written respondents said yes. As with the prior question, most organisations other than Local Authorities said they didn't know.

Figure 5 – The extent to which different respondent groups agree that childminders can access training to SCQF level 7 in a way that is flexible enough to allow them to continue to run their business

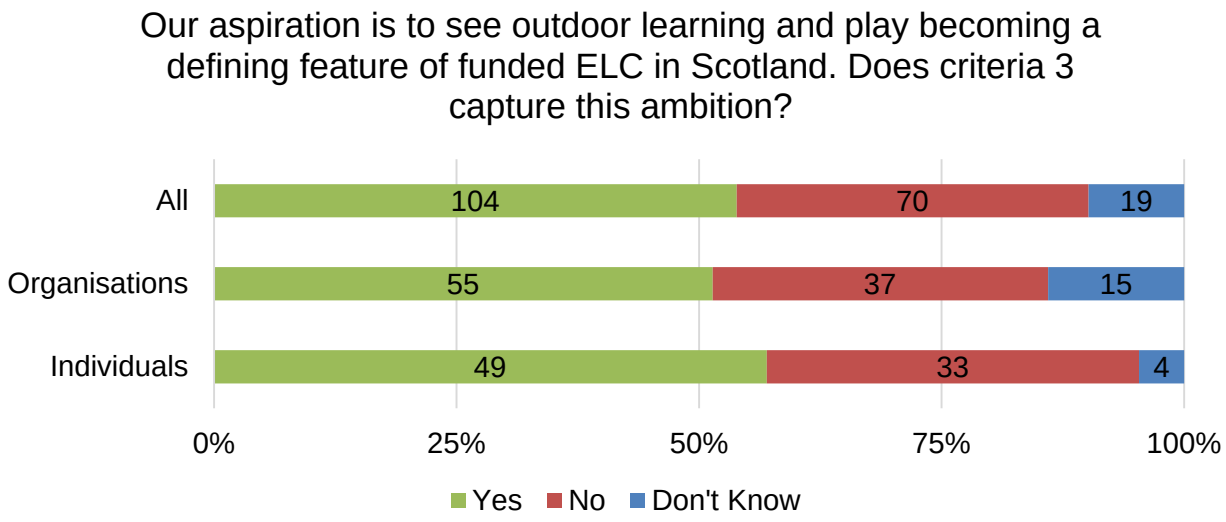


In their open-text comments, respondents underlined that it will be difficult for childminders, who often run a business on their own, to complete additional training. They highlighted the importance for childminders to access courses which are flexible (ie on evenings, weekends or long-distance/online). It was pointed out that flexible course delivery was important considering that many childminders are parents or carers themselves. While respondents recognised that there are such offers available, they highlighted the need for these to be expanded.

Chapter 6 Physical environment and outdoor learning

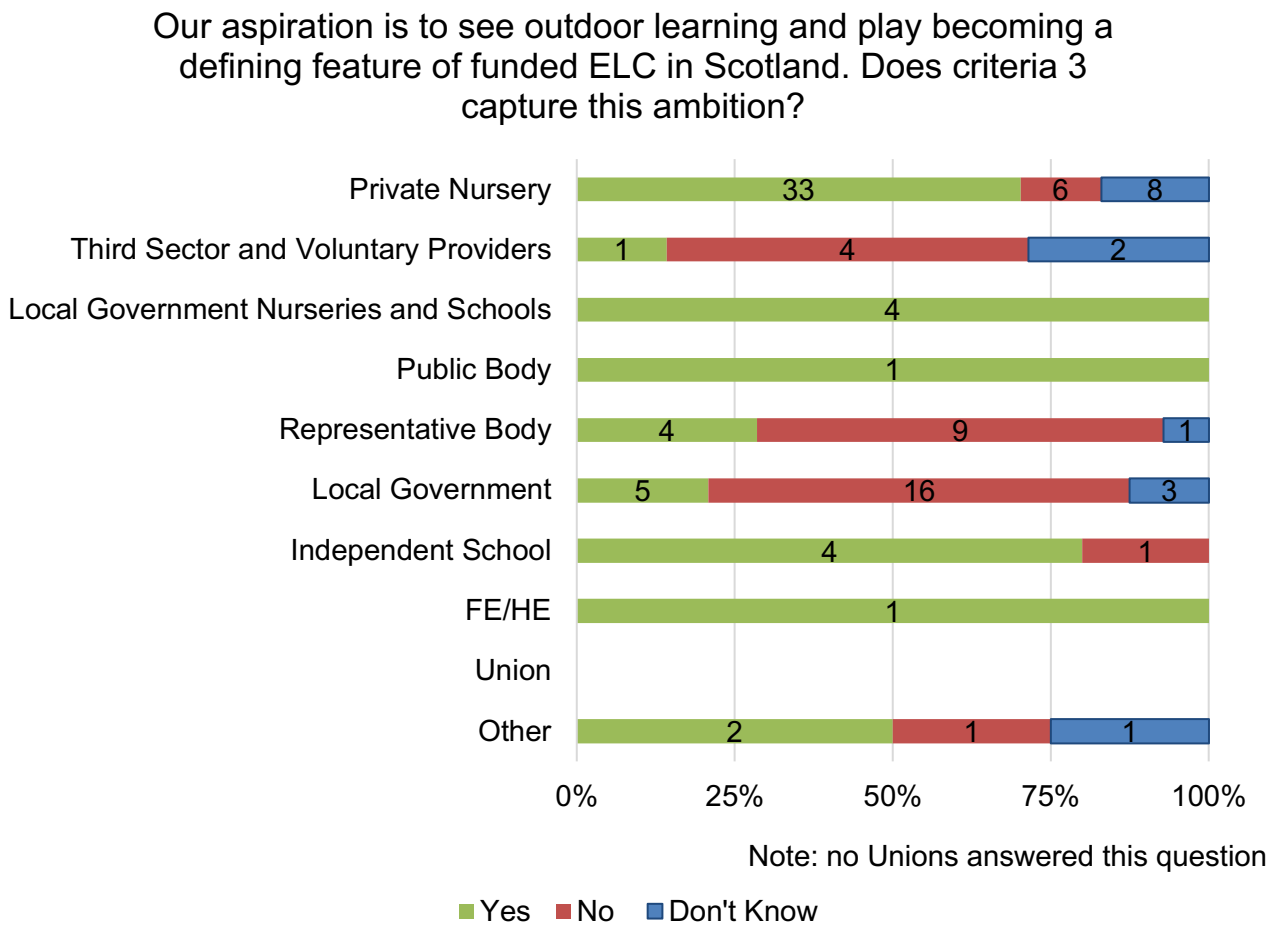
Criteria 3 of the National Standard outlined the criteria for Physical Environments, including the need for children to have access to outdoor play and outdoor learning in a range of environments. Respondents were then asked in a closed-question to what extent criteria 3 of the National Standard captures the Scottish Government's aspiration for outdoor learning and play to become a defining feature of funded ELC in Scotland. As can be seen in Figure 6, about half of respondents said yes, with most of the other half saying that they did not think criteria 3 would help to achieve this ambition.

Figure 6 – The extent to which respondents agree that criteria 3 captures the aspiration to see outdoor learning and play become a defining feature of ELC in Scotland



Of the organisations that responded, Local Government, Third Sector and Voluntary Providers, and Representative Body respondents were the most likely to say that no criteria 3 didn't help, with Private Providers and Local Government Nurseries and Schools most likely to say yes that criteria 3 will help to achieve the Scottish Ambition around outdoor learning and play (see Figure 7).

Figure 7 – The extent to which different organisational types agree that criteria 3 captures the aspiration to see outdoor learning and play become a defining feature of ELC in Scotland



In addition, respondents were asked in an open-text comment how criteria 3 could be strengthened in a way that is sustainable for providers. They were also asked what challenges, if any, exist for funded ELC providers to ensure children have access to outdoor play, and how these challenges can be overcome.

In their answer to these open-text questions, respondents raised the following points:

- Benefits of outdoor learning
- Need to define criteria 3 more precisely
- Challenges with regards to outdoor learning
- Strengthening outdoor play.

Each of these points will now be discussed in more detail.

6.1 Benefits of outdoor learning

Some respondents emphasised the positive impact outdoor learning and play has on children's development, as it was seen as enabling exploration and self-directed play. They particularly highlighted the importance of, where possible, free flow play between the indoors and outdoors. In this vein, respondents declared their support for the Scottish Government's ambition that outdoor learning and play becomes a defining feature of the funded ELC offer.

6.2 Need to define criteria 3 more precisely

Despite their general support for the Scottish Government's ambition, many respondents highlighted that criteria 3, as currently defined, does not capture the Scottish Government's ambition for outdoor learning to become a defining feature of ELC in Scotland. Respondents felt that there was currently a lack of clarity as to what exactly constitutes "access to outdoor play". Respondents therefore suggested that criteria 3 should be more specific about:

- What exactly constitutes an outdoor space and "a range of environments"
- The frequency with which children should have access to the outdoors.

6.3 Challenges regarding outdoor learning

The majority of respondents outlined a number of challenges linked to criteria 3, including:

- Not all providers have access to outdoor spaces or may not be able to offer "free flow" access to an outdoor space, particularly providers in urban areas. There was a concern that nurseries would receive bad grades from the Care Inspectorate due not having access to an outdoor space.
- The importance of health and safety during outdoor play was emphasised.
- It was felt that parents and carers may have negative attitudes towards outdoor play. Regarding this, the suggestion was made that parents and carers should be engaged with regularly and be informed about the benefits of outdoor play.
- The unpredictability of the Scottish weather was seen as a potential challenge for regular outdoor learning. Since the cost of suitable clothing may present a barrier for some parents, it was suggested that providers should provide children with weather proof outdoor clothing.
- Considering that some ELC staff may not feel confident with regards to outdoor learning and play, the importance for staff to receive training in delivering outdoor learning and play sessions was emphasised.
- The importance of having appropriate staff-child ratios during outdoor learning was noted.

6.4 Strengthening outdoor learning and play

Respondents made a number of suggestions as to how outdoor learning and play could be strengthened:

- It was suggested that capital funding should be provided to develop and improve ELC providers' outdoor areas.
- For providers that do not have their own outdoor space, it was suggested that the cost of transport to an outdoor space should be covered by the funded provider.
- The importance of partnership working was highlighted for the delivery of outdoor learning and play. Suggestions included ELC providers establishing links with community outdoor areas or sharing playgrounds with schools in a similar area. More generally, the importance for providers to make use of outdoor spaces in their local environment was noted.

Chapter 7 The National Standard as a whole

After outlining the nine proposed criteria of the National Standard, the consultation document asked respondents a range of questions about how they would evaluate the criteria as laid out in the National Standard as a whole, including:

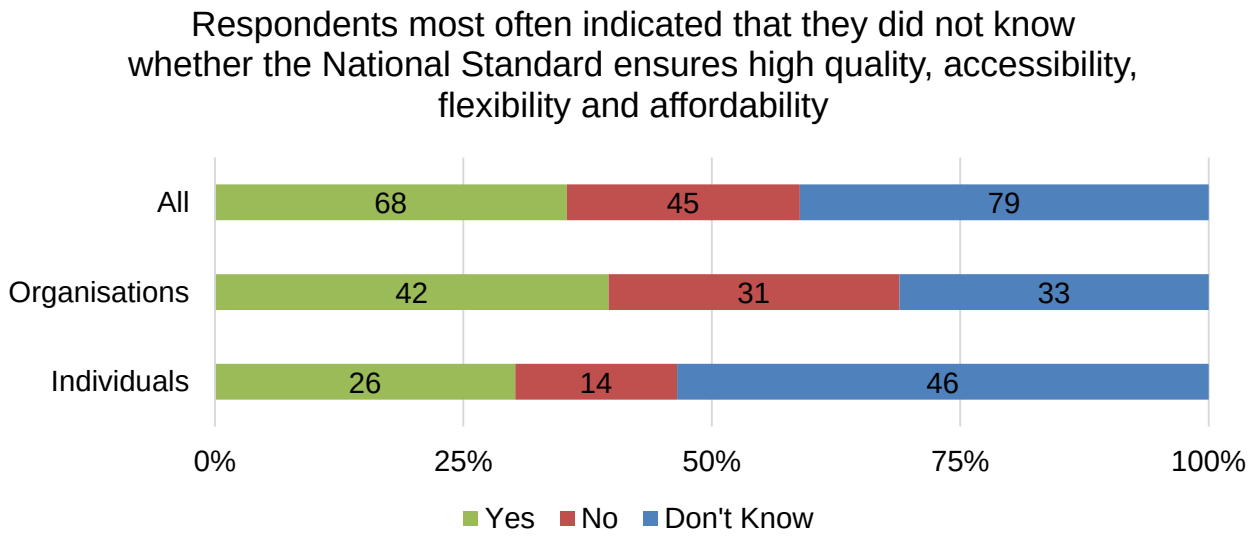
- Whether it ensures that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable ELC is delivered in all funded provider settings
- Whether it supports increased choice for parents and carers
- Whether there are any criteria not included in the National Standard that would be required to ensure a high-quality service is provided to all children
- Whether it seems fair and proportionate for all
- Whether it seems fair and proportionate for childminders.

Each of these questions will now be discussed in turn.

7.1 Quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability

Written respondents were asked whether the criteria in the National Standard would ensure consistency across funded provider settings in relation to the quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability of ELC. Most individuals were unsure whether these criteria would achieve this. Views expressed by organisations were more evenly split between yes, no and not knowing. This pattern didn't differ significantly between organisational types.

Figure 8 – The extent to which respondents agreed that the criteria set out in the National Standard ensure that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable Early Learning and Childcare is delivered in all funded provider settings



In the open-text comments many respondents indicated that they ticked “Don’t know” as an answer to this question as they felt that:

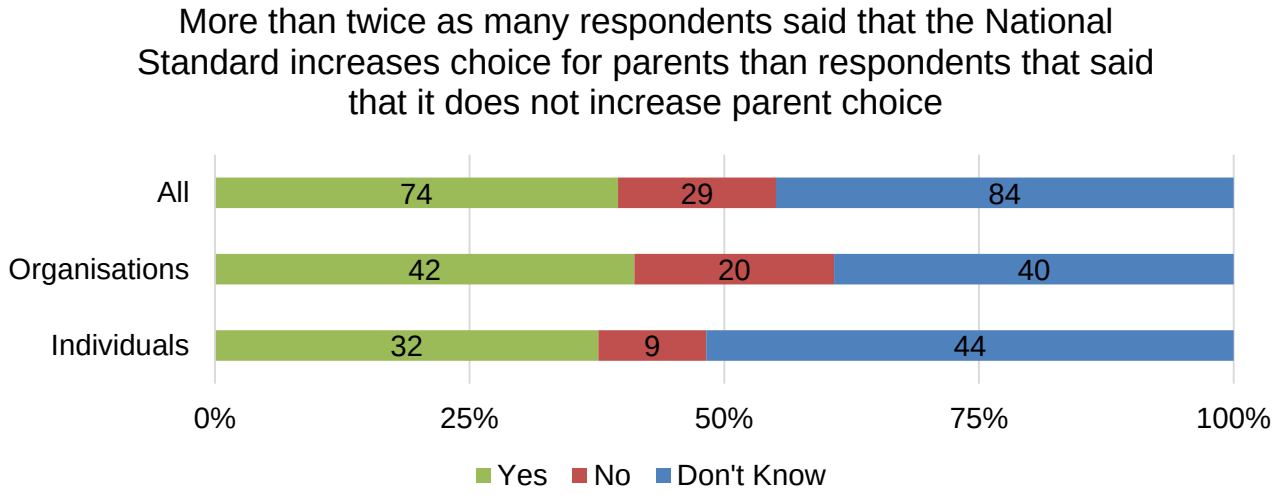
- The still to be determined funding rate is the ultimate deciding factor whether the National Standard ensures high quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability. It was suggested that the National Standard must be supplemented by a sustainable funding rate, especially for private and third sector providers.
- There needs to be, overall, more information about each of the criteria in order to know whether the National Standard will ensure that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable ELC services are delivered across all funded provider settings.

Some respondents, however, welcomed the criteria as currently outlined in the National Standard. They felt that, if implemented consistently, they will ensure quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability across providers.

7.2 Choice for parents

Written respondents were asked whether the criteria will increase choice for parents and carers. Just under half of respondents said that they didn’t know. Of the remaining respondents who answered, most said yes. Around 15% of all respondents said no, and only 10% of individuals (some of whom are likely to be parents) answered no.

Figure 9 – The extent to which respondents felt that the draft National Standard supports increased choice for parents



In the open-text comment to this question, respondents raised the following points:

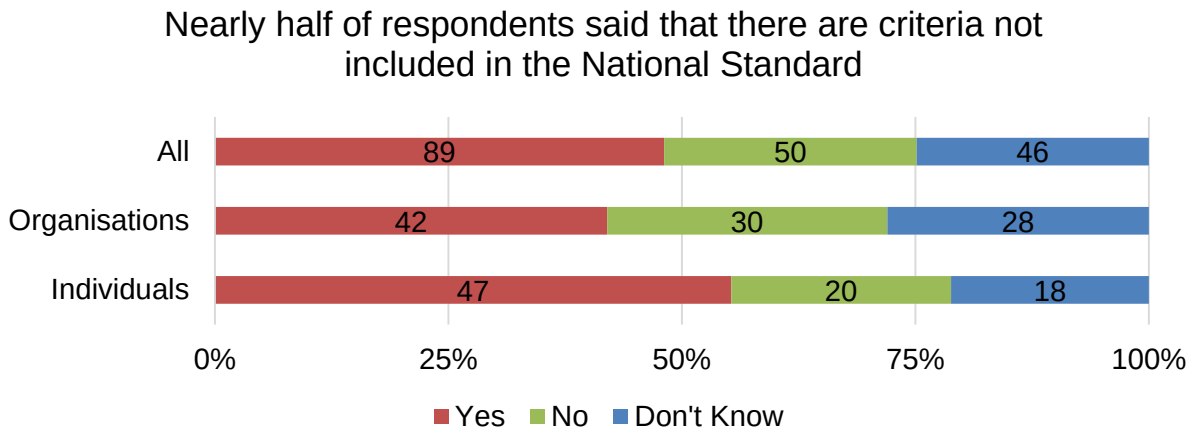
- It was noted that the provider-neutral and “Funding Follows the Child” approach underlying the National Standard ensures that there is an increased choice for parents.

- Respondents highlighted the need for parents to be informed about the different providers in their local area. Respondents noted that there needs to be an equal promotion of all funded ELC providers by local authorities in order for the choice available to parents to increase.
- Respondents suggested that parents and carers should have flexibility in how they want to make use of the hours of ELC services they are entitled to. This included flexibility in terms of:
    - The numbers of funded hours per day and the blocks of hours they can access (i.e. morning, afternoon, full-time)
    - How to split the hours between different provider types (e.g. blended models)
    - Funded providers being responsive to parents' changing needs and requests for particular hours on certain days.
- It was noted that there should be clear guidelines around flexibility, particular with regards to the number of split placements parents could make use of.
- It was highlighted that parent choice is also subject to demand and supply for different ELC providers in a particular area, e.g. there may be a lack of choice particularly in rural areas. It was suggested that parents' expectations with regards to choice should be managed considering that some providers currently have long waiting lists.
- There was also a concern among respondents that the National Standard and the still to be determined funding rate may lead to some providers pulling out of the market and that this could eventually decrease the choice for parents.

7.3 Criteria not included

Written respondents were asked whether there were any criteria that have been left out. Nearly half of all respondents said that they thought that some criteria had been left out.

Figure 10 – Criteria not included in the National Standard



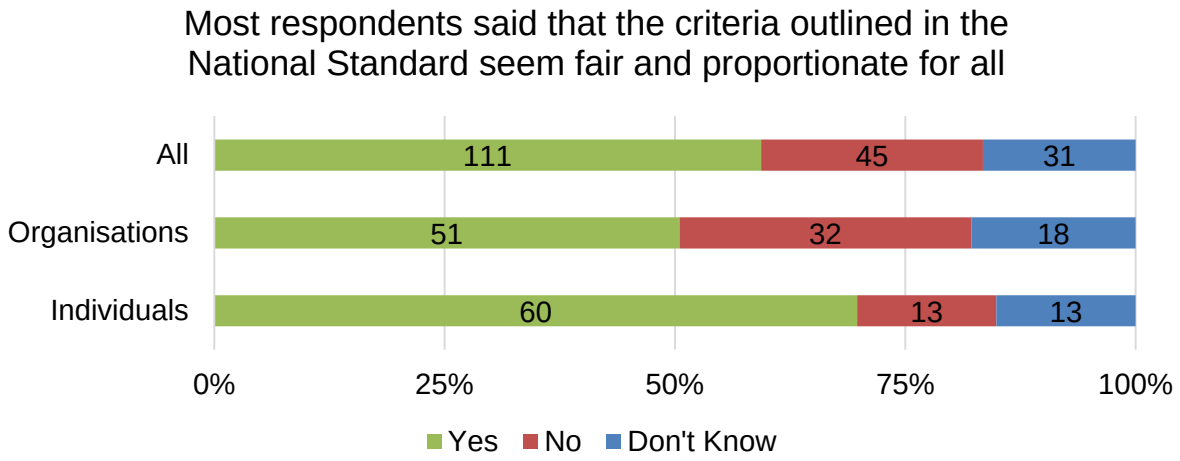
In their open-text comments, respondents raised a range of issues that they felt were not sufficiently addressed in the consultation document. Most of the issues were, however, not about missing criteria of the National Standard which providers would need to fulfil, but more operational in nature.

- It was suggested that all funded providers (including local authority providers) should have effective audit structures in place, giving local authorities and the Care Inspectorate the opportunity for regular monitoring.
- Some respondents proposed that there should be an opportunity for providers to appeal against decisions made by local authorities, both decisions with regards to the locally set funding rate for different providers and the decision whether a provider receives a funded status.
- Respondents requested further information on:
    - Blended models of ELC
    - Whether and/or how parents and carers are entitled to funded provision across local authority boundaries, e.g. whether their child can access a funded provider in a local authority different to the one in which they are a resident or whether children can access funded providers in different local authorities in case of a blended model
    - From what exact day children become eligible for funding, e.g. day of their second/third birthday or the day after
- The importance for funded ELC providers to regularly engage with parents and carers was seen as not sufficiently discussed in the consultation document. This included providing parents with information about the benefit of ELC and the range of ELC providers in their areas. Respondents cited evidence that involving parents and carers in their children's learning and education improves children's outcomes.

7.4 Fair and proportionate for all

Written respondents were asked whether they felt that the proposed criteria were proportionate and fair for all. Most respondents said yes, with 25% saying no. Individual written respondents were more likely to say yes than organisations. Of the organisations that answered this question, representative bodies were less likely to say that the criteria seemed fair and proportionate than providers from all sectors and Local Government.

Figure 11 – The extent to which respondents agreed that the criteria within the National Standard seems fair and proportionate for all



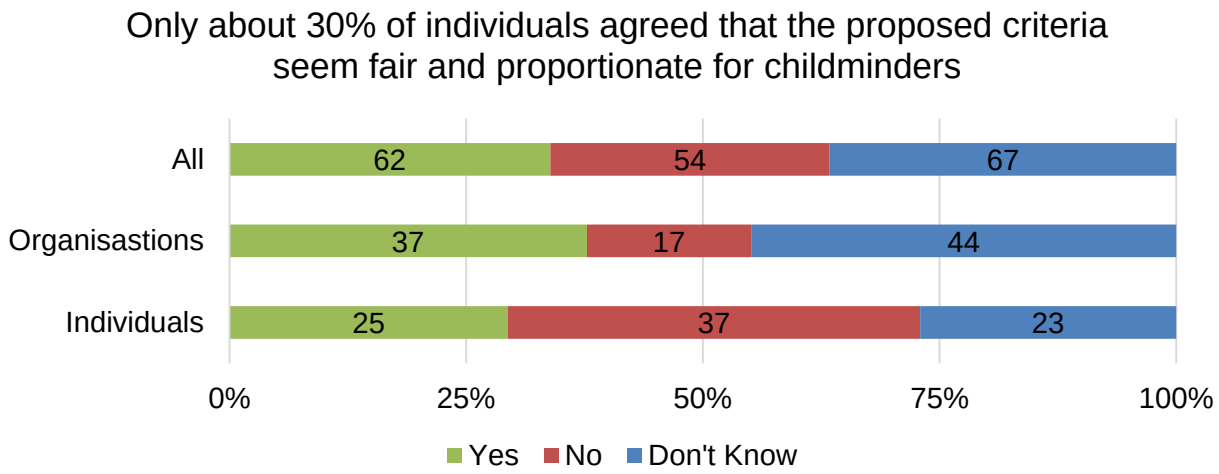
In the open-text comment, respondents raised the following points:

- The criteria have the potential to be fair and proportionate for all if:
  - they are consistently implemented across local authorities
  - there is a fair funding rate for different providers.
- While not specifically about the criteria of the National Standard, it was suggested that partner providers are at a disadvantage compared to local authority providers with regards to the following:
  - Partner providers have no access to free infrastructure or local authority management and support structures, leading partner providers to have higher costs than local authority providers.
  - Considering that local authorities have, on average, paid their staff higher wage, respondents recalled partner providers experiencing recruitment and staff retention issues and losing staff to local authority settings. Respondents hoped that the introduction of a sustainable funding rate for private and third sector providers would counteract this trend.

7.5 Fair and proportionate for childminders

Written respondents were also asked whether they thought that the criteria seemed proportionate and fair for childminders. More respondents were unsure that the criteria seemed fair and proportionate for childminders specifically. Of those that did know, a smaller proportion thought that they were fair and proportionate for childminders than they did for the question relating to everyone generally. In particular, individual written respondents, of whom some will be childminders, felt least likely that the criteria were fair and proportionate for childminders.

Figure 12 – The extent to which respondents thought that the criteria seem fair and proportionate for childminders



In the open-text comments regarding this, the views of respondents were divided, however there was no notable difference in views by respondent type:

- A few felt that the proposed criteria, specifically the variations related to qualifications, seemed fair and proportionate and should increase the status of childminders in the ELC sector. However, respondents raised concerns over the limited capacity of childminders in comparison to other provider types. It was therefore argued that this needed to be acknowledged by local authorities who should offer additional support and flexibility, for example, when it came to completing paperwork. An organisation representing childminders argued that there was work to be done in improving local authorities' understanding of childminding as a service and the need for variations to guarantee that the implementation of the proposed criteria was fair and proportionate.
- A few others felt that the proposed variations for childminders favoured childminders over other provider types and that, in order to be provider neutral, all funded providers should meet the same requirements.
- It was also raised that childminders generally cared for a smaller number of children than other provider types and that some requirements, for example paying the living wage and provision of meals would not be sustainable for their businesses. There was concern that this would either discourage, or lead to the closure of, child minding services which could be particularly detrimental to childcare provision in rural areas.

Chapter 8 The living wage

The consultation document describes the Scottish Government's commitment to provide funding to enable payment of the 'real' Living Wage to staff delivering funded ELC entitlement. Written respondents were asked in an open text question, which areas they would look to be addressed in the technical guidance note for implementing this commitment. The following points were raised in response to this question:

- The risk of creating different pay scales within the ELC sector
- Affordability
- Wages for different types of staff in the funded ELC sector
- Clarification for sole providers
- Business sustainability.

Each of these points is explored in more detail below.

8.1 The risk of creating different pay scales within the ELC sector

Most respondents who answered this question used this as an opportunity to express their concern that the Living Wage commitment should apply to all ELC staff working in funded and non-funded provision. Respondents raised that failing to do this would risk devaluing the work of those who work with the youngest children in ELC services. It was also argued that this could have a detrimental impact on the quality of provision available to this group as more qualified and experienced staff would be incentivised by higher wages to focus on older, eligible children. This point was raised by a large majority of local government organisations and most representative bodies.

8.2 Affordability

Respondents also raised that the technical guidance was less of a concern than ensuring that the funding rate providers received was high enough to allow for the payment of the Living Wage. This point was raised most frequently by private nurseries. It was argued that the funding rate allocated to providers should take account of overheads, other staff costs and the number of staff members requiring the Living Wage; and that the technical guidance should illustrate how the rate has been calculated. In general, respondents were very supportive of providing the Living Wage but felt they would be unable to if funding levels did not increase. It was also argued that as the Living Wage increases in line with inflation, this should be built into the funding rate and closely monitored.

8.3 Applying the Living Wage commitment to different types of staff in the funded ELC sector

There were a number of areas identified by respondents as requiring further clarification. Respondents felt unclear as to whether the Living Wage commitment applied to all staff working in the funded ELC sector, for example cooks or cleaners.

There also appeared to be confusion about how the Living Wage commitment would apply to childminders who care for both funded and non-funded children.

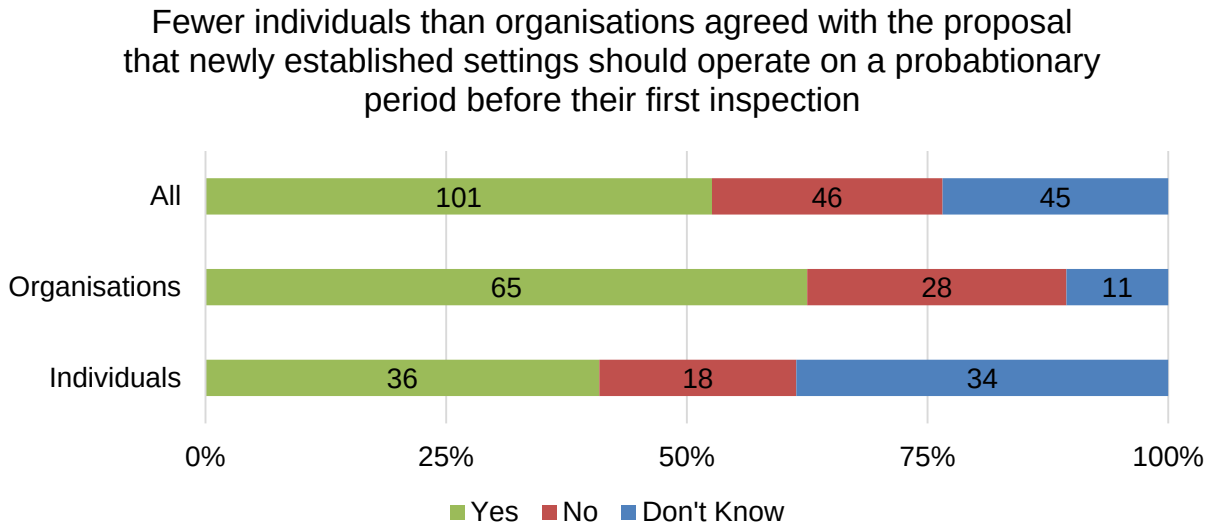
8.4 Business Sustainability

Finally, respondents mentioned that for providers to introduce the Living Wage into their business would mean raising the wages of all staff to ensure that salaries acknowledged different levels of expertise and responsibility. There was concern that this would not be sustainable for some providers.

Chapter 9 Inclusion of a probationary period

Written respondents were asked whether newly established ELC settings should be able to operate on a probationary period while they wait for the findings of their first inspection, provided they meet all other aspects of the National Standard. Just over half of respondents who answered this question agreed that newly established services should be able to operate on a probationary period, with organisations more likely to agree than individuals.

Figure 13 – The extent to which respondents agreed with the proposal for a probationary period



Respondents were also asked to comment on this proposal in an open text question. The following points were raised:

- A probationary period is necessary to fulfil the funded commitment
- A probationary period should be conditional
- A probationary period could have negative impacts on children, families and the quality of ELC service provision
- Timing of first inspection.

Each of these points is explored in further detail below.

9.1 Fulfilling the funded commitment

Respondents recognised that to fulfil the Scottish Government's commitment of expanding the funded hours, this would rely on the capacity of services in new settings. It was argued that the probationary period granted new services the time they needed to set up, build business and evidence sustainability. It was also said to give existing services time to adjust and demonstrate that they meet the necessary criteria.

9.2 Conditions

Respondents emphasised the difference between brand new providers and providers who have been delivering non-funded services. It was argued that the procurement system should distinguish between these two service types by introducing a number of conditions. Suggestions included a longer probationary period and more intensive monitoring process for new services.

9.3 Potential impact of including a probationary period

Many respondents raised a number of concerns about the potential impact of introducing a probationary period:

Respondents raised the concern that the inclusion of a probationary period could lead to poorer quality provision and the funding of inadequate learning environments for children. These respondents tended to argue that providers should not be able to deliver funded provision until they have successfully passed the first inspection.

Concerns were also raised in regard to cases where a provider fails the first inspection following the probationary period. Respondents sought clarification on the processes and procedures were this to occur and expressed concern over the potential disruption to care provision for children and families.

9.4 Length of probationary period

Respondents that stated they were unclear as to the exact length of the proposed probationary period sought confirmation on this. Others argued that it was imperative that local authorities ensured inspections were conducted within 12 months.

Chapter 10 Support during the introduction of the National Standard

At the end of the consultation, respondents were asked in an open text question what support service providers would require in preparation for the introduction of the National Standard and delivery of the new service model. Respondents discussed support required during the transitional period and more generally as part of the expansion. The following were referred to most frequently:

- Training
- Funding
- Information and guidance
- Dealing with workforce challenges
- Educating parents

Each of these points is explored in more detail below.

10.1 Training

Respondents raised the following points with regards to training:

Many respondents across all respondent types raised that access to training would be fundamental in achieving quality service provision across the funded sector. Respondents referred to funding and the location of training as potential barriers that needed to be overcome. It was also argued that to be accessble to all provider types, particularly childminders, training needed to be flexible, for example online courses and training delivered in the evening or at the weekend.

Respondents felt that it would be helpful for providers to access training related to best practice in ELC service provision. Examples included learning about the latest developments in early years childcare and topics that would help providers to ensure they meet the National Standard such as nutrition and food provision.

Respondents also felt that it would be helpful for providers to have access to training related to supporting children who may have additional needs. For example, children in care, children who have experienced trauma or children with disabilities.

Finally, respondents highlighted the importance of investment in ongoing professional development for ELC staff in order to improve the quality of provision and professionalise the sector. They welcomed the requirement for all SSSC registered staff to have a minimum of 12 hours per year of continuous professional development.

10.2 Funding

Respondents raised two main points in relation to funding:

There were general comments made about the need for providers to receive unambiguous, realistic funding in order to successfully deliver the new Service Model for ELC provision. This point was raised by the large majority of independent schools, the majority of third sector and voluntary providers, as well as many private nurseries and individuals. Respondents emphasised that the amount of funding should be carefully considered to ensure it sufficiently covered all relevant costs and that funding should be paid in advance rather than in arrears. There was concern that funding payments made by local authorities were often late which could be damaging for businesses.

Respondents raised that the availability for capital or grant funding for providers would be helpful in preparing for the ELC expansion. For example, funding for refurbishments, such as installing a kitchen for food provision, or investment in resources and equipment that improved children's experience of learning.

10.3 Information and guidance

Respondents emphasised the importance of information and guidance, including:

the need for clear, consistent guidance on implementing the National Standard for all service provider types, in advance of the deadline for expansion in 2020. It was argued that where possible, this should be illustrated with best practice examples. This point was most often raised by local government organisations but also by the majority of independent schools.

User-friendy templates to help providers to adopt consistent approaches to, for example, monitoring and evaluating progress. A 'criteria checklist' for providers was also suggested as a possible resoucre for supporting implementation.

Seminars or workshops were referred to as potential opportunities for providers to raise queries about the guidance in a face-to-face setting. It was suggested that this could also be an opportunity for providers to share thoughts and ideas with others working in the funded ELC sector.

The possibility of a designated support team, either sitting within each local authority or delivered by a third party, was suggested in order for providers to know where they could access timely information and advice. Other similar suggestions incuded a local and national helpline.

Mentoring support for smaller and less experienced services during the transitional phase of the expansion. Examples included pairing established services in the private sector with smaller, charitable organisations so that the latter could receive business support such as contingency planning. It was suggested that local authorities may be best placed to coordinate this activity, given their oversight of funded ELC services in the area.

A few respondents welcomed the proposed operational guidance for local authorities and emphasised that this should include clear instructions for allocating hourly rates to partner providers.

Respondents also raised that it would be helpful if information and updates from the Scottish Government and local authorities regarding the expansion were shared regularly on relevant websites and that all providers were alerted when this happened.

10.4 Dealing with workforce challenges

Respondents referred to possible challenges for funded providers in maintaining appropriate staff levels:

One of the biggest risks to private and third sector funded providers during the transition to 2020 was said to be the loss of qualified and experienced staff to local authority services. It was therefore argued that staff cover would be required to allow remaining staff members to attend training.The issue of staff retention was said to hinder the possibility of provider neutrality.

Respondents raised that it would be helpful to be provided with guidance regarding the minimum number or proportion of qualified staff within each setting.

Respondents raised concerns regarding the capacity of staff to deliver the funded commitment, particularly in rural areas. It was therefore raised that support with recruitment, for example developing new employment pathways or pooling resources within particular local authorities, could be helpful.

10.5 Parental engagement

Respondents raised the following points in regard to engaging parents of children using funded ELC services:

Respondents raised that parents needed to be supported to understand the processes underpinning the ELC expansion and the choice of providers available to them. There was concern that parents do not always receive information about all provider types which limited their ability to make an informed choice.

It was also suggested that information, advice and guidance for parents on child development and best practice in ELC could help parents to feel more engaged in ELC provision. Respondents argued that this could improve the effectiveness of ELC provison as parents applied what they had learned at home. Respondents did not specify who should be responsible for this.

The issue of informing and engaging parents was most likely to be raised by representative and public bodies.

Chapter 11 Other issues

Throughout the consultation, respondents raised a number of points that did not directly correspond to a specific consultation question:

- Criteria 5 – Accessibility
- Hours of delivery and wraparound hours
- Top-up fee
- Criteria 6 – Business sustainability
- Criteria 9 – Food.

Each of these points is explored in more detail below.

11.1 Criteria 5 – Accessibility

Respondents raised the following points with regards to Criteria 5 – Accessibility:

Respondents highlighted the importance for ensuring that ELC services under the new model are accessible to children with additional support needs (ASN). It was suggested that parents and carers whose children have ASN should have a choice between different providers which are inclusive and accessible for children with ASN.

It was proposed that funded providers should receive additional funding when working with children with ASN and that staff in all ELC settings should have greater access to training about working with children with ASN.

In addition, respondents highlighted the importance for ELC provision to be accessible for parents and children living in deprived neighbourhoods,

11.2 Hours of delivery wraparound hours

Respondents demanded greater clarity on the exact number of hours parents will be able to access funded hours per day and the patterns of delivery, ie mornings, afternoon or full-time (for how this relates to parents' choice, see Chapter 7). They also suggested that funded providers should deliver funded ELC for up to 10 hours a day. However, respondents drew attention to the fact that this would affect private providers' business model, which currently also relies on charging parents for wraparound hours. Should private providers lose the opportunity to charge parents for wraparound hours, the importance of a sustainable funding rate was raised (see also Chapter 3).

11.3 Top-up fees

One of the requirements under Criteria 8 is that no top-up fees are charged to parents relating to the statutory hours. Some respondents highlighted that they disagreed with this and wanted be able to charge parents top-up fees for entitlement hours. This was also raised in discussions at some of the consultation events. It was suggested that this may be necessary for some providers to remain financially sustainable (depending on the funding rate), particularly where they were seen to be delivering a higher quality offer. Independent schools were most likely to raise this issue.

More generally, respondents demanded clarity about what exactly providers are able to additionally charge parents for.

1.4 Criteria 6 – Business sustainability

Respondents generally welcomed the requirement for providers to be financially sustainable (as outlined in criteria 6 of the National Standard). However, they also drew attention to the risk that the proposals outlined in the National Standard – including the reduced opportunity to charge for wraparound hours due to the expansion (see 12.2) and the requirement to pay the living wage (see Chapter 8) – may reduce the business sustainability of some providers.

11.5 Criteria 9 - Food

Respondents raised the following two points with regards to Criteria 9 – Food of the National Standard:

Respondents outlined that they would like to have greater clarity on what exactly constitutes a “meal” and how eligibility to meals relates to number of sessions children access on a certain day, e.g. whether children will be eligible for multiple meals should they access funded ELC service from 8am-6pm on certain days.

Respondents also highlighted that some providers, particularly childminders, do not currently have facilities and staff capacities to provide food.

Appendix 1 Consultation questions

Respondents were asked a range of questions within the consultation document. These are listed below in the order that they appeared in the consultation document.

Question 1: What factors should be considered in developing a simple, standardised yet flexible process for becoming a funded provider?

Question 2: What are the key shared principles which should underpin an effective and positive partnership between local authorities and funded providers?

Question 3a: We are proposing that the National Standard includes a qualification requirement for childminders delivering the funded entitlement to be qualified to or working towards the same qualification level as is required for an ELC practitioner (SCQF level 7). What are the advantages of including this criteria?

Question 3b: Are childminders able to access adequate funding to pay for training to SCQF level 7? Are childminders able to access training to SCQF level 7 in a way that is flexible enough to allow them to continue to run their businesses?

Question 4: Our aspiration is to see outdoor learning and play becoming a defining feature of funded ELC in Scotland.

- Does criteria 3 capture this ambition? If not, how could it be strengthened in a way that is sustainable for providers?
- What challenges, if any, exist for funded ELC providers to ensure children have access to outdoor play? How can these challenges be overcome?

Question 5a: Will the criteria set out in the draft National Standard:

- ensure that high quality, accessible, flexible and affordable Early Learning Childcare is delivered in all funded provider settings?
- Support increased choice for parents and carers?

Question 5b: Is there any criteria not included in the National Standard that is required to ensure a high quality service is provided to all children?

Question 5c: Do the proposed criteria within the National Standard seem fair and proportionate for all? Do the proposed variations for some criteria seem fair and proportionate for childminders?

Question 6: What areas would you look to be addressed in the technical guidance note for supporting implementation of the ELC Living Wage commitment?

Question 7: Should newly established ELC settings be able to deliver the funded hours on a probationary basis, pending the outcome of their first inspection, provided they meet all other aspects of the National Standard? Are there any particular challenges or issues that may arise from this approach?

Question 8: What support will service providers require to prepare for the introduction of the National Standard and meet the criteria and delivery of the new service model?

Appendix 2 List of organisations

A number of organisations submitted responses to this consultation. Organisations were categorized by type and are listed as such below.

FE/HE

- West Lothian College

Independent schools

- Edinburgh Montessori Arts School
- George Heriot's School
- High School of Dundee
- St Margaret's School for Girls Aberdeen
- The Edinburgh Academy

Local Government

- Argyll & Bute Council
- City of Edinburgh Council Early Years Team
- Clackmannanshire Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Dundee City Council
- East Ayrshire Council
- East Dunbartonshire Council
- East Lothian Council
- East Renfrewshire Council Education Department
- Falkirk Council
- Family and Community Development West Lothian
- Fife Council
- Glasgow City Council
- Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative (The West Partnership)
- Highland Council
- Inverclyde Council Education Services
- Midlothian Council
- Moray Council
- North Ayrshire Council

- North Lanarkshire Council
- Orkney Islands Council
- Perth and Kinross Council
- Renfrewshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council EY Team and Service Delivery Group
- South Ayrshire Council
- South Lanarkshire Council
- Stirling Council
- West Dunbartonshire Council
- West Lothian Council, Education Services

Local Government nurseries and schools

- Carnwarth Primary and Nursery class
- Heathhall ELC
- Lincluden Primary School

Private nurseries

- ACE Place Childcare Services LTD
- Acorn Park Nursery
- Almond Park Nursery
- Arnhall Nursery
- Bertram Nursery Group
- Bertram Nursery Group
- Big Bird Nursery
- Bright Beginnings
- Busy Bees
- Busy Bees Nurseries (Scotland) Ltd
- Cairellot Nursery
- Childsplay Childrens Nursery Ltd
- Dunblane Nature Kindergarten
- Enchanted Forest Early Learning
- Fenton Barns Nursery
- Flowerpots Childcare Ltd
- First Adventures Nursery
- First Class Day Nursery

- First Steps Nursery
- Happitots Glasgow Airport (Bertram Nursery Group)
- Headstart Nursery Schools Ltd
- Heron House Early Years
- Heron House Early Years
- Kirktonholme
- Lauriston Nursery
- Lecropt Nursery & Old Doune Road Nursery
- Les Enfents Nursery
- Little Acorns Pre-School Learning Centre
- Mulberry Bush Montessori, Killearn and Yorkhill
- Musselburgh Private Nursery
- Nerlana Ltd
- North Edinburgh Childcare
- Oakwell Childrens Nursery
- Papillon Private Nursery
- Pear tree Nursery
- Peedie Breeks Nursery
- Playbarn Too
- Polkemmet Childcare
- Private childcare provider
- Scallywags Children's Nursery
- Stepping Stones for Families
- The Corstorphine Nursery Ltd
- The Kidz Stop
- Tiptoes Childrens Nursery Limited
- Torridon Education Group
- Villa Kindergarten
- West Lothian Private Nursery Group
- Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens
- Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens

Public bodies

- Audit Scotland
- Care Inspectorate
- NHS Health Scotland
- Scottish Social Services Council

Representative bodies

- Aberlady Primary School Parent Council
- ADES Early Years Network
- Care and Learning Alliance
- Early Education (The British Association for Early Childhood Education)
- Early Years Scotland
- Motherwell District Childminding Group
- National Day Nurseries Association
- National Day Nurseries Association Stirling Network
- National Day Nurseries Association West Lothian Network
- National Parent Forum of Scotland
- Parenting Across Scotland
- Scottish Childminding Association
- Scottish Out of School Care Network
- Stoneyhill Parent Council
- West Lothian NDNA network

Third sector and voluntary providers

- Alford Playgroup
- Blackhill Nursery
- Cambusbarron Playgroup
- First Step Community Project
- GCVS Everyone's Children Project
- Little Buds Playgroup
- One Parent Families Scotland
- Portknockie Nursery
- Stepping Stones for Families
- Stonelaw Preschool
- Stramash Social Enterprise

Union

- NASUWT
- Scottish Trades Union Congress
- The Educational Institute of Scotland
- UNISON Scotland

Other

- CELCIS (Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland)
- Children in Scotland
- Coalition for Racial Equality and Rights
- Connect – Supporting Partnerships in Education
- National Deaf Children’s Society
- Scottish Women's Convention
- Society of Personnel & Development Scotland
- Starcatchers
- Upstart Scotland

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