

Early Learning and Childcare: 1140 hours expansion

Introduction

The 1140 hours expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) will start in August this year following the delay caused by the pandemic. ELC will continue to be delivered in the public, private and third sectors. Childminders will also be able to deliver this service if that is where parents choose. This means that the patterns of delivery will vary across local authorities.

Key Points

Despite the delay caused by COVID half of Scotland's local authorities are already delivering 1140 hours of free at the point of use ELC. This is one of the few areas of local government where funding will increase and job numbers are growing. **There is therefore an opportunity to recruit new members** and for staff currently at risk of losing their jobs to retrain to work in this sector. The "funding follows the child" model means that much of the funding will go to private and third sector providers where pay and other terms and conditions are substantially lower. The [induction pack](#) which new starts (in all sectors) receive includes a section on the reasons why they should join a trade union.

Bargaining Issues

UNISON is committed to the public delivery of ELC. Most authorities have expanded their offer to more hours and a range of patterns for delivery. There is also an expansion among "partner" nurseries in the private and voluntary sector and the use of childminders to deliver at least some of the extended hours. The PVI sector must pay the Scottish Living Wage to staff working on the 1140 hours qualify to be a partner organisation. Wages remain low and the PVI sector continues to report problems recruiting and retaining staff.

Working Patterns

Some settings will be open 8 'til 6 and/or move to 52 weeks opening rather than school terms. The expanded opening hours means that many members in the public sector have been asked to change their working hours and patterns. While for some the opportunity to work more hours is welcome others may wish to keep their current work pattern. This could result in being moved to other settings. While COVID postponed many of these changes, employers are now moving forward in time for August.

Employers also recruited new staff on full time 52-week contracts. Some of these agreed to temporarily reduced hours when the expansion was postponed or were assigned to temporary settings for the pandemic period. They are now being told that they to return to the initial hours/settings planned. There are also reports of staff working unpaid due to early drop off and late collection of children.

KEY POINTS:

- **Following the delay due to the pandemic all local authorities will need ensure that 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare is available from August 21**
- **The funding "follows the child" so the balance between public and private provision of the service varies across authorities**
- **Half of authorities are already offering the 1140**
- **Across all sectors there are still shortages of qualified staff which is putting pressure on remaining staff**



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Outdoor learning:

The Scottish government is also increasing outdoor learning. Branches are encouraged to ensure that employers undertake appropriate risk assessments when planning outdoor learning and provide appropriate clothing, toilet facilities and breaks for staff and children working outdoors for considerable periods of time. There also need to be plans for locations should bad weather lead to outdoor sessions being cancelled.

Qualifications

In order to be able to train enough staff for the expansion there has been an increase in work-based training routes. The trainee roles (either SVQ or apprenticeships) should be genuine training roles not just cheaper staff. Only qualified staff should count on the staff to child ratio in the public sector. There also needs to be clarity about who will be responsible for delivering and supervising trainees.

Professional and career development

ELC staff also need time in their working day for training, reflection, and ongoing professional development. Changes to working patterns still need to accommodate these needs. It is not just teachers who are qualified to hold leadership roles in early years. Creating joint headships for schools and nurseries will cut off career development opportunities for early years workers. Branches should be aware that many authorities want to move in this direction.

Role of the extra graduate

Alongside the extra hours centres which meet the deprivation criteria will be entitled to an extra graduate post. Now called an Excellence and Equity Lead. Leads can hold teaching or early years degree, some of those appointed to the roles were still working towards their degree. UNISON's research shows clearly that there is no added value from having teachers rather than qualified early years workers in nurseries.

Opportunities for redeployment

The lack of qualified early years staff means that those who are at risk of losing their posts within local authorities may have the opportunity to move to work in the early years following suitable training. There is therefore an opportunity for branches to keep members in employment when cuts are made to other teams.

Recruitment

There is an opportunity for branches to recruit new members from both the new staff and existing workers. There will be opportunities in the public, private and third sector.

Lunch times

A "free" lunch is also included in the expansion. Eating is a learning experience in an early years setting so there will need appropriate staffing for snack and lunch to ensure staff breaks. Staff are already reporting skipping breaks and working late unpaid due to increased workload.

COVID

The government will publish updated COVID guidelines soon. Mitigations, particularly social distancing and self-isolation, impact on the capacity of settings. This is impacting on some settings ability to offer (and therefore charge for) more than the 1140 hours to families in some places. When mitigations are removed there may therefore be further changes to work patterns.

Action for Branches

To support this work branches are reminded that they are entitled to send a delegate to Education Issues Group meetings. They take place 4 times a year. It's a great way to share info and for education activists to get support. The next meeting is online on September 3rd. A reminder link will be sent nearer the time. Contact k.sillars@unison.co.uk for more information

Further info

Briefing 102 ELC expansion model

<https://unison-scotland.org/bargainin-g-briefing-102-early-learning-childcare-delivery-model-for-2020/>

UNISON Scotland Education Site

<https://unison-scotland.org/service-groups-and-sectors/local-government/education-issues-group/>

UNISON Childcare Charter

<http://www.unison-scotland.org/unison-scotland-childcare-charter/>

Briefing 111 Outdoor Learning in ELC

<https://unison-scotland.org/wp-content/uploads/Bargaining-briefing-111-Early-Learning-and-Childcare-outdoor->



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