

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: 9 June 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 that has been made in delivering the statutory entitlement of 1140 hours early learning and childcare; and
- (ii) The contents of Appendix 1, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Analysis.

3. Background - ELC Statutory Duty and the Expansion

- 3.1** The 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 ELC Expansion programme provides a near doubling of the ELC entitlement from 600 hours to 1140 hours. This has been planned and phased in over time for all eligible children in WDC. Working in partnership with colleagues in Facilities Management, Asset Management, Environmental Health, Health and Safety, Building Standards and Care Inspectorate we have repurposed our school assets, refurbished ELC and, recruited the skilled workforce that we need to deliver the entitlement.
- 3.3** 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.

4. Progress Report – Key Messages

- 4.1** Our WDC plan for expansion was accepted and fully funded by the Scottish Government in January 2018. To ensure progress the expansion plan was monitored closely by this Committee and the WDC Expansion Implementation Board. Data reports on progress were also requested by the Scottish Government at very regular intervals. The progress report published by the Scottish Government on the 8 April 2021 provides a progress delivery report up to and including end of February 2021. The report provides a summary of progress made across all local authorities. See Appendix 1, Early Learning

and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress for analysis of WDC performance in comparison to progress made nationally.

4.2 Key Messages

The Scottish Government Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report, March 2021, provided key messages for Councils on the progress delivery of 1140 hours at local authority and funded providers of ELC, recruitment of a suitable workforce and completion of capital building projects to enable 1140 hours. West Dunbartonshire Council compares very favourably in all of the key aspects reported.

5. Main Issues - Expansion Guiding Principles

5.1 Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard

The Interim Guidance on the delivery of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard has been reviewed. This revised guidance provides the requirements for all funded providers. The revised guidance recognises that the pandemic and closures of ELC has impacted delivery of 1140 hours and improvements to the quality of ELC. In light of this, a degree of continued flexibility will apply to certain aspects of the National Standard from August 2021. This flexibility will apply to certain aspects of when the National Standard will be met including:

- The partnership work with funded providers to reach agreement on sustainable local funding models;
- Delivery of as much of the National Standard criteria as possible, but to highlight where flexibility may still be required.

5.2 We continue to ensure that our ELC offers high quality provision. This is supported by the Early Years Team and Care Inspection Improvement Service to bring grades to good and above. Care Inspections have resumed for all high and medium risk services. This will include on-site visits to engage in fieldwork, to gain assurance about the wellbeing of children and to assess how children's needs are being met. Any setting that is a cause for concern or areas requiring further exploration will be a priority for inspection. The Care Inspectorate will prioritise their inspection activity in response to:

- Covid 19 notifications i.e. through complaints, medication, staffing, finance, accidents and incidents, infectious disease outbreak, allegation of abuse, misconduct, criminal conviction, manager absence, planned refurbishment or alterations;
- Inspection history, particularly where the last inspection identified significant areas for improvement and where they now need to assess the extent to which improvements have been made;
- New services which have not been inspected since registration with the Care Inspectorate;
- Inspection frequency timescales applies to all other services.

5. People Implications

6.1 As previously reported a high quality, diverse and well-qualified professional workforce is key to delivering the expansion. Recruitment plans for the

remaining projects are near completion. A range of leadership models ensures high quality at our ELC.

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 Round 3 of The Temporary Restrictions Fund (TRF) is being paid to private, voluntary and independent childcare services to aid recovery and reopening. This Scottish Government TRF is administered by the Council to support and protect businesses; to ensure that they continue to deliver a service for families on reopening. The services eligible include day care of children's services, out of school care providers, and childminders with more than twelve children. Payments are being made for the restrictions period only.

7.3 Scottish Government Grants of between £500 and £1,000 have been available to eligible childminding providers. The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) administers this scheme.

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 with partner providers.

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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Appendices: Appendix 1, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Analysis; and

Background Papers: Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report March 2021
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