

**The Highland Council**  
**ADULT & CHILDREN SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**21 August 2013**

Agenda Item	19.
Report No	ACS/79/13

**Additional Hours Early Learning and Childcare**

**Report by Director of Education, Culture & Sport and  
Director of Health & Social Care**

**Summary**

The report outlines the broad approach being taken in order to meet the requirement to deliver 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare across Highland by August 2014.

**1. Background**

- 1.1 The Children and Young People Bill was published on 18 April 2013. By August 2014, local authorities will be required to increase provision from the 475 hours of funded pre-school education currently delivered, to 600 hours of free early learning and childcare. The increased provision is also to be extended to two year olds who are, or have been, looked after by the local authority.
- 1.2 The Highland Council has committed to implementation of the measure. The Highland Council has also committed to continued support for wraparound care, and to work with communities to identify innovative and affordable solutions to nursery provision, including co-operative provision.
- 1.3 Due to the short timescale for initial implementation, the Scottish Government has acknowledged that it is not going to be possible to expand choice and flexibility of provision from August 2014. However in subsequent years, additional flexibility will be introduced in consultation with parents and within the overall resources made available by Government.
- 1.4 Local authorities have the flexibility to tailor future delivery of to meet local needs, incorporating the views of parents. There is no expectation that councils will have to put in place a set range of delivery models.

**2. Current Position in Highland**

- 2.1 In April 2013 there were approximately 5,400 eligible three and four year olds in Highland receiving funded pre-school education.
- 2.2 The provision is made through local authority Nurseries and Partner Centres in the private and voluntary sectors. Of the 183 primary schools in Highland, 135

have local authority run Nurseries. In addition, there are 73 Partner Centres commissioned to provide funded pre-school education. Of these, 25 provide a full day care service.

- 2.3 A comprehensive review of the delivery of Early Education is currently under way. The review will cover all aspects of delivery of early education including Nursery staffing structures, principal teachers, management structures, rationalisation of provision and central support. However to ensure that the 600 hour provision is fully in place by August 2014, the main focus over the next twelve months will be the implementation of a plan for delivery these additional hours. Any other changes or recommendations emerging from the Early Education Review will be brought to Committee in stages, with a view to full implementation by August 2015.

### **3. Update**

- 3.1 As there is already full provision of 475 hours of funded pre-school education across Highland, the intention is to explore the practicalities of increasing the existing provision to 600 hours through the existing local authority nurseries and partner centres, with minimal disruption to provision.
- 3.2 A programme of consultation meetings has been arranged with those Partner Centres currently operating on a sessional basis. Partner Centre Managers will be asked to consider if they have the capacity and/or are willing to undertake the increase in provision. The consultation will be complete by mid-September.
- 3.3 Partner Centres providing day care already have the capacity to deliver additional hours, and therefore negotiation with them will centre around the funding for the extended hours. There has however been no information to date on how the funding will be distributed amongst local authorities, and meetings with day care providers will be delayed until there is further information.
- 3.4 Various models of delivery for local authority nurseries are currently being scoped and considered. In Highland, there are approximately 76 primaries operating one session of pre-school education per day. It should therefore be relatively straightforward to extend the session from 2 hours 30 minutes per day, to 3 hours 10 minutes per day, to satisfy the 600 hour entitlement in term time. In small rural schools however, due to the low numbers involved, there is also an opportunity to consider Early Level classes which would include children from Nursery 3 and 4 with Primary 1 children, staffed by a teacher and a nursery assistant. This option is to be piloted in Cannich Bridge Primary in session 2013/2014.
- 3.5 Difficulties may arise in the larger primary schools operating two sessions per day, as it may not be practical to have 2 extended nursery sessions in one day when the length of the Primary pupils' day is only 5 hours. There are 59 primary schools operating two sessions per day. Options being considered include extending wraparound care in more Primary Schools, providing

childcare in holiday periods and changes to staffing structures.

- 3.6 These various issues in Nurseries and Partner Centres mean that, while in most cases we envisage that a smooth transition to new arrangements will be achieved, there will be some services where challenges are likely to arise that will need to be addressed through more detailed consultation.
- 3.7 Further, in the course of the Early Education Review it has been noted that the local authority staffing structure of Nursery Assistant and Nursery Auxiliary requires review in light of the changes in regulation by the Scottish Social Services Commission and the changes in responsibilities following the withdrawal of Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers in Highland two years ago. The review of staffing structures will therefore sit alongside the 600 hours implementation plan, but the short timescale may make it difficult to guarantee that new structures can be approved and implemented by August 2014.
- 3.8 As the numbers of looked after two year olds is relatively small, it is envisaged that their free entitlement to early learning and childcare will be determined on a case by case basis. It is likely that childminder and family centre provision would best meet the needs of these children and carers.

#### **4 Childcare and Family Resource Partnerships**

- 4.1 In 1998, the Scottish Executive published Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland, which at the time was one of a number of measures aimed at supporting families and in particular raising children out of poverty. It recognised that good quality childcare has benefits for children by promoting their development and learning, and benefits for parents, by enabling them to work. It was also recognised that although there was already a diverse range of childcare provision in Scotland, action was needed to fill gaps in the formal childcare sector which enables parents to take up employment or training. The overall aim of the Childcare Strategy was therefore to make high quality, accessible and affordable childcare available in every neighbourhood.
- 4.2 Childcare Partnerships were set up in every local authority area bringing together all those with an interest in childcare to promote its expansion in line with parental demand. In proposing that a Childcare Partnership be set up in each area, Ministers wanted a new approach to childcare. They believed the Childcare Strategy couldn't be achieved by central or local government alone. It needed the contribution of the private and voluntary sectors, parents, the community – indeed all those with a key interest in childcare locally.
- 4.3 In 2006, following consultation Highland moved away from having Childcare and Family Resource Partnerships in seven of the eight former Highland Council administrative areas, and followed the new Administrative areas, reducing the number of Partnerships by four.
- 4.4 Membership over the years has reduced, and it has proved difficult to sustain representation in relation to issues around employment (both in terms of

employing people in the sector and being aware of where childcare may be required), planning, business support, health and education .

- 4.5 The consultation on new integrated family teams has afforded an opportunity to look again the operation of the Partnerships. There is a clear view that we need strong local Partnerships to ensure the new teams are grounded in local communities. Local Partnerships would also provide a natural forum for discussion of implementation of the additional hours of early learning and childcare.
- 4.6 It is therefore intended that a discussion paper is prepared for District Partnerships, proposing that each of the new Districts supports a local Childcare and Family Resource Partnership. It is envisaged that these should involve the broad membership involved in the initial Partnerships from 1998.

## **5. Implications**

- 5.1 There will be resource implications in changes to staff contracts and in higher payments to Partner Centres to cover the extended hours. The Scottish Government has committed to fund the additional provision, but it is not yet clear what this will involve for Highland.
- 5.2 This is a measure that has been widely welcomed by families. Accordingly, there will have to be very careful local consultations in any communities that present implementation challenges.
- 5.3 There are no legal, equalities, or climate change implications.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee is asked to note the progress being made with regard to the implementation of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare by August 2014.

**Bill Alexander**  
**Director of Health & Social Care**

**Hugh Fraser**  
**Director of Education, Culture & Sport**

Date: 13 August 2013

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Background Papers: