



EDUCATION EXECUTIVE

EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE – EXPANSION PLAN UPDATE

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

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the Education Executive of the progress of the approved Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Plan to deliver 1140 hours of free high quality ELC within West Lothian for August 2020.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Executive notes the progress made to date and approves the following proposals:

1. To appoint an additional seven ELC Area Support Managers from January 2020 to support Head Teachers and settings outwith the school day and school session dates.
2. To cease payment for nursery snack in council ELC settings from 6 January 2020.
3. To note the pilot of 'Marvellous Meals' for Spring 2020 providing free school meals in 4 ELC settings.
4. To increase the hourly rate paid to childminders to £6.30 and private partner providers to £6.80 from 1 April 2020 (both rates to include the provision of a snack and a meal).
5. To allocate 0.2 FTE management support (teacher) to the management team within each school to oversee the quality assurance within the ELC setting.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I	Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; being honest, open and accountable; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources; working in partnership.
II	Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality	The Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan has been written in response to the Scottish Government policy to expand provision of early learning and childcare from 600 to 1140

	Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	<p>hours by 2020, as set out in its Planning Guidance for Local Authorities.</p> <p>Local Authorities will retain the statutory responsibility for ensuring that early learning and childcare is available to all eligible children in the area.</p> <p>Statutory Guidance has been issued in relation to early learning and childcare duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.</p> <p>No environmental, health or risk issues have been identified.</p> <p>An equality relevance assessment has been undertaken.</p>
III	Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	<p>Scottish Government to report in March 2018 on the operational details of the 'Funding Follows the Child' model. Planning assumption that the plan is fully funded in revenue terms and sufficient capital to allow physical expansion of Council capacity.</p> <p>Revenue funding to expand the early learning and childcare workforce and additional free hours:</p> <p>2018/19 - £2,574,997 + £209,733</p> <p>2019/20 - £6,117,000.</p> <p>2020/21 - £5,691,000.</p> <p>2021/22 - £1,661,000.</p> <p>Total: £16,253,730</p> <p>The increase in the hourly rate for partner provider placements will cost an additional</p>

£866,000 in 2020/21.

A Workforce Plan has been developed in consultation with Trade Unions.

VII Consideration at PDSP 17 December 2019

VIII Other consultations

Parents/carers have been consulted on increased flexibility and choice in early learning and childcare. Additional consultations have been undertaken in relation to the expansion to 1140 hours.

Agreement in place with the Scottish Childminders association (SCMA).

Consultation with all ELC staff was undertaken between January 2019 and May 2019. Further staff consultation to commence in early 2020.

Financial Management Unit and Operational Services (Facilities Management)
Non-teaching Trade Unions.

Consultation with current partner providers in relation to the hourly rate to be paid from April 2020.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1. Introduction

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Plans were submitted by each local authority to Scottish Government to inform the national ELC Expansion Programme in Autumn 2017.

Local authority ELC expansion plans are working documents which have and will continue to evolve over time. It is accepted the planning process is iterative and initial plans will be subject to change as further information and funding decisions emerge.

Local authorities are required to address capacity challenges by making best use of existing assets, buying where possible, through supporting a wide range of partners including childminders and third sector partners and building where needed. Local authorities are also expected to provide an increase to free hours of high quality ELC before 2020 using the additional revenue funding provided by the Scottish Government.

D2. Progress to Date

All sixty-one council run ELC settings within West Lothian now provide increased hours of free high quality ELC either up to 760 hours or 1000 hours for parents/carers with effect from August 2019 thus completing phase 2 of the phased implementation and complying with Scottish Government requirements.

Other options of placement for the academic session 2019/20 include:

- up to 1000 hours with a partner provider (private nursery, playgroup or family centre);
- 1140 hours with a registered childminder as part a pilot scheme being offered in partnership with the Scottish Childminder Association (SCMA).

D3. Recruitment

The extended opening hours in ELC setting from August 2019 has resulted in an increase in staffing levels across all council ELC settings from 293 FTE in 18/19 to 436 FTE in 19/20. There have been no recruitment issues to date, with recruitment to specific posts and the supply register continuing throughout the year.

In January 2019, ten new management posts were appointed in order to support the Head Teacher and staff in each setting based on a geographic area. These posts provide support to settings out with the school day (8am – 6pm) and throughout the year.

It is proposed to appoint an additional seven posts from January 2020 to support the increased number of settings open for 50 weeks per. The Early Years Development team based in the Civic Centre has also increased to cope with the increased workload with the additional of 2.4 FTE to support partner providers, childminders, Regional Improvement Collaborate and additional support needs.

In addition, it is proposed to allocate 0.2FTE management time to each setting to oversee the quality of learning and the quality of the provision from January 2020.

D4. Phase 3 – August 2020

In the next phase of the ELC expansion for August 2020, all Council settings will offer 1140 hours of free high quality ELC, with parents/carers being able to choose a private partner provider or childminder.

Further consultation with Head Teachers and staff in those settings which will move to opening 50 weeks per year from August 2020 will commence in the New Year.

The Early Years Development Team will also continue to consider what other options/models of provision can reasonably be made available to parents/carers in future years.

D5. Capital Programme

A programme of refurbishment and extensions to ELC settings commenced in 2016/17 utilising the additional capital funding for the ELC expansion. These works have provided increased capacity across ELC settings and in particular provided improved access to outdoor learning.

There are three new ELC settings within the programme due for completion in 2020 to provide increased capacity and/or increased flexibility options for parents/carers along with three ELC extensions;

- New nursery, St Mary's PS, Bathgate.
- New nursery extension, Blackburn PS.
- New nursery extension, Stoneyburn PS.
- Nursery extension, Blackridge PS to increase capacity.
- Nursery extension, Howden St Andrews PS to increase capacity.
- Nursery extension, Parkhead PS to increase capacity.

The opening hours of the three new settings will be determined following consultation with the local communities.

D6. Partner Providers

To provide additional flexibility and choice for parents/carers, following approval from Council Executive on 21 February 2019, eleven new private partner providers now offer up to 1000 hours free ELC from August 2019 for eligible children - thus giving a total of eighteen private partner providers across West Lothian.

All new partner providers including childminders have been provided with a start-up grant funded through a one-off additional revenue allocation from the Scottish Government. Existing partner providers were provided with a one-off grant in 2018/19. The balance was approved by the Scottish Government to be carried forward to support the expansion in 2019/20 for new providers and has now been allocated to new partner providers including childminders.

This funding will enable providers to develop resources to support the effective delivery of the Early Level of Curriculum for Excellence and the practice encouraged through Building the Ambition, national practice guidance. This funding was allocated for, but not restricted to supporting partner provider's settings to build capacity such as:

- Supporting staff training and development.
- The purchase of resources/ equipment which support and challenge children's learning within the areas of Literacy, Numeracy, Health and Wellbeing and promote curiosity, creativity and inquiry. Selected resources should be clearly linked to current Early Years practice and pedagogy promoted across W.L.C., i.e. Froebelian practice.

Approval was given by the Council Executive on 2 December 2019 to tender for private partner providers for a three year period from August 2020, this will align all providers on the same terms and condition for the provision of funded hours.

D7. Tender and Sustainable Rate for 2020 Onwards

The hourly rate paid to all providers including private partners, playgroups and childminders was increased to £5.00 per hour with effect from 1 April 2019. The increase was to enable the partner providers to make incremental adjustments to wage rates in 2019.

The hourly rate paid to partner providers requires to be reviewed again to consider the increases to the Scottish living wage (now £9.30 per hour), associated employer costs and inflation/indexation for 2020. It is a requirement of the National Standard that partner providers pay staff who support funded placements are paid the Scottish Living Wage in 2020.

At present partner providers pay staff the UK living wage rates which varies depending on the age of the member staff between £3.90 per hour and £8.21 per hour.

Consultation with current partner providers was been undertaken between October and December 2019. The consultation consisted of a combination if individual meetings with private partner providers, a survey of childminders and a cost survey of all private and third sector providers.

During the consultation officers shared the guidance published by the Scottish Government in May 2019 with private providers.

'Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard for ELC Providers: Guidance for Setting Sustainable Rates from August 2020'

Approval for a new tender for ELC partner providers for a three year period from August 2020 onwards was approved by the Council Executive on 2 December 2019.

Taking into consideration the feedback from each provider, the commercial information provided and benchmarking with other local authorities. The following rates are proposed to take effect from 1 April 2020 which will include the provision of a daily snack and meal for each child:

- Childminders £6.30 per hour.
- Private Partner Providers - £6.80 per hour.

It is estimated that the increase in the hourly rate will cost £866,000 in 2020/21 and will be fully funded within the additional revenue budget provided for the ELC expansion.

The hourly rate will be re-assessed for future years of the new contract, giving consideration to the rate of inflation and any increases in the Scottish Living Wage.

D8. Survey Results

A further survey of parents/carers was undertaken in September 2019 and was issued to 4750 parents/carers who have/will have eligible children during the

academic session 2019/20. There was a 35.6% response rate (1692 respondents) who showed a preference of providers for 1140 hours as follows:

- Local authority nursery – 80.1%,
- Private nursery – 11.4%,
- Child minder – 1.9%,
- Playgroup – 0.9%,
- Other – 5.7%.

For comparison the 2018 survey results are provided below (it should be noted that respondents could select more than one choice in this survey):

- Local authority nursery – 82%,
- Private nursery – 26.9%,
- Child minder – 10.4%
- Playgroup – 13.7%,
- Other – 1.4%.

The profile of ELC placements for children aged three and four years for the period August 2019 – April 2020 is outlined below:

- Council setting – 3552
- Private Partner Provider – 374
- Childminder – 25
- Total – 3951

A further intake of around 500 children will take place from April 2020.

D9. Free School Meals

From August 2020, all children in an ELC setting will be entitled to a free school meal. This means that up to an additional 4000 meals will require to be prepared per day, Monday – Thursday throughout the year in local authority settings (uptake is likely to be close to 100%). At present only those children whose family qualify for free school meals and are entitled to be provided with a meal.

Work is ongoing with schools and Operational Services to identify requirements in relation to additional staffing, equipment and accommodation in order to fulfil this entitlement. Three pilot locations have been identified to trial Marvellous Meals in early 2020, St Anthony's PS NC, Armadale, St Mary's PS, Polbeth (Polbeth NS), Bathgate EYC and Simpson PS NC, Bathgate in the Spring term.

It should be noted that the National Standard states that the meal to be provided does not require to be a hot meal but that all meals and snacks must meet the most up-to-date nutritional guidance provided for ELC (currently included in Setting the Table).

D10. Snack

As all children in an ELC setting will be entitled to a free school meal from August 2020, charging for snack will cease from January 2020.

This initiative supports the Council's Anti-Poverty Strategy and reduces the cost of the school day, providing additional support for parents/carers. It is estimated that this change will cost £110,000 per annum with a budget allocation being provided to each ELC setting to enable them to continue to purchase and provide healthy snacks throughout the year.

E. CONCLUSION

The Executive are asked to note the progress to date and to approve proposals outlined in this report.

The proposals will be fully funded by the additional revenue provided by the Scottish Government for the ELC Expansion for 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland:
ELC Expansion Planning Guidance for Local Authorities.

Appendices/Attachments: None

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