



Programme for Government 2023-24

School Age Childcare Q&A

COMMITMENTS

What is the Programme for Government?

Every year at the beginning of September the Scottish Government publishes its Programme for Government, which sets out the key actions and commitments which will be taken in the coming year and beyond. It also sets out the legislative programme for the next parliamentary term.

This year's [Programme for Government](#) was published on 5 September and builds on the First Minister's [Policy Prospectus](#) (published April 2023) which aims to address equality, opportunity and community.

What are this year's Childcare Commitments?

The Programme for Government commits to expanding access to high quality, funded childcare.

Over the coming year, we will work with Local Government and other partners to develop the local infrastructure and services needed to provide childcare **from nine months to the end of primary school** in specific communities in six local authority areas.

Through this community-based approach, we will also develop and test **a new digital service** to help parents and carers find, access and manage childcare that best suits their needs, laying the foundations to transform the childcare system in the longer-term in a way that empowers parents and supports greater choice.

In parallel, from next year, we will begin work to expand a national offer for families with two-year-olds, focussed on those who will benefit most.

We have also committed to provide funding to uplift pay in the private, third and independent ([PVI](#)) sectors to £12 per hour for those delivering funded Early Learning and Childcare – this action is needed now to support effective recruitment and retention of staff working in the sector.

We will also scale up innovative pilots for recruiting and retaining childminders to grow that essential part of the workforce by 1,000 more.

What about School Age Childcare specific commitments? Are there any included in this year's Programme for Government?

- Our existing school age childcare commitments are very much embedded within the Programme for Government.
- We remain committed to building a system of school age childcare, providing care before and after school and in the holidays, which will be funded for those families who need it most.
- We want Scotland to have a more accessible and affordable system of childcare which enables parents and carers to make choices about their employment or their family circumstances.
- We are focused on removing the barriers that the cost of childcare creates for families on the lowest incomes.
- We have already made progress in delivering on these commitments and this new announcement is clear about our drive to go further.
- We have already been investing in **Early Adopter Communities** in four local authorities – Inverclyde, Glasgow, Clackmannanshire, and Dundee – to test change and reduce barriers to activities and childcare around the school day and in the holidays, contributing to reducing the poverty related outcomes gap.
- This is part of our £15 million investment in School Age Childcare to expand access for families who need it most.

What are the Early Adopter Communities?

- Building on the learning from our Access to Childcare Fund Projects, summer programmes, and our People Panel, in October 2022 we provided funding to four local authorities (Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Glasgow and Inverclyde) to establish our first early adopting communities (South and East Alloa, Linlathen, Drumchapel and Carntyne, and Port Glasgow).
- This funding begins the **early phasing-in** of community-level systems of school-age childcare and is already delivering funded services for families most at risk of living in poverty. We are gathering stories from families of the impacts this funding is having for them.
- Understanding childcare needs in these targeted communities allows us to learn more about what works at a local level, which will help us to understand the processes and approaches needed across other communities to deliver effective services nationally.
- We are also supporting the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to work with our Early Adopting Communities to support the inclusion of childminders as an equal partner in the delivery of School Age Childcare.
- This year, we will expand into new communities with additional early adopters in Fife and the Shetland Islands.

What will this mean for families?

- This work is specifically targeted at families who need it most, with a clear focus on tackling poverty. Childcare will be provided which will support families to take up or sustain employment or to provide respite, where that's needed.
- By designing and commissioning services locally we expect that the offer will look different in different communities.

- It might mean that families have access to a different blend of hours, can use their funded hours more flexibly or are able to get help with the initial costs of starting their child in early learning or school age childcare.
- We will also work with local areas to explore ways of making it easier for families to access the local services they may need, and different types of provision such as community childminding or family support centres.

How many families will this help and by when?

- Taken together, the childcare package set out in the PfG will expand access to funded childcare for around 13,000 more children and families by the end of this Parliament.
- This offer will help families who need it most, building on the existing early adopter community work which is targeted towards the six priority family types as set out in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.
- Through the early adopter areas, we will test and invest in innovative models of all-age childcare provision in 2024-25. This will provide us with a clearer picture about what approaches deliver the greatest impact for families and are best value for money.

APPROACH

What approach is the government taking?

- The early adopter projects are taking a person-centred and place-based approach in line with our public service reform agenda. We are working with children and young people, and parents and carers within their communities to design and deliver childcare services which meet their needs.
- This work is specifically targeted at families who need it most, with a clear focus on tackling poverty. Childcare is being provided which will support families to take up or sustain employment or to provide respite, where that's needed.
- By designing and commissioning services locally we expect that the offer will look different in different communities.
- Our new commitment to design all-age childcare offers for families builds on existing work to fund school age childcare services as part of our commitment to design a system of school age childcare for Scotland. We are already seeing improved outcomes for children and families from these innovative projects.
- The childcare projects are being aligned with wider tackling poverty initiatives to combine funded childcare with employability and family wellbeing support in order to maximise benefits for families.

FUNDING

How much additional investment are you putting in to deliver this new package?

- Decisions across all areas of devolved spending, including additional investment in childcare, will be set out in the 2024-25 Scottish Budget.

WORKFORCE

Why does the £12/ hour commitment only apply to those working to deliver funded ELC? What about those working in other parts of the childcare sector?

- As with the ELC Real Living Wage commitment this currently applies only to staff working in PVI settings who are delivering funded early learning and childcare. This reflects funding being provided by the Scottish Government/local authorities to these providers for the delivery of funded ELC hours, and this funding does not cover non-funded hours. A contract will be agreed by the provider and the local authority for the delivery of the funded ELC hours.
- The childcare market is a mixed economy and, like local authorities, employers in the private and third sectors are responsible for making their own decisions about overall pay and conditions across their settings.
- It is therefore, as with the ELC Real Living Wage commitment, a business decision for funded providers in the PVI sector as to whether they provide the additional resource to uplift the salaries for all workers in their settings, including those not engaged in delivery of the funded entitlement.
- We understand that this may seem unfair for other parts of the sector including the school age childcare workforce, but we will ensure that Fair Work terms and conditions are central to our programme of expansion.

How will you recruit and retain staff to deliver School Age Childcare?

- We know that the school age childcare sector needs a varied workforce to meet the differing needs of children and families.
- We are developing a Strategic Framework for Scotland's Childcare Profession which will set out the priorities for the sector now and in the coming years.
- It will also set out the high level actions we will take to support professionals across key themes – Planning for the future workforce; Recruitment; Retention; Qualifications and Continuous Professional Learning.

REGULATIONS

How will the regulatory system support an expansion of school age childcare?

- We know that many different elements make up the year-round provision of the school age childcare sector in Scotland.
- We will work closely with our partners – in particular the Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Social Services Council – to consider what a robust regulatory framework for school age childcare, that supports quality, innovation and growth within the sector, should look like.
- We will work together to identify new options and consider how we might deliver this.

DELIVERY FRAMEWORK

When will you publish the School Age Childcare Delivery Framework?

- We have been developing a Delivery Framework for School Age Childcare in Scotland, in collaboration with key stakeholders, which is now ready for publication over the coming weeks.
- The Delivery Framework will set out our commitment to deliver a system of affordable and accessible school age childcare which will be funded for those families who need it most and defines our action areas for the next 2-3 years.
- It will outline our transformational people-centred and place-based approach which will be applied to designing and building a new system of school age childcare and includes more detail about our early adopting communities.