

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: 1 December 2021**

Subject: Early Years Implementation Update**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report details an update of the plan for expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** It is recommended that committee:

- (i) Notes the progress in meeting our statutory duties; expansion delivery and Funding Follows the Child; and
- (ii) The contents of Appendix 1, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress; and
- (iii) The contents of Appendix 2, West Dunbartonshire Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress; and
- (iv) The contents of Appendix 3, The Early Learning & Childcare Financial Phasing Plan 2018 - 2022

3. Background - ELC Statutory Duty

- 3.1** The Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Statutory Guidance places a duty on the Council to deliver 1140 hours which was phased in for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds by May 2021.

- 3.2** West Dunbartonshire Council has responsibility for ensuring that the statutory entitlement is available to all eligible children in their area and are the primary guarantors of quality, responsible for assessing and monitoring compliance with the National Standard. The guiding principles of the expansion of ELC; quality, flexibility, and accessibility continue to exemplify our commitment to children and families and to improve education outcomes for children and families.

4. Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress

- 4.1** The duty on local authorities to secure 1140 hours funded ELC for all eligible children has been in effect since 1st August 2021. To provide information on the implementation of this commitment, the Improvement Service and Scottish Futures Trust collect and analyse data on the progress of the delivery of the expansion programmes across local authorities. Data gathering is planned for the beginning of each academic term through to April 2022. The purpose of this data collection is to understand the status of the ELC sector

across the country regarding uptake, workforce and capacity as of the last week in August 2021.

- 4.2** The latest report (Appendix 1, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress) provides an analysis of the collected data on the progress of the delivery of the expansion programme across all local authorities. This data gathering will continue until April 2022. The report summarises the status of the ELC sector regarding uptake, workforce and capacity in the last week of August 2021.

National Key Messages of Expansion Delivery

- 1140 hours funded ELC delivered at all Councils
- 90,890 children were accessing funded ELC
- 97% were accessing more than 600 hours
- 87% were accessing 1140 hours
- 5 councils reported a reduction in the total number of children accessing funded ELC
- 6 councils reported an increase in in the total number of children accessing funded ELC
- 26% rise in the numbers of eligible 2-year-olds accessing funded ELC
- The workforce has increased by 7,942 FTE since academic year 2016/17
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 32% of all funded provision
- 912 projects in the capital programme (81% are now complete)
- Variability at local level remains a key feature of the expansion.

- 4.4** West Dunbartonshire progress compares favourably to the national picture reported in September 2021. See Appendix 2, West Dunbartonshire Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress for the full report

WDC Key Messages of Expansion Delivery:

- All three and four year olds and two year olds whose parents applied for a funded 1140 hours place have had this since May 2021
- In September 2021, 1,680 children were accessing funded ELC. By April 2022, approx. 2,230 children will have their placements at ELC.
- There is a reduction in the total number of children accessing funded ELC from the number we projected in 2018 which was 2,407 children.
- The year-on-year change in total numbers of children accessing funded ELC represents a reduction of 8% this school session. From our original prediction of 2,407 children to 2,230 children by April 2022. This is due to a decrease in birth rate impacting population numbers
- Of the 1,680 accessing 1140 hours in September, only eleven 2 year old children access less than 1140 hours but more than 600 hours, at the parents request. See 4.5 for our plan for this.
- The estimated number of eligible two year olds is 321 children. The total number accessing ELC funding in August was 155 children

- Our ELC workforce has increased by 469 FTE since academic year 2016/17.
- Funded providers in the private and voluntary sectors and childminders provide 34% of our funded provision.
- The capital projects required for delivery of 1140 hours were completed by August 2020. The remaining projects will improve our ELC assets and ensure compliance with Care Inspectorate regulations. The outstanding projects do not impact our delivery of 1140 hours.

4.5 As noted above, uptake is lower than projected in 2018. Access to flexible, high quality ELC has significant benefits for children and families, and increasing uptake is an important challenge for us, particularly for eligible 2 year olds. Our support for families has a significant role in addressing many of the issues that children, young people and their families face that lead to poor attainment and poorer life chances. Our focus is on early intervention and eligible 2's, but we will also ensure that 3 and 4 year olds access the hours that are right for them and their families. We continue to review all services and will include variations to service registrations if they can accommodate 2 year olds as we are doing at Dalmuir ELCC.

5. Funding Follows the Child: Meeting the National Standard Criteria

5.1 The Interim Guidance on the implementation of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard, the latest version of which was published in March 2021, set out that the Joint Delivery Board would be asked to undertake a review of the timetable for moving to full implementation of Funding Follows the Child following the national roll-out of 1,140 hours. To capture this information an in-depth survey was completed by all local authorities which provided information on the implementation of Funding Follows the Child in line with the Interim Guidance. The survey results will allow a review of the timetable towards full implementation.

5.2 Our continued challenge for Funding Follows the Child and meeting the National Standard, is to continue to improve the quality of our ELC and education outcomes for our children while also tackling the effects of the poverty related attainment gap. Our ELC meet the National Standard Criteria through inspection by the Care Inspectorate. We have requested that the Care Inspectorate prioritise re-inspection at our 5 ELC with below good evaluations. This session re-inspections have been carried out at two out of five ELC with evaluations below good. Both ELC re-inspected have achieved evaluations of good and above. Of our 40 ELC, including 11 funded providers, 3 ELC do not meet the national standard and await re-inspection. To date 93% of our ELC provision is currently evaluated at good and above. As previously reported to Committee, we continue to robustly support ELC with evaluative grades below good to ensure that they meet the standard. We expect our new ELC to be prioritised for inspection.

6. People Implications

6.1 As previously reported a high quality, diverse and well-qualified professional workforce is key to delivering the expansion and the quality of ELC that we

need. Recruitment for expansion is complete with no issues relating to recruitment and retention of staff.

7. Financial and Procurement Implications

7.1 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

7.2 The Scottish Government has confirmed that the expansion funding should remain a specific grant for at least until 2022/23.

7.3 To further improve quality of our ELC provision, we have planned and agreed funding for several projects. These projects, some of which were in our expansion plan for outdoor work are at: Whitcrook ELCC, Lennox ELCC (Alexandria) and Brucehill ELCC. Improvements and care inspection compliance work is also planned for Clydebank ELCC, Linnvale ELCC, Dalmonach ELCC and Dalmuir ELCC. The plans can be accommodated within existing ELC Expansion budgeted resources.

7.4 Our approach to setting a local sustainable hourly rate with our funded providers was developed with the West Partnership local authority ELC leads. All private and voluntary providers took part in a survey of their costs however, the process and survey findings were not accepted by our funded providers. We continue to work on setting a sustainable rate as an exercise to renew and refresh the work we have already done. Our partner providers are preparing a proposal and exemplification of their costs for our review. This approach may ensure sustainability of the private and voluntary sector, which has a key role in supporting economic recovery and access to ELC by our families.

8. Risk Analysis

8.1 The Key Risks:

- The quality of the offer of ELC at all funded providers to ensure that they meet the National Standard Criteria.
- Agreeing a sustainable rate year on year with funded partner providers.
- Completion of our final year projects to improve quality and compliance of our ELC assets.

9. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

9.1 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.

10. Consultation

10.1 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.

10.2 Legal Services and the Section 95 Officer have been consulted in relation to the content of this report.

11. Strategic Assessment

11.1 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 2017-2022.

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Background Papers: Appendix 1, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress
Appendix 2, West Dunbartonshire Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress
Appendix 3, The Early Learning & Childcare Financial Phasing Plan 2018 - 2022

Wards Affected: All

