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# Mapping the Provision of On-Site Early Learning and Childcare in Further and Higher Education Estates and Large Public Sector Employers



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# Mapping the Provision of On-Site Early Learning and Childcare in Further and Higher Education Estates and Large Public Sector Employers

Why Research, August 2017

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# Executive Summary

Large public sector employers (those employing more than 500 staff) along with Scotland's colleges and universities were contacted to ascertain whether staff and students have access to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision on-site, or whether any partnership or other arrangements exist with local nurseries.

The initial sample included 124 contacts: 40 large public sector employers, 43 individual NHS sites, 26 colleges and 15 universities.

In almost all of the public bodies contacted it proved challenging to identify the person or department with responsibility for, or knowledge of, ELC policy or support and various different departments and/or sites were contacted in an attempt to obtain this information.

## Availability of on-site provision

Of the 124 bodies and sites contacted:

- On-site provision was identified at 2 of the 40 large public sector bodies.
- On-site ELC provision was identified at 9 of the 43 NHS sites:
  - 2 of these are in-house (NHS run) provision.
  - 7 are private nurseries that operate on or adjacent to the hospital grounds.
- 6 of the 26 colleges reported that they have on-site provision.
- 8 of the 15 universities reported that they have on-site provision.

## Reasons for not offering on-site provision

Those without on-site ELC provision were asked whether they have any partnership or other relationship with local nurseries, but none was reported.

The main reasons for not offering provision include:

- Access to a childcare voucher scheme is offered instead.
- A lack of space available for ELC premises.
- Lack of demand, or presumed lack of demand as some said they had not been approached about ELC provision.
- Financial reasons.

Those without on-site provision were asked for any information on support for staff to access ELC and all who replied said that staff have access to childcare vouchers through the Childcare Voucher Scheme. None had any arrangements in place with

local nurseries, although some provided staff with information on the names and locations of nurseries in close proximity.

### **Findings from on-site ELC providers**

Those with on-site provision were recontacted in order to collect more detailed information but in all cases it was the nurseries themselves that were able to provide the details required. There was no evident correlation between the number of staff at each site and whether or not there was ELC provision.

7 NHS site nurseries supplied details: 2 in-house and 5 privately run.

11 college / university-site nurseries supplied details: 3 are in-house provision while 8 are privately run.

Information was provided in relation to one other large public sector employer; this is on-site provision run by a private company.

The key findings from the onsite settings were:

- Within both NHS and education settings there were both private and in-house nurseries.
- Both settings had a range of different sizes (number of spaces) of nurseries.
- All offered spaces for children aged 0-5 years old.
- All sites offer funded spaces and the majority of these are in use at any given time.
- NHS sites all report being at or near capacity. This is also the case for college / university sites during term time, although less so during the holiday periods.
- There was a wide range of different hourly rates.
- Most had similar opening hours (7am or 8am to 6pm).
- College / university spaces are predominantly used by staff and students. Within the privately run NHS sites around half or slightly more are used by staff, with the remaining spaces used by the general public.
- Some of the universities and colleges provided subsidised rates to students accessing early learning and childcare at an onsite setting.
- All sites are able to accept children with additional support needs; most reported that support is accessed as and when required to suit each child.
- All sites had access to outdoor space.

## **Benefits of on-site provision**

Some nursery staff reported that the main benefits of on-site provision identified were the reduced travelling time (and therefore shorter day for both child and parent). Some nurseries reported that the proximity to the workplace means that parents are less rushed and so can spend longer in the nursery, forming a closer relationship with nursery staff which can be beneficial in improving nursery staff's knowledge of the needs of each child.

## **Encouraging organisations to offer on-site ELC**

There seem to be a number of approaches that could be adopted in order to encourage organisations within other sectors to offer ELC to their staff; however, these can pose some logistical and/or financial challenges.

Bodies may consider offering accommodation to a private nursery; this would mean an initial financial outlay on the part of the organisation but the ELC provider would then manage provision as a private business with no additional costs to the organisation. In this instance, the private nursery would need to be convinced that there would be enough footfall to fill available ELC spaces. However, lack of available physical space was reported as a barrier to on-site provision of ELC so bodies may not be in a position to consider this route.

Another route would be for organisations to set up their own nursery and manage this business themselves. However, discussions with public sector organisations not currently offering any ELC would suggest that this is unlikely to be the preferred option as this will need an ongoing commitment of time and resources.

Setting up stronger links with local ELC providers might also be an option and some organisations do currently provide lists of local ELC providers to staff. However, public sector organisations might not be in a position to guarantee up-take of a specific number of nursery places. While offering staff a guaranteed nursery place might be welcome, neither of the respondents not offering on-site ELC that more detailed information was collected from were aware of staff struggling to find nursery accommodation. Also, neither of these respondents felt that setting up links with local providers would be a priority for the organisation.

# Introduction

## Background

In Scotland, all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds are entitled to 600 hours per year of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision.

The Scottish Government is committed to increasing the funded ELC entitlement to 1,140 hours per year by 2020.

It is widely acknowledged, including by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the EU, that the provision of universally accessible and high quality ELC enriches children with skills and confidence to carry into their schooling, and to help support work to close the poverty-related attainment gap between Scotland's most and least deprived children.

Increased flexibility in how the funded entitlement is delivered can also support more parents to work, train, or study.

Therefore, the proximity of ELC provision to places of work or study can be important for some parents and carers. The Children and Families Directorate of the Scottish Government commissioned a scoping study to better understand the extent of on-site ELC provision, and the interactions with wider ELC provision, within Higher and Further Education estates and large public sector employers in Scotland.

The aim of the scoping study was to provide an assessment of the level and characteristics of on-site ELC provision across Further and Higher Education estates and large public sector employers, with the original objectives including an analysis of:

- The total number and percentage of settings in each of these sectors with on-site ELC provision, no on-site provision but alternative arrangements, no on-site provision or alternative arrangements, for example through links with private or third sector providers or childminders.
- For those with on-site provision, further information including the nature of the provision, the amount of entitlement offered, opening hours, capacity and uptake / number of registrations, fees charged, provision for children with additional support needs, access to outdoor learning space, whether they cover irregular working patterns / hours.
- Additional breakdowns of ELC offering by local authority, SIMD deciles, urban / rural classification, funded / non-funded provision.
- To analyse NHS settings as a subset of large public sector employers.
- To identify case studies and conduct telephone interviews to gather in-depth qualitative data on what alternative arrangements are made for parents / carers where there is no on-site provision.



- Identification of factors that contribute to the provision of on-site ELC and the drivers and barriers to supporting and sustaining on-site ELC provision.
- What lessons there may be for other sectors in supporting on-site ELC, for example if the investment is regarded as influential on competitive appeal.

However, during the course of the study it became apparent that the low number of settings with any on-site ELC provision limited the potential for any detailed quantitative analysis to be produced. Therefore, a more qualitative approach was undertaken.

## Sample

The brief for the project defined large public sector employers as those sites with over 500 staff. The sample for the project was compiled using information from the Scottish Government's National Public Bodies Directory, with some additional large public sector employers including two large local authorities, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Parliament, along with all colleges and universities in Scotland. In addition, 43 separate NHS sites were included.

The following table shows the number of bodies in the initial sample:

Type of body	Initial sample
	Number
Individual NHS hospital sites	43
Colleges	26
Universities	15
NHS Boards	14
Executive NDPBs	9
Health Bodies	6
Other Significant National Bodies	3
Non-Ministerial Departments	2
Local Authorities	2
Scottish Government / Scottish Parliament	2
Other large public bodies	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>

# Availability of on-site ELC provision

Telephone contact was made with each of the bodies and sites on the sample list (including, where relevant, additional sites or campuses) to ascertain the most appropriate person to provide information on the availability of on-site ELC provision.

There was little commonality amongst bodies as to where this information was held and, in several cases, various different departments and/or sites were contacted to obtain this information.

As can be seen in the following table, 25 sites with on-site provision were identified from the initial sample.

Type of body	Contact sample	
	Number contacted	Number reporting on-site ELC provision
Individual NHS hospital sites	43	9
Colleges	26	6
Universities	15	8
NHS Boards	14	-
Executive NDPBs	9	-
Health Bodies	6	-
Other Significant National Bodies	3	-
Non-Ministerial Departments	2	-
Local Authorities	2	-
Scottish Government / Scottish Parliament	2	2
Other large public bodies	2	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>124</b>	<b>25</b>

- On-site ELC provision was identified at 9 out of the 43 NHS sites:
  - Only 2 of these are in-house (NHS run) provision.
  - The remainder are private nurseries that operate on or adjacent to the hospital grounds.
- No on-site provision was identified within the 2 large local authorities contacted.

- Provision was identified at the Scottish Government and Scottish Parliament.
- 6 of the 26 colleges reported that they have on-site provision.
- 8 of the 15 universities reported that they have on-site provision.

Those without on-site ELC provision were asked whether they have any partnership or other relationship with local nurseries but none was reported.

The majority of public bodies offer their staff access to childcare vouchers through the Childcare Voucher Scheme, which is generally delivered by employers through a salary sacrifice scheme.

The 25 nurseries identified in the initial contact formed the basis of the sample for the remainder of the project.

A small number of bodies where no provision was available were also added to this sample to find out whether on-site provision or arrangements with local ELC providers had been considered, and to gather more information on what factors had affected the decision making.

# On-site Early Learning and Childcare provision

An online survey and telephone contact was used in order to collect details on:

- The total number of spaces available (split by under 2s, 2 year olds, 3 year olds and 4 year olds).
- The number of funded spaces available.
- The number of spaces taken up (by general public or staff / students / service users).
- Fees.
- Whether staff / students are given a discount.
- Provision for children with additional support needs.
- Availability of outdoor learning space.
- Opening hours and any flexibility offered.
- Any other flexibility or innovation.
- Successes and barriers.

Information was received from 7 NHS-site nurseries; 2 are in-house provision while the other 5 are privately run.

Information was received from 11 college / university-site nurseries; 3 are in-house provision while 8 are privately run.

Information was provided by the nursery used by staff of one other large public sector employer; this is on-site provision run by a private company.

Information provided by these 19 nurseries is summarised below.

## Spaces

### NHS-site nurseries

The nurseries surveyed varied greatly in size:

- The largest of the NHS-site nurseries offers 108 spaces while the smallest offers 42. The average number of spaces available at NHS-site nurseries is 69.
- All NHS-site nurseries offer spaces for children aged 0-5 years old.

- Spaces for 2 year olds range from 10 spaces to 33 spaces, with an average of 17 spaces.
- Spaces for 3 and 4 year olds range from 16 spaces to 50 spaces, with an average of 32 spaces.
- Funded ELC entitlement places are available at all of the NHS-site nurseries surveyed. Nurseries found it difficult to say how many were being used at any one time because of the way the funding is worked out and the different ELC hours that parents require. However, the majority (over 80%) were being used at any given time.
- All of the NHS-site nurseries reported that they are generally at capacity or near capacity.
- Staff make use of these nurseries; reports from the privately-run nurseries varied from around 50% to 60% of spaces being used by hospital staff. Only two of the NHS-site nurseries reserved any places specifically for hospital staff; one in-house nursery only accepts children of individuals employed by the local NHS Board.
- None of the privately run NHS nurseries reported any use of spaces by patients; spaces not used by staff were used by the general public.

### **College / university-site nurseries / public sector**

- The largest of the college / university / public sector nurseries offered 113 spaces while the smallest offered 35. The average number of spaces available is 62.
- All college / university / public sector nurseries offer spaces for children aged 0-5 years old.
- Spaces for 2 year olds range from 8 spaces to 30 spaces, with an average of 15 spaces.
- Spaces for 3 and 4 year olds range from 16 spaces to 71 spaces, with an average of 30 spaces.
- Funded spaces were available at all of the nurseries that supplied information. Nurseries found it difficult to say how many were being used at any one time because of the way the funding is worked out and the different ELC hours that parents require. The majority of spaces (over 80%) were being used during term time.
- All of the college / university / public sector nurseries reported that they are generally at capacity or near capacity during term time, although the number of spaces used at colleges and universities decreases during holiday periods. The nurseries remain open during holiday periods, although there are vacancies as most students do not use the facilities during holiday periods.

- Students and staff make use of the college / university nurseries. Four of the nurseries worked on a 'first come, first served' basis, with the majority of spaces being taken up by staff or students. Five of these college / university nurseries offer spaces to non-staff and non-students, although there are generally very few spaces available to these types of user.
- Spaces at the one public sector organisation that provided information are all used by staff only.

## **Fees**

### **NHS-site nurseries**

- Fees for 3 and 4 year olds ranged from £3.51 per hour to £4.71 per hour within the privately-run NHS nurseries.
- Fees for 3 and 4 year olds in the in-house NHS-site nurseries were between £4.20 and £4.25 per hour.

### **College / university / public sector-site nurseries**

- Fees for 3 and 4 year olds ranged from £1.86 per hour to £5.41 per hour within the privately-run nurseries, with some universities and colleges providing subsidies to students.
- Fees for over 3 and 4 year olds in the in-house nurseries were between £2.73 and £5.72 per hour. Again, some universities and colleges offered subsidised rates to students.

## **Opening hours**

Across most nurseries the main opening hours were either 7am or 8am to 6pm. A small number had slightly different hours.

In some of the private nurseries that open at 8am, there was some flexibility. For example, two of the private NHS-site nurseries said they would open an hour or half an hour earlier if required. The additional cost for this provision was £3.50 for the half hour early start and £10 for the hour early start.

## **Provision for children with additional support needs**

All of the nurseries surveyed said that they have, or can make, provision for children with additional support needs, although not all can cater for children with severe disabilities and / or offer one-to-one support. Provision is based on any needs that have been identified in the child's Care Plan and nursery staff work closely with local authority staff and parents to deliver the support that has been identified. A wide range of support is offered across these nurseries and examples included:

- An Additional Support and Learning co-ordinator to make any specific arrangements required.

- Working with third sector organisations to provide child-specific support.
- Additional training for nursery staff.
- Additional support staff when required such as speech and language therapists.
- Specialised play resources.
- Specialised care / living resources.
- Access to additional funding for specialist equipment.
- Accessibility support.

Nurseries reported that, in general, when a child with additional needs applies they will work with the parents and other agencies (local authority or third sector) to ensure that staff and resources are available to suit the child's needs.

## **Outdoor learning space**

All of the nurseries surveyed said that they have access to an outdoor learning space. Nurseries reported that they use their outdoor space regularly as part of their learning. There were many examples given of the types of activity undertaken and these included:

- Outdoor skills such as bushcraft.
- Identifying and caring for nature.
- Litter picking.

## **On-site successes**

Nurseries were asked to say what aspects of being on-site within a college/university or a larger public sector employers have worked well and what has worked less well.

Most reported that public sector staff and students appreciate the proximity of the nursery to their place of work or study. This means that parents and carers can cut down on travelling time and, therefore, the number of ELC hours they have to purchase.

This additional time also means parents have less of a rush going to and from work and so have more time to spend getting to know nursery staff, talking to them and providing feedback. Nursery staff can also gain more information about each child (their likes and needs for example).

Some also mentioned the benefits to parents of being close by when nurseries have events which parents can, and would like to, attend; for example sports day or

plays at Christmas. The shorter distance to travel to the nursery means that parents do not have to take as long off work as they might otherwise have to.

Two nurseries reported that they are able to offer earlier opening hours (either half an hour or an hour) when parents require this to fit in with their working hours. This again proves beneficial as it both allows parents to start work when required and also means a shorter day for both the parents and children (as there is no additional travel time involved).

Some college nurseries offer flexible hours to fit with changing student timetables.

## **On-site barriers**

Nurseries were also asked about any barriers they face in the delivery of ELC. Very few issues were raised which were specifically related to being on-site.

The private NHS-site nurseries noted that where maintenance or internet have to be accessed through the hospital, this has caused delays for two of the private nurseries. This was put down to 'bad communication' or 'being passed from pillar to post'.



## No on-site early learning and childcare provision

As mentioned, staff at a relatively small proportion (20%) of the bodies, NHS sites and colleges/universities contacted had access to any on-site ELC provision.

Initial contact indicated that the main reasons for bodies not offering on-site ELC or having a relationship with local ELC providers included:

- They were instead offering access to a childcare voucher scheme.
- Lack of physical space.
- A perceived lack of demand.
- Financial reasons.

An in-depth telephone interview was conducted with two of the bodies (one college and one public sector body) that do not offer on-site ELC.

Of these two organisations not offering on-site ELC or having a relationship with local ELC providers, the key reason given was the lack of space for a nursery and / or that the geographic dispersion of staff means that there is no one suitable location where a nursery could be accessed by staff.

Some of the bodies that do not offer any ELC provision do provide lists of local nurseries to staff to help identify ELC provision. However, none had set up any links with specific ELC providers and none claimed they would be likely to.

### **How to access background or source data**

The data collected for this social research publication:

- ☐ are available in more detail through Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
- ☐ are available via an alternative route
- ☒ may be made available on request, subject to consideration of legal and ethical factors.
- ☐ cannot be made available by Scottish Government for further analysis as Scottish Government is not the data controller.



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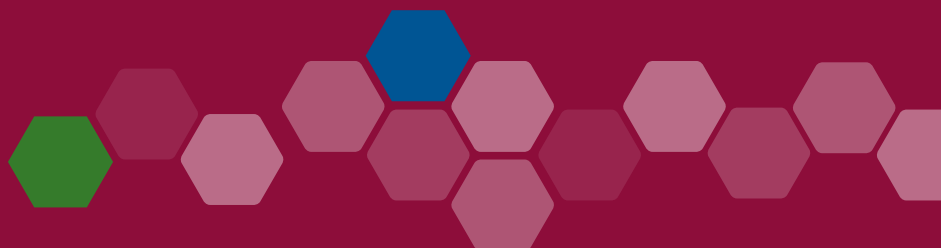
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