

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: 10 March 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, The Early Learning & Childcare Financial Phasing Plan 2018 - 2022.

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. 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** In WDC at the end of January 2021, 88% of eligible children had access to 1140 hours. 1140 hours remains to be put in place at Brucehill ELCC, Dalreoch ELCC, Gavinburn ELCC, Lennox ELCC Faifley and additional capacity for the Clydebank area at Linnvale ELCC. This final 12% of our capacity for 1140 hours will be in place by end of April 2021.

4. Expansion Guiding Principles**4.1 Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard**

As well as responsibility for ensuring that the statutory entitlement is available to all eligible children in their area, local authorities are the primary guarantors of quality and continue to be responsible for assessing and monitoring compliance with the Criteria for the National Standard; evaluations of good meet the standard. The Interim Guidance on the delivery of Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard published on 30 July 2020 will be reviewed. Further guidance and a revised date are expected from the Scottish Government before full 1140 hours implementation in August 2021.

- 4.2** Inspection activity by the Care Inspectorate is suspended however, we continue to ensure that our ELCC's offer high quality provision. This is supported by the Early Years Team and Care Inspection Improvement Service to bring grades to good and above. Settings rated below good are working with officers to ensure that when inspection scrutiny restarts they will

achieve evaluations of good or better. The scrutiny by Care Inspectorate during the pandemic has focussed on Covid safe practices, engagement with families, learning at home and wellbeing of children. The Care Inspectorate report that all services that they have scrutinised remotely are meeting the expected standard.

5. Main Issues

- 5.1** The Scottish Government delivery assurance team will continue engagement to support councils in implementing their expansion plans. All Councils are working towards 1140 hours universal provision. In January, 15 Councils were delivering 1140 hours to all families.
- 5.2** In West Dunbartonshire, the delay in delivery of 1140 hours was disappointing for families who had expected the offer of 1140 hours for eligible two year olds and all three and four year olds in August 2020. Capacity has still to be created for 288 children who are yet to receive 1140 hours.
- 5.3** Building work at the remaining building projects: Dalreoch, Gavinburn, and Dalmonach is due for completion by end of March. Linnvale ELCC will be refurbished to provide additional flexibility for the Clydebank area. Staff have been recruited and provision will be set up as soon as the services are registered with the Care Inspectorate.
- 5.4** Partner providers of 1140 hours early learning and childcare who opened during lockdown from December 2020 to February 2021 for vulnerable children and children of key workers, will be provided with a grant through a Temporary Restrictions Fund. This grant is to protect their business and ability to continue to deliver a service on reopening, The fund will be administered by the Council. The services eligible include day care of children's services, out of school care providers, and childminders with more than twelve children. Payments will be made for the restrictions period.
- 5.5** Childminders in partnership with the council were not subject to the same temporary restrictions as day care of children providers and were able to remain open from December to February. It is recognised however, that childminders would benefit from additional funding as they too may have been financially impacted by the pandemic. Grants of between £500 and £1,000 will be made to eligible childminding providers. The Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) will administer this scheme. The Council scheme for childminders received ten applications for the recovery grant which were all awarded.

6. 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.

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 In December it was reported that financial flexibility from the Early Learning and Childcare Grant for 2020/21 was necessary. The available flexibility has been reviewed to take account of projects due for completion by April 2021. See Appendix 1, The Early Learning & Childcare Financial Phasing Plan 2018 - 2022.

8. Risk Analysis

8.1 The Key Risks:

- delays in delivery of building work would impact the statutory entitlement of 1140 hours for the remaining 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds yet to receive this;
- delays in the delivery of the statutory entitlement would impact families and their children unfairly.

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 - The Early Learning & Childcare Financial
Phasing Plan 2018 - 2022.

Wards Affected: All