

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Education Officer****Education Services Committee: Wednesday 19th March 2025**

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

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

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.

3. Background**3.1 Early Learning and Childcare**

Within Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) we now deliver, across all our settings, up to 1140 hours to eligible 2 year olds and children aged from 3 to those not yet attending primary school. Places for children under the age of 2 are available in our partner settings for working families and for eligible children, and, in our council settings for eligible children. Overall children are very well supported, provided with exciting learning opportunities, and are nurtured by well trained staff.

3.2 Training

There continues to be a wide range of training available to all our ELC providers through our Professional Learning Framework and our framework for this session aims to support the actions identified in our delivery plan, staff development needs and to support all children. A further cohort of staff will be trained in 'Pedagogical Leadership' and we intend to deliver further training with a focus on improving attainment in literacy.

4. Main Issues**4.1 Children's Progress**

Attendance is robustly monitored on a monthly basis within our early years settings and training to staff has been provided to develop a more consistent approach. The average rolling attendance across West Dunbartonshire Council settings this session to date is 86.9%.

4.2 Speech and Language Development in children aged under 2 years

Current research has identified outcomes at the 27 month Health Visitor assessment are particularly poor for our children in this area. Going forward

we will be part of a multi-agency group looking at how best to tackle this. Initially we will carry out an audit of practice in our 0-2 nurseries to find out what is working well and what interventions and strategies we can put in place to help to improve these outcomes.

4.3 Statistical Data

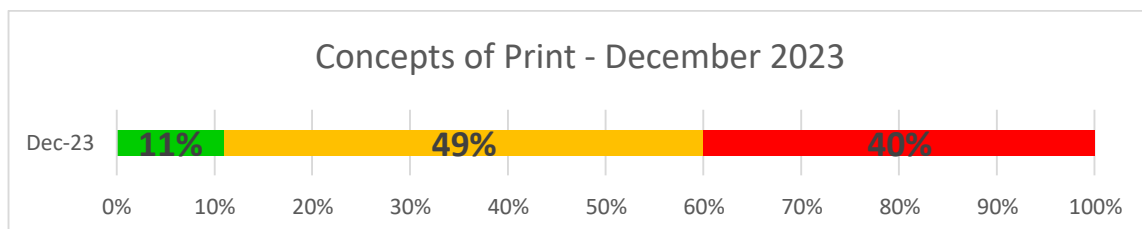
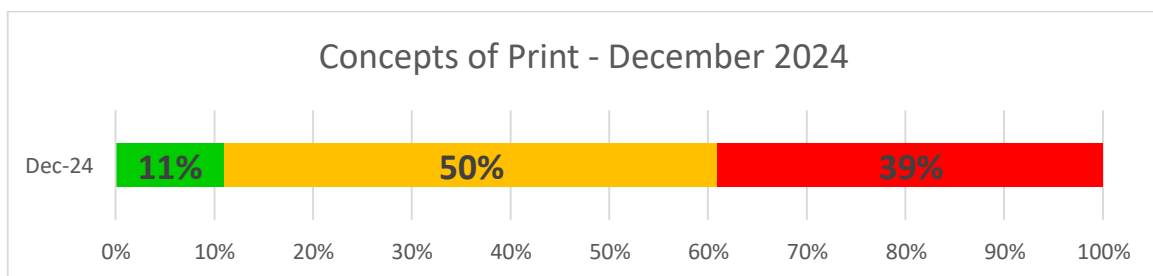
Statistical data gathered in December 2024 on children attending West Dunbartonshire early learning and childcare settings that are in their pre-school year, found;

- 25% of children accessed their entitlement in partner settings and 75% in council settings,
- 16% of children in this pre-school cohort are accessing a deferred year this session,
- 46% of the children live in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation Quintile 1,
- just over 39% have additional support needs, and,
- 6% of the children have English as an additional language.

4.4 Assessment Data

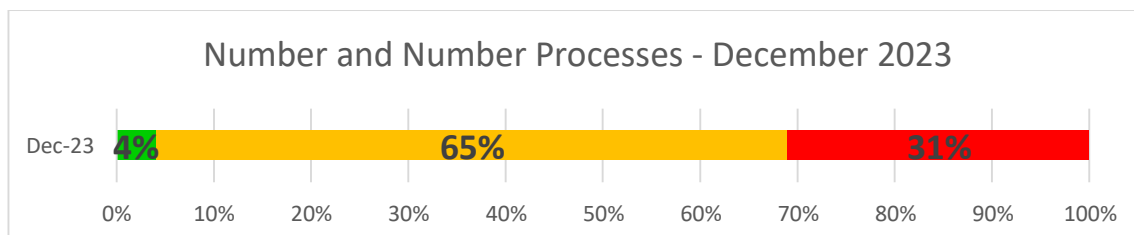
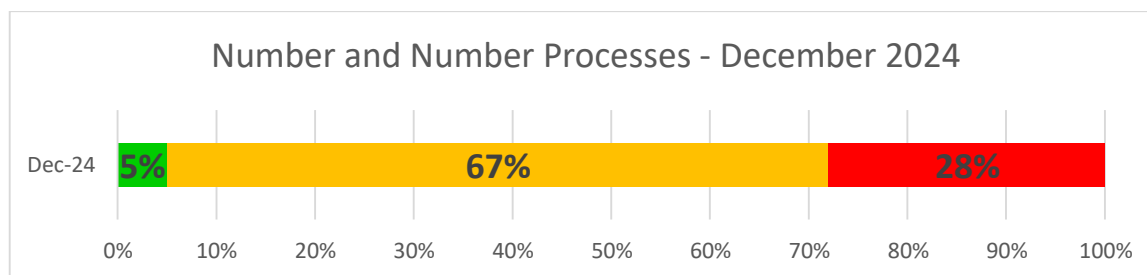
Assessment data gathered in December 2024 shows that children continue to make progress in literacy and numeracy outcome measures.

Percentage of Children Achieving Literacy Benchmark (Concepts of Print) – December 2024



Comparison against the data we have from December 2023 shows a very similar picture to this year's data for both literacy and numeracy. Continued training for staff in these curricular areas and the offer of a wide range of literacy and numeracy rich experiences for all children within our settings, that are developmentally appropriate, will continue to help us provide high quality learning and attainment for all our children.

Percentage of Children Achieving Numeracy Benchmark (Number and number processes) – December 2024



4.5 Faifley ELC

We are working with both Auchnacraig ELC and Lennox Faifley ELC to prepare for the transition to the new Faifley ELC where both settings will amalgamate as one setting, when the new service opens in the autumn of 2025. It will be managed under one Principal Officer. In this way they will have one vision and can better support children and families, particularly at times of transition. The new service will have the capacity to accommodate more children than Auchnacraig ELC and Lennox Faifley do currently, allowing them to support more families in the local community. The service will be open all year and offer a range of differing sessions to best suit families needs, with places allocated as per our existing admissions policy.

As a pilot, to further support working families, or those who are undertaking further study, the service will provide families with the opportunity to purchase additional hours, subject to availability. An hourly rate of £5 per hour will be introduced for this and provide families with greater access to affordable childcare. This pilot will be reviewed a year after its implementation and consideration then given as to its continuation or cessation.

4.6 Quality Improvement Framework

A draft new quality improvement framework for the ELC sector was published in January 2025 and the final version will be published in Autumn 2025. This self-evaluation framework supports quality improvement in ELC settings and can be used by all early learning and childcare services. The Care Inspectorate and His Majesty's Inspectorate of Education will use the framework for the inspection of settings from September 2025. The aim of this framework is to ensure that all ELC providers ensure that children are safe and protected from harm, cared for and able to thrive, and, offered high-quality learning and development opportunities. Through using this framework ELC providers will build their capacity for self-evaluation. For our ELC providers in West Dunbartonshire training will be provided to support them in developing an understanding of this

new framework and they will continue to be supported to develop robust quality assurance processes to maintain quality and meet the national standard.

5. People Implications

5.1 Support is provided for Early Learning and Childcare staff teams and leaders to enable effective delivery of the high quality ELC and the expectations of the statutory offer of 1140 hours for eligible 2 year olds and 3 year olds to pre school aged children.

5.2 To date, we have supported 23 Modern Apprentices. 15 have completed their training, achieving a Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) Level 3 within our Early Learning and Childcare settings and have been supported into employment with the council. 5 Modern Apprentices are working towards their qualification at present.

Additionally since 2022 we have supported 23 career changers, 18 have completed their qualification and 5 are currently participating in working towards achieving their qualification. We will continue to promote this career path and route to qualification.

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

6.1 Financial Year	Revenue £m	Capital £m
2020/21	8.717	4.480
2021/22	9.723	5.880
2022/23	9.485	0.794
2023/24	9.742	0.287
2024/25	9.725	0

7. Risk Analysis

7.1 The Key Risks:

- Maintaining high quality Early Learning and Childcare at all funded providers to ensure that they meet the National Standard Criteria.
- Failure to deliver 1140 hours curriculum by confident, well trained Early Learning and Childcare staff teams.
- Evaluations of good for environment by Care Inspectorate are at risk if Early Learning and Childcare building assets are not maintained.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment

8.1 There was no requirement to undertake another Equalities Impact Assessment for the purposes of this report as it is providing an update for Committee.

9. Consultation

9.1 Regular consultation with stakeholders including parents and carers, Early Learning and Childcare staff, Unions, Council partners in the project and partner Early Learning and Childcare providers continues through the various Council fora and regular meetings.

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

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 This report reflects the Council's aspiration to have resilient and thriving communities, a strong and flourishing economy and a council that is inclusive and adaptive. These are some of the strategic priorities for 2022-2027.

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Background Papers: none

Wards Affected: All

