

**The Highland Council**  
**ADULT & CHILDREN SERVICES COMMITTEE**  
**15 January 2014**

Agenda Item	9.
Report No	ACS/08/14

**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 to members, and seeks to update members on the progress since the November committee meeting, 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.
- 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. In subsequent years, additional flexibility (and perhaps increased capacity) will be introduced in consultation with parents and as extra resources are made available by Government. It is therefore important that an effective, affordable and 'fit for purpose' platform is established across the authority in August 2014.

**2. Progress to date**

- 2.1 **Voluntary Partner centres** - The current sessional voluntary providers have all agreed in principle to be part of the 600 hours implementation. The financial arrangements are being discussed with CALA (Care and Learning Alliance) to devise a new funding structure. Any new structure will have to be flexible enough for the range of partners to deliver the 600 hours, whilst having a clearly defined level of funding. The figure given at paragraph 4.1 is therefore indicative.
- 2.2 **Private day care centres** – there have been no discussions with these providers to date. Meetings are currently being arranged with these providers

and will form part of the final report.

- 2.3 **Local Authority Centres** – The models of delivery set out in the report to the November Committee have been shared with nursery staff and headteachers. Of the 350 nursery staff employed by Highland Council, 220 attended at least one of the 26 roadshows which took place in November and early December.
- 2.4 At 19 roadshows, the response was positive, and supportive of option 2. A greater level of concern was indicated in 6 of the roadshows, but following discussion, there was an understanding that changes will be necessary to achieve the required increased hours.
- 2.5 Four possible alternative models were suggested by individual centres, for double session nurseries. These will be considered further by the Early Years Review Group and with those centres, and an analysis will be provided to Committee in February. The initial analysis however, is that none of these models provides the necessary affordable platform for expansion across the authority.
- 2.6 In one roadshow, staff indicated their current working practices remained their favoured option and that they would prefer to “opt out” of a Highland-wide approach.
- 2.7 There have been presentations at 4 Headteacher training events, and at 7 Area Headteacher Meetings. Some Headteachers attended at least two presentations and some also accompanied their staff to the roadshows. This has meant that there have been good opportunities to develop and discuss issues that staff have had time to consider since their initial introduction to the proposed models.
- 2.8 The Project Team have also endeavoured to respond to any requests for further discussion or clarity, by providing visits to individual centres following the initial round of roadshows.
- 2.9 In the course of the roadshows there were four alternative models for double session nurseries submitted by individual centres. These will be considered further by the Early Years Review Group and with the individual centres in the New Year.
- 2.10 So far, the general consensus is that Option 2 appears to best meet the needs of parents, children and staff whilst building capacity for the future in terms of responding to parental needs. It is though acknowledged that further consultation with staff, including headteachers, is required before a recommendation is made.
- 2.11 The next stage of implementation therefore, is for members of the Project Team to visit each local authority double session nursery to meet with the Headteacher and nursery staff on site, to consider the detailed practicalities of the extended sessions. These visits will also include those nurseries where English and Gaelic Medium nurseries share the same room. The main topics

for discussion will be the proposed timings, any accommodation issues or changes to accommodation that may assist in the delivery of extended sessions, and the changeover periods between sessions. These visits will be complete by the end of January.

### **3. Staffing issues relating to the proposed models**

- 3.1 **Staffing Structure** - Both 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 the Nursery Assistant grade). The response to this proposal was overwhelmingly positive and fully supported by staff.
- 3.2 **Single Session Nurseries** - The majority of local authority nurseries are single session, and there is only one model proposed for those i.e. that the sessions as they are delivered at present be extended by 40 minutes per day, within the current school terms. The staffing arrangements proposed to implement this extension and the move to a one tier staffing structure would involve changing the existing 15 hours of Nursery Auxiliary and 19.5 hours of Nursery Assistant to two Early Years Practitioner posts of 23 hours each. The initial consultation regarding this was encouraging, and seen as a very positive move for the staff and for early years provision as a whole.
- 3.3 **Double Session Nurseries** - There are 59 nurseries operating two sessions per day, and these are where the extended hours present the greater issues and challenges for staff, parents and children. The two models were presented to staff and headteachers at the consultation events and four others have been received since those events. Consideration of all options in consultation with staff in these centres needs to continue in order that the most appropriate model is determined for the future.
- 3.4 Option 1: Extend both sessions to 3 hours per day in term time plus 2 additional weeks staffed by one full-time team of staff.
- 3.5 The main advantage of this model, is that it best reflects existing staff contracts, whilst still trying to address the workload issues that had been highlighted by staff. Currently, the contact time for staff in double session nurseries is 5 hours per day (2 sessions at 2.5 hours). Although moving to a one tier staffing structure would address some of the workload issues, it wouldn't address the increased contact time that the extension to the nursery session will bring.
- 3.6 This option is based on maximum sessions of 3 hours (i.e. 30 hours per week), with 7 hours planning time for staff per week. This necessitates that two weeks are offered outwith normal term time, in order to achieve 600 hours over the year (and while the cost implications for this have been estimated at £0.1m, they could be considerably more). It should also be noted that contact time for a teacher is limited to 22.5 hours per week in mainstream school.

- 3.7 Option 2 Model: Extend morning and afternoon sessions to 3 hours 10 minutes, each staffed by a dedicated team.

The advantages of this model, are that it achieves delivery of the 600 hours across the year within term time, and involves better start and finish times for parents, as well as reduced workload pressure for staff. It also provides a better platform for greater flexibility within the workforce, and increased capacity in the future. The staffing structure is the same as for the single session nursery, simply duplicated to provide two sessions in the day.

- 3.8 One of the issues raised about option 2, is the requirement for staff to work for 23 hours. As indicated previously to Committee however, Nursery Assistants on 35 hour contracts will be protected, and the additional 12 contractual hours will be retained. Several options for this were presented to staff, and three were received positively:

- the extension of wrap around care,
- transition support into P1
- specialist support for identified children.

The option related to permanent relief cover was not as well received.

- 3.9 Discussion is now commencing with each Headteacher and each of the 53 members of staff, to identify the preferred option in each case. The conservation of these hours would cease if the postholder was to move to a higher grade post, or opt to reduce their hours through flexible working.

- 3.10 Nursery Auxiliaries will also have their current overall level of salary protected as they move to the higher graded post.

#### **4. Implications**

- 4.1 The Scottish Government has confirmed the funding for the Early Learning and Childcare element of the Children and Young People Bill for the next 5 years. The revenue allocation for Highland in 2014/15 is £2.375m, with an additional £81K for looked after 2 year olds. There is also a capital amount of £1.467m each year of the next 3 years.

- 4.2 The projected cost of implementing these changes in 2014/2015 for the models above is:

<b><u>600 Hours delivery incorporating Option 1</u></b>	
<b>Estimated costs for weeks outwith term time</b>	£100,000
<b>Single Session Nurseries</b>	
One tier staffing structure and enhanced hours	£ 362,380
<b>Double Session Nurseries</b>	
One tier staffing structure and enhanced hours	£ 634,320
<b>Partner centre Payments</b>	
New payment structure (still to be presented and agreed)	£ 400,000
<b>Project management</b>	£ 25,000
<b>Total projected costs</b>	<b>£1,521,700</b>

**600 Hours delivery incorporating Option 2**

**Single Session Nurseries**

One tier staffing structure and enhanced hours £ 362,380

**Double session Nurseries**

One tier staffing structure and enhanced hours £1,109,520

Provision for 12 hours additional deployment £ 383,370

**Partner centre Payments**

New payment structure (still to be presented and agreed) £ 400,000

Project management £ 25,000

**Total projected costs £2,280,270**

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 delivery of 600 hours Early Learning and Childcare by August 2014, and that a recommendation for implementation will be presented in February.

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Date: 30 December 2013

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