

25.8.2026

Early childhood education and care services

Guidelines for extended opening hours, shift-based, and round-the-clock care

Municipalities shall organise the early childhood education and care as referred to in the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care to the scope and with types of activity that meet the needs in the municipalities. The annual operation and daily opening hours of early education centres shall be organised so that they meet local needs (Section 5 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care). Shift-based and round-the-clock early childhood education and care are organised in the evenings, at nights, at weekends and during public holidays falling on weekdays and other public holidays in centre-based early education or home-based childcare. Shift-based care shall be organised to the extent necessary for children who need it due to the employment or studies of their parent or other guardian. (Section 13 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care)

In these guidelines, extended opening hours refer to early childhood education and care services provided Monday–Friday, 05:00–22:00, with the exception of public holidays that fall on weekdays. Shift-based care refers to early childhood education and care services provided Monday–Sunday 05:00–22:00. Round-the-clock care refers to early childhood education and care services provided 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Shift-based care, round-the-clock care and extended opening hours are offered in different areas of the city of Kuopio. The need is assessed regularly and changes are made as needed. All of the above work together in arranging extended care, for example during on-call hours and in situations where the need for extended care is reduced and the numbers of children low (combining groups).

A child does not have a subjective right to extended care, shift-based care or round-the-clock care, and instead it is offered based on the need for childcare due to the guardians' employment or contact studies (e.g. lectures or work-based learning periods). When the care arrangements begin, the guardians must provide proof of the need for extended care for the child, with evidence from their employer, a work shift list, or other evidence. When a family apply for extended care, shift-based care, or round-the-clock care for their child, service guidance will check the need for extended care with the applicant family before the child is granted a care place. After this, the head of the specific early childhood education and care unit will check the need for extended care at least once a year, or if the child's need for care has reduced or ended completely. The need for shift-based care and round-the-clock care will be checked separately for public holidays falling on weekdays, and the Christmas and Midsummer holiday periods.

If a child's need for extended care, shift-based care or round-the-clock care ends, a care place will be arranged for the child based on their need for services. This may mean that their group or care location is changed.

As a rule, the daily duration of early childhood education and care may not exceed 10 consecutive hours, excluding round-the-clock and shift-based care, where the daily duration is set to suit the needs of the child, based on the work or studies of a parent or other guardian (Section 9 of the Act on Early Childhood Education and Care).

A child in full-time care is provided with breakfast, lunch, and a snack, as appropriate to the care hours. A child in extended care, shift-based care or round-the-clock care is entitled to a second warm meal (dinner) and an evening snack, if the length of the care day requires it. Dinner is served after the children in full-day care have been picked up, but no later than at 18:00. The evening snack will be served at around 20:00.

25.8.2026

Early childhood education and care services

Childcare hours and notification of care hours

The child's pick-up and drop-off times must be communicated electronically one week in advance by 24:00 on the Sunday of the week preceding the week of care, so that personnel resources may be planned out and implemented in the best interests of the children. If the parent or guardian was unable to provide a notification of care hours by this deadline, or last-minute changes are required, the child's care will be arranged in accordance with the need for care, either in the child's own unit or in another unit.

For personnel resourcing reasons, any cancellation of the need for care must also be reported to the daycare centre without delay. In accordance with the child's best interests, we also hope that holidays and days off taken by the parents will also be time off for the child. On a day when the guardian(s) have a day off, are taking holiday, or are on sick leave, the child is eligible to use the early childhood education and care services during the normal opening hours of the service (between 06:00 and 18:00). It is the responsibility of staff and the early childhood education and care unit manager to review the length of childcare hours and periods and, if necessary, raise these issues with carers if there appears to be cause for concern regarding the child's wellbeing.

Early childhood education and care services