



Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Applications

Frequently Asked Questions

A Perth and Kinross where everyone can live
life well, free from poverty and inequality

All three- and four-year-olds, and some eligible two-year-olds, can access 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) per year funded by the Scottish Government.

This document includes the answers to some frequently asked questions we receive regarding the applications process in local authority settings, and ways to access your child's entitlement.

The word 'parent' within the document includes reference to a child's guardian or carer.

If you cannot find the information you require, please email ELC@pkc.gov.uk.

Frequently Asked Questions

Does my child have to go to a nursery if they are three years old, or is it optional?

Unlike primary and secondary education, early learning and childcare is not compulsory in Scotland. However, most children do access some form of nursery education before beginning school. You can find out about some of the benefits of accessing ELC on the [Parent Club](#) website.

You can also choose for your child to attend a non-funded setting if you prefer and not access your 1140 hours of funded ELC.

I do not want to access the full 1140 hours. Is this possible?

There is no requirement to use your full entitlement of funded ELC. Attendance patterns available will be dependent on the ELC setting you wish your child to attend and will offer a maximum hours available per week, e.g. a term-time place is up to 30 hours per week, but you can choose to accept only some of these days. Please select which sessions you would like to access on the application form, e.g., Mon-Tues-Wed.

Can I access half days in a Local Authority setting?

Some attendance patterns do offer half days. For example, the 50-week pattern available in some settings offers five morning sessions. The term-time pattern does not allow you to apply for half days, but this may still be possible depending on the ELC setting. In this case, please apply for the full days on the application form and mention your intention on the form. You will not be able to take the unused hours and add them to another day, e.g., the unattended afternoon session hours will be forfeited.

The form does not allow me to apply for my funded provider or childminder. How can I make this application?

If you wish to use all your funding at a funded provider, e.g., a private nursery or childminder, please contact them directly. You can find out which settings are available in your community and contact details at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

If you wish to split your funding between a Perth and Kinross Council setting and a funder provider setting and/or childminder, please complete the application for the PKC setting and indicate that you are wishing to split your funding when asked. Please note that this is not an application for the funded provider/childminder, just for

our information. Please also contact the funded provider/childminder directly regarding availability and their registration process.

I am trying to apply for a space for Session 2025/26, can I still apply?

Yes, you can apply for Session 2025/26 until the end of the school year by using this link - [Register for a local authority nursery place for school year - Perth & Kinross Council](#)

In the 45-week model, can I have three full days instead of two full and two half days?

Unfortunately, this is not possible in a Perth and Kinross setting.

Often funded provider nursery and childminder settings can offer more flexibility to families, and you may be able to access a third full day at a local funded provider in your area, depending on their availability and ability to accommodate your request.

Please see [Nursery locality and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#) for funded provider options in your area.

In the 50-week model, can I have full days?

Unfortunately, this is not possible in a Perth and Kinross setting.

Many funded providers offer full day options over 50 weeks, depending on their availability and opening hours. Please see [Nursery locality and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council \(pkc.gov.uk\)](#) for other providers in your area.

Will I have to reapply for an ELC place next year as well, or will the nursery do this?

You will be required to apply for the next session (2027/28).

You can submit an application to retain the place, by confirming you are keeping the current attendance pattern and choice of ELC setting for your child. This declaration is part of the online form.

You can also submit an application to change the choice of setting or attendance model for your child's ELC place.

Any families wishing to access an additional year of ELC for a child who will turn five years old between the start of the school year in August and 28 February 2027, will also have to re-apply to confirm their place.

The applications process for the next school year beginning in August, opens the January before to applications.

What are the attendance options in local authority settings?

The Perth & Kinross area has been grouped into 11 ELC communities, each of which will have available a mix of attendance options at local authority, funded provider nurseries, and childminders.

In local authority nurseries, the options include term time, 45 week and 50-week options as appropriate, with some settings offering hours between 8.00 am – 6.00 pm.

You can find out more at [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

My child is already in nursery this year; do I need to do anything?

Yes, all families will need to complete the online application to confirm that they wish to retain their current place. Families with returning children will not be required to upload the birth certificate again; however, you may need to have it at hand when completing the online application as you will be asked for information from it.

Is there a minimum of sessions I must take in a week?

No, you can have as little as one.

How many choices of ELC settings or different attendance patterns can be submitted when applying?

You can submit up to three choices initially and we encourage you to do so. Please select those in order of preference. Please detail any other attendance patterns you would accept at your preferred setting(s) if the setting has more than one option, e.g., applying for a 45-week extended hour model, please state if any other options are suitable. The second and third preferences will be reviewed if we need to ballot for space and you are not successful in obtaining your first choice.

Are Gaelic speaking nurseries available for non-Gaelic speakers?

Yes, all children have access to Gaelic speaking nurseries. Please see [Early years Gaelic - Perth & Kinross Council](#) for more information.

Will I be able to visit my preferred nursery before applying?

Yes, this is possible, and we invite you to contact the setting directly to set up a visit.

Please note that if your application is not submitted by the deadline, it will not be considered in the initial allocation of places.

Where can I find a list of childminders who work with PKC to deliver funded ELC?

To find out which childminders operate in your area please check <https://www.pkc.gov.uk/article/21887/Find-my-nearest-childcare-providers>

Will my child having a sibling in the school be given preference when selection is made?

No, having a sibling in school does not increase your application priority.

Priority admission categories within ELC are as follows:

1. **Retained places** for children maintaining the same setting and attendance pattern.
2. **Support for Children and Families Places** for vulnerable children which are approved at panel.
3. **Children residing within the ELC Community**
 - 3.1 Pre-school children and children accessing an additional year of ELC.
 - 3.2 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in August.
 - 3.3 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in January.
 - 3.4 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in April.
4. **PKC children residing out with ELC Community**
 - 4.1 Pre-school children and children accessing an additional year of ELC.
 - 4.2 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in August.
 - 4.3 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in January.
 - 4.4 Ante-preschool children eligible to start in April.
5. **Children residing out with PKC.**
 - 5.1 Pre-school children and children accessing an additional year of ELC.
 - 5.2 Ante-preschool children

Can the hours I have been offered be split over the day in different settings, for example mornings in one and afternoons elsewhere?

No. Parents can access their ELC hours as a split-funded option, but this must be over different days. This option is available at funded providers and at other Local Authority settings.

I am applying to defer my child's entry into P1, do I need to complete an application form?

Children who will turn 5 years old between the start of the school year in August 2026 and February 28th, 2027, can automatically access an additional year of ELC. Should you decide this is the best option for your child, further information can be found at [Funded early learning and childcare for 3-5 year olds - Perth & Kinross Council](#).

For children who meet the above criteria, an ELC application must be submitted to retain your child's place for an additional year.

My preferred setting is not in my local community. Can I still apply?

Yes. Parents are entitled to apply to any local authority setting and/or funded provider for their child's funded ELC place. However, pre-school and ante-preschool children living within the ELC Community are considered a higher priority for the spaces than children who live out with the locality.

I am about to move house and do not have a council tax bill for my new address. What should I do for council tax proof?

Please upload a formal document stating your new address and your intent to move, e.g., a letter from a solicitor or rental agreement. You may be required to upload this in both the council tax and utility bill section although if you wish to upload two different pieces of evidence you may. If you do not know your future address or have no formal documentation, you will need to apply with your current address.

Should you have any further questions regarding submission of evidence, then please email ELC@pkc.gov.uk.

When will I get a decision on my child's application for a place?

Standard emails to parents allocating ELC places will be sent out initially from the week commencing 23 March 2026 (if you have met the initial deadline for submission). Cross-boundary places will be sent out week commencing 1 June.

How are placement decisions made?

All nursery places are allocated following Perth and Kinross Council's nursery allocation policy. The policy allows for a fair and transparent approach to nursery places and PKC try, where possible, to offer families nursery options which best suit their needs. It is not possible for everyone to receive their first choice; however, we will work to allocate the most appropriate placement for all families.

In alignment with the policy, every child is given a priority category based on their age and where they live (either within or out with the ELC community) and nursery placements are allocated based on these priorities.

If there are not enough spaces for all children within a priority category to have their first choice of placement within a setting, we hold a ballot or in-house draw and you will be informed of how this will take place. All children's names are drawn and then given a number in order of being drawn, and this number determines where they are on the allocation waiting list should a space become available.

Those who are unsuccessful in securing their first choice of setting or attendance pattern will be offered a place in their second choice if this is available, and so on.

What happens if I have not responded to the nursery offer email within a week? Will the place still be available?

Parents are required to advise of their decision within one week from receipt of the email. Once the reply has been returned, the place is assigned to the child, and parents can enroll the child at the setting. If you have not responded within the timescale, we will attempt to hold your place and ask that you keep us informed of the delay.

Should an offer still not be accepted after several weeks, and attempts to contact you remain unanswered, we will assume the placement is no longer required and it may be offered to someone else.

We advise you to check your spam or junk folder within your email account regularly in case an offer email is mistakenly saved in those.

What happens if I decline an offer? Can I get my next choice?

We will attempt to offer all families their first choice of placement wherever possible, or a different pattern at your first choice setting if there is more than one option offered in that setting. It is recommended that you initially accept the placement offered and then email ELCApplcations@pkc.gov.uk to state that you wish to move on to your second choice of setting. The ELC Applications Team will advise if there is availability at the new setting to inform your decisions moving forward. If you

decline the first offer without a second offer being available, you may not have any nursery space confirmed for Session 2026/27. Once the applications team has confirmed that an offer can be made at your second choice of setting, you can decline the first offer.

Is there a waiting list if I do not get my preferred choice?

For settings where there is not enough capacity to fit all applications received, the available spaces will be filled by priority category and then a ballot will be held to determine who, within the next category, can be offered the remaining places. If you are unsuccessful at ballot, we will continue to hold your application for that setting should you wish to be considered when space becomes available.

If a place does become available at a setting, it will be offered to the next person on the list as determined by the ballot. As there is no guarantee that space will be made available, we encourage you to consider a second or third choice to ensure your child can access a funded ELC place. Please email ELCApplications@pkc.gov.uk for advice on availability at your next choice.

I thought everyone was entitled for up to 30 hours of funding per week, but I was told there was no space at my first choice of setting.

There is a high demand in certain settings across Perth and Kinross, and it is not always possible to offer every family a place at their first choice of setting. The ELC Applications team will work with families to try and find an appropriate place in other local authority nurseries within the community.

There are also a number of funded provider nursery and childminder settings within the community which may be able to offer your child a place.

Please see [Nursery locations and attendance patterns - Perth & Kinross Council](#) for a list of settings by community.

Is there an appeals process?

No, there is no official appeals process.

Please contact ELCApplications@pkc.gov.uk with any questions / comments and we will attempt to resolve issues if possible.

I would rather use my funded hours at my private nursery. How do I change my application over to them?

All applications to funded providers and childminders should be made directly with them. It is recommended that you confirm any placements with your choice of setting before cancelling any PKC application or placement.

Can I start the year with a funded provider and move to a Perth and Kinross Council setting if a space becomes available?

Yes, it may be possible to switch placements during the year; however, this is likely to be from the start of the next term. Please ensure that you discuss your plans with your current setting and are aware of their individual notice periods and your contractual obligations.

What should I do if my circumstances change or I move house?

If your child will leave their current setting, please inform the ELC staff directly with your leaving date. If you require to change to another setting or attendance pattern within a local authority nursery in PKC, please complete the online application form and this will be processed during the year. In some circumstances, changes will not be possible until the start of the next school term, e.g., August / October / January / April.

I have a friend I would like to swap days with, is this possible?

No. All requests for changes must be in writing and confirmed by the PKC ELC Applications team to follow the correct policy and procedures

If you or someone you know would like a copy of this document in another language or format, (on occasion, only a summary of the document will be provided in translation), this can be arranged by contacting the Customer Service Centre on 01738 475000.

You can also send us a text message on 07824 498145.

All Council Services can offer a telephone translation facility.

BSL users can contact us via Contact Scotland BSL, the online British Sign Language video relay interpreting service. Find out more on the Contact Scotland BSL website <https://contactscotland-bsl.org>



**Enabling
children and
young people
achieve full
potential**