One Parent Families Scotland
changing lives, challenging poverty

Infrastructure gaps in childcare:

Implications for employment and poverty reduction in Calton Ward

An insight report from the Calton Demonstration of Change

Reporting period: November 2025 – October 2026

Author
Cheryl Murtagh, Childcare Connector
One Parent Families Scotland

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Background and purpose

This report has been produced as part of the work being undertaken through the Calton Ward Demonstration of Change, led by Clyde Gateway within Glasgow City Council's Child Poverty Programme. The Demonstration of Change is testing how childcare and play, community engagement, ESOL and employer engagement can be connected around families to support the shared objective of sustainable employment and increased household income.

Through the Demonstration of Change, One Parent Families Scotland (OPFS) is funded as lead delivery partner to provide a dedicated Childcare Connector role for families in Calton. The role helps parents identify and secure suitable childcare, navigate available financial support and upfront costs, work through issues with childcare providers, and maintain arrangements as they move into employment, education or training. The Childcare Connector works alongside Demonstration of Change partners, including the DWP, particularly the DWP Parent Advisor and local community organisations, so that childcare is considered as part of the family's wider progression rather than as a standalone referral.

This report brings together evidence from the Childcare Connector's frontline work with families, local childcare mapping and anonymised lived experience to identify the childcare barriers affecting progression, demonstrate what appropriate childcare can enable and inform future delivery, investment and policy.

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At a glance

Key figures from the Calton Demonstration of Change, drawn from the evidence in this report.

61
families received one to one Childcare Connector support, Nov 2025 – Oct 2026

41%
of children across the seven intermediate zones live in poverty

70%
of residents live in the most deprived SIMD quintile (Glasgow: 45%)

≈3 hrs
usable a day from a 4 hr 45 min funded session

14 weeks
a year not covered by funded childcare under the term-time model

25.5%
of households receive out of work benefits (seven zone average)

9
parents supported to enter employment

14
eligible 2 funded places secured

£1,004.69
a month better off in work for one parent after childcare was secured

Childcare Connector activity and outcome figures overlap and should not be added together to give a total number of families.

"I was able to say yes to more things… within four months of my daughter being here, I was offered a promotion."

Parent, Baltic Street Adventure Playground, August 2026

1. Childcare as economic infrastructure: policy vs local reality

National policy positions early learning and childcare (ELC) as a key component of economic infrastructure, with the expansion to 1,140 funded hours, partly intended to increase parental employment and contribute to the reduction of child poverty (Scottish Government, 2026). Research by Naveed Hakeem and Emily Thomson highlights that investment in childcare can strengthen the economy by enabling greater labour market participation, particularly among mothers and families on lower incomes (Hakeem and Thomson, 2026). Modelling by the Fraser of Allander Institute further supports this, identifying funded ELC as a significant policy lever in efforts to reduce child poverty in Scotland (Fraser of Allander Institute, 2022).

This policy position aligns with the central questions being tested through the Calton Demonstration of Change: what does childcare and play enable parents and carers to do? And, how does that contribute to sustainable employment and increased household income?

For a number of families supported by the Childcare Connector, evidence from practice within Calton Ward highlights a disconnect between policy intent and local delivery. While families are entitled to 1,140 hours of funded childcare, this is typically delivered as half day, term time sessions of approximately **4 hours and 45 minutes**. In practice, once travel and transition time are considered, parents are left with **around 3 hours** of usable time per day. This structure does not align with the requirements of most jobs, limiting parents' ability to enter or sustain employment (Audit Scotland, 2023).

In addition, the term time model provides funded childcare for only **38 weeks** of the year (Scottish Government, 2026), leaving a gap of approximately **14 weeks** where families must source alternative provision or reduce working hours. UK workers are legally entitled to **5.6 weeks**' paid holiday a year (known as statutory leave entitlement or annual leave) which is not sufficient to cover the gap, thus creating a structural barrier (GOV.UK, 2026).

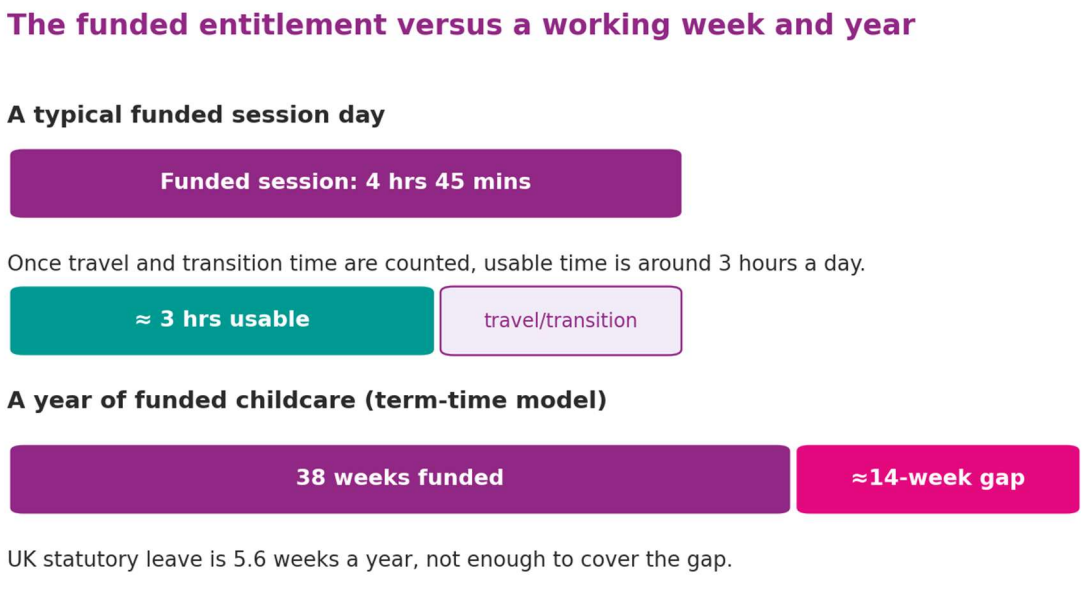

Figure 1. Funded childcare hours against a working day and year. Based on figures in section 1.

1.1 Childcare hours, delivery models and employment

Findings from the Scottish Government's report, *Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare (SSELC): Three-year-olds (Phase 3)*, provide useful evidence on the limitations of the previous 600 hour funded ELC entitlement. The study followed families whose children were eligible for funded ELC at age two ('Eligible 2s'), many of whom were from lower income households. It examined the experiences and outcomes of these families as their children moved from age two to age three.

The evaluation found that, of parents who were not in work at the start of the study, **83%** remained out of work one year later, while **17%** had moved into employment. Overall, the proportion of parents in either part time or full time employment increased only modestly, from **35%** to **40%** (Scottish Government, 2020). These findings demonstrate that providing funded childcare hours alone does not necessarily translate into increased parental employment, particularly where other barriers to work remain.

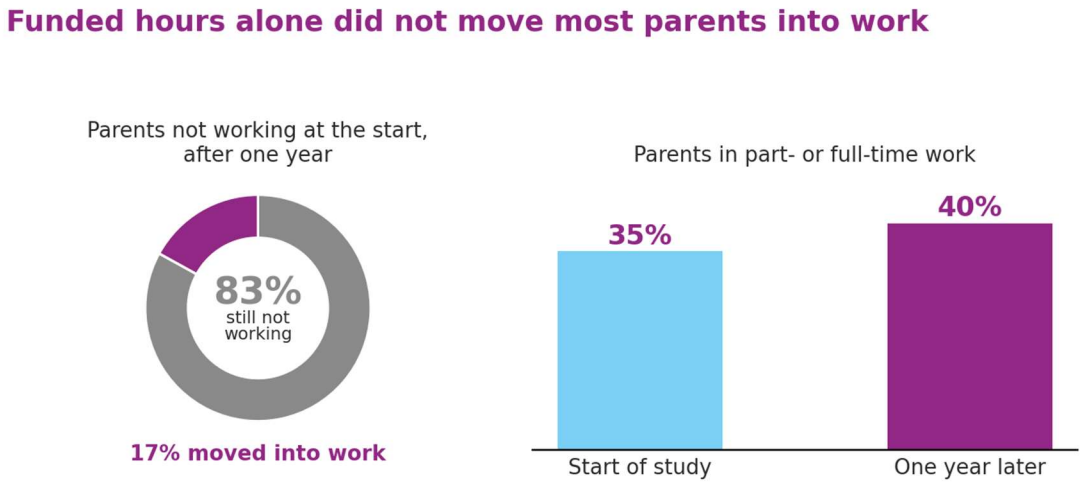

Figure 2. Employment outcomes for parents in the Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare (Scottish Government, 2020).

This is particularly relevant to the expansion from 600 to 1,140 funded hours. While the expansion has substantially increased the number of funded hours available, the way in which those hours are delivered remains important. The 1,140 hour entitlement can be provided in different ways, including approximately 30 hours per week during term time or around 22 hours per week when spread across the year. However, where provision is concentrated in shorter sessions or operates on a term time basis, parents may still face significant gaps between the childcare available and the hours required for employment, education or training.

The issue, therefore, is not simply the number of funded hours available, but whether those hours are accessible, flexible and aligned with parents' working patterns. The experience of the previous 600 hour entitlement highlights the risk of assuming that increasing the number of funded hours alone will automatically increase employment. Without addressing the wider mismatch between childcare provision and the realities of work, education and training, there is a risk that the 1,140 hour expansion will not achieve its full potential as an employment and poverty reduction measure.

This is particularly relevant in Calton Ward, where the lived experience in this report demonstrate that parents are being offered employment, education and training opportunities but are unable to take them up because childcare hours do not match the hours required. The evidence therefore suggests that childcare infrastructure needs to be designed around the needs of families and the labour market, rather than simply measured by the number of funded hours available.

This highlights a critical issue for childcare infrastructure in Calton Ward: while ELC is funded at a level that also carries an economic policy intent, it is delivered in a way that primarily supports children's learning and development rather than enabling parental employment. Evidence from the Childcare Connector's work also suggests that this economic contribution is not always fully realised where hours, location and delivery patterns do not align with the practical requirements of employment, education and training. For childcare to effectively contribute to poverty reduction, greater alignment is required between provision models and the realities of working patterns, particularly in areas of high deprivation (Cebula and Evans, 2024; Scottish Government, 2026).

The absence of a consistent way to capture what childcare and play enabled for the parent led the Calton Demonstration of Change to develop Scotland's first purpose of childcare and play framework and associated measures to support what childcare and play enable for the parent/carer. The framework identifies the reason childcare support is accessed and follows whether it contributes to participation, progression, sustainable employment, increased hours, household income, family stability and wider wellbeing.

2. Childcare provision in Calton Ward

Childcare provision in and around Calton Ward is delivered through a combination of local authority nurseries, nursery classes, partnership nurseries, childminders, after school care providers, and community based play services. Collectively, these services form a vital part of the local childcare infrastructure, enabling parents and carers to access employment, education and training opportunities.

Despite the range of provision available, evidence gathered through frontline childcare support indicates that many families experience significant difficulties securing suitable childcare. Challenges include limited availability of funded nursery places, a shortage of childminders, insufficient school age childcare provision and services operating at or near full capacity (Audit Scotland, 2023).

2.1 Early learning and childcare provision

There are nine local authority nurseries operating on a 50 week basis that serve families living in Calton Ward:

- Bridgeton Family Learning Centre
- Budhill Family Learning Centre
- Dennistoun Early Years Centre
- Green Trees Nursery
- Helenslea Nursery
- Onslow Drive Day Nursery
- Silverdale Nursery
- Westercraigs Nursery
- Winter Gardens Nursery

In addition, there are five term time nursery classes:

- Quarry Brae Nursery Class
- Haghill Park Nursery Class
- St Paul's Nursery Class
- St Timothy's Nursery Class
- Carmyle Nursery Class

These settings provide the core of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) provision available to local families.

2.2 Partnership nursery provision

Partnership nurseries provide additional funded childcare capacity and play an important role in supporting parental choice and flexibility.

Provider	Location	Registered places
Hyde N Seek	Bridgeton	43
Hyde N Seek	Glasgow Green	41
Kirktonholme	Shettleston	63
Kirktonholme	Tollcross	78
Seton House Nursery	Dennistoun	50
Play Away Nursery	Dennistoun	35
Carbon Footprints Nursery	Dennistoun	75

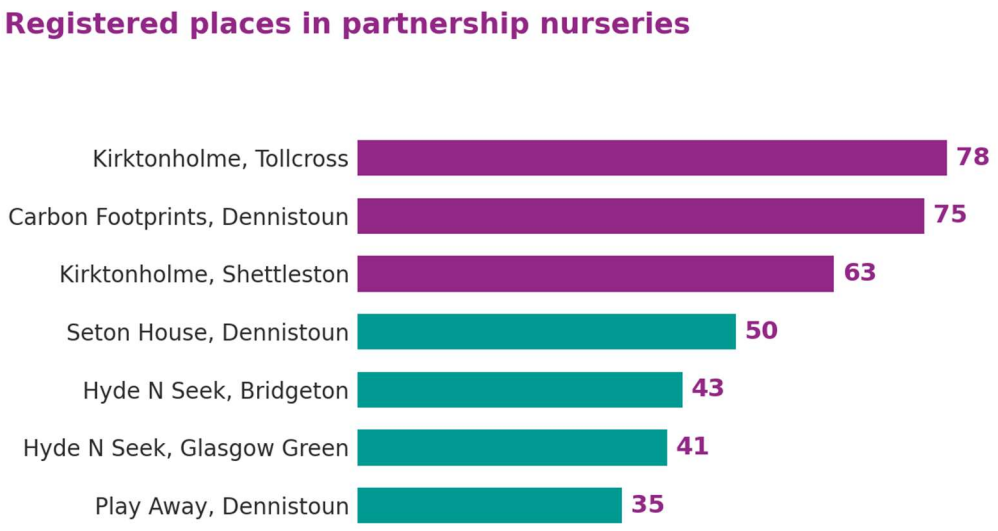

Figure 3. Registered places by partnership nursery. Based on the table above.

While partnership nurseries increase the overall number of funded childcare places available to families, many settings report limited or no immediate availability due to high demand. There is currently no reliable ward wide figure for the number of families on childcare waiting lists across Calton, as providers have not provided this information. However, discussions with parents and families accessing childcare support, alongside conversations within the local community, indicate that waiting lists and difficulties securing a suitable childcare place are a recurring and well recognised issue. As a result, parents may be placed on waiting lists or required to consider settings located further from their home or place of work.

2.3 Childminder provision

Childminders can provide flexible childcare arrangements that are particularly valuable for parents working irregular hours, undertaking training, or requiring wraparound care. However, childminder provision available to families in Calton Ward is extremely limited (Audit Scotland, 2023).

The limited number of childminders significantly restricts childcare options for families seeking flexible and local provision. A search conducted on 1 September 2026, using childminder directories including the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) and childcare.co.uk, identified three childminders listed within Calton Ward. However, these listings could not be independently verified as currently active providers and may include childminders who remain registered but are no longer actively providing childcare. The figure should therefore be treated as an indication of the limited availability of local childminding provision rather than a confirmed number of active childminders. This further highlights the challenges faced by families seeking flexible, local childcare.

2.4 School age childcare provision

Access to after school childcare is a critical component of childcare infrastructure, enabling parents and carers to sustain employment beyond the school day.

The following after school care providers support children attending primary schools serving the Calton Ward area:

Primary school	After school care provider
Alexandra Parade Primary School	Dennistoun ASC
Carntyne Primary School	Connect 2 ASC
Dalmarnock Primary School	Provision to be confirmed
East Bank Primary School	Buddies OSC
Golfhill Primary School	Dennistoun ASC
Haghill Park Primary School & Nursery Class	Connect 2 ASC
Mount Vernon Primary School	Schools Out ASC
Quarry Brae Primary School & Nursery Class	Provision to be confirmed
Riddrie Primary School	Connect 2 ASC
Riverbank Primary School	Baltic Street Adventure Playground / Connect 2 ASC
Royston Primary School	St Roch's ASC
Sacred Heart Primary School	Provision to be confirmed
St Denis' Primary School	Dennistoun ASC
St Michael's Primary School	Provision to be confirmed
St Mungo's Primary School & Nursery Class	St Roch's ASC
St Roch's Primary School	St Roch's ASC
St Timothy's Primary School & Nursery Class	Buddies OSC
Thorntree Primary School	Buddies OSC

Feedback from families and providers suggests that many after school clubs are operating at full capacity, limiting opportunities for parents to access or maintain employment, education, and training. School age childcare shortages are a recurring issue for families requiring care before and after the school day.

2.5 Community and play based provision

Alongside formal childcare services, Calton Ward benefits from strong partnerships with local organisations that provide play based opportunities, holiday activities and family support for children and young people. Three key partners within the Demonstration of Change are being funded to test how childcare and play support the parent/carer progress into sustainable employment. The Demonstration of Change was not asked to reproduce core activity or fund business as usual. Instead, the Demonstration of Change was asked to focus on sustainable employment as the outcome for the parent/carer.

Key partners include:

- PEEK
- Baltic Street Adventure Playground
- Halliday Foundation

These organisations play an important role within the wider childcare and family support infrastructure. Children's wellbeing remains intrinsic to PEEK, Halliday, Baltic Street and other partners, but the test of the Calton Demonstration of Change is to evidence how access to childcare and play enable or prevent parental participation, progression, sustainable employment and household income

The experiences of parents supported through community based childcare and play provision demonstrate the wider economic value of accessible childcare. One parent described how access to after school provision enabled them to take up greater opportunities at work:

> *"I was able to say yes to more things… within four months of my daughter being here, I was offered a promotion."*
>
> **Baltic Street Adventure Playground, Demonstration of Change parent, August 2026**

This illustrates that the impact of childcare extends beyond enabling parents to enter employment. Access to suitable and reliable childcare can enable parents to take on additional responsibilities, progress within employment and increase their household income. In this way, childcare and play provision can support not only participation in the labour market, but also sustainable employment and economic progression.

Through play based provision, holiday programmes, and community activities, they create valuable opportunities for children to learn, develop, and build social connections in safe and nurturing environments (Scottish Government, 2023).

The Childcare Connector service works closely with these organisations to help families access provision that supports their individual needs and circumstances. From November 2025 to October 2026, the Childcare Connector has worked with **57 families** in Calton Ward, providing individualised support to identify and access suitable childcare and address barriers to employment, education and training.

This partnership approach can provide parents and carers with valuable time to attend employability programmes, training courses, appointments and support services that contribute to their longer term goals and progression (Clyde Gateway, 2025a; Clyde Gateway, 2025b).

While not all provision constitutes registered childcare, these community based opportunities make a significant contribution to family wellbeing and help create the conditions that enable families to engage with services, develop skills and move closer to employment. Their presence within the community represents an important local asset and demonstrates the value of collaborative approaches to supporting children and families in Calton Ward.

2.6 Accessibility and capacity challenges

Although a range of childcare services are available to families living in Calton Ward, it is important to recognise that not all identified providers are located within the ward itself. Many are situated in neighbouring communities such as Dennistoun, Shettleston, Tollcross and Glasgow Green.

For many families, particularly those experiencing poverty, travel presents a significant barrier to accessing childcare. Parents without access to a car often require provision within walking distance of their home, their child's school or their place of work. The cost of public transport, the complexity of journeys involving multiple children and the need to coordinate childcare around working hours can make more distant provision impractical.

Through the work of the Childcare Connector service, travel and accessibility are consistently identified as barriers to childcare uptake. Families often require childcare that is not only affordable and appropriate but also located within their local community. Where local provision exists, it is frequently operating at or near full capacity, leaving families with few realistic alternatives.

As a result, childcare accessibility in Calton Ward cannot be measured solely by the number of registered childcare places available. A childcare place that is full, inaccessible by public transport or located too far from a family's daily routine is, in practice, unavailable.

> *A childcare place that is full, inaccessible by public transport, or located too far from a family's daily routine is, in practice, unavailable.*
>
> **Key finding**

The evidence gathered through childcare support work suggests that Calton Ward faces not only a shortage of childcare capacity but also a shortage of accessible childcare infrastructure. This has direct implications for parents seeking employment, education and training opportunities and represents a significant barrier to wider efforts to reduce child poverty within the ward.

Taken together, the findings highlight that while there is a broad range of childcare and family support provision available to families in and around Calton Ward, demand continues to outstrip supply. Capacity constraints, limited childminder provision, shortages in school age childcare and accessibility barriers combine to create significant challenges for families attempting to enter or sustain employment. Addressing these gaps in childcare infrastructure will be essential to supporting economic participation and reducing child poverty within the ward (Audit Scotland, 2023; Cebula and Evans, 2024).

3. Socioeconomic context of Calton Ward

3.1 Population context

The Calton Ward comprises seven key intermediate zones: Braidfauld, Bridgeton, Calton and Gallowgate, Carntyne West and Haghill, Dalmarnock, Gallowgate North and Bellgrove and Parkhead West and Barrowfield.

The ward population is **26,305** (2022), with the combined population of the seven intermediate zones used for wider analysis standing at **38,548** (2021). This broader geography provides a more detailed understanding of variation in need and deprivation across the area.

Across these zones, there are **3,505** dependent children living in households, reflecting a significant child population with implications for early years and school age service demand (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

3.2 Child population profile

The age profile across Calton Ward shows a substantial and unevenly distributed child population, with several neighbourhoods experiencing higher than average concentrations of children compared to the Scottish average of **7.4%**.

Higher concentrations of children are found in:

- Dalmarnock: **10.2%** aged 5–11, **6.6%** aged 0–4
- Braidfauld: **9.5%** aged 5–11, **6.4%** aged 0–4
- Parkhead West and Barrowfield: **9.2%** aged 5–11, **5.5%** aged 0–4
- Bridgeton: **7.9%** aged 5–11, **6.2%** aged 0–4

Other areas, including Carntyne West and Haghill and Calton and Gallowgate, have lower proportions of children but still contain substantial child populations requiring access to childcare, education and family support services (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

This variation highlights the need for a geographically responsive childcare infrastructure that reflects differing levels of demand across the ward (Glasgow City Council, 2025; Audit Scotland, 2023).

3.3 Child poverty and economic insecurity

Calton Ward experiences extremely high levels of child poverty. Across the seven intermediate zones, **41%** of children are living in poverty, significantly above national levels.

Rates are particularly high in:

- Carntyne West and Haghill **50%**
- Dalmarnock **48%**
- Gallowgate North and Bellgrove **46%**

- Bridgeton **42.2%**

(Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Glasgow City Council, 2025)

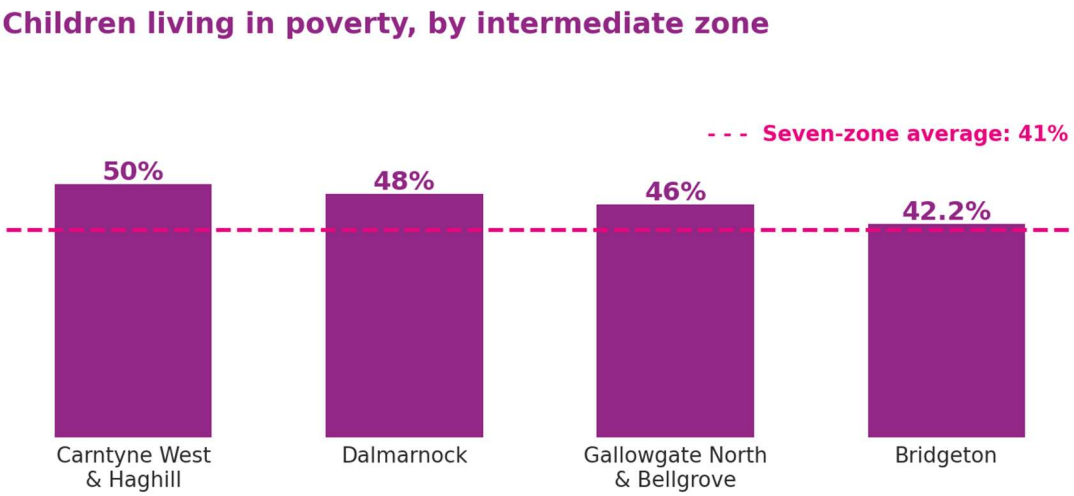

Figure 4. Child poverty by intermediate zone (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Glasgow City Council, 2025).

These figures indicate widespread financial insecurity among families with children, increasing reliance on accessible and affordable childcare as a route into employment and improved income stability (Cebula and Evans, 2024; Hakeem and Thomson, 2026).

3.4 Employment and social security

Unemployment and households living on a low income are significant features across the ward. On average, **25.5%** of households across the seven intermediate zones are in receipt of out of work benefits.

Rates are highest in:

- Dalmarnock **37%**
- Parkhead West and Barrowfield **32%**

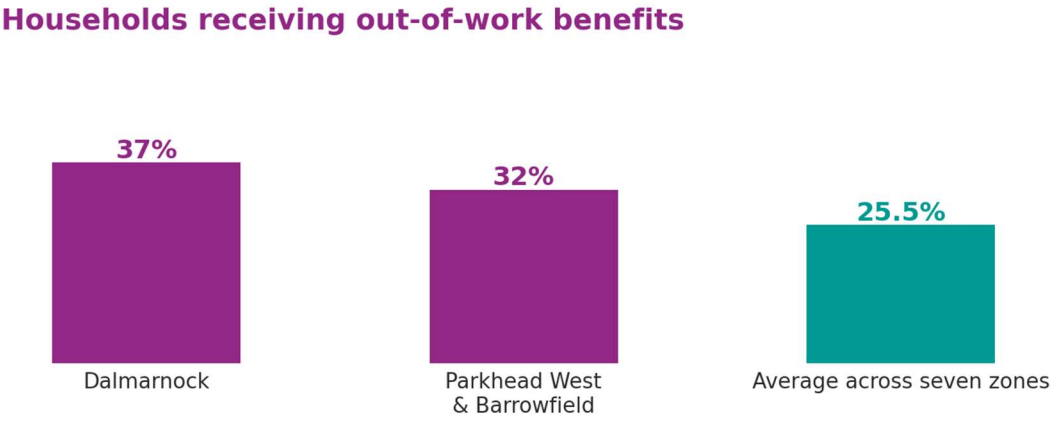

Figure 5. Households in receipt of out of work benefits (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

Households in receipt of Universal Credit is also significantly above national averages, with four out of seven zones recording rates more than double the Scottish average. Dalmarnock records the highest rate at 352 per 1,000 of the 16+ population (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

These indicators demonstrate a strong relationship between childcare availability, labour market participation and household income (Cebula and Evans, 2024; Hakeem and Thomson, 2026).

3.5 Eligibility for funded early learning and childcare

The socioeconomic profile of Calton Ward suggests that the proportion of two year old children eligible for funded early learning and childcare (ELC) is likely to be significantly higher than in many other parts of Glasgow.

Under the Scottish Government's funded ELC entitlement, eligible two year olds can access 1,140 hours of funded childcare where families meet a range of statutory criteria. These include families receiving Universal Credit below the prescribed earnings threshold, families receiving support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, children who are looked after by the local authority, children subject to kinship care or guardianship orders and children whose parent has experience of care during their own childhood (Scottish Government, 2026b).

Local data is not currently available to provide a reliable breakdown of eligible two year olds in Calton Ward by each individual eligibility criterion. The eligibility criteria are therefore outlined above, but the report does not estimate the number of children falling within each category.

Several of these eligibility criteria are closely aligned with the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics of Calton Ward. As outlined in Section 3.4, the number of households in receipt of Universal Credit is substantially higher than both Glasgow and Scottish averages, indicating that a disproportionately high number of families are likely to meet the income related eligibility criteria for funded childcare. Although official DWP data is not available at ward level for Universal Credit recipients by earnings, modelling based on local poverty data and national social security trends suggests that a significant proportion of claimant households are likely to fall below the earnings threshold for entitlement.

In addition, modelled evidence indicates that Calton has a comparatively high concentration of families supported under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999, with the proportion of asylum supported households with dependent children estimated to be more than double the Glasgow average. Modelled estimates also suggest that children in Calton are around twice as likely to be looked after by the local authority or living within kinship care arrangements compared with the city average. Care experienced parents are also likely to be overrepresented within the ward, reflecting both the intergenerational relationship between deprivation and care experience and the concentration of social housing that accommodates many young care leavers as they transition to independent living.

While comprehensive ward level data is not available for every eligibility category, the available evidence indicates that the proportion of children entitled to funded two year old

ELC is likely to be substantially higher than would be expected from population figures alone. Consequently, demand for funded childcare places within Calton is driven not only by the number of young children living in the area, but also by the significantly higher prevalence of statutory entitlement arising from poverty, welfare dependency, care experience, asylum support and other indicators of disadvantage (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Scottish Government, 2026).

This has important implications for childcare sufficiency planning. Assessments based solely on population projections are likely to underestimate demand for funded childcare places in Calton, where eligibility rates are expected to exceed those found across much of Glasgow. The concentration of eligible families reinforces the need for sufficient, accessible childcare provision that reflects both demographic demand and the ward's exceptionally high levels of social and economic need (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Audit Scotland, 2023).

However, eligibility for funded ELC does not necessarily mean that a parent has access to childcare that enables them to work or study. There are limited places available that provide the hours, flexibility and patterns of childcare required by parents with two year olds and younger children. Where a suitable funded place is unavailable, parents may need to seek alternative private or childminding provision and meet the costs themselves, potentially with support through Universal Credit where they are eligible. For families already experiencing financial hardship, the upfront cost of childcare and the difficulty of securing a suitable place can create a significant barrier to entering or sustaining employment or education.

A further issue is the potential gap between childcare support and parents' progression into employment. Where a parent's earnings exceed the relevant income threshold for funded two-year-old ELC, they may lose eligibility for the 1,140 hour entitlement until their child reaches age three. This can create a potential cliff edge for parents who move into employment or increase their earnings but are not yet in a position to meet the full cost of private childcare. In such circumstances, a parent can face increased childcare costs at the same time as they are attempting to increase their household income through employment.

This raises an important question about how effectively the current system supports parents into work. If taking up employment or increasing earnings can result in the loss of funded childcare before a family is financially able to meet the additional cost, the transition into work can become more difficult rather than easier. This is particularly relevant for parents entering low paid or part time employment, where the increase in earnings may not be sufficient to offset the additional cost of childcare.

This distinction is important: having an entitlement to funded childcare is not the same as having access to childcare that works for employment or study. The evidence from families supported through the Childcare Connector service demonstrates that parents can remain unable to take up employment, education or training opportunities where provision is unavailable, unsuitable, unaffordable or does not match the required hours. If childcare is intended to function as economic infrastructure and support parents into sustainable employment, the availability, affordability, flexibility and continuity of provision need to be considered alongside the number of funded hours available.

3.6 Multiple deprivation and wider barriers

The ward experiences deep and overlapping forms of deprivation:

- Approximately **70%** of residents live within the most deprived SIMD quintile, compared to **45%** in Glasgow.
- **98.5%** of residents live within 500 metres of a derelict site, indicating significant environmental deprivation.
- Six out of seven intermediate zones have higher-than-Glasgow levels of residents with limited or no English language skills.
- Five out of seven zones record higher-than-Glasgow rates of Carer's Allowance entitlement

(Glasgow City Council, 2025; Clyde Gateway, 2025)

Figure 6. Share of residents in the most deprived SIMD quintile (Glasgow City Council, 2025).

These factors illustrate the complexity of need across Calton Ward, where families are more likely to experience multiple and intersecting barriers including poverty, health inequality, language barriers and caring responsibilities

3.7 Childcare demand and structural inequality

The demographic and socioeconomic profile of Calton Ward demonstrates a high level of structural inequality and concentrated need. High child poverty rates, combined with significant levels of unemployment and households on a low income, create strong pressure on childcare services as a mechanism for enabling employment and training (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Cebula and Evans, 2024).

When considered alongside the distribution of children across neighbourhoods, the evidence indicates that childcare demand is driven not only by population size, but by the interaction of poverty, unemployment and household complexity.

There is also a clear imbalance between the scale of childcare provision outlined in Section two and the number of children requiring access to services. While childcare provision exists across the ward and surrounding areas, it is geographically uneven and frequently operating at or near capacity.

As a result, the issue is not solely the presence of childcare services, but their accessibility, distribution, and ability to meet concentrated local demand. This represents a structural gap

between need and provision, with direct implications for parents seeking to enter or sustain employment, education and training.

This reinforces the role of childcare as essential social and economic infrastructure within Calton Ward and highlights its importance in wider strategies to reduce child poverty and support labour market participation (Hakeem and Thomson, 2026).

4. Childcare Connector activity, outcomes and learning

4.1 Activity and reach

Between November 2025 and October 2026, the Childcare Connector supported **61 families** through one to one, personalised support to help them navigate childcare options, understand available funding and overcome barriers to accessing suitable provision.

Support included information and advice on local childcare providers, funded childcare places, Eligible 2, Universal Credit childcare costs and other financial support. Parents were also supported to explore suitable childcare options and understand the practical steps involved in accessing provision.

The figures below represent the cumulative activity and outcomes recorded between November 2025 and October 2026. The categories are not mutually exclusive: a parent may have accessed more than one type of provision or achieved more than one outcome. Figures should therefore be considered separately and should not be added together to calculate a total number of families.

4.2 Childcare provision and financial support

Type of provision or support	Number recorded
Eligible 2 funded places	**14**
Funded childcare places for children aged 3–5	**4**
Breakfast club provision	**5**
Out of school care provision	**3**
Short term crèche provision	**3**
Support to claim back childcare costs through Universal Credit	**9**
One to one personalised childcare advice and support	**61**

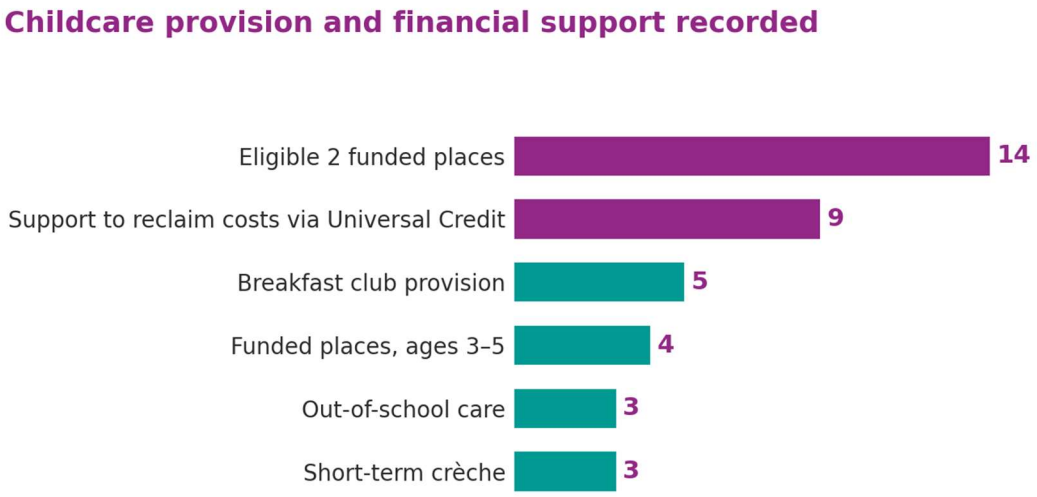

Figure 7. Childcare provision and financial support recorded, Nov 2025 – Oct 2026.

All **61 families** received personalised advice and support. The other figures reflect specific types of provision accessed or assistance provided and may relate to families who received more than one type of support.

4.3 Outcomes for parents and families

The following outcomes were recorded during the period:

Outcome	Number recorded
Parents supported to enter employment	9
Parents supported to enter education or training	5
Parents supported to access ESOL	6
Parents supported to prevent job loss	2
Parents supported to increase working hours	2
Parents supported to gain additional time for caring responsibilities	2

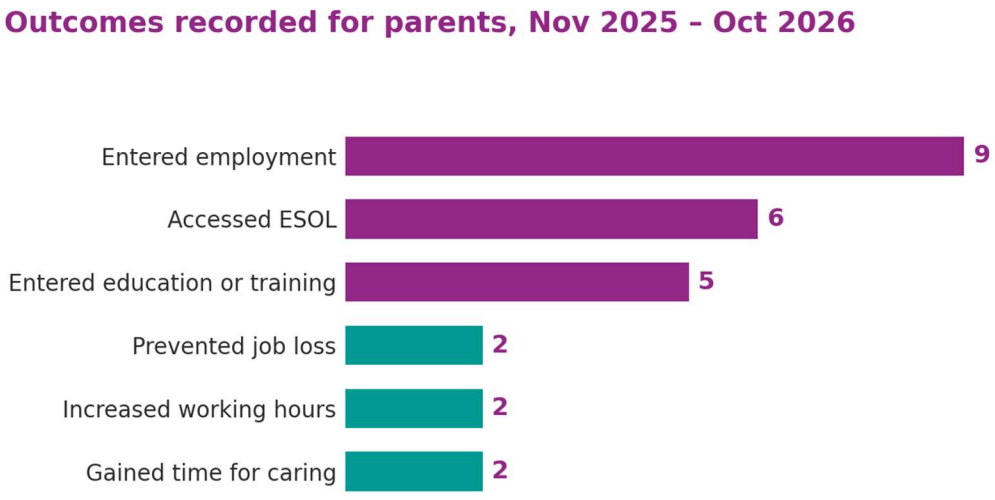

Figure 8. Outcomes for parents recorded, Nov 2025 – Oct 2026.

These figures demonstrate the range of ways in which childcare support can help parents participate in employment, education, training and language learning, maintain their employment and manage caring responsibilities. As parents may have achieved multiple outcomes, the figures should not be interpreted as separate groups or combined to calculate a total number of families.

4.4 Learning and challenges

The activity recorded highlights the contribution that personalised childcare advice can make to helping families identify and access suitable provision. However, the number of positive outcomes was constrained by wider barriers within the local childcare system.

Long waiting lists, limited availability of Eligible 2 places, a shortage of childminders and limited out of school care provision made it difficult to secure suitable childcare for some families. The lack of childcare linked to ESOL provision also continued to restrict opportunities for parents who wanted to improve their English.

These challenges highlighted the limits of individual support when suitable childcare places are unavailable. Although the Childcare Connector could help parents understand their options, explore funding and contact providers, this did not guarantee that an appropriate place would be available. More Eligible 2 places may have been secured if waiting lists had been shorter.

Not all families who received support were able to access childcare or progress into employment, education or training during the period. This does not mean that support was not provided: all **61 families** received one to one personalised advice, information and assistance tailored to their circumstances. The experience reinforces the importance of addressing both individual barriers and wider gaps in childcare availability.

4.5 Added value to delivering on communities

The Childcare Connector has helped make childcare information and funding pathways more accessible to families, while supporting parents to explore opportunities in employment, education, training and ESOL. The role also provides insight into how gaps in local childcare provision affect families' ability to take up opportunities and sustain employment.

The findings demonstrate that personalised advice is an important part of the solution, but its impact is limited when suitable childcare is unavailable. Continued partnership working, clearer referral pathways and improved access to flexible, affordable and locally available childcare will be important in helping more families overcome these barriers.

5. Lived experience: the impact of insufficient childcare provision

The following anonymised lived experience, gathered through frontline engagement with local families, demonstrate the significant barriers that inadequate childcare provision creates for parents seeking employment, education and training. Collectively, they illustrate how a lack of flexible nursery places, after school care and childminders contributes to financial hardship and limits opportunities to improve household income.

Source: Anonymised Childcare Connector case records, 2025–2026.

Parent 1: A parent is currently on the waiting list for a local authority nursery place for their eligible two year old child. They have a job offer waiting but are unable to start work until childcare becomes available. Taking up employment would increase their household income by approximately **£650 per month**.

Parent 2: A parent has secured an eligible two year old nursery place, but the allocated hours (8:30am–12:30pm) make it impossible to secure suitable employment. They have been unable to find work that fits within these restricted hours, leaving them unable to increase their income.

Parent 3: A parent was offered employment but could not accept the position because there is no after school care or registered childminder available to collect their two children from the local primary school.

Parent 4: A parent attending ESOL classes between 9:30am and 12:30pm hopes to secure part time employment afterwards. However, the absence of after school childcare prevents them from pursuing work and progressing towards financial independence.

Parent 5: A parent was offered employment, but their nursery provision operates only from 1:30pm–5:30pm, which is incompatible with their shift pattern. Without after school childcare beyond 3:00pm and with long waiting lists for private providers, they have been unable to take up the role.

Parent 6: A parent received an offer to study nursing at University but had to decline the place because no suitable childcare was available locally. All nearby private childcare providers were operating at full capacity.

Parent 7: A parent received an unconditional offer to attend college four days per week. However, their child's nursery place only operates from 8:30am–12:00pm, making attendance impossible. There is no flexible provision or alternative childcare available within the local area.

Parent 8: A parent whose child attends after school care has continued paying childcare fees despite being made redundant. Universal Credit does not cover these costs while they are unemployed, but they are using personal savings to retain the childcare place because the waiting list is so long. They fear losing the place would make it significantly harder to return to work in the future.

Parent 9: A parent in G32 was unable to find a local childcare provider and had to use a childminder in G74. As a result, their four year old is collected from school at 2.30pm four days a week, missing approximately two hours of education each week. The parent is concerned about how long the school will accommodate this arrangement. Although support with upfront childcare costs is available, this case demonstrates that financial assistance alone cannot overcome a lack of suitable local provision. While outside Calton Ward, it highlights the wider impact of childcare shortages on families and children's access to education.

5.1 Summary of key themes

The lived experience of parents demonstrates consistent barriers experienced by families across the ward:

- Insufficient availability of eligible two year old nursery places
- Nursery operating hours that do not align with typical working patterns or further and higher education timetables
- A severe shortage of after school childcare and registered childminders within the local area
- Long waiting lists for private childcare providers, leaving families with no alternative options
- Parents declining employment, education and training opportunities because suitable childcare is unavailable
- Families remaining in, or at risk of, poverty due to childcare acting as a barrier to improving income
- Financial insecurity caused by parents paying to retain scarce childcare places, even during periods of unemployment, for fear of being unable to access provision when work becomes available
- A shortage of local childcare providers is forcing families to rely on childcare further from home, creating practical difficulties and affecting children's access to education. This highlights that financial support alone is not enough; childcare must also be available locally and compatible with families' needs and school hours.

5.2 Impact of childcare gaps

The lived experience of parents provides clear evidence that gaps in local childcare provision has impacts beyond access to childcare itself. For families, the availability, affordability, flexibility and hours of childcare can directly determine whether a parent is able to work, study or undertake training, increase household income and maintain family wellbeing.

Impact on employment

A lack of suitable childcare is creating a significant barrier to parents entering or returning to employment. Several families have reported being unable to accept job offers because available nursery hours do not align with working hours, while others are unable to find suitable after school provision or childminders.

This particularly affects parents working shifts, parents with school age children and those seeking part time employment. Even where a parent has secured employment, the absence of suitable childcare can make the job financially or practically unviable.

The experience of parents demonstrates that childcare availability can act as a direct barrier to employment, education and training, rather than simply being a support required once they have been secured (Cebula and Evans, 2024; Hakeem and Thomson, 2026).

Impact on education and training

Insufficient childcare is also limiting access to education, higher and further education and training. Parents have reported having to reconsider or decline opportunities because childcare hours do not fit with college, university or training timetables.

This can have longer term consequences for families, as education and training can provide a pathway into better paid and more secure employment. Where parents are unable to take up these opportunities due to childcare constraints, they may remain economically inactive or in low paid employment for longer (Scottish Government, 2026a).

Two of the parents included in this report had to give up opportunities to study nursing and attend college because suitable and flexible childcare was unavailable locally.

Impact on household income

The lack of available childcare can have a direct financial impact on household income. Parents who are unable to take up employment lose the opportunity to earn additional income, while families may also face significant childcare costs when they do secure work.

One parent's experience illustrates the potential scale of this impact, as they were unable to take up employment that would have increased their income by approximately **£650 per month**.

£650	per month: the household income one parent could not gain because no nursery place was available

For families already experiencing financial hardship, these missed employment opportunities can reinforce existing poverty and make it more difficult to improve their financial circumstances. The interaction between childcare availability and household income is therefore particularly important in understanding the wider impact of childcare gaps within the ward (Cebula and Evans, 2024).

Impact on family wellbeing

The impact of inadequate childcare extends beyond employment and finances. Parents facing ongoing difficulties accessing childcare can experience uncertainty, stress and anxiety about their family's financial security and their ability to work or study (Cebula and Evans, 2024).

The lack of flexibility can also place additional pressure on family life, particularly where parents are required to balance childcare responsibilities with employment, education or other commitments.

Long waiting lists can create further insecurity. In one case, a parent continued paying for an after school place from their savings despite being made redundant, because they were concerned that giving up the place would mean being unable to return to work when another opportunity became available.

Overall, the experience of parents suggests that access to appropriate childcare is an important part of supporting family stability, reducing financial insecurity and enabling parents to participate fully in employment, education and training.

6. Positive outcomes: the opportunities created by accessible childcare

The following lived experience demonstrates the positive impact that accessible, flexible and available childcare can have on parents and families within Calton Ward. They highlight how effective childcare support can enable parents to access employment, education and training, improve household income and contribute to wider family wellbeing.

Importantly, these examples demonstrate that childcare can be an enabler of opportunity, allowing parents to overcome practical and financial barriers and take positive steps towards greater financial security.

Source: Anonymised Childcare Connector case records and better off calculations, 2025–2026.

Parent 1: supporting a parent into employment

A single parent of three children was offered a part time position with Social Security Scotland. Working alongside the Childcare Connector, the parent was able to secure breakfast club places at the children's school, enabling her to travel to work.

The parent and Childcare Connector also worked together to identify a partnership nursery that could accommodate the hours required for employment. The nursery place is partly funded through the 1,140 hours entitlement, with the remaining costs paid by the parent and **85%** subsequently reclaimed through Universal Credit.

As a result of being able to access suitable childcare, the parent was able to take up employment and is now **£1,004.69 per month** better off in work.

£1,004.69	per month better off in work after the parent secured coordinated childcare

> **Outcome:** Access to coordinated childcare support enabled the parent to enter employment, flexible nursery hours and funded school breakfast clubs significantly increasing household income and financial security.

Parent 2: enabling access to further education

A young single parent with a two year old child was offered a place to study for an HND at City of Glasgow College. With support from the Childcare Connector, the parent was able to secure an eligible two year old childcare place.

The parent and Childcare Connector worked together to identify a partnership nursery that could provide childcare on the days required around the college timetable. They also liaised with the college regarding additional childcare funding, with the child's place covered through eligible two year old funded hours and the college providing funding for one additional day.

This support enabled the parent to take up their college place and begin working towards a qualification that could provide a pathway into better paid employment in the future.

> **Outcome:** Appropriate childcare enabled a young parent to access further education and improve their future employment and earning potential.

Parent 3: preventing job loss through flexible childcare support

A single parent with one child was offered a part time position with the Department for Work and Pensions. The parent initially secured three days of out of school care at Connect 2 to fit around her working schedule.

However, she was subsequently informed that she would need to complete **14 weeks** of full time training, five days per week, before moving to her part time contracted hours. The childcare provider did not initially have capacity to accommodate the additional two days required. The parent was also concerned about the cost of the additional childcare and the possibility that she would be unable to complete the training, potentially resulting in the loss of her job.

The Childcare Connector contacted other local providers and worked collaboratively with Connect 2 to identify a solution. **£518** of Transition Support Fund funding was secured, allowing the provider to employ an additional worker and accommodate the child for the additional two days.

The parent was therefore able to complete the 14 week training period and continue progressing in employment. The childcare was also provided by a service trusted by both the parent and child.

> **Outcome:** Flexible childcare support prevented potential job loss, reduced financial stress and supported greater family stability

Parent 4: supporting learning, confidence and community participation

A parent secured an eligible two year old place for her child at a local authority nursery. Having access to this childcare enabled her to attend ESOL classes within the community to improve her English language skills.

The parent hopes to progress into further training in childcare, with improved language skills supporting her longer term employment aspirations. Access to nursery provision has also enabled her to get out into the community, interact with other adults and return to learning.

The parent reported a significant reduction in isolation and a considerable increase in confidence.

> **Outcome:** Access to childcare supported participation in education and community life, reduced social isolation and increased the parent's confidence and aspirations for future training and employment.

6.1 Local demonstration of change community partner delivery

In addition to supporting parents to access childcare, the Demonstration of Change has highlighted the wider role that flexible, community based childcare and play provision can play in improving family outcomes.

Alongside the Childcare Connector, the Demonstration of Change is exploring how flexible, community based childcare and play provision can help parents enter and sustain employment, increase working hours, and access education and training. Lived experience from Baltic Street Adventure Playground further demonstrates the role this provision can play in supporting families and preventing job loss. Together, this evidence highlights the importance of childcare and play as essential economic infrastructure and the value of collaboration across community partners, third sector organisations and statutory services to improve outcomes for families. Further details are provided in *Appendix 1: Baltic Street Adventure Playground Lived experience*.

6.2 What these positive outcomes demonstrate

Together, the positive experiences of parents demonstrate the wider value of accessible childcare provision within Calton Ward. They show that when parents can access childcare that is available, affordable, flexible and aligned with their individual circumstances, it can:

- Enable parents to enter and remain in employment
- Prevent job loss when working arrangements or training requirements change
- Support parents to access college, university and vocational training
- Increase household income and improve financial security
- Support longer term progression into better paid employment
- Reduce social isolation and improve confidence and wellbeing
- Enable parents to participate more fully in their communities
- Provide stability for families during periods of transition

> These examples also demonstrate the value of coordinated, person centred support. In each case, the Childcare Connector played an important role in identifying solutions, navigating available funding and working with childcare providers and other organisations to overcome barriers. The lived experience from Baltic Street Adventure Playground further complement this evidence, highlighting how flexible, community based childcare and play provision can help parents sustain employment, increase working hours, access education and training and prevent job loss (see Appendix 1).

Taken together, these positive outcomes illustrate the potential impact of investment in childcare infrastructure and support within the ward. They demonstrate that when suitable childcare and play provision is available, it can unlock opportunities that benefit not only individual parents, but also their children, household finances and the wider community (Clyde Gateway, 2025a; Clyde Gateway, 2025b; Cebula and Evans, 2024).

7. Conclusion

This report demonstrates that childcare in Calton Ward should be understood not only as a service for children and families, but as essential social and economic infrastructure. Access to appropriate childcare directly affects parents' ability to enter and remain in employment, participate in education and training, increase household income and build greater financial security (Hakeem and Thomson, 2026; Scottish Government, 2026a).

Calton Ward and the surrounding areas examined in this report experience significant levels of child poverty, socioeconomic disadvantage and low income. At the same time, local childcare provision faces capacity and accessibility challenges, including limited funded places, a shortage of childminders, insufficient school age and after school provision, waiting lists and childcare hours that do not consistently align with employment or education opportunities. This means that the existence of childcare provision does not necessarily translate into meaningful access for families. Theoretical provision is not the same as usable childcare.

> *Theoretical provision is not the same as usable childcare.*
>
> **Key finding**

The experience of parents demonstrates the real life consequences of these gaps. Parents have been unable to accept employment, education and training opportunities because suitable childcare could not be secured. In some cases, parents have faced the risk of losing employment or remaining on a low income. Conversely, the positive experiences of parents demonstrate the significant difference that appropriate, flexible and coordinated childcare support can make. Where suitable provision was secured, parents were able to enter employment, undertake education and training, increase household income and improve their confidence and wellbeing. The impact of childcare on the parent remains difficult to see unless it is intentionally measured and followed beyond initial access

The evidence therefore suggests that improving childcare infrastructure should form part of a wider approach to employment and poverty reduction. This requires consideration not only of the number of childcare places available, but whether those places are affordable, flexible, geographically accessible and responsive to the needs of local families (Cebula and Evans, 2024; Audit Scotland, 2023).

There is also a need to recognise the contribution of community based and third sector organisations providing play based provision. Organisations embedded within communities can offer trusted, accessible and flexible support that complements formal childcare provision and responds to local circumstances (Scottish Government, 2023; Clyde Gateway, 2025a).

Ultimately, investment in childcare infrastructure is an investment in children, families, communities and the wider economy. A more flexible and locally responsive approach has

the potential to remove barriers to employment and education while contributing to longer term poverty reduction (Hakeem and Thomson, 2026).

The learning from the Calton Demonstration of Change is therefore not solely that additional childcare capacity is required. It is also that families need provision that aligns with the opportunity it is intended to enable, specialist support to connect different parts of the system and a consistent method of following whether participation leads to progression, sustainable employment and increased household income.

8. Recommendations

Based on the evidence presented in this report, the following recommendations are proposed:

1. Increase investment in local childcare capacity

Prioritise investment in childcare capacity where the evidence indicates the greatest gaps in Calton Ward. In particular, this should focus on:

- Eligible two year old provision, where demand is likely to be significantly higher than population based estimates suggest due to the concentration of families experiencing poverty, low income and other eligibility factors.
- School age and after school childcare, where shortages, limited capacity and lack of provision are repeatedly identified through parent experiences and the Childcare Connector casework.
- Provision that matches employment, education and training patterns, including childcare outside standard nursery hours, provision covering school holidays and places that can accommodate changes in working or training hours.

Investment should therefore be informed by local demographic and poverty data alongside evidence from families and childcare providers, rather than relying solely on population projections. This would help ensure that new or expanded provision is targeted towards the specific childcare gaps experienced by families in Calton (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Audit Scotland, 2023; Scottish Government, 2026a).

2. Improve the flexibility of funded early learning and childcare

Review how funded ELC is delivered to ensure that provision better reflects the working, education and training patterns of parents.

Where possible, greater flexibility should be considered around session times, days of provision and the ability to combine funded hours with other forms of childcare. This is particularly important for parents working shifts, part time hours, variable hours or undertaking education and training (Audit Scotland, 2023; Cebula and Evans, 2024).

3. Strengthen school age and after school childcare

Prioritise the development of accessible and affordable school age childcare, including after school provision.

The experience of parents demonstrates that a nursery place alone does not remove the childcare barrier for parents with school age children. Gaps in after school provision and the limited availability of childminders can prevent parents from taking up or retaining employment.

4. Support the development and sustainability of local childminding

Explore measures to encourage more childminders to operate within Calton Ward and surrounding communities.

Childminders can provide an important source of flexible childcare, particularly where nursery or school based provision cannot accommodate parents' working patterns. Increasing the availability of local childminders could provide families with greater choice and flexibility (Audit Scotland, 2023).

5. Recognise and invest in community based and play led provision

Recognise and invest in the contribution of third sector organisations providing community based and play led provision, including PEEK, Baltic Street Adventure Playground and the Halliday Foundation.

These organisations provide valuable support that complements formal childcare infrastructure by offering accessible, trusted and community based opportunities for children and families. Sustained investment would enable these organisations to build capacity, respond to local need and continue providing flexible support within communities.

The Demonstration of Change approach is also testing the wider contribution of this type of provision, including:

- what access to community based childcare and play enables parents to do in relation to employment, education and training
- how this provision connects with and supports employment and employability pathways
- where community based provision complements rather than replaces registered childcare
- how children's outcomes and parents' outcomes can both be recognised when assessing the value of childcare and play provision

The learning from the Demonstration of Change should be used to strengthen the evidence base for community based childcare and play provision and inform future funding and service planning. Community based play provision should be considered as part of the wider childcare and family support infrastructure rather than as separate from it (Scottish Government, 2023; Clyde Gateway, 2025a).

6. Strengthen coordination between childcare, employment and education support

Improve coordination between childcare providers, employment services, colleges, training providers and other relevant services so that childcare is considered at the point when employment, education or training opportunities are identified.

Childcare needs should be identified when employment, training or education opportunities are being designed and planned, rather than after a parent has accepted an opportunity and

is expected to resolve their childcare arrangements themselves. This would allow potential childcare barriers to be identified earlier and appropriate support or provision to be put in place before an opportunity is taken up.

The positive experiences of parents demonstrate the value of proactive and coordinated support. Where childcare barriers are identified early, there is greater potential to prevent parents from losing opportunities or being unable to progress. Stronger coordination between childcare and employment, education and training services could therefore help ensure that childcare is treated as an integral part of pathways into and progression within employment.

7. Provide greater support with the upfront costs of childcare

Recognise and address the financial barriers parents can face when starting employment, education or training, particularly where additional childcare costs are required before wages or childcare support are received.

Learning from the Demonstration of Change, including work with the DWP and Elaine, has evidenced the value of identifying childcare and financial barriers at an early stage and putting appropriate support in place. This has included:

- carrying out early identification of childcare barriers before a parent starts employment or training
- using better off calculations to understand whether taking up an opportunity will result in a genuine increase in household income
- supporting parents to understand and access Universal Credit childcare support, including helping parents navigate the process of reporting and claiming childcare costs through their Universal Credit journal, which can be complex and difficult to navigate without support
- exploring the Flexible Support Fund and other available funding mechanisms
- using the Demonstration of Change Transition Fund to meet immediate childcare costs where other funding is not available or cannot be accessed quickly
- working directly with childcare providers to identify practical solutions and secure additional capacity
- using small, short term payments to overcome immediate childcare barriers and prevent much larger losses, such as a parent losing an employment or training opportunity

The experience of the Demonstration of Change shows that relatively small and timely interventions can prevent significant financial and employment consequences for families. Future childcare and employment support should therefore build on this learning, ensuring that parents receive both financial assistance and practical support to navigate existing childcare funding systems.

This approach should complement, rather than replace, existing childcare funding and benefits. It demonstrates the potential value of early intervention, flexible funding, practical

navigation support and coordinated working in helping parents move into and sustain employment and training.

8. Use local demographic, poverty and operational childcare data to inform childcare planning

Childcare planning should make greater use of demographic, child poverty, SIMD and social security data to identify areas where demand is likely to be greatest. However, demographic data alone cannot show whether families are able to access suitable childcare in practice.

Where available, planning should therefore also incorporate operational childcare data, including:

- the number and length of waiting lists
- available vacancies and capacity
- the number of unsuccessful or rejected childcare searches
- age specific demand, particularly demand for eligible two year old places and school age provision
- the hours and patterns of childcare requested by parents
- the travel distances and transport requirements involved in accessing available provision
- employment, education or training opportunities lost or delayed because suitable childcare could not be secured

This would provide a more complete picture of childcare sufficiency. Demographic data can help predict where need is likely to be greatest, while operational childcare data can demonstrate where families are experiencing actual unmet demand and access barriers. Combining both would allow childcare planning and investment to respond more accurately to the lived experience of families and the specific gaps within local provision.

In Calton, this approach would be particularly valuable given the high levels of child poverty and socioeconomic disadvantage alongside the evidence of limited childcare availability, waiting lists, gaps in school age provision and difficulties accessing provision that matches employment and education requirements (Centre for Civic Innovation, 2023; Audit Scotland, 2023).

9. Develop a national evidence base for childcare as infrastructure

Build on the childcare and play time purpose framework developed through Clyde Gateway's Demonstration of Change (Clyde Gateway, 2025a; Glasgow City Council, 2025a) to develop a consistent approach to measuring the wider contribution of childcare and play provision.

The framework is already being used by Baltic Street Adventure Playground within its statutory childcare service, providing an opportunity to build on learning from its practical application and demonstrate how outcomes can be measured alongside the delivery of childcare.

This should consider outcomes including:

- employment
- household income and poverty reduction
- access to education and training
- children's development and wellbeing
- family wellbeing and confidence
- community participation
- the wider social and economic value of local childcare infrastructure

The framework could be further tested and evaluated across different communities and types of provision before consideration of wider national adoption. Developing a consistent national evidence base would strengthen understanding of the role childcare plays in communities and provide evidence to inform future policy, investment and funding decisions. It would also help demonstrate the outcomes achieved through childcare provision, rather than measuring provision solely by the number of funded hours or places delivered.

10. Recognise childcare as part of wider poverty reduction and economic policy

Childcare should be embedded more explicitly within local and national employment, economic development and poverty reduction strategies.

The evidence in this report demonstrates that childcare barriers can directly prevent parents from entering employment, progressing in work or undertaking education and training. Investment in childcare should therefore be considered alongside other forms of economic and social infrastructure when planning for strengthening our economy and reducing poverty (Hakeem and Thomson, 2026; Cebula and Evans, 2024).

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Appendix 1: Baltic Street Adventure Playground lived experience

Childcare and play as economic infrastructure

Evidence from lived experience

Case studies developed by Rory McFeely Bolt, Afterschool Play Worker Lead, Baltic Street Adventure Playground

> Calton Demonstration of Change: testing what childcare and play enable for sustainable employment, progression and prevention.

Context

Led by Clyde Gateway as part of Glasgow City Council's wider Child Poverty Programme, the Calton Demonstration of Change is testing how four interconnected enablers: childcare and play, community engagement, employer engagement and ESOL (English language support) can work together around families to support them to enter, progress within and sustain employment.

Within this wider model, Baltic Street Adventure Playground (BSAP) is funded through the Demonstration of Change to specifically test the role of childcare and play as economic infrastructure, generating evidence of what access to consistent, trusted and flexible play provision can enable for parents, children and families.

Baltic Street was the first live delivery partner to begin using the purpose of childcare and play framework and supported Clyde Gateway in its design. The framework seeks to understand not simply how many childcare or play hours are provided, but the purpose for which that time is needed and what happens as a result. This includes whether childcare and play enable employment entry and sustainability, increased working hours, education and training, progression and prevention of job loss, alongside outcomes for children and families.

About the lived experience

Rory McFeely Bolt, Afterschool Play Worker Lead at Baltic Street Adventure Playground, developed this evidence from lived experience through his direct work with parents and children in the afterschool play pick up programme.

They capture parents' experiences of the provision and explore what access to consistent after school play has enabled for their families, with a particular focus on employment sustainability, progression, education and training, increased working hours and prevention of job loss.

16 hrs	2 days	608 hrs
of after school play each week (two days)	of provision a week for each parent	up to, across the school year

Each parent receives two days of afterschool play provision each week providing 16 hours of play for four children, and up to 608 hours across the school year.

What can 16 hours of consistent, accessible after school play enable for a parent and their family?

Parent quotations are presented in their own words. The accompanying narrative has been structured to draw out the learning relevant to the Calton Demonstration of Change and its testing of childcare and play as economic infrastructure.

Parent story 1 – Josie

Primary outcome: sustainable employment and prevention of job loss

Josie is a single parent of two children and works 24 hours per week as a children's nurse. Her children have attended Baltic Street's pick up programme two days each week since February 2026.

Before accessing the programme, Josie relied heavily on family members to provide after school care. Changes in family circumstances made these arrangements increasingly difficult to sustain alongside her employment.

Josie regularly used annual and parental leave when childcare arrangements fell through, reducing the leave available to cover school holidays and other family needs.

> *"I used to do two 12 hour shifts, which became completely unmanageable because… I was on my own with them. It meant that they were sitting in somebody's house until bedtime, and half the time I didn't really have anybody at that time, so I've obviously shortened my shifts, but even at that, school finishes at three."*
>
> **Josie, parent**

Despite her employer agreeing on set working days, the absence of reliable after school provision placed her employment under increasing pressure. Josie had worked in the same ward for 10 years:

> *"I have been working there for 10 years, and they've supported me through quite a lot... I'm comfortable there, and I can speak to them about anything… but at this point in my life, I think moving somewhere else wouldn't have been best for me."*
>
> **Josie, parent**

Without an alternative childcare arrangement, Josie felt she was reaching the point where she would either have to leave her existing role or change to night shifts.

What changed?

Access to two consistent days of after school play created a reliable arrangement around Josie's working pattern.

> *"I'm not under that kind of… stress, anxiety, to get home and grab them for wherever they are. If someone kindly offers to pick them up for me, you feel as if, oh my God, I need to get home… or if somebody's waiting to get out to work and you're stuck on the motorway… I know they're somewhere, they're happy, they're playing, they're safe. I can go and grab whatever I need before I collect them."*
>
> **Josie, parent**

It enabled Josie to remain in her existing role and avoid moving to a working pattern which would have been difficult for her family. She also describes becoming more reliable at work:

> *"It's increased opportunities for me at work... and I felt less guilty about my work because, again, we tend to do 12 hour shifts… it felt a little less of a burden because… I can give my work and children the attention it deserves... I'm more reliable, and I don't need… to mess work around."*
>
> **Josie, parent**

Josie no longer routinely needs to use annual leave to cover school collection, allowing her to retain leave for school holidays and time with her children. For Josie, access to play provision has therefore not simply provided childcare. It has helped prevent potential job loss and enabled her to sustain employment.

> *"I think they make an impact for me… as a lone parent… I just want to be able to provide and work. You're giving me a chance to do that. I think, obviously, certain families can be penalised when it comes to childcare help… But I am still expected, as a parent, to work, yet they don't really make it easy for me to work… So you're giving families… more opportunities to be good role models at work, and you're giving kids a safe, consistent place. Where they can obviously build positive relationships again, which some kids might not have a lot of at home."*
>
> **Josie, parent**

Economic outcome

Employment sustained • **Potential job loss prevented** • **Working pattern maintained** • **Employment reliability improved** • **Annual leave preserved**

Parent story 2 – Agnes

Primary outcome: skills progression, increased working hours and income

Agnes is a single parent of two children and works approximately 26 hours per week. Her family has accessed Baltic Street's after school play pick up programme since May 2025.

Agnes wanted to undertake training to develop her skills and improve her longer term career opportunities while remaining in employment. However, difficulties securing consistent after school provision made this increasingly difficult.

> *"It was okay at the beginning, until it became all over the place with after school care… I kept on doing this course with the Glasgow Libraries, and I was really struggling with childcare… it became too much, which led me to pull out of the course."*
>
> **Agnes, parent**

Childcare also affected her ability to maintain her working hours. At times Agnes had to reduce hours, take leave or pay for additional childcare, all of which affected household income.

> *"I have to be there for Lornay… so I had to lose two hours in the morning to get her to school. Which then means I am looking at losing at least three or four hours of work across the day when I had to take early leave of work in the afternoon."*
>
> **Agnes, parent**

What changed?

Following referral to Baltic Street, consistent after school play provision enabled Agnes to combine employment, caring responsibilities and study. She subsequently completed the course she had previously struggled to sustain:

> *"It made a big difference to my life because I've been able to complete the whole course, and I'm going to the next level, and I'm still working, and I don't have to give up on the course... and you know, because childcare is so expensive."*
>
> **Agnes, parent**

Agnes has since progressed to a Software Development course at Langside College as part of a longer term ambition to progress into IT employment within the banking sector.

Access to the pick up programme has also enabled Agnes to work additional afternoon hours, increasing her income and providing greater financial stability. The play provision is

therefore supporting both her immediate economic position and a longer term pathway towards career progression and increased employment.

Economic outcome

Employment sustained • Additional working hours enabled • Household income increased • Training completed • Further education commenced • Longer term career progression enabled

Parent story 3 – Hannah

Primary outcome: employment capacity, career progression and improved economic position

Hannah is a single parent of two children attending different schools. Her family has been accessing Baltic Street's pick up programme since August 2025.

Before accessing the programme, Hannah was working full time while coordinating different and frequently changing arrangements for school collection.

> *"Juggling two kids at two different schools and a full time job was difficult. Had to rely a lot on family, and it could never really be consistent; all my family worked full time."*
>
> **Hannah, parent**

The lack of predictable after school provision affected Hannah's capacity within employment. Although she continued performing her core role, she felt unable to take on additional opportunities, develop her skills or pursue progression.

What changed?

Reliable and predictable after school play provision gave Hannah greater capacity within her working life. She became able to plan ahead, take on additional work opportunities and pursue career development:

> *"I was able to say yes to more things… within four months of my daughter being here, I was offered a promotion."*
>
> **Hannah, parent**

Hannah ultimately decided that particular promotion did not offer sufficient progression:

> *"I knocked it back… it wasn't enough money… I realised my worth when I did knock back that promotion… I felt confident saying no."*
>
> **Hannah, parent**

She subsequently went through four interviews, received two job offers and moved into a role which better matched her career ambitions.

> *"It's fulfilling to know that I'm working hard at a job and I'm being paid a fair wage for it."*
>
> **Hannah, parent**

Her change in employment also removed the need to travel approximately 900 miles each month to Fife, previously costing around **£300 per month** in fuel.

For Hannah, therefore, play provision did not simply enable her to remain employed. It created greater capacity to progress, pursue better employment and reduce the costs associated with work.

Economic outcome

Full time employment sustained • Capacity for progression increased • Promotion opportunity generated • Better employment secured • Work related travel reduced • Approx. £300/month previous fuel expenditure avoided

What are we learning?

Taken together, this lived experience of parents demonstrates that the economic impact of childcare and play extends beyond supporting a parent to enter employment.

- Preventing potential job loss and sustaining existing employment
- Protecting and increasing working hours
- Enabling parents to undertake and complete education and training
- Creating capacity for career progression and better employment
- Increasing or protecting household income
- Reducing costs associated with maintaining employment
- Providing the stability that enables parents to plan their working lives rather than continually responding to childcare crises

The experience of Josie, Agnes and Hannah also demonstrates wider benefits for children and families, including consistency, routine, community connection and reduced household pressure. These wider outcomes are important and should continue to be captured through the wider Demonstration of Change learning.

For the specific purpose of this evidence, however, the focus is on understanding what childcare and play enable in relation to the Demonstration of Change's shared outcome of sustainable employment.

From counting hours to understanding what they enable

"How many hours of childcare or play have been provided?" ⌊ "What did those hours enable?"

The shift in the evidence question

For these three families, 16 hours of consistent after school play each week has contributed to employment being sustained, potential job loss being prevented, additional hours being worked, education and training being completed and career progression becoming possible.

This provides emerging local evidence of the role that childcare and play can perform as economic infrastructure when provision is designed around the realities of parents' working lives.

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If you have any feedback about anything in this report, please contact us at:

One Parent Families Scotland,
2 York Place, Edinburgh EH1 3EP

Tel: **0131 556 3899**
policy@opfs.org.uk

www.opfs.org.uk

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