



Report

Report to:	Education Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 May 2020
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Early Learning and Childcare (1140 hours) - Update
----------	---

1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ provide an update in light of current pandemic on the Scottish Government's decision to remove the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020.

2. Recommendation(s)

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

- (1) that the content of the report be noted; and
- (2) to note that a further update report will be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee.

3. Background

- 3.1. On Thursday, 30 March 2020, councils across Scotland were advised of the decision by the Scottish Government to amend legislation which will have the effect of removing the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare available to each eligible child from August 2020.
- 3.2. This decision was made jointly between the Scottish Government and COSLA, in recognition that due to the ongoing response to COVID-19, planned works to deliver the expansion such as construction, recruitment and induction of staff, is severely restricted and cannot go ahead, with the priority for councils being to provide critical childcare for those who need it most.
- 3.3. This decision was also highlighted in a communication issued on 31 March 2020 jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA which recognised that councils like ours had clear plans in place to deliver 1140 hours early learning and childcare but these required to be put on hold in the meantime. Further details can be found on the Scottish Government website.
- 3.4. This holding position does not change the policy intent of the Scottish Government to deliver on 1140 hours early learning and childcare when the coronavirus pandemic is over and we move into what will be an economic recovery period.

4. Implications of amendment to the legislation

Accommodation

- 4.1. As a consequence of the COVID-19 outbreak, all building work has halted for an indefinite period meaning that our plans to provide new and adapted accommodation to meet the demand for places across South Lanarkshire are on hold.
- 4.2. It is also worth noting that the Council's applications to the Care Inspectorate for the registration for the new nurseries and extended nurseries have been submitted and the Council liaises closely to ensure this work will continue at the appropriate time but more importantly take steps for any variations to existing nursery registrations that may now be required.

Funded providers

- 4.3. In taking forward the Council's plans to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, engagement and communication with private partner providers has been a core part of the implementation strategy. This will continue to be the case.
- 4.4. Over the last 6 months private partners were invited and encouraged to complete the necessary initial procurement activity and 98 funded providers were successful in being added to the Procured Service Agreement. The second phase which involves 4 submissions is underway and will conclude by June 2020.
- 4.5. In recognition of the impact the coronavirus has on the business community of who funded nurseries are part, the Council has continued support by paying them the full amount of their existing contracts until the end of June 2020, including most who have temporarily closed.
- 4.6. This will be kept under review in light of the dynamic nature of the pandemic and on the current impact this is having on delivery of early learning and childcare where all schools and educational settings are closed, except those Hubs providing emergency childcare for critical keyworkers.

Recruitment and training

- 4.7. Whilst there is a pause on recruitment and training as a result of the pandemic it is worth noting that very good progress had been made by the council in terms of recruiting employees in advance of the August 2020 start date for the implementation of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare.
- 4.8. A phased recruitment plan was underway prior to the pandemic with adverts placed and applications received for Head and Depute posts, team leaders and early years support workers.
- 4.9. Recruitment was underway prior to the 'lockdown' period to enable the Council to train and update the skills of new and existing employees prior to August 2020. Steps are currently being taken to continue with the recruitment of staff on a phased basis using on-line personnel systems.
- 4.10. 74 modern apprenticeships are in place in addition to the 12 taken on last year with plans to recruit a further 12 this year.

Admissions, communication and engagement with parents/families

- 4.11. Communication and engagement with parents and families on the implications of the change to the legislation with regards to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare and the contingencies being put in place when the pandemic is over as follows:-

- ◆ the admissions process for applications received by the end of February which is the closing date is complete. Parents will be informed by letter in late May as indicated in prior communication with families.
- ◆ families will know the nursery and level of provision their child will receive from August 2020;
- ◆ the admissions process centres on 0-5 year olds and children whose parents have decided to defer their entry to primary school;
- ◆ the letters for parents, as well as other communications, will let parents know that there is a temporary national hold on the introduction of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. However the council will continue to implement a phased approach to delivering these hours for all eligible children.

Emergency Childcare Hubs

- 4.12. The Council as a first responder in this national health emergency has established 6 Early Years and 20 school Hubs to provide childcare to health and care workers, the emergency services and others identified by the Scottish Government as critical category 1 workers (including all staff and facilities staff in educational settings).
- 4.13. The six early years establishments identified as Hubs include, Calderside Nursery, the Early Learning Unit, Glenburgh Nursery, Halfmerke Community Nursery, Larkhall Children's Centre and the Rigsides Rural Community Nursery. All of the Hubs continue to provide emergency childcare provision.

5. Next steps

- 5.1. The Council will continue to work in partnership with the Scottish Government, COSLA, the Care Commission and private partners to review and assess the impact the current pandemic is having on all schools and educational settings where the key priority is the health and wellbeing of children, young people, staff and communities.
- 5.2. The Council is currently re-assessing its implementation plan for the delivery of 1140 hours early learning and childcare both in terms of short, medium and long term implications and provide an update on the implementation plan which will:-
- ◆ confirm the allocation of ELC places for sessions 2020/2021
 - ◆ confirm the allocation for funded providers for session 2020/2021
 - ◆ outline the new build nursery and adaptations to existing nursery accommodation
 - ◆ outline future workforce recruitment
 - ◆ outline communication and engagement with parents and families
- 5.3. The implementation timeline is being reviewed on an ongoing basis and a further report will be presented to a future meeting of the committee. The Council remains committed to the policy intent to deliver the expansion of 1140 hours as soon as is practicable.

6. Employee implications

- 6.1. The employee implications in term of recruitment and training will be assessed by Education Resources and Corporate Personnel. Recruitment will resume as soon as is practicable and the timeline adjusted to ensure that centres are adequately staffed in preparation for full implementation of 1140 hours.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1. The cost associated with regards to the delivery of the 1140 hours expansion programme can be met from within existing resources and will be kept under review given the impact on the capital projects due to the current health pandemic.

8. Climate Change, Sustainability and Environmental Implications

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

9. Other implications

- 9.1. 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 August 2020 deadline. Clearly Covid19 was an unforeseen circumstance.

10. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 10.1. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the revised implementation plan in due course and communication and engagement and will take place as described in para 4.13.

Tony McDaid

Executive Director (Education Resources)

27 April 2020

Link(s) to Council Values/Ambitions/Objectives

- ◆ Improve achievement, raise educational attainment and support lifelong learning
- ◆ Protect vulnerable children, young people and adults
- ◆ Work with communities and partners to promote high quality, thriving and sustainable communities

Previous References

- ◆ Education Resources Committee – 6 August 2019

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:-

Stewart Nicolson, Head of Education (Senior Phase)

Ext: 4475 (Tel: 01698 454475)

E-mail: stewart.nicolson@southlanarkshire.gov.uk