



Local Authority Premises Survey 2025

1. Introduction

This survey specifically looks at letting costs charged to school age childcare services by Scottish local authorities for the use of schools, community centres, or other premises within the public sector.

2. Methodology

The survey consisted of 10 questions in total, although not all 10 were required to be answered, and it was available online via freeonlinesurveys.com. The survey was open for two weeks from 12th – 26th May 2025 and was promoted via social media and membership emails. All responses were anonymous.

3. Overview

A total of 65 responses were received from school age childcare services across 23 Scottish local authorities. 33 services were based in the private sector, 29 in the voluntary (not-for-profit) sector, 2 in the public sector, and 1 was unknown. 54 services were based in schools, 10 were based in community centres, and 1 was unknown. From these results, it was found that 9 local authorities provide free lets and 13 do not.

Note: there are a total of 32 local authorities in Scotland, and as such, this survey does not contain data from 9 local authorities so there may be more which do not have letting charges.

4. Free Lets Information

21 services responded to say that they have free lets for the use of local authority premises.

18 services were based in a school, 2 were in a community centre, and 1 was both in a school and community centre.

No service said that they had to pay additional cleaning or janitorial costs, although one service said they pay “£1.00 per year as part of a lease agreement for a modular building”.

All except one service did not know when the let agreement was last reviewed; this one service said it was last reviewed over 5 years, and a review process was currently underway.

4.1 Responses to the question: “Based upon your service's current financial situation, what do you think would be the effect on your sustainability if you experienced a rent increase of 10% or more?”

It would have a huge impact on us and would require fees to be increased dramatically which might affect the number of parents financially able to use our service.

If we were to be asked to pay rent it would a seriously negative impact on the finances of the club.



4.2 Responses to the question: “Is there any further information you wish to share about local authority premises lets?”

“We often experience changes to our annual let at very short notice which can impact on the activities planned.”

“Over the past two years we have had to fight to keep the let with the school. The council are reviewing each year and if we were to lose the use of the school or have to pay the club would not be able to run without a huge increase in fees to cover the let which in turn would mean club closure which would be absolutely devastating.”

“We are waiting on a new service agreement with head teachers and the local authority.”

“We have an agreement where for a certain amount of fee paying parents we have to provide the council with a free space based on referrals. This is a condition of the free let.”

“Not permitted to use kitchen facilities.”

“We have free lets within the schools but still have to pay for lets in community centre for after school care and during holiday care.”

“The maintenance is poor, due to the council and the school not agreeing who should keep the building updated.”

5. Charged Lets Information

44 services responded to say that they are charged a letting fee for the use of local authority premises.

33 services were based in a school, 5 were in a community centre, 2 were in a school and community centre, 1 was in a “community hub”, 1 was in a community wing of a school, 1 had a stand-alone building which was leased directly from the council, and 1 was unknown.

No service said that they had to pay additional cleaning or janitorial costs. One service said “We pay for our own blue roll, papertowels, soap etc”, and the service which was based in the stand-alone building said they had to pay additional costs- although their rent was £62.50 per month, they were “responsible for total maintenance of building and all bills. Around £2000 per month in total.”

7 didn’t know when letting charges were last reviewed, 4 services said they were last reviewed in 2023, 10 services said last year (2024), 20 services said this year (2025), and 3 services did not respond to this question.

The letting charges varied greatly across Scotland, and sometimes there was variation within the local authority. One local authority appeared to charge a standard £500 per year fee. In other local authorities, charges seemed not to be standard, in one, 3 different services were charged: “£870 per month”; “£10,000” per year, and “£40,000 per year”. In another local



authority different services said they were charged “£10.85 per hour”, “£12 daily” or “£2644.15 per year”. In another local authority, services reported paying £26 per day or £11 per hour. The highest reported charges in the same local authority were £43.85 per hour or £82 per day for 3 hours.

One service said that they currently pay £15.40 per session (all day too) but this was about to change to £25.30 per hour and as they are a multi-site service this would increase their overall rent costs from £21,000 to £129,000 per year.

5.1 Responses to the question: “Based upon your service's current financial situation, what do you think would be the effect on your sustainability if you experienced a rent increase of 10% or more?”

Responses to this were mixed- some said they would have to close, others said they would have to pass on costs to parents, and others said that it could be absorbed.

“An increase of 10% (taken in isolation and not considering the other premises both commercial & local authority) would impact, but not significantly, in our sustainability.”

“Any increase in our current let charge would have a significant impact on our sustainability. In addition, if there were any revision to the number of hours that we were charged for ie the full session 3pm-6pm then this would make our operation financially no longer viable as the increase in fees required to meet the increase would not be feasible.”

“Any increase would result in closure of our service within this particular hall. This is one of 2 services that we operate to service one very large Primary School which would then lead to inadequate provision for this school.”

“Any increases in letting costs would have an adverse affect on our ability to continue running our service, coupled with the current reduction in service user families that we are experiencing.”

“At the moment we are considering our options, due to our rent we already pay and as we are in a deprived area of the town. This will be a huge loss to the area.”

“Based on rent rates - these figures could close our setting and displace over 48 children and families.”

“Closure.”

“Detrimental to the ongoing provision of the service on top of the already increased expenditure this year.”

“I would have to pass the increase on to families as the cost of food, wages/NI etc has increased.”



"It would put a great strain on our service. We faced closure last year and had significant increase in fees to use our service to try and survive."

"Just now we are fortunate that our lets are reasonable and affordable within our current financial situation. If they were to increase by 10% it would not affect us straight away but would eventually have an impact on our sustainability along with other factors. I.e fees would need to increase which would possibly have an impact on occupancy."

"We are a small service, and busier days cover the cost of quiet days, we aim to remain open 5 days however may reduce to 4 days."

"Service wouldn't be viable."

"Should be ok but might need to increase fees slightly."

"The cost would have to be passed on to the families who use our service. We could not afford to absorb a price increase in rent."

"The service would close."

"This would affect our viability as we are already suffering from increased costs across the board."

"This would be very detrimental to our ever-decreasing finances while we want to remain affordable to families."

"This would have a significant impact on our finances and affect our ability to pay staff a fair wage."

"This would impact us financially and may result in us having to close some of our quieter sessions."

"We are a small private out of school care service with a staff team of 4 people not including the company Director. Given the current increases in employers national insurance, the real living wage and general costs of running a business our small service would not be able to cope if a rent increase was made. This would impact our ability to pay our staff above the real living wage, which is what we currently pay. We also offer all our staff members holiday pay due to the club operating 38 weeks a year as per the school term. We regularly renew the resources and activities our children use within the club and try and offer creative experiences which come with an additional cost to the service. After employment costs our rent is our second highest expense and if this was to be increased the positive learning experiences our children receive would be affected. In addition to this we would not be able to offer staff incentives which would have a significant impact on staff morale, wellbeing and retention."

"We would need to pass this onto parents."



"We will be in trouble."

"We will need to consider our position. A 10% or more increase in rent would drive us 'under'."

"We would be okay as the fee is minimal. It was previously free but the £500 per year charge was introduced in 2023."

"We would have to close our doors, not financially sustainable at all."

"We would have to increase our costs."

"We would not be able to cover our rent or we would have to put up parents fees which they are already struggling to cover with the cost of living."

"We would personally be OK."

"We would still be able absorb this increase."

"We would struggle to pay any more."

"With increase in staff wages as well I would have to seriously consider the future of the service."

"Would impact how much we charge parents who are less likely to use us if the costs are too high. Therefore unsustainable."

5.2 Responses to the question: "Is there any further information you wish to share about local authority premises lets?"

"If there are any days we cannot open in the holidays due to low numbers we are still required to pay for the let: they do not allow cancellations of single sessions even with notice despite no one else being able to access the school during the holidays. They now want a direct debit set up for costs or payment up front."

"In our area rents depend on whether Community Centre have a management committee or not, all voluntary sector clubs are charged something different and can vary by £100s of pounds."

"In October 2022, the Let cost increased from £14.50 to £24.00 and In August 2023 it increased again to £26. We are a not-for-profit organisation."

"It can be difficult in a shared space. Cleaners want in early, the school wish to set up things for the next day and don't always appreciate we rent the space for that time!"

"It looks like we get a low rent but when we are responsible for everything from sanitation bins, rubbish removal, alarm service, rentokil etc to fixing roofs - it all adds up."

“Out of school care is also expected to clean the school areas due to shortage of cleaners and lack of finance. In excess of 50% of hired times we are unable to use all of the areas booked. The school is filthy and requires multiple repairs.”

“Please help us.”

“Responding on behalf the Local Authority. Prior to 2023 our lets were free. There has been no increase to fee since it was introduced.”

“Local authority privately financed and managed schools don’t want after schools clubs and not set up for them.”

“The council are a very supportive Local Authority however the rates at which they let their premises out to us is higher than expected. For such a short space of time and the use of only one room charging above £100.00 is concerning. The school would have no use of this room during club hours so us being based in this room is providing the local authority with a stream of steady income. It would only be fair that the rent is either reduced or capped for the foreseeable future as we provide an essential service to the local community.”

“The local Authority charge in full hours only so despite only requiring a let from 7.30am - 9.00am we are charged for 2 hours each morning which equates to an additional £65 per week.”

“The premises we hire suit our needs within the school building, we have access to an assembly hall and gym hall most days, we also have a great outdoor area.”

“We are based within a dining area, we often need to complain to the janitor about the cleanliness of the hall - we have been told that "enhanced cleaning" ie skirting, walls, radiators will only be cleaned during the summer holidays as part of enhanced cleaning and SLC cutbacks.”

“We are fortunate that the janitorial staff and head teacher in the school we are based in are really helpful if we have any requests.”

“We do split booking for holiday care ie morning and late afternoon to reduce costs when we are out with the children. We always worry that we will not get the let in the holidays if someone books before us, and then would not be able to run, due to timings for CI to register premises.”

“We have a 23 year agreed fixed lease so we don't have any increases but this could change at any point.”

“We have a nursery which is open until 5. I consider that I should not pay let until 5pm. We are capable of cleaning and leaving the room to a high standard.”



"We have been in the premises since 2009 and would greatly appreciate it if the council would consider giving us a rental discount instead of increasing the rent year on year."

"We have heard in the pipe line there are changes happening to our let charges. And if what we have seen goes ahead... there will be significant work need done to oppose these. We have issues with the rooms we pay for being double booked and having no access to same. We have issues with the environment being filthy and out."

"When we are in schools we cost very little (perhaps an additional box of paper towels per term), term time they are open anyway (teaching staff & cleaners, holidays we key hold and clean ourselves. Our contribution to the local economy is far greater than the cost of paper towels."

"Yes, I find it incredibly ridiculous we are having to pay lets for a service which is needed within the local community. We have a waiting list with over 40 children on it and currently have over 70 children already registered and attending the club. It is a required service, we are a charity run not for profit which means the money we have goes straight back into the club and benefits the children. I feel that the council should be providing our let free of charge to allow us to provide this service to the community. It allows parents to go out and work which then allows more money to be returned to the country. By constantly increasing the rates alongside all of the other increasing rates we have to cover it really adds financial strain to not only the setting but the parents too when we have to increase our fee's we are not always able to cover our outgoings meaning we have to use loans."

6. CONCLUSION

Services receiving free lets did not mention sustainability issues at present but some did say that access to, or the actual premises might not be ideal. If charges were to be brought in then, financial sustainability might become an issue for some.

In terms of those services having to pay for lets there is a huge variation across Scotland, and sometimes even within local authorities- there is no parity. For some school age childcare services this has huge implications on overall financial sustainability and longer-term ability to operate. Despite paying rents, some services highlighted the poor quality of premises or having guaranteed access.

SOSCN would recommend that registered school age childcare services should receive free or low-cost lets when based in local authority owned and run premises to support the overall sustainability of the registered school age childcare sector, and ultimately provide guaranteed support to children, young people and families within Scotland.

If a local authority is reviewing letting charges we would recommend that a full review is conducted in terms of the impact of any financial increases on the overall sustainability of a childcare service. We would also recommend that a full impact assessment is conducted for any unintended consequences for local families, businesses and the local economy should there be a reduction in access to, or closure of, local school age childcare services.

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