

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLANNING FOR THE EXPANSION TOWARDS 1140 HOURS BY 2020/21: UPDATE 1

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 At this Committee on 3 February 2017, Members agreed that Officers present an update report to the March Committee regarding the detail of phase 1 and the funding requirement and to receive regular updates at this Committee on national and local developments.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to respond to Members request for this report, providing an update in progress towards delivering the Scottish Government's requirement for 600 hours Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and to agree the Dumfries and Galloway initial plans to ensure delivery of 1140 hours ELC and seek agreement on the draft strategy and approach to the first phase of the programme.

2. Recommendations

Members are asked to:-

2.1 note the complexities and associated risks of planning for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare prior to Government funding being released;

2.2. request a multi-year spending profile from Scottish Government to mitigate the risks of delivery by 2020;

2.3 agree the strategy for Early Learning and Childcare in planning for the expansion of 1140hrs by 2020 as detailed in paragraph 3.2 (and **Appendix**)

2.4 note that Early Learning and Childcare services will be procured through the Early Learning and Childcare framework 3.2.2

2.5 agree to commission new providers where there is no duplication of provision, prior to procuring services through the Early Learning and Childcare framework as detailed in 3.2.3

2.6 note the progress of the planned trial in the Newton Stewart area as outlined in paragraphs 4.1,4.2 1nd 4.3; and

2.7 agree the first phase of the capital programme outlined in paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2

3. Considerations

3.1 Background

The Scottish Government has made a commitment to extend the entitlement from 600 hours to 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare by 2020/21. 'A Blueprint for 2020: Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland Consultation' was published in October 2016. This consultation document invited views on the direction for the future ELC provision in Scotland. It set out key policy principles, and challenges, that will underpin the expansion, and the Scottish Governments aspirations for how a high quality, accessible, affordable and flexible ELC sector will look and operate by 2020. Members noted the

Education Services Management Team and COSLA responses to this consultation at CYPLL Committee of 3 February 2017.

3.1.1 Current Provision

Parents can choose whether to access a Commissioned Provider or Local Authority Nursery. The current parental uptake for the delivery of 600 hours in 2016/17 includes:

- 45 Local Authority nursery classes - Local Authority nurseries offer sessions of three hours and ten minutes and in nurseries open all day, two sessions in one day are offered for parents in work or training. 1802 children use this service, which is 63.5% of three-five year olds.
- Provision for two year olds continues to be developed in some local authority nursery classes. This provision is available where:
 - The school nursery is the only provider in the community
 - There is only one group provider offering places and the school nursery has 40 or more places. Currently 19 schools are registered to deliver two year old provision. 35 children use this service.
- 41 Commissioned Providers: Education Services continue to fund up to 600 hours ELC within the minimum framework as detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. 1040 children use this service which is 36.5% of three-five year olds. 63 two year olds also use this service.
- 45 Childminders are registered to provide Early Learning and Childcare for two year olds and (one is registered for three to five year olds the numbers of children are included above.) 12 children currently use this service for two year olds.

An audit of Early Learning and Childcare in Dumfries and Galloway was undertaken in February 2017 and submitted to Audit Scotland. This information is available on the Members SharePoint site.

3.1.2 Officers have been instructed to undertake a post project review of the 600hrs implementation so that lessons learned can inform the strategy for expansion to 1140hrs

3.2 Early Learning and Childcare Strategy

Education officers are continuing to develop the implementation plan to support the strategy with stakeholders to meet the Scottish Government commitment to the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. The strategy incorporates the Council priority of providing the best start in life for all our children, is underpinned by the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child. Dumfries and Galloway Council is committed to parental choice and a mixed economy of service provision while addressing best value and sustainability through rationalising and better managing capacity and investing in quality in planning for Early Learning and Childcare (**Appendix**).

3.2.1 The strategy builds on the implementation of 600hrs Early Learning and Childcare and the work of the Scottish Leadership Development Programme. It aims to;

- Provide flexible, accessible, affordable, quality services for families; Affordable, accessible and flexible Early Learning and Childcare is fundamental in supporting parents to work, train or study. Investment in Early Learning and Childcare also has key economic benefits; where subsidised childcare removes barriers to employment, it can help lift families out of poverty and help parents gain further skills, enhancing their employability and future earnings, as well as economy-wide productivity.
- Provide high quality stimulating physical environments, inside and out, which meet the needs of children, parents and communities. These will be developed taking account of best practice guidance and provided in locations identified through mapping existing facilities against capacity and demand and further informed by consultation.
- Provide a nurturing ethos which supports children's wellbeing, learning and development wherever the child accesses Early Learning and Childcare (childminder/day-care provision/local authority provision).
- Ensure children are supported by a skilled qualified workforce, this will require a significant investment in upskilling staff, also increasing the workforce for both Council and Commissioned Providers to meet the requirements of 1140 hours by 2020.
- Ensure children benefit from getting the right support at the right time, working effectively with partner agencies to best support children's individual needs.
- Ensure effective partnerships with parents and carers to support children's learning and development.

Officers will be sharing the strategy and inviting comment from the private and voluntary sector through the Childcare Partnership.

3.2.2 Procurement

Early Learning and Childcare provision now applies to local authority provision, day-care providers and childminders. Commissioned Providers are contracted annually to deliver Early Learning and Childcare and for current providers this is in place for academic year 2017/18. We are now required to procure services through an Early Learning and Childcare framework to comply with the EU Procurement Directives and Scottish procurement legislation, which aims to ensure that public purchases are made in a fair and transparent manner. This applies to all goods, services and works purchased by Dumfries and Galloway Council. Officers are working with the procurement team to develop the framework with Commissioned Providers delivering Early Learning and Childcare from August 2018

3.2.3 Prior to the introduction of the framework, between now and procurement, new providers will be considered on a case by case basis taking account of any duplication of provision.

4. Early Learning and Childcare Trial in Newton Stewart Area.

4.1 Planning for the Scottish Government Funded Trial for 1140 hours is underway in Penninghame Nursery and in the commissioned provider, Minnigaff Community Nursery. Consultation has taken place with senior staff from the Early Learning and Childcare settings and local representatives from Early Years Scotland and Scottish Childminding Association. A briefing paper, letter for parents and option forms were consulted upon.

Information was sent to parents, the school nursery and the Commissioned Provider outlining the detail of the trial.

4.2 The trial constitutes a new model of delivery and offers flexibility and choice for parents in post codes DG8 6**. Enrolment took place on 8 and 9 February. There are 95 families in the DG8 6** postcode area who are eligible to participate in the trial and 87 children have enrolled as part of the trial.

4.3 Early analysis of parental requests indicates the majority of Early Learning and Childcare preferences are within the school day and few requested 50 week childcare. 80 families have opted for term time provision. Seven families have opted for 50 week provision and seven families have opted for a blended approach using both nursery provision and a childminder. The Commissioned Provider will be extending the hours of provision to provide more flexibility to parents. The school nursery will be extending hours of provision, increasing the number of registered children and opening all year round. Further analysis is underway to establish what can be provided within the trial to meet the needs of the families.

5. 600 hours Early Learning and Childcare Evaluation

Funding for implementation of 600 hours free Early Learning and Childcare was made available from the Scottish Government at the start of financial year 2014/15. The adaptations to operational models and physical facilities as part of this work will be fully evaluated and used in conjunction with information gathered through the Newton Stewart trials to inform the delivery model for 1140 hours.

6. Funding

Scottish Government have indicated that they will be announcing the Early Learning and Childcare funding levels to Local Authorities by end of February/early March. From the draft proposal the funding allocations will use the pre-school education grant-aided expenditure formula, which equates to a 3% allocation for Dumfries and Galloway of the total budget. This would be an assumption which amounts to £630k for revenue and £900k for capital for financial year 2017/18.

7. Capital

7.1 Moving towards meeting the commitment of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, progress is being made on understanding the Authority requirements and where service pressures will arise. Early scoping work which has been undertaken indicates that meeting the demands of providing 1140 hours based on our current provision would require an increase in capacity. This will include new build nursery classrooms, extensions to current buildings and refurbishment of current establishments.

This has informed the physical requirements by area model, which has been broken down into new build facilities and alterations to existing Council buildings. In order to maximise any Scottish Government funding for financial year 2017/18 it is proposed that phase one investment is allocated to alteration works, as this reduces any risks associated with revised guidance from the Care Inspectorate which is due for consultation Spring 2017 and adopted by Summer 2017.

7.2 Phase One refurbishment will be undertaken in Council establishments where a complex solution is not required, where there is internal underutilised space, and where there is an identified capacity gap to meet 1140 hours. Refurbishments will take place in:-

- Rephad
- Troqueer
- Gatehouse
- Hecklegirth

7.3 Other locations are still being considered for phase one and will depend on the outcome of further engagement, deliverability and value for money.

8 Revenue

8.1 Project Management

Revenue funding will be utilised to appoint a project manager to work alongside officers from Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning to support them in the preparation for and implementation of 1140 hours.

8.2 Quality Assurance

Revenue funding will also be utilised to fulfil the Council's duty to quality assure Early Learning and Childcare provision in commissioned and local authority services.

8.3 Work Force Planning

Implementing the expansion will necessitate a substantial increase in the Early Learning and Childcare workforce. The Scottish Government are developing a Skills Investment Plan which aims to identify opportunity to widen the skill set within the sector. Dumfries and Galloway Council and Dumfries and Galloway College are working together to respond to this plan and set out the needs and opportunities for the sector. Working with employers to deliver skills that meet the need of the region is a key strategic objective of Dumfries and Galloway College as well as delivering education and training that is a route to employment and career development. This joint planning for workforce development will ensure there is sufficient qualified staff in Dumfries and Galloway to achieve the qualification requirements in order to meet the needs of families. The aim of the work between the Council and the College is a shorter and coherent learner journey i.e. from school to work - to employment in the Early Learning and Childcare sector. Work is also ongoing to develop and promote the management qualifications the Scottish Social Services Council require for those leading establishments. Revenue funding 2017/18 will be utilised to upskill the current workforce. Ten Nursery Nurses will be supported to undertake BA Childhood Practice degree whilst remaining in employment with Dumfries and Galloway Council. Funding for training 10 additional graduates in BA Childhood Practice to support children in most deprived postcodes is also identified in 17/18 funding.

9. Risks

This is a major project which will require significant capital and revenue expenditure. Failure to begin work on this at early stage will result in the Council being unable to provide the required additional hours by 2020 to which parents/carers are entitled. Doing nothing is not an option as this work needs to be progressed if we are to increase our provision by 2020. To achieve this by 2020 will require a considerable amount of work and resource and a Council wide approach will be needed as the implications go beyond Education.

Further guidance from Scottish Government is awaited and will influence and impact on decisions. However, we need to plan for infrastructure and workforce development prior to these becoming available.

These include:-

- Funding settlement for revenue and capital (expected March 2017)
- Professional Learning and Development Pathway for Childminders (expected March 2017)
- National Care Standards (expected April 2017)
- The National Best Practice Design Guidance (expected Summer 2017)

10 Consultation

10.1 In response to members request the consultation process has been accelerated. Commissioned Providers have been asked to provide information on their current service, their capacity to deliver the increased entitlement for children and to share any plans for expanding their service. This information will support officers to ensure that the Commissioned Providers capacity to deliver additional hours will be taken account of in the mapping of current provision and in the planning of future delivery. Early indications are that this has been received favourably by our Commissioned Providers.

10.2 It is a requirement of the Children and Young People's Bill (2014) to consult with parents every two years. Parents will be consulted on their requirements for the expansion of 1140hrs. A survey is expected to take place in June 2017.

11. Governance Assurance

The Corporate Management Team, Senior Management Team – Education Services, Head of Finance and Procurement and Head of Education have been consulted on the contents of this report and are in agreement with the information contained therein.

12. Impact Assessment

An impact assessment will be undertaken as part of developing the policy proposals. The implementation plan is in its early stages of development and will be impact assessed when completed.

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Appendices - 1

Appendix: Early Learning and Childcare Strategy 2017

Background Papers -

Children, Young People and Lifelong Learning 3 February 2017 – Item 4 – Early Learning and Childcare Planning for the expansion towards 1140 Hours by 2020/21
<http://egenda.dumgal.gov.uk/aksdumgal/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=CYP&meet=6&arc=71>

Education Committee, 19 February 2014, Item 4, Children and Young people Bill, Scottish Government – 600 hours early learning and childcare
<http://egenda.dumgal.gov.uk/aksdumgal/users/public/admin/kab12.pl?cmte=EDU&meet=54&arc=71>

Policy and Resources Committee, 18 March 2014, Item 4, Development of Capital Investment Strategy
<http://egenda.dumgal.gov.uk/aksdumgal/users/public/admin/kab14.pl?operation=SUBMIT&meet=31&cmte=PRC&grpid=public&arc=71>
