

Early Years Scotland Mental Health, Happiness and Wellbeing Report



Contents

Summary of Key Findings	3
Background to the Project	5
Methodology	6
Introduction to Project Findings	7
Key Findings	8
Children’s Responses	8
Workforce Responses	10
Parents Primary One – Primary Three Responses	13
Parents of 3–5-year old Children’s Responses	15
‘One stop shop’ Model of Support	17
Analysis of Findings	19
Annexe 1	22
Annexe 2	28

Early Years Scotland would like to thank the 15 local authorities that noted an interest in being part of this mental health and wellbeing engagement project and for the information they provided in advance. This information has been reviewed and taken into account as part of the overall report findings, and discussions within the Scottish Government Task and Finish Group 7. We are also very grateful to the local authorities that supported this engagement process and the settings, childminders, schools, parents, and children who participated in the surveys.



3-5 Mental Health, Happiness and Wellbeing Project Summary of Key Findings

In undertaking this engagement project, Early Years Scotland (EYS) has engaged with children aged 3-5, their parent/carers, the parents/carers of children in P1-P3 and the early years workforce in 6 local authority areas across Scotland, with over 600 respondents to the online questionnaires.

Children's Engagement

Play was a common theme for the children we engaged with. The majority stated that this is what makes them feel happy – whether that be with friends, outside, with sand/water or games. Nurture also plays a big part in children's emotional regulation – they feel sad when they don't have friends to play with, or they miss their parents. When they feel this way, they seek comfort, telling their parent/carer or a worker within their setting and seek comfort from them. Cuddles are very popular in making children feel happy again, coming from people they trust and care for, such as parents/carers, ELC staff, friends and other family members.

Workforce Engagement

One of the overall emerging themes was the responsiveness of the early years workforce to both children and families, which highlights the strong reciprocal bonds created by both. It was clear from responses, however, that staff would benefit greatly from access to more professional learning opportunities, such as additional developmentally appropriate resources, that are designed to meet the needs of young children's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing. There was also widespread support from the workforce for increased adult/child ratios within settings. This would allow additional staff to be available to support children's overall development more effectively, as well as their mental health, happiness, and wellbeing. Increased support and collaboration with external agencies was also cited as being beneficial for the workforce to support the holistic needs of the children and families.

Parents/Carers of Children in P1-P3

Parents/carers of children who are now in P1-P3 reflected on their child's 3-5 experiences and spoke positively of the assistance they received from their ELC setting to support their child's mental wellbeing. In terms of transitions from ELC to school, there was an overall 'fear of the unknown' – new environments in which children had not spent much time, new routines etc. COVID played a huge part – these children did not benefit from traditional transitions, which exacerbated any concerns or worries about this important step in their lives. Parents/carers also requested clearer guidance and support for their child's mental health, happiness and wellbeing.

Parents/Carers of Children aged 3-5

Half of all respondents stated that in situations where they had concerns about their child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing, they would approach their ELC setting in the first instance for advice, support, and guidance. Importance of informal networks were also cited, such as family and peer support and requests for more access to family learning experiences, such as stay and play sessions. Parents would also benefit from access to more opportunities to learn about their child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing, however there was also recognition of time constraints and pressures on parents who feel they are 'constantly juggling' a number of different aspects of their lives.

A helpline/online 'one stop shop' model of support

There was overwhelming support from all parents surveyed for the creation of a 'one stop shop' model of support, where information, advice and support about children's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing can be accessed in a manner which best suits individual families. Support included age and developmentally appropriate tailored resources for children aged 3-5, with information on child development, how to help children be confident, dealing with anxiety at a young age, and behaviour support were just some of the ideas cited for this type of service. A telephone line, FAQs, a webchat service, and opportunities for peer engagement, as well as short, 'bite-sized' videos, would all be welcomed.



Background to the Project

The Children and Young People's Mental Health and Wellbeing Joint Delivery Board (JDB)¹ is responsible for 8 key deliverables, some of which were carried forward or have evolved from prior deliverables, and others which have been newly created. These have been agreed by both Scottish Ministers and COSLA. Where appropriate, these deliverables are being taken forward by Task and Finish Groups, with membership being tailored to the specific deliverables, bringing together those best able to implement the necessary actions.

This project falls under Deliverable and Task and Finish group 7:

Work jointly with the Perinatal and Infant Mental Health Programme Board to consider what is currently available and what is required in the future to support the mental health and wellbeing of 3-5 year olds across Scotland and produce recommendations for further action.

The work of the Task and Finish Group was to focus predominantly on finding out what can be done at a universal level to raise awareness of, and support more effectively, the mental health and wellbeing of all children aged 3-5 year old. One of the key pillars of the work of the group is to ensure that an evidence-based, lived-experience approach is taken to developing the recommendations which will form the main outputs for this phase of the work. As such, it was agreed that engagement should be undertaken with children aged 3-5 themselves, their families and the Early Learning and Childcare² (ELC) workforce, as well as families of children currently in P1-P3, who could reflect upon what worked and what could have been improved, particularly given the impact that COVID-19 may have had on this particular age group.

The engagement process posed a series of questions to children, families and the ELC workforce that intended to capture evidence regarding whether they felt that they had the correct level and format of support for the needs of their children. Questions also focused on whether there were gaps in the current levels of support and the range of resources available, and what suggestions parents, staff and children could recommend or request. This report intends to provide suggested solutions which help to answer the calls made by children, parents and the ELC workforce, which will support their day-to-day practice around positive mental health and wellbeing. Questions can be found at annexe 2.

This report also highlights the necessity and importance of early intervention, identifying the needs of this particular age group and their families, who often do not know where to seek help other than their child's ELC setting.

It was also important that the organisation tasked with carrying out the work – identified, approached, and confirmed during these initial stages as Early Years Scotland (EYS) – engaged with children and families from a broad range of backgrounds and different geographical areas.

It is important to note that this report does not intend to devalue or undermine the wide range of support already facilitated in ELC settings. Rather, the suggestions made in this report from the analysis of the participants' responses, aims to build on the positive work already provided by the ELC workforce and parents. This will help to provide all children with the opportunity to receive the best start in life, as well as continuing to support practitioners to facilitate positive, high-quality ELC experiences for children in their settings. This includes identifying appropriate support for children and families towards positive mental health, happiness and wellbeing.

Early Years Scotland

Early Years Scotland (EYS)³ was commissioned to undertake this engagement project from January 2022, which was still very much against the backdrop of the impact of the pandemic, and we are aware that this will have influenced some of the responses. EYS is committed to providing the best start in life for every child and while our remit is broad, our focus is always on the children and the professionals and families who care for our youngest children.

¹<https://www.gov.scot/groups/children-and-young-peoples-mental-health-and-wellbeing-joint-delivery-board/>

²When we refer to early learning and childcare (ELC), this is an inclusive term for all ELC practitioners and childminders.

³<https://earlyyearsscotland.org/>

Methodology

The project commenced in February 2022 and the engagement with the children, parents, and the ELC workforce took place during April/May 2022.

1. The questions in the survey adopted a mixed methods approach, consisting of quantitative questions with the opportunity to provide feedback and expand on close-ended questions through qualitative questions in each section. There were 4 different themed survey questionnaires in total (including demographics in Annexe 1) for the following categories:

- 3-5 year old children
- 3-5 year old ELC workforce⁴
- Parents⁵ of 3-5 year old children
- Parents of Primary 1-3 year old children

2. Respondents (except children) were asked several demographic questions regarding their local authority, job title, gender identity, and ethnic background. Children's engagement was undertaken in a different way – workers within early years settings were given the questions and encouraged to discuss these with the children in their care. The questions were designed to be a guide and it was up to the workforce to ask them in ways best suited to the individual children.

3. Promotion of the survey was undertaken by working in partnership with 6 local authorities that volunteered to be part of the project, chosen from 15 initial volunteer local authorities.

4. Ethical considerations: All responses were anonymous to eliminate response identification. EYS met with the Association of Directors of Education Scotland (ADES), sponsor of the Task and Finish group, who worked specifically with their early years colleagues to ascertain the most effective means of engagement with local authorities and invite them all to participate in this important project.

A set number of participant groups were identified from each local authority:

- 9 ELC Settings
- 2 Childminders
- 1 Primary School
- Parents of the children attending the above settings

At the start of the process, EYS prepared an information sheet for each local authority in Scotland, which outlined the key aims of the work to be undertaken and invited them to take part. This was then disseminated to the contacts identified by ADES for each of the 32 councils. From this, 15 local authorities put themselves forward to participate in this piece of work, with the final 6 being identified based on ensuring we had a range of demographics and geography.

During this time, EYS collaboratively drafted four separate questionnaires relevant to each participant group, which were written to ensure as much information as possible could be gathered which was applicable to those responding, but in a succinct and accessible way so as not to overwhelm participants. EYS then met virtually with the early years leads from each of the participating local authorities to provide those participating with the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification on any aspects of the work that they were unsure about. Following this discussion, they were provided with information packs which included, amongst other information, a short video⁶ outlining the aims of the project.

The online questionnaires received the following responses:

- | | |
|---|-----|
| • Children's Survey | 121 |
| • Workforce Survey | 142 |
| • Parents of P1-P3 children | 86 |
| • Parents of children aged 3-5 | 278 |
| • Parent online focus group/direct parental | 30 |

(Including verbal engagement recorded from Glasgow City Council EYS Stay Play and Learn Services)

Total Number of Participants: 657

⁴The term workforce is used to cover those within early learning and childcare who participated in this project – practitioners, setting managers, and childminders.

⁵The term 'parents' is inclusive of all caregivers.

⁶<https://youtu.be/8k7eF0l9X2s>

Throughout this period, EYS project staff maintained regular contact with the relevant local authorities, and also held an online focus group for parents. EYS worked with colleagues across the sector to successfully identify an appropriate individual to analyse the data and produce a report.

Introduction to Project Findings

Through analysis of the research project a substantial gap was clearly identified regarding the support provided for early years professionals, as well as the parents* who support the mental health and well-being of children aged 3-5 years old.

The necessity for age and developmentally appropriate support and signposting on where to find appropriate guidance and resources was identified through the responses to the questionnaires from both parents and the ELC workforce, which will be discussed throughout this report. The data set also provided key themes from each respondent group which will be discussed further.

When reviewing the ELC workforce responses, key themes from the data displayed the need for more time, as well as support and professional learning opportunities tailored more to the age group of children in their care. Furthermore, an implicit theme found in the workforce data was the need to be understood, valued and heard. The ELC workforce is under immense pressure to ensure that they meet the needs of every child; however, they are calling to be recognised for this, and need further support to continue to provide high-quality care.

The creation of this report intends to answer these calls and provide suggested recommendations to support parents and the ELC workforce in their day-to-day practice for children and their families. Furthermore, a positive response from the parents' data found it to be evident that ELC staff are highly valued for the support they already provide, with an overwhelming number of responses detailing the support and guidance they already receive from their ELC setting.

This report highlights the necessity and importance of early intervention, identifying the needs of this particular age group and their families, who often do not know where to seek help other than their child's ELC setting, as reflected on page 16. This project intends to reinforce the importance of the crucial support and vital importance of the work being done by ELC practitioners for children to ensure they have the best start in life and can continue to flourish and live prosperous and happy lives. It is clear from this data that a 'one stop shop' model of support for children's mental health and wellbeing through an online website and phone support service could provide a possible solution for parents, or at least some clarity and signposting for relevant support and help.

Demographics of respondents

Please find an overview of the demographics of our respondents in Annexe 1. We refer to many questions throughout this report, however the full set of the questions for each group of participants can be found in Annexe 2.

Key Findings

1. Children's responses

Children were asked several questions regarding their well-being and emotions. For example, children were asked "What things do you like to do that makes you feel happy or excited", with the table below demonstrating the responses.

What things do you like to do that makes you feel happy or excited?		
Responses	%	No. of children
Play with friends	58.9%	46
Play outside	15.38%	12
Play with sand/water	2.56%	2
Play with computer	0%	0
Play games	2.56%	2
Story time	11.54%	9
Snack time	8.9%	7
Total 78 responses		

An overwhelming number of children (79.4%) responded that different types of play made them feel happy or excited, with the remaining responses including story time and snack time.

Play was identified as being the main component of children's happiness, which underpins the importance of the likes of Play Scotland⁷, as well as the continued need for the workforce to promote and encourage as wide a range of play as possible. All adults involved in children's lives should recognise the vital impact of play and creating friendships. Many children expressed how not playing or having friends to play with made them feel - when children were asked "Is there anything that can make you feel sad, worried or upset," they had responses such as:

- "If friends don't play with me, I feel sad."
- "Tidy up time makes her upset as she wants to continue to play."
- "If I don't have any friends."
- "When I am hurt and not playing."

Children also commented that not having cuddly toys and hurting themselves made them sad, reinforcing the importance of environments which can respond to children's need for nurturing and holistic approaches. From the data analysed, children value the creation and building of friendships with their peers, where they can navigate and develop their emotional and social development and skills. It is important then that the workforce is supported to appreciate the importance of facilitating nurturing environments full of rich play experiences, enabling children to develop and enhance their social and emotional skills, such as communication, problem solving and emotion regulation⁸. ELC staff can facilitate self-regulation through implementing scaffolding techniques, such as play types which promote role-playing and impulse control to promote executive function skills, which develop rapidly in 3-5 year olds⁹.



⁷<https://www.playscotland.org/>

⁸<https://www.firstdiscoverers.co.uk/benefits-childhood-friendships/#:~:text=Navigating%20friendships%20helps%20to%20support,Having%20friends%20lessens%20stress>

⁹Harvard University (2019) What is executive function? And how does it relate to child development <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/what-is-executive-function-and-how-does-it-relate-to-child-development/>

To further understand their emotional and support needs, children were asked “Who do you speak to when you’re feeling sad or worried about something?”, with the responses displayed in the below table.

Who do you speak to when you’re feeling sad or worried about something?		
Responses	%	No. of children
Your keyworker	32.63%	31
Your friends	7.37%	7
Your mum/dad/brother/sister/family member	60%	57
Total 95 responses		

These statistics demonstrate the important role the workforce plays in responding to children’s social, emotional, and physical needs in their care and, importantly, how highly children value and trust these adults, with over one third of children speaking to their keyworker. This also highlights the importance of support for family members to help young children to regulate and understand their emotions.

When children were asked “What do you do when you’re feeling sad or worried?”, the theme of self-regulation was implicit, with children commenting they would “sit by myself” or “lie down”. This highlighted the importance of teaching children to understand and respond to how they are feeling and how best to talk about and manage their emotions. From the data, it can be suggested that this is currently being facilitated in settings, demonstrating the workforce’s positive awareness of and response to children’s mental health and wellbeing needs. Finally, children were asked “What helps to make you feel happy again when you have been feeling sad or worried?” – this gained a mixture of responses including cuddles, physical activities such as dancing, being outside, breathing (which highlighted mindfulness practices), and the importance of playing and eating. All of these highlight the important role of adults facilitating the opportunities for children to engage in these activities which support and promote positive mental health, happiness, and wellbeing in children. After feeling sad or worried, children commented on the importance of lots of hugs and cuddles from trusted staff or adults, to help them feel better. Comments included:

- “I play with my favourite toys and get lots of cuddles.”
- “Friends give me a cuddle and it makes me happy again.”
- “I get my keyworker and get a cuddle and talk about it.”

It is clear that children seek and respond to nurturing practices from the adults in their world, who should be providing rich and nurturing environments which allow children to flourish, grow and develop. Throughout the responses, children are currently receiving this through their ELC experiences, and it is vital that the workforce can continue to respond to the individual needs of children. There is clear evidence of this, with the workforce implementing the eight indicators of wellbeing from the Scottish Education Policy and National Practice Model, Getting it right for every child¹⁰, as well as the commitment to implementing ‘Realising the Ambition: Being Me’¹¹. It is, however, clear that the workforce recognises the needs for these qualities, with an example from the workforce data responses underpinning this.

“Practitioners need to be patient, calm, nurturing, kind, gentle, a good supportive team including managers.”

Furthermore, there was a parental comment that reported children need to better understand their emotions and be able to self-regulate. This also links to workforce data requesting specific professional learning to further facilitate this, in order to be able to truly support each and every child, adopting and utilising tools and methods tailored to each child.

¹⁰ <https://ihub.scot/media/1512/a-guide-to-getting-it-right-for-every-child.pdf>

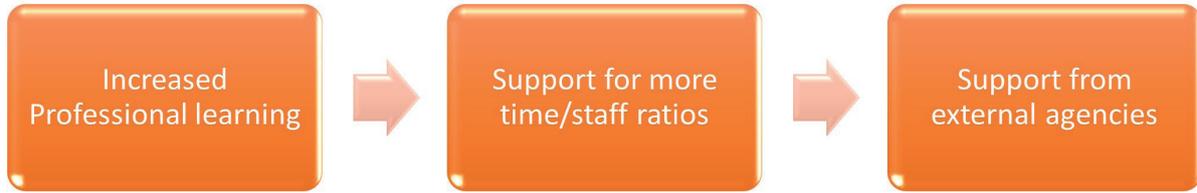
¹¹ <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/realising-the-ambition/>



2. Workforce responses

The ELC workforce was asked a plethora of questions to gather rich and valuable data to be analysed, to reflect the wants and needs of the workforce and how they can feel better supported in the valuable work they provide for children and families in their settings. The full set of questions can be found in Annexe 2.

From the responses, there were clear emerging key themes as follows.



It was evident that there is a need for targeted professional learning (PL) opportunities to enable the workforce to specifically support the mental health and wellbeing of children aged 3-5 years old. Comments noted that previous professional learning undertaken has been targeted at older children, or indeed all ages of children.

“Training for staff to support mental health in children under 5 specifically as most of this is aimed at school age children and up.”

Staff felt confident in the overall support they provide for children, as displayed in the table below:

To what extent do you feel you meet the mental health, happiness and wellbeing needs of the children within your setting/childminding service?		
Responses	%	No. of respondents
Always	47.52%	67
Often	44.68%	63
Sometimes	6.38%	9
Occasionally	1.42%	2
Total 141 responses		

Throughout the workforce’s additional comments, there was an indication that staff would benefit from more bespoke professional learning to expand their knowledge, demonstrating a clear commitment to the wellbeing of children and families.

“Staff have all the general knowledge re attachment etc. but some more free webinars about trauma informed practice or specifics of supporting mental health and wellbeing would be beneficial.”

Resources such as mindfulness training and Care Inspectorate ‘bitesize’ videos are of real benefit, with the latter emphasising the time pressures faced by the workforce and how this is impacting on their ability to undertake professional learning. This is discussed further below.

“Short courses on how to help support children’s mental health and wellbeing issues and strategies on how to deal with this.”

Most responded that they have undertaken PL around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), highlighting awareness of the importance of early intervention for children and the criticality of identifying trauma-informed responses in young children to implement early intervention effectively. The need for this demonstrates the necessity for staff to be competent in supporting young children to facilitate and manage their emotions.



From the workforce responses, they are aware and use mindfulness techniques with the children in their care, which acknowledges the knowledge and good practice already undertaken.

Workforce data also identified a need to learn more about these types of methods and techniques, specifically for ages 3-5 years, to maximise the outcomes for children in their care.

This dedication and wish for increased access to specific, age and developmentally appropriate professional learning opportunities regarding mental health and wellbeing, is displayed in the table below.

Do you think there should be more professional learning opportunities for ELC practitioners/childminders to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of young children?

Responses	%	No. of respondents
Yes	87.80%	108
No	12.20%	15
Total 123 responses		

Although the workforce indicated their willingness and drive to learn and expand their knowledge, thus providing enhanced practice, lack of time was identified as a barrier to engaging in further professional learning opportunities. The workforce highlighted support for more time to enable them to engage meaningfully in professional learning, as demonstrated in the following response:

“Supported training time/ time away during the day as opposed to always in the evening – to support my own mental wellbeing.”

Furthermore, there is an evident need for staff to have more time to complete the responsibilities of their daily practice. The workforce identified that these challenges could be mitigated with the recruitment of more staff to support better adult to child ratios.

Staff noted that at times they feel both overstretched and undervalued. They appreciate the crucial responsibility of their role; however, it can be challenging and difficult to provide these high-quality experiences due to the complexities of being regularly understaffed and under pressure.

"Time and practitioners – these are our most valuable resources, but it can be difficult in a busy setting where you are only just meeting ratios."

Expanding on the need for more time and support, the workforce identified a need for revised ratios to enable staff to fully engage with every child in their care, including parents, and ensure each child receives their full support and attention, and is nurtured accordingly, demonstrated in the following extracts from the workforce data.

"Better ratio of adults to children so we can engage more fully with each child to ensure they are all getting fully supported and nurtured."

"Staffing levels that allow us to give the children and their parents the time to be able to really listen and support."

"Higher adult to child ratio in these challenging times."

The workforce also highlighted a lack of targeted sources of support when asked "As an early years professional, what else do you feel that you need to be able to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of the children within your setting/childminding role?".

Responses included more support from agencies, professional learning opportunities, and more effective resources. Throughout the data, comments were made about age and developmentally appropriate resources and access to agencies, as demonstrated in the following extracts:

"Information on agencies and how to access them would also be good as this could be passed onto parents to help support them."

"More child-friendly books on emotions."

"Child-friendly book that explains things in terms children will understand."

It is clear from the workforce responses that they are knowledgeable overall and confident in providing general guidance and support for parents, however time and ratios pressures can impede this. Furthermore, a lack of access to, and difficulties in accessing relevant agencies, particularly for the age group they care for, was highlighted. A key theme that emerged from the workforce data was the lack of support and guidance for signposting for children aged 3-5 years old in their care.

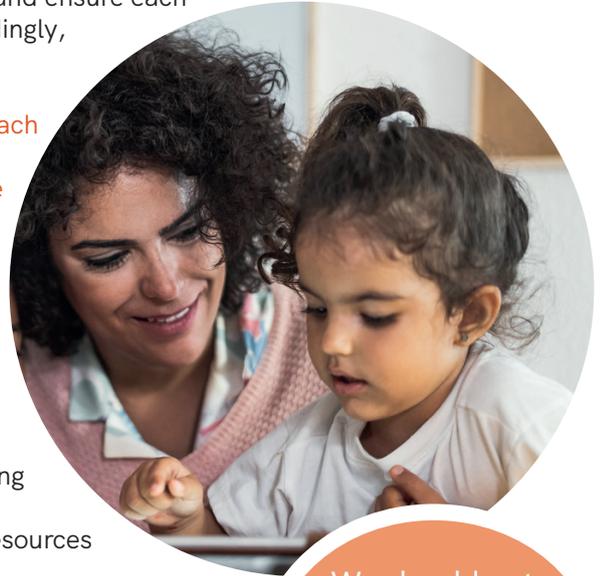
"The biggest barrier we face in early years is the lack of services available for children in early years."

The confusion and lack of understanding of how to access agencies was discussed throughout the data set. The workforce also identified barriers to parents accessing support such as the perception that some children were too young to access the support, long waiting lists, lack of services, and there being insufficient information on children's mental health and wellbeing for parents to support their child. The workforce also voiced their need for more government guidance documents which could be used to inform practice, as well as noting that some examples of best practice would be helpful, validating their efforts to date.

"Reassurance that what we are currently doing is what others are doing, so having best practice examples would be beneficial."

Resource tools and guidance, provided by recognised bodies and designed specifically for the workforce to support to this particular age group would be beneficial. This would enhance the support and guidance they can offer to children and families in their care and aim to support effective early intervention, if required. It would also enhance the knowledge and practice of the workforce overall, given the data demonstrates that parents will turn to ELC staff in the first instance for guidance and support. The request for formal documents/guidance was further identified in the following extract:

"I feel personally we should get a course on how to help mental health and wellbeing in a child, for example, even written documents about how to help them with their mental health, as each child could be going through something different,"



We should get a course on how to help mental health and wellbeing in a child

3. Parents Primary One – Primary Three responses

The parents of primary one to primary three parents were asked about their child's time within their ELC setting, transitioning to school and their ability to engage with their child. (Questions listed in Annexe 2) Key themes from these responses focused on the importance of positive and meaningful transitions, which could be further facilitated and enhanced through increased collaborative working between ELC and school settings.

Parents were first asked "Looking back at your child's ELC experience, did you receive assistance from your child's nursery/childminder to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of your child?". Over half of the parents who responded (65.12%) said they received assistance from their child's ELC setting to support their child's mental health and well-being, with further statistics presented below. However, a third of parents felt they didn't receive support, so this is an area that we can potentially focus on for support.

Looking back at your child's ELC experience, did you receive assistance from your child's nursery/childminder to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of your child?

Responses	%	No. of respondents
Yes	65.12%	56
No	34.88%	30
Total 86 responses		

Examples of support received from their child's ELC setting included effective communication, resource packs, and play and learning activities for children to do at home, including physical transition visits, which were highlighted as an important key theme. The parents' data also provided suggestions for improved transitions - it was highlighted that the overall 'fear of the unknown' made their child feel most anxious about starting school. This was exacerbated by the pandemic, as these children were moving to primary school at a time when 'traditional' transitions were unable to take place, making the process more difficult for all concerned.

"She was worried about the new routine and not being able to do the tasks. I shared her concerns with her nursery teacher, who helped her understand that they had covered a lot of things in nursery and her primary teacher would know all of the things she could do."

Apart from some similar comments like this, parents were then asked "How did your child feel about starting school?", with the majority of parents stating that their child was happy and excited, suggesting the experience of transitioning to school was presented by the ELC staff as a positive and exciting experience, aiding effective transition from ELC to school overall. However, almost a third of children had mixed emotions, indicating a need for further improvement and development for children transitioning to school.

How did your child feel about starting school?

Responses	%	No. of children
Happy and excited	61.63%	53
Uncertain and anxious	9.30%	8
Mixed emotions	29.07%	25
Total 86 responses		

Parents were then asked, "Based on your, and your child's experience around starting school, do you have any suggestions as to how this could be improved, so that children and families feel more confident about this transition to school from nursery/childminder overall?" Parents provided many suggestions to improve transitions, such as more teaching assistants, and opportunities to meet other parents, highlighting a need for increased peer and networking support. Furthermore, parents suggested that it would be beneficial for them to visit the school and meet the teacher to understand the school setup better, as demonstrated in the following extract:

“Visits before school starts would be appreciated so the parents have a greater understanding of the set up and can discuss more with their child.”

Increasing the number of visits and enhanced collaborative working would enable parents to enhance communication with their child, which would provide a better understanding of their child’s experiences and ‘their world’. It is hoped that the removal of COVID restrictions and the reinstatement of enhanced transitions will remove any anxieties round this. The need for engaged participation in their child’s school is demonstrated by this parent’s response, which we appreciate has also been impacted by the restrictions.

“The biggest issue was not being able to see where she would be learning so we weren’t able to talk to her about the area she would be spending her time and we weren’t able to ask targeted questions about her day as we had no frame of reference.”

Parents were asked about their ability to engage with their child, being asked if they were able to talk and listen to their child regularly. A vast 94.94% of parents claimed they could easily engage with their child and only 5.06% saying they did not find this easy.

A key theme of more support was, however, identified when asked for further comments on what would help increase or make it easier to engage with their child. Some parents felt overworked and mentioned the stress of working full time, which impacted their ability to engage with their child. Other parents sought a need for more days to visit their child’s school and classroom and gain an understanding of the curriculum, as they lacked an understanding of their child’s daily environment and so had no point of reference, as mentioned above, which proved challenging and stressful to discuss with their child.

Visits before school starts would be appreciated so parents have a greater understanding of the set up and can discuss with their child

The request for increased school visits was also noted by parents of 3–5 year olds who also seek to build further relationships with their child’s ELC setting, indicating a willingness to build relationships with those caring and educating their child. The workforce also identified that increased visits would help them provide enhanced support through increasing the quality of relationships with children and their families transitioning to school.

Expanding from engagement with their child, the parents from this data set were also asked about their ability to provide time outdoors for their child, with the majority of parents, 91.14% saying yes, they could, and 8.86% saying they could not.

When asked what the barriers were to providing time outdoors for their child, a common theme was work-life balance and the stress of juggling this. Barriers included lack of time after school, working long hours and being tired. If the majority of ELC settings can continue to provide high-quality experiences outdoors, this will ensure most children at least have access to safe and appropriate outdoor spaces in their daily activities, easing pressure on parents who reported needing to work full-time to provide for their children.



“Life is busy (paid work, house chores, childcare). These can be barriers to spending more quality time together.”

It was identified that there were indications of pressures on parents who work full time and have children of different ages. Identifying parental pressures highlights the importance of having high-quality ELC settings to ease the pressure of modern-day parental struggles, where many find it hard to juggle supporting children of different ages, presenting challenges such as balancing homework, activities, and responsibilities. To further support parents, many suggested schools could promote more mental health and wellbeing support, which should be accessible for every parent/carer. This could, for example, involve signposting to the likes of Parent Club and the Parentline.

Offering further professional learning and equipping ELC staff with the knowledge and confidence of where and how to gain external support for children and their families could also enable parents to have a better understanding of what support is available, should they need it, and be confident and knowledgeable to seek support when necessary. This demonstrates the importance of effective early intervention so that support is offered before children progress to school, where multi-professional agency working tends to be facilitated, and can, if necessary, be continued.

4. Parents of 3–5 year old children’s responses

When parents were asked “Do you currently receive any form of assistance from your ELC setting/childminder to support the mental health, happiness and wellbeing of your child?”, 23.74% answered yes, which aligns with the workforce’s request and need for more targeted and age-appropriate resources and guidance, which can then be relayed to parents and would hopefully then increase the volume of parents feeling supported overall.

Do you currently receive any form of assistance from your ELC setting/childminder to support the mental health, happiness and wellbeing of your child?

Responses	%	No. of respondents
Yes	23.74%	66
No	76.26%	212
Total 278 responses		

From the 23.74% of parents who said yes, many gave positive examples and comments, such as staff supporting their child and knowing their child well, resulting in targeted support tailored to their child’s and family specific needs and concerns. Other examples included reference to daily support and reassurance, and tools for communicating effectively with their child, further strengthening the request for ELC staff to have the time and relevant ratios to support individual children and their families effectively.

More focused responses included positive references to mindfulness activities and mental health and wellbeing resources, as well as support that enabled children to articulate their emotions, giving the children them the chance to develop and enhance emotional regulation, which is crucial for positive child development. Parents also commented on the positive and nurturing ELC environments, reflecting the children’s data set where they seek more hugs and cuddles, and nurturing experiences from the adults in their lives. This mirror in responses indicates that parents are aware of the good practice and support they receive from their child’s ELC setting, reflecting the workforce data that reports that they recognise they give as much support as they can.

Regarding the 76.26% of parents who felt they are not currently supported, this also links to the workforce data, where they identify a clear need for more support for children and families too. This demonstrates the workforce’s commitment to children and families, reflecting many of the principles and values from the national practice guidance for early years in Scotland framework, *Realising the Ambition: Being Me*¹².

Parents were then asked about the types of support they would like to receive from their child’s ELC setting and there were some additional responses provided, such as literature supporting under 5s with anxiety, and additional documentation.

Some parents asked for activities, groups, and courses to help them understand children’s mental health and wellbeing, increased nursery visits, along with the availability of stay and play type sessions for parents and children together, alongside early years professionals. This request was also highlighted in the workforce data, where responses stated increased visits to the nursery would enable them to further support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of the children in their setting.

“Invite parents into the nursery to see set up of the playrooms and for them to be more involved in learning and teaching.”

¹² <https://education.gov.scot/improvement/learning-resources/realising-the-ambition/>

The reported positive support parents receive from their ELC settings was demonstrated in response to being asked 'Where would you go to talk about child's mental health?', with half of the parents (50%) saying ELC / childminders, 30% said they would ask their Health Visitor, 18.15% saying their GP and the remaining 1.11% saying other professionals. Parents were then asked who else would they seek for assistance, with responses such as family, friends, and online resources being provided.

Although asked where else they would seek assistance, many commented that their ELC setting was well equipped and would approach them first for guidance. The acknowledgement of staff being approached first for assistance further emphasises the importance of building and sustaining positive and meaningful relationships between parents and the workforce.

"The nursery and especially the manager know my son really well and I feel they are best suited to understand my child's needs however if I required and had concerns, I would talk to GP."

"There are various charities who I'd contact, but this would be alongside ELC setting because I know mental health support for young children under 12 years is extremely difficult to get."

These parents were also asked if they felt there were any barriers to playing with their child regularly; an overwhelming 80.22% said no. However, this still left 19.78% of parents feeling there are barriers to engaging with their child, with the most common again being cited as work pressures, spending time with other children and busy lifestyles. Some parents commented that they did not know how to play with their child and/or could sometimes be too tired to do it. This highlights the assumption that play is natural, and everyone knows how to play with young children. The importance and value of learning through play is strengthened by this assumption that all parents should know how to play and reflects the importance of play-based pedagogies, and ELC settings encouraging, valuing and promoting learning through play with and alongside parents in informal stay and play services.



I know mental health support for young children under 12 years is extremely difficult to get

Lack of play knowledge of parents could be addressed by further supporting increased stay and play sessions, where qualified early years professionals work in partnership with parents and children together to support and enhance parents' understanding of the importance of simple, low/no cost, play and learning experiences. Facilitating these sessions would encourage and develop further parents understanding of how to play with their child, as well as observing how their child plays, encouraging deeper bonds and relationships to form.

The Growing up in Scotland (GUS)¹³ report, which assessed children's cognitive abilities by measuring the range of children's activities and what parents think of those activities, highlights the importance of home learning environments, as well as simple play activities for children's positive outcomes. The research suggests that children from households of four or more children have lower ability scores than those with fewer or no siblings, reflecting the pressures identified from parents of P1-P3 data who struggle with the challenges of having more than one child at different ages. Furthermore, households with low-income levels were also associated with poorer performance. The GUS research emphasised then the need for all children to have access and the opportunity to high quality ELC settings which can provide valuable learning through play opportunities, and help families to support this at home with the facilitation and support of providing easy activities for families to replicate.

Parents were also asked if they felt able to support their child to spend time outdoors daily; 84.33% positively responded yes, with 15.67% feeling that they could not facilitate this. The main barriers listed demonstrated a common theme of parents working and struggling to balance family life, especially with more than one child.

"There never seems to be enough time in the day."

¹³ [Growing up in Scotland: the impact of children's early activities on cognitive development - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/documents/2019/04/Growing-up-in-Scotland-the-impact-of-childrens-early-activities-on-cognitive-development-2019.pdf)

Limited access to safe and appropriate spaces was highlighted as a barrier to spending time outdoors. The lack of outdoor resources and parents lack of time away from work commitments to facilitate play outdoors reinforces the need for high-quality ELC care and provision to provide these opportunities, which will enable children from all areas to access suitable and appropriate outdoor environments. We know from experience that outdoor stay and play sessions with ELC staff and children and parents together is extremely beneficial. Facilitating more access to these sessions would relieve the pressures on parents to do so, as some parents responded that outdoor access was difficult due to mobility issues or access locally.

Additional Supports Discussed: 'One-stop shop' Model

Both sets of parents were asked their opinion and views on introducing a 'one stop shop', such as a national helpline providing easy access to guidance on any queries they may have regarding their child's development or behaviour. Over half of the parents of P1-P3 (55.84%) responded they would benefit from such a service, with a similar number of 52.54% of parents of 3-5 year olds stating the same. There was overwhelming support for this model from our online parent focus group and our direct discussions with parents of 3-5 year old children.

Both groups of parents were also asked what type of support they would find helpful from such a service, including the following described in the table below.

Types of support requested by parents		
Information and resources for mental health and wellbeing	Signposting for external agencies	Someone to listen to parents' concerns
Behaviour advice	Emotional support	Referral advice and guidance
Building resilience	Mental health support	General advice on school applications
Advice on child development	Parent peer group	Support for minor issues

When parents were asked what would encourage them to use this service, key themes were; easier and more accessible communication, a call back service, and something which is available for all parents to provide a universal approach to avoid stigma. Furthermore, responding to the pressures of working parents, the opportunity for later opening/access times would allow parents to reflect and process their day. Comments of support requests included:

- "It would be nice to know there are people out there just in case"
- "Tips and coping strategies, books or things we could do with child to alleviate things"
- "Just being able to ask questions if unsure if you should be concerned."
- "General advice on mental health and wellbeing of children"

The opportunity for supportive and non-judgmental advice and signposting to other agencies was also identified as a potential benefit of the service. Parents commented that the reassurance of knowing someone is always there at the end of a phone for advice, even for the simplest of questions, would encourage them to use the service.

- "Referrals on who to contact for specific support might be helpful. Or just a space to vent"

Parents were asked to comment on barriers to using and accessing the service - the importance of keeping the service anonymous due to the possibility of feeling judged and considered a "bad" parent was apparent, which was also highlighted by the workforce when they were asked what they thought were potential barriers to accessing help for parents.

Parents noted that the one stop shop should be staffed by qualified early years workers, which reinforced the support, confidence and positive relationships parents have already built with ELC staff.

The prospect of a service being funded or sponsored by a “scary” organisation (such as a statutory service) was also identified as a barrier, with a fear of shared information and judgement being made, further inducing parental anxiety around using such a service.

Additional information and resources were identified, specifically from an online platform. These included support and top tips for parents on sleep management, stress and anxiety. Parents commented that a Q&A type system of frequently asked questions and relevant answers would be helpful for parents to browse, as well as guidance documents for parents to read and review.

An online forum was also suggested for peer support, where parents could interact 24/7. This would, however, need to be monitored for appropriateness. The suggestion of an online platform would help address the issues of parents feeling pressured from working, where they could access resources at the most convenient time to them. To ensure the platform is accessible, the method of a webchat would enable most parents to access the service due to Wi-Fi being perhaps more easily accessible with the use of public Wi-Fi connections, rather than parents needing to use phone credit.

“If you child has specific needs, then a knowledgeable person to speak to is helpful.”

A web chat was also reported as being able to ease parents’ anxieties by talking to someone virtually, where access to direct links can also be provided through the web chat. Furthermore, where a telephone service was to be made available, in that case, most parents requested that this be a freephone or a call-back service to enable free access and ease for all parents, providing a universal and accessible approach.

Finally, parents were asked if they could think of anyone who could be an ambassador for a potential campaign to raise awareness of 3–5 year old mental health and happiness and wellbeing. Responses included a celebrity who was a young mum, however they had to be able to relate to the struggles of the general population, otherwise a celebrity would be tokenistic. Furthermore, bloggers or social media influencers were suggested, with those being perhaps ‘less-known’, but relatable. Lastly, children’s authors were suggested who were supportive of inclusivity for children and advocates for children’s wellbeing.

Analysis of Findings

Following the key findings discussed throughout this report, a number of suggested recommendations have been made, to support the data provided from the respondent groups. The key themes are displayed in the table below.

How did your child feel about starting school?			
Children's data	Workforce data	Parents of P1-P3 data*	Parents of 3-5 data
More play and learning opportunities	Increased access to bespoke professional learning	Improved engagement and collaborative working with agencies	More informal support from ELC staff through Stay and Play sessions, both indoors and out.
Nurturing approaches like cuddles and hugs	More space and time to engage with relevant professional learning and supporting parents too	Clearer guidance and support for children's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing	Increased nursery support visits and joint working between ELC and Primary
High-quality ELC experiences	Better staff /child ratios	Increased transition support visits to schools	Support to enhance knowledge of benefits of learning through play
Important role of key/trusted adults in their lives	Increased support and collaboration from external agencies	Support to obtain a better work-life balance to support their child more	Targeted support for their children's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing
Self-regulation support for emotions	Recognition and value for what they do well in ELC with regard to children's mental health, happiness and wellbeing	Lack of time and resources to provide as many play opportunities as possible for children	Supporting mixed ages of children and or more than one young child at home

*Parents of P1 – P3 were asked to look back and reflect on their child's early years experience prior to starting school. Their comments reflect their feelings about possible changes for their child's previous 3-5 year old period.

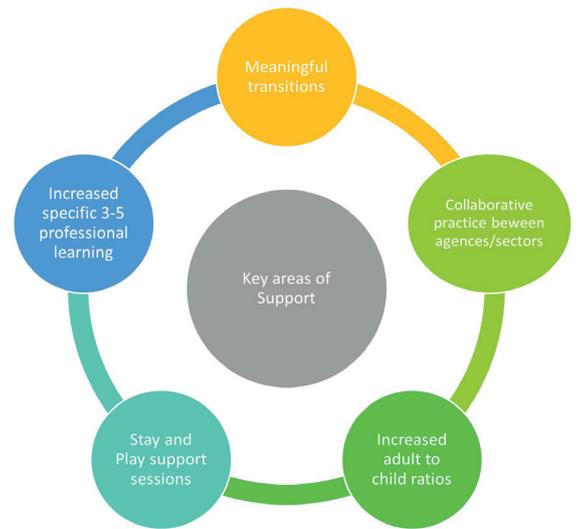
Based on the above summary of findings, we believe focusing on the following key areas would help further support children and their families, and the ELC workforce and aligns with the data provided by respondents.

Meaningful transitions

It is clear from the data that an increased number of transition visits would benefit children and their families. Increasing more meaningful transitions would enable children and parents to gain an enhanced understanding of the school environment that their child is about to attend.

Although most parents said their child was happy and excited to start school, this was not the case for 10% of children, indicating this as an area for improvement. We acknowledge that transitioning to school can be a daunting experience for children and their parents, with the ‘fear of the unknown’, cited, however from the data, it could be suggested that there is room for improvement and the potential delivery of further resources for parents and children would enhance their experiences.

Resources for targeted mental health support was acknowledged as a beneficial improvement by both parents and the ELC workforce. Providing targeted support for this age and developmental stage of children could aid in more children and parents feeling confident to start school. Increased transitions would also enhance engagement between children and their parents, enabling parents to have a point of reference to engage in communication with their child and ask about their day. The facilitation of increased transitions would perhaps also enable parents to create new support friendships and networks and present the opportunity for increased peer support for parents to meet and interact.



Collaborative practice between agencies and sectors

It is clear from the data that enhanced multi-agency practice would be beneficial to provide further support for children and families and the workforce. Increased and effective multi-professional practice and a better way of sharing communication would enable all professionals involved in children’s lives to be effectively involved in working together to enhance the provision of individual and targeted support.

It is clear from the data that the workforce requires some clarity on signposting and support on how to access and engage with external agencies to provide the best support for children in their care. It is also evident that there is a lack of known or identified agencies available for 3–5 year olds, resulting in a lack of targeted resources and guidance that ELC staff can then also facilitate for parents. It was clear from the data that the workforce is requesting further support from external agencies to enhance provision of mental health and wellbeing services for children and parents, with the workforce calling for more effective collaborative practices between all agencies to support children and families.

Increased staff /child ratios

An overwhelming response of needing more time to carry out daily responsibilities was evident throughout the workforce data, where time was identified as a barrier to providing the high-quality care and support for mental health, happiness, and wellbeing. The workforce is aware of the important responsibilities they have to each and every child and family in their care, however, they have identified that this is very challenging and stressful to provide with a lack of time or staff numbers in the setting.

Furthermore, the ELC workforce has identified that the lack of available staff exacerbates this pressure, with most of the workforce identifying this as a barrier to the daily running of their settings. To support the workforce in providing nurturing and high-quality services, we would suggest the implementation of increased staff to child ratios. By providing more staff per child, this was reported to potentially alleviate the daily pressures faced by ELC staff, who are currently feeling overstretched and have voiced their need for more support. Furthermore, implementing better ratios would further support each child and their families to receive targeted and individual care and support, with more keyworkers available and more staff to enable distributed leadership, alleviating the pressures of lack of time.

Stay and Play sessions

From both sets of parents’ data, it is clear that they would benefit from more opportunities to visit their child’s educational establishment to gain a better understanding of their child’s experiences. From the data

Annexe 1

Parents of children aged 3-5 years

Question	%	No. of respondents
Which of the following age brackets do you fall into?		
Under 25	3.35%	8
26-35	44.35%	106
36-45	46.44%	111
46-55	5.86%	14
56-65	0.00%	0
65+	0.00%	0
Total responses 239		
What is your gender?		
Female	93.72%	224
Male	6.28%	15
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Transgender	0.00%	0
Intersex	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Total responses 239		
Do you consider yourself to have a disability?		
Yes	4.20%	10
No	94.54%	225
Prefer not to say	1.26%	3
Total responses 238		
What religion, or religious denomination, do you belong to?		
None	69.49%	164
Church of Scotland	14.41%	34
Roman Catholic	8.05%	19
Other Christian	6.36%	15
Muslim	1.27%	3
Hindu	0.42%	1
Buddhist	0.00%	0
Sikh	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Pagan	0.00%	0
Total responses 236		

What is your ethnic group?		
White	95.38%	227
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.84%	2
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	2.52%	6
African, Scottish African or British African	1.26%	3
Caribbean or Black	0.00%	0
Total responses 238		

In which local authority does your child attend an ELC setting/childminder?		
Aberdeen	0.00%	0
Dumfries and Galloway	7.69%	6
Falkirk	33.33%	26
Glasgow	25.64%	20
Perth and Kinross	32.05%	25
Shetland Islands	1.28%	1
Total responses 78		

Parents of P1-P3 children

Question	%	No. of respondents
Which of the following age brackets do you fall into?		
Under 25	0.00%	0
26-35	29.49%	23
36-45	62.82%	49
46-55	3.85%	3
56-65	2.56%	2
65+	1.28%	1
Total responses 78		

What is your gender?		
Female	90.91%	70
Male	9.09%	7
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Transgender	0.00%	0
Intersex	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Total responses 77		

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?		
Yes	3.85%	3
No	93.59%	73
Prefer not to say	2.56%	2
Total responses 78		

What religion, or religious denomination, do you belong to?		
None	1.89%	1
Church of Scotland	30.19%	16
Roman Catholic	28.30%	15
Other Christian	13.21%	7
Muslim	3.77%	2
Hindu	1.89%	1
Buddhist	0.00%	0
Sikh	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Pagan	1.89%	1
Any other religion or body	18.87%	10
Total responses 53		

What is your ethnic group?		
White	90.79%	69
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1.32%	1
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	5.26%	4
African, Scottish African or British African	2.63%	2
Caribbean or Black	0.00%	0
Total responses 76		

In which local authority does your child attend an ELC setting/childminder?		
Aberdeen	0.00%	0
Dumfries and Galloway	7.69%	6
Falkirk	33.33%	26
Glasgow	25.64%	20
Perth and Kinross	32.05%	25
Shetland Islands	1.28%	1
Total responses 78		

Workforce data

Question	%	No. of respondents
What is your role?		
Setting manager	20.16%	25
Practitioner	70.16%	87
Support Staff	7.26%	9
Childminder	2.42%	3
Total responses 124		

Which of these age brackets do you fall into?		
Under 25	15.70%	19
26-35	17.36%	21
36-45	31.40%	38
46-55	27.27%	33
56-65	8.26%	10
65+	0.00%	0
Total responses 77		

What is your gender?		
Female	98.35%	119
Male	1.65%	2
Non-binary	0.00%	0
Transgender	0.00%	0
Intersex	0.00%	0
Prefer not to say	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	0.00%	0
Total responses 121		

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?		
Yes	4.13%	5
No	91.74%	111
Prefer not to say	4.13%	5
Total responses 121		

What religion, or religious denomination, do you belong to?

None	63.03%	75
Church of Scotland	19.33%	23
Roman Catholic	11.76%	14
Other Christian	5.88%	7
Muslim	0.00%	0
Hindu	0.00%	0
Buddhist	0.00%	0
Sikh	0.00%	0
Jewish	0.00%	0
Pagan	0.00%	0
Total responses 119		

What is your ethnic group?

White	99.17%	69
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	0.00%	1
Asian, Scottish Asian or British Asian	0.83%	4
African, Scottish African or British African	0.00%	0
Caribbean or Black	0.00%	0
Total responses 121		

In which local authority area do you work?

Aberdeen	10.74%	13
Dumfries and Galloway	19.01%	23
Falkirk	32.33%	39
Glasgow	12.40%	15
Perth and Kinross	16.53%	20
Shetland Islands	9.09%	11
Total responses 121		

Annexe 2

Scottish Government and Early Years Scotland Engagement with 3–5 year olds, their families, and the early years workforce

Children's questionnaire

Question	Response options
1. What things do you like to do that makes you feel happy or excited?	Multiple choice with comment box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Play with friends • Play outside • Play with sand/ water • Play with computer • Play games • Story time • Snack time • Other (please specify)
2. Is there anything that can make you feel sad, worried, or upset?	Comment box
3. Who do you speak to when you're feeling sad or worried about something?	Multiple choice comment box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your Keyworker (however the child describes this term) • Your friends • Your mum/ dad/ brother/sister/ family member (as appropriate) • Other (please specify)
4. What do you do when you're feeling sad or worried?	Comment box
5. What helps to make you feel happy again when you have been feeling sad or worried?	Comment box

ELC workforce questionnaire

Question	Response options
SUPPORTING CHILDREN: Given the importance of young children being supported to have positive mental health, happiness, and wellbeing:	
1. What resources help you to provide support to children regarding their mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Comment box
2. To what extent do you feel you meet the mental health, happiness and wellbeing needs of the children within your setting / childminding service?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occasionally • Sometimes • Often • Always
SUPPORTING PARENTS	
3. How have parents been positively supported with regards to their children’s mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Comment box
4. What, if any, are the barriers for parents wishing to access support regarding their child’s mental health, happiness and wellbeing?	Comment box
SUPPORTING STAFF: We know that the pandemic has adversely affected some children’s mental health, happiness, and wellbeing – for example being unable to engage properly with their peers, limited family contact etc.	
5. Do you feel equipped and confident to engage with parents regarding helping them to look after their children’s mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Yes/No
5b. If no, what actions could be taken to improve this?	Comment box
6. What professional learning has positively impacted on your ability to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of children in your setting?	Comment box
7. Do you think there should be more professional learning opportunities for ELC practitioners/childminders to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of young children?	Yes/No
7b. If yes, can you give an example(s) of the kind of professional learning you would like?	Comment box
8. As an early years professional, what else do you feel that you need to be able to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of the children within your setting/childminding role?	

Parent/Carers' questionnaire

Question	Response options
1. Do you currently receive any form of assistance from your ELC provider/childminder to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of your child?	Yes/No
2. If yes, please share examples of the support you have received from your setting that was helpful to you and your child.	Comment box
3. Are there any other types of support that you would like to see being made available to support you and your child?	Comment box
4. Where would you go / or what would you do in the first instance if you needed to talk to someone about your child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELC setting/childminder Health visitor • GP • Other professional • Other (please specify)
5. Who would you approach within your ELC setting to discuss any issues about your child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Multiple choice and comment box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child's Key • Worker/Teacher/ • Childminder • Setting Manager • Other (please specify)
6. Apart from your ELC setting or childminder, is there anywhere else you would go for assistance in supporting your child to have good mental health, happiness, and wellbeing?	Comment box
The impact of the pandemic on your child's wellbeing	
7. What impact has the pandemic had on your child and their relationships with you, as their parent/carer?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no impact • Significant impact, in a good way • Significant, in a bad way
8. What impact has the pandemic had on your child and their relationships with close family members, and other children?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little or no impact • Significant impact, in a good way • Significant, in a bad way

Engaging with your child	Response options
9. Do you feel there are barriers to playing, talking, and spending time with your children on a regular basis?	Yes/No with comment box
10. Are you able to support your children to spend time outdoors every day? 10B. If you selected no, what are the main barriers and difficulties?	Yes/No with comment box Comment box
11. Do you find it easy to talk and listen to your child regularly?	Yes/No
12. Is there anything you feel would help to make this easier/better for you and your child?	Comment box
13. How does your child feel about starting school?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy and excited • Uncertain and anxious • Mixed emotions • Other (please specify)
14. Do you have any suggestions about how getting prepared to start school could be improved in general, so that children and families feel more supported and confident?	Comment box
15. If you have had positive experiences regarding your child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing during the pandemic, please share these.	Comment box
16. Do you feel your own mental health, happiness and wellbeing has had an impact on your child? 16B. If yes, please rate how much you feel this has impacted on your child?	Yes/No Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A great deal • A lot • A moderate amount • A little • None at all
17. If you answered yes above, is there anything that would be helpful to support your mental health, happiness and wellbeing which would, in turn, be beneficial for your children? 18. Do you think you would benefit from a dedicated, 'one stop shop', such as a phone helpline for parents with young children who have any concerns or queries about their child's development or behaviour? 18B. What types of support, information and advice would you find useful with such a service?	Comment box Yes/No Comment box

Parent/Carers' of children P1-P3 questionnaire

Question	Response options
1. Looking back at your child's ELC experience, did you receive assistance from your child's nursery/childminder to support the mental health, happiness, and wellbeing of your child?	Yes/No
If yes, please share examples of the support you received and how this benefitted your child and family overall.	Comment box
2. How did your child feel about starting school?	Multiple choice with comment box <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Happy and excited • Uncertain and anxious • Mixed emotions • Other (please specify)
3. If your child was uncertain or anxious about starting school, what were the main things they were concerned about, and how did you address this at the time? 4. Based on your, and your child's experience around starting school, do you have any suggestions as to how this could be improved, so that children and families feel more confident about this transition to school from nursery/childminder overall?	Comment box Comment box
The impact of the pandemic on your child's wellbeing	
5. What impact has the pandemic had on your child and their relationships with you, as their parent/carer at home?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/no impact • Significant impact, in a good way • Significant, in a bad way
6. What impact has the pandemic had on your child and their relationships with close family members, and other children?	Multiple choice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little/no impact • Significant impact, in a good way • Significant, in a bad way
Engaging with your child	
7. Are you able to support your children to spend time outdoors every day? If you selected no, what are the main barriers and difficulties?	Yes/No with comment box Comment box

8. Do you find it easy to talk and listen to your child regularly?	Yes/No
9. Do you feel there are barriers to playing, talking, and spending time with your children on a regular basis?	Yes/No with comment box
10. Is there anything you feel would help to make engagement with your child easier / better for you and your child?	Yes/No with comment box
11. If you have had other positive experiences of support regarding your child's mental health, happiness, and wellbeing, please share these.	Comment box
<p>12. Do you think you would benefit from a dedicated, 'one stop shop', such as a phone helpline for parents with young children who have any concerns or queries about their child's development or behaviour?</p> <p>12b. What types of support, information and advice would you find useful with such a service?</p>	<p>Yes/No</p> <p>Comment box</p>

Early Years Scotland
23 Granville Street, Glasgow G3 7EE
Tel: 0141 221 4148 Fax: 0141 221 6043
Email: info@earlyyearsscotland.org

www.earlyyearsscotland.org

Early Years Scotland is a company limited by guarantee registered
in Scotland Registration No 86932 and a Scottish Charity Registration No SC003725

