

**AUDIT REPORT 24'017****EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PREMISES SECURITY****Executive Summary**

The annual audit plan for 2023/24 provides for a review of controls in place to mitigate the risk of unauthorised access to Early Learning and Childcare Nurseries. The audit also included a review of the controls to prevent children from leaving nursery buildings and play areas unnoticed. It was found that the age and type of premises do vary considerably, which does present challenges to ensure the implementation of consistent physical security arrangements.

In Moray, there are 63 funded nurseries, with the majority delivered by private and third sector providers. The Council's Early Learning and Childcare Service has an overall responsibility to ensure the delivery of Scottish Government funded childcare in Moray. The scope of the audit included a check to review the policies and procedures used to maintain the security controls within nursery buildings and play areas. Audit testing involved selecting a sample of both Council and privately run nurseries to visit, where the actual security controls operating in practice were observed and tested.

The audit was carried out in accordance with the Public Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS).

The review found that the security of children was of high priority to the Early Learning and Childcare Service, with examples of good practices noted during the audit visits to nurseries. However, the audit has highlighted where further improvements should be considered:

- The audit visits to nurseries found effective supervision arrangements for the children. However, the physical controls to manage access and exit to nursery grounds and play areas varied, with some nurseries having low fencing and concerns noted regarding locks for the gates. It is appreciated the challenges facing some nurseries regarding physical security arrangements. Consideration should be given to every nursery to undertake a risk assessment of their security risks and the mitigating controls that should be considered.
- It was pleasing to note that induction training on the security arrangements to be followed is provided to officers working at nurseries. However, from a review of a sample of officers appointed, examples were noted where individual training records had not been updated to record the training provided. In addition, it was also found there was no requirement for nurseries to deliver ongoing refresher training for officers to maintain an up to date awareness of security requirements.
- The Early Learning and Childcare Service administers Scottish Government childcare funding to the private and third sector nurseries. This arrangement is documented within a contractual agreement. A review of this agreement noted reference to a requirement to ensure the safety of children and officers, but no reference is made regarding the security of the premises and play areas.

The Internal Audit Section provides Management with an opinion on the internal control environment and also categories risk ratings for recommendations as high, medium or low. The audit recommendations for this review have been classified as follows:

<b>Risk Ratings for Recommendations</b>		
<b>High</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Low</b>
Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.
<b>2</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>

## Recommendations

Risk Ratings for Recommendations						
High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
<b>Key Control:</b> The controls around Early Learning and Childcare Nurseries are sufficient to prevent unauthorised access and to prevent children from leaving premises unnoticed.						
5.01	Council operated nurseries should be reminded to update the Early Learning and Childcare Policies, Procedures and Guidance Document with their site-specific security arrangements.	Medium	Yes	Each Local Authority nursery to complete the site-specific arrangements of the Early Learning and Childcare Policies, Procedures and Guidance Document.	Early Years Service Manager/ Nursery Managers	31/08/2024
5.02	All security training provided to nursery officers should be recorded within their personal training records. Regular security procedures awareness training should	Medium	Yes	Managers will be reminded to record induction security	Early Years Service Manager / Nursery Managers	31/08/2024

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High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
	also be provided on an ongoing basis.			training and refresher security training will be carried out annually for all nursery practitioners. The same training will be offered as induction training when new staff start.		
<b>5.03</b>	All nurseries should agree on site specific operating guidelines to follow in the event of unauthorised access to the nursery by an individual.	Medium	Yes	Nursery Managers will develop and document site-specific procedures to be followed in the event of a range of	Early Years Service Manager / Nursery Managers	31/08/2024

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No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
				security scenarios.		
5.04	Consideration should be given to including a requirement for ensuring premises and play area security arrangements within the contractual agreements with private and third sector early learning and childcare nurseries.	Medium	Yes	Requirement to maintain secure indoor and outdoor spaces to be included in upcoming review of contract terms and conditions.	Early Years Service Manager	31/08/2024
5.05	Consideration should be given for all nurseries to install individual alarms on external doors accessible to the children.	High	Yes	To be included as part of individual risk assessments to be carried out at each nursery regarding security arrangements.	Early Years Service Manager / Nursery Managers	31/08/2024

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High	Key controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved. Urgent attention required.	Medium	Less critically important controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	Low	Lower level controls absent, not being operated as designed or could be improved.	
No.	Audit Recommendation	Priority	Accepted (Yes/ No)	Comments	Responsible Officer	Timescale for Implementation
5.06	Consideration should be given to all nurseries to undertake a documented assessment of the premises and play areas to assess current security risks and the controls implemented or required to mitigate these risks.	Medium	Yes	To be included as part of individual risk assessments to be carried out at each nursery regarding security arrangements.	Early Years Service Manager / Nursery Managers	31/08/24
5.07	Consideration should be given to service delivery inspections at nurseries to include an assessment of the physical controls operating within the nursery's premises and play areas.	Medium	Yes	To be included in contract monitoring carried out by Continuous Improvement Officers.	Early Years Service Manager / Continuous Improvement Officers	31/08/2024
5.08	A premises key holder list should be maintained for all nurseries.	High	Yes	Key holder lists to be established and maintained at all Local	Early Years Service Manager / Nursery Managers	31/08/2024

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<b>No.</b>	<b>Audit Recommendation</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Accepted (Yes/ No)</b>	<b>Comments</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>	<b>Timescale for Implementation</b>
				Authority Nurseries.		