



ELC Parents and Carers Survey

Summary Report

27 September - 1 November 2019

1. Introduction

- 1.1** The Scottish Government and Aberdeen City Council are committed to increasing funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement to 1140 hours per year from August 2020 for all 3 and 4-year-olds and for eligible 2-year-olds. The expansion is a cornerstone in helping every child to fulfil their potential and to close the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 1.2** This is an exciting time for ELC in Aberdeen. The expansion will support child development through the provision of high-quality services and will support parents to return to work or study. The Council plans to provide local, flexible early learning and childcare, which is accessible, affordable and of high quality. We want to provide parents and carers with a choice of services and offers that will best meet the needs of their child and their family. Each local offer will be designed around the needs of families in each locality.
- 1.3** The purpose of the ELC Parents and Carers Survey was to hear from parents, grandparents, carers and potential parents to ensure the Council and its partners are providing an Early Learning and Childcare service that best meets the needs of the children and families of Aberdeen. The Council has a statutory duty, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, to consult with parents and carers on a regular basis. The responses to this consultation will help inform the development of services as we move forward with introducing the increased funded hours.
- 1.4** The survey was live on the Council's Citizen Space platform between 27 September - 1 November 2019.
- 1.5** The survey received **881** responses indicating a high degree of interest in ELC expansion from parents and carers in Aberdeen.
- 1.6** The Council's website contained a link to the survey on the Citizen Space platform and survey responses are now held on the system. In line with data protection legislation, the Council will retain trend data for analysis and benchmarking purposes, but personal information (names, contact information etc) will be destroyed no later than 1 November 2021.

2. Key Headlines from the Survey

- 2.1** There is a high degree of interest in ELC expansion as 881 people responded to the survey and over 300 people were interested in taking part in ELC focus groups to discuss the findings of the survey.
- 2.2** Respondents overwhelmingly welcomed the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare and saw clear benefits for their children and family life. Parents and carers advised that the increase to 1140 hours per year would save them money on childcare; allow them to work and study more whilst their children were being cared for in a safe learning environment.
- 2.3** A majority of parents and carers welcomed increased flexibility and choice in ELC provision to better fit around family life, with particular focus on increased opening hours for ELC settings and the ability to use increased hours across a variety of ELC services such as school nurseries, private nurseries and childminders. Respondents were also supportive of more outdoor learning for their children.
- 2.4** There was clear demand from parents and carers for high quality and local ELC services.
- 2.5** However, uncertainty was expressed about how ELC expansion would work in practice. Common queries included:
- How does the registration process work?
- How do I use my 1140 hours?
- How do I mix my 1140 hours between different nurseries and other ELC settings?
- Are nursery places first come, first served?
- How will nursery days to be structured and what is the curriculum?
- How many meals does my child get during a full day (8am-6pm) at nursery?
- 2.6** To answer queries such as those above, most respondents wished to receive ELC information directly from their local nursery; using the Aberdeen City Council website; or through Facebook.

3. Breakdown of Survey Results

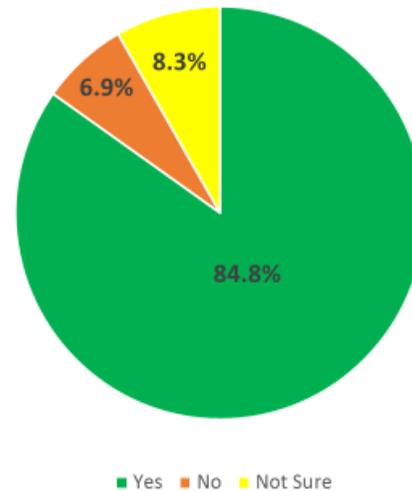
3.1 Responses were received from across Aberdeen City and a number of areas within Aberdeenshire.

3.2 Most respondents had one or two children, and had children of nursery age.

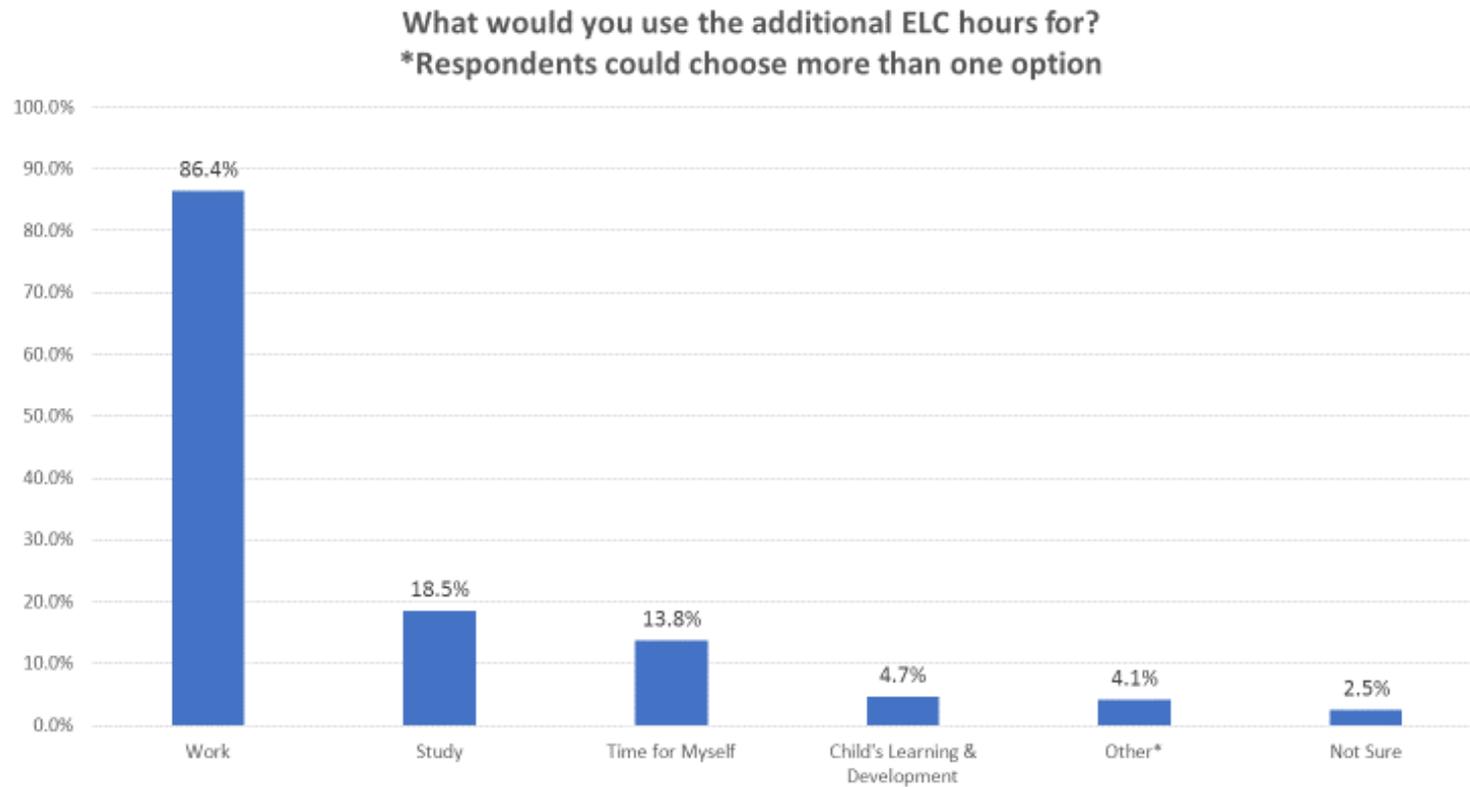
3.3 82.7% of respondents currently use ELC services.

3.4 84.8% of respondents would make use of the increased 1140 hours.

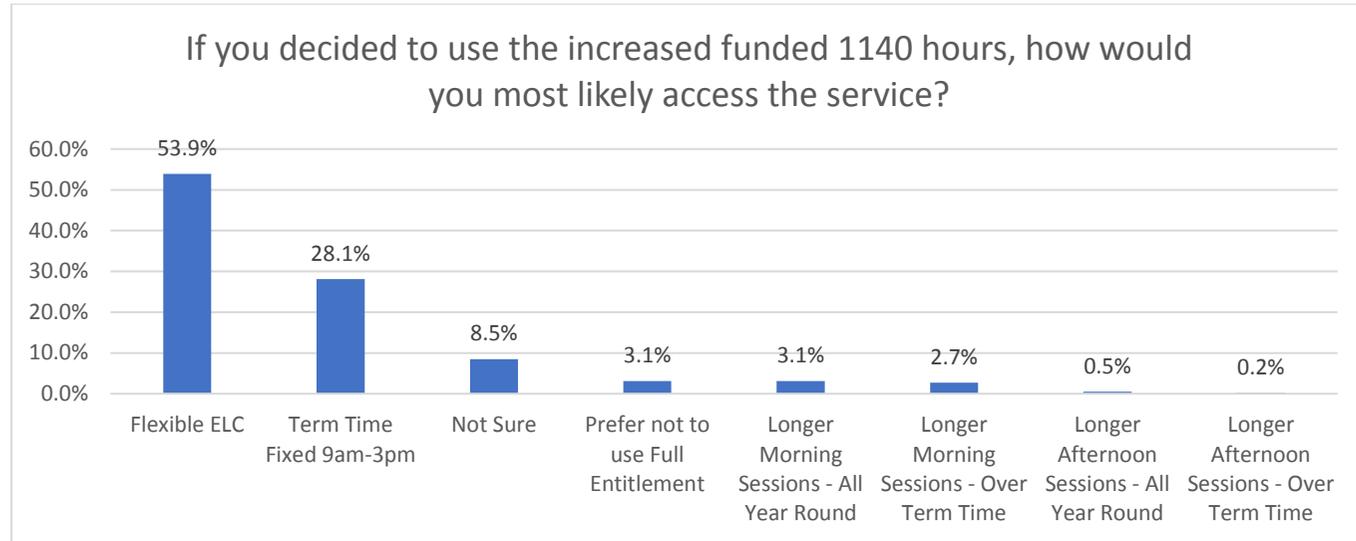
Would you use the increased 1140 hours?



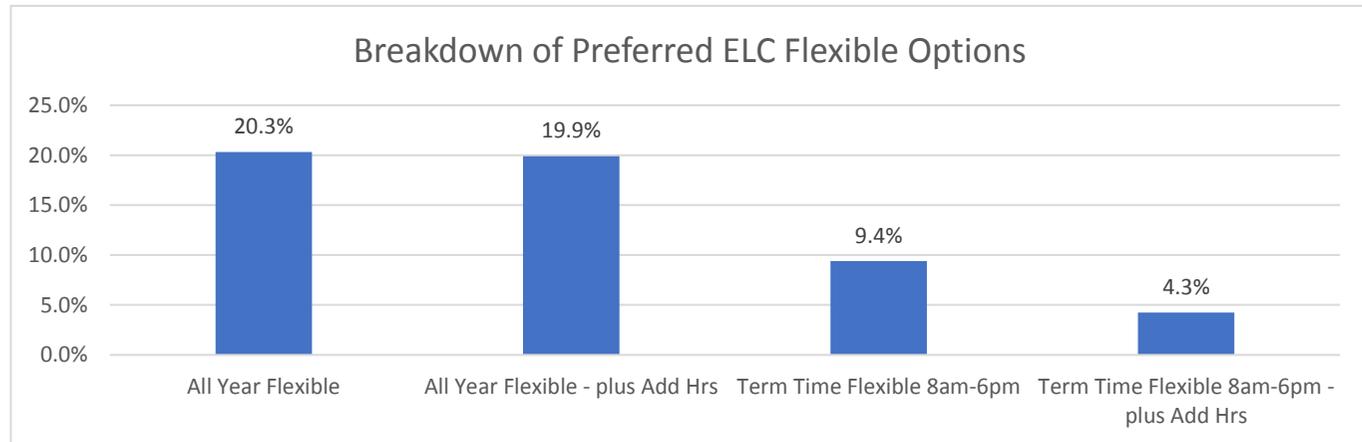
3.5 86.4% of respondents intend to use increased ELC hours to work, whilst 18.5% would use the hours to study and 13.8% would use it for personal time.



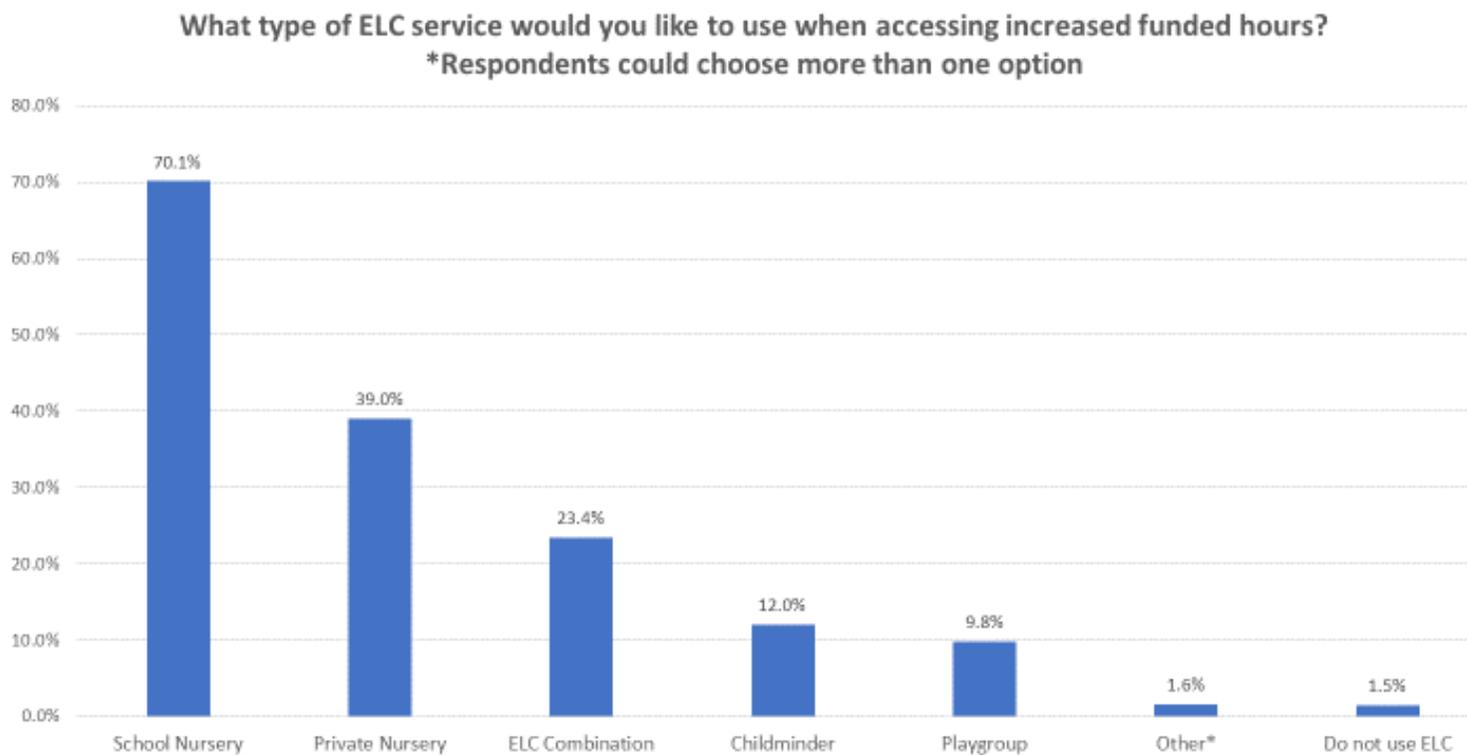
3.6 53.9% of respondents would prefer to access ELC services flexibly. Whereas 28.1% of respondents would mostly access ELC services on a term-time fixed basis (9am-3pm).



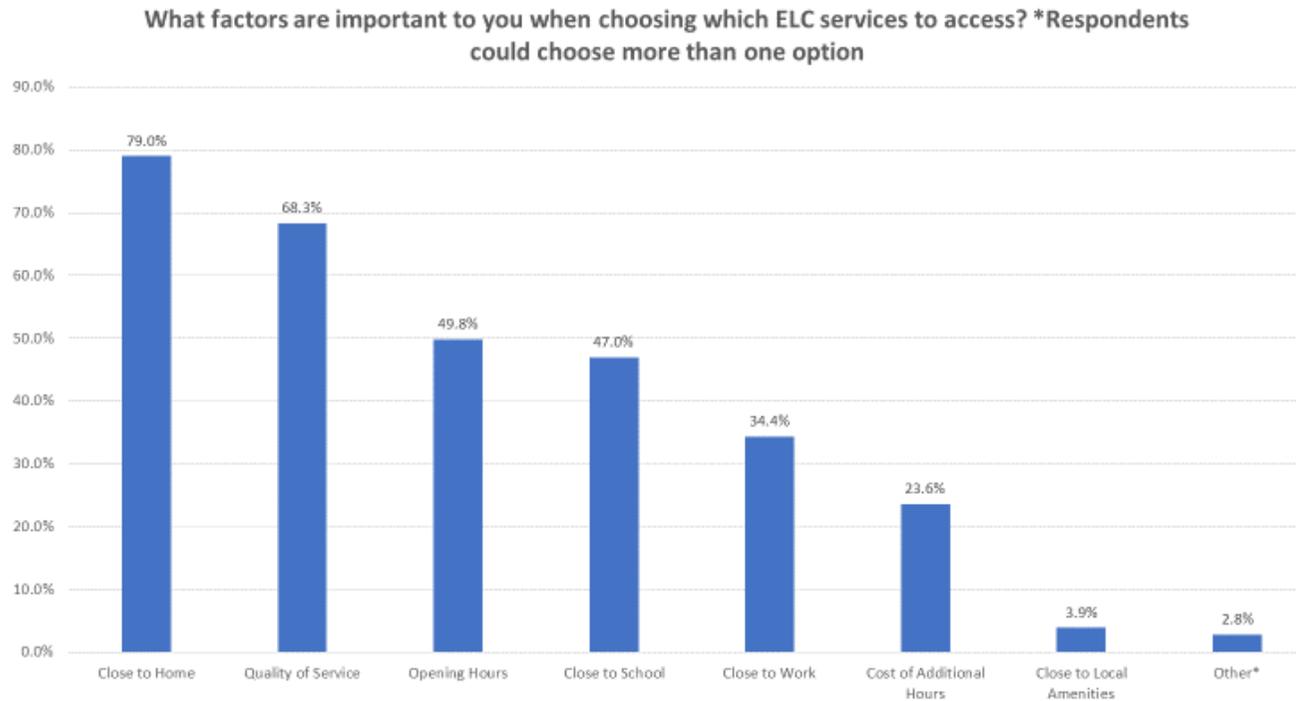
3.7 A breakdown of the flexible options are shown in the graph below.



3.8 70.1% of respondents said their preferred ELC service was the school nursery, whereas 39% said a private nursery and 23.4% preferred to use a combination of ELC services.



- 3.9** In terms of how early in the morning respondents wanted to access ELC services, 29.2% preferred 7:30am, 26.3% preferred 8:00am and 25% preferred 8:30am.
- 3.10** In terms of how late in the afternoon/evening respondents wanted to access ELC services, 24.5% preferred 3:30pm, 15.7% preferred 5:00pm, 15.4% preferred 5:30pm and 19.5% preferred 6:00pm.
- 3.11** In terms of which ELC factors were important when choosing an ELC service, 79% of respondents said an ELC service close to home, 68.3% said the quality of service, 49.8% said opening hours, 47% said close to school and 34.4% said close to work.



3.12 In terms of the most important things that make ELC services work better for families, the top priority was ELC services close to home, followed by having the choice to allocate 1140 hours as required. These findings in conjunction with 53.9% of respondents preferring to access ELC services flexibly demonstrates the importance of flexibility in delivering ELC services to fit in with changing lifestyle choices, work patterns and family time.

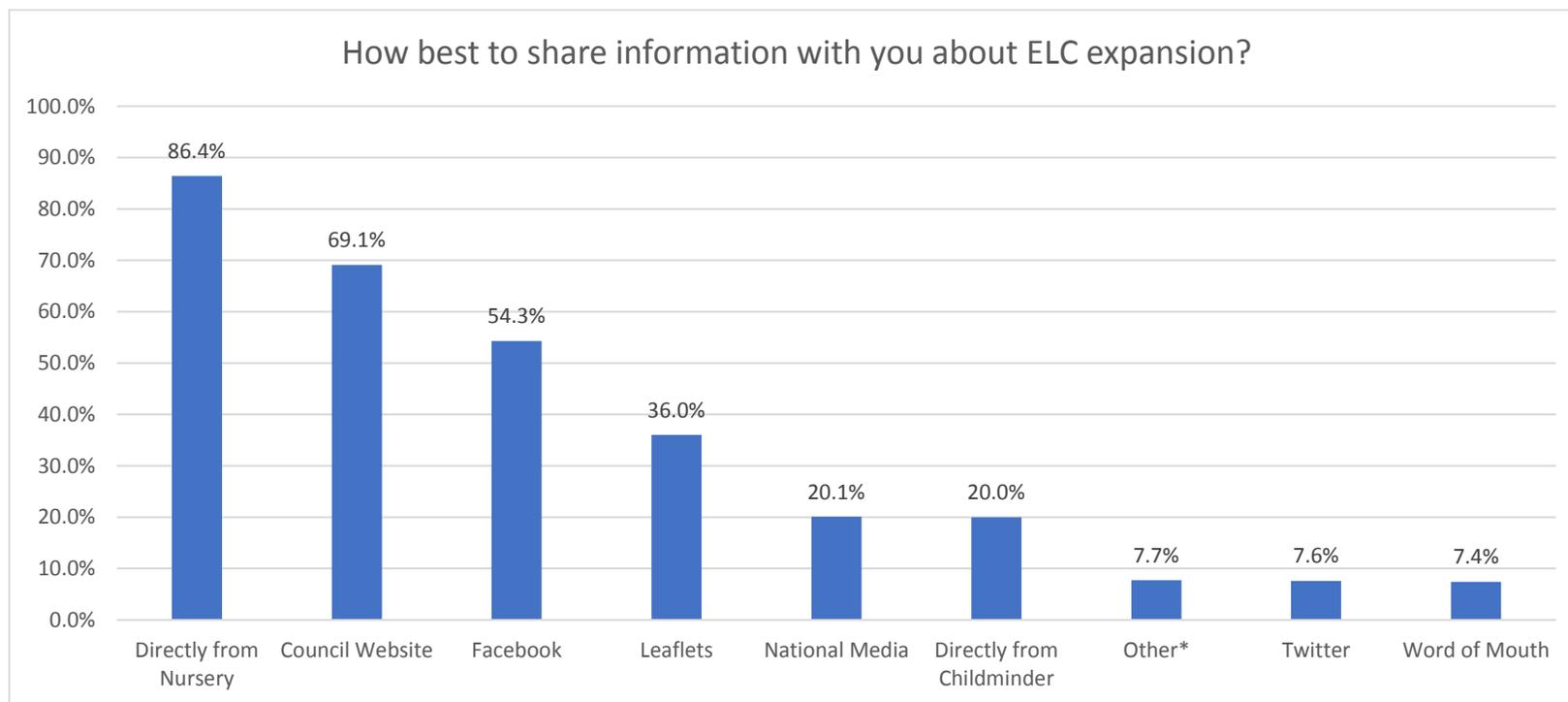
Other priorities included:

- Important that siblings go to same nursery/primary school
- Easier transition into P1
- More spaces in preferred nurseries
- Consistency and quality of ELC setting
- Make it easier for private nurseries to become funded providers
- Closer proximity to child's carer
- Smaller class sizes
- Cost of childcare
- Greater variety of ELC services – not just nurseries or childminders
- Gaelic facilities
- Greater administrative discretion for children who narrowly miss the registration date and miss nursery terms as a result
- Good quality Additional Support Needs Unit

3.13 30.6% of respondents were interested in using a childminder for some or all of their 1140 hours, 20.9% weren't sure.

3.14 In terms of outdoor learning, 36.4% preferred that their child spends part of the day in a local park/greenspace, 27.7% said that children should be free to decide amongst themselves how they want to spend their time – outside or inside.

- 3.15** 44.8% of respondents started thinking about ELC for their child as soon as they were born, 25.5% when they reached 2 years old, whereas only 1.7% of respondents thought about ELC immediately before registration.
- 3.16** Respondents were evenly split on their awareness of the full registration process prior to registering with 42.6% aware of the full process and 45.4% not aware of the full process.
- 3.17** In terms of how best to share information about ELC expansion with parents and carers, 86.4% of respondents said information should directly come from the nursery, 69.1% felt the Council website and 54.3% said Facebook.



- 3.18** 34.7% of respondents were interested in taking part in an informal discussion group based on this survey.
- 3.18** Where would respondents expect to find information on the registration process?
- Health Visitors – a lot of respondents, particularly first time parents mentioned health visitors as a source of information in the first two years
 - Council website
 - Family Information Service
 - Nursery/School website
 - Scottish Government website
 - Primary schools
 - Toddler and Playgroups
 - Community Centres
 - Sport Centres
 - Post Office
 - Facebook
 - Social Media
 - Leaflets/information packs sent to home address
 - Could an ELC information pack be sent to home addresses like bounty packs are following the birth of a child?
- 3.19** What information about Early Learning and Childcare would respondents like to receive or find helpful?
- Develop a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section for ELC expansion on the Council's website
 - How to register/apply in plenty of time
 - How early can I register my child?
 - How applications are processed & timescales
 - A full process chart from registration through to first day of nursery would be helpful
 - Simplify the ELC process, use examples on ACC website/leaflets etc
 - Is it first come first served?
 - What about children with February birthdays?
 - List of ELC settings taking part by area, including childminders
 - Are private nurseries taking part?
 - Opening hours of all ELC settings taking part should be readily available
 - Concern about nursery oversubscription in their local area
 - Can I apply for nurseries outside my catchment area?
 - ELC staff to child ratio per setting
 - Lunch times and menus

- ELC curriculum and activities
- How are nursery days structured? – How many meals will my child get?
- How does free hours work? What is my entitlement?
- Will ELC entitlement impact on my existing welfare benefits?
- Is funding available all year round or just term time?
- What childcare costs may I still have to incur even after expansion?
- Can I pay for additional hours beyond my entitlement?
- Why are only some 2 year olds eligible?
- Will parents be educated/supported on childcare and child development for eligible 2 year olds?
- Do we get free hours or free days with expansion of ELC entitlement?
- Can we mix school nurseries with private nurseries?
- How to feedback on rollout of ELC expansion?
- Will the survey results be published or made available to respondents?
- Information packs on ELC expansion should be available at all nurseries
- What facilities are available for Gaelic education?

4. Next Steps

- 4.1** Aberdeen City Council's Early Years Team are preparing information and guidance for parents and carers which will be made available in December 2019.
- 4.2** Focus Groups by Associated School Group are being arranged for January 2020 and will provide an opportunity for parents and carers to discuss and find out:
- Information on the options and models of Early Learning and Childcare in each ASG;
 - Information on quality and outdoor provision;
 - What 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare may look like for you?; and
 - Provide an opportunity to ask the Early Years Team questions, for example on meals, opening and closing times etc.
- 4.3** Finally, the Early Years Team would like to thank all those who gave up their time to complete the survey. Your responses are very important to us and will help to shape how we design and deliver ELC expansion in Aberdeen. ELC expansion is a key strategic priority for the Council as helps us to deliver the City's Local Outcome Improvement Plan where our vision is to make a

Aberdeen '*a place where all people can prosper*' and supports our efforts to be recognised by UNICEF as a Child Friendly City.

For more information on Early Learning and Childcare Expansion please visit our website:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/services/education-and-childcare/expanding-early-learning-and-childcare>

or email us at elcexpansion@aberdeencity.gov.uk