

Agenda Item	22
Report No	ECAS 39/14

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.

1. Background

- 1.1 The requirement arising from the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 for local authorities to increase provision to 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare to all eligible 3 and 4 year olds, and to 2 year olds who are looked after or subject to a kinship care order or with a parent appointed guardian is now in place. There has been a further amendment to extend provision to 2 year olds from households in receipt of certain out of work benefits. This amendment will come into force on 31 October 2014. Provision will be further extended from August 2015 to include those 2 year olds eligible through free school meal entitlement.
- 1.2 The Highland Council has committed to implementation of these measures. 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. This report provides an update on the progress of the arrangements to date and more specifically sets out the plan for taking consultation with parents forward and the introduction of the new provision for 2 year olds.

2. Provision of 600 Hours of Early Learning and Childcare from August 2014

- 2.1 The arrangements are in place in both school nurseries and partner centres to ensure that all 3 and 4 year olds will have access to 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare per year from August 2014.
- 2.2 The alterations to buildings and refurbishment works are on schedule with some projects set aside until next summer in order that a more comprehensive review of facilities across an ASG can be taken into account before taking works forward.

- 2.3 The provision for two year olds from workless households is also to be in place this session. However, the statutory duty will not come into force until 31 October 2014. Any requests from eligible households for these places will however be dealt with as they present themselves from August onwards. Details of the expansion plans are in section 5 below.

3 Implementation of New Local Authority Staffing Structure

- 3.1 The recruitment process for the new Early Years Practitioner posts started in April and interviews were complete by the end of May. In total there were 131 new employees recruited. In the majority of locations, due to the high number of applications submitted, only qualified staff were invited to interview. Accordingly, only 62 of the new Early Years Practitioner Workforce of 486 (13%) are unqualified.
- 3.2 Of the existing 350 staff, 23 opted to transfer to nurseries nearer their homes, and others took the opportunity to reduce the number of days they work. There have been subsequent adverts for these “gaps” in staff teams, and interviews were held in most cases in the week before the start of the session.
- 3.3 Training for Nursery Auxiliaries transferring to the new Early Years Practitioner post was well received, and the same training package will be rolled out again from August for the new recruits.
- 3.4 Workshop sessions were held in June for Nursery Assistants and their headteachers, in order that discussion and agreement on the deployment of the additional hours could be reached. The sessions were well attended and very positive and generated new and creative approaches to their deployment and to the benefits to be gained from the additional input. An ongoing evaluation of the various models will be carried out throughout the session.
- 3.5 Over session 2014/15, the focus will be to further develop the supervisory structure in larger facilities and to create a robust relief bank of staff in each ASG, with staff who are registered with SSSC and therefore either qualified or working towards their qualifications. This will ensure that we have yet again, built capacity in the workforce to address any further expansion in Early Learning and Childcare and to address the inevitable short term vacancies which will occur now that we have a larger, and younger, workforce in Early Years.
- 3.6 Discussions are also underway to investigate if it will be possible to introduce Modern Apprenticeships in Childcare, particularly in rural areas.

4. Expansion of Wraparound Care

- 4.1 As previously reported, some facilities have been identified as being suitable for providing wraparound childcare for nursery age children to match the school day i.e. 9am – 3pm. The Primary schools offering this new service are: Central, Muirtown, Kinmylies, Smithton and Lochardil (South Area); and also Tain, Hilton of Cadboll and South Lodge, Invergordon (Mid Area).
- 4.2 These new models again provide an opportunity to introduce new staff models and services that can be tried and tested before any further expansion is mandatory. Their introduction also provides opportunities to consult with parents on their childcare requirements and how best to tailor services to meet their needs.

4.3 One of the main limiting factors in expanding early learning and childcare in Highland is the availability, and suitability, of accommodation. The Estates Team and the Early Years Team will therefore continue to work closely in order that the benefit from the capital funding for the expansion is maximised, by using it alongside other available capital funding streams.

5 Provision for Eligible Two Year Olds

5.1 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 or subject to kinship care order or those who had a parent appointed guardian. The new legislation was enhanced during its progress through Parliament, to extend the eligibility criteria from August 2014 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

5.2 In Highland, it is estimated that there are approximately 430 two year olds in that category, and the assumption is that around 70% of the total will choose to take up this entitlement. That means that we expect to provide places for approximately 300 two year olds in session 2014/15.

5.3 Eligibility is to be extended still further from August 2015, to include two year olds from families who meet free school meal entitlement criteria. This will bring the total of eligible children up to approximately 27% of two year olds. On the same assumptions, we would expect to provide for approximately 540 two year olds in 2015/16.

5.4 The most current data on the number of eligible two year olds by Multi-Member Ward is at **Appendix 1**. Our approach has been to seek to ensure that in areas of highest incidence of workless families, we investigate the establishment of Family Centre facilities. This would ensure that support for families in these locations could be enhanced alongside the delivery of Early Learning and Childcare for two year olds. At this time, we are looking for suitable accommodation in Wick, Alness, Invergordon, Dingwall, Skye, Nairn, Grantown and Fort William, as well as developing the Family Centre at Merkinch and identifying other areas in Inverness such as Hilton, Dalneigh and Culloden.

5.5 In the meantime, we have also written to all 317 registered childminders in Highland, asking if they would be interested in working in partnership with us to make provision for two year olds in 2014/15. To date, there have been 103 confirming that they will work with us, and only 29 have declined the offer.

5.6 It is proposed that once we identify how many places we would need to set aside in any area, we would offer an incentive to childminders to sign up to guarantee a place for each, and in return we would provide an initial payment of £500. If there are then places required, an hourly rate of £5 per hour would be paid for the places allocated.

5.7 This approach creates time and capacity to develop other strategies to address the growing demands in future years, whilst addressing the immediate pressure of

getting places on the ground right away.

- 5.8 Although at the time of writing there have only been 3 requests for places for eligible two year olds, the Scottish Government is to launch a national publicity campaign which should generate more interest in this new initiative. The continuing rollout of welfare reforms will also mean that there may be an increased need for parents in workless households to seek childcare.

6 Next steps

- 6.1 The updated Implementation Plan is at **Appendix 2**.
- 6.2 The priorities for the next year are: consultation with parents to ascertain if the provision in place is meeting their needs; and a review of all provision by ASG to ensure that the roll pressures and accommodation needs are identified for the medium to long term. It is the intention that in September and October, that the following ASGs are targeted – Millburn and Inverness Royal Academy in Inverness, and Wick and Ullapool. From these reviews, a clear plan for the future expansion will be identified.
- 6.3 In relation to provision for two year olds, developmental work around the establishment of family centres across Highland will also be progressed.

7 Implications

7.1 Resources

The Scottish Government is providing a substantial financial package to take forward the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. A summary of the Revenue and Capital Funding is at **Appendix 3**.

- 7.2 The funding for 3 and 4 year olds has been previously reported and has been fully incorporated into the expansion plans for the next 2 years. The funding for two year olds was recently announced and it will take somewhat longer to devise a full plan and fully investigate the cost implications and long term viability of new approaches. A further report will be brought to the November Committee. However, the initial approach of commissioning places with childminders alongside development of the existing Family Centre structure is affordable from the funding allocation of £523,484 in 2014/15.
- 7.3 The eligibility criteria for two year olds mirror those for the 3 and 4 year olds, so that only half of the year group get a full year's entitlement (i.e. those with birthdays between 1 March and 31 August). Those with birthdays from 1 September – 31 December become eligible from 1 January, and those with birthdays in January and February are eligible from 1 April.
- 7.4 If the projected uptake is for 300 places for 2 year olds and all places were commissioned from childminders, then this would be the most expensive option equating to: -
- | | | | |
|---|------------|---|------------------|
| Initial incentive payment | 300 x £500 | = | £ 150,000 |
| 2/3 (August – March) x 600hrs x £5 x 150 | | = | £ 300,000 |
| 1/3 (January – March) x 600hrs x £5 x 100 | | = | £ 100,000 |
| Total | | | £ 550,000 |
- 7.5 However, there will be at least 30 places available at Merkinch Family Centre, thus

reducing the estimated costs above by £55,000. This takes the initial proposals well under the funding figure for 2014/15.

7.6 This approach gives a good starting point. However, there are still further options to be explored in discussion with existing private and voluntary partners, regarding the part they can play in this expansion, and again a review community by community will be the best way to progress in making provision that meets local needs.

7.7 As previously stated, the capital funding has to be considered alongside other capital streams and the Early Years Team will continue to work with the Estates Team to identify future priorities.

7.8 Equalities Implications

The enhancement of early years services is a key national and local initiative to address health and social inequalities throughout life.

7.9 Legal and Risk Implications

These actions are necessary to fulfil new statutory responsibilities. While the level and pace of expansion involves significant risk, good progress has been made to ensure that necessary provision is in place, albeit given the scale and diversity of provision across Highland, it is inevitable that local challenges will arise.

7.10 Gaelic Medium Implications

In Highland, there are 18 local authority Gaelic medium nurseries, and only 2 of these are double session nurseries – Portree and Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Inbhir Nis. In the main therefore, the expansion actions are straight forward, in that most staff in Gaelic medium extended their contracts to accommodate the increase to 600 hours of provision. In Portree and Inverness an additional 2 staff have been recruited in each centre.

7.11 In Bonar Bridge however, we have been unable to recruit Gaelic medium staff, and as a result the Gaelic medium nursery which operated for 3 sessions per week will not be up and running in August. There is a fully staffed English medium nursery on site, and Gaelic nursery provision is available in Tain which is 16 miles away. The posts will be advertised again in the new session and discussions will continue with colleagues in the Gaelic Development Team to identify other possible routes to recruitment of Gaelic Medium staff in that area.

7.12 Rural Implications

In a very few rural settings, the provision is split between the local school and a larger centre offering day care. This option was introduced to address the limited social interaction available in a very small school, the difficulty in providing the extended hours due to staff commitments and accommodation limitations. This also provides an option for a wider social experience, which could be accessed for up to 6 hours in any one day.

7.13 Carbon Clever Implications

There are none.

Recommendation

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, and to agree to the proposal to pay an initial incentive payment to childminders who agree to provide 600 hours of childcare for any two year olds from families on Out of Work Benefits who are eligible in 2014/15.

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Date: 12 August 2014

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APPENDIX 1

Highland Council – Early learning and Childcare

Projected numbers of Eligible Two Year Olds 2014/2015

Multi-Member Ward	0 – 4 year olds in out of work benefit	Estimate of 2 yr olds in OOWB claimant families	Adj. for 70% uptake
North, West & Central Sutherland	40	8	6
Thurso	95	19	13
Wick	155	31	22
Landward Caithness	60	12	8
East Sutherland and Edderton	45	9	6
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	35	7	5
Cromarty Firth	265	53	37
Tain and Easter Ross	65	13	9
Dingwall and Seaforth	125	25	18
Black Isle	40	8	6
Eilean a Cheo	130	26	18
Caol and Mallaig	50	10	7
Aird and Loch Ness	70	14	10
Inverness West	120	24	17
Inverness Central	205	41	29
Inverness Ness-side	110	22	15
Inverness Millburn	60	12	8
Culloden and Ardersier	60	12	8
Nairn	105	21	15
Inverness South	100	20	14
Badenoch & Strathspey	75	15	11
Fort William and Ardnamurchan	145	28	20
Highland total	2155	430	301

APPENDIX 2

Implementation Plan for delivery of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare and expansion of provision to 2 year olds from families on Out of Work Benefits in session 14/15

Date	Partner Providers	LA Nurseries	Parents
June 2014	Partner Centre Agreements issued	Processing of PVGs etc. Confirmation of appointments Programme of refurbishments and alterations underway	Induction Visits and information sharing with parents.
July 2014	Contact Childminders to gauge their interest in participating in 2 year old provision.	Ongoing administration related to recruitment and letters of appointment. Identify possible locations for 2 year old provision where numbers are most significant.	Respond to any queries/requests from parents following national advertising campaign regarding free places for 2 year olds.
August 2014		Contract variations issued New hours implemented	Issue details of Parent Consultation Programme.
September 2014/October 2014	Agree funding for 2 year old provision – partner centres and childminders Develop:- New funding framework Parent/toddler groups to support expansion of 2 year old provision	Further review of arrangements Training for new recruits Develop: - Senior EYP post for large nurseries. Family Centres to incorporate provision for 2 year olds. Capital works plan for future expansion of 2 year old provision Registered Bank of relief staff for each ASG	Consultation with parents regarding the changes implemented from August and future provision required. ASGs identified for first round of consultation and review: - Wick High; Ullapool High Millburn Academy and Inverness Royal Academy,
November 2014/December 2014	Formalise funding arrangements and develop further plans for expansion 15/16	Workforce Development programme	Ongoing consultation – 3 more ASGs

APPENDIX 3

Highland Council – Early learning and Childcare

Summary of Scottish Government Funding

Revenue Funding	14/15	15/16	Total
3 & 4 year olds	2,375,000	3,592,876	5,967,876
LAC – 2 year olds	81,000	161,968	242,968
Additional 2 year olds	523,484	1,535,533	2,059,037
Workforce Development – Addl 2s	122,146		122,146
Totals	3,101,630	5,290,397	8,392,027

Capital Funding	14/15	15/16	Total
3 & 4 year olds	1,467,000	1,526,197	2,993,197
Additional 2 year olds	2,532,617	tba	2,532,617
Totals	3,999,617	1,526,197	5,525,814