

Greens ask for children to defer a year due to the pandemic

Green councillors have called on The City of Edinburgh Council education officers to allow primary-age children to defer for another year, and fully fund nursery spaces due to coronavirus disruption.

Each year a number of families whose children are due to start school before the age of five contact Edinburgh City Council seeking to defer the start of primary school for a year and to secure funding for a further year in a pre-school setting.

Children who are not five until the following January or February automatically get Scottish government funding for a deferred year if they apply, but those whose fifth birthday falls between August and December are funded on a case by case basis by the council.

From 2023, children born from August to December will also be able to get deferred early learning and childcare places funded by the Scottish Government, and some Scottish local authorities are already allowing parents to automatically defer until the following primary school intake year.

However, the council is still only allowing this on a 'case by case' basis, and now the city's Green Party councillors want

education chiefs to automatically allow parents to defer, due to the disruption caused to nursery learning over the course of the pandemic.

Cllr Mary Campbell said: "Starting primary school is a huge milestone in a child's life. Every year councillors get messages from families who are concerned their child is not ready to start school.

"Thanks to the hard work of the Give Them Time campaign, the government has recognised these concerns and, from 2023, will fund children under five who need to stay in nursery an extra year.

"But this does nothing for the families who are worried for their child right now.

"After a difficult year of disrupted learning, and with families struggling to access other services, I felt something needed to be done.

"That is why I brought this proposal to the council education committee.

"I'm calling for the council to immediately fund all families who have already applied for another year of nursery.

"Crucially, I'm also asking that Edinburgh seeks to prepare for the change in 2023 now, so that families most in need of support can take advantage of the new funding.

"I really hope all councillors will get behind this proposal and provide reassurance to these families at this stressful time."

The Green Party motion will be heard at a meeting of the council's education committee on Tuesday 18 May 2021. The papers for the Education Committee can be found [here](#).