

About this Easy Read

Building Blocks: What are the barriers and facilitators to accessing funded early learning and childcare provision for children with learning disabilities in Scotland?



Easy Read Executive Summary



This is an Easy Read version of an **Executive Summary**.



An **Executive Summary** is a short version of a full report with just the most important parts.



The full report is about some research SCLD did.



The full report is called Building Blocks: What are the barriers and facilitators to accessing funded early learning and childcare provision for children with learning disabilities in Scotland?



The report is about the access children with learning disabilities have to **free early learning and childcare places**.



Free early learning and childcare places are spaces for young children in nurseries or with childminders that the Scottish Government pays for.

About the Research



The Scottish Government knows that early learning and childcare is important for children as they grow up.



Being able to get good support for children when they are young helps them to learn things and to be healthy and well.



Lots of laws and policies have been made to try and make sure that children always have the best start in life



One of these policies is that children aged 3 and 4 should get **free early learning and childcare places**.



In Scotland children get a set amount of **free early learning and childcare** hours.



This means time when they go to nursery or another place where they are looked after.



Just now children in Scotland get 1140 hours a year for 3 to 4 year olds.



SCLD wanted to hear from parents of children with a learning disability.



SCLD wanted to hear about their experiences of getting free childcare.



This includes the parents of children who are allowed to get funded early learning and childcare but are not using it.



SCLD thought there might be some things to help parents who want to use free childcare but are not able to just now.

What we did



SCLD did different things to get the information for this report.



SCLD sent a **freedom of information request** to Scottish Councils asking how many children with learning disabilities have been using their **free early learning and childcare places**.



A **freedom of information request** is when someone asks for information which has to be given by law.



Parents and carers of children with learning disabilities were interviewed.



People in charge of organising the **free early learning and childcare places** in councils were interviewed.



Childminders and people working in nurseries were asked to do a survey.

What we found out



When we asked councils if children with learning disabilities used their free spaces they said they did not know.



Council staff told us it was important to them that all children were able to get their free spaces.



Parents told us that they did not always use their free childcare even when they would like to.



People who work in childcare sometimes thought things needed to be better.

These things make it harder for children with learning disabilities to use their free spaces.



Sometimes staff in the places that look after young children did not understand that the law says children with learning disabilities have the same rights.



Some places do not have enough money to make changes that are needed to look after children with learning disabilities.



There used to be more places that were just for disabled children.

These things help children with learning disabilities to use their free spaces.



When Councils find out about children’s support needs long before they go into nursery.



When all the teams that might be needed to support the child, like NHS and Social Work, work well together.



When local authorities let children with learning disabilities come into nursery at two years old instead of three.

These are the things childcare providers said made them sure they could look after children with learning disabilities.



Lots of childcare providers told us they were sure they could look after children with learning disabilities.



They said staff had looked after children with learning disabilities in the past.



They said staff had good training.



They said experts like speech and language therapists and physiotherapists supported them well.

Things childcare providers said would help them feel like they could look after children with learning disabilities



Some providers and childminders said they were not sure they could look after children with learning disabilities.



They said they needed more training.



They said they needed more support from experts like speech and language therapists and physiotherapists.



They said they needed more staff.



They said they needed better equipment and changes to the building.

What did parents say?

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Parents of children with learning disabilities said they found it hard to get information about the support their children could get.



Parents said they found it hard to make sure the right support was in place for their children in their early learning and childcare setting.



Some parents said that children with learning disabilities were treated differently from other children.



This meant they were not able to access the same services.



Children had a good experience when the staff had a good attitude.



Children had a good experience if there is good management.



Some parents said they and their children had good experiences when the providers were open and honest when they talked to them.



Parents said it was important that all staff have training on meeting the needs of children with learning disabilities.



Some parents said they had to put their children in specialist nurseries because the staff there would be trained to meet the needs of their children.



Parents said it was important that class sizes in nurseries are as small as possible so staff can give enough attention to their children.

What next?



The Scottish Government says it wants to make sure that all children and young people get the support they need to have the best life they can.



Some parents we spoke with were very happy with their child's experience of childcare.

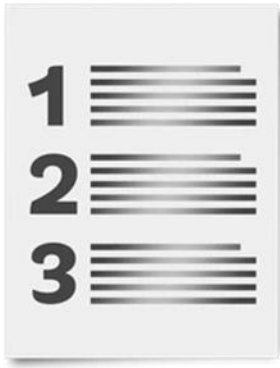


But most parents said that early learning and childcare is not working well for children with learning disabilities.



There needs to be more money and other resources to make early learning and childcare better for children with learning disabilities.

What SCLD thinks would make things better



SCLD have put some recommendations in this report based on what parents told us.



These recommendations are things that can be done to help children with learning disabilities use their funded early learning and childcare places.

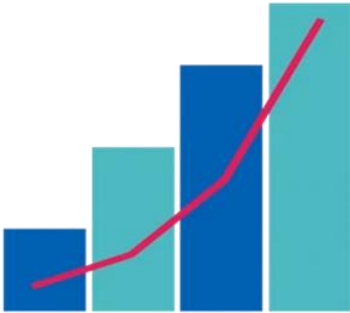


Our suggestions are small changes that can be made soon.



SCLD believes bigger changes will need to be made in the future to make sure early learning and childcare works for children with learning disabilities.

Recommendation 1



There should be better information about the number of children with learning disabilities not using their free space.



Children with learning disabilities should always be included in the **Early Learning and Childcare Census**.



The **Early Learning and Childcare Census** is a report that records facts about the children using their **free early learning and childcare place**.

Recommendation 2



Parents should be given clear and easy to understand advice about what services are available for their children.



This should be done by telling all parents about **Enquire**.



Enquire is a service that tells parents what support and services are available for children with additional support needs in Scotland.



Including information about **Enquire** in the Baby Box that all new parents can get in Scotland is a good way to do this.

Recommendation 3



Parents must be able to access support programmes that are helpful for raising a child with a learning disability.



An example of a good support programme is a programme called **Early Positive Approaches to Support**.

Recommendation 4



Health visitors must be trained to know what to do to support families and be able to tell them where to go for information and advice.

Recommendation 5



There should be better testing of people who want to work in early years settings to see if they know how to work with children with learning disabilities.

Recommendation 6



Early years workers should be trained to work with children who have profound and multiple learning disabilities.



This could be done by creating a new training module called an '**Open Badge**'.



The **Scottish Social Services Council** run the **Open Badge** website.



The **Scottish Social Services Council** is the organisation that registers people who work in social care.

Recommendation 7



People who look after children should make sure they are always communicating with parents about their child's needs.

Recommendation 8



The Scottish Government has promised to fund early learning and childcare places for 1 and 2 year olds.

Step 1

The Scottish Government will do this in stages starting with children who live in poverty.



Children with learning disabilities should be included in the first stage.

Recommendation 9



The Scottish Government should make sure local authorities let parents use special nurseries and nurseries that are open to everyone if they want to do this.

Recommendation 10



The Scottish Government should make money available to help to make sure there are enough good quality childcare spaces for children with learning disabilities.



This needs to happen in every area of Scotland.

What next?



The Scottish government has said that it wants to learn lessons from the Coronavirus pandemic.



They want to help to make things more equal.



They want to protect human rights.



They need to listen to the people who did not get fair chances before the pandemic.



This will help the Scottish Government know what they need to make better.



There needs to be big changes to give children with learning disabilities the same chances as other children.



This is important if the Scottish Government want to make Scotland more fair.