

Dear Parent / Carer,

You are receiving this letter as you have said you would like your child to attend a Midlothian Council early learning and childcare setting in the academic year August 2020 to July 2021.

Children continue to be entitled to a place according to the time table below

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Children turning 3 between | Become eligible… |
| 1st March and 31st August 2020 | Start of the academic year in August |
| 1st September and 31st October 2020 | One month and one day following their 3rd birthday |
| 1st November and 31st December 2020 | Start of January term (6th Jan) |
| 1st January and 28th February 2021 | One month and one day following their 3rd birthday |

**When will I know if my child has got a place?**

Admissions to Midlothian Council early learning and childcare settings are usually managed by the individual schools/settings. With the current restrictions, this is not possible so we are asking you to **complete a short online form to tell us your preferences for an early learning and childcare place**. We will use this information to allocate places and send you confirmation of your place before the end of session.

All Midlothian school-based early learning and childcare settings will be offering places over term time (38 weeks per year). Our settings at Scots Corner in Penicuik and Vogrie Outdoor ELC offer places over the whole year.

You should have already completed an application form for a funded place. If you have not or your choices and/or circumstances have changed since you completed the application form, you will need to complete a new form prior to your child starting at the allocated nursery. You will also need to provide proof of age and address if you have not done so already.

**Please remember to complete the online survey now though.**

We appreciate that some families already have existing childcare arrangements with our partners in the private and voluntary sector and childminders. We strongly encourage you to consider continuing with these places rather than transitioning to a local authority setting as you may find that these childcare providers are able to offer hours that better suit your needs.

**We are asking all parents who wish their child to start at a Midlothian Council Early Learning and Childcare setting to complete an online survey which you can find at the below web address.**

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ELCPref2020/>

**How many funded hours will I get?**

You will probably be aware that the Scottish Government had committed to increasing the entitlement to funded early learning and childcare from 600 to 1140 hours per year from August 2020. **Unfortunately, due to the coronavirus pandemic, this commitment has now been delayed which means the funded entitlement remains at 600 hours.**

At the moment social distancing and other infection-control measures significantly reduce the number of children who can attend an early learning and childcare setting and we expect this to still be the case in August. As a result we are planning to make sure that all eligible children can receive their entitlement of 600 hours during the 2020/2021 academic year. The situation is changing frequently and at the time of writing this letter further information is expected shortly about how the Scottish Government intends to relax the current lockdown restrictions. We have been phasing in the increase to 1140 hours and we hope to be able to go back to doing this at some point in the 2020/2021 academic year. If we are able to offer more than 600 funded hours we will do so but at this time, we are unable to say if or when this might happen.

**What will early learning and childcare look like in 2020/2021?**

All Midlothian early learning and childcare settings will follow guidance from Scottish Government, Health Protection Scotland and Environmental Health on measures which should be taken such as social distancing, cleaning and hygiene routines and personal protective equipment. Children will be in smaller groups and we will set start and finish times for each group so there aren’t lots of children arriving or leaving at the same time.

**What do I need to do?**

**Please go to the following link to complete the survey before Monday 8th June. We will then inform you of your allocated place by Friday 19th June. Please only complete the online survey if you want your child to attend a Midlothian Council setting. If you would like your child to attend a setting in the private, voluntary or childminder sectors, please speak directly to the setting.**

<https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/ELCPref2020/>

If you have any questions about this process, please contact earlyyears@midlothian.gov.uk

Kind regards

Julie Fox

School Group Manager Early Years

Midlothian Council