

## The Highland Council

### Education, Children and Adult Services – 12 November 2014

Agenda Item	18.
Report No	ECAS 57/14

#### Early Learning and Childcare – update

#### Report by Director of Care and Learning

##### Summary

The report is part of the regular reporting on progress of the implementation plan for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires local authorities to increase provision of Early Learning and Childcare to 600 hours for 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. The further amendment to extend this provision to 2 year olds from households in receipt of certain out of work benefits came 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 acknowledged that it may not be possible to expand choice and flexibility of provision from August 2014. In subsequent years however, additional flexibility (and perhaps increased capacity) will be introduced in consultation with parents and as extra resources are made available by Government.
- 1.4 Over the past year there have been reports presented to each Committee, providing updates on the progress of implementation. Having met the target to deliver 600 hours of early learning and childcare from August 2014, and providing improved commissioning rates to partner providers, whilst also managing to change the local authority staffing structure to a more equitable single tier staffing structure, the next phase of implementation is ready to commence. This report provides information on the consultation process which is already underway, provides details of the current uptake of the 2 year old places and sets out a revised implementation plan (**Appendix 1**) of other areas of work which will further improve the delivery of early learning and childcare provision in Highland.
- 1.5 The updated implementation plan is attached.

#### 2. Consultation with Parents

- 2.1 As stated in the last report, the consultation with parents to gauge if the current arrangements for 600 hours of early learning and childcare best meet parental needs, will be carried out in each Associated School Group (ASG). The first four

ASGs identified were Ullapool, Wick, Millburn and Inverness Royal Academy.

- 2.2 Alongside the consultation with parents, a review of the school, and partner centre facilities and their capacities will be undertaken to ensure that each ASG is seen as a whole, and that there is a future-proofed plan for delivery of extended services for parents.
- 2.3 In Ullapool, there are English and Gaelic medium nurseries and the only childcare provision for pre-school children is through a small number of childminders. Many parents in the Ullapool area are involved in seasonal employment and as a consequence, we wished to explore the possibility of spreading the 600 hours across the summer holiday period. There has been a meeting with parents of nursery children and a questionnaire has been distributed to parents of children in the 0 – 4 age range. Parents have been asked to express their preference for 6 different models of provision – three that are term time, and three that cover the whole year including the summer holiday period.
- 2.4 In Wick, the issues are related to the need to rationalise the number of different providers in preparation for the completion of two new schools – Noss Primary in 2015/16 and Newton Park Primary in 2016/17. Initial meetings were held with the staff and committees of the partner centres, and then meetings were held with parents. All meetings to date have been very positive, and it is envisaged that there will be agreement on the early learning and childcare provision for Noss Primary by the end of January, in order that confirmation on the provision will be made in time for nursery enrolment in early February.
- 2.5 In the two Inverness ASGs, there is already significant childcare provision, both in local authority nurseries and in private daycare centres. A questionnaire has been distributed to parents of all nursery age children in the Millburn ASG to get a better understanding of the choices that parents are making in securing their nursery places. Once the returns have been analysed, a questionnaire tailored to the Inverness Royal Academy ASG provision will be issued. The main focus in these ASGs is the pressure on the school rolls and the capacity of the accommodation (as identified in a separate report to this meeting of the Committee).
- 2.6 The consultation and review in each of these four ASGs will be complete by the end of December. These ASGs were prioritised as it was recognised that there were significant, but quite different, issues to be addressed in each. By tackling these significant issues at the outset, it is anticipated that the outcomes will better inform the ongoing programme of consultations, and will equip us with approaches that have already been worked through. In the January – March term, the ASG priorities are Portree High School, Lochaber High School, Culloden Academy and Dingwall Academy

### **3. Provision for eligible Two Year Olds**

- 3.1 From 31 October 2014, two year olds from families eligible for the following benefits are also entitled to 600 hours of early learning and childcare:
- Income Support
  - Jobseeker's Allowance (income based)
  - Employment and Support Allowance (income based)
  - Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance
  - Pension Credit

- 3.2 In Highland, it is estimated that there are approximately 430 two year olds in these categories. To date however, it is evident that this entitlement is not widely known about, and therefore there are presently only 5 eligible two year olds receiving funded places. There have been enquiries from 20 others and these are being processed. Early indications are that most of these will take up their entitlement through private daycare centres that already make provision for 0 – 5 year olds. Only one childminder has been approached to date to be a partner provider for two year olds.
- 3.3 As more parents become aware of this new entitlement, the demand will grow. However it has been useful to have this initial period to form a clearer picture of how the provision for two year olds could develop across Highland. The consultation meetings highlighted above have been useful in promoting the new entitlement and the general view of parents (and staff) to date is that they would prefer to see provision for two year olds that is separate from school nurseries.
- 3.4 It is therefore envisaged that planning for future provision will focus on childminders, day care centres and Family Centres. Further work is required to identify possible sites for the establishment of new Family Centres in the larger communities across Highland.

#### **4. Ongoing Review and Development of 3 and 4 year old provision**

##### **4.1 Local authority staffing structure**

The new local authority staffing structure appears to be working well, with staff settling into their new roles. There are, as would be expected, some challenges in the larger teams around the new arrangements, and the newly formed Working Group has met twice this session and has agreed an action plan to address these issues. One/one meetings with staff working in the larger teams are to be set up as soon as possible in order to highlight any particular matters of concern.

- 4.2 The supervisory structure in larger facilities is being considered, but it has been agreed that it would be helpful to allow the new structure to settle, and further consideration will be given to possible future changes in supervisory models before any recommendations are made.

##### **4.3 Admissions Guidance**

Enrolment for nursery will take place in early February 2015. The current Admissions Guidance is to be reviewed to provide a more robust policy in light of the increasing roll pressures in many of our schools and nurseries. Catchment area residence will be the highest priority criterion in determining eligibility for a nursery place and more robust measures are to be put in place to validate the information provided by parents on their enrolment applications.

##### **4.4 Early Level Classes**

A successful pilot of an early level class (nursery and P1) was carried out throughout last session at Cannich Primary. An evaluation report of the pilot will be compiled and further consideration given to ascertain if this is a model that could be extended to meet the needs in rural communities throughout Highland.

#### **5. Implications**

- 5.1 **Resources:** The uptake of places for two year olds has been so low to date that a clear strategy has not been determined as various options are still being considered. The financial detail given in the last report stated that the cost of

making provision for eligible two year olds through childminders in 2014/15 would be the most expensive model of delivery, but was still affordable within the funding being provided by Scottish Government. As it is unlikely that childminders will be the main providers in 2014/15, the costs will be lower than that initial estimate.

- 5.2 Capital funding for two year olds (£2.532m) will be primarily targeted at establishing Family Centres.
- 5.3 There is also Workforce Development Funding for additional 2 year olds (£0.122m). As it is expected that the majority of places for eligible two year olds will be provided by partners in 2014/15, and the further expansion in 2015/16 will include more local authority places through Family Centres, the plans for utilising Workforce Development funding will involve working with all sectors in the development of a training strategy. This additional funding will augment the existing funding in relation Workforce Development already in place for Early Years initiatives.
- 5.4 **Equalities Implications:** The enhancement of early years services is a key national and local initiative to address health and social inequalities throughout life
- 5.5 **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.
- 5.6 **Gaelic Medium Implications:** All requests from parents of eligible two year olds will be considered and matched to the most suitable provider. Whereas every effort will be made to identify registered Gaelic speaking childminders, it may be that there will be none available in an area at this time. It is the intention to work with colleagues to support and encourage a drive to recruit Gaelic speaking childminders over the next two years.
- 5.7 **Rural Implications:** Due to the low numbers of children in some rural areas it would be beneficial to adopt a flexible approach to school and nursery arrangements from year to year, ensuring that the educational and social needs of the whole cohort of 2- 12 year olds in the community are addressed whilst providing stability for the school (and partner centre in some cases) in terms of staffing and class arrangements.
- 5.8 There are no **Climate Change/Carbon Clever** Implications

## 6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to note the progress to date with the Implementation Plan for the delivery of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 4 November 2014

Author: Marlene Stewart, Education Officer/  
Sam Brogan, Resource Manager (Early Years)

**Implementation Plan for delivery of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Partner Providers</b>	<b>LA Nurseries</b>	<b>Parents</b>
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	Workforce Development programme  Formalise funding arrangements and develop further plans for expansion 15/16	Workforce Development programme  1:1 meetings for staff in larger nurseries  Strategy for establishment of Family Centres  Recommend capital works priorities  HT Forums – update  Early Level Classes – develop proposal  Funding proposals for nursery snack	Ongoing consultation and review of ASGs above
January – March 2015	Nursery enrolment – new admission guidance  Analysis of consultation and review data  Continued expansion of two year old provision	Nursery enrolment – new admission guidance  Analysis of consultation and review data and development of new models of delivery in LA nurseries as required	Consultation with parents in the following ASGs:- Portree High Lochaber High Culloden Academy Nairn Academy  Nursery enrolment – new admission guidance

	Develop: Plans for a recruitment drive for childminders ahead of further expansion likely in 16/17		
April – June 2015	Continued expansion of two year old provision		Consultation in 4 more ASGs
July – August 2015		Staff Changes for any new models of delivery	
Session 15/16			Continued Consultation