

To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 28 October 2021

Report by: Director of Children's Services

**Heading: Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement - 1140
Expansion Update**

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda for early learning and childcare (ELC) by 2020. The vision was to increase the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by August 2020 for all children aged 3 and 4 year and eligible 2 year olds.
 - 12 Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the statutory duty to deliver 1140 hours of ELC by August 2020 was removed by the Scottish Government in March 2020. The Scottish Government placed a new Order in March 2021 making 1140 hours of ELC effective from 1 August 2021.
 - 13 Renfrewshire Council's ELC expansion plan was first approved by the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 15 March 2018. The expansion of 1140 hours has been phased in Renfrewshire in the lead up to school session 2020. During school session 2020/21 1140 hours of ELC was implemented where possible, with 94% of children receiving the increased hours.
 - 14 This report provides a final update on the 1140 expansion in Renfrewshire in relation to implementation, workforce and the infrastructure programme.
-

2. Recommendations

- (i) The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to note the hugely successful implementation of the 1140 expansion in Renfrewshire, as outlined in section 4 of the report.
-

3. Background

- 31 Prior to the 1 August 2021 children aged 3 and 4 years and eligible 2 year olds were entitled to 600 hours of funded ELC per annum. A new Order issued by the Scottish Government in March 2021, via The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (Modification) Order 2021, amended the entitlement from 600 hours to 1140 hours, effective from 1 August 2021.
- 32 The 1140 expansion programme has transformative potential to raise the attainment of all children with a focus on giving children the best start in life and in narrowing the poverty related attainment gap. The expansion of ELC is underpinned by the following four key principles - quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability. These 4 key principles are fully reflected in Renfrewshire Council's 1140 expansion plan.
- 33 The Council's ELC expansion plan was first approved by the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 15 March 2018. Further papers updating on the phasing of the expansion were presented to the same Policy Board in August 2018, January and October 2019, March and 29 October 2020.
- 34 The planned infrastructure developments to support the expansion included 16 refurbishments, 6 extensions and 4 new builds. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic 9 of these projects were completed. The impact of the pandemic on the delivery of the infrastructure programme was reported to the Policy Board meeting on 29 October 2020, when members were advised that 11 projects were complete and 15 were outstanding.
- 35 Early learning and childcare places continue to be offered via a mix of Council and Funded Provider settings, including childminders, with 69% being delivered within Council establishments and 31% in Funded Provider services.
- 36 Members will recall that the Council's expansion offers parents a range of options for accessing their child's free ELC entitlement across each geographical area. In each area parents will be able to choose from a range of providers and options, including term time and 52 weeks per year, full day and part-time places.
- 37 ELC places are allocated in line with the Council's Early Years Admissions Policy to ensure fairness and consistency in the allocation process. The majority of parents usually apply for an ELC place within the area they reside in. Parental preference of establishment is considered by panel members during the allocation process.
- 38 Members should be aware that not all families may choose to take up the full 1140 hours of ELC. Some parents may also choose to have a blended placement for their child, this is where a child is receiving the entitlement across more than one setting.
- 39 Renfrewshire Council continues to be committed to ensuring high quality early learning provision across Renfrewshire. A range of training and development opportunities has continued to be provided to support the development of new and existing staff (practitioners and leaders) in Council and Funded Provider settings.
-

4 Progress in Implementing Renfrewshire Council's 1140 Expansion Plan

4.1 Implementation

4.1.1 During the last school session (2020/21) Renfrewshire Council successfully delivered 1140 hours of ELC to 94% (3,403) of children aged 3 to 5 years and 99% (244) of eligible 2 year old receiving 1140 hours. The remaining children received at least 600 hours, the statutory entitlement at that time.

4.1.2 From the start of this school session, all eligible children in Renfrewshire, whose parents choose to have this, have been allocated with 1140 hours of ELC in line with legislation. To date, the Council has offered ELC places to 3598 children aged 3 to 5 years and 200 eligible 2 year olds. It is expected that the numbers of children will increase as further applications are made throughout the school session.

4.2 Workforce

4.2.1 The Council successfully achieved the required workforce to support the ELC expansion, with 297 new positions created across the Council's ELC classes and centres, this included management and practitioner posts. The ongoing recruitment programme, voluntary contractual changes and 'grow our own' workforce plan enabled the Council to achieve the staff and leaders to support the expansion.

4.2.2 The successful delivery of Children's Services 'grow your own' plan helped to facilitate the required growth in the workforce to support the expansion. This included the training of Modern Apprentices (MA) and Early Learning Support Workers (ELSW) to support the recruitment of ELSWs and ELCOs. The Service's comprehensive leadership training programme was successful in helping to 'grow our own' leaders, with a number of internal management appointments made to posts such as Senior ELCOs, Head and Depute Heads of Centres and Early Years Graduates positions.

4.2.3 Children's Services continues to provide a range of high quality professional learning opportunities for practitioners and leaders in the Council, Funded Provider establishments and Childminders to support the Council's commitment to ensuring high quality ELC provision across Renfrewshire. A comprehensive programme of remote and online learning opportunities was provided last session and is planned for this session, including:

- a range of professional learning seminars and courses, including certificated courses, learning sets, leadership induction and courses for existing and new Heads, Deputies and senior staff; and
- funded support for leaders and practitioners to access certificated training such as degree and entry qualifications to enable them to meet Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements.

4.2.4 Children's Services Quality Improvement Framework and programme of support continues to be provided to Council and Funded Provider settings to support them to ensure and maintain quality provision.

4.3 Infrastructure

4.3.1 In October 2020 the Education and Children's Services Policy Board was provided with an update on the early years infrastructure expansion programme, which reflected the impact of Covid-19 on the delivery of the programme. At that time the infrastructure programme status of the 26 projects was as follows:

- 11 projects were complete;
- 7 projects were on track for completion by December 2020;
- 5 projects were projected for completion by April 2021; and
- 3 projects were projected for completion by August 2021.

4.3.2 While the challenges facing the project have been considerable, by October 2021 the profile of the infrastructure expansion programme has progressed very well and the status of the 26 projects is as follows:

- 24 are now complete (including the 4 new builds);
- 1 major refurbishment (St Catherine's) 'go live' date has been rescheduled to end of February 2022; and
- 1 dining extension (no impact on 1140 delivery) at St Anne's has been rescheduled for completion by end of February 2022.

4.3.3 As indicated above the delivery of individual projects has not been without its challenges, however the project team has received very positive feedback from Heads of ELC Classes and Centres reporting high levels of satisfaction in almost all settings. Where snagging matters have been identified swift action has been taken to remediate any issues with minimal impact on service users.

4.3.4 Rescheduling of the 'go live' at St Catherine's is a direct result of availability of resources (workforce and materials) and every effort has been made to ensure continuity for those children temporarily relocated to Gallowhill Community Centre.

4.3.5 Similarly, rescheduling at St Anne's is also related to the impact of the pandemic, however there has been no requirement to relocate children to alternative locations.

4.3.6 While facilities may not be complete at 2 locations, all entitled children will have access to 1140 hours.

Implications of this report

1. Financial

Renfrewshire Council's delivery of the expansion plan will require to be in line within the Government funding.

2. HR and Organisational Development

As outlined in the report presented to the education and children's services policy board in August 2018.

3. Community/Council Planning

- | | |
|---|---|
| Our Renfrewshire is thriving | - Ensuring the best start in life for children and young people. |
| Our Renfrewshire is well | - Early intervention will lead to healthier outcomes for children and young people. |
| Our Renfrewshire is safe | - Local services will benefit children, young people and members of the community. |
| Building strong, safe and resilient communities | - The quality of community life is enhanced by supporting parents, children and young people. |

Tackling inequality, ensuring opportunities for all

- Effective governance arrangements ensure that the organisations receiving funding comply with legislative requirements.

Creating a sustainable Renfrewshire for all to enjoy

- Support to families and flexible childcare placements will support parents into and sustain employment, training or enter education.

4. Legal

The Council will require to comply with any change to support for early learning and childcare in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, amended Act 2019

5. Property/Assets

The development of individual infrastructure projects is informed, as appropriate, by officers from children's services; finance and resources; communities, housing and planning services; and environment and infrastructure services.

6. Information Technology

Information and technology will be required to be set up for new services.

7. Equality and Human Rights

The recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations.

8. Health and Safety

It is integral to the Council's aim of securing the health and wellbeing of employees and those affected by its undertakings and without this continued effective focus, there is a risk that will adversely impact on the Council both financially and in terms of service delivery.

9. Procurement

The current Framework for ELC Places with funded providers runs out at the end of this school session therefore a further procurement process will be undertaken during this session for session 2021 onwards. The new Framework arrangements will reflect the Scottish Government procurement guidance for engaging independent providers or third sector in delivering early learning and childcare.

10. Risk

The infrastructure timeline could be subject to change as a result of unknown covid implications.

There is a risk around independent and third sector sustainability due to the impact of Covid-19. Also, in relation to the retention of their workforce; implications of paying the living wage; issues around the sustainable rate for an ELC; and the impact the increased hours of ELC has on the non-funded

hours part of their businesses. These concerns have been raised across Scotland, as well as in Renfrewshire.

11. Privacy Impact

Personal information will only be held as required to deliver the service. This will be done in accordance with data protection legislation.

12. COSLA Policy Position

COSLA has been involved in the negotiations with the Scottish Government regarding the expansion of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. The Renfrewshire plan reflects the COSLA position.

13. Climate Risk

None

List of Background Papers

- (a) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement Expansion Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 24 August 2017.
- (b) A blueprint of 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland – early learning and childcare service model for 2020 consultation paper, The Scottish Government 2018.
- (c) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement – 1140 Expansion Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 15/03/18
- (d) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement – 1140 Expansion Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 23/08/18
- (e) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement – 1140 Expansion Plan, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 17/01/19
- (f) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement - 1140 Expansion Phasing Update, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 31/10/19
- (g) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement - 1140 Expansion Phasing Update, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 12/3/20
- (h) Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement - 1140 Expansion Phasing Update, Education and Children's Services Policy Board, 29/10/20

The foregoing background papers will be retained within children's services for inspection by the public for the prescribed period of four years from the date of the meeting.

The contact officer within the service is Kathleen McDonagh, Education Manager, 0141 618 7196, Kathleen.mcdonagh@renfrewshire.gov.uk

KMcD/JC/SQ/LG
14/09/2021

Authors: Kathleen McDonagh, Education Manager, 0141 618 7196, kathleen.mcdonagh@renfrewshire.gov.uk, Ian Thomson, Education Manager, 0141 6187241, ian.thomson@renfrewshire.gov.uk