

INTRODUCTION

This guidance details specific priorities and actions which are required to support the aims in the [National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023](#). It sets out the vision for the Gaelic Medium provision within the funded early learning and childcare (ELC) sector and guidance on other Gaelic ELC, which is not part of the funded entitlement. We hope that this helps those involved in the Gaelic ELC sector understand their role in a child's learning and development.

The [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#) made 600 hours of free ELC available for all three and four-year-olds and eligible two-year-olds in Scotland from August 2014. By 2020 there will be an increase in the hours of free ELC from 600 to 1,140 hours per year.

Local Authorities that provide Gaelic education, or are considering providing Gaelic education, should consider (ELC) as part of the implementation of the increased entitlement to 1140 hours by 2020.

For children entering primary GME, Gaelic ELC is considered a beneficial first step. Currently, those entering P1 GME do not have to experience ELC, although desirable. Entry at another point may be considered in exceptional circumstances, this would be considered on a case by case basis according to local authority/school policy.

BACKGROUND

[National Gaelic Language Plan 2018 – 23](#)

The overarching aim of [National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-2023 \(NGLP III\)](#) is that Gaelic is used more often, by more people and in a wider range of situations. This will be achieved by focusing on these three overarching principles: -

- Increasing the use of Gaelic
- Increasing the learning of Gaelic
- Promoting a positive image of Gaelic

Gaelic ELC is listed as a priority for increasing the learning of Gaelic. It is undoubtedly also an important sector for increasing the usage of Gaelic as an 'initiative which promotes the use of Gaelic in homes and communities'.

1140 HOURS COMMITMENT

The Scottish Government and local authorities have committed to making an unprecedented level of investment in ELC through near doubling of the funded entitlement from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year from August 2020 for all 3 to 5 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds.

"Make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up in by improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for all babies, children, mothers, fathers and families across Scotland to ensure that all children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed."

Early Years Collaborative

This policy aims to ensure that high quality, flexible early learning and childcare is accessible and affordable for families.

GAELIC MEDIUM EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE GUIDANCE

In order to ensure that the funded ELC entitlement is delivered in high quality settings, a Funding Follows the Child approach will be introduced in August 2020 alongside the statutory roll-out of the expanded entitlement.

The approach is 'provider neutral' and is underpinned by a National Standard that all settings who wish to become a funded provider - regardless of whether they are in the public, private or third sector, or childminders - will have to meet.

The criteria in the National Standard focus on what children and their families should expect from their ELC experience, regardless of where they access their funded entitlement.

The National Standard requires all settings delivering the funded entitlement to have been graded as good or better against Care Inspectorate themes for quality of staffing, and management and leadership. In addition, the National Standard also requires settings to meet additional criteria which contribute to the overall quality of the setting.

The introduction of 1140 hours of Gaelic Medium ELC will have a positive impact on language acquisition and the development of fluency. 1140 hours provides an opportunity to raise attainment and enhance the transition experience for: children, their families & education authorities through increased exposure to Gaelic from the age of 2 or 3, this helps to strengthen the 3 – 18 learner journey.

RATIONALE FOR OUR YOUNG CHILDREN

Current research shows that the foundation for future health and wellbeing of children is established at the earliest stages of life.

'We know that the home learning environment continues to be most influential for children. However, the expansion, particularly when delivered alongside other family support, provides a real opportunity to strengthen the foundations of a child's early learning journey. (Blueprint 2017)

We know that the care and nurture a child receives from pre-birth onwards influences their life journey and a clear strategy for delivering Gaelic language learning in their early years is crucial. Early engagement with high-quality Gaelic will ensure all our children get the best possible experience of Gaelic.

'Children and young people need to experience high-quality total immersion as part of Gaelic Medium Education until they have a secure foundation in the language and a level of fluency that will enable them to build on the progress made in Gaelic.' (Advice on Gaelic Education, Education Scotland.)

Every child has a right to experience unconditional love and feel secure in their daily lives. To equip them with the building blocks they require to enable them to grow and flourish in life. In order to support positive development, we must provide the following.

- Appropriate support for parents and carers as they are the most important adults in a child's life and we must do all we can to support parents who undertake this role and choose Gaelic provision.
- Environments where children are enabled to actively construct their own learning and engage in active language learning.

GAELIC MEDIUM EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE GUIDANCE

- Work in partnership with parents to ensure that all children taking part in Gaelic ELC have the best possible start in life. By offering children the opportunity to benefit from being bilingual we help them to be ready to succeed.
- Build on family nurture models of engagement, particularly with those who may be impacted by health and social inequalities.

The overarching rationale for early learning and childcare provision in Gaelic Medium ELC must be focused on high quality provision, which is flexible, accessible and affordable. It should be well matched to the individual needs of the children and families and built on strengths of individual families. It is essential that there is equality in provision between GME and EME.

Gaelic Medium ELC is an important initial stage of Gaelic Medium Education. Its importance is that it encourages Gaelic language learning from an early age and puts young children on a path towards Gaelic fluency.

Education authorities are under a duty to provide a mandatory amount of ELC every year to those ages 3-5 and to eligible 2-year olds. However, there is, generally no duty on education authorities to provide early learning and childcare to those aged 0-3. Local authorities have a discretionary power to provide early learning and childcare to this age group and can do so themselves or by planning with private or voluntary sector providers. **(see appendix A)**

Gaelic Medium ELC is available in some local authority areas for children aged 0-3 and 3-5. In Education Authorities where there is currently no GME provision this guidance recommends authorities consider establishing Gaelic ELC as a step towards Gaelic medium primary education (GMPE). If an authority is providing GMPE, it should consider opportunities to establish Gaelic ELC.

It is considered essential that Gaelic ELC is led by Gaelic speaking ELC practitioners who hold the relevant childcare qualifications and are able to deliver total immersion in Gaelic.

Gaelic Medium ELC may provide parents the opportunity to become involved in their child's Gaelic language development in an informal setting by learning through play, songs, stories, activities and games. This can benefit both children and parents, many of whom may not be speakers of Gaelic. It also gives parents the opportunity to learn about GME through the experiences of other parents with children in GME. Gaelic ELC is open to all with no previous knowledge of Gaelic necessary.

OVERVIEW OF EXISTING PROVISION

Funded Gaelic Medium ELC Provision

There is currently funded Gaelic Medium ELC provision available in 56 settings across 12 education authorities. Gaelic ELC offers the opportunity for 'total immersion' - enabling children to learn, understand and use Gaelic while accessing a curriculum that is well-matched to their needs and has a focus on learning through play and real-life experiences. Children & young people in GME must be exposed to a total immersion phase until the end of primary three for them to develop a good foundation in the language.

We need to ensure a high-quality experience for all children, supporting positive child development and helping children to develop their physical, cognitive and social skills.

As early learning starts in the home, Gaelic Medium ELC provision must be integrated with support for families, supporting parents and carers to maximise and enrich the home learning environment. We can enhance this through our existing initiatives such as PlayTalkRead and Bookbug by providing support and material to help families and carers to bond with and give their children the best start in life and have some fun learning Gaelic at the same time. To date national statistics shows that there are 3,028 parents taking part with 4,589 children and an overall total of 7,617 participating in Gaelic Bookbug.

However, this must be complemented by high quality Gaelic ELC provision which will benefit all children taking part in active learning sessions.

0-3 Provision

See Appendix A

There are currently 80 ELC Groups offering a variety of sessions across Scotland with Gaelic input. Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant currently work with the Corra Foundation to provide funding to 40 groups to assist with staffing costs, resources and insurance if they require it.

Statistics from Bòrd na Gàidhlig

Gaelic Medium Education (GME) provides learning opportunities which can take you from Early Years to undergraduate and post graduate studies. Starting in the home, and including playgroups, parent and child groups, nurseries, primary schools, secondary schools, colleges, universities and communities, the National Gaelic Language Plan 2018-23 aims to expand and improve Gaelic education and learning at all levels.

Several Local Authorities in Scotland offer GME at different levels for children and young people aged 0-18. In the school year 2018-19 there were 1,078 (1,066 17/18) children in Scotland who attended a Gaelic Medium ELC setting, 3,467 (3,278 17/18) pupils were enrolled in GME primary education and 1,423 (1,251 17/18) secondary school pupils were studying Gàidhlig for fluent speakers and/or other subjects in high school through the medium of Gaelic.

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig (SMO)

Sabhal Mòr Ostaig has been looking to address the needs of the sector and has been developing courses SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) and Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) in Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 6. Both these awards will be delivered through the medium of Gaelic.

The SVQ 3 Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 7 is suitable for individuals who are currently in employment and who wish to obtain a formal qualification. The target audience is people who are practitioners in early years settings and residential/daycare for children and young people. It is a requirement by the SSSC that everyone employed in this capacity should be working towards achievement of this qualification.

The Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) in Social Services (Children and Young People) at SCQF level 6. This qualification is for pupils in S5 and S6. Pupils complete a National Progression Award (NPA) at SCQF level 6. This includes knowledge units that support pupils to develop an understanding of how children develop and learn, play and child protection. They also complete the 4 mandatory Units of the SVQ2 Social Services (Children and Young People). These two parts, along with associated

work placement, which is undertaken within a Gaelic-medium environment, form the Foundation Apprenticeship.

Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig

Stòrlann co-ordinates, promotes and supports resources for Gaelic enriched learning, at all ages and stages of education in Scotland. Stòrlann outputs underpin the creation of positive learning environments, partnerships with parents and education practitioners with an emphasis on supporting positive models of engagement from birth onwards.

Early learning starts in the home, Gaelic ELC provision must be integrated with support for families, supporting parents and carers to improve and enrich the home learning environment. For this purpose, Stòrlann will maintain existing initiatives such as: Gaelic4parents; Support for Continuous Lifelong Professional Learning; Language learning aids and extended learning frameworks and resources for use within the ELC sector.

Stòrlann are developing a new online resource for use in the ELC learning centres and in homes. The online 'Gàidhlig nan Òg' resource will provide parents/carers and early years practitioners with an abundance of themed resources to open up opportunities for Gaelic to be used in the home and early years settings in both a functional and fun way.

By taking a progressive approach to its structure, Gàidhlig nan Òg will support both adult learners (including those for whom Gaelic is completely new), parents, and early years practitioners, in their day to day interactions with children from 0-5 and onwards to continuing GM /GL provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Local Authorities should consider adding a question about Gaelic early learning and childcare to any parental consultations regarding the expansion or delivery of ELC in their areas.

When a Local Authority is asked by Bòrd na Gàidhlig to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan it receives High Level Aims for that Plan. The Bòrd will ensure that ELC is included in these High Level Aims thus ensuring that Local Authorities are including Gaelic ELC at the planning stages of any policy affecting the sector.

Local Authorities should consider the expansion Gaelic Medium ELC developments as they prepare their bids to the Scottish Government's Gaelic Specific Grant Scheme and Gaelic Capital Fund.

Local Authorities should use fluent Gaelic speakers from the community to enhance the Gaelic immersion in ELC settings.

Opportunities exist under the Developing the Young Work Force Programme to target pupils in the senior phase of GME to help staff ELC settings while offering career pathways in Gaelic. Local Authorities should maximise these opportunities.

We recognise the huge task in managing the move to the delivery of the increased hours and the Local Authority should support staff managing this to ensure they understand what Gaelic Medium ELC is and how it works.

Local Authorities have a duty under The Education (Scotland) Act 2016 – Section 15 (6) to:

'Promote and support Gaelic medium education and learning.'

GAELIC MEDIUM EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE GUIDANCE

Where EME & GME ELC meet in the same premises, Local Authorities must ensure that the introduction of 1140 hours does not compromise total immersion within the GME setting.

The needs of families

- Families should be enabled to choose accessible Gaelic Medium ELC settings that are of the highest quality for their children. The Scottish Government has produced guidance for parents to inform them of how to choose an ELC setting that meets their needs. This can be found on the Parent Club website.
- New initiatives which support families to use Gaelic with their children must be developed.
- Families should expect flexibility in the provision that meets the needs of their family life and enable them to work, train or study.
- Families should have access to affordable Gaelic ELC (3-4)
- The need for journey pathways for Gaelic learning that sustain parental attention and engagement.

0-3 PROVISION

There are currently 80 Gaelic 0-3 running sessions for: parents, carers, children and families in 17 local authorities across Scotland. Most feed into Gaelic ELC provision for children aged 2-5 years and then move on to Gaelic Medium Primary Education.

These groups are run by voluntary led committees who are supported by Bòrd na Gàidhlig Early Years workers, Comann nam Pàrant officers and local authority officers. Staff are on hand to support the children in acquiring the language through play based approaches: songs, rhymes, games, stories and arts and crafts. Children get used to hearing and speaking the language daily, through play based activities which helps with their confidence in using the language. Children experience playing with children of their own age and grow in confidence as they hear and use more Gaelic. Those who aren't Gaelic speakers soon develop skills which enable them to use Gaelic in the sessions. The sessions are extremely popular with families and ensure that the children have lots of positive opportunities to hear and use Gaelic.

There are currently 108 staff working with Bòrd na Gàidhlig's Early Years Team in voluntary 0-3 groups across Scotland. There is a combination of fluent and learner speakers developing Gaelic within sessions while supporting parents, children and families in learning and using Gaelic both in sessions and in the home.

There needs to be a high-quality experience for all children and families. This includes supporting positive child development, helping children to develop their physical, cognitive and social skills and enhancing the opportunities to acquire Gaelic in 0-3 settings, so that the children are hearing the Gaelic language more frequently.

“Education Scotland’s [Advice on Gaelic Education](#) (particularly chapter 7), coupled with [Building the Ambition](#), (particularly chapters 6 and 7), present practitioners with effective pedagogy for early learning in GME.

If we are to close the attainment gap in GME, we need to recognise the early gains from a strong total immersion experience as part of early learning and childcare. For this, children need to hear and absorb very fluent Gaelic across a range of play contexts. Practitioners’ quality and frequent interactions are key drivers in helping children to acquire fluency as they foster learning, which is creative, investigative and exploratory.”

(Joan Esson, HM Inspector and Lead Officer for inspection of Gaelic Medium Education June 2017)

As learning begins before birth and starts in the home, Gaelic ELC provision must be integrated with support for families, supporting parents and carers to improve and enrich the home learning environment. We can enhance this through our existing initiatives such as Gaelic4parents, Go Gaelic, Play, Talk, Read and Gaelic Bookbug sessions and resources.

The needs of children

- Children should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, actively respected and included.
- Children must be recognised as capable and competent individuals.
- Children’s learning should be active, responsive and holistic.
- Children must be supported to be the best they can be, with a right to start and lead their own learning. By being active contributors and decision makers in matters that affect them will ensure they are rounded individuals from the outset.
- Children have the right to play and learn – the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out in article 31(1).

Comann nam Pàrant

Comann nam Pàrant (CnP) is the national organisation that advises and supports parents/carers of those in Gaelic Medium Education (GME).

Comann nam Pàrant, which consists of a network of local groups and a national body, represents the interests of parents whose children are educated through the medium of Gaelic, from pre-school to secondary level. The main aim of all CnP groups is "to promote and support the establishment and maintenance of education through the medium of Gaelic".

In any education system, parents have a crucial role to play and where Gaelic is concerned this role takes on an added dimension; it was as a result of the efforts of parents that GME began in 1985 and it is still the case that most new provision will be in response to parental demand.

CnP have an important role to play in promoting GME to families and in encouraging parental engagement and demand. Initial contact with Gaelic for many families will be when parents / carers have children in the 0-3 age group, and it is at this stage especially that CnP have a role in ensuring that parents have access to accurate information on all aspects of GME. Families are encouraged to access their entitlement to statutory early learning provision in Gaelic medium settings in preparation for Gaelic medium primary education.

CnP have a website with information on GME and the use of Gaelic in homes and communities, as well as several other resources. The organisation also shares information through social media.

www.parant.org.uk

www.facebook.com/ComannNamParant

CnP groups are an important mechanism for local authorities and other agencies to engage with GME parents. The organisation also has development officers at national level, funded by Bòrd na Gàidhlig, who are keen to work collaboratively with local authorities and other organisations in advancing GME provision.

For further information on Comann nam Pàrant please contact

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ELC PUBLICATIONS

[A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland - 2017–18 Action Plan](#)

[A Blueprint for 2020: Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Planning Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

[A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland – Next Steps - Analysis Report](#)

[A Blueprint for 2020: Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare Consultation](#)

[Out to Play: practical guidance for creating outdoor play experiences in early learning and childcare](#)

[The Growing Up in Scotland study report 'Growing Up in Scotland: Changes in Language Ability over the Primary School Years'](#).

RELEVANT WEBSITES

[Parent Club website](#)

[UNCRC – Gaelic resources](#)

[Education Scotland – Early Learning and Childcare](#)

[Parentzone](#)

[Advice on Gaelic Education](#)

[Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education](#)

[Comann nam Pàrant](#)

[Stòrlann Nàiseanta na Gàidhlig](#)

[Sabhal Mòr Ostaig](#)

SERVICE MODELS

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: transition options guidance on contracting](#)

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: guidance for setting sustainable rates from August 2020](#)

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: guidance on criteria 7 - business sustainability](#)

[ELC providers: delivery support plan](#)

GAELIC MEDIUM EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE GUIDANCE

[Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for early learning and childcare providers: Principles and practice](#)

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: operating guidance](#)

[Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: guidance for local authorities](#)

[Early learning and childcare service model for 2020: consultation analysis](#)