**1140 hours of Flexible Early Learning & Childcare: FAQs**

**What’s changed?**

Fife Council currently offer 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare to all eligible children. There are a number of different ways for families to access this entitlement as shown below:

* In a private nursery that is in partnership with Fife Council.
* At a playgroup that is in partnership with Fife Council.
* With a child minder who is in partnership with Fife Council.
* Term time in a Fife Council nursery for sessions of 6 hours per day.
* Across the whole year in a Fife Council nursery either am or pm for 4 hours and 40 minutes per day.
* Across 46 weeks in a Fife Council nursery either full day Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday am **OR** Wednesday pm, full day Thursday, Friday – this option is limited to 1 nursery within each local committee area across Fife and different allocation criteria apply.

It will be possible to share hours between different Early Learning & Childcare providers up to a maximum of 1140 funded hours across all settings.

**How can I find a list of the nurseries, playgroups and childminders available?**

Fife Council settings for each local nursery area can be found by clicking the + button beside the relevant area at the bottom of the page [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/education2/early-learning,-childcare-and-nurseries/preschool-and-school-nursery/nursery-places-for-3-and-4-year-olds-session-202223). A list of all private nurseries and playgroups offering funded ELC in Fife can be found [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0024/306276/Private_Nurseries_and_Playgroups_in_Partnership.pdf) and a list of all childminders in partnership can be found [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0025/306277/Childminders_in_partnership_as_at_6_January_2022.pdf).

**When can my child start nursery?**

Every child is entitled to a free nursery place from the entry point following their third birthday. That means:

* Starting nursery in August 2022: Your child must be three before 31st August 2022.
* Starting nursery in January 2023: Your child must be three before 31st December 2022.
* Starting nursery in April 2023: Your child must be three before the last day of February 2023.

**My child does not currently attend nursery – what do I need to do?**

If you wish your child to access funded early learning and childcare in a Private Nursery, Playgroup or Childminder for academic year 2022/23 then you should contact your provider of choice directly to secure a place.

If you wish your child to attend a Fife Council nursery during academic year 2022/23 then you should apply for a place between 6th and 31st January 2022. Any applications received after this date will not be processed until the main allocation of nursery places has taken place, and this may reduce your chance of being allocated a nursery or session time of your choice.

**How do I apply for a nursery place?**

Application forms for Fife Council nurseries can be completed online and are available [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/services/form-pages/apply-for-a-fife-council-nursery-place).

Alternatively, you can request a paper copy of the application form from any Fife Council nursery by telephone. You should make an appointment directly with your first-choice nursery to hand in your completed form, this will be done in line with any COVID-19 guidance at that time. You should also remember to bring proof of your child’s date of birth, your address and any other documentation in support of your application. Documents will be checked by school staff. We will be unable to accept your application in nursery if the requested proof is not supplied or no appointment has been made.

**My child already has a nursery place for 2020/21 and is due to return to nursery next year – do I need to do anything?**

No, your child’s current nursery placement will continue automatically for academic year 2022/23. However, if you wish your child to attend a different Fife Council nursery, change session length or increase the number of sessions you currently have then you should complete a new application form by **31st January 2022.**

If you are offered an alternative placement through the application process and you wish to accept this instead of your current nursery placement, please let your current nursery know as soon as possible that you will be leaving. You also need to confirm you are accepting the alternative place offered using the process detailed in your offer letter. Your existing placement can then be reallocated to someone else, if required.

**My child is due to start Primary School in August 2022 – do I need to do anything?**

Yes, you should apply for a school place between 17th January and 18th February 2022. You can find out more information [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/education2/schools-in-fife/apply-for-a-school-place). The Schools Admissions policy does not take into consideration the ELC provider your child attends, so attending a nursery based at a particular school will not guarantee your child a place at that school for Primary 1.

**My child is due to start school in August 2022 but I am concerned that they are not ready. What should I do?**

If you are at all concerned about you child moving onto Primary 1 please discuss this with your child’s key worker. There is a large amount of work that takes place within nurseries around the transition process to Primary School and staff should be able to advise you on what you can do to help with this process.

Alternatively, if following this discussion you wish to delay your child’s entry to school then you can access Fife Councils deferral policy [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/kb/docs/articles/education2/early-learning,-childcare-and-nurseries/preschool-and-school-nursery/deferrals). Only children under the age of 5 by the start of the academic year are able to defer their entry to Primary School.

**How are places allocated at Fife Council Nurseries?**

Places are allocated at Fife Council nurseries using the agreed Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy which can be found [here](https://www.fife.gov.uk/__data/assets/word_doc/0027/306279/Early_Learning_and_Childcare_Admissions_Policy_September_2019_.docx). Children are given a priority level in accordance with the criteria listed in the policy based on the choice of nursery and session.

Those with the highest Priority, Level 1, are allocated first and we continue this process, moving through the priority levels in numerical order, until all children are either allocated a place or all places at that nursery are filled. If there are more people wanting a placement at that nursery than spaces available, then places are allocated through a ballot process (based on priority order) and a waiting list will be created. That waiting list will remain in place until the allocation of places for the following year is made, when a new waiting list will be created.

Fife Council do not operate catchment areas for individual nurseries, however we do have 22 local nursery areas across Fife which are made up of a number of different providers. The reason for this is that not all nurseries offer the same patterns of attendance, so each local nursery area will be made up of a number of different ELC providers so you can choose different options to meet your needs.

There will be at least one Fife Council nursery offering term time and full year sessions in each of the 22 local nursery areas. Children living within each local nursery area are given a higher priority for a place than those living outside this area, however you can choose to send your child to any funded ELC provider.

**One of my children already attends a Fife Council nursery and is due to return there next year – will my other child be prioritised for this nursery?**

Yes. If you already have one child at nursery and have another child due to start, we will take this into account when allocating places. Places are awarded in accordance with the Fife Council Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy.

**One of my children attends Primary School – will my other child be prioritised for the nursery attached to this school?**

No. Fife Council operate local nursery areas which do not correspond with school catchment areas to ensure parents have a choice of provision available to them. As a result, this is not included in the Early Learning and Childcare admissions policy as it may disadvantage other children living within the local nursery area who wish to attend that nursery.

**Will my child be provided with a meal during their nursery session?**

Yes, all children attending a funded early learning and childcare place from August 2022 are entitled to receive a meal as part of this entitlement. Depending on the session attended an appropriate meal will be provided free of charge.

**Can I change sessions times during the year?**

Your nursery place is offered until your child is eligible to start school. You may be able to change sessions if there are places available in the nursery of your choice at the times you want to change to. If you do wish to change part way through the academic year then you should complete another application form for the nursery / sessions of your choice. We will then follow the late application process as detailed in the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy to allocate you a place if one is available or place you on the appropriate waiting list.