

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	CLH 21/19

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Care, Learning and Housing

Date: 14 March 2019

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

Report By: Interim Director of Care and Learning

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report offers Members a summary of the current key national and local priority developments to support the continued expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC).

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Note the key updates and progress towards delivery of the programme across Highland.
 - ii. Note the risks around the capital expansion programme
 - iii. Agree the recommendations in relation to progress and funding for the project at Deshar Primary (section 8.3)

3. Introduction

- 3.1 Members will recognise from previous updates to this Committee that the expansion of ELC remains challenging due to the scale and pace of change required to ensure that every child in Highland is able to take up their entitlement.
- 3.2 However, it also offers opportunities to ensure the best outcomes for all children through high quality provision that nurtures and enables them to reach their full potential.
- 3.3 The speed of change required is reflected in the national steer from the Scottish Government and COSLA, and is summarised for members in this report.

4. Early Learning and Childcare National Standard

- 4.1 The National ELC Directorate led by Joe Griffin continues to direct local authorities to develop a number of key initiatives to ensure the successful roll out of the expansion programme.
- 4.2 The development of a Funding Follows the Child and National Standard was made available on 18 December 2018: ***Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare Providers: Principles and Practice*** <https://www.gov.scot/publications/funding-follows-child-national-standard-early-learning-childcare-providers-principles-practice/>
Members will find this document useful.
- 4.3 This is the newest Blueprint document for the expansion of ELC and provides clear criteria that must be met to guarantee the principles for the expansion are met and a high quality early years' experience for all of our young children.
- 4.4 Within this is the expectation that all providers will be able to attain Care Inspectorate gradings of good or above in all domains:
- Quality of Care and Support
 - Quality of environment
 - Quality of staffing
 - Quality of management and leadership
- 4.5 The National Standard is supported by a suite of Operating Guidance that includes clarity on business sustainability requirements for all of those who wish to enter into partnership with the Local Authority to provide ELC.
- 4.6 A provider neutral philosophy underpins the document and we welcome this approach which we endeavour to emulate across Highland through working collaboratively with our partners in CALA and across all partner providers.
- 4.7 The implications of the National Standard will be fully processed over the next couple of months at the ELC Programme Board and through the ELC Partnership Group. ELC Commissioners in Area Care and Learning teams are responsible for the implementation of the principles at a local level, consulting wider with partners and the public.
- 4.8 Alongside regular direct correspondence between the Scottish Government and local authority leads, they are also supporting dialogue across the Regional Improvement Collaboratives, for us through the Northern Alliance Early Years Officers group.

Various national events are also taking place across the Country to ensure full understanding of the potential impact of the new National Standard and funding follows the child.

- 4.9 A national ELC Partnership Forum has been established to ensure that all partner providers are fully involved in discussions in respect of the implications that the National Standard may directly have on them. Furthermore, the Scottish Childminding Association is currently developing principles and guidance around commissioning of childminders and these will be shared with authorities early this year.

5. Data systems

- 5.1 Some local authorities use the Nursery Administration Module (NAMs) of SEEMIS for capturing nursery provision of funded and non-funded hours. However, because of the high amount of flexibility and ability to purchase additional hours that Highland have offered parents for many years, NAMs was not a system that worked for us.
- 5.2 As this is a common recognised issue with NAMs, SEEMIS have now been tasked by the Scottish Government to develop a new NAMS system that will provide all of the required elements of full flexibility to capture data on children using the services, including non-funded hours that parents are able to purchase.
- 5.3 SEEMIS are currently engaging with all local authorities around requirements for the new module. The revised NAMs module will eventually replace the local data system that was implemented in Highland and we look forward to its development and implementation.

6. Other National Priorities

- 6.1 The Northern Alliance Early Years Officers have been working closely with Architecture and Design Scotland who together with Space Strategies have produced guidance for the northern authorities in relation to outdoor provision. This guidance is based on workshops with officers and practitioners across the region and is available to members on request: ***Issues and options for Outdoor provision of Early Learning and Childcare in the Northern Alliance region.***
- 6.2 A Scottish study of ELC has been commissioned by the Children and Families analytical unit of the Scottish Government and is being undertaken by ScotCen Social Research. This project will study the impact that provision of 600 hours of funded ELC has on the development and outcomes for eligible 2 year olds. It will also provide data on the impact that the offer of funded hours has had on parental uptake of study, training or employment. Several of our partner providers have agreed to take part in this research project.
- 6.3 In order to protect and strengthen the quality of ELC, the government have commissioned the Scottish College for Educational Leadership (SCEL) to create a new leadership programme aimed at head teachers who have an ELC setting within their school. Expressions of interest from head teachers in each authority to participate in the pilot were asked for and we have two head teachers from Highland taking part in this first cohort.

7. 1140 hours implementation 2019/20

- 7.1 The settings that were funded to deliver 1140 hours in 2018/19 were selected based

on a range of socioeconomic indicators of disadvantage. The project teams in these sites have met the challenge head on and ensured a solution focused approach to the not insignificant issues that have been encountered. They have offered a huge amount of learning that will assist us as we move forward into the next phase of delivering 1140 hours in many more settings across Highland.

7.2 Local ELC Area Boards led by Area Care and Learning Managers have been working hard to develop proposals for the expansion of 1140 hours to more settings in 2019/20.

7.3 As Highland have over 190 providers of ELC we need to move forward with this and have therefore proposed settings where there would be little capital requirements that would cause delay. The criteria remain that we have focused on areas of deprivation where possible. Settings offering outdoor provision are included as Highland is one of the eight local authorities working with the Scottish Government and Inspiring Scotland around outdoor learning. This will help us understand any implications for the expansion. Partner providers are included in the proposals as key providers of ELC in Highland. Discussions with the proposed settings have taken place with preparations being made.

Planning for additional roll out is very significant and includes a full cost and impact analysis.

7.4 The ELC Programme Board has agreed the final proposals and these are attached as **Appendix 1**. There may undoubtedly be some changes to this as planning moves ahead.

7.5 Meanwhile every setting in Highland is being considered and assessed in preparation for roll out. We will propose sites for August 2019 initially, moving to 1140 hours in approx. 70 sites, followed by further ones into January 2020.

7.6 We have been working with our financial and legal teams to ensure we have in place a system for partners to access ELC funding for capital projects. This follows a debate in the Scottish Parliament in October 2018, followed by a letter to all authorities clarifying the government's position.

7.7 Local authorities are permitted to provide financial support to funded partners where a need to create additional capacity has been identified in local expansion plans. This is where the authority has already planned to make full use of existing in house and partner capacity in line with the sequential decision making process: use what we have → use what we purchase → create what we need.

This funding could include making local authority premises available for providers to operate out of to increase provision of hours or assisting with building works required for the expansion programme in line with the Delivery Plan.

8. Capital expansion of ELC

8.1 Many of the workforce and operational requirements for the expansion of ELC are well underway and on track. However, with regard to the ELC capital investment programme, there are a number of settings that are also facing primary school capacity pressures over the coming years. Officers are currently working on a 3 year programme of investment priorities that would be funded from the generic budget allocations in the Care and Learning capital programme. There would be clear benefits from combining these separate funding streams into single projects where possible.

- 8.2 A programme will be reported for approval to a future Committee meeting, however, given the requirements for some of these projects to be completed by August 2019, design work has commenced where necessary. Early approval of the 3-year programme is considered to be one of the highest risk factors facing the delivery of the ELC investment programme.
- 8.3 There is one particular setting, Deshar Primary in Boat of Garten, where the Council has been working on a potentially innovative joint-funding initiative with the community to provide a stand-alone nursery building at the school. Following an initial approach to the Council in May 2018, a community group initiated a fundraising programme and engaged with a local contractor (A W Laing from Grantown-on-Spey) to provide an outline design and cost for the building, based on the Council's requirements and specification.
- 8.3.1 As reported to the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee on 31 January, Ward Members agreed in principle to support the proposed way forward subject to engaging with both the Parent Council and the Community Council to seek their formal support for the project, and also holding a drop-in event in Boat of Garten to allow the wider community to view and comment on the proposals.
- 8.3.2 Both the Parent Council and the Community Council have since confirmed their support, and the community drop-in event took place on 14 February with over 100 feedback forms submitted. The vast majority of the returns were in favour of both the project and the proposed approach, and some of the comments and suggestions received are being considered with a view to incorporating these in the project where practicable.
- 8.3.3 The total cost of the project is estimated at £230,000 with an agreed minimum contribution from the community of £80,000 (over £77,000 has been raised to date). The Council's funding commitment of £150,000 would be provided from the capital allocation received from the Scottish Government for the Early Learning and Childcare expansion programme. The Council will be the Client for the purposes of the construction contract and will also be the owner and landlord of the building on completion.
- 8.3.4 Given the population of the local community, the fundraising effort has been impressive and the amount of feedback received is proportionally higher than received from similar events held recently in other communities. It is anticipated that this approach can be used as an exemplar for similar joint community initiatives in the future, and also that lessons identified from the recently completed community-led new build project at Strontian Primary School will be implemented on this project.

9. Quality Agenda

- 9.1 The publication of the National Standard as detailed above re-emphasises the positive impact that high quality ELC has on children in their earliest years and the long term implications for their health, wellbeing and happiness. This knowledge also lies behind the philosophy of Highland Council's ELC Delivery Plan (September 2017) and the additional understanding around Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how as a council we are mitigating the impact of this.
- 9.2 ELC that is of high quality, delivered by caring, nurturing staff that put childrens wellbeing at the heart of their delivery are crucial to ensure we give all children in Highland the best start in life.

- 9.3 The National Standard focus on quality provision demonstrates a commitment to ensuring an improvement in quality of learning and child development. It details specific criteria required for a service to be commissioned to deliver ELC that will ensure the development of children's cognitive skills and improve their health and wellbeing.
- 9.4 In practice this means that every service whether it is local authority or partner provider including childminders must achieve Care Inspectorate quality evaluations of good or better on all of the quality themes noted in 4.4.

However, as Education Scotland also inspect ELC providers, we need to acknowledge that Education Scotland Inspection criteria focus more specifically on the quality indicators within 'How Good is our Early Learning and Childcare' these include:

- Leadership of change
 - Learning teaching and assessment
 - Ensuring wellbeing, equality and inclusion
 - Securing children's progress
- 9.5 This may have implications for some of our current provision where gradings of good or above may not be the position. Therefore it is imperative that we support providers to achieve this standard otherwise there is a real risk that they may be decommissioned in the future.
- 9.6 The risks and opportunities for quality provision through expansion of funded hours to 1140 were captured in our ELC Delivery Plan. Headteachers and partner providers want to achieve better gradings and by building our peripatetic nursery teacher remit (Early Years Education Support Officers: EYESOs) into settings we can help support services to achieve this.
- 9.7 We currently have 9 EYESO posts that support 198 providers with quality improvement and curriculum development and we will expand this workforce as detailed and costed in our Delivery Plan to meet the challenges as we move to expanding to more sites. An additional requirement to this is that we support a developmentally informed approach to learning across the early level curriculum (nursery – primary 1) and therefore seamless transitions between ELC settings and primary school across Highland.
- 9.8 The Emerging Literacy work has been a proof of both concept and effectiveness of this approach. However, spreading this thinking across all curricular areas and improving quality generally in ELC learning provision requires a more strategic joining up across Early Level, from ELC into school support structures and quality improvement.
- 9.9 As part of building the necessary strategic capacity as described in the report to this Committee in October 2018, we recognise a need to ensure strong strategic leadership for the settings and the EYESO team, in order to ensure the needs of learners in Early Level are informed, supported and recognised at all levels of the curriculum. We aim to progress the improvement and leadership agenda to provide assurance that the quality of ELC is not compromised by the expansion programme.

10. Implications

- 10.1 Resource - The Government has awarded full capital and revenue funding for the ELC expansion programme, based on Highlands Delivery Plan.
- 10.2 Legal - There is a legal requirement to provide the 1140 hours entitlement to all eligible children as detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 10.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) - 1140 hours will impact positively
- 10.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever - None
- 10.5 Risk - Risks are described in the report. There remains a challenge to ensure that all the capital funding is utilised on time as without this the programme will not be delivered.
- 10.6 Gaelic – There remain challenges around ensuring capacity for Gaelic Medium provision, mainly in relation to the workforce

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

Date: 28 February 2019

Author: Sandra Harrington, Senior Manager Early Years

Background Papers:

Proposed settings for Delivering 1140 hours-phases 2&3

green	On target for August 2019
green	On target for January 2020
amber	Some issues around being ready on time
red	Major risks around timescales

	Setting	Area	Phase	
1	Abernethy	South	Phase 2	green
2	Cannich	South	Phase 2	amber
3	Cauldeen	South	Phase 2	green
4	Cawdor	South	Phase 2	amber
5	Central	South	Phase 2	amber
6	Dalneigh	South	Phase 2	amber
7	Dochgarroch	South	Phase 2	green
8	Farr	South	Phase 2	green
9	Stratherrick	South	Phase 2	amber
10	Mackenzie Centre	South	Phase 2	green
11	St Joseph's	South	Phase 2	green
12	Teanassie	South	Phase 2	green
13	Glenurquhart CCC (Partner Centre -PC)	South	Phase 2	green
14	Karen Mackenzie (Childminder - CM)	South	Phase 2	green
15	Limetree (Dalneigh) (PC)	South	Phase 2	amber
16	Northern Meeting Park CALA (PC)	South	Phase 2	amber
17	Stramash Tornagrain (PC)	South	Phase 2	green
18	Meike White (CM)	South	Phase 2	green
19	Summerlings, The Sheiling (PC)	South	Phase 2	red
20	Culbokie	Mid	Phase 2	amber
21	Dingwall	Mid	Phase 2	amber
22	Gledfield	Mid	Phase 2	green
23	Hill of Fearn	Mid	Phase 2	green

24	Hilton of Cadboll	Mid	Phase 2	
25	Marybank	Mid	Phase 2	
26	Milton	Mid	Phase 2	
27	Park	Mid	Phase 2	
28	Resolis	Mid	Phase 2	
29	South Lodge	Mid	Phase 2	
30	Tarbat Old	Mid	Phase 2	
31	Ardross (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
32	Croileagan (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
33	Cromarty (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
34	Dingwall Children's Nursery (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
35	Dingwall Ducklings (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
36	Little Angels (PC)	Mid	Phase 2	
37	Bonar	North	Phase 2	
38	Canisbay	North	Phase 2	
39	Castletown	North	Phase 2	
40	Dornoch	North	Phase 2	
41	Dunbeath	North	Phase 2	
42	Farr	North	Phase 2	
43	Helmsdale	North	Phase 2	
44	Keiss	North	Phase 2	
45	Lairg	North	Phase 2	
46	Lybster	North	Phase 2	
47	Melvich	North	Phase 2	
48	Rogart	North	Phase 2	
49	Scourie	North	Phase 2	
50	Durness	North	Phase2	
51	Thrumster	North	Phase 2	
52	Alison Munro (CM)	North	Phase 2	

53	Halkirk (PC)	North	Phase 2	
54	Julie Minchen (CM)	North	Phase 2	
55	Kinlochbervie CALA (PC)	North	Phase 2	
56	Seonaid Mhor (CM)	North	Phase 2	
57	Watten (PC)	North	Phase 2	
58	Acharacle	West	Phase 2	
59	Applecross	West	Phase 2	
60	Auchtertyre	West	Phase 2	
61	Banavie	West	Phase 2	
62	Broadford EM	West	Phase 3	
63	Broadford GM	West	Phase 3	
64	Bun-sgoil Ghàidhlig Phort Rìgh	West	Phase 3	
65	Bun-sgoil Stafainn	West	Phase 3	
66	Caol	West	Phase 2	
67	Carbost	West	Phase 3	
68	Glenelg	West	Phase 2	
69	Invergarry	West	Phase 2	
70	Inverlochy	West	Phase 2	
71	Kilmuir GM	West	Phase 3	
72	Knockbreck	West	Phase 3	
73	Kyleakin	West	Phase 2	
74	Lundavra	West	Phase 2	
75	MacDiarmid	West	Phase 3	
76	Plockton GM	West	Phase 2	
77	Raasay	West	Phase 3	
78	Spean Bridge	West	Phase 2	
79	St Columba's	West	Phase 2	
80	Struan	West	Phase 3	
81	Little Learners (PC)	West	Phase 2	

82	Lochcarron (PC)	West	Phase 3	
83	Portree EM (PC)	West	Phase 3	
84	Stramash FW (PC)	West	Phase 2	