



**Connect Parent/Carer Survey:  
Early Learning and Childcare and 1140  
Hours**

Findings Report January 2022

# Introduction: The Survey

## About Connect:

- Independent membership organisation and charity for parents and parent groups in Scotland for over 70 years
- Offers a range of services including support and advice to parent groups and parents
- Works with school communities and education staff
- Regularly surveys parents/carers on different issues
- Seeking to promote positive relationships and communication between all involved in education and learning



# Early Learning and Childcare (1140 Hours) Survey

- Ran from 18 October to 30 November 2021
- This survey asked parents/carers of eligible young children aged 2-5 about:
  - their child's funded early learning and childcare funded hours (up to 1140 hours funded by Scottish Government)
  - whether their child's early learning and childcare placement meets their family's needs
  - whether information about their child's learning is shared
- **112 responses from 22 local authorities**



# Happy Families: Positive Parent Comments

## Parents Said:

- *Just very grateful that my child gets the time at nursery and is getting prepared for school in the best way whilst learning but mainly by having fun and social development*
- *I'm happy with my child going to nursery he really enjoys it has fun and learns a lot*
- *We are extremely happy with the quality of experience our son receives, and that our daughter before that received, at this nursery. Staff are exceptionally knowledgeable about early learning and development and this is evident in the way they talk and write about each individual child's progress and interests*
- *I am delighted with the 1140 hours provided, and with the nursery staff in my daughters nursery, would just like to be updated a little more*
- *Our kids both just love our nursery, we have been so so lucky. The atmosphere and learning involved is top notch*
- *Delighted to be receiving these hours which helps with our jobs without having to get wrap around childcare*
- *It's a great resource and would have been useful to help me stay in work under non pandemic conditions*
- *The early learning provision has given me and my family the opportunity to save, enabled us to plan for the future and helped our child to learn and interact with other kids*
- *Very happy with our current provision - thanks!*
- *Very happy with my son's hours and the regular communication with the nursery*
- *It's a massive step in the right direction for working parents*
- *The 1140 hours is a huge saving for working parents, which offsets a portion of the hefty cost of using childcare in order to go to work*

# Survey Report Summary

- Survey responses (**112**) represent a relatively small sample, with responses from **22** out of 32 local authorities. However, information provided does give details of families' preferences and choices, as well as a picture of what provision is (or isn't) on offer from local authorities
- The vast majority of respondents (**74%**) take their 1140 hours entitlement in local authority settings
- **79%** take all of their 1140 hours entitlement; **21%** do not
- **82%** said they accessed their entitlement in ways that worked for their family; **18%** said they did not
- Asked if their early learning and childcare setting kept them informed about their child's learning, **77%** of respondents said yes, **21%** said no and **2%** said they didn't know

# Connect's Calls to Action from the Survey Findings

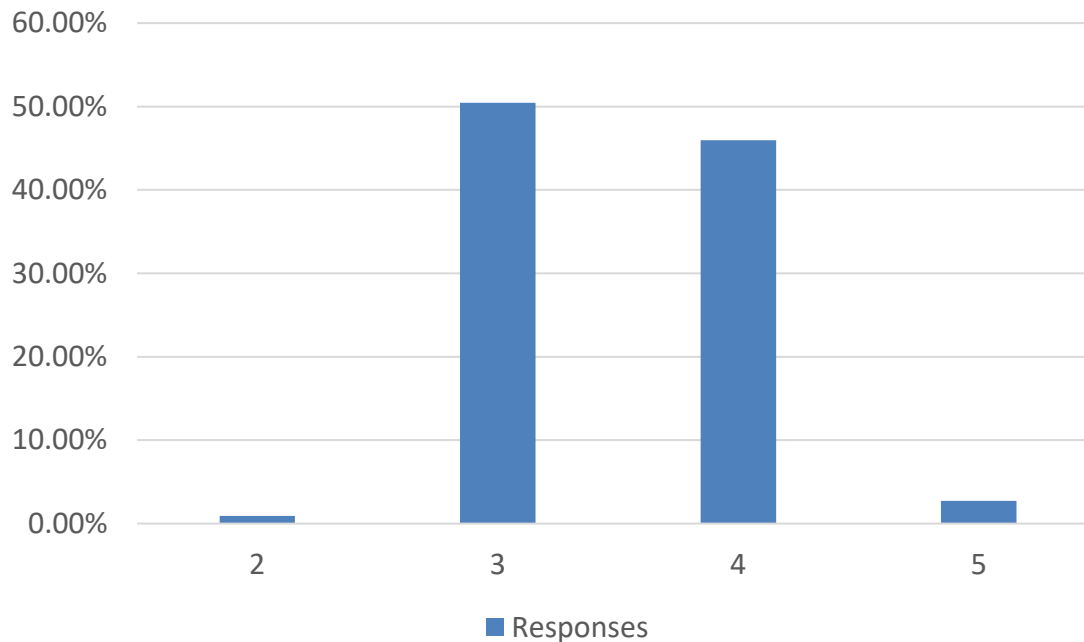
- Just under **one fifth of respondents say their needs** are not being met by the early learning and childcare provision being offered to them
- In some areas, the range and type of provision is not very varied or flexible in terms of meeting parents' and children's needs. From comments made by respondents, parental choice seems to be limited or non-existent. Connect would like to see more in-depth research to investigate to what extent the Scottish Government ambition of parental choice in early learning and childcare has been realised. Some models offered result in many funded hours being unused because they make no practical sense for families. We would welcome Audit Scotland or Scottish Government looking into this
- It is imperative that provision is child-centred – families must not be forced to take excessively long hours if they don't feel it is right for their child

# Connect's Calls to Action from the Survey Findings

- Where centres pressure parents not to take up their full entitlement (eg by collecting children early or dropping them off late), this is clearly not acceptable and the reasons behind this (staffing, costs?) must be addressed
- From the point where this policy was consulted on, Connect was concerned that families would be compelled to take up all 1140 hours when their preference was for fewer hours . This has been happening. Some local authority settings do allow informal flexibility where families take up less than their funded hours. However, the centres retain the full funding from Scottish Government. Open discussion about this needs to take place as there is a conflict between inbuilt centre costs and allowing families flexibility
- Of particular concern is the fact that **23%** of respondents said they were not kept informed about their child's learning or did not know if they were being kept informed. This has to change

# What Age is Your Child?

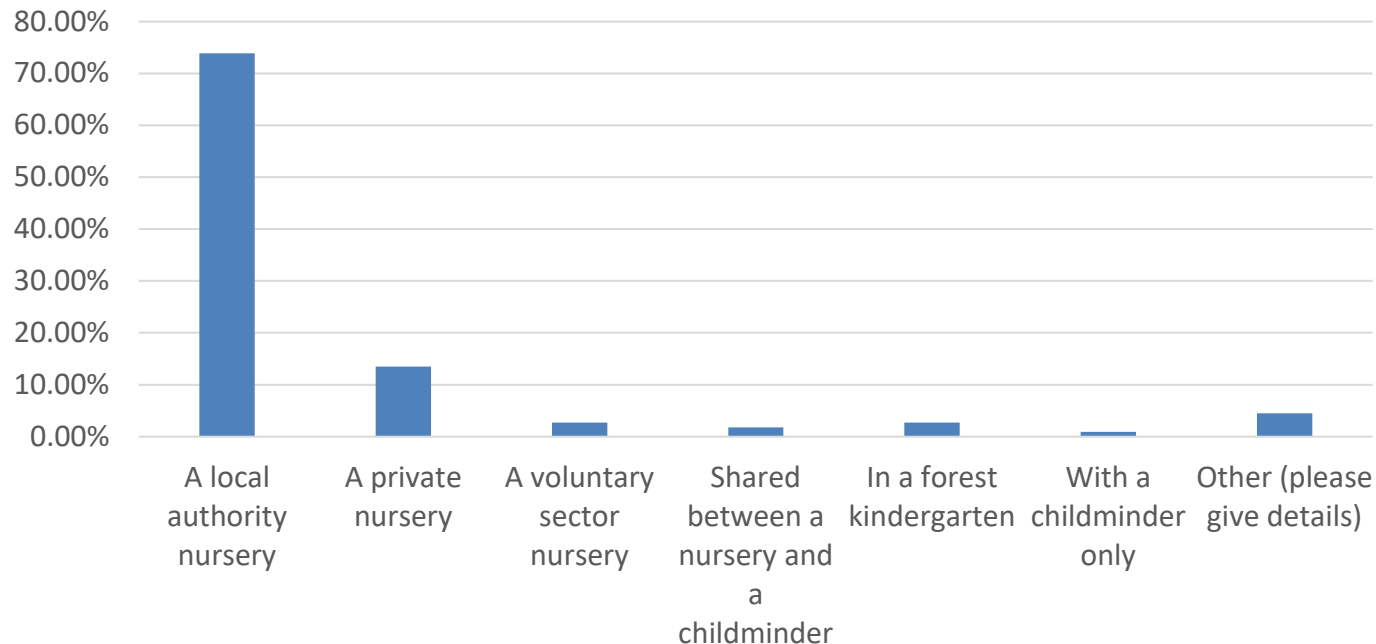
- **1%** of respondents said two years old
- **50%** said three years old
- **46%** said four years old
- **3%** said five years old





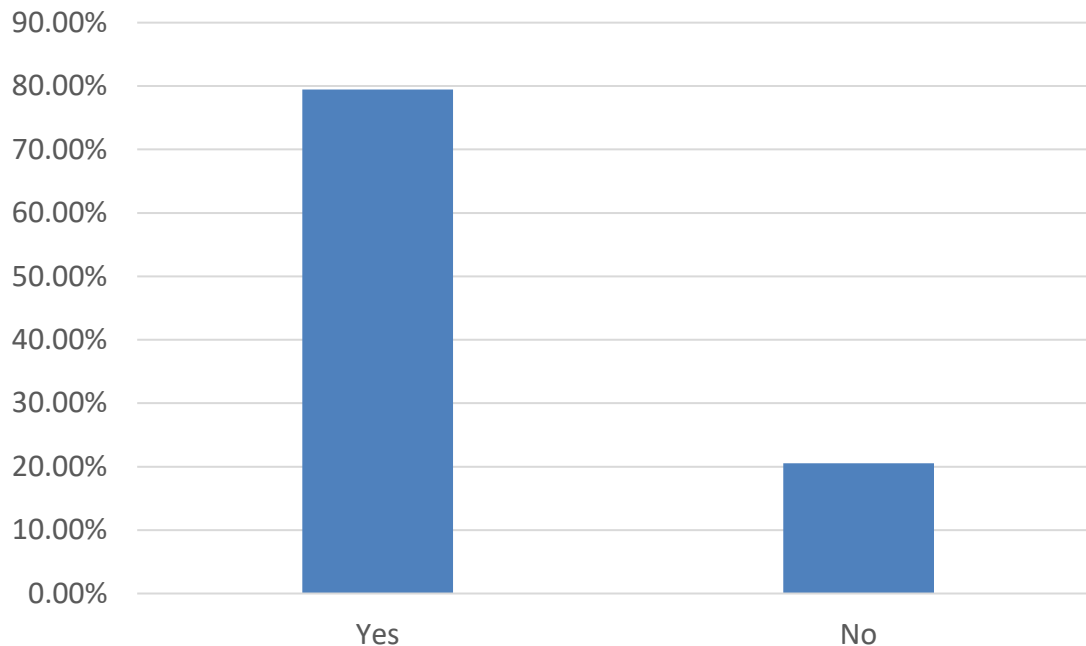
# What type of setting does your child attend to access their funded ELC?

- **74%** of respondents said a local authority nursery
- **14%** said a private nursery
- **3%** said a voluntary sector nursery
- **2%** said shared between a nursery and a childminder
- **3%** said in a forest kindergarten
- **1%** said in with a childminder only
- **5%** said other (comments include shared between local authority and private nursery or forest kindergarten, didn't get funded place so had to go private, local authority specialist provision)



# Do you receive all 1140 hours of your free (often described as ‘funded’) Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement?

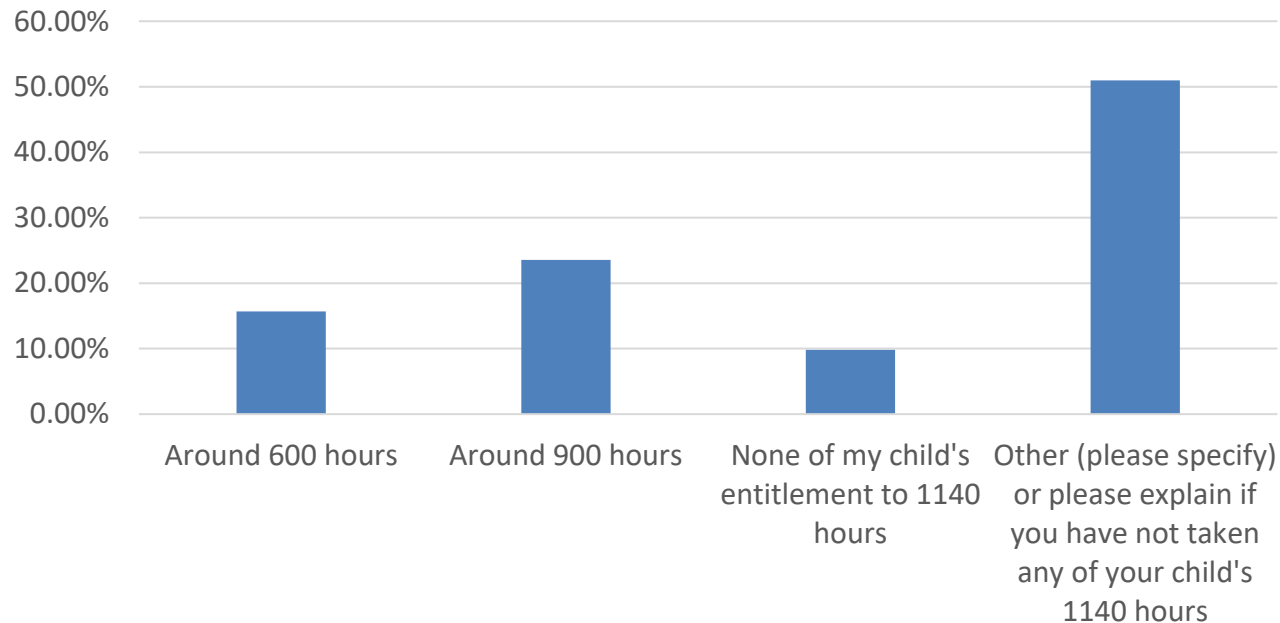
- **79%** of respondents said yes
- **21%** said no



# If you do not receive all of your funded hours, approximately how many hours do you receive?

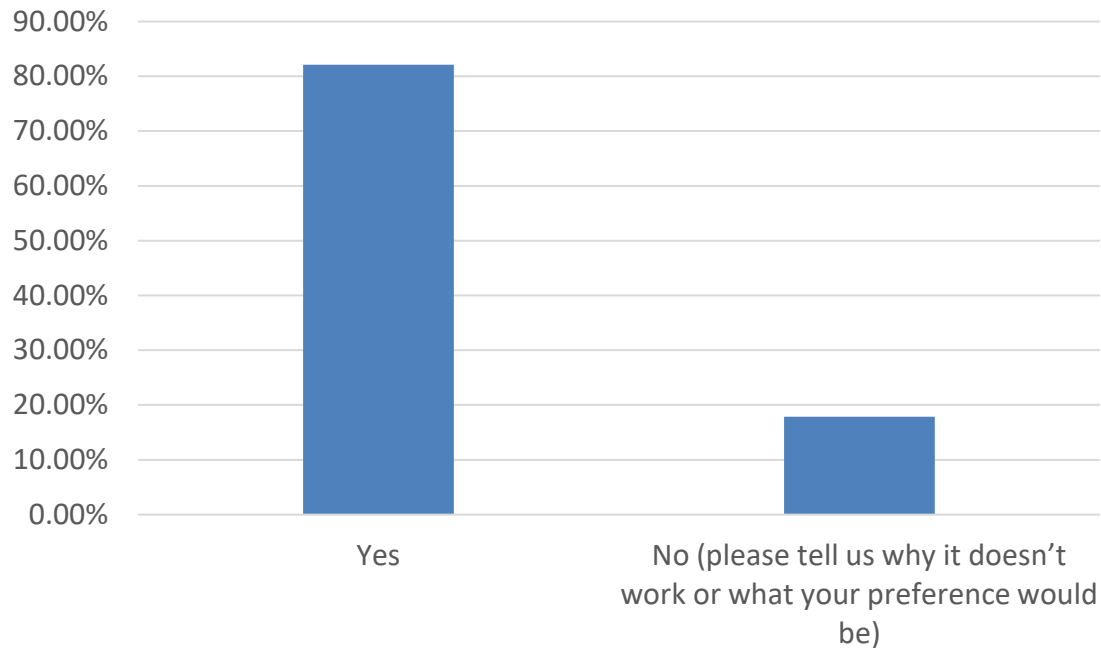
Of the 29% who said they did not receive their full 1140 hours' entitlement,

- **16%** of respondents said they received around 600 hours
- **24%** said around 900 hours
- **10%** said none of my child's entitlement to 1140 hours
- **51%** said other, with a wide range of responses



# Do you access your child's funded hours in a way that works for you and your family?

- **82%** of respondents said yes
- **18%** said no



# Parents' Voices on Hours Offered/Received

## The following themes emerged through parents' comments:

- Provision did not match the needs of working parent(s) eg hours too short, no flexibility, no option to buy additional hours
- Hours are incompatible with school drop off/pick up times (earlier start and/or later finish) leading to an inability to take all 1140 hours (ie the hours are funded by Scottish Government but aren't practically available for all families)
- No choice of model or flexibility offered (for younger children, for family arrangements)
- The 1140 hours are not delivered in full

## Parents Said:

- *I had applied and got into a nursery with 9-3 and holidays off which would have been ideal but 2 days before he started the council changed the hours to a 48 week plan*
- *On paper we do receive them all but we are told we need to collect our children by 5.30pm latest, encouraged to actually collect them between 5.15 (when they are ready to go) and 5.30. Technically our session runs daily from 1pm-5.45pm. I've never complained but it has crossed my mind recently that my child loses 30mins each day if they are standing ready to go home at 5.15 each day, waiting for me to collect. It all adds up!*
- *I was given two full days, then every second Friday which is no good to working families*
- *It isn't structured in a way to support families' needs. We have to pay from 8-9am but never use this hour because we drop off sibling at the attached school at 9am*
- *My nursery allowed me to keep the same hours to suit my work. Otherwise, I was being forced to take 8am-6pm two days per week, even though I would only use 9-3. So we have 9-11.30 one day and 9-3 two days. I don't think it's fair on the council to force the new block times onto families - child care should be more flexible.*
- *Two 10 hour days is way too much for a 4 year old. Shorter days every day would be more beneficial as it's a whole week in between nursery again which just isn't right*
- *I would love for my son to go to the local school nursery but the short hours don't work*

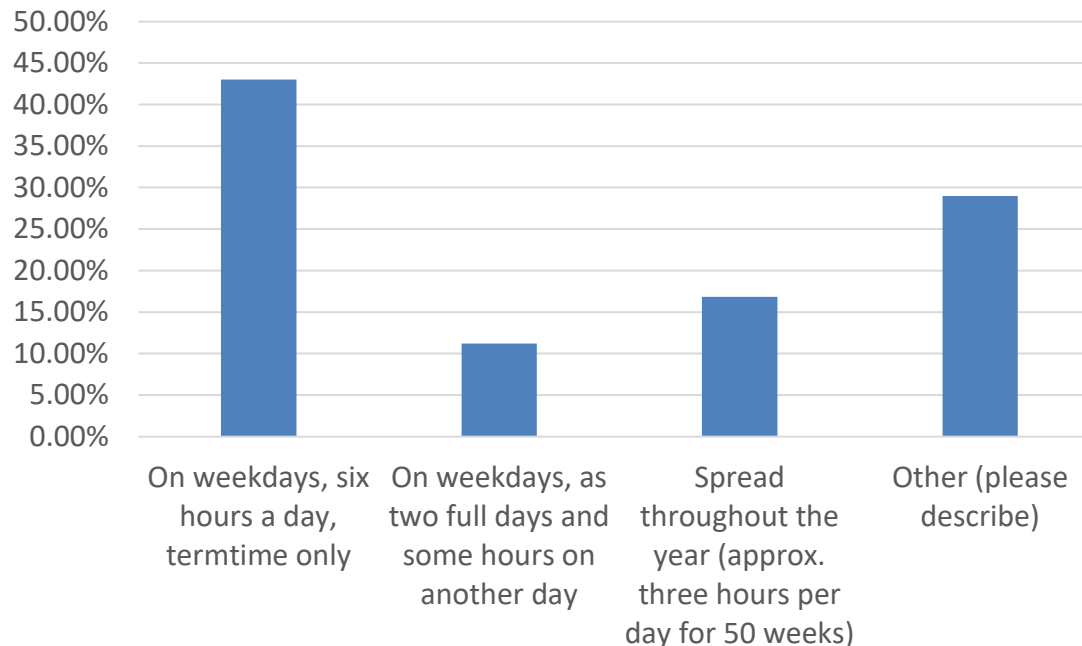
# Parents' Voices on Hours Offered/Received

## Parents Said:

- *My children attend 8am-12.30pm Monday to Friday. The nursery is opened 48 weeks; I am a teacher and it would suit our family if they could attend for longer hours but in termtime only*
- *Termtime only placement was not an option available. We receive 5 morning sessions each week but are often encouraged not to use these sessions in school holidays. We have also been told they don't have the staff for full morning sessions so we need to drop him off at 8.30am then collect at 12.30pm. We lose lots of funded childcare due to this*
- *The hours offered by school nursery are limited to groups of two days Mon/Tue or Wed/Thu and days cannot be swapped for other days nor to another setting. Fridays are so sporadic that they cannot be relied on for childcare and although the hours can be used in another setting, they only amount to half a day which would be very inconsistent and confusing for a child if one was able to find a private setting with availability at all*
- *The hours given in each local authority are so mixed depending on whether your local site is a nursery or a family centre. I am lucky I get 48 weeks a year but it's just luck of the draw my village has a family centre. The process for allocation of slots this year was a shambles and they stopped allowing swapping (which they did very well in previous years) which led to parents who had already arranged sensible swaps with each other being forced to go back into multiple ballots*
- *Our private nursery isn't very flexible on how we use our funded hours; we are fixed to mornings only which means we have to pay for afternoons*
- *As hours are over the whole year, I feel they are not used as much throughout the holidays. Perhaps a different pattern of hours would be used more?*
- *The core hours of 10-2 are very difficult. Children starting nursery at age 3 (especially after Covid) are not used to being away from home and should have the option of just morning nursery and home for lunch. The core hours have not taken into consideration families that have other children at the school. It would be much better to have them as 8.30-12.30 to allow for new starters to be eased in with just a morning session*

# If your child does receive their full 1140 hours entitlement, how do they take the hours?

- **43%** of respondents said on weekdays, six hours a day, termtime only
- **11%** said on weekdays, as two full days and some hours on another day
- **17%** said spread throughout the year (approx. three hours per day for 50 weeks)
- **29%** said other (please describe)



# Parents' Comments: Variations in Hours

Of the **29%** who said 'other' and did not take their hours in the options given in the survey question, variations included:

- Mornings only (various hours, over 46, 48 or 50 weeks per year and some did not take the hours in the holidays)
- Afternoons only (various hours, over 46, 48 or 50 weeks per year)
- Mixture of full and part days (two full days, one or two afternoons; four half days, one full day; two long days, two half days etc)
- Two, three or four full days (ten hours for some)
- Five six hour days, termtime only (38 weeks)
- Mon-Thurs 8.45am-3.15pm, no Fridays, termtime only
- Placements split between centres
- Parents paying for additional hours at different settings or the same setting

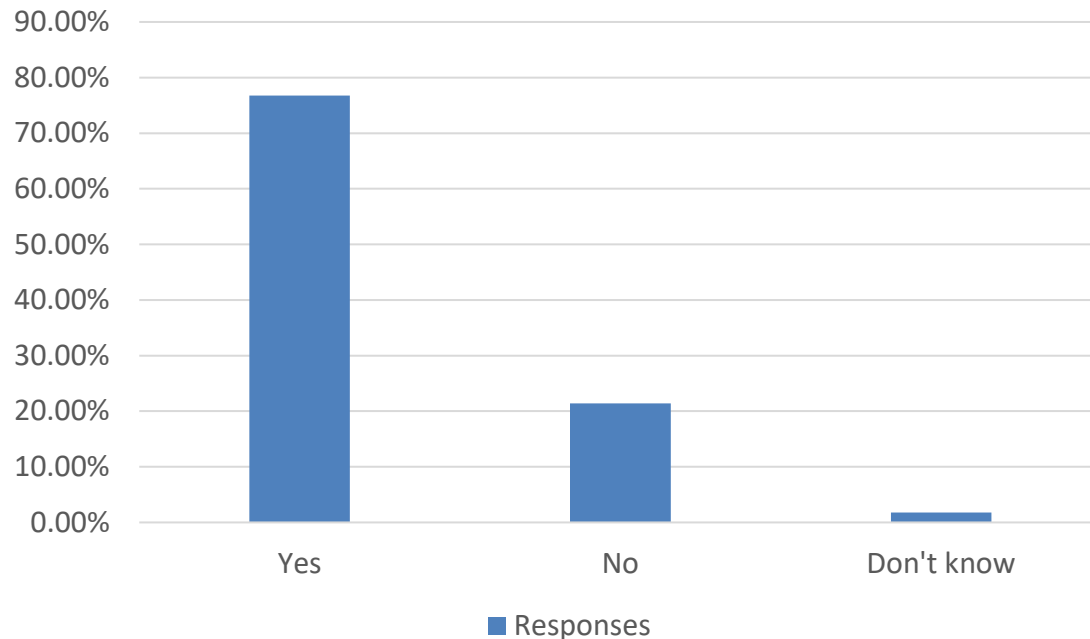
## Parents Said:

- *Three mornings a week. Sadly with my & my husband's shift working we have to pay for a nanny which isn't covered by 1140*
- *They didn't get a funded place*



# Your child's learning from age three is part of Scotland's *Curriculum for Excellence*. Do you feel your nursery or other setting tells you regularly about your child's learning?

- **77%** of respondents said yes
- **21%** said no
- **2%** said don't know



# Parents' Voices: Communication about Learning – Positive Experiences

## Parents Said:

- *We receive weekly reports about our child's learning, and a termly newsletter that explains the wider learning themes and pedagogical approach in the nursery. The staff handover each day and are adept at explaining how children learn through their play and through the daily routines of nursery life*
- *We get a newsletter but it has always been Covid times so it's hard to know what is going on*
- *Regular learning updates and good communication with his key workers and others*
- *Old nursery never heard anything, he played in garden most of his time there. This nursery I can tell he's learning by what he tells me himself*
- *We receive regular learning updates and are asked periodically to contribute to my child's learning plan and priorities*
- *We get weekly updates on what they are doing. And quarterly we see their folio*
- *The nursery have great updates on the Seesaw app and they inform us well after each session*

# Parents' Voices: Communication about Learning – Negative Experiences

## Parents Said:

- *There is only one update a week on learning journals. And these are a week behind. Nursery used to use twitter and we were given updates of what the children were up to every day*
- *A few pictures but I don't see much in terms of what he's learning. Some posts are generic for a whole group of children*
- *Tricky with it being during the pandemic*
- *Not told anything, no reporting to parents other than some pictures on a closed Facebook group*
- *No, I rarely receive updates on what my child has been learning. The staff never tell me how my child has been when I collect him at home time*
- *We have not been given feedback of any kind since my child commenced nursery in August*
- *Would just like to hear more from the nursery about how my child is getting on*
- *They are always too busy to discuss the learning the kids do*





We are very grateful to all the parents and carers who took part in this survey