

*Organisational Development, Human Resources and Performance*

# ***Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy***

Version No 2

Produced by:

Inverclyde Council  
Municipal Buildings  
GREENOCK  
PA15 1LX

2024

**Inverclyde Council is an Equal Opportunities employer**

**This document can be made available in other languages, large print, and audio format upon request.**

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Document Responsibility</b>		
<b>Policy Title</b>	<b>Corporate Group</b>	<b>Service</b>
Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy		Education and Communities

<b>Change History</b>		
<b>Version</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comments</b>
1	August 2020	Implementation of 1140 hours of ELC.
2	November 2024	Implementation for 2025 admissions process.

<b>Distribution</b>

<b>Policy Review</b>		
<b>Updating Frequency</b>	<b>Next Review Date</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
Every Two Years	April 2027	Yvonne Gallacher

<b>Policy Review and Approval</b>			
<b>Name</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Communication</b>

<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>LINKS TO LEGISLATION</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>AIM</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>LINKS TO CORPORATE GROUPS</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>SCOPE</b>
<b>8.0</b>	<b>POLICY CONTENT</b>
8.1	<i>Policy Statement</i>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION / KEY PRINCIPLES</b>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>APPLICATION AND ADMISSION OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN</b>
8.3.4	<i>Application Process</i>
8.3.6	<i>Types of Provision</i>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DELIVERY MODELS</b>
<b>8.5</b>	<b>APPLYING FOR A CHILDMINDER / PRIVATE NURSERY ELC PLACE</b>
8.6	APPLYING FOR A CROSS BOUNDARY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACE
8.6.2	<i>Cross Boundary Application for a LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHMENT</i>
8.6.4	<i>Cross Boundary Application for a CHILDMINDER / PRIVATE / VOLUNTARY INDEPENDENT PROVIDER</i>
<b>8.7</b>	<b>APPLICATION TIMELINE</b>
8.7.1	<i>2-Year-Old Entitled Early Learning &amp; Childcare Application and Admissions Timeline</i>
<b>8.8</b>	<b>ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AGED 3 - 4 YEARS</b>
<b>8.9</b>	<b>3.5 EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DEFINED AREAS</b>
8.9.3	<i>LOCAL AUTHORITY ELC DEFINED AREA 0 - 3 years</i>
8.9.4	<i>LOCAL AUTHORITY ELC DEFINED AREA 3 – 5 years</i>
<b>8.10</b>	<b>CHILDMINDER, PRIVATE / VOLUNTARY / INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS DEFINED AREAS</b>
<b>8.11</b>	<b>ELIGIBILITY OF ELC PLACE FOR CHILDREN DEFERRING ENTRY TO PRIMARY 1</b>
<b>8.12</b>	<b>ALLOCATION AND BANDING EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACES</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACES</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>UNHAPPY WITH DECISION MAKING</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
<b>12</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>
<b>13</b>	<b>RISK</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>EQUALITIES</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>
1.1	The following document sets out the Education Service policies and procedures for receiving applications and allocating places to all eligible children who reside within the Inverclyde Council area.
1.2	As outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the authority has a duty to secure that the minimum amount of early learning and childcare is made available for each eligible child belonging to its area. This 'minimum amount' is known as the 'funded entitlement'.
1.3	The above Act requires the authority to consider the method in which it makes early learning and childcare available in ensuring it is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the service. The service provision remains under review, subject to regular ongoing consultation, as outlined in the Act, and will be updated as required.
1.4	The Scottish Government has developed a 'Funding Follows the Child' approach which provides families with choice on how they wish to access their funded entitlement. This approach enables families to access their child's funded entitlement from any establishment (including local authority, private, voluntary and independent providers and childminders) who meet the National Standard, has a place available and is willing to enter into an agreement with the local authority. Any offer of a place will be subject to physical and financial capacity being available, in line with the Council's approach to ensuring best value.
<b>2</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b>
2.1	This policy sets out Education Services, policies and procedures for receiving applications and allocating early learning and childcare places to all eligible children. Eligibility is defined in more detail in section 3. It also sets out the allocation of discretionary ELC places when a child is not entitled to an Early Learning and Childcare place.
2.2	Inverclyde Council is committed to providing high quality early learning and childcare for children across the area and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that early learning and childcare placements are allocated in a consistent way. It sets out the main principles and criteria used to allocate placements.
<b>3</b>	<b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>
	The strategic context for an Early Learning Centre (ELC) admissions policy and process is rooted in the broader goals of ensuring equitable access to quality early childhood education, promoting social inclusion, and supporting community needs. At a foundational level, the Admissions Policy aligns with National and local Education priorities, such as improving school readiness, fostering lifelong learning, and addressing achievement gaps for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups. The policy also plays a crucial role in managing demand for limited places in a fair and transparent manner, balancing the needs of families while ensuring that the Local Authority maintains its educational standards, staff-child ratios, and diversity goals. Strategically, the admissions process reflects ELC's aim to provide accessible, high-quality early education and care, supporting both the developmental needs of children and the socio-economic dynamics of the surrounding community. Additionally, it integrates with broader frameworks such as inclusion, sustainability, and support for families with diverse needs, ensuring long-term viability and a strong partnership with stakeholders.
<b>4</b>	<b>LINKS TO LEGISLATION</b>

4.1	The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 1) Order 2019 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 2) Order 2019.
4.2	The above Act requires the authority to consider the method in which it makes early learning and childcare available in ensuring it is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the service.
4.3	The Education (Scotland) Act 1980
4.4	The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
4.5	The Schools Consultation (Scotland) Act 2010
<b>5</b>	<b>AIM</b>
5.1	The aim of our Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) admissions policy in Inverclyde Council, is to ensure that every eligible child has fair, equitable, and timely access to high-quality, funded ELC, in line with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. We are committed to supporting the wellbeing, learning, and development of all children by providing flexible and inclusive childcare options that meet the diverse needs of families. Through a transparent and efficient admissions process, we aim to prioritise those who would benefit most, while offering flexibility and choice to all families.
<b>6</b>	<b>LINKS TO CORPORATE GROUPS</b>
	The ELC Admissions Policy reflects and actively supports the values and legal requirements outlined by the Protected Characteristics under the Equality Act 2010, ensuring that no applicant is discriminated against based on age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation. By embedding these principles into the admissions process, the policy ensures fairness and inclusivity, allowing equal access to quality early childhood education for all families. Additionally, the policy addresses the Fairer Scotland Duty, aimed at reducing inequalities of outcome caused by socio-economic disadvantage, by prioritising access for vulnerable groups and those experiencing hardship. Educations Services are commitment to promoting social equity aligned with the broader strategic goals set by the Inverclyde Alliance Partnership Plan 2023-2033, which focuses on community empowerment and reducing inequality, and the Council Plan 2023-2028, which emphasises improving outcomes for children and young people. Together, these frameworks ensure that the ELC Admissions Policy supports both legal compliance and strategic objectives, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable educational environment within the community.
<b>7</b>	<b>SCOPE</b>
	The scope of the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Admissions Policy, aligned with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and relevant statutory guidance, outlines the framework for ensuring universal and equitable access to high-quality early learning and childcare services. The policy reflects the entitlement of all 3 and 4-year-old children, as well as eligible 2-year-olds, to 1,140 hours of funded ELC annually, as per the Act. It prioritises a non-discriminatory approach, ensuring fair access regardless of socioeconomic background, disability, or additional support needs. Furthermore, the policy ensures the inclusion of provisions for flexibility to meet the diverse needs of families, while maintaining the overarching goal of

	promoting the welfare, learning, and development of children. It also is inclusive of Local Authority discretionary powers for children who do not meet the eligibility criteria for an ELC place. The policy will be regularly reviewed to comply with any updates in statutory guidance or local government priorities.
<b>8.0</b>	<b>POLICY CONTENT</b>
	The content of the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) admissions policy clearly outlines the eligibility criteria, application procedures, and prioritisation framework for accessing funded ELC. It specifies the entitlement for all 3 and 4-year-olds, as well as eligible 2-year-olds, to 1,140 hours of funded ELC in accordance with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The policy details how families can apply for a place, including key dates and documentation required, and explains the process for allocating spaces, particularly where demand exceeds capacity. It provides clear criteria for prioritisation, which may include considerations of vulnerability, additional support needs, and socioeconomic factors. The policy outlines the procedures for utilising local authorities' discretionary powers to offer ELC to children under the age of three, where appropriate. Additionally, it addresses how flexibility is offered to meet the varied needs of families, such as different patterns of attendance and provides information on complaints procedures in cases where admission decisions are contested. The policy ensures transparency, fairness, and consistency, and aligns with statutory guidance, national standards, and local authority priorities.
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Policy Statement</b>
	<p>Inverclyde Council is committed to providing high-quality, equitable, and accessible Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for all eligible children in line with the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. Our ELC admissions policy ensures that all 3 and 4-year-olds, as well as eligible 2-year-olds, are entitled to 1,140 hours of funded ELC annually, delivered in a way that supports their wellbeing, development, and learning.</p> <p>We strive to create an admissions process that is transparent, fair, and responsive to the diverse needs of our families and communities. Where places are limited, priority will be given to children and families who meet specific criteria, such as those with additional support needs, vulnerable circumstances, or socioeconomic disadvantage. In addition, we recognise our discretion to offer funded ELC to children under the age of three in circumstances where this would benefit their development or family situation.</p> <p>Our goal is to provide flexible options that support parents and carers in balancing work, education, and family life, while ensuring that all children receive the nurturing and stimulating environments necessary for their growth. We are dedicated to continuously reviewing and adapting our admissions process to meet national standards, statutory guidance, and local priorities, ensuring the best possible outcomes for children and families in our community.</p>
<b>8.1.1</b>	<p>The Act defines those children who have an entitlement to 1,140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children in a deferred - child that is still 4 years old on the date they are eligible to start school (i.e. children with birth dates on or between the day after the school commencement date in August – last day in February)</li> <li>• All 4-year-olds.</li> <li>• 3 years olds in the term following their third birthday (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).</li> </ul> <p>Eligibility for 2-year-old children is currently determined by a range of different criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Income Support</li> <li>• Job Seekers Allowance (income based)</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any income related element of Employment and Support Allowance</li> <li>• Incapacity or Severe Disablement Allowance</li> <li>• State Pension Credit</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit (CTC), but not Working Tax Credit (Earning threshold applies)</li> <li>• Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit (Earning threshold applies)</li> <li>• Support under Part V1 of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999</li> <li>• Universal Credit Statement (Take home pay threshold applies)</li> </ul> <p>Or if the child is age 2 or over and is or, since they turned 2 has been (in terms of legal status):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 'Looked After' by a local council</li> <li>• The subject of a 'Kinship Care Order'; or</li> <li>• The subject of a 'Parent Appointed Guardianship Order'; or</li> <li>• Has a care experienced parent - (Parent has been in residential care, foster care, kinship care, or has been looked-after at home with a supervision requirement at any stage in their life)</li> <li>• Have graduated from the Family Nurse Partnership Programme.</li> </ul> <p>Once a child is identified as eligible their entitlement to early learning and childcare will remain, regardless of changes to parental/family circumstances.</p>
<b>8.2</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION / KEY PRINCIPLES</b>
8.2.1	The Scottish Government has set out its vision for early learning and childcare provision in Scotland. This is a 'funding following the child' approach underpinned by the principles of <i>Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability</i> and Early Learning and Childcare National Standards
8.2.2	Inverclyde Council is committed to providing high quality early learning and childcare for children across the area and the purpose of this policy is to ensure that early learning and childcare placements are allocated in a consistent way. It sets out the main principles and criteria used to allocate placements.
8.2.3	As outlined in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the authority has a duty to secure that the minimum amount of early learning and childcare is made available for each eligible child belonging to its area. This 'minimum amount' is known as the 'funded entitlement'. Funded early learning and childcare entitlement is calculated on a pro-rata basis in line with the intake date to determine the correct amount of ELC hour.
8.2.3	The above Act requires the authority to consider the method in which it makes early learning and childcare available in ensuring it is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the service. The service provision remains under review, subject to regular ongoing consultation, as outlined in the Act, and will be updated as required.
8.2.3	The Scottish Government has developed a 'Funding Follows the Child' approach which provides families with choice on how they wish to access their funded entitlement. This approach enables families to access their child's funded entitlement from any establishment (including local authority, childminders, private, voluntary and independent providers) who meet the National Standard, has a place available and is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority. Any offer of a place will be subject to physical and financial capacity being available, in line with the Council's approach to ensuring best value.

8.2.4	<p>Eligible children will have access to early learning and childcare regardless of age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage or civil partnership; race; religion or belief; sex or sexual orientation in line with the protected characteristics listed in the Equalities Act 2010:</p> <p><a href="https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents">https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents</a></p>
8.2.5	<p>Eligible children are entitled to a funded early learning and childcare place in line with the following dates:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• August Intake – child’s qualifying birthday must be on or before 31 August.</li> <li>• January Intake – child’s qualifying birthday must be on or before 31 December.</li> <li>• April Intake – child’s qualifying birthday must be on or before last day in February.</li> </ul> <p>The funding year is deemed to start on the first day of each academic year. Funded early learning and childcare entitlement is calculated on a pro-rata basis for children starting in January and April intakes.</p>
8.2.6	<p>Securing a place in a school nursery class does not entitle a child to a place in the corresponding primary school. The provision of early learning and childcare in early years establishments is not governed by primary school catchment areas.</p>
<b>8.3</b>	<b>APPLICATION AND ADMISSION OF ELIGIBLE CHILDREN</b>
<b>8.3.1</b>	<b>Eligible Children</b>
8.3.2	<p>Those currently eligible to receive funded early learning and childcare are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All children aged 2 who meet the Scottish Government’s eligibility criteria</li> <li>• All children aged 3 and 4 (ante- and pre-school years)</li> </ul> <p>Children will receive their full entitlement for each school year in which they are eligible and a pro-rated amount for each part-year in which they are eligible</p>
8.3.3	<p>In terms of starting dates, eligible 2-year-olds and all 3-year-olds are eligible for funded early learning and childcare from the beginning of the first term after the child’s 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday</p>
<b>8.3.4</b>	<b>Application Process</b>
8.3.5	<p>Parents must submit an application form in order for an ELC place to be allocated.</p>
<b>8.3.6</b>	<b>Types of Provision</b>
8.3.7	<p>Funded early learning and childcare (ELC) places can be accessed in a number of different early years settings / providers across Inverclyde. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inverclyde Council Child / Family and Early learning Centres</li> <li>• Inverclyde Council nursery school / classes</li> <li>• Childminders contracted by Inverclyde Council to deliver funded ELC</li> </ul> <p>Private Nurseries contracted by Inverclyde Council to deliver funded ELC</p>
8.3.8	<p>The local authority will only enter into partnership with Partner Providers if they are:</p>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Registered with the Care Inspectorate</li> <li>Staff are SSSC (Scottish Social Services Council) registered where appropriate.</li> <li>Meet acceptable standards of provision when inspected by the Care Inspectorate (grades of good or better)</li> <li>Meet the National Standard</li> <li>Meet Inverclyde Council's scrutiny financial standing</li> </ul>
8.3.9	<p>Parents/carers must provide satisfactory documentary evidence of the age of their child and their residing address. This evidence must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The child's birth certificate</li> <li>Council Tax Notice</li> <li>A recent letter from DWP/HMRC outlining benefit qualification</li> <li>Evidence of qualifying benefit / criteria (2-year-old ELC place)</li> </ul> <p>The list above is not exhaustive, and the Council retains the right to ask for further information when proof is not satisfied. In the event that the required documentation is not available, the Education Department can provide further guidance.</p>
<b>8.4</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DELIVERY MODELS</b>
8.4.1	Local authority establishments offer a range of different operating models within each local authority ELC defined area. The delivery models offered will be determined by its opening times and whether the service is term time or extended year.
8.4.2	Model delivery times will be reviewed annually to ensure the maximum number of entitled ELC hours are delivered.
8.4.3	Any blended or split place for an entitled ELC place will only be delivered in equal amounts to ensure places are maximised. This will be either be over 2 ½ days or 5 Am or 5 Pm sessions only.
8.4.4	The operating models available for families to access their child's funded entitlement remain under regular review, subject to the statutory consultation to understand the needs of families and will be updated as appropriate to best reflect changing service demands.
<b>8.5</b>	<b>APPLYING FOR A CHILDMINDER / PRIVATE NURSERY ELC PLACE</b>
8.5.1	Applications for a Childminder / Private Voluntary or Independent Nursery can be made to any provider as they do not come under defined area within the authority. Parents must contact the provider to discuss their availability and the service model they deliver to ensure that it meets their needs before applying.
8.5.2	Childminder, Private / Voluntary / Independent Nurseries (Approved Funded Providers) are private businesses and manage their own operating models. Inverclyde Council has no locus on how the operating models will be delivered other than to ensure that an eligible child receive their entitled ELC, and that the entitlement is free at the point of delivery. Childminder, Private / Voluntary / Independent Nurseries will have their own terms and conditions / operating models, and it is the parent's responsibility to ensure they are aware of this information.
<b>8.6</b>	<b>APPLYING FOR A CROSS BOUNDARY EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACE</b>

8.6.1	A Cross Boundary application is when an application is received from a parent who does not reside within the Inverclyde Council area, however, wishes to apply to that Council.		
8.6.2	<b>Cross Boundary Application for a LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHMENT</b>		
8.6.3	Parents who wish to access funded early learning and childcare for their child within another Local Authority area, and within and within a local authority establishment then they should make the application directly to their 1 <sup>st</sup> preference of choice. This is classed as a Cross Boundary Application (local authority) and will be allocated in line Inverclyde Council's admissions policy		
8.6.4	<b>Cross Boundary Application for a CHILDMINDER / PRIVATE / VOLUNATAY INDEPENDENT PROVIDER</b>		
8.6.5	Parents who wish to access funded early learning and childcare for their child within another Local Authority area, and with a Childminder, Private, Voluntary or Independent Nursery should contact the relevant Local Authority directly for information on how to apply for a placement in their preferred nursery. This is classed as a Cross Boundary Application and would be subject to the West Partnership's Cross Boundary Protocol and in line with Funding Follows the Child guidance.		
<b>8.7</b>	<b>APPLICATION TIMELINE</b>		
8.7.1	<b>2-Year-Old Entitled Early Learning &amp; Childcare Application and Admissions Timeline</b>		
8.7.2	Applications for children who meet the eligible 2-year-old criteria must be made to their 1 <sup>st</sup> choice preference of provider. The application and evidence timeline below applies:		
8.7.3	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Application and supporting Universal Credit Evidence must be within the month of</b>	<b>Intake Month</b>
	1 March – 31 August	Term Time establishments – Application form can be submitted in June and then submit qualifying evidence in July  Extended Year establishments – July	August (autumn term) occurring in that year
	1 September – 31 December	December	January (spring term) following their birthday April (summer term) following their birthday
	1 January – last day February	March	
8.7.4	Children accessing 2-year-old placements must complete a new application form when applying for a 3-4 year old placement, as this is a separate process. Securing a place in a funded 2-year old provision does not entitle a child to a place in the corresponding 3 to 4 year old provision in that setting.		

<b>8.8</b>	<b>ELIGIBLE CHILDREN AGED 3 - 4 YEARS</b>	
<b>8.8.1</b>	<b>3 and 4-Year-Old Entitled Early Learning &amp; Childcare Application and Admissions Timeline</b>	
	<b>Birth Date</b>	<b>Intake Month</b>
	1 March – 31 August	August (autumn term) occurring in that year
	1 September – 31 December	January (spring term) following their birthday
	1 January – last day February	April (summer term) following their birthday
8.8.2	Applications for children who will become eligible for their funded ELC entitlement over an academic year (August onwards) should be submitted during the application the 2-week window which opens at the start of term in January each year. Application submitted within this window will be presented at the Annual panel. The exact details of the application window are published annually.	
8.8.3	Applications submitted after close of the application window will be classed as a late application and will be presented at a Post Admission Panel to allocate ELC places.	
8.8.4	Applications received after the Post Admissions Panel has concluded will be considered on a one-to-one basis thereafter for allocation.	
8.8.5	Only one application per child may be submitted. Parents/carers will be asked to indicate preferential choices based on the specific models available at specific establishments. The only exception to this is where is an application is for a blended place (between two providers) an application must be submitted to both providers.	
8.8.6	Parents are asked to list several choices (to include the choice of early learning and childcare establishment and sessions) on their application form, in order of preference. This is so these choices can be considered during the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Panel process, we will always try and place the application with the choices provided, however, there is no guarantee. If we have exhausted all choices indicated on the application form, we will offer an ELC place from within the ELC defined area based on your residing address.	
<b>8.9</b>	<b>EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DEFINED AREAS</b>	
8.9.1	Local Authority Establishments:	
8.9.2	Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision in an Inverclyde Council local authority establishment for allocated (children aged 0 – 3 years), eligible 2-, 3- and 4-year-old places and discretionary ELC places are divided in to defined areas, with the only exception being Whinhill Gaelic Nursery Class. Each local authority establishment and residential property is aligned to a ELC defined area. Parents are encouraged to apply for an ELC place in their area. The location of the property of the parent/carer with whom the child resides shall be used when determining the local Early Learning and Childcare defined area for the child. Personal childcare	

	arrangements in place cannot be used as a residing address. It is important to safeguard the right of local children to attend their local nursery as far as possible.	
8.9.3	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY ELC DEFINED AREA 0 - 3 Years</b>	
	<b>ELC DEFINED AREA</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHMENT ALIGNED TO AREA</b>
	AREA 1	Port Glasgow / Kilmacolm
	AREA 2	East End
	AREA 3	Central / West Central
	AREA 4 / 5	South West / Inverkip / Wemyss Bay
	AREA 6	Gourock
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rainbow Family Centre</li> <li>• St Francis Nursery Class</li> <li>• Gibshill Children's Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blairmore Early Learning Centre</li> <li>• Glenbrae Children's Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellpark Children's Centre</li> <li>• Glenpark Early Learning Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bluebird Family Centre</li> <li>• St Joseph's Nursery Class</li> <li>• Larkfield Early Learning Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Binnie Street Children's Centre</li> </ul>
8.9.4	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY ELC DEFINED AREA 3 – 5 Years</b>	
8.9.5	<b>ELC DEFINED AREA</b>	<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY ESTABLISHMENT ALIGNED TO AREA</b>
	AREA 1	Port Glasgow / Kilmacolm
	AREA 2	East End
	AREA 3	Central / West Central
	AREA 4	South West
	AREA 5	Inverkip / Wemyss Bay
	AREA 6	Gourock
	All areas	All Inverclyde areas
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kilmacolm Nursery Class</li> <li>• Rainbow Family Centre</li> <li>• St Francis Nursery Class</li> <li>• Newark Nursery School</li> <li>• St John's Nursery Class</li> <li>• Gibshill Children's Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• King's Oak Nursery Class</li> <li>• Hillend Children's Centre</li> <li>• Blairmore Early learning Centre</li> <li>• Glenbrae Children's Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wellpark Children's Centre</li> <li>• Whinhill Children's Centre</li> <li>• Glenpark Early Learning Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lady Alice Nursery Class</li> <li>• Bluebird Family Centre</li> <li>• St Joseph's Nursery Class</li> <li>• Larkfield Early Learning Centre</li> <li>• Aileymill Nursery Class</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inverkip Nursery Class</li> <li>• Wemyss Bay Nursery Class</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moorfoot Nursery Class</li> <li>• Binnie Street Children's Centre</li> </ul>
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Whinhill Gaelic Nursery Class</li> </ul>

8.9.6	ELC places and School places have <b>no connection</b> . ELC defined areas do not align to existing school catchment areas and attendance at a particular establishment does not afford any additional priority or right for subsequent primary school registration or the consideration of placing requests.	
<b>8.10</b>	<b>CHILDMINDER, PRIVATE / VOLUNTARY / INDEPENDENT PROVIDERS DEFINED AREAS</b>	
8.10.1	Childminder, Private / Voluntary / Independent Nurseries are not aligned to specific local authority establishment ELC defined areas and can receive applications from residing addresses from across the whole of the Inverclyde area.	
<b>8.11</b>	<b>ELIGABILITY OF ELC PLACE FOR CHILDREN DEFERRING ENTRY TO PRIMARY 1</b>	
8.11.1	Children who would not yet five years old on the day the new school term starts in the August will have the right to start school, however, they can also defer entry to school until the following year and will automatically be able to access an additional year of funded early learning and childcare.	
8.11.2	The additional year of ELC year, will be guaranteed at the current provider. If a parent chooses to change provider for the additional year, an additional year of ELC will be guaranteed, however, we cannot guarantee an ELC place at the new requested provider. A transfer form requires to be completed and considered in line with the Early learning and Childcare admission policy.	
<b>8.12</b>	<b>ALLOCATION AND BANDING EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACES</b>	
8.12.1	All Early Learning and Childcare places are prioritised in line with Inverclyde Council's Admission Policy Bandings.	
<b>INVERCLYDE COUNCIL – Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy BANDING</b>		
BAND 1	<b>Children aged (0 - 5 years)</b>	
	a)	Children referred in emergency situations by Social Work who have been identified through Child Protection procedures.
	b)	Children born to mothers under the age of 18 years or in full time education provided within a secondary school to allow the mother to return to education.
BAND 2	<b>Entitled or discretionary ELC place (0 - 5 years)</b>	
	a)	ENTITLED CHILDREN AGED 2-5 YEARS - who have been adopted or are in Foster/Kinship Care and where there is an identified need to support the “family unit” as a whole in one locality.
	b)	ENTITLED 2-YEAR-OLD PLACE - whose parents meet the Scottish Government criteria for an entitled ELC place.
	c)	Children referred to “as being in need” (as in Children (Scotland) Act 1995) aged 0-2 years who are referred by a professional agency.
	d)	Children referred to “as being in need” (as in Children (Scotland) Act 1995) aged 2-3 years who are referred by a professional agency.
BAND 3	a)	Children who turn 5 years after 1 <sup>st</sup> day of new term in August – end of February whose parents wish deferred entry to primary school.
	b)	Children who are granted a deferred year by the “Additional Support Needs” Monitoring forum

	c)	Children who have previously been identified by a multi-agency team, as requiring a specialist Early Learning and Childcare place or special consideration for a tailored ELC place.
<b>BAND 4</b>	<b>Children in their pre-school &amp; ante pre-school year, residing within an ELC defined area (3 - 5 years)</b>	
	a)	Pre-school children residing within the establishment's ELC defined area
	b)	Children who have attended <b>the same</b> establishment for an entitled 2-year-old place and reside within the establishment's defined area.
	c)	Children who have attended <b>a different</b> establishment for an entitled 2-year-old funded place and reside within the establishment's defined area.
	d)	Children with a sibling in a <b>deferred year / pre-school</b> ELC place, residing in the establishment's defined area.
	e)	Children who attended in a discretionary 0–3-year place and a review of the place has confirmed a priority in the same establishment.
	f)	Ante pre-school children residing within the establishment's defined area.
<b>BAND 5</b>	<b>Children in their pre-school &amp; ante pre-school year, residing out with an ELC defined area</b>	
	a)	Pre-school children residing out with the establishment's defined area
	b)	Children who have attended <b>the same</b> establishment for an entitled 2-year-old place who reside out with the establishments defined area.
	c)	Children who have attended <b>a different</b> establishment for an entitled 2-year-old funded place who reside out with the establishment's defined area.
	d)	Children with a sibling in a deferred year / pre-school placement residing out with the establishment's defined area.
	e)	Ante pre-school children residing outside the establishment' defined area
<b>BAND 6</b>	<b>CROSS BOUNDARY 2 – 5 years - Children residing out with Inverclyde area / Entitled ELC place</b>	
	a)	Children in their pre-school school year from out with Inverclyde for an entitled ELC place.
	b)	Children in their ante pre-school year from out with Inverclyde for an entitled ELC place.
	c)	Children in their entitled 2-year-old place.
<b>BAND 7</b>	<b>Private ELC place residing in the Inverclyde area (0 - 3 years) – No priority – for recording purposes only</b>	
	a)	Children aged 0-3 years attending in a private place
8.12.2	Some establishments and models will be oversubscribed based on capacity and, in this situation, places will be allocated in priority order, with higher priority children being allocated first. Where there are more applications than places available, children who have the same priority level will be balloted to establish the order that placements will be allocated. Once all available placements have been allocated in accordance with application details then a waiting list will be established for any remaining applications, based on the ballot order. This process will continue with any higher priority level applications until a full waiting list is established.	

8.12.3	Applications for children who are identified as Band 1, will always take priority regardless of when they are received. We will never remove another allocated place; however, we will place at the top of any waiting list at that establishment.
8.12.4	Applications that come under a Band 6 applying for a local authority establishment – (Children residing out with Inverclyde area) will only be considered after the Post Admission Panel and after Band 5 applications. There must be capacity across the ELC defined area and not based on an individual establishment. If after the post admissions panel there is more than 5 places available across an ELC defined area, then area applications will be allocated. Priority is always given to applications who reside within the ELC defined area.
8.12.5	Following the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Panel process, parents are informed of the outcome of their application (date set annually). Parents will then be required to confirm if they are accepting the placement offered by the date indicated in the offer letter. If parents do not confirm acceptance of the placement, within this time, then the place may be withdrawn and offered to another child.
8.12.6	If parents wish to change the agreed allocated ELC placement at any point following acceptance of the place, then an amendment / transfer form would need to be submitted, however, there is no guarantee that changes can be granted. Requests will be processed in the same way as any other application form and in line with policy bandings.
8.12.7	Late applications for all other priority levels will be allocated places on a first come, first served basis, into any remaining places once the panel process has been completed. If a waiting list is in place at the preferred establishment, then applications will be placed at the bottom of any established waiting list.
<b>9</b>	<b>DISCRETIONARY ELC ALLOCATION</b>
9.1	The Local Authority has discretionary powers to provide Early Learning and Childcare under section 1(1C) of the 1980 Act to deliver; but are not under a duty to provide.
9.2	The 1980 Act refers to a child in need as being in need of care and attention because: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the child is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining a reasonable standard of health or development unless these services are provided by the local authority.</li> <li>the child's health or development is likely significantly to be impaired or further impaired unless such services are so provided.</li> <li>the child is disabled.</li> <li>the child is affected adversely by the disability of any other person in his/her family; and</li> <li>the child is looked after by a local authority as per Section 17(6).</li> </ul> <p>This duty does not solely fall on Education Services to tailor a package of support to any child in need, this would be developed through a multi-agency approach.</p>
9.3	Discretionary ELC places can only be allocated by the Discretionary allocation panel through an interagency referral – request for assistance form.



9.4	This Discretionary Panel exists to prioritise and ensure the allocation of places are based on the need(s) of the child / families.
9.5	Parents must consent to the referral form and be made aware that their application will be discussed at an admission panel. Referral forms submitted that parents have not given their consent, will not be presented at panel.
9.6	In exceptional circumstances a child's application can be accepted and banded before birth e.g. schoolgirl mothers whose education must lawfully continue; a child whose name will be on the Child protection Register following birth.
9.7	The core membership of the panel, should remain constant: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Head(s) or their representative from their Senior Management Team of Local Authority early years establishment.</li> <li>• CHCP representative(s).</li> <li>• Health Visitor(s).</li> <li>• Early Years Development Officer</li> </ul> Additional representative from supporting agencies may be represented on the panel.
9.8	Members of a panel have a responsibility to conduct business so that a consensus is reached.
9.9	All referrals for 0-3 years place must be sent to the Interagency referral mailbox by the agree dates. Referrals received after these dates will be taken to the next scheduled panel.
9.10	The Early Years Development Officer will chair admission panels. Education Services will distribute the register of applicants and minutes to all panel members.
9.11	Discretionary ELC panels take place throughout the year to allocate.
9.12	The panel is responsible for confirming proposed bands. It is important that all relevant documentation is available for panel members so that fair decisions can be made. Should a panel find it impossible to arrive at a consensus, advice should be sought from the Quality Improvement Manager - Early Years.
9.13	Children who are not eligible under the entitled ELC place criteria, would be classed as a discretionary ELC place (Band 1a, 1b 2b, 2c of Inverclyde Council Banding)
9.14	There is no entitlement to a discretionary place, therefore, there is no guarantee that a place will be allocated. Any place allocated will be decided by the Discretionary panel members and will be solely based on the information received by the professional and focused on the current level of support by agencies to the child / family, the needs of the child / family and how all professionals will work co-operatively to meet this need.
9.15	Discretionary ELC places have no mandatory entitlement of ELC hours and if granted will be offered sessions (AM or PM to a maximum of 3 hours in any one session. There is no mandatory number of sessions, only in exceptional circumstances and only with agreed by the Quality Improvement ELC Manager, will any other pattern be offered) in line with their identified need within an Inverclyde Council establishment. Only in exceptional circumstances will a discretionary place be granted at Funded Provider establishment.



9.16	Any discretionary place offered, will be based on needs or circumstances and will only be allocated for a period of time, all places offered will be subject to regular review. Any allocation of a place can be increased / decreased or withdrawn if circumstances change. Any change will be verified through the review process.
9.17	Children accessing any 0-3-year-old placements must complete a new application form when applying for a 3 - 4-year-old nursery placement, this is a separate process.  Allocation of a discretionary place does not entitle a child to a place in the corresponding 3–4-year-old provision in that setting.
<b>10</b>	<b>UNHAPPY WITH DECISION MAKING</b>
10.1	There is no formal process for parents/carers wishing to appeal the decision making process and allocated establishment and operating model for early Learning and Childcare places. Should applicants remain dissatisfied with the way in which their application has been processed, the authority's formal complaints process should be followed. Further details on the Council's complaints procedure are available from the Council's website.
<b>11</b>	<b>ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES</b>
11.1	Chief Executive – Louise Long
11.2	Directors – Ruth Binks
11.3	Heads of Service – Michael Roach
11.4	Service Managers – Yvonne Gallacher
11.5	ELC Officers
<b>12</b>	<b>IMPLEMENTATION</b>
12.1	Training N/A
12.2	Communication of the policy  Inverclyde Council are committed to ensuring that the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) admissions policy is communicated clearly and effectively to all parents and carers. The policy will be made accessible through a variety of channels, with the council's website serving as the primary source of up-to-date information. The policy and related guidance will be easy to navigate, with clear instructions on eligibility, application processes, key dates, and how to access support if needed.  In addition to the website, we will distribute information through local nurseries, schools, community centers, and partner organisations to reach families who may not access the internet regularly. Feedback from consultation with parents has been invaluable, and we will continue to engage with families through surveys, parent forums, and other consultation methods to ensure that the policy meets their needs and that our communication remains clear, inclusive, and user-friendly. Where necessary, we will provide translations and alternative formats to ensure accessibility for all.

	We are committed to listening and responding to parent feedback, making ongoing improvements to how we communicate, and ensuring parents feel supported throughout the admissions process.
<b>13</b>	<b>RISK</b>
13.1	Legislative risk
	N/A
<b>14</b>	<b>EQUALITIES</b>
	An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been carried out as part of the Early Learning and Childcare Admssion Policy review. A Children Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assesment (CRWIA) has been carried out as part of the Early Learning and Childcare Admssion Policy review.
14.1	Consultation and Engagement
	A consultation with parents/carers for the implementation of 1140 hours was undertaken in November 2023. A consultatiation with parents/carers and Education Officers for the review of the Early Years Admission Policy was undertaken in September 2024.
14.2	The service provision remains under review, subject to regular ongoing consultation, as outlined in the The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 1) Order 2019 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) (No. 2) Order 2019 and will be updated as required.
14.3	Equality Impact Assessment
	An Equalities Impact Assesment (EIA) has been carried out as part of the Early Learning and Childcare Admssion Policy review.
<b>15</b>	<b>APPENDICES</b>
1	EIA
2	CRWIA