**Aberdeen City Council – Early Years Expansion Programme**

**Grant Application Scheme**

**Guidance Notes**

**Introduction**

In 2016 the Scottish Government announced its intention to increase the early learning and childcare (ELC) entitlement available to all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds, from 600 hours per annum to 1140 hours per annum by August 2020. The announcement also included a commitment to put quality at the heart of ELC provision and to make ELC more flexible, accessible and affordable for parents.

The Early Years Expansion Programme has been set up by Aberdeen City Council to co‑ordinate all of the activities required to meet these commitments.

The objectives of the programme are as follows:

* To expand the provision of early learning and childcare in Aberdeen, from 600 hours to 1140 hours per child per year, by August 2020
* To develop a delivery model which supports flexible, accessible and affordable early learning and childcare across localities
* To ensure high quality early learning and childcare provision across all of Aberdeen, regardless of the setting

The council recognises that its funded providers will have a crucial role to play in achieving the programme’s objectives, and with that in mind we have created a grant application scheme to allow providers to make a bid for financial support with their own expansion plans.

This one-year grant funding scheme has been established to support existing and new providers to increase quality provision and capacity to deliver the expanded hours (1140 hours) for August 2020. The purpose of the proposed scheme is to create additional capacity in areas of need, improve quality and support staff development to enable funded providers to facilitate expansion.

In sections 1 and 2 of the application form you will be asked to provide:

* Details about your organisation
* Details of your proposal and how it will help to achieve our objectives
* Details of the projected costs of your proposal and how these might be met

**Funding**

The funding allocated to Aberdeen City Council by the Scottish Government to implement this programme is limited, therefore it is imperative that both the council and its funded providers think creatively about how to make the best use of resources.

A total of £1,000,000 has been identified for the grant funding scheme. Funded Providers may apply to the following grant offers:

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Grant Criteria** | **Grant Offer** |
| A | Improve quality and environment to support settings to reach National Standard | Up to the total costs of £5,000 |
| B | Improve quality of outdoor space | Up to the total costs of £10,000  |
| C | Increase capacity up to 20 places/improve outdoor space for those children accessing 1140 hours | Up to the total costs of £10,000 |
| D  | Staff training and development to support quality in the delivery of 1140 hours | Up to the total costs of £10,000 |
| E | Improve quality and environment, up to 40 additional spaces created in areas where capacity is restricted | Up to the total costs of £20,000 |
| F | New or innovative type of provision proposed, up to 40 additional spaces created. | Up to the total costs of £25,000 |

**Restrictions**

The council has a duty to ensure best value in the spending of public funds. This means we will have to place some restrictions on what grants from this scheme can be spent on. Here is a list of what we can’t fund:

* Repair, maintenance or replacement costs of any equipment you already own
* Endowments, loan payments, bank charges etc
* Rental or hire payments for premises or venues
* Staff wages or training costs
* Activities promoting religious or political beliefs
* Any goods or services that you buy or order, or activities that have already taken place, before you receive our grant offer letter
* Donations or payments to third parties where cost details are not provided
* Activities or projects funded through existing contracts with Aberdeen City Council or any other organisation

The purchasing of land or property may be included in your proposal.

Funded providers must submit a minimum of two quotations to support their application. Doing so will assure the Council that requested sums are truly reflective of the market costs of the goods, services or works being procured. The Council reserves the right to reject grant applications received if it has reason to believe figures are artificially inflated. Funded Providers are encouraged to contact the Early Years Expansion Team if they require clarification on this requirement.

Where proposals are successful we reserve the right to implement appropriate arrangements to ensure public funds are protected. As a guide, such measures may include, as a minimum:

* A formal grant acceptance form, indicating your agreement to complete the proposed project and report on the benefits achieved;
* a monitoring report to be completed at an agreed time after completion of the proposal, confirming that the project went as planned and evidencing the benefits achieved.

Where a grant award is of a sufficiently high value, we may also implement further measures such as a grant agreement, including provisions for repayment if any property or equipment is disposed of or if the service does not enter into or withdraws from contract to deliver funded placements.

**The application and evaluation process**

Your application form should be typed, printed, and signed by the appropriate parties at section 3.

Please return the completed form, marked as confidential, to:

Early Learning and Childcare Funded Provider Grants, Aberdeen City Council, Early Years Team, Integrated Children’s and Family Services, Second Floor North, Marischal College, Broad Street, Aberdeen, AB10 1AB.

Alternatively, applications can be emails to elcexpansion@aberdeencity.gov.uk

The closing date for receipt of applications is **5pm on Monday 16th March 2020.**

When your application is received, it will be logged and an initial screening will be carried out to ensure all of the necessary information is included. At this point someone may contact you if there is a need to seek clarity on any of the information you have submitted, prior to a full evaluation.

An evaluation panel will be convened after the closing date to look at all of the applications received. All applications will be considered by the ELC Programme Board, who will provide effective governance and oversight over the grant process and make recommendations. A council solicitor may also be consulted if appropriate.

The panel will review each application and where decisions have to be made about prioritisation due to limited funds, the following factors may be taken into consideration:

* **Supply & Demand**

Statistics show that there are some areas of Aberdeen where settings are regularly near capacity and in some cases there are waiting lists in operation. As a primary concern, priority may be given to applications from localities where supply is struggling to cope with demand and where an increase in places would therefore be most beneficial.

* **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

SIMD is the [Scottish Government’s official tool](https://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD) for identifying areas of deprivation in Scotland. Evidence shows that an attainment gap exists between children who live in areas with a high SIMD rank and children who come from more advantaged backgrounds. As a secondary concern, priority may therefore be given to applications from localities with a higher SIMD rank. An interactive map containing SIMD information for Scotland, which is adjustable to show Aberdeen-specific information, can be found [here](http://simd.scot/2016/#/simd2016/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/).

* **Local and Regional Considerations**

The planning and implementation of the early years expansion is taking place in a constantly changing environment. The council’s own infrastructure expansion plan is being regularly refined as new information comes to light, and the proposals for any given school, town or locality can change. We reserve the right to take into account the most up to date local and Aberdeen-wide information at the time of the award panel to help inform our decisions and to ensure our limited funds are targeted in the right places. The reasoning behind the outcome of your application will always be fully explained.

Following the panel meeting you will be notified of the outcome of your application in writing. The possible outcomes include:

* **Application Successful**

This is an unqualified approval of the application. Your notification letter will include details of how the funding will be made available, any stipulations attached to the funding, and how the council will monitor and review the implementation of your proposal.

* **Application Partially Successful**

This means that the evaluation panel agrees to only a part of your proposal, or that we are only able to part-fund the whole proposal. Your notification letter will explain this in more detail and a meeting may be arranged to further explore and support your proposal.

* **Application Unsuccessful**

This means that the evaluation panel has not approved your proposal, or that other proposals have been prioritised in line with the factors described above. Your notification letter will explain the decision more fully.

If you have any queries regarding the process or the information above during the period that the scheme is open, please raise these by e-mail to elcexpansion@aberdeencity.gov.uk Unfortunately, we cannot provide advice on individual proposals, but support will be provided where it does not compromise the objectivity of the scheme.

**Additional Information**

Some additional points to note are:

* The grant application scheme will only happen once. There are currently no plans, or funds, to repeat the scheme in future years.
* There is no minimum or maximum amount of applications that any one provider can submit, and beyond the restrictions outlined above and the overall objectives of the programme we have no expectations about what you should be proposing – innovation and “thinking outside the box” will be welcomed. Each application will be considered initially on its own merits, and then in the context of the other applications received.
* Your proposals should be in place by August 2020 to prevent funded placements being disrupted, so please ensure that if your proposal involves the purchasing of land or property, and/or construction or refurbishment, that you have planned for how long this will take. The Council may make exceptions to this deadline exceptional circumstances, so if unsure, applicants are encouraged to contact the Council to discuss.
* Payment arrangements for any successful or partially successful application may vary, depending on the requirements of the proposal. For example, payment could be made in stages if appropriate for certain construction projects, or an agreement could be made to have a third party contractor invoice the council directly. Such details will be discussed at the time of the grant award.