

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

**13 November 2013**

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	ACS/102/13

**Implementation of 600 hours Early Learning and Childcare – progress update**

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

**Summary**

The report forms part of the regular reporting process to members, and seeks support to progress to the next stage of planning, in order to meet the requirement to deliver 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare across Highland from 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.
- 1.5 The report to Committee in August 2013 indicated that the initial approach in Highland would be to increase provision through the existing local authority nurseries and partner centres, with minimal disruption to services. It was also indicated that various models of delivery for local authority nurseries would have to be scoped and considered, and that a review of local authority nursery staffing structures would sit alongside the 600 hours implementation plan.

## **2. Progress to date**

- 2.1 Consultation meetings took place throughout August and September with all sessional voluntary partner centres. The centres were given a deadline of the end of October to confirm that they wished to be included in the scheme to extend provision to 600 hours. All have confirmed that they agree in principle, although this will be subject to further detail regarding the financial arrangements. Some centres will also have accommodation issues to resolve, as they share facilities with other community groups.
- 2.2 There have been no consultation meetings with private day care providers to date. As these centres are already providing extended care, the financial information is the most crucial element in taking those consultation meetings forward. These meetings will therefore be arranged for early January.
- 2.3 Proposed models of delivery for local authority centres have been scoped and consultation has begun with the trade unions. The models are now being shared with headteachers at training and area events throughout November, and a programme of “roadshow meetings” for nursery staff is in progress. This will be complete by 4 December.
- 2.4 The Early Education Review Group continues to focus on the immediate issue of 600 hours implementation. However, other aspects of early education are being viewed in the longer term, and will be brought to Committee in due course.
- 2.5 The Scottish Government indicated at the outset that it would fully fund the extension of provision. There has been recent confirmation of revenue funding for Highland of £2.375m in 20014/15, and a further £0.081m for looked after 2 year olds. There is also a £1.467m capital allocation.

## **3. Proposed Models**

- 3.1 All local authority models have been predicated on changing the staffing structure from the current two tier model of Nursery Assistant and Nursery Auxiliary, to a one tier structure of Early Years Practitioner (i.e. still two staff in a nursery of up to 20 children but both staff at Early Years Practitioner grade).
- 3.2 There are approximately 76 local authority nurseries only operating for one session per day. In these, the intention is to extend the session by 40 minutes to 3 hours 10 minutes per day. Both staff would work 23 hours per week – which would be an increase of 8 hours per week for the current auxiliary and 3.5 hours for the assistant. The delivery of the 600 hours would be achieved in school term time only.
- 3.3 There are a further 60 nurseries operating for two sessions per day. Simply extending the nursery sessions presents many issues and challenges for staff, parents and children. Two models have therefore been considered, which attempt to address these issues and offer alternative approaches.

3.4 Option 1 - Extend both sessions to 3 hours per day.

To achieve 600 hours, the sessions would have to run for two weeks longer than the school session, creating a range of logistical challenges in services across the authority. Staff contracts would require to be extended to 37 hours per week for both Early Years Practitioners – which would be an increase of 7 hours for the current Nursery Auxiliary, and 2 hours for the current Nursery Assistant. These contracts would also have to be extended for two extra weeks – possibly one week in April and one week in October.

3.5 Option 2 – Extend both sessions to 3 hours 10 minutes per day.

This is the same proposal as for the single session nursery above, which could be delivered in school term time. In order to achieve this, the nurseries would be staffed by two separate teams of staff (morning and afternoon) - all on 23 hours per week. This would mean that the timings suit parents and children better as they would fit with primary school timings, as there need only be a short (e.g. 10 minute break) between sessions, and the contact time for staff would be limited to one session per day.

3.6 Option 2 is currently the preferred model, as it appears to best meet the needs of parents and children in terms of timings, and of staff in terms of working conditions. It meets the needs of all parties in terms of a focussed, child centred approach, as each member of staff would only be key worker for a maximum of ten children.

3.7 It is recognised however, that there are significant concerns for existing Nursery Assistants, who have full time contracts of 35 hours and who now face a reduction to 23 hours.

3.8 It is therefore intended to identify other options for deploying these 12 hours for those staff who wish to retain their full time hours. Current considerations include: extension of wraparound care, formation of a relief staff bank in each Associated School Group (ASG), enhanced transition support into Primary 1 and specialist support to other nurseries within an ASG.

3.9 Following the events organised during November for headteachers and staff, there will be a better understanding of the concerns, opinions and preferences in taking these models forward.

3.10 The additional costs for Partner Centres have been based on the proportionate increase in provision that would be contracted from them. This equates to 265, which would be £0.343m. There may be other costs which arise from discussions with the sector.

## 4. Implications

### 4.1 Revenue Implications

The cost of implementing these changes in 2014/2015 is estimated as:-

#### Option 1

One tier system for all LA staff	0.803m
Enhanced hours	0.413m
26% increase in payments to Partners	<u>0.343m</u>
	1.549m

#### Option 2

One tier system for all LA staff	0.803m
Enhanced hours	0.898m
26% increase in payments to Partners	<u>0.343m</u>
	2.044m

4.2 Option 1 would also involve additional costs that have yet to be quantified, relating to having open buildings for an additional couple of weeks during the holidays, as well as line management issues when the school is on holiday but the nursery is not.

4.3 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, and to endorse implementation on the basis of Option 2 above.

Bill Alexander  
Director of Health & Social Care

Hugh Fraser  
Director of Education, Culture & Sport

Date: 5 November 2013

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