

## The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee - 21 May 2014

|             |           |
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| Agenda Item | 19.       |
| Report No   | ECA/16/14 |

### Implementation of 600 hours Early Learning and Childcare – update on progress

#### Report by Director of Care and Learning

##### Summary

The report is part of the regular reporting on progress with the implementation plan for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, and seeks that members homologate the funding settlement for partner providers.

## 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.
- 1.4 There have been reports presented to all Adult and Children's Services Committees since August 2013, relating to the progress and implementation plans for the delivery of the 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare. The February Committee gave the approval to progress the arrangements to implement a new local authority nursery staffing structure. This report provides an update on the progress of those arrangements and on all other ongoing aspects of the Implementation Plan (**Appendix 1**).

## 2. Implementation of New Local Authority Staffing Structure

- 2.1 Following the approval at Committee on 19 February 2014, 1:1 consultation meetings with all full-time nursery staff were carried out throughout Highland. Meetings were also offered to part-time staff at that time, and by the end of March, just over 250 of the total staff of 350 had been involved in individual meetings. Although there are still some issues to resolve for a small number of staff, the majority remain positive about the changes, and acknowledge that they will address many long standing issues, as well as provide a platform to deliver Early Learning and Childcare for the future.

- 2.2 After collating the information on the number of staff who would automatically transfer to the new post of Early Years Practitioner, and also allowing staff to request transfers to locations that may better suit their own travel and domestic arrangements, the number and location of remaining vacancies was determined, and as a result an advert was released on 22 April for 140 new posts. The response has been overwhelming, with in excess of 900 applicants across Highland. Just over half of the applicants have, or will have completed, their childcare qualification by the summer.
- 2.3 The posts were advertised for each Associated School Group, and there have been applications received for all ASGs. Interviews will be held locally by the end of May, and this should ensure that there is time to process all the necessary documentation and checks for new staff to be available to start in August 2014.
- 2.4 Training for Nursery Auxiliaries transferring to the new Early Years Practitioner post is already underway. Staff attend a compulsory one day course and then there is a suite of training that they can choose from to supplement their training, over May and June. The same training package will be rolled out again from August for the new recruits.
- 2.5 Workshop sessions are being held in June for those Nursery Assistants who will have additional hours, and their headteachers, in order that discussion and agreement on the deployment of the additional hours can be agreed. Other Education personnel and representatives from outside agencies will also attend the sessions in order to add to advise and support the workshops. This will also be a useful platform for recruiting volunteers for the Working Group to consider the development of the Senior Early Years Practitioner post, as these staff members are the ones who are at present working in the large nurseries.
- 2.6 Other models of delivery continue to be considered. The Early Level class pilot has been very successful in Cannich and will continue in a slightly amended form next session too. A further pilot is also being considered in the Lochaber area.

### **3. Nursery Enrolment and Clearing**

- 3.1 Enrolment for session 2014/15 was delayed from the normal timing in order to allow the new arrangements and timings to be firmed up before inviting parents to enrol. The enrolment process has on the whole gone smoothly. However, with the increasing rolls in some areas of Inverness, there has been pressure in some schools where demand has significantly exceeded the number of places available.
- 3.2 For those nurseries which were oversubscribed, the nursery clearing process was implemented, whereby all applications to enrol were scrutinised to ensure that those from the catchment got priority for places in line with the admissions policy and guidance that has been in place for some years. This has meant that in two schools in the Inverness area, it has not been possible to allocate places for next session to a small number of children who attended a local authority nursery outwith their own catchment this session.
- 3.3 There are places for all 4 year olds to attend their catchment nurseries. However, there are some nurseries where the three year olds from the catchment have been allocated places elsewhere for 2014/15, on the understanding that they are guaranteed places in their catchment nursery for 2015/16.

#### **4. Expansion of Wraparound Care**

- 4.1 In the course of the visits to schools in January, those nurseries with 40 plus pupils and available accommodation to host wraparound care were identified. There were twelve schools in that category, and surveys were issued to parents at enrolment time to see if there was interest in using that type of service.
- 4.2 The wraparound care service that is being introduced is for nursery children only, and is only being provided up until 3pm - i.e. it will match the school day. As a result of the survey findings, the new service will be introduced in 8 locations: five in Inverness (Kinmylies, Smithton, Balloch, Lochardil and Central) and three others (Tain, Hilton of Cadboll and South Lodge Invergordon).

#### **5. Partner Centre Funding**

- 5.1 A review of the commissioning rates for partner providers was undertaken to address the increase to 600 hours. It has been some time since the rates were last reviewed, and account had to be taken of the need for more than an inflationary increase.
- 5.2 The discussions with representatives from the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) centred around what was a reasonable fee for a number of elements: staff salaries, rent, insurance, resources, care commission fees, consumables and (for the first time) snacks. The agreement reached will mean that partner providers will receive an uplift in their commissioning rates from August 2014 that are a little higher than the percentage increase in the hours to be delivered. The rates have been arrived at after discussion with the CALA, and build in a reasonable enhancement to allow for higher staff salaries and to fund the provision of snacks. This will go a little way to bridging the gap between partner and local authority provision. The rates are affordable within the overall allocation as reported to Committee in February.
- 5.3 Partner centres are paid either on a "Block Grant" or a per capita basis. Block grants are paid at two levels and only to voluntary sector providers. For 2014/15, the block grant parameters will be Block Grant 1 for centres with fewer than 10 children; and Block Grant 2 for 11 to 20 children (in session 2013/14 this was for 11 to 16).
- 5.4 In 2015, once there is confirmation of the levels of funding from Scottish Government, further review of the commissioning rates is likely to be required to further bridge the gap between the local authority and partner funding, to address issues such as pay scales and the costs associated with employing SSSC registered Managers.
- 5.5 As partner providers required to know the level of funding that would be available, in order that they could take forward their plans for the increased provision, following consultation with the Chair of the Committee, the Director of Care and Learning made the decision to confirm these rates to partner centres. Members are therefore asked to homologate these rates.

#### **6. Provision for Eligible Two Year Olds**

- 6.1 When the requirements of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 were first set out, the provision for eligible two year olds was limited to those who were looked after. The new legislation was enhanced during its progress through

Parliament, to extend the eligibility criteria to include two year olds from families eligible for the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Jobseeker's Allowance(income based)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
- Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance
- Pension credit

6.2 We are now working to seek to make sure that capacity is available to meet this additional demand. The Family Centre in Inverness is identified as the main location that is already up and running for August 2014. In preparation for this, the existing provision for 3 and 4 year olds has been moved to Merkinch Primary School for August by establishing an additional nursery room in the infant wing of the school.

6.3 Discussions are at an early stage about where further facilities can be established across Highland. The main challenge is in meeting the demand as locally as possible, when it is not known where exactly the take up of this provision might be. In many areas, it is conceivable that a school or partner centre that is operating for less than ten 3 and 4 year olds could also accommodate all of the 2 year olds in that community.

## **7 Implications**

7.1 As previously indicated, the implementation of 600 hours early learning and childcare is affordable within the additional funding provided by the Scottish Government in 2014/15. Information has still to be received regarding funding for additional flexibility in future years.

7.2 The Council will also continue to take all opportunities to enhance local Gaelic-medium provision and meet demand.

7.3 There are no legal, equalities or climate change/carbon clever implications.

## **8. Recommendation**

8.1 The Committee is asked to:-

- Note the progress to date with the Implementation Plan for the delivery of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare
- Homologate the decision of the Director of Care and Learning to increase in commissioning rates for Partner Centre providers

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 12 May 2014

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## Implementation Plan for delivery of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare

| Date                 | Partner Centres   | LA Nurseries   | Parents  |
|----------------------|---|--|--|
| <b>February 2014</b> | Commence discussion with CALA and individual private centres regarding funding available.                                   | 1:1 meetings for all staff in double session nurseries to outline their contract variations and arrangements.  |  |
|                      |   | Accommodation issues highlighted and site visits carried out. Works agreed re improvements in terms of access, toilets, room layout etc. Identify schools that may be suitable for wraparound care provision.  |  |
| <b>March 2014</b>    | Enrolment information sent out  | Enrolment information sent out.<br><br>Wrap surveys issued in identified schools (14)  | Brief details provided of change in entitlement – i.e. longer sessions – as part of enrolment information placed in newspapers alongside the enrolment advertisements and placed on the HC website.<br><br>Survey of demand for wraparound care in 14 schools. |
| <b>April 2014</b>    | Enrolment information collated.<br>Nursery clearing carried out.<br><br>Funding levels agreed and forwarded to all Partners | Enrolment information collated.<br>Nursery clearing carried out.<br>Staffing requirements worked out.<br>Vacancies advertised (140 EYPs)   | Confirmation of nursery places and arrangements  |
| <b>May 2014</b>      |   | Ongoing discussion with unions re individual cases.<br><br>Interviews and appointment of all staff required for August.<br><br>Training of existing staff who will upgrade.<br><br>Workshop Session for staff with additional hours and their headteachers.<br><br>Identify location/provision for 2 year olds where possible. | Meetings with staff and parents to discuss wrap around Childcare in the 8 identified schools   |

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| <b>June 2014</b>              | Partner Centre Agreements issued | Processing of PVGs etc.<br>Confirmation of appointments<br>Programme of refurbishments and alterations underway  | Induction Visits and information sharing with parents.<br><br>Contact parents of eligible 2 year olds to determine possible provision. |
| <b>July 2014</b>              |                                  | Ongoing administration related to recruitment and letters of appointment   |  |
| <b>August 2014</b>            |                                  | Contract variations issued<br><br>New hours implemented  |  |
| <b>September 2014 onwards</b> |                                  | Further review of arrangements<br><br>Development of Senior EYP post for large nurseries.<br><br>Ongoing review of other aspects of Early Learning and Childcare provision | Consultation with parents regarding the changes implemented from August and future provision required.                                 |