
To: Education and Children's Services Policy Board

On: 12 March 2020

Report by: Director of Children's Services

Heading: Early Learning and Childcare Entitlement - 1140 Expansion Update

1. Summary

- 1.1 The Scottish Government is increasing the provision of early learning and childcare from the current 600 hours to 1140 by August 2020. This applies to all 3 and 4 year olds, and eligible 2 year olds. As agreed at the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on 15 March 2018, the expansion is being phased in Renfrewshire in the lead up to school session 2020.
 - 1.2 The 1140 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 early learning and childcare is to be underpinned by the following four key principles - quality, accessibility, flexibility and affordability.
 - 1.3 A report to the Education and Children's Services Policy Board on the 31 October 2019 provided members with an update on the 1140 expansion of early learning and childcare in Renfrewshire.
 - 1.4 Councils across Scotland regularly report to the Scottish Government on their progress on phasing of 1140 hours, workforce and infrastructure developments. In December 2019 the Scottish Government issued the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Progress Report (September 2019) to Councils, which indicated that good progress was being made across Scotland towards the expansion.
 - 1.5 This report provides a further update on the current status of the expansion programme in Renfrewshire, in relation to implementation, infrastructure and workforce. The overall assessment of Renfrewshire's progress to date is positive and is in line with the progress being made across Scotland.
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2. Recommendations

2.1 The Education and Children's Services Policy Board is asked to:

- (i) note the current progress to date in implementing of 1140 expansion of early learning and childcare; and
 - (ii) note the revised infrastructure timeline and contingency arrangements for ensuring the required spaces for all eligible children from August 2020 in areas where there is a delay in the completion of a construction project, as detailed in section 4.3.4 of this report.
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3. Background

- 3.1 Currently, under The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, children aged 3 and 4 years and eligible 2 year olds are entitled to 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare per annum. The 2014 Act was modified in 2019 to amend the mandatory amount of funded early learning and childcare hours from 600 hours to 1140, with the increase in hours coming into force in August 2020.
- 3.2 The Education and Children's Services Policy Board approved the early learning and childcare expansion plan for Renfrewshire at a meeting on 15 March 2018. Further papers relating to the expansion were presented to the same policy board in August 2018, January and October 2019.
- 3.3 Renfrewshire's plan has been developed in line with the Government advice to 'use what you have' in terms of the workforce, infrastructure and by securing places with the independent and third sector partner providers, including childminders. The planned infrastructure developments to support the expansion includes 16 refurbishments, 6 extensions and 4 new builds.
- 3.4 Renfrewshire Council's plan offers parents a range of options for accessing their child's free early learning and childcare entitlement across each geographical area. In each area, parents will be able to choose from a range of providers and options, as follows:
- a service which opens between 8 am to 6 pm provision over the school year, 46 or 50 weeks;
 - specific options of 6 hours per day over 38 weeks (school day model);
 - an option of 8am to 6pm over 2.5 days for 50 weeks; or
 - 8 am to 1 pm or 1 pm to 6 pm over 45.6 weeks.
- 3.5 Until the start of the school session in August 2020 the Council has a duty to ensure that the legislative requirement to provide children with 600 hours of funded early learning and childcare is maintained.
- 3.6 The identified key risks in achieving the expansion within the timescale set continue to be proactively managed by council officers. The risks include, progressing infrastructure developments; securing sufficient qualified staff; and future sustainability of the independent and third sector providers.

4 Progress in Implementing Renfrewshire Council's 1140 Expansion Plan

4.1 Implementation

4.1.1 During the current school session, the Council has offered early years places to an increasing number of children as part of the agreed phasing plan. Currently 1774 (41%) of children are receiving the expanded provision.

4.1.2 Early learning and childcare places continue to be offered via a mix of Council and funded partner facilities, including childminders, with 69% (2955) being delivered within Council establishments and 31% (1348) in funded provider services. The breakdown of the current expanded places offered as per provider is as follows:

- Local authority – 1095
- Funded provider – 679

4.1.3 The time line for progressing the early years admissions process for session 2020/21 has been brought forward to enable an earlier understanding of the projected uptake and demand across individual establishments and each area admissions panel area.

4.1.4 Communications for parents and the workforce in relation to the expansion is ongoing via several media platforms and internal communications. This includes information for parents about the early learning and childcare entitlement and the admissions process, and information for staff about career and job opportunities.

4.1.5 Renfrewshire Council continues to be committed to ensuring high quality early learning and childcare and has progressed a range of opportunities to support the development of new and existing staff (practitioners and leaders) in Council and funded partner establishments as follows:

- a range of professional learning seminars, leadership courses and conferences for existing heads, deputies and senior staff; and
- funded support for leaders and practitioners to access certificated training to enable them to meet Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements.

4.1.6 Children's Services quality improvement framework and programme of support visits to Council and funded partner establishments support them to ensure and maintain quality.

4.2 Workforce

4.2.1 Securing the required workforce to support the 1140 expansion continues to be a key priority for the Council. As a result of a range of recruitment exercises and voluntarily contractual changes, Children Services are 63% towards achieving their workforce target for August 2020.

- 4.2.2 There are remaining vacancies across Council establishments, which pose a moderate risk to the successful delivery of this programme. A range of interventions to mitigate this risk are on-going such as the recruitment of Modern Apprentices; training Early Learning Support Workers to achieve the required qualification to work as Early Learning and Childcare Officers; the introduction of a programme to re-train Council employees to work in early learning and childcare establishments, and working with schools and colleges and an independent provider to train senior pupils in early years through the foundation apprenticeship and vocational training route.
- 4.2.3 Funded providers have been supported to address workforce challenges by involving them in Council recruitment events; by developing a communication toolkit to enable them to promote their services; through grant support which could be used for trainee employee costs; and support with training costs for unqualified staff working in their establishments. We will continue to work with our providers to support them to address future workforce challenges.
- 4.2.4 It should also be noted that, because not all children will be three years old as of August, not all posts will require to be filled in time for the school session starting. Early analysis of the admissions information will support deployment of staff to ensure successful delivery of expansion.

4.3 Infrastructure

- 4.3.1 The initial planned infrastructure programme to support the expansion comprised of 27 projects: 17 refurbishments, 6 extensions and 4 new builds. Through continued planning and analysis of need the infrastructure programme now comprises of 26 projects: 16 refurbishments, 6 extensions and 4 new builds. Nine of the refurbishments are complete and the overall assessment of progress to date is positive.
- 4.3.2 The Scottish Future's Trust has been working with all local authorities to ensure contingency plans are in place to provide sufficient spaces for all entitled children by August 2020 in the event that construction projects are not complete by this date. In this respect, the Council has flagged delivery risk, and mitigation which ensures that places will be available to support the delivery of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare to all entitled children by August 2020, against 2 of the 4 new build projects, 1 of the extension projects and 1 of the 16 refurbishment projects. The details of these contingency arrangements are noted as 'delivery risks' below.
- 4.3.3 Delivery risks:
- Lochfield Early Learning and Childcare Centre (new build): revised completion date November 2020. This risk relates to ground conditions identified by the contractor in December 2019. The remediation required will delay the construction start date, impacting on an already tight construction programme.
 - Dargavel Early Learning and Childcare Centre (new build): revised completion date November 2020. This risk is the result of delays in the transfer of land from BAE and the subsequent delay in commencing site investigation which ultimately impacts on the construction programme.

- Lochwinnoch Early Learning and Childcare Class (refurbishment): revised completion date November 2020. This risk is the result of a legal requirement to respond to 'Bat Activity'. Work should have commenced on site in May 2020; however, evidence of potential bat roosting has been identified and therefore construction cannot commence until July 2020 at the earliest.
- St Catherine's Early Learning and Childcare Class (extension): revised completion date November 2020. A revision of the construction approach, from a modular extension to traditional build, is required as the opportunity to progress this project through the Crown Commercial Services and Scottish Procurement Alliance national frameworks was no longer viable in terms of delivery timescales.

Advice obtained from key suppliers on the frameworks reported that manufacturing and design slots for modular construction were generally at full capacity for projects of the scale of St Catherine's until at least August 2020 and as such, there would be significant risk in obtaining Building Warrant and Planning Consent within acceptable timescales.

- 4.3.4 To mitigate any delivery risk, Children's Services is analysing admissions data to manage the placement allocation from August 2020; with children aged 3 years becoming eligible from the month after his or her 3rd birthday. As not all children will be 3 years old in August, a reduced number of children will be entitled to a place and temporary arrangements can therefore be made to redirect entitled children to alternative facilities until the new build Centres are ready for occupation.
- 4.3.5 In terms of Lochwinnoch ELCC the proposal is to decant the children to the McKillop Institute until the refurbishment to the existing building is finalised. Children will continue to attend St Catherine's ELCC and additional children that cannot be accommodated within the existing floor space will be temporarily relocated until the extension to the building is complete. Admissions arrangements have been brought forward to support this analysis and a greater understanding of the number of places required will be known in April 2020. Given this mitigation the likelihood and impact of these delivery risks are low.
- 4.3.6 Construction risks have been identified through ongoing site investigations and technical appraisals. Due to the complex and varied nature of the construction sites there exists inherent risk in the ground conditions and substructure, building services connections and potential adverse weather conditions. The project team and contractor will routinely monitor construction progress against the programme in order to identify any potential slippage and means of mitigation against these low risk elements. Given this mitigation the likelihood and impact of these construction risks is low.

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.

Additional early years staff and managers are required to deliver the expansion. The workforce subgroup continues to lead on recruitment and training options to help ensure that there are sufficient staff to support the expansion.

3. Community/Council Planning

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| 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 Renfrewshire Expansion Plan will consider the way in which providers are contracted to deliver early learning and childcare services for entitled children. Future procurement arrangements will reflect the Scottish Government procurement guidance for engaging independent providers or third sector in delivering early learning and childcare.

10. Risk

Given the expansion across Scotland there will be a demand on the construction industry which could result in insufficient providers being available to build and deliver the adaptations required.

Given the scale of expansion across Scotland, Children's Services may be unable to recruit sufficient staff to deliver the expansion of funded early learning and childcare.

Providers in the independent and third sector will face challenges in retaining and recruiting sufficient staff, posing a risk on the number of places available.

There is a risk around independent and third sector sustainability due to their concerns about retaining their workforce, living wage implications receiving a sustainable rate for early learning and childcare and sustainable around non-funded hours part of other 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

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.

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