

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: 22 September 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:

Notes the progress that has been made in delivering the statutory entitlement of 1140 hours early learning and childcare.

3. Background - ELC Statutory Duty and the Expansion

- 3.1** Legislation to reinstate the duty to provide 1140 hours early learning and childcare by August 2021 was laid in the Scottish Parliament on 22 January 2021. This legislation places a duty on local authorities to make available 1140 hours of funded ELC to all eligible children from August 2021.
- 3.2** The Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Statutory Guidance has also been updated. Councils are required to have regard to this guidance when carrying out their statutory functions in relation to the ELC entitlement. The statutory guidance applies from 1 August 2021. Statutory guidance relating to the delivery of ELC was originally published in 2014 to reflect the changes introduced through the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The majority of the changes in the new guidance reflect previously announced legislative and policy developments since 2014.
- 3.3** The legal obligation to deliver ELC entitlement was suspended temporarily owing to the pandemic. In West Dunbartonshire we continued with our plan and commitment to deliver 1140 hours which was phased in for eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds by May 2021. Council has responsibility for ensuring that the statutory entitlement is available to all eligible children in their area and as the primary guarantors of quality, are responsible for assessing and monitoring compliance with the National Standard. The guiding principles of quality, flexibility, and accessibility continue to exemplify our commitment to children and families.
- 3.4** The expansion of ELC entitlement is designed to help improve the education of our children while also tackling the effects of the poverty related attainment gap. Ensuring high quality education provision and meeting the National Standard through our expanded ELC provision is central to our service planning. The expansion has provided the opportunity to create leadership models at our ELC which are impacting and improving the quality of the

provision and education provided for our children. We now have an expanded ELC service which provides high quality early learning and care at 29 settings which includes 9 new ELC services, 11 funded partner providers and 9 Childminders.

- 3.5** Parent uptake of ELC placements for eligible 2 year olds has slowly increased. Our funded partner providers and childminders are providing placements for eligible 2 year olds which has increased our capacity to deliver the policy for eligible 2 year olds. Most of our Council geographical areas can provide ELC for 2 year olds except Dalmuir, where there is a need for this service. Families in Dalmuir who have eligible 2 year old children, travel to Lennox ELCC Faifley and Clydebank ELCC for their placements which is a financial burden for the families. A review of assets in the area to repurpose for 2 year old provision is underway. This expansion of 2 year old provision will provide sufficient accessible ELC capacity for eligible 2 year olds which meets the principles of the expansion plan and will be located as conveniently geographically as possible and delivered in a fit for purpose setting.

4. Main Issues - Expansion Guiding Principles

Meeting the National Standard Criteria

- 4.1** Our Improvement Framework for ELC has been designed to support improvement to ensure that ELC meet the National Standard Criteria through inspection.
- 4.2** Care Inspectorate inspection scrutiny was focussed on Covid safety throughout the pandemic. Last session the Care Inspectorate worked remotely to scrutinise services. This was supported by the Early Years Team and Care Inspection Improvement Service to ensure that services delivered Covid safe, high quality provision. The quality evaluation of children's health and well being supported and safeguarded during COVID-19 at all 11 settings inspected, was rated very good.
- 4.3** On site inspections resumed in July. One inspection at an ELC was carried out by the Care Inspectorate using a combination of onsite and virtual methodology. This was a full inspection using the Care Standard Framework resulting in evaluative grades of good from below good. Of the 10 ELC settings inspected by the Care Inspectorate, between August 2019 and July 2021, using the Quality Standard Framework the following evaluations were given:
- For Quality of Care and Support at 10 ELC: 7 settings rated good and above.
 - For Quality of Environment at 10 ELC: 8 settings were rated good and above.
 - For Quality of Staffing at 10 ELC: 8 settings were rated good and above.
 - For Quality of Management and Leadership at the 10 ELC: 8 settings were rated good and above.

Overall 90% of our ELC provision is currently evaluated at good and above. As previously reported to Committee, we continue to support ELC with evaluative grades below good. By using a combination of weekly meetings with this group of ELC leaders, one to one support, coaching and mentoring, professional learning and continued support from the Care Inspection Improvement Service focussed on improvement methodology, we expect at re-inspection grades to be good and above.

- 4.4** The expanded hours will improve children’s outcomes, help to close the poverty-related outcome gap, increase family resilience and support parents and carers into work, study or training as we recover from COVID.

5. Funding Follows the Child

- 5.1** A degree of flexibility will continue to apply to certain aspects of meeting the National Standard from August 2021. The Joint Delivery Board will undertake a review of the timetable for moving full implementation of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard following the national roll-out of 1140 hours this August. This will take account of the need for sufficient notice required for both education authorities and ELC providers.

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.

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** There are projects in this final year of the multi year funding for expansion which will further improve the quality and accessibility of ELC delivery. The Scottish Government advise that we refine the plan to meet the principles of expansion delivery; accessible, flexible, high quality provision. The remaining projects will provide the quality that we need and will also provide the compliance for Care Inspectorate standards required at some ELC where possible registration variations are required. The projects in scope are: Whitecrook ELCC, Lennox ELCC (Alexandria), Brucehill ELCC, Clydebank ELCC, Linnvale ELCC, Dalmonach ELCC, Dalmuir ELCC, and Gavinburn

ELCC. At this stage it is anticipated that the necessary works can be accommodated within existing budgeted resources.

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.
- Potential risk of financial loss if we are unable to redirect funds to another project.
- It is unknown if any surplus balance in the multi year funding will be required to be paid back to the Scottish Government or deducted from the 2022/23 budget or allowed to carry forward.

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:

Funding Follows the Child Update to Guidance March 2021:

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-the-child-and-the-national-standard-for-early-learning-and-childcare-providers-interim-guidance---update-march-2021/pages/payment-of-sustainable-rates-for-the-delivery-of-funded-early-learning-and-childcare/>

Wards Affected:

All

