



Early Learning and Childcare Charging Policy 2025/6



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Entitlement to Free Provision

3 - 5 year olds are entitled to 1140 of funded early learning and childcare from the term after their third birthday until they start school. The Orkney Islands Council Early Years page sets out the start dates.

<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/education-and-learning/early-learning-and-childcare/registration/>

Some two year olds are also entitled to 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare from the term after their third birthday. The link below sets out the criteria for the funded provision:

<https://www.orkney.gov.uk/our-services/education-and-learning/early-learning-and-childcare/eligible-two-year-olds/>

What are we charging for?

Most nurseries in Orkney operate the same hours as the primary school, which means that children are able to attend up to 30 hours per week during school term times. Some settings offer early learning and childcare outwith the school day. They are:

- Papdale and Glaitness offer hours outwith the school term (47 weeks per year) and also an early bird session and a late afternoon session.
- Dounby, Stromness, St Andrews and the Strynd offer an early bird session only.

Parents/carers of 3 to 5 year old children may request additional hours on top of their 1140 hours allocation. If the setting are able to accommodate the request within existing resources, parents will be offered a space. This will be charged for.

Please note, that if circumstances change and settings can no longer accommodate the request within their staffing or resources, then the paid for hours may be withdrawn following a 4 weeks notice period.

How do I book additional hours?

We recommend that if you are considering additional hours that you speak with the Nursery Manager 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 using the additional hours. Ad hoc hours cannot be accommodated.

How much will additional hours cost?

The current cost for additional hours of Early Learning and Childcare is £6.00 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 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