

COMMITTEE:	Education & Children's Services
MEETING DATE:	9 June 2026
BY:	Depute Chief Executive – Children and Communities
REPORT TITLE:	Update – Delivery of Early Learning and Childcare
REPORT STATUS:	Public

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the progress of the planned changes to the delivery of Early Learning and Childcare from August 2026.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Members are recommended to:
- i. Note the final update of the transition of seven nurseries from a full-year to a school-year delivery model.
 - ii. Note that officers will continue to review the criteria for admissions for Early Learning and Childcare by August 2026.
 - iii. Note that officers will continue to undertake a scoping exercise to assess the viability of introducing charging for extra hours in Council settings by August 2026.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 17 March 2026, Council was updated on the work underway to support families in transitioning seven Early Learning and Childcare (EL&CC) settings from a full-year model to a school-year model, effective from August 2026. The settings affected are Aberlady, East Linton, Law, Longniddry, Pinkie, Sandersons and Yester.
- 3.2 At this meeting, Councillors agreed to note all actions undertaken for this transition to date and requested a further update in June 2026. This report provides a final update on the work undertaken.

UPDATE ON ACTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Final Update on The Change of Delivery Models

- 3.3 The staffing structures for the 7 nurseries have been agreed for August 2026. New contracts to formalise the change are in progress.
- 3.4 All school-based Early Learning and Childcare staff have been successfully supported to adopt working patterns that meet both their individual needs and the needs of the service. In parallel, central team staff have been successfully supported into redeployment opportunities following the completion of the service review, ensuring continuity of employment.
- 3.5 Further to the update provided to Committee on 7 March 2026, which outlined the support available to families, all those affected by the change in delivery model who requested assistance have been supported by the Early Years Central Team. They have been helped to understand the range of Early Learning and Childcare options available across the county, with all children offered their full entitlement to funded provision.
- 3.6 A small number of families may not have been able to access their first choice setting due to the revised delivery model now operating within their preferred setting. As families do not require to provide feedback on their childcare choices, it is not possible to determine how many families are in this position.
- 3.7 We continue to work with providers who wish to deliver funded Early Learning & Childcare (EL&CC) in East Lothian, supporting a diverse, sustainable and flexible local childcare sector. Expanding the funded provider network remains a priority to increase parental choice and strengthen our provider-neutral approach as required by the Scottish Government.

Review of the criteria for EL&CC admissions

- 3.8 Officers have begun a review of the current Early Learning and Childcare (ELC&C) admissions criteria, with the rationale for this work grounded in capturing and responding to family voice. In line with Scottish Government policy, East Lothian continues to operate a “funding follows the child” model. Under this approach, catchment areas do not apply, and cross-boundary access remains essential to supporting parental choice and flexibility.
- 3.9 Officers will continue to review admissions criteria by looking both inwards and outwards, learning from the work of other local authorities and through our active participation in the Southeast Early Years Network, which includes East Lothian, Midlothian, Scottish Borders and Fife. While this work progresses, age-based eligibility remains a widely

used and equitable criterion across Scotland and will continue to inform our approach. EL&CC current admissions criteria can be found here:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210642/early_learning_and_childcare/12629/early_learning_and_childcare_in_east_lothian/9

- 3.10 Families choose childcare based on a broad range of personal and professional circumstances. To remain aligned with the funding follows the child policy intent, families are not required to evidence or justify “need” to access funded EL&CC.
- 3.11 Our Admissions Criteria review will be completed by August 2026, and a report will be shared at Education and Children’s Services Committee in November 2026 seeking approval of any changes.

Viability of Charging for Early Learning and Childcare in East Lothian Council Settings.

- 3.12 In March 2026, Council agreed that officers should explore whether East Lothian Council settings could offer families additional paid hours.
- 3.13 This work is being taken forward jointly by Early Years and Finance to assess what may be feasible within existing operational, capital and revenue resources. While this remains a priority, progression is dependent on the outcome of a detailed viability and scoping exercise to ensure any new arrangements are deliverable, sustainable and compliant with statutory requirements. The outcome of this feasibility assessment including any recommendations for approval will be brought back to Education and Children’s Services committee in November 2026.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Potential change to EL&CC Admissions Criteria following review.

5 RESOURCE AND OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Finance: None
- 5.2 Human Resources: None
- 5.3 Other (e.g. Legal/IT): None
- 5.4 Risk: None

6 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

6.1 **Select the statement that is appropriate to your report by placing an 'X' in the relevant box.**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening process has been undertaken, and the subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality and human rights; tackling socio-economic disadvantages and poverty; climate change, the environment and sustainability; the Council's role as a corporate parent; or the storage/collection of personal data.

or

The subject of this report has been through the Integrated Impact Assessment process and impacts have been identified as follows:

Subject	Impacts identified (Yes, No or N/A)
Equality and human rights	
Socio-economic disadvantage/poverty	
Climate change, the environment and sustainability	
Corporate parenting and care-experienced young people	
Storage/collection of personal data	
Other	

The Integrated Impact Assessment and Children's Rights Wellbeing Impact Assessment relating to the Service Review has been published and can be accessed via the Council's website:

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/210602/equality_and_diversity/12014/integrated_impact_assessments

https://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/file/35611/restructure_and_reorganisation_of_early_learning_and_childcare_services_in_east_lothian

7 APPENDICES

7.1 None

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 None

9 AUTHOR AND APPROVAL DETAILS

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Date	20 May 2026

Head of Service Approval

Name	Nicola McDowell
Designation	Head of Education
Confirmation that IIA and other relevant checks (e.g. finance/legal) have been completed	Yes
Approval Date	28 May 2026