

Aberdeenshire Council

Integrated Impact Assessment

FY25-26 Budget Saving: EY: Alignment of Early Learning and Childcare admissions intakes with statutory entitlement

Assessment ID	IIA-002550
Lead Author	James Martin
Additional Authors	Natalie Stewart
Service Reviewers	Myra McRobbie
Subject Matter Experts	Kakuen Mo, Jane Wilkinson, Ricki Lyon, Jade Fitzpatrick
Approved By	Anne Marie Davies Macleod
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1. Overview

This document has been generated from information entered into the Integrated Impact Assessment system.

Admissions: If this change takes place then the eligibility for accessing ELC will be reduced so that it is in line with the statutory entitlement, i.e. removal of October intake, meaning that those children not eligible to start in August but with their third birthday before the October holiday, would start in the January following their third birthday.

Those children who are eligible from two years of age i.e. vulnerable 2 year olds who are placed by Social Work, would still be prioritised and given access to ELC as soon as a space is identified.

Differences between the Aberdeenshire model and the statutory entitlement. Aberdeenshire Council has a 4th intake in October and allows for more children to be able to access funded ELC in April, than would be under the statutory entitlement. Up to 2021/22, there were 3 terms/intakes for children accessing ELC across Aberdeenshire. Aberdeenshire Council implemented a fourth term/intake for the 2022/23 academic year. This intake was October, meaning that children with their 3rd birthday after 31st August, but by start of October intake, wouldn't have to wait until January to access their funded entitlement. A second amendment was made to the allocations policy, in that children turning 3 years old between 1st March and start of April term, would be able to access from April term, rather than wait until the following academic year. Aberdeenshire Council has gone beyond the legislative requirements. In the current (2024/25) academic year, there were over 430 children accessing their funded entitlement from 30th October 2023, rather than accessing from 8th January 2024.

During screening 3 of 11 questions indicated that detailed assessments were required, the screening questions and their answers are listed in the next section. This led to 1 out of 5 detailed impact assessments being completed. The assessments required are:

- Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty

In total there are 0 positive impacts as part of this activity. There are 5 negative impacts, of these negative impacts, 7 have been mitigated and 0 cannot be mitigated satisfactorily.

A detailed action plan with 1 points has been provided.

This assessment has been approved by annemarie.daviesmacleod@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

The remainder of this document sets out the details of all completed impact assessments.

2. Screening

Could your activity / proposal / policy cause an impact in one (or more) of the identified town centres?	No
Would this activity / proposal / policy have consequences for the health and wellbeing of the population in the affected communities?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e) in the Council or community and / or the procurement, use or disposal of physical resources?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the resilience to extreme weather events and/or a changing climate of Aberdeenshire Council or community?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy have an impact on people and / or groups with protected characteristics?	Yes
Is this activity / proposal / policy of strategic importance for the council?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy impact on inequality of outcome?	Yes
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's rights?	No
Does this activity / proposal / policy have an impact on children / young people's wellbeing?	No
Does the activity / proposal / policy relate to budget proposals?	Yes

3. Impact Assessments

Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Not Required
Climate Change and Sustainability	Not Required
Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty	Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated
Health Inequalities	Not Required
Town Centre's First	Not Required

4. Equalities and Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

4.1. Protected Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Age (Younger)			Yes	
Age (Older)		Yes		
Disability		Yes		
Race		Yes		
Religion or Belief		Yes		
Sex			Yes	
Pregnancy and Maternity		Yes		
Sexual Orientation		Yes		
Gender Reassignment		Yes		
Marriage or Civil Partnership		Yes		

4.2. Socio-economic Groups

Indicator	Positive	Neutral	Negative	Unknown
Low income			Yes	
Low wealth			Yes	
Material deprivation			Yes	
Area deprivation		Yes		
Socioeconomic background		Yes		

4.3. Negative Impacts and Mitigations

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Age (Younger)</p>	<p>Children born in September and October and between 1st March and mid-April would have delayed access to funded Early Learning and Childcare meaning they would lose access to ELC. In school session 24/25, this was 500 children in local authority settings and in Funded Provider settings. These children would have delayed access to ELC and related learning and development opportunities. However, the most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age. Aberdeenshire Early Years have been working to increase the number of settings able to offer ELC to two year olds. A change to the registration with the Care Inspectorate registration is required in order for this to be able to happen. It also requires investment in resources and training and development for staff. The Early Years Service is also working on a strategy and action plan in relation to increasing the uptake of two year olds. They are being supported by the Improvement Service with these developments.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2026</p>
<p>Age (Younger)</p>	<p>Children born in September and October and between 1st March and mid-April would have delayed access to funded Early Learning and Childcare meaning they would lose access to ELC. In school session 24/25, this was 500 children in local authority settings and in Funded Provider settings. These children would have delayed access to ELC and related learning and development opportunities. However, the most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation Working with Social Work and Health to be able to identify families who will have children eligible from 2 via the referral route. This will allow settings to be able to put the staffing and support measures in place to support the child/ren as soon as possible from the point that the childn/ren turn two years of age.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2025</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Sex</p>	<p>It is recognised that female parents/carers often assume the greater childcare burden, particularly in single parent households. Further, informal family childcare arrangements are often assumed by grandmothers. Removing the October intake will disproportionately impact on female parents/carers in terms of employability and income generation</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age. Aberdeenshire Early Years have been working to increase the number of settings able to offer ELC to two year olds. A change to the registration with the Care Inspectorate registration is required in order for this to be able to happen. It also requires investment in resources and training and development for staff. The Early Years Service is also working on a strategy and action plan in relation to increasing the uptake of two year olds. They are being supported by the Improvement Service with these developments.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2026</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Low income</p>	<p>It is recognised that alignment of intake eligibility to statutory entitlement will impact on those households/families experiencing low income, low wealth and material deprivation. For households/families with children born in September and October, and children born between 1st March and mid-April, there may an impact on employment, childcare expenditure, household income and household savings.</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age. Aberdeenshire Early Years have been working to increase the number of settings able to offer ELC to two year olds. A change to the registration with the Care Inspectorate registration is required in order for this to be able to happen. It also requires investment in resources and training and development for staff. The Early Years Service is also working on a strategy and action plan in relation to increasing the uptake of two year olds. They are being supported by the Improvement Service with these developments.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2026</p>
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Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Low wealth</p>	<p>It is recognised that alignment of intake eligibility to statutory entitlement will impact on those households/families experiencing low income, low wealth and material deprivation. For households/families with children born in September and October, and children born between 1st March and mid-April, there may an impact on employment, childcare expenditure, household income and household savings</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age. Aberdeenshire Early Years have been working to increase the number of settings able to offer ELC to two year olds. A change to the registration with the Care Inspectorate registration is required in order for this to be able to happen. It also requires investment in resources and training and development for staff. The Early Years Service is also working on a strategy and action plan in relation to increasing the uptake of two year olds. They are being supported by the Improvement Service with these developments.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2026</p>

Impact Area	Details and Mitigation
<p>Material deprivation</p>	<p>It is recognised that alignment of intake eligibility to statutory entitlement will impact on those households/families experiencing low income, low wealth and material deprivation. For households/families with children born in September and October, and children born between 1st March and mid-April, there may an impact on employment, childcare expenditure, household income and household savings</p> <p>Can be mitigated Yes</p> <p>Mitigation The most vulnerable children in our communities would continue to be able to access eligible 2s provision within the term after they turn 2 years of age. Aberdeenshire Early Years have been working to increase the number of settings able to offer ELC to two year olds. A change to the registration with the Care Inspectorate registration is required in order for this to be able to happen. It also requires investment in resources and training and development for staff. The Early Years Service is also working on a strategy and action plan in relation to increasing the uptake of two year olds. They are being supported by the Improvement Service with these developments.</p> <p>Timescale January 2025 to August 2026</p>

4.4. Evidence

Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
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Type	Source	It says?	It Means?
External Data	Benefit and employment data	That there is an increasing number of families that are meeting the requirements for children aged two years old to be eligible to access funded Early Learning and Childcare. This is for those families who meet the benefit/income criteria.	That a higher level of funding will need to be available to support two year olds. As the ratio is different - 1 to 5, rather than 1 to 8 for 3 to 5 year olds, then the revenue spend for two year olds is far higher than the revenue requirement for 3 to 5 year olds. The funded rate that is paid to funded providers is also higher to support them with the higher level of staffing input. Not only will there be greater demand, but there will be the need to have more places for two year olds made available. Not all nursery settings are registered to care for two year olds and so more work will need to be done to support this i.e. increasing staffing levels, suitable resources invested in for two year olds, review of space requirements etc. The more settings who can accommodate two year olds, the greater the flexibility and accessibility that there is, meaning the greater the uptake.

4.5. Engagement with affected groups

There was a specific question on the ELC admissions in the recent Aberdeenshire resident survey on budget. The majority of residents are in support this measure.

4.6. Ensuring engagement with protected groups

All of our settings were asked to encourage and support families accessing our service with completing the survey. Our partners including funded providers and Health also had the survey shared with them.

4.7. Evidence of engagement

The survey was shared across Aberdeenshire. The results collected make it clear that there is a majority support for this decision, which would protect other vital aspects of the service i.e. being able to increase the capacity to offer greater accessibility and flexibility for vulnerable two year olds.

4.8. Overall Outcome

Only Some Negative Impacts Can Be Mitigated.

While the service will increase the level and quality of provision to improve accessibility and flexibility of provision for those families with two year olds who meet the criteria i.e. benefit, social work involvement etc, there will be families who have children that turn 3 after August but before the October hols, who will be impacted on by the removal of the October intake. Those children will have to wait an additional approx 7 school weeks to be able to access funded ELC.

At present, what is being offered by Aberdeenshire Council is beyond the statutory requirement and is not sustainable. There have been continued reductions to the grant payment from Central Government for funded Early Learning and Childcare. However, there has been an increase in the prevalence of additional support needs, in families with 2 year olds meeting the eligibility criteria and also in the number of deferrals. By making this change, the Council will be able to support those in greatest need, improving their life chances by providing high quality input to development at a crucial stage in their lives. The majority of Scottish Councils, including Aberdeen City Council adhere to the statutory admission intake schedule, so Aberdeenshire Council wouldn't be out of step with other COuncils.

Also, the additional improvement measures that Aberdeenshire Council is putting in place regarding eligible two year olds will improve the targeting of support to those who are most vulnerable, thereby mitigating the adverse impact on our most vulnerable communities.

4.9. Improving Relations

Aberdeenshire Council's Early Years Senior Practitioners have had capacity created into their working week to be able to support families with regards to their childcare needs and signposting to appropriate services.

4.10. Opportunities of Equality

The changes which will be part of the mitigations, including improving access to vulnerable 2 year olds, will create greater equality of opportunity for the most vulnerable in the Aberdeenshire area.

5. Action Plan

Planned Action	Details
<p>Collaboration with the Improvement Service to develop a strategy for improving all aspects of ELC for vulnerable two year olds. The impacts will be achieved within months of the programme starting but the programme itself will be a long term one, as there will be a drive to get as many settings as possible registered for two year olds.</p>	<p>Lead Officer James Martin</p> <p>Repeating Activity No</p> <p>Planned Start Thursday January 16, 2025</p> <p>Planned Finish Monday August 17, 2026</p> <p>Expected Outcome To increase the number of two year olds who are eligible accessing funded ELC.</p> <p>Resource Implications Staffing - Council Early Years Staffing Funded Provider payments Resources for children in the setting Training and Development</p>