

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services
11 November 2015

Agenda Item	10.
Report No	ECAS 98/15

Expansion of Flexible Delivery of Early Learning and Childcare for 2016/17

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

The report outlines proposals for the further development and flexible delivery of Early Learning and Childcare from August 2016, and is the first in a series of papers to be presented to committee as part of the process of establishing new management structures for schools in Highland.

1. Background

- 1.1 As required by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, the Highland Council has, since August 2014, provided 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for all eligible 3 and 4 year olds. The provision is delivered by 141 school nurseries and 62 partner centre providers.
- 1.2 Some two year olds are also entitled to 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare. They are:
 - those who come from families with a level of household income that entitles them to free school meals,
 - those who are looked after or subject to a kinship care order or with a parent appointed guardian.
- 1.3 The uptake of two year old provision across Scotland has not been as high as would have been expected, and in Highland Council area the uptake of free entitlement is standing at 92 places out of a projected eligibility of 650. Provision for eligible two year olds is largely made through childminders and partner providers, although some may also use their entitlement to attend their local school nursery as soon as they reach their third birthday.
- 1.4 Due to the short timescale for initial implementation, the Scottish Government acknowledged that it might not have been possible to expand choice and flexibility of provision from August 2014. In subsequent years however, the expectation was that additional flexibility should be introduced in consultation with parents and as extra resources were made available. The Government priorities underpinning the provision of early learning and childcare are:
 - to improve outcomes for children, especially those who are more vulnerable or disadvantaged and
 - to support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty
- 1.5 Having met the target to deliver 600 hours of early learning and childcare from August 2014, the next stage has been to develop appropriate models of flexible delivery to best meet the needs of Highland communities, whilst also preparing and planning for the expected increase in entitlement over the coming years. This report provides details of revised models of delivery which, if approved, would be

introduced from August 2016 and beyond.

- 1.6 It is envisaged that flexibility in our larger schools will be achieved by opening from 8am – 6pm, and free early learning and childcare entitlement will be available for a maximum of 8 hours in any one day and for up to 16 hours in a week. Parents will also be able to purchase care by the hour, over and above their free entitlement. In these settings, childcare for school age children would also be available, as well as four weeks provision in the summer holidays.
- 1.7 In small to medium sized schools, and depending on local demand, it may be that 8am – 3pm is all that can be offered, as there is unlikely to be sufficient numbers to ensure the sustainability of a wider service. All ages would have access to the childcare provided between 8am – 9am, and all nursery children would also have access to early learning and childcare (free or to purchase) until 3pm when the school day finishes. This would still give opportunities for greater access to work and training opportunities for all parents.
- 1.8 In very rural schools with very low numbers, flexibility could be achieved, if all parents agree, by having the 16 hours of entitlement delivered over 3 or 4 days instead of 5 daily sessions. This would cut down on travel costs, but also provide longer periods over fewer days for access to work and training opportunities for the parents.
- 1.9 In taking these developments forward, we must be ever mindful of the impact that any changes to the current arrangements in local authority nurseries will have on the early years staff and management teams, and ensure that appropriate support is in place to alleviate any potential workload issues. These developments also have to be achievable within the current budget constraints, and therefore the range of early learning and childcare services being developed has to be seen in the context of the overall school management structures.

2. Current Models of Delivery

- 2.1 There are 62 partner centres, and 26 of these provide a full daycare service where parents can pay for early learning and childcare in addition to their 600 hours entitlement. These daycare settings usually operate throughout the year, in holiday periods as well as term time.
- 2.2 The remaining 36 partner centres tend to follow the current local authority model of daily sessions of 3 hours 10 minutes in term time. The pattern of delivery is not prescribed by the authority. Indeed, partners were encouraged to find their own solutions when the 600 hours of provision was implemented, albeit all went with the “sessional” approach at that time.
- 2.3 The majority of local authority nurseries only provide daily sessions of 3 hours 10 minutes in term time, but there are some exceptions where “wraparound care” has been established – some having been established as far back as 2007. A list of the 16 schools providing extended early learning and childcare is at **Appendix 1**.
- 2.4 Some of these settings offer an 8am – 6pm service for 3 -12 year olds, whereas the ones established in August 2014 provide a 9am – 3pm service for nursery age children which matches the school day. In all of these settings, parents can choose to buy early learning and childcare, in addition to their free entitlement of 5 daily sessions, at the current rate of £3.45 per hour.

- 2.5 This sessional approach was appropriate when the major expansion had to take place in such a short timescale. It is now evident that having established a one tier staffing structure and recruited a third more staff to the early years workforce – most of whom are qualified practitioners - that we are now ready to address the diversity of the Highlands and introduce new services and structures that are sustainable in the communities that they serve.
- 2.6 Introducing greater flexibility in the delivery of early learning and childcare will give parents more choice in how they can access their free entitlement, so that this can fit better with their working lives and finances, and consequently have a more positive impact on their family life.

3. Consultation with Parents

- 3.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires that the authority consults with parents every 2 years on early learning and childcare provision. In Highland, the view was taken that this should initially be a rolling programme of consultation in each Associated School Group, so that by the end of the first 2 years of implementation we would have had local discussion all over Highland. The programme was prioritised in the early stages to areas where there were other ongoing developments - e.g. new build schools, capacity pressures, lack of childcare provision.
- 3.2 In the main, parents in most areas were satisfied with the extended 600 hours service, although it was acknowledged that in some cases they were perhaps simply appreciative that there was an enhanced service, and they were not aware that it could be tailored more to their needs.
- 3.3 The general view of parents (and staff) is that they would continue to prefer to see provision for 2 year olds to be separate from school nurseries.
- 3.4 In rural areas, there is a general interest in more flexible patterns of delivery of the 16 hours per week, and in developing the approach of “early level” classes where appropriate. Early level classes are opportunities for nursery and primary 1 pupils to be educated together. This can be particularly beneficial, both educationally and socially, when the numbers in a small rural school are such that the mix of 5 – 12 year olds is not in balance, and the resulting composite class structure(s) are not ideal. An early level class would be staffed by a teacher and at least one Early Years Practitioner, depending on the numbers. A pilot of this approach was carried out Cannich Bridge in 2013/14, and is currently underway in Lairg this session. Further development, evaluation and consultation on this approach will be carried out before bringing a paper to Committee, as part of the wider ranging School Management Structure proposals in the future.
- 3.5 In the more urban areas, parents would like to see extended childcare services which would allow them increased access to work opportunities.
- 3.5 The consultation process will continue throughout this session, and it is encouraging that the views of parents across Highland reflect a broad consensus.

4 A More Flexible Approach

- 4.1 Although the implementation of the 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare was a “success”, in that we met the target to introduce the expansion by August 2014, it

was always acknowledged that there would need to be ongoing development and refinement of the service, especially as there was likely to be an even greater entitlement within the next term of Scottish Government.

- 4.2 It was for that reason that the implementation plan acknowledged that addressing weaknesses in the existing staffing structure was the first key point of the plan. A single tier staffing structure was introduced, which meant that the majority of staff were upgraded, and the standard core contract for an Early Years Practitioner was set at 23 hours per week.
- 4.3 It was also recognised that in the larger schools where there is a double session operating – one in the morning and one in the afternoon, with only a 10 minute change over period – that there was no more capacity to cope with an increase in entitlement in the future within the same accommodation. Increasing the capacity, by providing double the accommodation, would be a solution but perhaps not one that could be immediately affordable or deliverable. Flexibility of delivery was therefore something that could more readily be provided, and would in turn increase capacity and better meet the needs of working parents. While accommodation pressures remain, these can be tackled over a longer timescale.
- 4.4 It is clear that the “wraparound care” service is popular with some working parents. However, the free entitlement being organised into 5 daily sessions is not helpful for those who only work part weeks or shift patterns.
- 4.5 Another concern to be addressed, is that extended childcare services are currently only available to a very few parents/schools.
- 4.6 It was therefore decided to pilot new flexible approaches in 3 of the existing wraparound care settings in August 2015, in order to formulate a robust model of alternative delivery throughout Highland from August 2016 onwards.
- 4.7 The schools identified to pilot the increased flexibility were Inshes, Milton of Leys and Lochardil Primaries. Inshes and Milton of Leys were chosen because they were the biggest and most complex of our 8am – 6pm provisions. Lochardil was the “busiest” of our 9am – 3pm provisions. The reasoning was that if we could deliver in the most complex settings, then we would encounter, test and resolve the majority of issues in the pilot year.
- 4.8 The flexible approach adopted in the 3 pilot schools, means that parents can opt to take their 600 hours of entitlement in a way that best meets their needs. They can have a maximum of 16 hours per week, with up to 8 hours in any one day, so that some (if they only work two days per week) could have their child attend for only two days taking up their full entitlement, and have no childcare costs to pay. There is still the option for others to attend in the usual daily (sessional) pattern.
- 4.9 Almost half of the families in the pilot settings have taken the flexible option, with some stating that this approach has enabled them to return to work two years earlier than they could previously have done.

5 The Proposal for August 2016

- 5.1 From the ongoing feedback from the 3 pilot schools, and discussions with headteachers and early years staff regarding the current pressures with the existing model, the following proposals are presented for August 2016:

- All existing 8am – 6pm provisions move to the offer of flexible uptake (Inshes, Milton of Leys, BSGI, Drakies and Ben Wyvis).
- All other double session nurseries (approx. 53) offer 8am – 3pm flexible uptake – where accommodation allows.
- All single session nurseries consult with parents to see if there is demand for flexibility – if there is, then where this is considered sustainable, arrangements should be put in place.
- In all small school settings, consult with parents to see if a different delivery model would suit the majority better - i.e. 4 sessions of 4hours of delivery rather than 5 sessions of 3hours 10 minutes each

5.2 Where provision from 8am is introduced, all pupils will be able to access it. Parents of school aged children would require to pay for this service, but it may be part of the free entitlement for parents of 3 and 4 year olds. This will be a significant development across Highland, providing parents with greater flexibility in their working arrangements.

5.3 This transition to a flexible pattern of services involves additional administrative and management challenges for schools. Indeed, larger nurseries may have around 18 additional staff.

5.4 In the Inshes and Milton of Leys pilots, the deputy headteachers have been non class committed during this session, to develop and manage these extended services alongside their normal Senior Management Team duties and responsibilities. In the Lochardil (9am – 3pm) pilot, there has been no additional management time, but additional administrative support and Childcare and Family Resource Officer input from the central team has been provided.

5.5 It is proposed that a post of Childcare Manager is created in those schools with nurseries in excess of around 60 pupils. At present there are 19 schools in this category (**Appendix 2**), but a review will be carried out to confirm that there is demand for the proposed services before any appointments are made. These post holders will be members of the school senior management team, and the registered managers in terms of Care Inspectorate responsibilities of the facility. The Child Care Manager will be the line manager of the early years staff and will undertake to develop a full 8am – 6pm service for all 3 – 12 year olds pupils at the school. Initially, they may also be required to support smaller schools to implement their flexible arrangements.

5.6 The Childcare Manager position will create an opportunity for career advancement for Early Years Practitioners, which has not previously been available in the local authority staffing structure. It also provides a new key member of the senior management team in the larger primaries.

6. Implications

6.1 Resources

6.1.1 Child Care Manager posts will be funded from the Childcare fee income that is generated.

6.1.2 By introducing flexibility, there will be opportunities for Early Years Practitioners on

23 hour contracts to extend their hours (there will be no obligation to do so). Staff have been advised that these additional hours (over core 23 hours) will initially be negotiated on an annual basis.

- 6.1.3 Accommodation is a limiting factor in the expansion of delivery – if the entitlement doubles, do we need to have double the accommodation? This flexible approach would suggest not - as by offering the service over a longer day, we can maximise the usage of the accommodation beyond the “normal” school hours.
- 6.1.4 The booking and staff rostering systems for the large nurseries are complex, and at present there is no robust electronic system to support the activity. It is anticipated that as this is a national development, SEEMiS will develop their nursery management system to support the development of these flexible approaches.
- 6.2 **Equalities:** The enhancement of early learning and childcare services is a key national and local initiative to address health and social inequalities throughout life. This proposal seeks to provide services across Highland to support working parents to access affordable and sustainable early learning and childcare.
- 6.6 **Legal and Risk:** These actions are necessary to fulfil new statutory responsibilities. While the level and pace of expansion involves significant risk, good progress has been made to ensure that necessary provision is in place, albeit given the scale and diversity of provision across Highland, it is inevitable that local challenges will arise.
- 6.7 **Gaelic:** School providing both English and Gaelic medium nurseries would not be considered as a “double session” providing full 8am – 3pm flexible service in both mediums. Local discussion would have to take place to agree what could be acceptable and sustainable to both groups of parents.
- 6.8 **Rural Implications:** Due to the low numbers of children in some rural areas, it would be beneficial to adopt a flexible approach to school and nursery arrangements from year to year, ensuring that the educational and social needs of the whole cohort is addressed, whilst providing stability for the school (or partner centre).
- 6.9 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** There are none.

7. Recommendation

7.1 The Committee is asked to:

- agree the proposals relating to the staged expansion of flexibility of early learning and childcare across Highland from August 2016, and
- approve the creation of the post of Childcare Manager in the largest Primary Schools.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 15 October 2015

Author: Marlene Stewart, Education Officer

Primary Schools in Highland providing extended Early Learning and Childcare (for nursery children) and/or Out of School Care (for school age children)

Name of School	Year Childcare Service established	Hours available	Service provided
Inshes Primary, Inverness	2007	8am – 6pm	ELCC & OoSC
Bunsgoil Ghaidlig, Inbhir Nis	2007	8am – 6pm	ELCC & OoSC
Drakies Primary, Inverness	2007	8am – 6pm	ELCC only
Milton of Leys Primary, Inverness	2011	8am – 6pm	ELCC & OoSC
Ben Wyvis Primary, Conon Bridge (Mid)	2012	8am – 6pm	ELCC & OoSC
Central Primary, Inverness	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Hilton of Cadboll Primary, Mid Area	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Kinmylies Primary, Inverness	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Lochardil Primary, Inverness	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Muirtown Primary, Inverness	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Smithton Primary, Inverness	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
South Lodge Primary, Invergordon	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Craighill Primary, Tain	2014	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Ullapool Primary, Ullapool	2015	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Bunsgoil Ghaidlig Loch Abar	2015	8am – 6pm	ELCC & OoSC
Tomnacross Primary, Kiltarlity	2015	9am – 3pm	ELCC only
Cauldeen Primary, Inverness		3pm – 6pm	OoSC only
Grantown Primary, Grantown on Spey		3pm – 6pm	OoSC only
Inverlochy Primary, Fort William		3pm – 6pm	OoSC only
St Joseph's Primary, Inverness		3pm – 6pm	OoSC only

Nurseries over 60 pupils

North

Pennyland
Miller Academy
Noss
Newton Park

Mid

Park/South Lodge
Ben Wyvis

South

Milton of Leys
Inshes
Drakies
Smithton
Duncan Forbes
Balloch
Kinmylies
Merkinch
Central
Lochardil
Hilton
BSGI
Rosebank

Total 19

Notes:

Park/South Lodge – although no longer a cluster, South Lodge has 9-3 wraparound, and along with Park School, which has 56, could be developed by a Childcare Manager as there is no other childcare in Invergordon.

Dingwall Primary is not included and presently has 56 children – there are other providers in the town and this situation should be monitored.