

THE EXPANSION OF FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND– ARGYLL AND BUTE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update for members on the progress being made by the Service in preparing the Argyll and Bute Delivery Plan to support the implementation of 1140 hours of funded ELC in Argyll and Bute per year by 2020.
- 1.2 Specifically the report provides information on the rationale of the Draft Delivery Plan and its contents. The Plan requires to take account of the key principles as outlined in 'A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland':
- 1.3 A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland' consultation was launched on 15 October 2016. It set out the Scottish Government vision for an expansion that will almost double entitlement to free early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds. That vision is underpinned by clear guiding principles of Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability.
- 1.4 As part of this commitment all Local Authorities are required to submit to the Scottish Government by 29th September 2017 an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Draft Delivery Plan in relation to the expansion of funded ELC to 1140 hours per year by 2020 in their local Authority area.
- 1.5 The Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan has been framed around a delivery based model grounded in the principles outlined above. A robust mapping exercise has resulted in a clear outline of the opportunities and challenges around ELC delivery within each of the localities of Argyll and Bute. Specific challenges include capacity in certain areas of the Local Authority and the recruitment of a suitably qualified workforce.
- 1.6 In addition the paper presents an overview of the financial planning challenges associated with the implementation of the Draft Delivery Plan. Whilst the Scottish Government has committed in principle to funding the expansion, no detailed financial agreement with Authorities has been made beyond 2017-18. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan.

- 1.7 As progress is made within the implementation of the Draft Delivery Plan, the following factors will inform future developments of the service delivery:
- Consultation and engagement of parents, partners, practitioners and wider community members;
 - Continued support of and investment in our Partner Providers;
 - The expansion of the Early Years Workforce;
 - Ongoing ELC capital programme, and
 - Allocation of ELC capital and revenue funding from the Scottish Government to deliver key aspects of the Plan.

1.8 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Community Services Committee:

- i. Note the expectations arising from the Blueprint for 2020 for Argyll and Bute Council;
- ii. Note the contents of the Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan;
- iii. Note the key recommendations contained within the Draft Delivery Plan and the requirement by the Scottish Government to submit the Plan to them by 29th September 2017;
- iv. Approve the Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan for submission to the Scottish Government by 29th September 2017, as required;
- v. Note the currently identified financial risks for Council, as outlined in Sections 2 and 7 of the report, and as detailed within section 6 of the draft delivery plan, associated with the requirement to deliver 1140 hours of ELC per year by 2020. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan, and
- vi. Request that the Executive Director, Community Services bring forward progress updates to future meetings of Community Services Committee.

THE EXPANSION OF FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND – ARGYLL AND BUTE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on plans to implement 1140 hours of funded ELC in Argyll and Bute per year by 2020. The report provides information on the rationale for of the Draft Delivery Plan and its contents. The Plan should take account of the key principles as outlined in ‘A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland’
- 2.2 A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland’ consultation was launched on 15 October 2016. It set out the Scottish Government vision for an expansion that will almost double entitlement to free early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds. That vision is underpinned by clear guiding principles of Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability.
- 2.3 All Local Authorities are required to submit to the Scottish Government by 29th September 2017 an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Draft Delivery Plan in relation to the expansion of funded ELC to 1140 hours per year by 2020.
- 2.4 The Plan is required to take account of the key principles as outlined in ‘A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland’.
- **Affordability** – funding for implementation and to ensure affordability for parents;
 - **Accessibility** – making sure that funded ELC is accessible to all regardless of where they live;
 - **Flexibility** – where possible ensure there are options for parents to choose from, and
 - **Quality** – a key element within the learning environments and within the ELC workforce- to ensure all children are getting the best start in life.
- 2.5 The Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan has developed a model for delivery based on the principles outlined above. A robust mapping exercise has resulted in a clear outline of the opportunities and challenges around ELC delivery within each of the localities of Argyll and Bute.

- 2.6 Specific challenges include capacity in certain areas of the Local Authority and the recruitment of a suitably qualified workforce. In addition financial planning for implementing the Draft Delivery Plan presents a significant challenge. Whilst the Scottish Government has committed in principle to funding the expansion, no detailed financial agreement with Authorities has been made beyond 2017-18. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the ELCC plan.
- 2.7 As progress is made within the implementation of the Draft Delivery Plan, the following factors will inform future developments of the service delivery:
- Consultation and engagement of parents, partners, practitioners and wider community members;
 - Continued support of and investment in our Partner Providers;
 - The expansion of the Early Years Workforce;
 - Ongoing ELC capital programme, and
 - Allocation of ELC capital and revenue funding from the Scottish Government to deliver key aspects of the Plan.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- i. Note the expectations arising from the Blueprint for 2020 for Argyll and Bute Council;
 - ii. Note the contents of the Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan;
 - iii. Note the key recommendations contained within the Draft Delivery Plan and the requirement by the Scottish Government to submit the Plan to them by 29th September 2017;
 - iv. Approve the Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan for submission to the Scottish Government by 29th September 2017, as required;
 - v. Note the currently identified financial risks for Council, as outlined in Sections 2 and 7 of the report and as detailed within section 6 of the draft delivery plans, associated with the requirement to deliver 1140 hours of ELC per year by 2020. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan, and
 - vi. Request that the Executive Director, Community Services bring forward progress updates to future meetings of Community Services Committee.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 **The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare – Scottish Government Policy Commitment and Requirement for a Local Authority Delivery Plan**
The Scottish Government announced as a policy commitment the expansion of the provision of funded ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours by 2020.
- 4.2 The expansion prioritises a high quality experience for the child to capitalise on the significant contribution that ELC can make to a child's development and to closing the poverty related attainment gap. The 1140 hours of ELC will be offered by a range of providers across Argyll and Bute, including Local

Authority, Private, Voluntary, Independent and Childminders.

The Council is required to prepare and submit to the Scottish Government by 29th September an ELC Draft Delivery Plan to support the implementation of 1140 hours of funded ELC. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan.

4.3 **Affordability**

Reducing the cost of accessing ELC for Parents/Carers is a significant driver in the ambition to extend ELC entitlement. This must be set alongside the redesign of ELC Services in a manner that is affordable to deliver for Local Authorities and the Scottish Government. Delivery will aim for long term value for money to create a financially sustainable service model which makes most effective use of public funds. It is likely that this will include investment in local authority services and in new arrangements with private and third sector services, including Childminders.

Partnership working with national organisations such as the Association of Directors of Education (ADES) and the Northern Alliance has provided the Early Years' Service with the opportunity to compare financial information and ELC details with other local authorities. This positive dialogue and collegiate working has informed how financial resources and funding can best be utilised and has therefore influenced the development of the Argyll and Bute ELC Draft Delivery Plan.

4.4 **Accessibility**

Each locality within Argyll and Bute offers its own unique challenges and opportunities in being able to offer accessible and flexible ELC to its families. Following a robust mapping exercise, the Early Years' Service now has a clear picture of provision which is currently available to families and what improvements need to be made to ensure flexible and accessible ELC is on offer within each locality, as required within Scottish Government expectations.

4.5 This has helped to inform a capital programme for alterations and refurbishments to existing local authority ELC properties. There has been partnership working with social enterprise groups to support communities in developing wraparound childcare provision, as well as dialogue with existing ELC partner providers in looking at expansion of their current services.

4.6 The Early Years' Service continues to work closely with Argyll and Bute Childminders through regular locality network meetings. Childminders will play a role in future ELC service delivery for three and four year olds, which will provide greater accessibility for parents and carers across Argyll and Bute. It is clear that each locality will offer a different range of childcare services, building on local assets and reflecting the needs of each community where possible.

4.7 **Flexibility**

The flexible element to the delivery plan will offer ELC which makes effective use of our Argyll and Bute assets by providing a range of experiences both during and out with the times outlined within the term time delivery of ELC.

4.8 These experiences will depend upon the opportunities available to children within each of our communities. Investment in professional development for staff will ensure that there are practitioners within each 'cluster' of nurseries that can lead on quality ELC. It is anticipated that approximately an additional six Lead Childcare and Education Workers and 50 full time equivalent Childcare and Education Workers will be required. Additional support staff will be required to meet the needs of specific children as identified within the GIRFEC process. It is anticipated that a strengthening of the Central Early Years team may also be required to support the increased infrastructure as a result of expansion to 1140 hours.

4.9 Flexible patterns of ELC which reflect our three key drivers will be offered by:

- Local Authority provision;
- Childminders;
- Partner Providers;
- Community Organisations;
- Outdoor Nurseries, and
- Fèis / Cultural Activities and organisations.

4.10 **Quality**

In order to achieve transformational change, it is vital that our children do not experience 'more of the same' in this expansion of ELC – delivery should be innovative and reflect the opportunities and needs across the Authority, within each community and within each family.

4.11 In line with national and local priorities, Argyll and Bute continues to place a strong emphasis on children's **health and wellbeing** in order to build strong, resilient and happy children. There will be an equally strong emphasis in working closely with our families, focusing on **family learning and engagement**, to ensure families are at the heart of our ELC provision. Argyll and Bute is also able to offer an exciting range of experiences for children accessing ELC that promotes **high quality learning** and that supports our young children as they make the transition into primary education.

4.12 Within Argyll and Bute, there are many remote and rural settings and some of our nurseries are in the most beautiful locations, offering beaches and forests on our doorsteps. In addition to this, our culture is rich with traditional music, Gaelic and storytelling. Communities are skilled in problem solving and working together to overcome the challenges of living within a remote location. Local practice will reflect our Argyll and Bute assets:

- Outdoor Learning;
- Partnerships, and
- Culture

Each asset will be woven into the delivery of ELC for children to experience rich, relevant and high quality ELC.

4.13 Scottish Government funding has been made available to each local authority to support the quality of provision through an allocation of 'Additional Graduates'. This allocation has been based on the 'Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) profile of each nursery within each local authority. Argyll and Bute has been allocated three Additional Graduates and plans are underway to ensure most effective use is made of this resource to enhance the quality of learning experiences and close the attainment gap.

4.14 **Phasing Delivery of 1140 Hours of ELC**

It is important to 'test' plans for delivery of ELC in 2020. Currently the Scottish Government is funding two 1140 hours trials in Argyll and Bute, one in Tobermory and one in Tiree.

4.15 Additional annual capital and revenue funding from the Scottish Government will enable local authorities to 'phase in' 1140 hours of funded ELC from 2017 until full implementation in 2020. The first phase of funding has been allocated for 2017-18 and amounts to Revenue Funding of £346,000 and Capital Funding of £494,000. This enables Argyll and Bute to begin work on phasing in 1140 hours ELC.

4.16 The ELC Draft Delivery Plan will identify the locations for phasing in of 1140 hours across Argyll and Bute and will be dependent upon local circumstances and funding available from Scottish Government, including:

- Response to local parent consultations;
- Workforce availability;
- Availability and readiness of physical resources;
- Care Inspection registration;
- Existing levels of provision;
- Distance from nearest provision, and
- SIMD profile.

4.17 The phasing will require work to be undertaken in several areas including recruitment of additional staff, building capacity of Partner Providers and the creation of additional services and additional capacity where current provision is likely not to meet future demand.

4.18 **National Support Networks**

The Scottish Future's Trust and the Scottish Government both have teams who can provide guidance and expertise to local authorities in planning and implementing ELC Draft Delivery Plans. In particular, direct support is being made available through the national 'ELC Delivery Team' in ensuring local authority delivery plans are robust and make most effective use of local assets. As part of an ongoing timeline of support and challenge activities from the Scottish Government, there is a requirement for local authorities to submit an 'Additional Graduate Action Plan' in September 2017 and a 'Quality Action Plan' in October 2017.

5.0 The ARGYLL AND BUTE DRAFT DELIVERY PLAN

- 5.1 The Draft Delivery Plan sets out the vision for ELC in Argyll and Bute. It focuses on our plans to provide local flexible ELC up to 50 weeks of the year which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and builds upon the provision currently available.
- 5.2 The plan aligns with Argyll and Bute's *Education Vision and Strategy: Our Children, Their Future* and aspires for ambition, excellence and equality. In particular the delivery Plan focuses on the third objective within the Education vision:

We will ensure that children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed, by

- *Providing high quality Early Learning and Childcare, and*
- *Working with parents, families and partners.*

- 5.3 The ELC Draft Delivery Plan is organised in seven sections:

Section 1: Introduction – The national and local context to the expansion of ELC to 1140 hours;

Section 2: Key Principles – the ethos underpinning Argyll and Bute's approach to developing a model for delivery of 1140 hours, and an outline of the main priorities and themes within which work will be undertaken;

Section 3: Service Planning – an outline of the governance structure in place to take forward the Plan in line with the Scottish Government Blueprint including work streams involved and a description of how Argyll and Bute will deliver *Quality, Availability, Flexibility* and *Affordability* as per Scottish Government expectations;

Section 4: Milestones and Service Delivery Plan Specification - the activities requiring to be undertaken by the Authority initially over the period 2017-18 in order to keep in line with Scottish Government milestones, key personnel and intended outcomes;

Section 5: Resourcing the Plan – Demand and Supply Predictions. This section provides an outline of the anticipated demand for ELC within each locality. This includes:

- The number of children entitled to ELC for session 2017-18 and the anticipated number of children entitled to ELC for sessions 2018-19 and 2019-20;
- Predicted number of additional Local Authority staff required for full implementation, and
- Anticipated infrastructure requirements for full implementation, and

Section 6: Financing the Plan – a template showing indicative costs for

the Council over a five year timeline to achieve delivery of the requirement for expansion of ELC to 1140 hours per year by 2020. Full funding from Scottish Government will have to be available to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan.

- 5.4 At the time of preparing the plan, the Scottish Government financial template was still awaited. It is therefore important to highlight that the current financial outline, section six of the draft plans has been prepared by Officers utilising the existing Council/Service framework and that further work will be required when undertaking the completion of the Scottish Government financial template. Two telephone Q&A dial in sessions are scheduled in coming weeks to allow Officers to engage with Scottish Government on this crucial matter. Following these sessions the Service will undertake a further review and update of the financial modeling for the delivery plan.

In moving forward, the Plan will need to be flexible and responsive to a potentially changing landscape with adjustments to specific timescales and review of spending priorities along the way.

A copy of the draft plan is attached as Appendix 1.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Scottish Government is committed to expanding the provision of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from 600 hours to 1140hours by 2020. The expansion will prioritise a high quality experience for the child to capitalise on the significant contribution that ELC can make to a child's development and to closing the poverty related attainment gap.
- 6.2 This paper outlines how Argyll and Bute will work towards delivery of 1140 hours and introduces the Authority's ELC Draft Delivery Plan for approval of Community Services Committee.
- 6.3 The Argyll and Bute ELC Delivery Plan will support the implementation of 1140 hours of ELC by 2020 through the engagement and support of a range of partners and Local Authority departments.
- 6.4 The Argyll and Bute ELC Delivery Plan has been designed to reflect the differing opportunities and challenges within each of its localities. A high quality of ELC provision in Argyll and Bute will be achieved through focusing on Health and Wellbeing and family learning and engagement, as well as planning around outdoor learning, culture and partnerships.
- 6.5 There are a range of factors, as outlined in the introduction, which will impact on and model future ELC service delivery. These include the availability of full funding from Scottish Government.
- 6.6 The Draft Delivery Plan for 1140 hours is to be submitted to the Scottish Government by 29th September.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Policy The ELC Draft Delivery Plan will assist the Education Service to implement and develop practice in line with 'Our Children, Their Future: Education Vision and Strategy', and Argyll and Bute Council's Education Annual Plan.
- 7.2 Financial Expansion is dependent on capital and revenue funding from the Scottish Government and its protection within a local context. At this stage the full details of the settlement are unknown. Full funding from Scottish Government be required to Argyll & Bute Council to enable delivery of the plan.
- 7.3 Legal The ELC Draft Delivery Plan will assist the Education Service to implement the relevant sections contained within the Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014. The Council is required to submit the ELC Draft Delivery Plan to Scottish Government by the end of September 2017.
- 7.4 HR Considerable workforce development and recruitment will be required to deliver the expectations set out in the Draft Delivery Plan.
- 7.5 Equalities The Draft Delivery Plan aims to respond to the challenge of reducing inequality and improving outcomes for children and their families within the diverse geographical and social context of Argyll and Bute.
- 7.6 Risk A number of risks exist at this stage including as yet no confirmed financial allocations beyond 2017-18, workforce recruitment and development and, as yet unknown levels of uptake within communities.
- 7.7 Customer Service Our youngest children and eligible 2 year olds will benefit most from the expansion of ELC. There are significant benefits for families with parents/carers able to use the extended hours to enable them to return to employment, reduce childcare costs and access training.

Ann Marie Knowles
Acting Executive Director of Community Services

Cllr Yvonne McNeilly
Policy Lead for Education and Lifelong Learning

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For further information contact:

Anne Paterson, Acting Head of Service: Education –
Tel: 01546 604333
Email: anne.paterson@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Don McAllister, Education Manager (Acting) Learning and Achievement –
Tel:
Email:donald.mcallister@argyll-bute.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Argyll and Bute Early Years Strategy – 1140 Hours 2017-2020 (Draft Delivery Plan)

SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

‘A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland’ -
<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/10/1665>

Early Learning and Childcare Trials –
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/early-years/ELCTrials/ELCTrials>

Additional Graduate Commitment –
<http://news.gov.scot/news/early-years-workforce-expansion>

‘Space to Grow’ – ELC Design Guidance -
<http://hub.careinspectorate.com/media/549001/space-to-grow.pdf>