

Midlothian Council – Early Learning and Childcare Expansion 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 from 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.

Midlothian Council is working to co-ordinate all of the activities required to meet these commitments.

The objectives of the expansion are as follows:

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

The council recognises that its external funded providers will have a crucial role to play in achieving the 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. Applications must be made by a legally constituted organisation.

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 Midlothian Council by the Scottish Government to implement this programme is limited, therefore it is imperative that both the council and funded providers think creatively about how to make the best use of resources. This scheme should be your funder of last resort and you must consider all other reasonable and sustainable alternative/additional sources of funding that may be available to support your proposal, including business development loans, grants and match funding opportunities, and include this in section 2 of the application. If appropriate we may ask you to provide evidence of unsuccessful funding applications.

The council's Economic Development service may be able to support you with accessing additional funding sources. For further information please contact the team on 0131 271 3435 or by e-mail to econ-dev@midlothian.gov.uk.

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 Midlothian Council or any other organisation
- Equipment with a short economic life

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

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 land or property is disposed of or if the service is otherwise withdrawn within an agreed period from the date of the grant award. This may include allowing the council to review title deeds and to take standard security over land or property for an agreed period. The agreed period in which repayment may apply will vary depending on the level of grant assistance offered. If your application is successful and we consider security may be necessary we will discuss what will be appropriate with you.

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 and supporting documents, marked as confidential, to Magnus Inglis, Early Years Expansion, Midlothian Council, Fairfield House, 8 Lothian Road, Dalkeith, EH22 3ZG or email to Magnus.Inglis@midlothian.gov.uk. The closing date for receipt of applications is **12pm on Wednesday 8 May 2019**.

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. The panel will include the expansion programme manager, at least one experienced early years manager, and representatives appropriate services in the council, such as Building Services. A council solicitor may also be consulted if appropriate.

Applications must show evidence of a sound budget and financial planning, and strong content with reference to the objectives.

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 Midlothian where settings are regularly near capacity and in some cases there are waiting lists in operation, or where it is considered that there is potential for this following the increase in ELC hours. As a primary concern, priority may be given to applications from localities where demand will be high compared to capacity and where an increase in places would therefore be most beneficial.

- **Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation**

SIMD is the [Scottish Government's official tool](#) 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 can be found [here](#).

- **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 Midlothian-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**

You have been awarded the full amount applied for in your proposal. 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**

You have been awarded part of the amount applied for in your proposal. This may be because evaluation panel has agreed 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 this by e-mail to Magnus.Inglis@midlothian.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 as it would not be possible to carry out construction works in the time remaining.
- Where an organisation has more than one setting and hence expansion project they want to apply for funding for, a separate application should be made for each project.
- There is no minimum or maximum bid amount, 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. The cost per additional place may be considered when comparing applications.
- The additional capacity should be in place by August 2020, so please ensure that if your proposal involves the purchasing of land or property, and/or construction or refurbishment, planning permission etc. that you have planned for how long this will take.
- You must ensure that you have all necessary permissions required prior to work commencing and you are responsible for all necessary certification etc. upon completion.
- 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. Such details will be discussed at the time of the grant award.
- The council reserves the right to reduce or withdraw the funding to an applicant in the event that the project is determined to not be meeting its objectives.