

Briefing Note Template

Elected Member Briefing – Early Adopter Communities Funding Update

Elected Member Briefing Note Ref. No. 2026-19

About this Briefing Note

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Date: 02 April 2026

Subject: Early Adopter Communities Project

Public / ~~Exempt~~ / ~~Confidential~~

if exempt or confidential explain risks and consequences.

Purpose

This briefing provides Members with a progress update on Shetland's Early Adopter Communities (EAC) Project and confirmed funding for the 2026/27 financial year.

Background

The project is funded by the Scottish Government and aims to test flexible, place-based approaches to childcare provision. It has a particular focus on supporting families most at risk of experiencing child poverty. Learning from the project will inform future national policy on childcare provision, particularly within remote and rural contexts.

Key points

- Funding for the EAC project has been extended for 2026/27, with an allocation of £385,169.
- This funding will support the continuation of existing childcare provision developed through the project.
- The project remains focused on improving access to affordable, flexible childcare for families most at risk of poverty.
- The project will continue to generate learning to inform future childcare policy and delivery.

Overview

The 2026/27 allocation is broadly in line with current year expenditure. The focus for

the coming year will be on sustaining and embedding the provisions already established through the Early Adopter Communities Project, while continuing to capture learning and outcomes.

The project aims to:

- Improve access to childcare by providing consistent, reliable and flexible provision that meets the needs of families.
- Support families experiencing poverty, particularly those who face barriers to accessing existing childcare services or subsidies.
- Provide access to childcare alongside wider support services, including activities, food, transport and links to family support services, to improve outcomes for families.
- Enhance outcomes for children through access to high quality childcare, activities, and wider support services that promote wellbeing, development, and play.
- Enable parents and carers to access employment, training and education by reducing childcare related barriers.
- Adopt a person centred, place based approach, ensuring services are designed around the needs of families and communities.
- Strengthen partnership working across childcare providers, education, employability services, and family support services to create a more integrated system of support.
- Test and evidence “what works” in reducing inequalities in childcare access, particularly in rural and island contexts.
- Support long term sustainability, including exploring how services can be maintained beyond the lifetime of the project.

The project will continue to be monitored through regular reporting to the Scottish Government, including progress and financial updates.

The Grant Offer Letter states:

“In 2026-27, there will continue to be a focus on developing and delivering tests of change to reduce inequalities in accessing childcare services and understanding the difference that childcare makes in tackling child poverty. The Project/Programme will

continue to deliver for children before school age, primary school age, and, where there is a need identified, for secondary school pupils who have an Additional Support Need. In this phase of the Project/Programme there will be a focus on consolidating and communicating key learning to inform national and local childcare policy and tackling child poverty initiatives, as well as giving consideration to embedding and sustaining the approach and outcomes associated with the Project/Programme at local level”.

The grant offer letter was signed on 18 March 2026.

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