

Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	6 September 2022
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Early Learning and Childcare (1140 hours) - Update
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to: -

- ♦ provide an update on progress made in the expansion and delivery of 1140 hours in line with the Scottish Government's statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2021.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the content of the report be noted;
- (2) to note progress on the delivery of 1140 hours ELC for eligible 2-year-olds and all 3 and 4 year olds;
- (3) to note that a further update will be provided on the consultation outcomes on the delivery of the 1140 hours Early and Learning (ELC);
- (4) to note that a further update will be provided on the process for reaching a sustainable rate for funded providers for 2022-23; and
- (5) to note that a further update will be provided at the November meeting on ELC developments supported by City Deal

3. Background

3.1. A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, published in March 2017, outlined the Scottish Government commitment to expanding the provision of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1140 hours.

3.2. The expansion of ELC has brought a number of duties on the Local Authority under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014:

- ♦ statutory responsibility for the provision of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for eligible two-year-olds and all three- and four-year-olds
- ♦ ensuring that 1140 hours funded ELC entitlement is available to all eligible children
- ♦ be the primary guarantor of quality and key enabler of flexibility and choice, ensuring that there is a range of options for all children and their families
- ♦ responsible for engaging and consulting with parents and carers on a regular basis (minimum of every 2 years) on the provision of ELC delivered locally
- ♦ Responsible for preparing and publishing an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan every 2 years.

- 3.3. The Council welcomed the opportunity for this development in recognition of how the expansion of ELC could help reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. In South Lanarkshire all eligible children aged 2-5 years have been receiving 1140 hours of free Early Learning and Childcare.
- 3.4. The Council's Expansion Plan presented an ambitious vision for ELC which extended beyond the national policy intention. We have delivered against the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Delivery Plan approved in 2017 and have fully implemented the expansion of ELC across the Council. The expansion was delivered through partnership working which included all of our stakeholders, our workforce, the Funded Providers and most importantly driven through continuous consultation with parents and carers and our youngest children.

4. Progress Update

- 4.1. The Council's Local Child Poverty Action Plan 2021/22 confirms the target for delivery of places for the eligible 2-year-old of 15.5%.

Over the year we have provided a nursery place for 1,111 two-year-old children. This higher figure is due to the admission process. This sees a total of 33.7% of our 2-year-old population accessing a 2-year-old nursery place over the last year. This represents a yearly increase of 9.8% of the population being provided with a nursery place at any one time.

Admissions figures so far for session 2022/23 has confirmed 520 2-year-olds have places allocated which is a 10.4% increase from the same time last year. It is also worth noting that the additional new places which will be created at the new Skylark ELC and Jackton ELC will increase the percentage figure further.

Admissions allocation meetings for late applications commence week beginning 22 August 2022 and continue on a regular basis with the final meeting in January 2023. This ensures places are allocated regularly with start dates throughout the year for new applications, transfer applications to another ELC provision and also the allocation of change pattern of provision or additional hours. The final admissions allocation figure for session 2022/23 will be confirmed in February 2023.

4.2. Consultation

We undertook a range of consultation in May 2022 to evaluate and reflect on the delivery of the 1140 hours of ELC and also the impact, outcomes and lessons learned which included our youngest children, funded providers and also local authority staff. The main outcomes on Consultations with children, parents, funded providers and Learning Authority Staff are outlined in appendix 1.

4.3. Training Opportunities

An extensive training programme was delivered over the past year for staff from local authority nurseries, funded providers and also childminders. Some of the highlights were:

- ♦ The first 15 practitioners have successfully completed the Graduate Apprentice Early Learning and Childcare degree, this includes one practitioner who was a Foundation Apprentice, then employed as part of the pilot as an ELC Support Worker. We now have 13 practitioners continuing their studies and 14 about to begin the programme.
- ♦ 180 practitioners who have completed the Froebel in Childhood Practice certificate with University of Edinburgh.

- ◆ 60 ELC team leaders have successfully completed bespoke leadership training with University of Edinburgh.
- ◆ 36 foundation apprentices are being supported in ELC settings.
- ◆ 20 practitioners are about to start year 2 of the BA Childhood Practice degree with UWS.
- ◆ All support workers are undertaking the SVQ2 or GA ELC. Two have just completed their SVQ2.
- ◆ Almost all settings have attended SLC Froebel in Practice training, SLC Outdoor training and Gender Awareness training.
- ◆ Gender Awareness in ELC successfully gained a Cosla award in February 2022.
- ◆ Approx. 100 modern apprentices have successfully completed their SVQ3 and moving into posts as Early Years Workers, 26 are currently completing their qualification
- ◆ Successfully developed a bespoke training programme for our funded provider childminders
- ◆ Leadership sessions for Managers
- ◆ A virtual ELC conference

In addition, a range of on-line training opportunities have been developed and have been distributed to Local Authority and Funded Providers. The training available includes Creativity, Loose Parts Play, Wonderous Words, Tracking and Monitoring, Parental Engagement, Making Books Sparkle, Child Protections and Safeguarding, Funs and Sounds, Planning for Children's Learning, Communication in Young Children, Care Plans in ELC, Planning for Care Inspectorate, Attachment Strategy, and Standards and Quality Report Writing.

We are currently finalising the training plan for session 2022/23 and opportunities will include – Gender Awareness, Safeguarding, SLC Froebel into Practice, Froebel Network, Outdoor Training including Sustainability, Biodiversity and Risky Play, Play Pedagogy, Health and Wellbeing, Together We Can Count, Communication and Language, STEM and Family Engagement.

The innovative training ELC – 'Developing inclusive approaches to LGBT+ education in ELC setting for children, parents and practitioners and' received a COSLA award. Following this there has been national interest and it is likely that this will result in the development of a case study and learning events.

4.4. **Quality of Provision**

We know that the earliest years of life are crucial for every child, and the evidence tells us that if our early learning and childcare offer is to help give children the best start in life and contribute to closing the poverty-related attainment gap, it must be of high quality. Quality has been at the heart of the 1140 Expansion and in order to ensure that quality remained an integral principle in driving the expansion, the Scottish Government introduced the National Standards for early learning and childcare.

National Standards

To ensure the delivery of a 'provider neutral approach', the National Standard applies to all providers regardless of whether the funded hours are provided by a setting in the public, private or third sector, including provision offered by childminders. The National Standard is aligned to the guiding principles for the expansion to 1140 hours:

- ◆ quality;
- ◆ flexibility;
- ◆ accessibility;
- ◆ and affordability.

It is also underpinned by the regulations in the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 which applies to all care services across Scotland, including day-care of children and childminding settings.

Nurseries and Playgroups (Voluntary providers) must achieve Care Inspectorate quality evaluations that are good (4) or better on themes that relate to quality of staffing, management and leadership. If this isn't achieved, then there is a period of time which the provider is allowed to improve. It is important to state, that in order for there to be improvement, there must be capacity for such improvement and engagement with services and organisations that can support such improvements. Prior to the current contract being in place and the National Standards, the ELC contract required a level 3 or above (satisfactory). The new grade is confirmed as (4) good, and all providers must achieve or work towards achieving this grade across all areas for inspection.

The Council is currently working with Care Inspectorate and the Scottish Government Improvement Unit to support those funded providers who do not meet meeting the National Standards.

The support offered is delivered through area teams lead by the ELC Lead Locality Officer who is supported by an ELC Quality Officer and Peripatetic ELC Teachers. In addition, the ELC Equity and Excellence Leads offer targeted support.

We remain committed to providing the current additional services to support to ensure the National Standards are met ensuring continuous quality improvement and the delivery of the highest quality of experiences for our youngest children. Examples of this support include:

- ◆ designated support ELC staff
- ◆ professional advice and support
- ◆ Access to zero rated high quality continued professional learning
- ◆ Financial support towards external professional training

Equity and Excellence Leads

We have a full complement of 26 FTE Equity & Excellence Team Leaders who provide targeted support across all 4 localities within South Lanarkshire Council. They have worked in collaboration with Local Authority and Funded Provider settings to help close the poverty related attainment gap whilst supporting employees to improve their practice. Evidence shows the positive impact that this is having leading to improved outcomes for the children. The Equity & Excellence team have also supported some settings who were failing to meet the National Standard. The managers of these settings reported the impact of this support, and this has been reflected in the Care Inspectorate reports and resulted in settings improving their practice and inspection grades

The central team have continued to provide virtual training opportunities, support and guidance and pre and post inspection activity for local authority and funded providers.

- 4.5. Regulatory inspection activity re-commenced with 'Virtual Inspections' undertaken by the Care Inspectorate however this has moved to the return of 'face to face' inspections. Inspection outcomes will confirm which providers are meeting the National Standard and those where improvement work is required. Outcomes reported confirm positive outcomes for local authority establishments recently inspected. In addition, Education Scotland have confirmed that their inspection activity will commence from September 2022.

4.6. Admissions/Allocation of Places
7255 children have had places allocated at ELC provision for session 2022/23. All children have been allocated 1140 hours provision.

4.7. Building programme
The 1140 hours expansion building programme update is as follows:

New Build Nurseries

Lightburn ELC, Cambuslang – opened July 2021

Kilbryde ELC, East Kilbride – opened July 2021

Expansion to existing Nurseries

Carnwath Nursery Class, Carnwath – increased August 2022

Newfield Nursery Class, Stonehouse – increased provision from August 2021

St Elizabeth's Nursery Class, Hamilton – increased provision from August 2021

New Nursery Class provision

St Columbkille's Nursery Class, Rutherglen – opened August 2021

In addition, the new provision for Bothwell/Uddingston - Clyde Terrace Nursery – will be completed for August 2023

4.8. Funded providers

As part of the delivery of the 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, engagement and communication with all funded providers continues to be a core part of the strategy. Over the past year a range of such as Funded Providers meeting (on-line), quality improvement activity on-line and in-house, support with inspection activity online and in-house, support with the COVID pandemic implications, on-line and telephone support, the provision of guidance and support materials as well as a range of personal and professional activity.

A consultation was held with funded providers regarding future meetings related to the frequency, allocated time and also forum either virtual or face to face.

The outcome confirmed a 6-weekly format of 1 hour and virtual to allow for staff to be in their work location and eliminate travelling time therefore encouraging a greater participation.

Following consultation across funded providers we continue to pay 4 weeks in advance and a further development introduced from the beginning of August is an agreed model for payment timetable where funded providers are able to choose the model of payment best suited to their financial planning. The models are as follows:

- ◆ 38 week model of 30 hours per week – 10 equal monthly payments per child (August – May)
- ◆ 40 week model of 28.50 hours - 10 equal monthly payments per child (August – May)
- ◆ 46 week model of 24 hours (24.78 hours) - 11 equal monthly payments per child (August – June)
- ◆ 52 week model of 21 hours (21.92 hours) - 12 equal monthly payments per child (August - July)

Recently we have been focusing very much on meeting the expectations of reviewing the sustainable rate. In February 2022, the Scottish Government commissioned Ipsos Mori to undertake a Cost Collection Exercise across all Funded Providers.

All funded providers were contacted on a few occasions to ensure they contributed and were invited to contribute to this process. The findings were provided to the Council on 12 May 2022 and noted the outcome from 10 funded providers from across the Council.

Since then, an extensive exercise had been on-going reflecting:

- ◆ Consideration of the Cost Collection Exercise – Ipsos
- ◆ Mori Outcomes
- ◆ Reference to guidance – areas for consideration:
- ◆ Seasonality
- ◆ Inflation
- ◆ Re-investment
- ◆ Work across the West Partnership (Regional Improvement Collaborative) Finance Group

In order to ensure active consultation and participation of funded providers an initial subgroup of funded providers was established however due to the holiday period as well as a recognition for the need to reflect all individual funded providers, area forums for all were held on 12 August. The next forum for consultation is scheduled for 7 September at the Funded Provider Meeting.

As Part of the National Standard is the commitment to paying the real living wage to those staff engaged in the delivery of the 1140 hours of ELC.

We have been informed that the announcement of the likely increase is expected by the end September 2022. This outcome will also be reflected in the on-going process.

In addition, we remain committed to providing the current additional services to funded providers in support them to provide the highest quality of experiences for our youngest children.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1. There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6. Employee implications

- 6.1. A range of training opportunities and support for employees is provided in para 4.3.

7. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

- 7.1. There are no direct implications arising from the recommendations in this update report.

8. Other implications

- 8.1. The Education Resources Risk Register did highlight that the delivery of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare was a potential risk in terms of any un-mitigating factors that may impact on the full implementation deadline. Covid19 was an unforeseen circumstance. The 1140 hours ELC has been fully implemented.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the revised implementation plan in due course and communication and engagement continues to take place with funded providers, other stakeholders and the trade unions.
- 9.2. Communication and engagement with parents and families continues so that all eligible children aged 2-5 years will receive 1140 hours per year of free Early Learning and Childcare.

Tony McDaid
Executive Director (Education Resources)

24 August 2022

Link(s) to Council Values/Priorities/Outcomes

Education and learning: inspiring learners, transforming learning, strengthening partnerships

Previous References

- ♦ Education Resources Committee - 16 March 2021

List of Background Papers

- ♦ Early Learning and Childcare (1140 hours) – implementation plan

Contact for Further Information

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

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Appendix 1

A Children's Consultation Event was held on Tuesday 17 May at which over 160, 3 and 4 year old children attended from across the Council.

The event was hosted by Tony McDaid, Executive Director of Education Resources and Stewart Nicolson, Head of Education where they met and invited the children to express their views on the quality of early learning and childcare, for example, on the things they liked best and how we could improve our provision for our youngest children.

All children attending the event were asked to complete a simple microsoft form prior to attending the event and 112 responses were received.

The outcomes from the questions asked were noted the following:

What makes you happy in your nursery?

The majority confirmed that they are happy when – they are playing with their friends, playing outside, singing songs, reading stories, dancing and at the funky forest

What makes your nursery the best?

All children stated that the toys are the best as they have loads of toys inside the nursery and also outside. They also shared that the staff are the best

What don't you like in your nursery?

The children shared that they don't like children drawing on the toys which makes them really sad, and they don't like it when other children are not kind to each other and not playing together.

What do you like most about playing outdoors in your nursery?

The children shared they like to play on rope swings, play tig with their friends, play on a slide, grow carrots, run fast but really like the water mud slide, the mud kitchen and also the water wall which is fabulous.

What would you like to change in your nursery?

Some children noted they wish to change where they have their lunch and possibly have it in a quiet area with a couch and others noted that the slide needs to change to become a water slide. There were also suggestions that the snack area could change into a café.

Why do you like your nursery staff?

Some examples from children said, I love the staff and I like this nursery so much. They like the staff especially those nice hair and also nice shoes but they especially like them as they give them good snacks like apples and oranges.

What is your favourite lunch at nursery?

The children provided a range of responses which included cheese sandwiches, pizza, pasta, baked potatoes, sausages and penne Bolognese.

What other type of food could we put on the nursery lunch menu?

All children responded that they like lots of food. They don't like the potatoes unless the staff mash them up for them. They prefer the menu with chicken korma curry, soup with some bread, Noodles – (you get noodles in chicken soup sometimes), mashed potato and cheese, macaroni cheese, lasagne, mince & mash, cottage pie, some children prefer chicken wraps (fajitas but not hot ones) chilli con carne, pasta but not the hard stuff, sometimes it's too chewy and hard.

If possible, they would like waffles and more chicken, and one child wanted Octopus to be added to the menu.

Parental views

253 Parents confirmed the following:

- ◆ 61% of respondents preferred a term time provision for their child
- ◆ 21% wishing 52-week provision and
- ◆ 18% favouring 40-week provision.

The majority of parents agreed with blended provision being available where parents choose this however no more than two ELC provision for their child to attend and an agreement of a minimum number of hours for each location to be agreed to meet the needs of the child and family.

90% of parents were able to access their first choice of provision for their child and the other 10% attended an alternative choice which they were satisfied with.

Overall, 98% of parents were highly satisfied with the provision their child attended and the other 2% noted their comments due to not achieving their first choice of provision.

All parents noted the most important factors to be considered were the quality of the learning their child received, the inclusive approach, the quality of the staff, the quality of the environment and how happy their child was with their friends.

All parents identified an improvement in their child's social skills and communication skills. They noted they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of 1140 hours and that overall, there was improved wellbeing /respite with the positive impact of having more time to themselves.

Funded Providers

17 Funded Providers responded and confirmed the following:

72% confirmed the most positive outcome from the 1140 hours as enhanced learning for the children with 14% noting making friends and the remaining 14% choosing building confidence

95% confirmed the benefits for children from the 1140 hours

All responses noted that flexibility and choice for parents is the most important factor in delivering the 1140 hours

Additional comments focused on financial benefits for parents, the need for a review of the sustainable rate and the benefits for children with the increased hours for their learning and development

Local Authority Staff:

84 Local Authority establishments responded with an additional 107 individual responses and the following outcomes were noted:

All staff confirmed the most important outcomes of the 1140 hours as opportunities for the children to learn through play, the children improving their communication skills and being able to socialise with other children, their increased independence and building resilience and confidence and making friends and having fun.

100% of staff responded that the children had benefited from the 1140 hours

In moving forward all staff confirmed that the focus requires to be on the quality of provision and improving the quality of learning experiences for young children, building positive relationships with parents/carers and more personal and professional learning opportunities.