

Patricia Anderson
By email: request-687161-
f2bf9a77@whatdotheyknow.com

Please ask for: Nicky Grant
Direct Dial: 01463 702804
E-mail: Nicky.Grant@highland.gov.uk
Your
Reference: HC0226-7576

Dear Ms Anderson,

I refer you to your request for information regarding **early learning and childcare discretionary funding**. You have asked:

“1) The total number of requests received to date for the Council to provide discretionary funding for a further year of early learning and childcare (nursery) for children whose fifth birthdays will fall between the day after the school start date in August 2020 and 31st Dec 2020.

2) A breakdown of the total number in 1. above by requests for

- a) continued funding in private/voluntary settings and
- b) continued funding in council run settings and
- c) continued funding for split placements where a child attends both a private/voluntary and a council run setting.

3) In relation to question 2, please provide the number of places the Council has agreed to provide continued funding for in

- a) private/voluntary settings and
- b) council run settings and
- c) split placements where a child attends both a private/voluntary and a council run setting.

4. How many of the children applying have a December birthday?

5a. How many appeals (challenges if there is no official appeals process) did the Council receive against the Council's decision not to grant funding?

5b. How many of these appeals/challenges resulted in the initial decision being overturned?

6. How many official complaints has the Council received regarding discretionary deferral funding decisions between Nov 2019 and the date of your response to this FoI request?

7a. How many applications did the Council receive for children to be permitted early entry to primary school to start in Aug 2020 instead of Aug 2021 (for children who will turn five on or after 1st March 2021)?

7b. How many of these early entry applications were approved?

8. Is the Council's discretionary deferral funding policy currently under review or are there any plans to update it in the near future?

9. How many parents/carers are currently financing a further year of nursery for their child's deferral year themselves in a council run nursery after the Council refused to fund their request for this?

10. How many older children* has the Council permitted to defer their primary one start till 2021?

*(by "older children" I mean those who had already reached the age of five by the school commencement date in August 2020)."

Please see below The Highland Council's response.

1) The total number of requests received to date for the Council to provide discretionary funding for a further year of early learning and childcare (nursery) for children whose fifth birthdays will fall between the day after the school start date in August 2020 and 31st Dec 2020.

171

2) A breakdown of the total number in 1. above by requests for

a) continued funding in private/voluntary settings and

35

b) continued funding in council run settings and

136

c) continued funding for split placements where a child attends both a private/voluntary and a council run setting.

5 (included in both counts above)

3) In relation to question 2, please provide the number of places the Council has agreed to provide continued funding for in

a) private/voluntary settings and

b) council run settings and

c) split placements where a child attends both a private/voluntary and a council run setting.

Prior to the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, the Council made the decision that every child with a birthday between the start of school in August 2020 and 31 December 2020 would be entitled to funded deferral. As such, all applications made would have been approved, and therefore no appeals or challenges would have been received or made.

4. How many of the children applying have a December birthday?

95

5a. How many appeals (challenges if there is no official appeals process) did the Council receive against the Council's decision not to grant funding?

5b. How many of these appeals/challenges resulted in the initial decision being overturned?

See response to question 3

6. How many official complaints has the Council received regarding discretionary deferral funding decisions between Nov 2019 and the date of your response to this FoI request?

See response to question 3

7a. How many applications did the Council receive for children to be permitted early entry to primary school to start in Aug 2020 instead of Aug 2021 (for children who will turn five on or after 1st March 2021)?

7b. How many of these early entry applications were approved?

Our records show that there are 7 pupils currently in P1 who will still be aged 4 on the 28th of February 2021.

8. Is the Council's discretionary deferral funding policy currently under review or are there any plans to update it in the near future?

The Highland Council reviewed and approved the deferral and early entry policy in August 2019, and a decision was made to bring in the changes to deferral rights from August 2020. Although all policies are subject to review to reflect current requirements, changes in legislation, etc., it is not anticipated that this particular policy will require a review in the foreseeable future as it reflects the particularities of Highland, and it is compliant with current national requirements.

9. How many parents/carers are currently financing a further year of nursery for their child's deferral year themselves in a council run nursery after the Council refused to fund their request for this?

0 (nil).

10. How many older children* has the Council permitted to defer their primary one start till 2021?

*(by "older children" I mean those who had already reached the age of five by the school commencement date in August 2020).

There are 9 pupils in N5 this year who were already aged 5 by the 12th of August 2020.

Under Section 20 of the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002, you have the right to request that the Highland Council reviews any aspect of how it has dealt with your request. This requirement for review should be put in writing to the Freedom of Information Officer, Chief Executive's Office, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness IV3 5NX, within 40 working days of receipt of this letter. The request should include details of the information requested and the aspects of the Highland Council's response which you are not satisfied with.

If you are subsequently dissatisfied with the outcome of the Council's review, you have the right to appeal to the Scottish Information Commissioner under Section 47 of the Act, within six months of receiving the Council's review response.

Further guidance on information request reviews and right to appeal can be found on the Scottish Information Commissioner website at www.itspublicknowledge.info.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicky Grant' with a stylized initial 'N' and a period at the end.

Nicky Grant
Executive Chief Officer for Education and Learning
The Highland Council

