

Auchinairn Early Years Centre



Staff Deployment Policy & Protocol

Our purpose

Effective staff deployment ensures children are safe, supported, supervised and able to access high-quality play and learning throughout the day. Deployment is not simply about being within the required adult: child ratio. We must also consider:

- the children
- their individual needs
- the environment
- what is happening
- where staff are.

At Auchinairn, deployment is a shared responsibility.

Leadership will organise and oversee staffing. However, every member of staff has responsibility for using professional judgement, initiative and communication throughout the day.

This protocol has been developed following staff self-evaluation and staff voice on August 2026.

Our Golden Rule

LOOK • THINK • COMMUNICATE

Before leaving a play space, ask yourself:

LOOK

- Who is here?
- Who is already away?
- Which areas are open?
- What is happening with our children?

THINK

- Are children well supported?
- Is anyone dealing with personal care, distress, an accident or another situation?
- Is this a busy/transition time?
- Does what I am leaving to do actually need done now?

COMMUNICATE

- Tell senior/colleagues before leaving.
- Say where you are going.
- Where appropriate, say how long you expect to be.
- If the floor cannot safely and effectively manage without you, you do not leave.

Deployment is more than ratio

Being “in ratio” does not automatically mean we are well deployed. For example, a play space may technically meet ratio but one practitioner may be:

- supporting a distressed child
- carrying out personal care
- responding to an incident/accident
- supporting a child requiring enhanced supervision
- speaking with a parent
- supporting children outdoors
- managing a transition

Staff must therefore consider effective supervision and children's needs, not just count adults.

Our DOs and DON'Ts

DO ✓

Look around before leaving
Know who is already away
Communicate with colleagues
Check children's needs
Consider which areas are open
Ask “Can this wait?”
Wait until colleagues return where appropriate
Use the walkie-talkie appropriately
Respond when an area becomes stretched
Return promptly
Respectfully challenge each other
Use professional judgement
Ask for help early

Support across the centre

DON'T X

Walk out without checking
Assume someone else is covering
Disappear without saying where you are going
Base the decision on ratio alone
Leave an area inadequately supervised
Prioritise photocopying/resources over children
Leave simply because your task needs done
Ignore a request for support
Think "that's not my area"
Become distracted by another non-urgent task
Walk past a stretched area
Wait for leadership to tell you where to be
Wait until deployment becomes unsafe
Focus only on your own zone

NO EXCEPTIONS – our deployment non-negotiables

These expectations apply to everyone.

1. Never leave without checking the floor

Before leaving, you must be satisfied that children remain appropriately supervised and supported.

2. Never leave without communicating

Someone must know that you are leaving the play space.

A quick:

"I'm going to the office, I'll be back in five minutes."

can prevent several people independently leaving at the same time.

3. Never assume someone else is covering

Check.

Being physically present in a room does not necessarily mean that practitioner is available to cover another area.

4. Never prioritise a routine task over children's immediate needs

Photocopying, collecting resources, tidying, paperwork and other routine jobs can wait.

Children cannot.

5. Never leave when the floor is already stretched

If staff are managing distress, personal care, accidents, enhanced support or a particularly busy period:
stay and support.

6. Never ignore a request for deployment support

If a colleague calls on the walkie-talkie because an area is stretched, staff who are available should respond.

If you cannot respond, communicate this.

7. Never leave at a key transition without checking

Particular attention must be given during:

- lunchtimes
- Together Times
- busy personal-care periods
- staff breaks
- staff finishing shifts

Staff finishing their shift must ensure their play space is appropriately supported before leaving the floor.

Finishing time does not remove the responsibility to communicate the handover.

This does not mean staff should routinely work beyond their contracted hours. It means ensuring a safe handover before leaving.

8. Never open or continue an area that cannot be effectively supervised

If staffing changes, we change how we use the environment.

We adapt the environment to available staffing – we do not stretch staff to keep every area open.

How many staff can be away from the floor?

There is no automatic number.

Staff voice identified that this depends on:

number of children

- children's needs
- staffing • absence
- time of day
- areas open
- activities taking place
- what is happening at that moment

Therefore:

- There may be times when several staff can appropriately undertake planned duties.
- There may also be times when one additional person leaving would stretch the floor.
- Professional judgement must be used.

Tea breaks and lunches

Planned breaks are important and staff are entitled to take them. However, additional staff should not independently leave the floor simply because colleagues are already on scheduled breaks. If two colleagues are on break, everyone else needs to be particularly aware of deployment before undertaking another task. Where circumstances unexpectedly change, staff should communicate and work together with each other and the senior.

What if I need to do a job?

Use our simple question:

CAN IT WAIT?

- If yes → wait for a better opportunity.
- If no → communicate and ensure appropriate cover.
- If unsure → speak to a senior/leadership.

Where possible, use another solution. For example, ask someone already going to the office, radio for a resource, plan the task for quieter time or complete it during allocated time off the floor.

When the floor becomes stretched

Do not silently struggle.
Say it.

- Examples:

Can we have someone back to Discovery please?

We are stretched outside just now, can someone support?

Before you go, can you wait until ___ comes back?

I've got personal care here, can someone cover this area?

This is not criticism of a colleague.

Respectful challenge is part of keeping children safe.

Staff responsibility

Every member of staff is expected to:

- take responsibility for their own movements
- maintain awareness of the wider environment
- communicate
- respond to changing circumstances
- support colleagues
- use initiative
- prioritise children's needs
- and challenge poor deployment respectfully

Staff should not need to be continually directed by leadership.
A strong team notices what is happening and responds.

Leadership responsibility

Seniors and leadership will maintain an overview of staffing across the centre, respond to sickness/absence/training, support areas experiencing pressure, coordinate deployment where required, protect appropriate time for agreed staff duties, communicate significant staffing changes and monitor whether this protocol is working.

Leadership will intervene when required, however, Leadership oversight does not replace individual professional responsibility.

Our staff-agreed standard

Very good deployment at Auchinairn looks like:

- Children are safe and well supported.
- Staff know where colleagues are.
- People communicate before leaving.
- Staff move and respond according to children's needs.
- Non-urgent tasks wait.
- Walkie-talkies are used effectively.
- Colleagues ask for and respond to support.
- Key transitions are well covered.
- Staff use initiative rather than waiting to be directed.
- Leadership has oversight without needing to micromanage.

Documents & Frameworks:

- Quality Improvement Framework for Early Learning and Childcare Sectors (2025) – Staff skills, knowledge, values and deployment
- Health and Care (staffing) (Scotland) Act 2019
- Funding Follows the child – National Standard for ELC
- Care Inspectorate staff ratios/condition of registration
- Health and Social Care Standards
- SSSC Codes of Practice
- Realising the Ambition: Being Me
- GIRFEC/SHANNARI
- UNCRC/Children's rights

Signed:

Date:

Created: September 2026