

Agenda Item	17.
Report No	CLH 15/18

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 30 May 2018

Report Title: **Early Learning and Childcare Update**

Report By: Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with current information in relation to the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare. It includes detail of the settlement of funding for the multi-year allocation and progress in relation to the additional graduate and modern apprentice posts. It also provides an update on the trial sites.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note:
- i. the multi-year funding allocation
 - ii. the position on the additional graduate and modern apprentice posts
 - iii. the update on the trial sites

3. Introduction

- 3.1 As detailed in the previous report to this Committee, Scottish Ministers agreed a proposal made by COSLA leaders that funding for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare would be announced for one year only, covering 2018-19. This enabled work to continue with Scottish Government and local authority colleagues to refine the cost estimates for the expansion moving forward.
- 3.2 Due to the disparity between the allocations the government had initially set aside for the expansion and the far greater amount local authorities had requested, the Government invited local authorities to review their revenue and capital costs against updated and detailed planning guidance, and submit a revised Financial Template.
- 3.3 There were concerns, particularly from rural authorities including Highland, that if the standard distribution formula were used for allocating the funding, we might find ourselves in a position where we would have insufficient funds to deliver the full expansion, and that the quality and equity of provision would be impacted on.
- 3.4 Opportunities were utilised at meetings with Government officials and MSPs to raise these concerns, which were supported by other colleagues across Scotland

4. Multi-year settlement

- 4.1 Plans to deliver the expected expansion in hours to 1140 by 2020 are developing at a pace and our proposals are dependent on the funding from the Scottish Government. Local authorities submitted refreshed financial templates in March 2018, and the Scottish Government has confirmed that full funding would be provided, taking account of some necessary adjustments agreed with COSLA, and also making provision for inflation.
- 4.2 Local authorities have been awarded total recurring funding of £567m revenue per annum by 2021-22, and Highland's share of this is £26.469m
- 4.3 Capital allocations have also increased to £476m nationally, and the total capital allocation for Highland from 2017-18 to 2020-21 will be £32.590m.
- 4.4 This will enable Highland Council to move forward with expansion plans to ensure that children will benefit from a high quality early years' experience.

5. Additional Graduates and Modern Apprentices

- 5.1 The revenue funding allocation includes a commitment to provide additional graduates to offer direct support to children in nurseries in areas of deprivation, to address the poverty related attainment gap. Highland Council was allocated six posts and submitted a plan to the Government in September 2017 for the suggested placement of these graduates.
- 5.2 It has been confirmed by Government that the proposed sites for placements in Highland have been agreed. These are: Newton Park Primary in Wick, Lundavra in Fort William, Millbank Primary in Nairn, Merkinch Family Centre (which provides for eligible 2 year olds), Hilton Primary in Inverness and a shared post between Park and South Lodge Primary Schools in Invergordon.
- 5.3 Interviews are about to take place for these posts, which should allow appointments to

commence in August. Plans for a collaborative approach across the Northern Alliance will continue to shape and develop a support network for the sharing of good practice, ensuring the anticipated positive impact of these posts.

- 5.4 Highland will also have its first 4 early year's modern apprentices in post, ready to start in the new school term, and the Service is keen to expand this opportunity year on year to increase the workforce through this route. We are encouraging staff to become assessors for the scheme, which will allow us to increase capacity and resources, which is particularly important in remote and rural communities.

6. 1140 hours Trial Sites

- 6.1 As previously discussed with Members, the 2018-19 funding settlement did not allow us to achieve the incremental increase in hours across Highland that was originally set out in the Delivery Plan. Members agreed that in line with the Government's initial proposal, that those children who would benefit the most from the additional hours, should be prioritised.
- 6.2 Members agreed that this should include centres across the authority, where there is space and capacity, and where families were unlikely to seek to transfer children from existing provision, thereby making that less viable.
- 6.3 The level of funding in 2018/19 determined that around six centres could move to 1140 hours this year. Merkinch is the Highland Council community with the greatest number of children who experience disadvantage, and there are three providers across that community. Seeking a spread of provision across the Council area, and on the basis of the other criteria, Kyle, Obsdale and Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Loch Abar were identified.
- 6.4 There will be more centres moving to 1140 hours in August 2019, based on the level of funding next year, and further discussion with Members.
- 6.5 The learning from these trails will underpin how we move forward to full expansion and will include a focus on workforce, training, management allocation, additional central support and most importantly outcomes for children. We will use these sites to focus on exploring opportunities for more focussed parental engagement and nurture, and addressing child poverty through linking in with other care and learning improvement objectives and policy developments.

7. Implications

- 7.1 Resource
The Scottish Government has committed to fully fund the expansion, based on the re-submitted Financial Templates.
- 7.2 Legal
These actions will fulfil the Councils statutory responsibilities and ensure the principles of the Early Learning and Childcare expansion programme are met.
- 7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)
The proposed settings for delivery of the 1140 hours from 2018 will ensure children living with poverty, inequality or rural deprivation are prioritised.
- 7.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever
None

7.5 Risk

This remains a high profile and significant development programme, taking place within a short time scale, even with agreed funding.

7.6 Gaelic

There is agreed expansion of provision for Gaelic within one chosen trial site, and there will be further development of Gaelic medium provision

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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