



ORKNEY
ISLANDS COUNCIL

Early Learning and Childcare

Charging Policy 2023/2024



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Entitlement to Free Provision

In August 2021, 3 - 5 year olds and eligible 2 year olds became entitled to 1140 funded hours of Early Learning and Childcare each full year they attend.

In Orkney, most children become eligible for a funded place at the start of the term after they have their third birthday and remain eligible until they reach the end of the term before they are due to start school.

What are we charging for?

Hours requested in addition to the 1140 funded hours for 3 – 5 year olds will be charged for. At registration parents/carers choose to use their funded hours as follows:-

- All settings listed below, 38 weeks (term-time) = 30 hours per week
- Glaitness, Papdale and St Andrews, 46 weeks (year round) = 25 hours per week
- Dounby and Stromness, 43 weeks (year round) = 26.5 hours per week
- All settings listed below, 38 weeks (term-time) = 30 hours per week with the option to purchase additional hours during the holiday periods.

The entitlement to these hours are pro-rata, for example if your child is due to start the term after their third birth for the January or April intake, they would only be entitled to a proportion of hours during the remainder of the school year, not a full years' provision as above.

Our larger settings (Dounby, Glaitness, Papdale, Stromness, St Andrews and the Strynd Nursery) operate an extended day offering daily early morning and late afternoon sessions which are outwith the school day (example 08:30 – 17:30).

Glaitness, Papdale and St Andrews operate over 46 weeks of the year covering Easter, Summer and October school holidays.

Dounby and Stromness operate over 43 weeks of the year covering one week of the Easter and October holidays and three weeks during the summer holidays.

The Strynd Nursery offers an extended day during term-time.

All of the above settings are not open the first two weeks in July (closed for a deep-clean), Christmas holidays, five in-service days plus three public holidays (Easter Monday, May Day and Dounby Show).

How do I book additional hours?

We recommend that if you are considering additional hours that you speak with the Nursery Manager or Senior Practitioner for advice on what can be offered at their setting.

Parent/carers will be able to book additional hours in blocks for each term. Requests should be made using the Additional Hours Request Form, which can be obtained from the manager at the setting.

Completed Additional Hours Request Forms need to be submitted a minimum of seven days prior to the start of the term. Ad hoc hours cannot be accommodated.

How much will additional hours cost?

The current cost for additional hours of Early Learning and Childcare is £5.00 per hour.

Payment Structure

Following receipt of the request for additional hours, invoices will be issued monthly in arrears.

Methods of Payment

Online Payments

Payments can be made online using credit or debit card by visiting www.orkney.gov.uk and selecting 'Online Payments' in the 'Online Services' section of the website. Follow the instructions for invoice payments to pay your Early Learning and Childcare invoice.

Payments in Person or by Telephone

Customer Services in Kirkwall and Stromness are available throughout the day, including lunchtimes, to offer the maximum convenience for all our customers.

Unpaid fees are managed through the Council arrears process. If an account remains in arrears, this will result in the removal of unfunded sessions and early learning and childcare provision will be reduced to funded sessions only.

Customer Services (Kirkwall): Council Offices, School Place, Kirkwall, KW15 1NY, 01856 873535 ext 2904.

Customer Services (Stromness): Warehouse Buildings, 2-12 Victoria Street, Stromness, KW16 3AA ext 2901.

Childcare Vouchers

Parent/carers should contact their Childcare Voucher Provider to register for voucher payments. The Council are currently registered to accept Busy Bees and Edenred vouchers, but if you are registered with another voucher provider please let us know and we will try to register with other voucher providers where possible. The Childcare Voucher Scheme closed to new entrants in October 2018.

Childcare Choices – Tax Free Childcare

The Tax Free childcare scheme is a Government initiative that allows eligible working families to claim 20% of their childcare costs, up to £2,000 per year (or £4,000 for a child with a disability). Parents/carers can apply for tax free childcare payments through HMRC by visiting www.childcarechoices.gov.uk. If you decide to sign up to this we can provide further information on how you are able to use this to pay against your invoice.

Can I get a refund?

You will not be refunded if:

- Your child does not attend their requested non-funded hours.
- Your child arrives late or leaves early.

You will be refunded if:

- If the Council withdraws additional hours.

Who do I contact if I have queries about my invoice?

In the first instance all queries should be made by email to elc@orkney.gov.uk, or by calling Early Learning and Childcare on 01856873535 extension 2209 or 3220.