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**To:** **Education Policy Board**

**On:** **15 January 2015**

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**Report by:** **Director of Education and Leisure Services**

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**Heading:** **Implementation of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare**

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## **1. Summary**

- 1.1. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act (the Act), which received Royal Assent on 27 March 2014, introduces a mandatory number of hours for early learning and childcare of 600 hours for eligible pre-school children per year. This was an increase from the previous 475 hours offered in 2013/14. The provision of 600 hours of early learning and childcare was required to be implemented from August 2014 with a more flexible model of delivery offered and which will enable parents to have an appropriate degree of choice from August 2015.
  - 1.2. This report details the proposed plan for delivering a more flexible model of delivery of early learning and childcare from August 2015.
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## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1. The education policy board is asked to note the plan for delivering a more flexible model of delivery of early learning and childcare as specified in section 4 of this report.
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## **3. Background**

- 3.1. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act includes various proposals in respect of the provision of early learning and childcare to children from ante pre-school age to primary age including a mandatory number of government funded hours for early learning and childcare. From August 2014 this introduced the offer of up to a maximum 600 hours per year for eligible pre-school children.
- 3.2. An eligible child is defined as:

- Three years of age and over subject to guidance relating to section 34 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000, as amended;
  - 2 years old and over who is or has been at any time since their second birthday been looked after, subject of a kinship care order or has a parent appointed guardian; and
  - 2 years old and over from households where a parent or carer is in receipt of certain qualifying benefits defined under the Provision of Early Learning and Childcare (Specified Children) (Scotland) Order 2014.
- 3.3. The Act also places a duty on local authorities to consult with parents of children under school age on how early learning and childcare should be made available and for each local authority to publish a plan of intention. Thereafter, consultation must be carried out every 2 years.
- 3.4. The statutory guidance, which was produced by Scottish Ministers under section 34 of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 and under section 96 (3) of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 in relation to Part 6 of the Act on early learning and childcare provides a minimum framework in relation to the method of delivery of early learning and childcare as follows:
- sessions which are no less than 2.5 hours;
  - sessions which are no more than 8 hours a day; and
  - sessions must be over a minimum of 38 weeks a year, or pro rata which need not be confined to term time.
- 3.5. Local authorities must have regard to, and ensure that the method of delivery of early learning and childcare is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice when deciding how to access the services. Scottish Ministers expectation is that a range of models or patterns are implemented to ensure flexibility.
- 3.6. The Council consulted with parents of children under school age who use services in Renfrewshire on the method for delivering early learning and childcare from July 2013 to December 2013. Within the questionnaire parents were asked to provide their views on the future model of delivery for early learning and childcare. From the responses received, the majority indicated a preference for 3 hour 10 minute sessions over 38 weeks (school term). However, three options received returns of over 50% indicating that there is also a need for childcare that is flexible to suit family situations. These options were:
- morning or afternoons with the option of additional time early morning, lunchtime or late afternoon;
  - 2 full days during term time totalling 15hrs 50 minutes; and
  - 2 x 6 hr days for 50 weeks of the year.
- 3.7. In response to the feedback from the consultation the following model of 600 hours of early learning and childcare was approved by the education policy board in January 2014 and is being implemented during this current school session:

- 5 sessions of 3 hours 10 minutes over 38 weeks during the school term; and
  - for nurseries providing a full year service more flexible options of early learning and childcare may be delivered. These could include a 3 hour session over a 40 week period; 2½ hours over 48 weeks; 2 full days or 2½ days totalling a maximum of 15 hours and 50 minutes.
- 3.8. A focus group comprising staff from local authority, approved partner nurseries and trade union representation has continued to meet to monitor and evaluate the 2014/15 delivery model and to plan a more flexible model for 2015/16 onwards.
- 3.9. All early years establishments (council establishments and providers contracted to deliver early learning childcare) were consulted during October 2014 on the current model being implemented. The feedback to date from establishments, the focus group and unison are as follows:
- i) Benefits:
- quality childcare continues to be provided;
  - increased hours has resulted in a reduced costs for parents who pay for additional hours of early learning and childcare;
  - increased hours benefit working parents;
  - longer sessions provide staff with more time to spend with children and increased learning opportunities for children;
  - increased staffing is enabling staff to offer greater support to children with ASN or vulnerable children in planning and in the management of children's profiles; and
  - staggered start/finish times is providing parents with more flexibility.
- ii) Issues:
- children may become tired and hungry due to the increase session length;
  - increase of session time is limiting the time for staff to meet to jointly plan for children, attend CPD and manage displays and children's profiles;
  - children are being collected before the end of a session, this is particularly an issue for the afternoon session; and
  - staff shifts and working patterns can be challenging to manage.
- 3.10. Part of the consultation included a question on the identification of possible solutions. They are as follows:
- increase the length of the working week for nursery staff from 35 hours to 36 or 37 hours;
  - reduce the length of session time and extend length of year, for example, 3 hrs over 40 weeks;
  - additional staff;
  - increase management time in primary schools with nursery classes to provide additional support;
  - discussion with parents regarding the importance of accessing the full session;
  - introduce breakfast time in nursery and review the routine of the day; and

- limit lunchtime places or provide extra support over lunchtimes.
- 3.11. Further work will be undertaken to consider issues raised and to explore possible solutions including those that have been identified. The possible solutions for recruiting additional staff or increasing staff hours would require further discussion and clarification as to how this could be achieved. The proposal for additional hours may require a change to conditions of employment for Renfrewshire Council nursery staff.
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#### **4. Proposals for implementing a more flexible model of delivering 600 hours of early learning and childcare**

- 4.1. Work is ongoing in relation to planning a model of delivery of early learning and childcare which is flexible enough to allow parents an appropriate degree of choice.
- 4.2. The proposal includes a 'community model' approach which is planned for geographical areas (nursery admissions areas). This model would result in establishments providing a range of patterns for delivering early learning and childcare, with some delivering the more traditional model of term time provision of 3 hours 10 minutes sessional places or full day places of 6 hours 20 minutes per day whilst other establishments may deliver a range of patterns of placements across a calendar year. This approach should ensure flexibility which allows parents an appropriate degree of choice.
- 4.3. Initial work has been undertaken to identify the possible models that could be made available within panel areas. However, further work is required to establish information on the needs of identified families on a local basis and to plan the required staffing resources to achieve the proposed model.
- 4.4. A detailed plan for delivering a range of models of early learning and childcare which is flexible to ensure there is a degree of choice for parents will be reported to the education policy board by May 2015.
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#### **Implications of this report**

##### **1. Financial Implications**

Within previously reported resource allocations.

##### **2. HR and Organisational Development Implications**

Where additional staffing will be recruited in line with council policy. There will be staffing implications to deliver the increased entitlement and maintain the existing level of quality services. Additional nursery staff will be required to maintain ratios, allow for curriculum planning and lunchtime provision. The additional hours will also impact on cleaning arrangements and business support in terms of more flexible arrangements.

##### **3. Community Plan/Council Plan Implications**

Children and Young  
People

- Ensuring the best start in life for children  
and young people.

Community Care, Health and Well-being	- Earlier intervention will lead to healthier outcomes for children.
Empowering our Communities	- Local services will benefit children, young people and members of the community.
Jobs and the Economy	- Flexible early learning and childcare places will strive to support parents into sustainable employment, training or education.
Safer and Stronger	- Services are provided by a highly skilled workforce.  People benefit from services that continually improve.
Children and Young People	- Ensuring the best start in life for children and young people.

**4. Legal Implications**

The council requires to comply with the legislative changes arising from the Act.

**5. Property/Assets Implications**

There may be a need to modify some local authority buildings to respond to the requirements of the Act.

**6. Information Technology Implications**

None.

**7. Equality and Human Rights Implications**

The recommendations contained within this report have previously 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 contained in the report. Consultation and evaluation will be carried out as part of the implementation to ensure no negative impact on equalities or human rights.

**8. Health and Safety Implications**

None.

**9. Procurement Implications**

Where the council obtains services from private and third party service providers within the council area and the proposed changes and increase in hours have been discussed and identified in the report 'Purchase of Early Learning and Childcare Places in Private and Voluntary Nurseries' dated 16 January 2014.

**10. Risk Implications**

There are no new material risks in relation to the current proposal. However, the service will ensure a full review of risks and opportunities is undertaken when plans for implementing a more flexible model are being developed.

## 11. Privacy Impact

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

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### List of Background Papers

- (a) Purchase of Early Learning and Childcare Places in Private and Voluntary Nurseries, education policy board, 16 January 2014.
- (b) Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000, as amended.
- (c) Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

The foregoing background papers will be retained within ELS 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 Officer, [kathleen.mcdonagh@renfrewshire.gov.uk](mailto:kathleen.mcdonagh@renfrewshire.gov.uk)

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#### **Education and Leisure Services**

KMcD/AK/LG/AK/GMcK/LMcA/FD

19 December 2014

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