

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: 08 March 2023**

Subject: Early Learning and Childcare Progress Update**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report provides progress made to provide high quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that Committee notes: progress to deliver the statutory entitlement of 1140 hours of high quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)

3. Quality of ELC Provision

- 3.1** The quality provided at our ELC continues to show that children are very well supported, provided with exciting learning opportunities, and are nurtured by well trained staff. Comments in successive inspection reports exemplify this aspect of the quality of our ELC.
- 3.2** A working group are considering a variety of approaches and options to support our ELC provision for the growing population of children with additional support needs (ASN) in our mainstream settings. We are exploring how best to support the growing number of children with additional support needs across West Dunbartonshire Council in particular Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), including the potential need for specialist ELC provision. As part of the work to explore what is needed, we have considered the specialist provision at Kilpatrick Early Years service (KEYs) and the work that it does for children with complex learning needs and how that service could support our mainstream ELCs. We have identified training and support needs at our mainstream ELC which is currently being addressed with a programme of learning and support underway. Education Services Committee will be updated when options for consideration are available which will align with the overall ASN strategy.
- 3.3** A small number of ELC staff continue to find the increased hours of ELC challenging to provide. Support from the central team through our programme for 1140 Hours Champions is providing a programme of high quality professional learning and is beginning to impact positively on the performance of staff who find the new curriculum offer challenging. An exit poll at each session for the champions, provides feedback from the group members participating that day. This is used to tailor the training required at the next

meeting. Sharing practice has had the greatest impact on improving practice.

3.4 This session our ELC Improvement Framework has gathered evidence on ELC design of the 1140 hours curriculum at our ELCs. The focus of improvement visits is implementation of 1140 hours curriculum models and outcomes for children and families. Leaders share their curriculum rationale and design, pedagogy and play, curriculum learning and development pathways and the development of skills for life and learning. Views of staff, parents and carers, children and partners is gathered during the process and their involvement in the design of the curriculum. Evidence from feedback from our staff teams is showing that the design of the curriculum is changing and improving, staff also report that they are more confident about their role and remit in regard to 1140 hours curriculum offer. Education Scotland is undertaking a thematic review of curriculum design across Scotland. HM Inspectors will gather evidence on the following areas: designing a high-quality curriculum that takes into account national guidance and local need and, involvement of the school/ELC community and others in designing the curriculum. Whitecrook ELC has been selected to take part in this study. The One-ery model of early level learning, curriculum delivery based on play pedagogy and nurturing approaches is included in this series of our Improvement Framework visits. Views and experiences of One-ery from staff, parents, children, parents and carers is also gathered.

3.5 Parents and carers feedback about 1140 hours is very positive.

Comments from parents and carers and their views:

A Grandparent shared that her son had secured work for the first time as a result of 1140 hours. Prior to this he could not, as he would have to pick his children up at lunch time. The grandparent said that the quality of life, particularly her sons, had improved tenfold due to financial independence and confidence to re-join the workforce.

A parent said that she has a child who attended ELC before 1140 hours, and one who attends ELC at present. This has allowed her to increase her work hours. The parent said this has made a difference to her household income and quality of life for her family.

“My child has autism. Staying all day has helped them – sometimes they might have had a bad morning and need support from staff but when I pick them up they have calmed down. The staff are amazing. Some of the suggestions have helped me at home”

“The nursery always feels welcome; all staff say hello to me and my child. The longer days have given a chance for me to join in sessions like tea and toast and there was a stay and play to find out about numeracy”

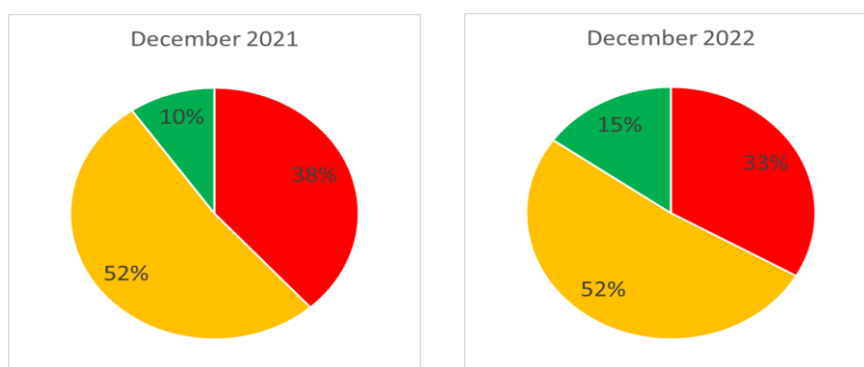
“It has been great having my child in for more hours of the day; they are eating better at home since they have been having lunch at nursery. I have

been amazed by how much they have improved with their writing and the words they use”

“I have a chance to chat with nursery staff in the morning and after nursery and I can always find out what they have been doing that day. I have noticed a big difference in their talking since they have been staying for full days”

4. Children's Progress

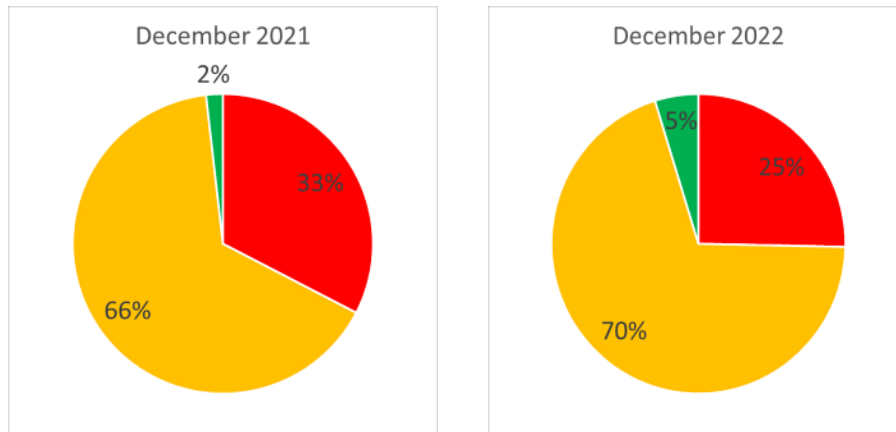
- 4.1 Assessment data gathered in December 2022, shows that children have made gains in their progress in attainment in literacy measures compared to December 2021. Whilst it is too early to say that this is due to increased hours that children attend, the gains made are significant in that they are above the averages at this time last session. Comparisons to pre pandemic results and the 600 hours ELC offer will be analysed in June 2023. Our projected stretch aim for June 2023: is 67% of all children will achieve the benchmark in Concepts of Print which we are confident will be achieved.



- 5% more children have reached the benchmark than this time last year.
- The percentage of children in amber, making good progress towards meeting the benchmark, is the same as this time last year.
- 5% fewer children are in the red band than this time last year.

- 4.2 Assessment data gathered in December 2022, shows that children have made gains in their progress in attainment in numeracy measures compared to December 2021. Whilst it is too early to say that this is due to increased hours that children attend, the gains made are significant in that they are above the averages at this time last session. Comparisons to pre pandemic results and the 600 hours ELC offer will be analysed in June 2023. Early years are currently on track to reach their numeracy stretch aim for June 2023. Stretch Aim for June 2023: 33% of children will achieve the benchmark in Number and Number Processes.

- 3% more children have reached the benchmark than this time last year.
- 4% more children are in the amber band than this time last year.
- 8% fewer children are in the red band than this time last year.



5. Evaluation of 1140 Hours

- 5.1** The self-evaluation tools which support ELC to measure progress and plan improvement continue to be updated and improved. A new self-evaluation framework from the West Partnership brings together quality indicators from both inspection bodies and the national standard criteria. This framework maps out the quality indicators which will help ELC teams to critically reflect on practice and to evaluate the 1140 hours curriculum offer and plan for improvement.
- 5.2** The West Partnership 1140 Hours Evaluation Study aims to help us understand the impact of this policy on children's outcomes and the experiences of those involved in this significant transition. This evaluation involves several different methods of data collection. This includes assessing children with the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to measure changes in developmental outcomes, as well as surveys, interviews, and focus groups with parents, carers and practitioners. This will provide rich data from a range of sources. To ensure that the data reflects the diversity of the West Partnership, the samples of early years establishments from all eight local authorities are provided from a spread of SIMD profiles. From this data, 200 nurseries were randomly selected from each SIMD quintile and local authority, ensuring this was proportionate to the full dataset produced.
- 5.3** The West Partnership 1140 Hours Evaluation Study is underway at a sample 10 ELCs in West Dunbartonshire. Those included in the study are: Dalmuir ELC, St Mary's ELC Alexandria, St Mary's ELC Duntocher, Our Lady of Loretto ELC, Carleith ELC, Brucehill ELC, St Ronan's ELC, Lucky Little Stars, Dalreoch ELC and Gartocharn ELC.
- 5.4** The findings from a parent survey commissioned by the Scottish Government on [Parent's use and views of early learning and childcare in Scotland, 2022](#) was published on 20 December 2022. The aim of the research was to provide up to date information on different groups of parents' and carers' use, experiences and views of ELC, to help evaluate the implementation of the 1140 ELC expansion, to inform the ongoing delivery of funded ELC, and support policy development. The results show that the majority of parents are

very positive about funded ELC. Most parents also valued the opportunities offered to work, look for work, or undertake education and training. Almost all parents accessing funded ELC (97%) were satisfied with the quality of the provision from their main funded ELC provider. While, 88% of those with a 3-5 year old and 92% with an eligible 2 year old were satisfied with the flexibility they had been offered to 'use their funded hours in a way that meets their family's needs'. However, some areas for further improvement were highlighted in relation to flexibility of funded ELC offered, accessing suitable funded ELC for children with additional support needs (ASN) and affordability of childcare.

5.5 This national survey does not provide a breakdown of views for local authorities however, the views of parents and carers will continue to be gathered in West Dunbartonshire Council in particular uptake of work and training which we have little detail on.

5.6 The Scottish Government Evaluation strategy for 1140 was published in October 2022. The focus of the evaluation will be on quality of provision for children, their parents, carers and families. A final report is currently planned for 2025. The evaluation aims to strengthen the existing evidence base by including and assessing how funded ELC can help parents and carers to move closer to the labour market.

6. Meeting the National Standard

6.1 A key focus of the Criteria for the National Standard is inspection evaluations. The National Standard Criteria sets a minimum quality threshold of good for providers delivering the funded hours of 'good'. There are proposed amendments to the interim Funding Follows the Child Guidance in relation to service improvement periods for ELC below good. The proposal is that where a setting is on a service improvement period, and meets certain criteria, and does not receive evaluations of 'good' or better at their next Care Inspectorate quality evaluation but is demonstrating sustained improvement, the local authority may agree to extend the service improvement period until their next Care Inspectorate quality evaluation.

6.2 WDC is the guarantor of quality, providing the support and challenge to ensure that inspections at our ELC maintain good and above. Care inspections from a sample of ELCs, provided the following evaluations at 15 ELCs over the last two school sessions (so far). There will be further inspections this session. All ELCs awaiting inspection, are currently evaluated at good and above but the evaluations were based on 600 hours model of ELC. We are not complacent and support those ELC awaiting inspection to ensure that they remain at good and above.

Care Inspectorate Evaluations 2021 to 2022				
Quality Indicators:	1.1 Nurturing Care and Support	2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3.1 Quality assurance and improvements are well led.	4.3 Staff Deployment
	How good is our care, play and learning?	How good is our setting?	How good is our leadership?	How good is our staff team?
good	3	5	2	3
very good	7	5	8	7
excellent	0	0	0	0

Care Inspectorate Evaluations 2022 to 2023				
Quality Indicators:	1.1 Nurturing Care and Support	2.2 Children experience high quality facilities	3.1 Quality assurance and improvements are well led.	4.3 Staff Deployment
	How good is our care, play and learning?	How good is our setting?	How good is our leadership?	How good is our staff team?
good	2	3	2	2
very good	3	2	3	3
excellent	0	0	0	0

7. Expansion Projects

- 7.1** The unit at Clydebank ELC has been demolished. This leaves a large outdoor learning space which requires work to ensure that children are safe and secure and provided with an exciting space for play. The outdoor expansion project at Whitecrook ELC has completed. This has provided a new safe, secure entrance and improved play spaces for children. Outdoor project plans for Gartocharn and Brucehill ELCs have been agreed. These projects will commence in Spring 2023. Projects planned for compliance and improvement at Linnvale and St. Mary's Alexandria ELCs are underway. Plans for additional capacity required for the Vale of Leven area at Christie Park Primary School have been drawn up and agreed. Budget has been allocated for projects within existing budgeted resources.

8. People Implications

- 8.1** As previously reported a high quality, diverse and well-qualified professional Workforce is key to delivering the expansion and the quality of ELC.
- 8.2** Support is provided for ELC staff teams and leaders identified to support delivery of the high quality ELC and increased expectations of 1140 hours model of curriculum

9. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 9.1 As reported previously to ensure that it is protected for investment in early learning and childcare, the multi-year funding package for expansion is allocated through a specific grant. There are no changes to the multi-year funding allocation to this authority; figures are cumulative. The multi-year allocations for West Dunbartonshire:

Financial Year	Revenue £m	Capital £m
2018/19	1.410	0.580
2019/20	5.268	2.380
2020/21	8.717	4.480
2021/22	9.723	5.880
2022/23	9.485	0.794

10. Sustainable Rate Setting

- 10.1 The 2022 ELC LA Funding & Support data report was published by Scottish Government during December. The published version of the report is available at:
[Summary of the Returns - Early learning and childcare providers - local authority funding and support: overview 2022 to 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/summary-of-the-returns-early-learning-and-childcare-providers-local-authority-funding-and-support-overview-2022-to-2023/pages/summary-of-the-returns-early-learning-and-childcare-providers-local-authority-funding-and-support-overview-2022-to-2023.aspx)
- 10.2 Scottish Government and COSLA are currently undertaking a review of the sustainable rate setting process in 2022-23. The aim of the review is to learn lessons from rate-setting during 2022 and to identify where the process can be improved further; and to ensure that the sustainable rates set reflect the costs of delivering funded ELC.

11. Risk Analysis

- 11.1 The Key Risks:
- Maintaining high quality ELC at all funded providers to ensure that they meet the National Standard Criteria.
 - Failure to deliver 1140 hours curriculum by confident, well-trained ELC staff teams.
 - The Christie Park project is required for August 2023 which if delayed will impact our capacity to deliver the number of ELC placements required for deferred entry policy. If delayed this will require contingency planning.

12. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 12.1 An EIA for the Expansion Plan was undertaken previously. There was no requirement to undertake another EIA for the purposes of this report as it is providing an update to Committee on the expansion.

13. Consultation

- 13.1** Regular consultation with stakeholders including parents and carers, ELC staff, Unions, Council partners in the project and partner ELC providers continues through the various WDC fora and regular meetings.
- 13.2** Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.
- 14. Strategic Assessment**
- 14.1** This report reflects the Council's aspiration to have a strong local economy, improved employment opportunities and efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents. These are strategic priorities for 2017-2023.

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Background Papers: The 2022 ELC LA Funding & Support data report:

[Summary of the Returns - Early learning and childcare providers - local authority funding and support: overview 2022 to 2023 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Wards Affected: All