

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	10 December 2019
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Review of Admissions Policy for Early Learning and Childcare Establishments
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update on the review of the policy for admissions of children into early learning and childcare establishments in South Lanarkshire, including the process and outcome of a recent consultation; and
- ♦ to seek approval for the admissions policy and process for the allocation of places to local authority and funded partner provider establishments from March 2020.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the priorities for admission to all early years' establishments, as detailed in Appendix 1, be approved;
- (2) that the admissions policy and process for the allocation of places to all early years' establishments be implemented from March 2020;
- (3) that the admissions policy for early years' establishments be endorsed and referred to the Executive Committee for approval.

3. Background

- 3.1. On 31 March 1998, the Education Resources Committee approved a revised admissions policy in light of national policy development. The priorities took account of the new statutory duties of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 which was implemented in April 1997, ensuring that priority places would be available for 'children in need'.
- 3.2. The Government issued guidance under the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 which requires councils to review their admissions policies every two years.
- 3.3. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 represents one of the biggest changes to children's legislation for over a decade and introduced a new concept of early learning and childcare (ELC), details of which have been shared previously with the Education Resources Committee.
- 3.4. The last review of the admissions policy for ELC establishments was presented to the Education Resources Committee on 6 February 2018.

- 3.5. The current admissions policy has a closing date of end April each year for parents/carers to submit an application for consideration for a place for their child. In moving towards the implementation of the 1140 hours from August 2020 and, in line with central admissions allocation, it is now proposed to introduce a closing date of the end of February each year. This will allow for parents/carers to have their child's place confirmed in May of each year. In addition, closing dates for 'Early Entry to Primary School' and 'Deferred Entry from School' will be 20 January. Allocation of places will be confirmed by the end of May.

4. Consultation and engagement

- 4.1. The Education Resources' Early Years team sought the opinions of parents, families and providers on the current admissions policy and on proposed amendments, taking account of what matters to them in terms of early learning and childcare provision.
- 4.2. A consultation was undertaken from October to November 2019 with over 500 responses received, (90 of which were early years establishments which reflected the views and opinions of parents/carers and staff). The responses also included those made by parents/carers of children from 0-5 years who attend local authority establishments, partner providers and childminders, with some from those intending to access early years in the near future.
- 4.3. Some points worth highlighting include:

Parents who wish their child to attend 38 weeks	54%
Parents who wish their child to attend more than 38 weeks up to 51 weeks	19%
Parents who wish their child to attend for 52 weeks	27%

- Parents believe that in the future there should be greater flexibility and accessibility
- Strong opinions were noted, that where there are twins or multiple births within the same family, the allocation of places being the same sessions in the same nursery
- Parents were unanimous that siblings within the same family, where possible, should be allocated places in the same early learning and childcare setting and same times.

5. Proposals

- 5.1. The proposed admissions policy is outlined in Appendix 1.
- 5.2. The admissions policy priorities will be used for the allocation of an early learning and childcare place. Once places are allocated, particular patterns of sessions are then matched wherever possible: morning, afternoon or full day.
- 5.3. Where there are too many requests for the preferred sessions than places available, a ballot will be held in line with agreed procedures and places allocated in line with the admissions policy.
- 5.4. In relation to the proposed priorities for allocation of additional hours, a number of Early Learning and Childcare establishments may be able to offer additional hours and, as we move to implementing 1140 hours, this may increase. It may be that

additional hours will be through the phased approach to 1140 hours, free for children who fall within the Council's exemption criteria and paid by other parents. The charge to parents and/or carers for this service is detailed within the Council's Nursery Fees' Policy.

- 5.5. The Annual Admissions' allocation will move from May to March beginning in 2020. All applications for local authority and partner nurseries are considered with places allocated. Parents will be informed of their child's early learning and childcare place in writing by the end of May each year (was June previously)
- 5.6. Applications received after the end of February each year will not be processed until after the full Early Learning and Childcare admission process has been concluded in May each year. This may reduce the choice of Early Learning and Childcare establishment available to parents and/or carers if the nurseries they have chosen are oversubscribed.
- 5.7. Children will be allocated on a first come, first served basis into any remaining places in accordance with the Admissions Policy criteria.
- 5.8. If there are no places available at a particular Early Learning and Childcare establishment, then parents and/or carers will be offered an alternative nursery.
- 5.9. Deferred entry to Primary School
If a parent and/or carer applies for deferred entry to primary school for their child they may be able to access an additional year of funded Early Learning and Childcare. This will only be considered where either of the following apply:
 - children whose 4th birthday falls in the January or February of the year they are due to start primary school. These children are considered returning children.
 - when parent/carers wish to be considered for deferred entry for their child where the 4th birthday falls between August and December their application will be considered by an Admissions Scrutiny Group.

6 Employee Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct employee implications arising from the implications in this report.

7 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Nursery Charges Policy will apply to the allocation of nursery places where applicable.

8 Other Implications (Including Environmental and Risk Issues)

- 8.1 The main risk associated with this report in taking forward the legislative requirements in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act at this stage is that further additions to the legislation are still awaited.

- 8.2 To mitigate the risk, a further evaluation of the impact of the new legislation and the eligibility criteria to determine affordability and sustainability will be monitored.

9 Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. This report does introduce a new policy, and therefore, an impact assessment will be conducted prior to implementation.
- 9.2. Consultation involved an on-line consultation for parents/carers and stakeholders from the beginning of October 2019 until November 2019 and this has helped to shape and influence the revised admissions policy.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)

19 November 2019

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults

Previous References

- Education Resources Committee - 6 February 2018
- Executive Committee – 28 February 2018

List of Background Papers

None

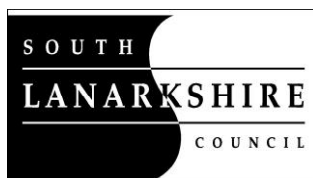
Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Education Resources

South Lanarkshire Council Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020

Purpose:

When the Council are considering places for ELC the admissions policy will be used to determine the allocation of places.

Guidance pertaining to each priority will be contained in guidelines for staff.

Proposals

The proposed admissions policy is outlined below.

<i>Proposed Policy Children aged 0-3 years</i>	<i>Proposed Policy Children aged 3-5 years</i>
<i>Priority 1</i>	<i>Priority 1</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children affected by Abuse Children with additional support needs Looked after and Accommodated Children from birth up 2 years old Children who at any time from the age of 2 years have been <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Looked after and Accommodated or b) subject to a Kinship Care Order Children affected by Domestic Violence Children affected by Substance Misuse Children affected by a disability within the home <p><i>All applications within Priority 1 must be substantiated by a wellbeing assessment/single agency assessment</i> <i>*2 year olds as required by relevant legislation from time to time applying</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children affected by Abuse Children with additional support needs Children who at any time have been <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Looked after and Accommodated or b) subject to a Kinship Care Order Children affected by Domestic Violence Children affected by Substance Misuse Children affected by a disability within the home <p><i>All applications within Priority 1 must be substantiated by a wellbeing assessment/single agency assessment</i></p>
<i>Priority 2</i>	<i>Priority 2</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New applications: (0-3 year olds) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in their pre-school year – new applications Deferred entry children Aug/Dec Transfer application pre-school year children – change in circumstances
<i>Priority 3</i>	<i>Priority 3</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer applications – change in circumstances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in their ante pre-school year - new applications Transfer applications ante-pre-school year – change in circumstances

Priority 4	Priority 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer applications – parental choice 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer application pre-school year children - parental choice Transfer applications ante-pre-school year – parental choice
Priority 5	Priority 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children resident outwith South Lanarkshire Council who are not within a catchment area of a primary school within the Council Area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All children resident outwith South Lanarkshire Council who are not within a catchment area of a primary school within the Council Area
Priority 6 Additional Hours	

Priority 1 All Priority 1 Children

Priority 2 Children whose parents and/or carer are in employment or education

Priority 3 All children allocated a place in the nursery including those children returning to nursery for a further year which includes deferred children approved by the Council

- Priorities 1-4 are children who are resident within South Lanarkshire Council Area and those children who are catchment pupils for a South Lanarkshire Council Primary school
- All children (non SLC primary school catchment children) residing outwith the Council no matter the circumstances are considered priority 5
- Eligible children will have access to Early Learning and Childcare regardless of age, gender, race, religion or need.
- Early Learning and Childcare will be provided on a non-denominational basis.
- Securing a place in a school nursery class does not guarantee a primary school place within the same primary school
- Children deferring entry from Primary 1 January and February birthdays Council are considered returning children
- Children deferring entry from Primary 1 August to December birthdays who have been approved for a deferred year of funding are considered returning children
- Additional hours are only considered once all eligible children have been allocated their entitlement