

# **An Equal Start: Fair access to nursery provision**

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scotland

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### **About Reform Scotland**

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Reform Scotland is an independent, non-party think tank that aims to set out a better way to deliver increased economic prosperity and more effective public services based on the traditional Scottish principles of limited government, diversity and personal responsibility.

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## **i. Executive Summary**

### **Objective**

Childcare is an increasingly important issue – not just because of the cost barriers it can place on people, normally mothers, re-entering the work-place, but also because it can deter them from having any or additional children. As recent official figures have indicated that there are now currently more people over 65 in Scotland than under 15, childcare policy may well have long term implications for the economy and public services in general. The purpose of this paper is to examine whether there are any changes the Scottish government can make, in the short-term, to improve the way the government-funded nursery provision works as well as feed into the wider debate on childcare.

### **Findings**

#### **Scottish government unaware of nursery capacity**

Although the Scottish government has indicated that it will be looking at the issue of nursery provision and extending it through the forthcoming Children & Young People Bill, in answer to a Freedom of Information request submitted by Reform Scotland, we were informed that it did “*not hold information on capacity/places of pre-school education centres*”. (Though it does hold information on the number of registrations). While nursery provision may be a matter for local authorities, if the Scottish government is going to extend requirements placed on local authorities with regard to providing nursery places, it is alarming that it would not have an idea of the current capacity before doing so.

#### **Reform Scotland survey of nursery capacity**

As a result of the Scottish government not knowing the current capacity of nursery provision in Scotland, Reform Scotland submitted Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities to establish an approximate idea. The way some local authorities outlined their capacity differed from others (see annex for complete responses). However, as a result of the information we received we understand that local authority operated nurseries have a capacity of roughly 96,265 places (morning and afternoon) in Scotland. Information we received from the Scottish government indicates that there were 70,150 registrations (again, including morning and afternoon) to local authority nurseries in 2011, suggesting spare capacity of 26,115. That is not to say that there wouldn't be additional staffing and other costs associated with the spare capacity, but it does offer some potential to look at expansion.

#### **Partnership providers**

Nursery vouchers, albeit virtual ones, operate in all but name in most local authority areas where parents can claim back roughly the cost of their local authority place if they choose to send their child to a non-local authority

nursery. According to information from the Scottish government, partnership providers accounted for 26 per cent of all pre-school registrations in 2011, with 24,700 registrations compared to 70,150 registrations at local authority establishments. However, the prevalence of the use of partnership providers varied considerably across council areas from 57 per cent in Moray to 8.5 per cent in Falkirk in 2011.

## **Policy Recommendations**

### **Equity of nursery provision**

*Reform Scotland believes that every child should be entitled to two years of government-funded nursery provision, regardless of when their birthday falls. In other words, provision for all children should start at a fixed point in the year, probably the August two years before they start school, just as it does for primary school.*

Nursery provision, especially with the new Curriculum for Excellence beginning at age 3, plays a key role within the education system. Indeed nurseries have a vital role to play not just with early years' education but also with social development of children, which has been highlighted in a number of recent reports<sup>1</sup>. Therefore, it seems grossly unfair that all children at a basic level are not equally entitled to the same amount of government-funded nursery care.

Entitlement to government-funded places begins in the term after a child turns three. So unlike school provision where all children start together in the autumn term in August, normally in the calendar year they turn five, with nursery provision the entitlement only begins in the term after a child's third birthday. As a result, children born before the start of the autumn term will be able to receive two years of nursery education, but those born after this point will receive less, while children who are born in January and February and plan to start school when they are four and a half may end up only receiving a year of nursery education. This is also not clear to parents who may have assumed that their child would be entitled to two years of nursery. In reality, due to their child's date of birth, they may end up receiving far less

As a result, Reform Scotland believes that every child across Scotland should be entitled to 2 years of pre-school education, starting in the August of the year they turn three, just as they are all equally entitled to seven years of primary school.

While there may be some who believe that a child at 2 and a half is too young to begin nursery, that child is more than likely to be starting school at age 4.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. Thrive at Five; The Scottish Childcare Lottery; A Scotland for Children

Therefore, giving them a lesser entitlement to nursery provision than some of their peers who will start school with them does not make sense and is more likely to increase any gap, if it exists, when they start school.

While this would mean an expansion in provision, this should not result in a huge additional cost. According to the figures produced by local authorities, council run nurseries have a capacity of 96,265, though according to the Scottish government there were 70,150 registrations at local authority nurseries in 2011, suggesting a spare capacity of 26,115. The Scottish government registration information stated that there were 56,720 pre-school registrations, but only 29,510 ante pre-school registrations. Reform Scotland's policy would mean that all children were equally entitled to two years of nursery provision and would mean that the number of ante pre-school registrations should be roughly equal to that of the pre-school registrations. The difference in 2011 was 27,210. This figure is very close to the spare capacity figure and through utilising partnership providers should be able to be accommodated. There would, potentially, be additional staffing and other costs associated with utilising the spare capacity, but it would help to make nursery provision more equally available to all.

Ultimately, Reform Scotland believes that before the Scottish government increases the level of nursery provision a child is entitled to from 475 hours to 600 hours, there should be a change in when the entitlement starts to ensure all children have the same basic entitlement to two years of nursery provision, regardless of when their birthday falls.

### **Parents to choose nursery, not local authority**

*Reform Scotland believes that as long as a nursery meets necessary standards set by both Education Scotland, which is responsible for inspection of the education side of the nursery, and the Care Inspectorate, which is responsible for inspection of the care side, parents should be able to take up their entitlement with that provider.*

Parents can currently only choose to take their child's entitlement through a private or independent nursery if the local authority designates a nursery as a partnership provider. This can mean that even if a nursery meets standards and passes inspection by both Education Scotland (responsible for inspecting the education side of a nursery) and the Care Inspectorate (responsible for the care side) and meets the needs of parents, parents still may be unable to send the child to the nursery of their choice.

Reform Scotland believes that if a nursery provider meets necessary standards and passes inspection by both organisations and parents wish to take up their funded place at that nursery, they should be able to do so. Parents should be

able to choose the nursery which suits them best, rather than have their choice restricted by the council.

### **Greater flexibility of funding**

*Reform Scotland believes that there should be greater flexibility in the provision of funded places.*

With most local authorities offering the minimum 2.5 hours a day five days a week at local authority-run nurseries, it is virtually impossible for parents to take up these placements if they work or undertake training, unless they also rely on relatives or other options such as wrap around care. As noted in our appendix, very few local authority nurseries allow parents to pay for additional care or to add sessions together. Although the ability to take up your placement in a partnership nursery helps some parents in most local authorities to meet childcare costs, the rigidity of the system means that having a child attending 5 sessions in a partnership nursery will almost always be too expensive for those already struggling to make ends meet even with the funding deducted. This is because a session in a partnership nursery is normally half a day rather than the 2.5 hours provided by a local authority nursery. It would make more sense for the partnership scheme to allow parents to obtain the full local authority grant if their child was attending the nursery for at least 12.5 hours a week. Therefore, Reform Scotland welcomes the indication in the Scottish government's 'A Scotland for Children' consultation that it intends to provide greater flexibility in the provision of funded places to help parents juggle childcare and work.<sup>2</sup>

### **Government legislation is a minimum, not a maximum and there is a need for local flexibility**

*Reform Scotland believes that local authorities must have the freedom and flexibility to work out patterns of provision of nursery care which respond to the needs and circumstances of the parents and children in their area.*

It is worth remembering that the current, and indeed any future, legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament sets down the minimum amount of nursery provision local authorities must provide, it is then up to local authorities how this is provided, including whether they choose to use partnership providers, teacher-led nursery units or units led by childcare development officers. From our FOI responses, all but two provide the basic 12.5 hours a week and very few offer any deviation from the 2.5 hours a day.

Reform Scotland believes that it is important that a prescriptive set-up is not forced on local authorities by central government. Local authorities must have the freedom and flexibility to work out patterns of provision of nursery care

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<sup>2</sup> Scottish Government, "A Scotland for Children: A Consultation on the Children and Young People Bill", July 2012, chapter 2

which respond to the needs and circumstances of the parents and children in their area.

For example, as nursery provision is a local authority provision, rather than increasing the minimum number of hours, the Scottish government could consider enabling local authorities to have greater flexibility to use the additional resources to come up with a system which best suits local needs and circumstances. Some local authorities may choose to increase the provision for all, while others may feel that it would be better to target that resource at more disadvantaged children. The Save the Children Report, ‘Thrive at Five’, highlights evidence which shows that many children who grow up in poverty in Scotland are starting school at a serious disadvantage compared to their classmates.<sup>3</sup> By giving greater flexibility to local authorities, councils could come up with schemes which best suit local needs in addition to the basic provision.

### **Longer-term aims:**

*Reform Scotland believes the following recommendations should be considered for the longer term.*

- **Premium for nursery vouchers as a long-term aim**

In the long term, we would hope that a premium could be added to the current nursery entitlement scheme to help children from more disadvantaged backgrounds or those with special needs. As explained above, local authority provision alone can be difficult to take-up if a parent is working, but the cost of partnership providers can be prohibitive. By adding a premium to the entitlement scheme, it would expand those able to choose a provider that best suited their own needs.

- **Consolidate funding**

Currently there are a wide number of funding streams available to parents including child tax credits, child care vouchers, partnership funding, child benefit, all of which come from a variety of sources and layers of government, but a thread of government involvement runs through them all.

If the additional tax and benefit powers Reform Scotland has previously called for were to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament<sup>4</sup>, consideration could be given to consolidating some of these funding streams into a simpler system.

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<sup>3</sup> Save the Children, “Thrive at Five”, November 2012

<sup>4</sup> Reform Scotland, “Devolution Plus”, September 2011

## **1. Introduction**

When Reform Scotland started looking at the subject of nursery provision and childcare in Scotland we soon realised not just the crucially important role that nursery provision can play in a child's life, but the many difficult issues surrounding the provision of childcare, as illustrated in reports such as *The Scottish Childcare Lottery* and *Thrive at Five*<sup>5</sup>.

Due to the complex nature of the wider childcare issue, we decided to produce this initial report, *An Equal Start*, focusing specifically on the government-funded nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds. This is an area where we felt there were some big issues that could, and should, be addressed in the short-term, whilst also highlighting some of the other wider issues surrounding childcare which have major implications for individual families and the wider economy.

We believe that this report contains some very straightforward policy recommendations that the Scottish government could pick up and introduce in the *Children and Young People Bill*, as well as highlighting some issues that can contribute to the wider and on-going debate on childcare.

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<sup>5</sup> Children in Scotland/ Daycare Trust, "The Scottish Childcare Lottery", February 2012; Save the Children, "Thrive at Five", November 2012

## 2. Nursery provision in Scotland

### 2.1 Background

Although there had been historical provision for some three and four year olds to attend nursery in Scotland for some time, provision varied from area to area. As a result, politicians at a Scotland-wide level tried to improve access for all and as a result there have been a few big policy ideas which have had a major impact on the debate on how nurseries are provided in Scotland – arguably, the main areas are nursery vouchers and the Standards in Scotland’s Schools Etc Act 2000 (which placed a legal duty on local authorities to offer nursery provision and enabled them to use external providers to meet demand).

#### **Nursery Vouchers**

In 1995, the then Conservative government proposed the introduction of a nursery voucher scheme with the intention of ensuring that all four year olds were able to access a year of nursery provision, rather than be subject to the lottery of provision which tended to exist. Parents would receive a physical voucher for £1,100 a year which they could use to purchase nursery education. The voucher could be used to buy services from their local authority or from the private or third sector. Pilot schemes were undertaken in 1996/7 in parts of North Ayrshire, East Renfrewshire, Argyll & Bute and Highland local authority areas.<sup>6</sup> Critics of the scheme complained of the bureaucracy of the system and, following the 1997/8 school session, the new Labour government scrapped the vouchers.<sup>7</sup> A study was carried out by Stirling University into the scheme and Sally Brown, Stirling's then deputy principal, told the TES:

*"Parents are largely indifferent to the vouchers and some think they are an extra bureaucratic task. They are delighted with the provision that is free, provides them with guaranteed places and in some areas provides them with some choice."*

This suggested that the idea of increased provision and some element of choice were popular, though the method by which it was delivered was seen as bureaucratic.

#### **Standards in Scotland’s Schools Etc Act 2000**

However, it was not until the enactment of The Standards in Scotland’s Schools Etc Act 2000 that a duty was placed on local authorities to provide pre-school education to all three and four-year olds and set a minimum entitlement of the

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<sup>6</sup> Local Government Chronicle, “£3m Scots Nursery Vouchers Pilot Scheme Announced”, 4/3/1996

<sup>7</sup> Hansard, 17/6/1997

number of hours of pre-school education per year a child should be able to receive, if their parents wanted it. Section 35 of the act also gave authorities express power to secure provision through suppliers other than themselves.

As a result, currently, every three and four-year-old in Scotland is entitled to a minimum of 475 hours per year, though some local authorities offer more and some parents may choose not to use all their entitlement. (The Children and Young People Bill due to be introduced at Holyrood is expected to increase the entitlement to 600 hours) The entitlement can be taken up at a local authority nursery or play group or through the private/third sector as the 2000 Act allowed local authorities to commission care from partnership providers. It is up to each local authority who it commissions care from and, therefore, not all privately-run nurseries or childminders will necessarily be partnership providers. However, the ability and willingness of local authorities to offer parents the choice to take their entitlement elsewhere has expanded the choices available to parents, especially those who are working and would have difficulty juggling the 2.5 hour local authority daily provision. In many ways, the act has re-introduced the nursery voucher scheme and choice of provision that the Conservatives tried to implement in the nineties, but modernised it for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by dealing with some of its faults.

## **2.2 Current System**

It is worth pointing out that while the Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc Act removed the postcode lottery over provision another lottery was introduced and remains in place. Not all children are entitled to the same amount of nursery care. Entitlement to the place guaranteed in the 2000 Act begins in the term after a child turns three. So, unlike school provision where all children start together in the autumn term normally in the calendar year they turn five, with nursery provision the entitlement only begins in the term after a child's third birthday. As a result children, born before the start of the autumn term will be able to receive two years of nursery education, but those born after this point will receive less. Children who are born in January and February and plan to start school when they are four and a half may end up only receiving a year of nursery education. Indeed, potentially a child who cannot take up a place in the autumn term as they have not yet turned three, faces having to join a peer group later in the year after initial friendship bonds have been made. This can be a lot to ask of a young child, and may result in parents, if they are choosing to take up a local authority place, waiting until the next autumn term to take up a place. This can result in a year's difference in nursery provision based purely on when a child's birthday falls.

Table 1 illustrates the difference in entitlement, however in reality children born after August may end up receiving even less provision due to the reasons discussed above.

Table 1: Difference in government-funded nursery entitlement based on child's birthday.<sup>8</sup>

Child's birthday	Entitlement to government funded nursery provision begins (either at a local authority nursery or funding entitlement for partnership provider)	Total nursery entitlement before beginning school	Approximate financial entitlement for partnership provision before beginning school (based on Edinburgh council's figures of £1,550 per year/£516.65 per term)
1 March to 31 August	August/ Autumn Term	2 years	£3,100
1 September to 31 December	January/ Spring Term	18 months	£2,493
1 January to 28 February (based on child starting school aged 4)	April/ Summer Term	15 months	£2,067

While there may be some who believe that a child at 2 and a half is too young to begin nursery, that child is more than likely to be starting school at age 4. Giving them a lesser entitlement to nursery provision than some of their peers who will start school with them does not make sense and is more likely to increase any gap, if it exists, when they start school.

This is a wholly separate issue from children in care being able to start nursery at the age of two, and calls for children from poorer backgrounds to start nursery earlier in order to try and close developmental gaps before children start school. Reform Scotland would agree with such policies. The current problem with provision for three year olds has nothing to do with their background, where they live, or risks they may face but is purely based upon when their birthday falls. This does not seem fair or sensible.

For children already receiving nursery education through partnership providers, it means that their parents do not receive as much money towards the costs of their nursery provision as others. But for children attending local authority nurseries who are born between August and February and will start school when they are four, they are either expected to join a peer group which has been established and together for at least six months before they are entitled to join and try to fit in, or they receive a year's less provision. This is simply unfair and unacceptable.

While councils could if they wished expand provision in their area to correct this inherent inequality, and any attempts at doing so are to be welcomed, if the Scottish government is going to use legislation to ensure everyone across

<sup>8</sup> The figures for partnership funding are an estimate and based on Edinburgh Council's pre-school funding for 3 and 4 year olds [http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/8809/pre-school\\_funding\\_leaflet](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/downloads/file/8809/pre-school_funding_leaflet)

Scotland is to be given access to a service, the Scottish government must surely do so in a way that treats everyone equally.

### **Employer related Childcare Vouchers**

It is worth highlighting the development of childcare vouchers. Although not relevant towards the provision of local authority nurseries, they do help parents meet the cost of childcare, including partnership nursery providers.

Since 2005, the UK Government has allowed income tax and National Insurance exemptions for participating employees (up to a maximum of £1,196 a year per parent) and NI exemptions for employers (up to £370 a year per participating employee), provided certain conditions are met<sup>9</sup>.

The following explanation adapted from Martin Lewis's MoneySavingExpert.com<sup>10</sup> website simply explains how the system works:

*“Childcare vouchers can save many parents with kids aged up to 15 over £1,000 a year on childcare... The key is they enable you to pay for childcare out of your PRE-TAX and National Insurance income. While this doesn't sound much, the benefit is huge. A few very generous employers will simply give you the vouchers on top of your normal salary, but most will ask you to do what's called a 'salary sacrifice', which works something like this (basic rate tax example):*

*“You give up £1,000 of salary but after tax & NI that's only worth £700ish in your pocket. In return you get £1,000 of vouchers so you're £300 per grand better off.”*

*“...Providing childcare vouchers shouldn't cost your employer any money. In fact, as they don't pay national insurance on the vouchers, it actually makes them serious profit - £100s per employee... Firms can offer voucher schemes one of two ways, either by operating the scheme themselves or by using one of the many voucher companies to do all the admin for them. The fee for this should be less than the firm gains in national insurance, so they'll still profit.”*

However, as the site warns, it can affect the amount of child tax credits you receive:

*“The problem is for a number of people with kids (depending on how many) getting childcare vouchers reduces your eligibility for tax credits; potentially leaving you out of pocket. This is because the amount of tax credit you get depends on how much you pay IN CASH (i.e. not vouchers) for childcare.”*

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/Childcare>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/childcare-vouchers>

### **2.3 Background statistics**

The following tables outline some background statistics regarding government-funded nursery provision in Scotland. It is worth highlighting the difference in the number of ante-pre-school children and pre-school children registered in 2011. The statistics, which used to be compiled in January, have been compiled in September from 2010. It is, therefore, unsurprising that the ant-pre-school figure, or in layman's terms the number of children who would be starting school in two years' time, is almost half of the number pre-school registrations, or the number of children starting school in one year's time, because all of the children who would be starting school two years from this date and who turn three after September 2011 are not eligible for a nursery place.

Table 2 outlines the number of registrations, while Table 3 outlines the proportion of places that are provided by partnership providers and local authorities.

**Table 2: Local authority and partnership pre-school education registrations by local authority and type of provider, September 2011<sup>11</sup>**

Local Authority	Type of provider										Total				
	Local Authority					Partnership					Under 3 year old	Ante-pre-school	Pre-school	Deferred Entry	Total
	Under 3 year old	Ante-pre-school	Pre-school	Deferred Entry	Total	Under 3 year old	Ante-pre-school	Pre-school	Deferred Entry	Total					
Aberdeen City	30	700	1,530	160	<b>2,410</b>	90	490	610	50	<b>1,230</b>	110	1,190	2,130	200	<b>3,640</b>
Aberdeenshire	80	750	2,140	170	<b>3,130</b>	120	650	580	30	<b>1,380</b>	200	1,400	2,720	190	<b>4,510</b>
Angus	10	340	990	140	<b>1,480</b>	60	250	210	20	<b>530</b>	70	590	1,190	160	<b>2,010</b>
Argyll & Bute	10	220	460	30	<b>720</b>	0	210	400	30	<b>640</b>	10	430	850	60	<b>1,350</b>
Clackmannanshire	60	280	640	30	<b>1,010</b>	0	70	40	10	<b>110</b>	60	350	680	30	<b>1,120</b>
Dumfries & Galloway	0	480	1,170	90	<b>1,740</b>	20	310	410	30	<b>770</b>	20	790	1,580	120	<b>2,510</b>
Dundee City	70	510	1,180	150	<b>1,910</b>	30	200	310	20	<b>560</b>	90	710	1,490	180	<b>2,470</b>
East Ayrshire	60	570	1,080	50	<b>1,760</b>	10	160	170	10	<b>340</b>	70	720	1,240	50	<b>2,090</b>
East Dunbartonshire	70	310	620	50	<b>1,050</b>	10	280	570	40	<b>890</b>	90	580	1,190	90	<b>1,940</b>
East Lothian	0	430	1,000	120	<b>1,550</b>	20	120	210	10	<b>360</b>	20	550	1,210	130	<b>1,900</b>
East Renfrewshire	50	390	840	60	<b>1,340</b>	30	130	170	10	<b>340</b>	90	510	1,010	70	<b>1,680</b>
Edinburgh, City of	100	1,480	3,120	290	<b>5,000</b>	140	1,070	1,760	160	<b>3,130</b>	240	2,550	4,880	450	<b>8,120</b>
Eilean Siar	20	90	160	20	<b>280</b>	0	60	100	10	<b>170</b>	20	150	250	30	<b>450</b>
Falkirk	0	840	1,740	100	<b>2,680</b>	0	120	110	10	<b>250</b>	10	960	1,850	110	<b>2,920</b>
Fife	220	1,770	3,670	220	<b>5,880</b>	80	480	460	30	<b>1,050</b>	300	2,250	4,130	250	<b>6,940</b>
Glasgow City	600	2,060	4,540	250	<b>7,440</b>	170	760	1,290	60	<b>2,270</b>	770	2,810	5,830	300	<b>9,710</b>
Highland	130	810	1,820	210	<b>2,960</b>	90	520	540	70	<b>1,220</b>	220	1,330	2,360	280	<b>4,190</b>
Inverclyde	120	340	690	50	<b>1,200</b>	50	70	130	0	<b>250</b>	170	400	820	50	<b>1,450</b>
Midlothian	0	420	820	120	<b>1,360</b>	10	80	170	10	<b>270</b>	10	500	990	130	<b>1,620</b>
Moray	0	160	470	60	<b>690</b>	0	310	550	50	<b>920</b>	0	470	1,020	110	<b>1,610</b>
North Ayrshire	70	500	1,110	60	<b>1,730</b>	80	270	390	10	<b>750</b>	150	770	1,490	70	<b>2,480</b>
North Lanarkshire	360	1,680	3,150	160	<b>5,340</b>	80	520	760	20	<b>1,380</b>	440	2,200	3,910	180	<b>6,730</b>
Orkney Islands	0	80	200	50	<b>320</b>	0	40	0	0	<b>50</b>	0	120	200	50	<b>370</b>
Perth & Kinross	30	440	1,060	150	<b>1,680</b>	10	220	430	40	<b>700</b>	40	660	1,490	190	<b>2,380</b>
Renfrewshire	230	610	1,280	110	<b>2,230</b>	210	420	680	40	<b>1,350</b>	440	1,030	1,970	140	<b>3,580</b>
Scottish Borders	10	330	900	80	<b>1,320</b>	30	290	310	30	<b>660</b>	40	620	1,220	100	<b>1,980</b>
Shetland Islands	10	90	200	50	<b>350</b>	0	30	40	10	<b>80</b>	20	120	240	60	<b>430</b>
South Ayrshire	20	480	890	70	<b>1,460</b>	20	140	250	10	<b>410</b>	40	610	1,140	80	<b>1,870</b>
South Lanarkshire	220	1,410	2,380	150	<b>4,170</b>	20	570	1,020	40	<b>1,650</b>	240	1,990	3,400	190	<b>5,810</b>
Stirling	130	320	730	60	<b>1,250</b>	20	150	200	10	<b>380</b>	160	470	930	70	<b>1,630</b>
West Dunbartonshire	50	460	940	70	<b>1,520</b>	0	100	170	10	<b>280</b>	50	560	1,110	80	<b>1,800</b>
West Lothian	110	990	1,990	120	<b>3,220</b>	30	120	210	10	<b>360</b>	130	1,110	2,200	130	<b>3,580</b>
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>2,870</b>	<b>20,330</b>	<b>43,470</b>	<b>3,470</b>	<b>70,150</b>	<b>1,420</b>	<b>9,180</b>	<b>13,250</b>	<b>850</b>	<b>24,700</b>	<b>4,290</b>	<b>29,510</b>	<b>56,720</b>	<b>4,330</b>	<b>94,840</b>

<sup>11</sup> Information from Scottish Government in response to a Freedom of Information request.

Table 3: Total registrations at local authority nurseries and partnership providers, 2011<sup>12</sup>

Local Authority	Total local authority & partnership pre-school education registrations	Registrations at local authority nurseries 2011	% local authority	Registrations at partnership providers 2011	% partnership provider
Moray	1,610	690	42.86%	920	57.14%
Argyll & Bute	1,350	720	53.33%	640	47.41%
East Dunbartonshire	1,940	1,050	54.12%	890	45.88%
Edinburgh, City of	8,120	5,000	61.58%	3,130	38.55%
Eilean Siar	450	280	62.22%	170	37.78%
Renfrewshire	3,580	2,230	62.29%	1,350	37.71%
Aberdeen City	3,640	2,410	66.21%	1,230	33.79%
Scottish Borders	1,980	1,320	66.67%	660	33.33%
Dumfries & Galloway	2,510	1,740	69.32%	770	30.68%
Aberdeenshire	4,510	3,130	69.40%	1,380	30.60%
North Ayrshire	2,480	1,730	69.76%	750	30.24%
Perth & Kinross	2,380	1,680	70.59%	700	29.41%
Highland	4,190	2,960	70.64%	1,220	29.12%
South Lanarkshire	5,810	4,170	71.77%	1,650	28.40%
Angus	2,010	1,480	73.63%	530	26.37%
<b>Scotland</b>	<b>94,840</b>	<b>70,150</b>	<b>73.97%</b>	<b>24,700</b>	<b>26.04%</b>
Glasgow City	9,710	7,440	76.62%	2,270	23.38%
Stirling	1,630	1,250	76.69%	380	23.31%
Dundee City	2,470	1,910	77.33%	560	22.67%
South Ayrshire	1,870	1,460	78.07%	410	21.93%
North Lanarkshire	6,730	5,340	79.35%	1,380	20.51%
East Renfrewshire	1,680	1,340	79.76%	340	20.24%
East Lothian	1,900	1,550	81.58%	360	18.95%
Shetland Islands	430	350	81.40%	80	18.60%
Inverclyde	1,450	1,200	82.76%	250	17.24%
Midlothian	1,620	1,360	83.95%	270	16.67%
East Ayrshire	2,090	1,760	84.21%	340	16.27%
West Dunbartonshire	1,800	1,520	84.44%	280	15.56%
Fife	6,940	5,880	84.73%	1,050	15.13%
Orkney Islands	370	320	86.49%	50	13.51%
West Lothian	3,580	3,220	89.94%	360	10.06%
Clackmannanshire	1,120	1,010	90.18%	110	9.82%
Falkirk	2,920	2,680	91.78%	250	8.56%

It is worth noting that in October 2011 there were press reports<sup>13</sup> that both East Dunbartonshire and Dumfries and Galloway councils were considering withdrawing support from partnership nursery providers. However, that withdrawal would appear not to have materialised. In its Freedom of Information response to Reform Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway Council stated *“In Dumfries & Galloway we have a parental choice model where parents can enrol at either partnership provider or local authority nursery class. The Council will always purchase from a partnership provider if that is the parents’ choice, even if we have availability in our own LA nursery classes.”*

<sup>12</sup> Information from Scottish Government in response to a Freedom of Information request.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.heraldsotland.com/news/home-news/fury-as-councils-to-axe-free-places-in-private-nurseries.15480176>

Similarly, according to East Dunbartonshire Council's website<sup>14</sup> parents can still opt for a partnership provider.

The information in the above tables came from a Freedom of Information request Reform Scotland submitted to the Scottish government. Although nursery provision is a matter for local authorities, as the Scottish government is planning to extend the entitlement from 475 hours to 600 hours, we asked it to state the current capacity for nursery provision. We were informed that the Scottish government did "*not hold information on capacity/places of pre-school education centres*", which we found somewhat surprising. Surely, if the government is to expand the entitlement, it should have an idea of the current capacity before doing so.

As a result, Reform Scotland submitted Freedom of Information requests to all local authorities to establish an approximate idea of the current capacity. The way some local authorities outlined their capacity differed from others (see annex for complete responses). However, as a result of the information we received, we understand that local authority-operated nurseries have a capacity of roughly 96,265 morning and afternoon places in Scotland. Information we received from the Scottish government illustrated in Table 1 indicates that there were 70,150 registrations (again, including morning and afternoon) at local authority nurseries in 2011, suggesting spare capacity of 26,115. That is not to say that there wouldn't be additional staffing and other costs associated with the spare capacity, but it does offer some potential to look at expansion.

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/content/education\\_and\\_learning/schools/school\\_and\\_nursery\\_places/nursery\\_and\\_pre\\_school\\_places.aspx](http://www.eastdunbarton.gov.uk/content/education_and_learning/schools/school_and_nursery_places/nursery_and_pre_school_places.aspx)

Table 3: Capacity at local authority-run nurseries & registrations at local authority nurseries, 2011.

Local Authority	FOI question: "What is the capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education in local authority owned and run nurseries?"	Total capacity based on response. (Where a figure was given as FTE we have doubled as a session only covers morning or afternoon, otherwise we have used the given figures)	Total number of pre-school education registrations at local authority run nurseries in 2011 according to FOI response from Scottish government	Difference between total estimated capacity and number of registrations in 2011
Aberdeen City	There are 2,950 part-time places shared by children in their ante and pre-school years in nurseries owned and run by Aberdeen City Council.	2,950	2,410	540
Aberdeenshire	The capacity for ante and pre-school education in Local Authority Nurseries is 3,939.	3,939	3,130	809
Angus	There is no differentiation in the capacities in each of our pre-school settings for pre-school and ante-preschool. Pre-school classes have different capacities and the total capacity of Angus pre-school classes at present is 912 morning places and 830 afternoon places.	1,742	1,480	262
Argyll & Bute	According to the information provided there are 1,457 morning places and 903 afternoon places.	2,360	720	1,640
Clackmannanshire	746 FTE	1,492	1,010	482
Dumfries & Galloway	3,284 total physical capacity	3,284	1,740	1,544
Dundee City	Dundee City Council does not separate ante pre-school (APS) and pre-school (PS) places when determining supply and demand for LA nursery schools and classes. If the child is age eligible then a place is found for the child. As at September 2012, Local Authority nursery schools and classes can offer 2,700 places across the city for APS and PS children whose parents wish a nursery place for their child.	2,700	1,910	790
East Ayrshire	Places are allocated to children in their ante pre-school year and pre-school year. There are 1,219 full time equivalent places which translate to 2,438 sessional places.	2,438	1,760	678
East Dunbartonshire	East Dunbartonshire Council has 775 morning and 765 afternoon capacity in our local authority nurseries.	910	1,050	-140
East Lothian	The capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education places in local authority owned and run nurseries in East Lothian is 2,086. Capacity is not split by stage i.e. ante preschool and pre-school.	2,086	1,550	536
East Renfrewshire	East Renfrewshire Council pre-five establishments has an overall capacity for 1,940 preschool children and funds a further 300 places in partner provider nurseries. We do not break this down to places for preschool and ante-preschool children.	1,940	1,340	600
Edinburgh, City of	We do not split the nursery capacity into ante pre-school and pre-school. The total number of nursery places within nursery schools and classes is approximately 6,300 places.	6,300	5,000	1,300
Eilean Siar	Service provision meets demand. The Comhairle have sufficient capacity to ensure all children secure both a pre-school and ante pre-school place in the area of their choice. (NB: As a figure was not provided, 2011 registrations has been used)	260	280	-20
Falkirk	According to the figures provided there are 1,756 morning places and 1,756 afternoon places. There are also 282 full day places for 3-5 year olds.	3,794	2,680	1,114
Fife	According to figures provided there are 4353 AM and 3884 PM places	8,237	5,880	2,357
Glasgow City	There are 5,869 places available in Glasgow City Council nurseries for children aged 3-5 years old. Glasgow City Council Education Services do not separate ante-pre-school from pre-school as education is delivered in mixed groups across the age range and the balance of ante-pre-school versus pre-school children attending will depend on local needs and demands.	5,869	7,440	-1,571

Local Authority	FOI question: "What is the capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education in local authority owned and run nurseries?"	Total capacity based on response. (Where a figure was given as FTE we have doubled as a session only covers morning or afternoon, otherwise we have used the given figures)	Total number of pre-school education registrations at local authority run nurseries in 2011 according to FOI response from Scottish government	Difference between total estimated capacity and number of registrations in 2011
Highland	We have a capacity of 3,247 places within local authority provision. All centres take three & four year olds.	3,247	2,960	287
Inverclyde	Total capacity Local Authority - 1,564 - This is not split into ante-pre-school or pre-school places	1,564	1,200	364
Midlothian	1080 Morning/ 1080 Afternoon	2,160	1,360	800
Moray	We do not differentiate between ante pre-school and pre-school when determining capacity in local authority nursery provision. There are 800 places in total.	800	690	110
North Ayrshire	In North Ayrshire we can provide 2,044 part time nursery places. These places can be accessed by any child pre-school or ante pre-school. The partner providers have the capacity to provide 1,500 part time places.	2,044	1,730	314
North Lanarkshire	This Authority does not distinguish between numbers of places for pre-school and ante-preschool. All children have the same entitlement to a place and at present this Authority currently has 2,998 full-time equivalent places for 3-5 year olds and each place generally accommodates 2 children.	5,996	5,340	656
Orkney Islands	Pre-school and ante-pre-school numbers are not separated. The maximum capacity is 475 (please note that this is not the actual number or the number currently staffed for, but the maximum capacity available).	475	320	155
Perth & Kinross	The capacity within each local authority managed nursery is based on room capacity within the school as well as the number of qualified staff in line with National Care Standards. No specific number of places is allocated to children in the pre-school or ante pre-school year. All children are eligible to apply for a pre-school education place in the term after their 3 <sup>rd</sup> birthday. A copy of the current Policy & Guidelines for Nurseries is attached for information. <i>(NB: As a figure was not provided, 2011 registrations has been used)</i>	1,650	1,680	-30
Renfrewshire	According to figures supplied capacity is 3,359.	3,359	2,230	1,129
Scottish Borders	The Council has capacity for about 1,935 pre and ante pre-school children in our local authority run nurseries. We have a large number of additional places available in our commissioned settings in both private and voluntary run playgroups and nurseries.	1,935	1,320	615
Shetland Islands	Approximately 642 based on figures attached to response	642	350	292
South Ayrshire	The capacity of our nursery schools and classes is determined by the Care Inspectorate. It is defined by number of spaces for children whether they are pre-school or ante pre-school children. According to the figures the council supplied, there are 1,055 morning places, 1,047 afternoon places and an additional 104 places.	2,206	1,460	746
South Lanarkshire	I can confirm that the Council does not differentiate between pre-school and ante pre-school categories as referred to above. A total of 5,704 full time equivalent places are offered for 3 and 4 year olds.	11,408	4,170	7,238
Stirling	LA Standalone Nurseries 384 FTE/768 places LA Nursery Classes 420 FTE/840 places	1,608	1,250	358
West Dunbartonshire	According to the figures the council supplied there are 1,052 morning places and 1,042 afternoon places.	2,094	1,520	574
West Lothian	Ante pre-school and pre-school capacity is not defined separately in West Lothian. Total physical capacity, as per Care Inspectorate registration, is 2,473 AM, 2,303 PM. Total current operating capacity is 2,064 AM, 1,823 PM.	4,776	3,220	1,556
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>96,265</b>	<b>70,150</b>	<b>26,115</b>

## 2.4 Scottish government's approach

The Scottish government has a number of different strategies and policies which focus on young children, many of which cover the issues of nursery provision and childcare. The main policy strands are explained below:

### National Parenting Strategy

In October 2012, the Scottish government published the “National Parenting Strategy: Making a positive difference to children and young people through parenting”. According to the publication it has one clear purpose “*to act as a vehicle for valuing, equipping and supporting parents to be the best that they can be so that they, in turn, can give the children and young people of Scotland the best start in life.*” Although the report addresses issues far wider than nursery provision and childcare, it does make statements on these areas.

The strategy identifies problems that parents had with regard to the flexibility of nursery provision and juggling childcare alongside employment. In response, the strategy states:

- *We are proposing legislation to increase the current entitlement to 475 hours per year of pre-school education for 3 and 4 year olds and looked after 2 year olds to a minimum of 600 hours*
- *We will also make provision more flexible, enabling parents to better access employment, training and education opportunities*
- *We will develop childcare options in areas where unmet need has been identified, using social enterprise or Public Social Partnership (PSP) models. These areas would include parents on low incomes or in poverty, parents who work shifts, out-of-school care including holidays and non-term times, and issues associated with living in rural areas.*
- *Since 2011 we have invested £64.6m of European Social Funds to support 21 strategic employability projects across the country, many of which will address the specific needs of parents in the labour market. At the same time, we are also providing funding to a number of organisations to offer support, including advice about benefits and childcare, to individuals and families*
- *Following the National Business Summit held in June 2012 we will encourage businesses to promote family-friendly working practices*
- *Following the Women's Employment Summit we hosted in September 2012 we are considering ways to ensure that parents are more effectively supported into or back to work.*

## **Early Years Framework**

On 10 December 2008, The Early Years Framework was launched, which signified “the Scottish government and COSLA's commitment to giving all children the best possible start in life”. An update on progress was published in January 2011. “Early years” is identified as covering birth to age eight. The Framework sets out:

- the importance of transformational change at local level;
- early intervention by moving from crisis management to prevention;
- support for parents to be the best parents that they can be for their children;
- ensuring that when parents and children need support and services that these are delivered in an integrated way; and
- ensuring that we have a well-trained and well-supported workforce.

## **Early Years Collaborative<sup>15</sup>**

The Early Years Collaborative is a multi-agency programme launched on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2012, but officially starts work in January 2013. It aims to help local Community Planning Partnerships work with the government to close the gap between what is known to work well and implementation. The collaborative will be centred on three work streams based on a family centred, life-course approach with a focus on pre-birth to one month; one month to three years and three to five years.

## **Children and Young People Bill**

In the second half of 2012, the Scottish government carried out a consultation on the proposed Children and Young People Bill. It is anticipated that the legislation will be introduced to Holyrood in early 2013. The proposed legislation will look at a number of different issues; however it specifically addresses the issue of nursery provision.

The consultation document highlights that parents had identified that the pre-school education hours needed to be more flexible as around 60 per cent of families in the Growing up In Scotland longitudinal research were using two or more forms of childcare.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/early-years-collaborative>

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government, “A Scotland for Children: A Consultation on the Children and Young People Bill” July 2012

The consultation document proposes that legislation would require local authorities to:

- secure a minimum provision of 600 hours per annum early learning and childcare for 3- and 4-year olds;
- offer a range of uptake options to parents – these could include options such as compressed hours over 2 or 3 days, hours outwith term times, or longer sessions of early learning and care;
- consult locally on the needs of parents and demand for places; and
- provide a minimum provision of 600 hours per annum early learning and childcare for looked-after 2-year olds, including joint work with parents or carers where appropriate.

The report also suggests a number of ways which could be considered to help increase the flexibility of the provision of hours for parents. These were:

- 12.5 hours/week extended to 48 weeks to cover non-term times (600 hours pa)
- 15 hours/ week extended over 40 weeks (600 hours pa)
- 16 hours/week delivered through 2 compressed days (9:00-5:00) (608 hours pa)
- 16 hours/week delivered through 5 longer sessions of 3 hours and 20 minutes, including breakfast, or lunch, or at the end of the afternoon session (608 hours pa)
- 6.5 hours/day (9:00-3:30) over 5 days a fortnight, e.g. Monday, Tuesday, alternate Wednesdays; or alternate Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays (617.5 hours pa)<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Scottish Government, "A Scotland for Children: A Consultation on the Children and Young People Bill" July 2012

### 3. Wider childcare issues

#### 3.1 Wider relevance of childcare

Childcare, not just through nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds which is the focus of this report, but also for younger children as well as out of school care is a huge issue facing many families and has been highlighted in a number of recent Scottish, UK and international reports. Research has tended to highlight the expensive nature of childcare in Scotland (and across the UK); the importance of affordable childcare in helping women re-enter the workforce; and the impact of work in terms of helping people out of poverty.

Reform Scotland believes that it is also important that childcare is not viewed as a ‘women’s issue’. It is not simply a matter of the cost of paying benefits and credits to a mother staying at home versus the cost of subsidising childcare. The cost of childcare and its impact on, normally the mother, can have a major impact on fertility rates and female employment rates, which in turn have major impacts on the economy and public services. For example, the Scottish government’s 2010 report ‘Demographic Change in Scotland’ highlighted that the fertility rate in Scotland, at 1.77, remained below replacement level, 2.1, and outlined the long-term problems this can cause given our increasing life expectancy:

*“Increasing life expectancy will inevitably lead to an ageing population (a greater proportion of the population falling into older age groups). However, this is exacerbated when a low fertility rate reduces the numbers of people in the younger age groups, and over time reduces the numbers of people of working age. The dependency ratio is set to increase more rapidly in Scotland than elsewhere in the UK. Although in-migration can compensate for a low fertility rate (as is the case at present), this is not necessarily a long term solution as the behaviour of migrants in relation to long term settlement is far from certain.”<sup>18</sup>*

Further, official figures published in December 2012 indicated that there are, for the first time ever, more people over the age of 65 in Scotland than there are people under the age of 15.<sup>19</sup>

Therefore, helping mothers with young children, should they wish to do so, to re-enter the workforce can provide a wider and long term benefit not just to the individuals directly affected, but to the wider economy.

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<sup>18</sup> Scottish Government, “Demographic Change in Scotland”, November 2010

<sup>19</sup> Whitaker. A, “Scotland’s population soars to record high”, Scotsman, 18/12/2012

Although we are not dealing with these wider issues in this report, it is still important to recognise their relevance and also see how attitudes and practices differ elsewhere. As a result, the following chapter highlights some examples of what is done successfully overseas.

To put the costs of childcare in context it is worth noting that the Daycare Trust's annual UK survey of childcare costs 2012<sup>20</sup> indicated that for parents in Scotland it costs £94.52 per week for 25 hours of nursery care for over 2s. According to the Office for National Statistics' 2012 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings<sup>21</sup>, the average Gross weekly earnings of a part-time woman in Scotland in 2012 was £168.40 – suggesting that formal part-time childcare takes up on average 56 per cent of a part-time salary. On average this would mean if you have more than one child in pre-school child care, the cost is more than the salary.

## 3.2 International context

### Doing Better for Families

In 2011, the OECD published 'Doing Better for Families', which looked at how family policy and government support for families was developing across member nations to reflect the way in which families themselves were changing due to higher life expectancy, lower birth rates and in the sense of what constituted 'the family'.

Although the report did not separate out Scotland from the rest of the UK, the report did highlight some interesting findings comparing child care in the UK with other members of the OECD, as illustrated in Table 4, which summarises the findings and was compiled by the Guardian<sup>22</sup>. The data suggests that although the UK has an above average pre-primary spend as a percentage of GDP, the cost of childcare as a percentage of net family income was second highest across the OECD, and was third highest as a percentage of the average wage.

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<sup>20</sup> Daycare Trust, "Childcare costs survey 2012", February 2012

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/publications/re-reference-tables.html?edition=tcn%3A77-280149>

<sup>22</sup> OECD, 'Doing Better for Families', 2011; Rogers. S, 'Child care costs: how the UK compares with the world', The Guardian, 21/5/2012 - <http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/may/21/child-care-costs-compared-britain>

Table 4: Data from OECD report, ‘Doing Better for Families’, published in 2011

Country	Cost of child care as % of net family income	Net Cost of child care, % of average UK wage	Maternal employment rate (child under 15)	Child care spending as % of GDP	Pre-primary spending as % of GDP
Switzerland	50.6	77.7	69.7	0.1	0.2
UK	26.6	40.9	67.1	0.4	1.1
Ireland	25.6	45.2	58.7	0.3	0.3
USA	23.1	38.1	66.7	0.1	0.4
New Zealand	18.6	28.6	62.2	0.1	0.8
Canada	18.5	29.5	70.5	..	0.2
Japan	16.9	28.1	52.5	0.2	0.3
Australia	14.5	22.5	61.9	0.2	0.4
Slovenia	13.7	19.9	85.7	..	0.5
OECD, all	11.8	18.4	66.2	0.2	0.6
Austria	11.8	16.8	75.4	0.3	0.3
Germany	11.1	14.1	70.8	0.1	0.4
Israel	11	18.3	64.1	0.1	0.7
Norway	10.8	16.8		0.7	1
France	10.4	16.5	73.6	0.4	1
Netherlands	10.1	13.2	78.5	0.3	0.7
Denmark	8.9	11.2	84	0.8	1.3
Korea	8.5	15.2		0.2	0.3
Finland	8.4	12.2	77.2	0.7	0.9
Czech Republic	6.6	10.6	58.8	0.1	0.4
Luxembourg	5.4	8.7	68.4	0.4	0.4
Iceland	5	7.9	84.8	0.2	0.9
Portugal	4.8	7.7	75.4	0	0.4
Poland	4.8	7.1	68.1	0	0.3
Spain	4.7	8.2	60	0.5	0.5
Belgium	4.7	5.8	70.9	0.2	0.8
Sweden	4.7	7.1	80.3	0.6	1.1
Hungary	4.2	6.2	54.4	0.1	0.6
Slovak Republic	3.9	7.4	59.3	0.1	0.4
Estonia	3.7	6.6	66.7	0	0.3
Greece	3.2	4.9	58.8	0.1	0.1

The report also indicated that the UK, compared to many other OECD countries, has a high reliance on informal childcare from friends and relatives.

However, the figures used in the OECD report regarding the UK have been open to criticism. In 2012 the IPPR published “Double Dutch: The case against deregulation and demand-led funding in childcare”. This report, although referring to the childcare system in operation in England, highlighted problems it felt existed with the OECD’s figures, specifically it said:

- *OECD comparative data overinflates UK public spending on childcare: To make expenditure figures comparable, the OECD adjusts spending in each country as if all children begin school at six. This means that the figure given for the UK is factored up as if children spent an extra year in early education, with equivalent levels of funding. Based on our calculations, actual expenditure on childcare and early education in the*

*UK is 0.34 per cent of GDP. This is a significant adjustment which, when taken into account, leaves overall spending on childcare and early education at less than 0.7 per cent of GDP in 2007 rather than 1.1 per cent, as suggested in the official OECD figures. This suggests that the UK is a middle-ranking spender at best, well behind the Nordic nations (whose expenditure levels in the comparative data are actually deflated due to their later school starting age).*

- *Public spending on childcare is not spread evenly across income or age profiles: This is true in all countries, but is particularly marked in the UK. For example, there is a steep drop-off in expenditure during the period when a child is aged between one and three, after maternity pay expires and before the 'free entitlement' for three and four-year-olds kicks in. Childcare costs faced by parents also vary significantly by household income. While the free entitlement is available to all families, the childcare element of the working tax credit is heavily means tested (offset in part by tax relief on employer-supported childcare).*

*This means that a couple family, where both adults earn the average wage and have children aged two and three, spends (on average) 27 per cent of its net income on childcare costs (equal to 41 per cent of the UK's average wage). However, a working lone parent, who earns half the average wage and has children aged two and three, faces similar childcare fees but their net costs are (on average) just 4 per cent of family income (or 3 per cent of the average wage). In the UK, net childcare costs as a share of family income rise with affluence. This is similar to many other countries, though not all. However, even the most affluent of families in Sweden, Portugal, Netherlands, Iceland, France, Finland, Denmark and Belgium face lower net childcare costs as a share of their income than all but the poorest UK families.*

- *Public spending on families is dominated by cash benefits rather than childcare services: Expenditure on family-related services (childcare and early years plus children's social services) increased significantly between 1995 and 2007, from £3.6 billion to £10 billion. However, over the same period, public spending on cash benefits for families grew considerably more, from £13.7 billion to £31.5 billion. Almost three-quarters of the overall rise in expenditure went on greater spending on cash benefits. This meant that by 2007 the government was spending more than three times as much on cash benefits (76 per cent of total expenditure on families) as it was on childcare and children's services (24 per cent). This imbalance – which does not include spending on health, education or housing – stands in stark contrast to Denmark, for example, which devotes over half its spending on families to childcare services (55 per cent) as opposed to cash benefits (45 per cent).*

## Starting Well

Another recent report looking at the international comparisons of pre-school education was published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in 2012. The EIU was commissioned by the Lien Foundation, a Singapore-based philanthropic organisation, to devise an index to rank preschool provision across 45 countries, encompassing the OECD and major emerging markets. Although the Starting Well Index also took costs and affordability into consideration, it also considered the relative availability and quality of such preschool environments, and therefore looks at broader issues than the OECD report.

The results of the study are detailed below. In this study the UK performs fairly well when compared to other countries

Overall score ranking			1) Social context ranking (counts for 5% of overall score)		2) Availability ranking (counts for 25% of overall score)		3) Affordability (counts for 25% of overall score)		4) Quality (counts for 45% of overall score)					
1	Finland	91.8	1	Australia	100	1	Belgium	99.7	1	Norway	32.4	1	Finland	93.5
2	Sweden	91.7	1	Belgium	100	2	Norway	98.6	2	Denmark	89.8	2	Sweden	90.2
3	Norway	88.9	1	Czech Republic	100	3	UK	97.7	3	Sweden	86.7	3	UK	86.9
4	UK	87.9	1	Denmark	100	4	Sweden	97.5	4	Finland	64.2	4	Norway	80.4
5	Belgium	84.7	1	Finland	100	5	Finland	94.9	5	Belgium	78.5	5	Belgium	78
6	Denmark	83.5	1	France	100	6	France	91.3	6	UK	77.6	6	New Zealand	77.3
7	France	81	1	Germany	100	7	Spain	90.5	7	France	76.6	7	Netherlands	76.6
8	Netherlands	75.6	1	Greece	100	8	Germany	88.6	8	Italy	75.6	8	Denmark	76.3
9	New Zealand	73.9	1	Hong Kong	100	9	Denmark	87	9	New Zealand	71.9	9	France	75.5
10	South Korea	72.5	1	Hungary	100	10	Portugal	85.8	10	Netherlands	70.7	10	South Korea	69
11	Germany	71.9	1	Ireland	100	11	South Korea	82	11	Switzerland	70.4	11	Hong Kong	68.9
12	Austria	70.9	1	Israel	100	12	Italy	81.4	12	Germany	66.6	12	Austria	68.6
13	Switzerland	69.9	1	Italy	100	13	Ireland	79.8	13	Czech Republic	66.5	13	Japan	67.7
14	Spain	69.1	1	Japan	100	14	Chile	77.8	14	Austria	65.4	14	Ireland	65.2
15	Portugal	68.7	1	Netherlands	100	15	Czech Republic	76	15	South Korea	64	15	Portugal	64.5
16	Italy	68.4	1	New Zealand	100	16	Austria	75.8	16	USA	63	16	Switzerland	63.1
17	Czech Republic	68.1	1	Norway	100	17	Switzerland	75.6	17	Chile	62.1	17	Germany	62.4
18	Ireland	67.4	1	Poland	100	18	Mexico	74.3	18	Australia	60.6	18	UAE	62.3
19	Hong Kong	66.2	1	Portugal	100	19	Hungary	74	18	Spain	60.6	19	Taiwan	62.2
20	Chile	63.6	1	Singapore	100	20	Netherlands	73.9	20	Hong Kong	60	20	Czech Republic	61
21	Japan	63.5	1	South Korea	100	21	Canada	70.9	21	Singapore	59.8	21	Spain	58.6
22	Hungary	61.6	1	Spain	100	22	Greece	68.5	22	Taiwan	59.2	22	USA	57.8
23	Israel	61	1	Sweden	100	23	New Zealand	64.7	23	Israel	58.8	23	Greece	57.6
24	UAE	60.3	1	Switzerland	100	24	Israel	64.6	24	Japan	57.2	24	Australia	56.4
24	USA	60.3	1	Taiwan	100	25	Singapore	64.3	25	Poland	56.5	25	Israel	56
26	Canada	59.9	1	UAE	100	26	Hong Kong	60.9	26	UAE	55.3	26	Canada	54.5
27	Greece	59.4	1	UK	100	27	Argentina	59	27	Hungary	54.2	26	Hungary	54.5
28	Australia	59.1	1	USA	100	27	Russia	59	28	Portugal	53	28	Italy	53.7
29	Singapore	58.8	29	Austria	95	29	Poland	57.4	29	Ireland	52.5	29	Chile	53
30	Taiwan	58.4	29	Canada	95	30	Japan	54.9	30	Canada	51.9	30	Singapore	50.6
31	Poland	56.1	29	Chile	95	31	USA	54.4	31	Greece	45.4	31	Poland	50.2
32	Mexico	50.5	29	China	95	32	Australia	54.3	32	Malaysia	42.6	32	Russia	48
33	Russia	49.9	29	Malaysia	95	33	UAE	54	33	Argentina	39.4	33	Turkey	47.8
34	Argentina	43	34	Argentina	90	34	South Africa	48.6	34	South Africa	36.9	34	Mexico	41.5
35	Turkey	39.9	34	Russia	90	35	Ghana	48.5	35	Mexico	36.3	35	Malaysia	33.9
36	Malaysia	39.4	36	Mexico	85	36	Thailand	47.9	36	Russia	36	36	South Africa	33.7
37	South Africa	38.8	36	Thailand	85	37	Brazil	47.8	37	Thailand	31.4	37	Argentina	30.9
38	Thailand	37.9	38	Brazil	80	38	Vietnam	43.6	38	Ghana	30	38	Thailand	30.6
39	Brazil	35.1	38	Turkey	80	39	Taiwan	42.6	39	Philippines	24.8	39	Brazil	28.9
40	Ghana	34.3	40	Vietnam	70	40	Philippines	40.6	40	Brazil	24.7	40	Ghana	28.1
41	Vietnam	31.3	41	Philippines	60	41	Malaysia	35.1	41	Turkey	23.9	41	China	27.8
42	China	30.7	42	Indonesia	55	42	China	34.8	42	Indonesia	22.7	42	Vietnam	26.8
43	Philippines	30.5	43	South Africa	45	43	Turkey	33.5	43	India	19.5	43	Philippines	24.7
44	Indonesia	22.1	44	Ghana	40	44	India	21.8	44	Vietnam	19.2	44	Indonesia	24
45	India	21.2	45	India	15	45	Indonesia	11.5	45	China	19	45	India	22.5

## **4. Policy Recommendations**

Reform Scotland believes that a number of the policy recommendations set out below should be considered as part of forthcoming legislation which will consider nursery provision, especially our call for all children to be given the same entitlement to nursery care, which we believe is a priority.

### **Equity of nursery provision**

*Reform Scotland believes that every child should be entitled to two years of government-funded nursery provision, regardless of when their birthday falls. In other words, provision for all children should start at a fixed point in the year, probably the August two years before they start school, just as it does for primary school.*

Nursery provision, especially with the new Curriculum for Excellence beginning at age 3, plays a key role within the education system. Indeed nurseries have a vital role to play not just with early years' education but also with social development of children, which has been highlighted in a number of recent reports<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, it seems grossly unfair that all children at a basic level are not equally entitled to the same amount of government funded nursery care.

Entitlement to government-funded places begins in the term after a child turns three. So unlike school provision where all children start together in the autumn term in August, normally in the calendar year they turn five, with nursery provision the entitlement only begins in the term after a child's third birthday. As a result, children born before the start of the autumn term will be able to receive two years of nursery education, but those born after this point will receive less, while children who are born in January and February and plan to start school when they are four and a half may end up only receiving a year of nursery education. This is also not clear to parents who may have assumed that their child would be entitled to two years of nursery. In reality, due to their child's date of birth, they may end up receiving far less

As a result, Reform Scotland believes that every child across Scotland should be entitled to 2 years of pre-school education, starting in the August of the year they turn three, just as they are all equally entitled to seven years of primary school.

While there may be some who believe that a child at 2 and a half is too young to begin nursery, that child is more than likely to be starting school at age 4. Therefore, giving them a lesser entitlement to nursery provision than some of

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<sup>23</sup> i.e. Thrive at Five; The Scottish Childcare Lottery; A Scotland for Children

their peers who will start school with them does not make sense and is more likely to increase any gap, if it exists, when they start school.

While this would mean an expansion in provision, this should not result in a huge additional cost. According to the figures produced by local authorities, council run nurseries have a capacity of 96,265, though according to the Scottish government there were 70,150 registrations at local authority nurseries in 2011, suggesting a spare capacity of 26,115. The Scottish government registration information stated that there were 56,720 pre-school registrations, but only 29,510 ante pre-school registrations. Reform Scotland's policy would mean that all children were equally entitled to two years of nursery provision and would mean that the number of ante pre-school registrations should be roughly equal to that of the pre-school registrations. The difference in 2011 was 27,210. This figure is very close to the spare capacity figure and through utilising partnership providers should be able to be accommodated. There would, potentially, be additional staffing and other costs associated with utilising the spare capacity, but it would help to make nursery provision more equally available to all.

Ultimately, Reform Scotland believes that before the Scottish government increases the level of nursery provision a child is entitled to from 475 hours to 600 hours, there should be a change in when the entitlement starts to ensure all children have the same basic entitlement to two years of nursery provision, regardless of when their birthday falls.

### **Parents to choose nursery, not local authority**

*Reform Scotland believes that as long as a nursery meets necessary standards set by both Education Scotland, which is responsible for inspection of the education side of the nursery, and the Care Inspectorate, which is responsible for inspection of the care side, parents should be able to take up their entitlement with that provider.*

Parents can currently only choose to take their child's entitlement through a private or independent nursery if the local authority designates a nursery as a partnership provider. This can mean that even if a nursery meets standards and passes inspection by both Education Scotland (responsible for inspecting the education side of a nursery) and the Care Inspectorate (responsible for the care side) and meets the needs of parents, parents still may be unable to send the child to the nursery of their choice.

Reform Scotland believes that if a nursery provider meets necessary standards and passes inspection by both organisations and parents wish to take up their funded place at that nursery, they should be able to do so. Parents should be able to choose the nursery which suits them best, rather than have their choice restricted by the council.

### **Greater flexibility of funding**

*Reform Scotland believes that there should be greater flexibility in the provision of funded places.*

With most local authorities offering the minimum 2.5 hours a day five days a week at local authority-run nurseries, it is virtually impossible for parents to take up these placements if they work or undertake training, unless they also rely on relatives or other options such as wrap around care. As noted in our appendix, very few local authority nurseries allow parents to pay for additional care or to add sessions together. Although the ability to take up your placement in a partnership nursery helps some parents in most local authorities to meet childcare costs, the rigidity of the system means that having a child attending 5 sessions in a partnership nursery will almost always be too expensive for those already struggling to make ends meet even with the funding deducted. This is because a session in a partnership nursery is normally half a day rather than the 2.5 hours provided by a local authority nursery. It would make more sense for the partnership scheme to allow parents to obtain the full local authority grant if their child was attending the nursery for at least 12.5 hours a week. Therefore, Reform Scotland welcomes the indication in the Scottish government's 'A Scotland for Children' consultation that it intends to provide greater flexibility in the provision of funded places to help parents juggle childcare and work.<sup>24</sup>

### **Government legislation is a minimum, not a maximum and there is a need for local flexibility**

*Reform Scotland believes that local authorities must have the freedom and flexibility to work out patterns of provision of nursery care which respond to the needs and circumstances of the parents and children in their area.*

It is worth remembering that the current, and indeed any future, legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament sets down the minimum amount of nursery provision local authorities must provide, it is then up to local authorities how this is provided, including whether they choose to use partnership providers, teacher-led nursery units or units led by childcare development officers. From our FOI responses, all but two provide the basic 12.5 hours a week and very few offer any deviation from the 2.5 hours a day.

Reform Scotland believes that it is important that a prescriptive set-up is not forced on local authorities by central government. Local authorities must have the freedom and flexibility to work out patterns of provision of nursery care which respond to the needs and circumstances of the parents and children in their area.

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<sup>24</sup> Scottish Government, "A Scotland for Children: A Consultation on the Children and Young People Bill", July 2012, chapter 2

For example, as nursery provision is a local authority provision, rather than increasing the minimum number of hours, the Scottish government could consider enabling local authorities to have greater flexibility to use the additional resources to come up with a system which best suits local needs and circumstances. Some local authorities may choose to increase the provision for all, while others may feel that it would be better to target that resource at more disadvantaged children. The Save the Children Report, ‘Thrive at Five’, highlights evidence which shows that many children who grow up in poverty in Scotland are starting school at a serious disadvantage compared to their classmates.<sup>25</sup> By giving greater flexibility to local authorities, councils could come up with schemes which best suit local needs in addition to the basic provision.

### **Longer-term aims:**

*Reform Scotland believes the following recommendations should be considered for the longer term.*

- **Premium for nursery vouchers as a long-term aim**

In the long term, we would hope that a premium could be added to the current nursery entitlement scheme to help children from more disadvantaged backgrounds or those with special needs. As explained above, local authority provision alone can be difficult to take-up if a parent is working, but the cost of partnership providers can be prohibitive. By adding a premium to the entitlement scheme, it would expand those able to choose a provider that best suited their own needs.

- **Consolidate funding**

Currently there are a wide number of funding streams available to parents including child tax credits, child care vouchers, partnership funding, child benefit, all of which come from a variety of sources and layers of government, but a thread of government involvement runs through them all.

If the additional tax and benefit powers Reform Scotland has previously called for were to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament<sup>26</sup>, consideration could be given to consolidating some of these funding streams into a simpler system.

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<sup>25</sup> Save the Children, “Thrive at Five”, November 2012

<sup>26</sup> Reform Scotland, “Devolution Plus”, September 2011

## **5. Conclusion**

The more Reform Scotland looked into the issue of childcare and spoke to interested organisations, the more it became clear how complex the issue is and how it is interwoven with a number of other issues including economic development, poverty and education.

As a result, we felt that the issue of childcare could not be adequately dealt with in a single report and, as the many reports on the topic issued recently have demonstrated, there is no easy answer.

However, we do believe that although this report has focused on one element of childcare, it still outlines a number of sensible suggestions which would help expand the availability of government-funded nursery provision as well as increasing flexibility for parents.

It is simply unacceptable that the current availability of nursery provision depends on when a child's birthday falls. As a result, this is not currently a service that is equally available to all. At present all children start primary school at the same time and are entitled to the same provision of primary school education. Reform Scotland believes that this element of fairness and equality should extend to the government-funded nursery provision. We would hope that the Scottish government would amend this and ensure all children have an equal start, as a matter of urgency.

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## Appendix: How local authorities apply provision of nursery placements for 3 and 4 year olds

Reform Scotland emailed all local authorities in Scotland asking

1) *What is the capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education in local authority owned and run nurseries?*

2) *How do you allocate places to local authority nurseries, especially when the potential Primary 1 roll is larger than the relevant nursery's capacity?*

3) *Whether you offered any flexibility on the days/hours that children attending local authority nurseries, i.e. must it be 2.5hours a day five days a week, or can this be varied to allow a child to attend more on one day and less on another?*

The following table outlines the answers given by each local authority.

Local Authority	<i>What is the capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education in local authority owned and run nurseries?</i>	<i>How do you allocate places to local authority nurseries, especially when the potential Primary 1 roll is larger than the relevant nursery's capacity?</i>	<i>Whether you offered any flexibility on the days/hours that children attending local authority nurseries, i.e. must it be 2.5hours a day five days a week, or can this be varied to allow a child to attend more on one day and less on another?</i>
Aberdeen City	There are 2,950 part-time places shared by children in their ante and pre-school years in nurseries owned and run by Aberdeen City Council.	Where possible, new nursery classes are opened where there is demand for places. Where particular schools have no physical capacity for additional nursery classes, we aim to open places elsewhere in their associated school group.	Nursery places are five 2.5 hour am or pm sessions in nurseries owned and run by Aberdeen City Council.
Aberdeenshire	The capacity for ante and pre-school education in Local Authority Nurseries is 3,939.	Aberdeenshire allocates pre-school education places in its local authority nurseries through the use of a priority setting process against 8 criteria. This predominantly favours children who are in their pre-school year and who live in the same Children's Services network as the nursery they are applying. Aberdeenshire also delivers approximately 40 per cent of the total available pre-school education places via commissioned providers from the private voluntary and independent sectors. This provides parents with choice as to the type of provision which is most likely to match their children's and wider families' needs. It also therefore explains why we do not always require the school nursery to offer a capacity matching that of Primary One.	Due to Care Inspectorate requirements regarding ratios of staff to children, we are not currently able to allow children to access any more than 3 hours per day. Therefore it is not possible for parents to accumulate hours. However, some parents choose to take less than 5 days or take a phased approach to building their use of hours over the course of an academic session.
Angus	There is no differentiation in the capacities in each of our pre-school settings for pre-school and ante-preschool. Pre-school classes have different capacities and the total capacity	Each child is given a category which is used as a means of prioritising the initial allocation of places. The three categories used for the initial allocation of Angus Council Education Department Pre-School places are:  Category 1 Children in their pre-school year (4 year olds) living within the delineated area of the pre-school class	Children attending a local authority pre-school class are usually required to attend 5 sessions per week (either 5 mornings or afternoons). However, more flexible arrangements can be negotiated with private and voluntary providers

	of Angus pre-school classes at present is 912 morning places and 830 afternoon places.	<p>Category 2 Children in their ante-pre-school year (3 year olds) living within the delineated area of the pre-school class</p> <p>Category 3 Children living outwith the delineated area of the preschool class</p> <p>All pre-school children apply to Primary Education using separate criteria and priority is always given to children residing within the catchment. Any children who attend a pre-school class, but who do not live within the school catchment area, must apply to the school by means of a parental placing request. Parental placing requests are therefore only granted where capacities for any given year allow.</p>	
Argyll & Bute	<p>1,457 morning places 903 afternoon places</p> <p>From information supplied</p>	Parents are free to register at whichever pre-school provider they wish and a ballot process will take place should the Service be oversubscribed. However, this rarely has to take place.	Within Local Authority Units all children have the option to attend for 5 x 2.5 hour sessions, although all 5 sessions do not need to be accessed. There is no flexibility available due to the majority of the units only operating in the morning.
Clackmannanshire	746 fte	Our nursery capacities change each year in line with application forms.	No at the moment its 5 mornings or 5 afternoons(each session lasts 2.5 hours)
Dumfries & Galloway	3,284 total physical capacity	<p>Children will be allocated places according to the following allocation priorities:</p> <p>Children Deferring Entry To Primary 1</p> <p><u>CATEGORY 1</u> - Children with additional support needs, including Looked After Children. Applications being made under this category require support from Dumfries and Galloway Council's Psychology Service.</p> <p><u>CATEGORY 2</u> - Children with January or February dates of birth that choose to defer entry to Primary 1 until the enrolment date following their 5th birthday. These children have an automatic right to an additional funded year of pre-school education. However, priority will only be given to those children in this category who are within the nursery's zone or have attended the nursery in Year 1.</p> <p><u>CATEGORY 3</u> - Children with September to December dates of birth whose decision to defer entry to Primary 1 until the enrolment date following their 5th birthday has been agreed by The Admissions Panel. Where an application to defer entry under this category has not been agreed by the Admissions Panel, deferred entry can still take place. However, funding for deferred entry will not be available and access to pre-school education would only be available within a partner provider setting and at a cost to the parent.</p> <p>Year 2 children with additional support needs including Looked After children</p> <p>Year 1 children with additional support needs</p>	<p>Flexibility is not currently available within the LA nursery classes. However parents can access split placements (i.e. sessions with both a LA nursery class and a partnership provider). Further flexibility is available where partnership providers also offer day care (eg. 2 x 2.5hrs per day). If parents prefer, they are able to access all funded sessions with a partnership provider only.</p> <p>In Dumfries &amp; Galloway we have a parental choice model where parents can enrol at either partnership provider or local authority nursery class. The Council will always purchase from a partnership providers if that is the parents' choice, even if we have availability in own LA nursery classes. In the majority of cases, however, our own LA nursery classes fill up as the year progresses but where vacancies exist, we adjust staffing levels accordingly.</p>

		<p>including Looked After children  Year 2 children within the nursery's zone who have siblings in the school/nursery  Year 2 children within the nursery's zone  Year 1 children within the nursery's zone who have siblings in the school/nursery  Year 1 children within the nursery's zone  Year 2 children outwith the nursery's zone who have siblings in school/nursery  Year 2 children outwith the nursery's zone but who are applying to the same nursery they attended in Year 1.  Year 2 children outwith the nursery's zone  Year 1 children outwith the nursery's zone with siblings in the school/nursery  Year 1 children outwith the nursery's zone  Children living outwith Dumfries and Galloway  14. Late applications – these will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.</p>	
Dundee City	<p>Dundee City Council does not separate ante pre-school (APS) and pre-school (PS) places when determining supply and demand for LA nursery schools and classes. If the child is age eligible then a place is found for the child. As at September 2012, Local Authority nursery schools and classes can offer 2,700 places across the city for APS and PS children whose parents wish a nursery place for their child.</p>	<p>Demand for places is continuously reviewed to ensure that supply can meet future demand. Knowing the numbers of children in nursery provision is helpful when calculating demand for primary one places the following year. There are no catchment area restrictions for nursery places in Local Authority settings.  Parents choose the nursery school or nursery class that they wish their child to attend and apply to the nursery for a place. Whenever possible, a place in the parent's first choice of nursery is provided but this cannot be guaranteed.  Where a nursery is full, the parent can choose to apply to an alternative nursery which has available places.</p>	<p>In the main places are 2.5 hours per day over 5 days and this appears to be the choice of most parents. In some cases Head Teachers can apply flexibility about the way in which the 5 sessions are allocated. However, this can only be done where it will not deny another child their 5 sessions over 5 days when this is the parent's choice.</p>
East Ayrshire	<p>Places are allocated to children in their ante pre-school year and pre-school year  There are 1219 full time equivalent places which translate to 2438 sessional places.</p>	<p>Places are allocated according to the Council's Pre- School Education Admissions Policy according to the places available in the nursery.  The question assumes that all primary schools have nursery class which is not the case.  We have standalone establishments where the children feed into a number of primary schools</p>	<p>Nursery and Family Centres are able to allocate 12.5 hours across 2.5 days per week due to the hours of operation and staffing structure.</p>
East Dunbartonshire	<p>East Dunbartonshire Council has 775 morning and 765 afternoon capacity in our local authority nurseries.</p>	<p>Nursery classes are not attached to every primary school. Nursery catchment areas contain more than one primary school. Allocations to nursery classes are determined by East Dunbartonshire Council Admission Policy.</p>	<p>Flexibility is available for parents but based on 2.5 hour sessions.</p>
East Lothian	<p>The capacity of a) ante pre-school and b) pre-school education places in</p>	<p>Places are allocated in our local authority nurseries according to the following list of criteria. There are 7 priority categories and 1 is the highest priority:</p>	<p>East Lothian Council offers flexibility on the number of sessions that a child can attend a local authority nursery using the</p>

	local authority owned and run nurseries in East Lothian is 2,086. Capacity is not split by stage i.e. ante preschool and pre-school.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. East Lothian children retained in Nursery (children with Additional Support Needs who are age eligible for school).</li> <li>2. East Lothian children who have been offered a deferred year in nursery.</li> <li>3. East Lothian Children with additional support needs – pre-school year children and eligible 3 year olds.</li> <li>4. East Lothian children in their pre-school year according to their date of birth.</li> <li>5. East Lothian children in their ante pre-school year according to their date of birth.</li> <li>6. Applications where the parent/carer wishes to access fewer than 5 nursery sessions per week for an East Lothian child.</li> <li>7. Children eligible for nursery education, not resident in East Lothian.</li> </ol>	admissions criteria above. When all places have been allocated for children in priority categories 1-5 then places can be offered to East Lothian children wishing to access fewer than 5 nursery sessions per week.
East Renfrewshire	East Renfrewshire Council pre-five establishments has an overall capacity for 1940 preschool children and funds a further 300 places in partner provider nurseries. We do not break this down to places for preschool and ante-preschool children.	<p>Places are allocated in the local authority according to a set of priorities and catchment areas for each local authority nursery establishment. Parents are guaranteed a place in their catchment nursery for their child's preschool year, although we try wherever possible to allocate places for 2 years where capacity allows us to do so. If this is not the case parents are offered an ante preschool the next nearest local authority nursery where there is capacity.</p> <p>The overall capacity of 2240 (1940 + 300) is based on the average P1 intake over the past 5 years, which has not exceeded 1100.</p>	East Renfrewshire nurseries offer 5 morning or 5 afternoon sessions, each session being 3 hours in duration
Edinburgh, City of	We do not split the nursery capacity into ante pre-school and pre-school. The total number of nursery places within nursery schools and classes is approximately 6,300 places.	The nurseries allocate places according to the priority set out in the admissions policy. Please note - there are no catchment areas for nursery places and 40% of children attend a partner provider nursery.	We do try and be flexible but this would depend upon the availability of places. If a nursery has a high demand for places then it is often more difficult to accommodate everyone's needs.
Eilean Siar	Service provision meets demand. The Comhairle have sufficient capacity to ensure all children secure both a pre-school and ante pre-school place in the area of their choice	The Comhairle's P1 roll is not larger than the capacity of our nurseries so this is not an issue	We have a variety of nursery provision. The majority offer 12.5 hours only, however when a nursery offers extended care parents are provided with flexibility in the days and hours that children can attend.
Falkirk	According to the figures provided there are 1,756 morning places and 1,756 afternoon places. There are also 282	Places at day nurseries and nursery classes are allocated in line with the council's Early Years Allocations policy. For children aged under 3, a waiting list system is in operation.	Nursery classes in primary schools only provide 2½ hour sessions, but may be able to accommodate requests for a combination of some morning & some afternoon sessions. At day nurseries and nursery

	full day places for 3-5 year olds.		schools, children who attend for a full day can be allocated a combination of morning and afternoon sessions.
Fife	4353 am 3884 pm  From information supplied	Nursery places are allocated according to Fife Council Early Years Admissions Policy. Admissions panels are held in March each year and places are allocated in local nurseries according to priority. If a child is not placed in the parent's first choice of nursery a second or third choice is allocated. Children are not allocated to a catchment nursery but a local nursery. Therefore some children will attend a different Primary School. Not all Primary schools have a nursery class attached. I have attached a copy of the leaflet provided to parents.	Places are offered in line with Scottish Government recommendations. All children are entitled to 5 x 2 ½ hour sessions.  These are generally 5 morning or 5 afternoon places. Some nursery centres can offer longer days and lunch provision or have the capacity for parents to pay for additional hours. Parents can also choose to split places between a local authority nursery and a partner provider. In this case they can attend a minimum of 2 sessions in each setting and receive Grant funding towards the private/voluntary provider's fees. For example, Mon, Tues, Wed mornings at a local authority nursery, all day Thursday and Friday at a Partner Provider. Funding reimbursed for 2 x 2 ½ hours (5 hours) of care and education in a Private Nursery/Playgroup on Thursday and Friday, parents pay the balance of fees.
Glasgow City	There are 5,869 places available in Glasgow City Council nurseries for children aged 3-5 years old. Glasgow City Council Education Services do not separate ante-pre-school from pre school as education is delivered in mixed groups across the age range and the balance of ante-pre-school versus pre-school children attending will depend on local needs and demands.	All nursery places are allocated in line with the priorities set out within Glasgow City Council's Nursery Admissions Policy. This policy is available on the Council's website – <a href="http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/57016439-B537-4936-8946-EF948D546126/0/MC03ai_0409.PDF">http://www.glasgow.gov.uk/NR/ronlyres/57016439-B537-4936-8946-EF948D546126/0/MC03ai_0409.PDF</a>  Less than 20% of our early years provision is based within primary schools – 21 nursery classes out of a total of 112 nursery establishments. We are clear in our information for parents that there is no direct link between the nursery class and guaranteed automatic entry to primary one within that school simply because they have a place in the nursery class. Glasgow City Council do not currently operate "catchments" for our nurseries as there are fewer nurseries than there are primary schools (112 versus 142) within the city so by default, nurseries would have to have much wider catchments than schools. Parents may choose to apply to any nursery they wish across the city and many choose provision close to their work or perhaps to a relative's home to support their childcare needs rather than their local nursery.	A great deal of flexibility is available to parents within Glasgow City Council nurseries. Our sessions are three hours long as standard not 2.5 hours and we do not insist that parents take up all 5 days per week. In the child's interest, we do ask that the child attends more than once per week as less frequent attendance can make it very difficult for a child to settle and can also make it challenging to ensure that the child is making sound educational progress. Many children attend for two of three full days rather than five half days and a very wide range of patterns of attendance is on offer. Approximately one third of the children attending Glasgow City Council nurseries currently take up more than the standard 15 hours per week and in 35 of our 112 establishments we can also offer places over the holidays.
Highland	We have a capacity of 3247 places within local authority provision .All centres take three & four year olds.	<u>Admission Priorities</u>  Priority for allocation of places should be given to children living within the catchment area. The only exception to this will be full	There are currently 10 local authority nurseries able to offer wrap around care within Highland, otherwise sessions are of 2.5 hours. Parents can choose to attend more than one centre so for example may

		<p>day care partner centres.</p> <p>The criteria for allocation of places after that are as follows:</p> <p><u>Firstly</u> - to those with siblings in the school/centre  <u>Secondly</u> - to four year olds  <u>Thirdly</u> - to three year olds</p> <p>There may however be other considerations as follows;</p> <p>If there is no pre school provision in the child's own area other centres will have been identified to include these children.</p> <p>Where the parent has domestic or work arrangements that are judged as giving reasonable grounds for granting a place in your centre e.g. the child is regularly cared for during the day by a relative or childminder who lives in the area, this should be given a high priority.</p> <p>N.B. Parents of children enrolling from outwith the school catchment area should be made aware that they have to make a placing request if they wish their child to transfer into primary one at the preferred school. Attendance at the nursery is no guarantee that a placing request will be granted or that another year is automatically provided in the setting.</p> <p>Wherever possible existing childcare arrangements will be taken into consideration when allocating morning or afternoon sessions.</p> <p>Parents will be informed as soon as possible whether their child has been allocated a morning or afternoon placement.</p>	<p>attend their nearest local authority nursery for two sessions &amp; a day nursery for the other three if they require childcare to enable them to work or attend training etc.</p>
Inverclyde	Total capacity Local Authority - 1564 - This is not split into ante-pre-school or pre-school places	Nursery places are allocated in line with the admission policy bands; Nursery places are not allocated or linked to any Primary School Catchment Areas as we use defined areas giving parents a greater choice.	We have the provision in Family / Children's Centre to provide some flexibility in placements however, this is in exceptional circumstances only i.e. ASN placement to meet the service we provided or meet a child's specific needs or vulnerable children. This is no flexibility in nursery schools or classes and they would attend 2.5 hours over 5 days.
Midlothian	1080 Morning 1080 Afternoon	Places are allocated through date of application and age eligibility. We do not operate a catchment area system and, therefore, the places are not determined by school capacity.	Midlothian's guidance asks that children attend at least 2 sessions of 2.5 hours at a pre-school education centre. They should also attend no more than 2 centres.
Moray	We do not differentiate between ante pre-school and	The Admission to Pre-school Education Policy sets out the priority categories for admission. The potential Primary 1 roll is not	There is some flexibility to allow for split placements e.g. 2 x 2.5 hours in one nursery class and 3 in another.

	pre-school when determining capacity in local authority nursery provision. There are 800 places in total.	a factor.	In local authority nursery classes children do not attend for more than 2.5 hours on any one day.
North Ayrshire	In North Ayrshire we can provide 2044 part time nursery places. These places can be accessed by any child pre-school or ante pre school. The partner providers have the capacity to provide 1500 part time places.	<p>In North Ayrshire we have a policy on Admissions to Nursery Establishments.</p> <p>* Priority 1 Children in Need, Children with Additional Support Needs.</p> <p>* Priority 2 All children living within the boundary of North Ayrshire who are in their pre-school year and those children with January /February birthdays whose parents choose to defer their entry into primary school.</p> <p>* Priority 3 All children living within the boundary of North Ayrshire with a birthday from September to December whose parents choose to defer their entry into primary school and this has been agreed by North Ayrshire Council.</p> <p>* Priority 4 Children in their ante pre-school year residing in North Ayrshire whose siblings currently attend the nursery.</p> <p>* Priority 5 Children in their ante pre-school year residing in North Ayrshire.</p> <p>* Priority 6 Children in their pre-school year residing out with North Ayrshire.</p> <p>* Priority 7 Children in their ante pre-school year residing out with North Ayrshire. There are no catchment areas for nurseries and a place in a nursery class does not mean an automatic entry into primary one.</p>	Most children attend for 2.5 hours per day in local authority early years provision. Where parents require a more flexible provision to support training/work or childcare we try to accommodate them with split placements, or they choose to attend a partner provider who can offer greater flexibility
North Lanarkshire	This Authority does not distinguish between numbers of places for pre-school and ante-preschool. All children have the same entitlement to a place and at present this Authority currently has 2,998 full-time equivalent places for 3-5 year olds and each place generally accommodates 2 children.	There is an admissions policy which determines the allocation of places on an area panel basis. The panels meet annually and allocate places taking the expressed preferences of parents into account. There is no direct correlation between individual primary school rolls and the numbers in the nursery class as not every primary school has a nursery class and there are also 16 nursery centres and 36 partner nurseries for which parents can apply.	Flexibility is available and all nursery centres operate for 52 weeks of the year and services are offered beyond the 2.5 hours should a parent require additionality for childcare purposes. All offer a core minimum of 2.5 hours per day. Services are regulated by the Care Inspectorate and are able to offer an extended service within the terms of their registration. All classes are registered as sessional day care services and can only offer up to 4 hours per session. They are allowed by regulation to offer more than this to only 5% of their registered

			<p>numbers so we have some children who attend on the basis of 2 sessions in one day but this is limited. Centres are registered for full day care and can offer 2 sessions in one day with childcare over lunch periods or at the start and end of the day. Children are brought into nursery from the day after their third birthday rather than the required term after they become 3. This service from the day after the child's birthday is provided free by North Lanarkshire Council.</p>
Orkney Islands	<p>Pre-school and ante-pre-school numbers are not separated. The maximum capacity is 475 (please note that this is not the actual number or the number currently staffed for, but the maximum capacity available).</p>	<p>Currently children living in the catchment area receive a place at their local nursery and the nursery is staffed accordingly. Any spare places are available for discretionary deferrals, and placing requests from other parishes.</p>	<p>At the moment, there is no flexibility, children are offered 5 2.5 hour sessions per week over 5 days in local authority nurseries. However, split placements with other settings (eg day care settings) are possible to enable parents to access longer lengths of childcare, and parents can have up to 12.5 ours funded at either or split between both settings.</p>
Perth & Kinross	<p>The capacity within each local authority managed nursery is based on room capacity within the school as well as the number of qualified staff in line with National Care Standards. No specific number of places is allocated to children in the pre-school or ante pre-school year. All children are eligible to apply for a pre-school education place in the term after their 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday. A copy of the current Policy &amp; Guidelines for Nurseries is attached for information.</p>	<p>All pre-school education places within Perth &amp; Kinross Council are allocated in accordance with our Policy &amp; Guidelines for Admission to Nursery Schools &amp; Classes.</p> <p>Not all local authority managed schools within Perth &amp; Kinross Council have a nursery class. Each nursery has a defined locality which is made up of one or more primary school catchment areas. As outlined within our Nursery Policy &amp; Guidelines, a place in a nursery class does not give priority in gaining a place in the same school when enrolling for Primary 1.</p>	<p>As part of this Council's policy for pre-school education, children are able to apply for a minimum of 3 and a maximum of 5 sessions per week. During the course of the school year, parents who have opted for less than 5 sessions may wish to apply for an increase up to a maximum of 5 sessions in the same nursery.</p> <p>A number of full-time nursery places are available within some local authority managed nurseries and are available to eligible children on a Council-wide basis. All full-time places are allocated on a Support for Children &amp; Families basis.</p> <p>Further information regarding the allocation of <u>pre-school education</u> places is available on the Council's website .</p>
Renfrewshire	<p>According to figures supplied capacity is 3,359.</p>	<p>Places are allocated using Renfrewshire Council's admissions policy. Admission panels are held monthly where applications are discussed. Priority rankings are awarded as per the admissions criteria. Where there are more applications than available places a ballot will be held. Parents are asked to state a first, second and third choice when making an application. Renfrewshire Council will provide a pre-school education place for all eligible children who want a place and reside within Renfrewshire. All efforts are made to allocate places according to choice.</p>	<p>In our pre five centers and nursery classes children can attend for longer hours where capacity allows e.g. 2.5dayd. Parents can pay for additional sessions and or additional hours before and after their child's free pre-school placement in order to allow them to attend education, work or training. Parents can also purchase a wraparound place for children aged 0 – 3 years of age. Parents will be change for the full placement where applications are</p>

			catagorised as priority 5.
Scottish Borders	The Council has capacity for about 1935 pre and ante pre-school children in our local authority run nurseries. We have a large number of additional places available in our commissioned settings in both private and voluntary run playgroups and nurseries.	We have a suggested allocation order when there are less available places than requests <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• additional needs and Social work/ICS . Deferred entries;</li> <li>• Pre school in catchment area including those from neighbouring schools without a nursery;</li> <li>• pre school non catchment with siblings attending the school</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>(there are further categories but these are the main ones)</p>	We expect children to attend for 2.5 hour session but do not expect them to necessarily attend for 5 sessions per week.
Shetland Islands	Approximately 642 based on figures attached to response	In Shetland, places in Nursery provision are normally allocated within the local area and the numbers of children are such that it is usually the case that all children will be allocated a place. However, the Council has an admissions policy and should there be a need to refer to this policy, places would be allocated under set criteria – see below:- <p>“In the event that there are insufficient spaces to accommodate all the requests for admission to a pre-school setting, then Shetland Islands Council will allocate places in the priority order listed below.</p> <p>Children referred by Additional Support Needs, Social Work or Health professionals. Children who have already attended the pre-school setting and wish to continue for their pre-school year or have deferred entry to Primary School. Children who have siblings at the pre-school setting. Eligible three year olds.</p> <p>Once priority spaces have been allocated and there are insufficient spaces left to accommodate the remaining requests, if all other factors are equal a ballot will be used to determine the allocation of places.</p> <p>When a child has not been allocated a place in the requested setting, the parents will be contacted to discuss an alternative offer of pre-school education”.</p>	With regard to flexibility of attendance, there is some flexibility available in the larger nursery settings where there is more than one session per day which parents can access. In nurseries with only 1 session the nursery will operate at the same times each day which provides less opportunity for parents. However, parents can choose to send children to more than one nursery (if places are available). Some parents may also choose to pay a fee for additional sessions both in local authority provision and in nurseries within the private sector.
South Ayrshire	The capacity of our nursery schools and classes is determined by the Care Inspectorate. It is defined by number of spaces for children whether they are pre-school or ante pre-school children.  According to the	Places are allocated in line with the Early Years Admission Policy	At present we offer flexibility in terms of split places. We do not currently offer more than one session per day in a local authority nursery school or class. Some partnership centres offer this within South Ayrshire.

	figures the council supplied, there are 1,055 morning places, 1,047 afternoon places and an additional 104 places.		
South Lanarkshire	I can confirm that the Council does not differentiate between pre-school and ante pre-school categories as referred to above. A total of 5704 full time equivalent places are offered for 3 and 4 year olds.	South Lanarkshire Council nurseries are not aligned within catchment areas. Parents have the choice of which nursery they would like their child to attend. They do this through an application and places are allocated in line with our admissions policy. Please refer to the attached early years admissions policy for more information.	South Lanarkshire Council offer a varied pattern of attendance: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nursery classes based in schools and nursery schools cater for children aged 3-5 years. They are open term-time and opening times are generally 9am-12 noon and 1pm-4pm.</li> <li>• Extra hours can be provided within some nursery establishments, however, there will be a charge for extra hours. Opening times vary locally and range from 8am to 6pm.</li> <li>• Full day provision during school terms is available within some nurseries that cater for children aged 3-5 years. Opening times vary locally between 8am-6pm. Information on charges is available from the head of the nursery.</li> </ul> The Council is also committed to providing free pre-school education places through entering into partnership with playgroups and private nurseries. A child becomes eligible for a free place in the term after their third birthday and the entitlement is 475 hours over 38 weeks. The normal pattern of attendance is 5 x 2.5 hrs per week, either morning or afternoon, with no more than 2 x 2.5 hrs in any one day.
Stirling	1) LA Standalone Nurseries 384 fte/768 places LA Nursery Classes 420 fte/840 places Partner Nurseries who we commission places from 172 fte /345 places  We do not isolate capacity numbers for each category.	Admissions procedures can be found at <a href="http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/education-and-learning/nurseries-and-playgroups/nursery-school-places">http://www.stirling.gov.uk/services/education-and-learning/nurseries-and-playgroups/nursery-school-places</a>	There is a flexible approach within extended day/ extended year Stand Alone Nurseries and extended hours in three nursery classes.
West Dunbartonshire	We do not have separate numbers for ante pre-school or pre-school children as children from both stages are accommodated in the centres.	Places are allocated through catchment areas. We have admissions panels who meet to ensure children are accommodated.	Flexible hours can be arranged to accommodate parents' needs. This allows children to attend 2 sessions on one day.

	According to the figures the council supplied there are 1,052 morning places and 1,042 afternoon places.		
West Lothian	Ante pre-school and pre-school capacity is not defined separately in West Lothian. Total physical capacity, as per Care Inspectorate registration, is 2473 AM, 2303 PM. Total current operating capacity is 2064 AM, 1823 PM.	Please find attached copy of our pre-school admission guidelines. Our School Placement Panel (a group of Council officials, usually chaired by the Depute Chief Executive) must have regard to these guidelines when allocating places in over-subscribed establishments. Pre-school provision in West Lothian is diverse in nature. We have free-standing nursery schools and early years centres, nursery classes in denominational (all Roman Catholic in West Lothian) and non-denominational primary schools, private sector nurseries and voluntary sector playgroup nurseries. It is often the case, therefore, that the potential P1 intake is larger than the capacity of the school's nursery class because of the nature of the local provision. This situation would be difficult to alter because of the capital expenditure required even where there were no physical constraints on providing new or extending existing provision.	Please find attached document detailing start and finish times for West Lothian Council pre-school establishments. Children would be expected to attend for these hours. As there are no pre-school (or primary or secondary) sessions on Friday afternoons, children attend longer sessions on Monday to Thursday afternoons. Applications for full-time placements (5 mornings or 4 afternoons) will, in general, be considered before part-time (e.g. 2 morning sessions and one afternoon session) applications. In general part-time placements will only be granted if the chosen establishment is not over-subscribed, including by children who will become eligible for placement in April





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