



EDUCATION POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

THE NATIONAL STANDARD FOR ELIGIBILITY TO BECOME A FUNDED PROVIDER OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

REPORT BY HEAD OF EDUCATION (LEARNING, POLICY AND RESOURCES)

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the panel of the National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) providers which was published on 18 December 2018.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the panel notes that the Scottish Government have published in 2018, a new National Standard which will be used to evaluate the suitability of ELC providers to enter into contract with West Lothian Council.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable, making best use of our resources.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	Direct awards will be made in accordance with Standing Orders of West Lothian Council and the Public Contracts (Scotland) Regulations 2015.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£6,114,000 revenue funding in 2019/20 to expand early learning and childcare.
VII Consideration at PDSP / Executive Committee	14 February 2019
VIII Other consultations	Parents/carers have been consulted on increased flexibility and choice in ELC. Consultations to commence with private providers in February / March 2019.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Background

West Lothian Council Education Service is committed to ensuring a high quality early learning and childcare. Service.

The council's expansion plan aims to give children the best start in life and contribute to closing the poverty related attainment gap. The publication of the National Standard following consultation with all stakeholders, including local authorities, provides welcome guidance in relation to expanding the range of providers delivering early learning and childcare and maintains the role of the local authority in quality assuring the provision across all providers.

D.2 The National Standard for Early Learning and Childcare

The National Standard is aligned to the four guiding principles for the expansion to 1140 hours: quality; flexibility; accessibility and affordability.

The National Standard sets a minimum quality threshold for funded providers and provides clear and consistent quality criteria to apply which is fair and proportionate during the eligibility process.

The National Standard applies to all providers: within public, private or third sectors including childminders.

This will provide parents and carers with the certainty that those providers are offering high quality ELC provision.

D.3 Criteria for all Settings.

- Criteria 1 – Staffing, leadership and management
Criteria 1 - Childminding businesses
- Criteria 2 – Development of children's cognitive skills, health and wellbeing
- Criteria 3 – Physical environment
- Criteria 4 – Self – evaluation and improvement
- Criteria 5 – Parent and carer engagement and involvement in the life of the setting
- Criteria 6 – Inclusion
- Criteria 7 – Business sustainability
- Criteria 8 – Fair work practices, including payment of the living wage
- Criteria 9 – Payment processes
- Criteria 10 – Food

Our expectation and now confirmed as the national expectation is that all funded providers achieve an evaluation of Good or Better by Care Inspectorate in Criteria 1 to 5.

Criteria 6-10 are mandatory and will be assessed separately under technical guidance.

D.4 Transitional arrangements

Existing funded providers will be expected to meet the National Standard from the full statutory roll-out of the entitlement to 1140 hours in August 2020. If they are unable to demonstrate that they meet the criteria, their funded provider status will be withdrawn.

Existing settings who are not currently offering the funded hours, but wish to start offering them, will be eligible to apply only if they meet the National Standard.

Newly registered settings need not wait for their first inspection before being able to apply to become a funded provider. The rigour of the Care Inspectorate registration process should provide reassurance that the newly registered setting is able to deliver the funded hours on a probationary basis, pending the outcome of their first inspection by Care Inspectorate with the proviso that W.L.C. is assured that they have the potential to meet all other criteria in the National Standard.

Funded providers in W.L.C. who are evaluated below the required quality criteria will be given an Action Plan and proportionate support from the Early Years Team, working in partnership with Care Inspectorate and in line with national guidance on improvement timescales.

In addition, we will engage with the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland, as well as the national organisations that represent the ELC sector, to raise awareness of the National Standard amongst those involved in the provision of ELC.

D.5 Supporting Guidance

As part of the implementation of the National Standard, national operating guidance is available to assist providers with the application process to become a funded provider.

These documents will also support local authorities' assessment of the eligibility of applicants to become a funded provider.

All settings wishing to become a funded provider in Scotland will be assessed against the same National Standard criteria and no additional criteria will be applied in specific areas of the country.

E. CONCLUSION

It is recommended that the panel notes the new National Standard which will be used to evaluate the eligibility of ELC providers to enter into contract with West Lothian Council.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland. Funding follows the child and the national standard for early learning and childcare providers: Principles and Practice.

Scottish Government, December 2018

Appendices/Attachments:

None

Contact Person: Donna Adam, Strategic Resource Manager donna.adam@westlothian.gov.uk
Tel No. 01506 281646.

James Cameron
Head of Education (Learning, Policy and Resources)

Date of meeting: 14 February 2019