

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
18 May 2016

Agenda Item	14iii.
Report No	ECAS 41/16

Further Developments in Early Learning and Childcare

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

The report outlines the progress to date in taking forward the strategic plan for the further expansion of flexible delivery of Early Learning and Childcare from August 2016.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Scottish Government priorities underpinning the provision of early learning and childcare are:
 - to improve outcomes for children, especially for those who may be 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.
- 1.2 Having met the target to deliver the increased entitlement of 600 hours of early learning and childcare in August 2014, the next stage has been to develop models of more 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.
- 1.3 Various models are being developed for implementation in school nurseries across Highland in an attempt to meet the local demand from parents for greater flexibility, whilst at the same time working within the limitations and constraints of existing accommodation, budgets, school management structures and capacity and data systems development.
- 1.4 This requires a continually evolving variety of management and staffing models as we seek to move to the new enhanced and flexible model of provision across many communities, within a strategic framework.
- 1.5 Partner Centres are able to devise their own models of delivery as long as they meet the Scottish Government parameters of a maximum of 16 hours per week over a minimum of 38 weeks of the year with no more than 8 funded hours in any one day. There are currently 33 sessional Partner Centres and 26 private Day Care Centres in Highland.

2. Progress to date on determining the model of flexible delivery in schools from August 2016

- 2.1 The current delivery model in most Highland school nurseries is to offer 5 sessions of 3 hours 10 minutes per week.
- 2.2 There are also eight schools offering additional wraparound care until 3pm; three

offering wraparound care until 6pm; and the three pilot schools for this session (Inshes, Milton of Leys and Lochardil Primaries) offering a flexible delivery where parents can request to vary their pattern of delivery to meet personal requirements, rather than fit with set sessional times.

- 2.3 In the last year in the pilot schools the uptake of those requesting flexible patterns of delivery has been around 30–35%. However, for August 2016, this has increased to around 50%. It is clear that once parents are aware and trust that arrangements will remain in place which will better support their working arrangements, they can tailor their working and childcare arrangements to their own specific needs.
- 2.4 Workshops were held for Headteachers and Early Years staff in January, prior to the nursery enrolment in early February, in order to ensure that all staff were briefed with enough information to consult locally with parents to determine if they would prefer a change to their current delivery model. There was no compulsion to change to a flexible model if the current sessional model suited the majority of parents. It was, though, highlighted that a further expansion of early learning and childcare would happen by 2020 and that it was important to begin to consult with parents about options in preparation for that.
- 2.5 In the smaller rural nurseries, discussions were around whether there should be a move from the current 5 session model to a longer session over fewer days – so there are now several nurseries opting to move to a 4 day / 4 hour session and at least one where all parents opted to have 3 days of 6 hours and they will pay for an additional two hours of early learning and childcare every week. This will mean that they will be travelling less, and the nursery timings will match the school day of any older siblings. In a rural area, where there are considerable travel distances, these arrangements would appear to work well for families – and also for the environment.
- 2.6 The establishment of Early Level classes has also been considered in some rural schools where there appears to be an educational and social benefit for pupils, where the whole school and nursery roll distribution would lend itself well to this approach. Although consultation with parents is still ongoing in some schools it looks as if there will be at least 10 Early Level classes established for session 2016/2017.
- 2.7 These Early Level Classes combine provision for 3 and 4 year old children with P1s, in an environment where the emphasis remains on early years' development. They ensure children are able to access the correct stage of learning to meet their needs. This is provided through a flexible programme, delivering learning opportunities through play along with more formal learning for those who are ready to access it. A wide range of resources are provided to support learning and this takes place both indoors and outdoors, and across all areas of the curriculum. The P1 pupils access all the mainstream school activities with the older children and as a result, transition from nursery to P1 and then on to P2 is more seamless than can be the case in larger settings.
- 2.8 In larger single session nurseries, it has been difficult to get a consensus around more flexible models and therefore the status quo of 5 standards sessions per week is likely to remain in most nurseries of this size in the coming year. Before an expansion of flexibility in these nurseries could be considered there would need to be evidence of sufficient uptake for additional hours, in order that they are

sustainable.

- 2.9 In the larger schools which operate double nursery sessions, there are many variations of times and models on offer, as each school can consult and agree on what is viable and possible. This detail is still being collated but it has been encouraging that, although there was the expectation for most of these schools to offer a flexible service to the end of the school day only (3pm), a number are responding to parental demand and providing a service to 4pm or 5pm. Some are providing the 16 hours entitlement more flexibly, whereas others are offering additional hours that can be purchased.

3. Management and Curricular Support for the new Flexible Models of Delivery

- 3.1 The new post of Childcare Manager was approved at the November Committee. This post will be established in larger primaries where we envisage the development of a full 8am – 6pm service for 3 -12 year olds will be fully in place within 2 years.
- 3.2 There were 13 posts to be established for the coming academic year. To date, there are 4 in post. Another 4 are due to start in June, and interviews for two posts are still to be held in the North. It is intended to hold back on any further recruitment action at this time and instead negotiate with the schools that have not been successful in recruiting in this round to determine how the existing management team can best be supported to deliver the new model. This will most likely be by providing increased management time but it could also be achieved by holding back the level of flexibility at this time.
- 3.3 At the March Committee it was agreed that the management time allocated to schools with double session nurseries would continue into next year and, in addition, the larger single session nurseries would also be entitled to additional management time from August 2016. There will require to be a degree of flexibility in determining this allocation. If it is purely based on the number of nursery children enrolled, it will not reflect the situation for a teaching head as opposed to a cluster head teacher or an Early Level class. These elements will need to be addressed in the overall review of School Management Structures.
- 3.4 In the meantime, it is broadly proposed to allocate additional management time as follows:
- Schools with Childcare Managers – no allocation
 - Schools with double session nurseries providing additional hours of early learning and childcare (and therefore generating additional income) – management time to be negotiated depending on level of service being offered – but will be greater than 0.1FTE
 - Schools with double sessions but only providing 16 hours for each pupil – 0.1FTE
 - Single session nursery – single headteacher school – 0.1FTE
 - Single session nursery – cluster headteacher – 0.1FTE for the whole cluster
 - Early Level classes – no management time allocation (as there will be a fulltime teacher)
- 3.5 Curricular support to all nurseries and partner centres will be provided by Early Years Education Support Officers. It has been agreed that there will be 10 of these posts across the authority (3 in the South, 2 in the three other areas, and a 1.0FTE Gaelic post which is most likely to be split into a 0.5FTE post for the West and a

0.5FTE post in the East). There have been 6 appointments to date from the Principal Teachers Pre-school, and the remaining posts will be advertised externally.

4. Changes to the Staffing Structure in Individual Settings

- 4.1 Local authority nurseries are currently staffed by Early Years Practitioners (EYPs). However, when the staffing structure was established in 2007 for the “Wraparound Care” service, posts of Out of School Care Assistants and Out of School Care Auxiliaries were established. The Assistant posts are the equivalent grade of the EYP, whereas the Auxiliary posts are a lesser grade. These posts have no curricular or key worker responsibilities.
- 4.2 With flexible delivery, the “wraparound care model” will no longer exist, as a nursery age child will be entitled to take up the funded entitlement at any time in the day – there will be no set “session time”. It is therefore proposed that the core staffing for school nurseries in the future should be Early Years Practitioners only, and that the posts of Out Of School Care Assistant and Auxiliary should only be included in the childcare of school-aged children.
- 4.3 There are 19 school settings where Out of School Care staff are employed. In 4 of these settings, the staff are already only working with school age children. In the other 15 settings, there are a total of 6 Out of School Care Assistants and 17 Out of School Care Auxiliaries who will be affected by this change.
- 4.4 Informal consultation meetings have already been held to alert staff to this potential change. There will be an opportunity for Out of School Care Assistants to take up Early Years Practitioner posts if they wish. However, the Out of School Auxiliaries would have to apply for any available EYP posts. Both are free to retain their existing posts, but would change to work with school-aged children only. This may result in a change of hours of work and a possible reduction in the number of hours and/or a change of base.
- 4.5 Alongside these developments, there is a need to further review nursery staffing to explore the relevance of establishing posts of Support Worker and Senior Practitioner, in order to create a staffing structure that will support the future expansion and provide a clear career path for staff.

5. Implications

5.1. Resources

- 5.1.1 The expansion of early learning and childcare will be fully funded by the Scottish Government. The Council will also receive income for additional childcare services.
- 5.1.2 Depending on the level of flexibility that is introduced, individual Early Years Practitioners may be offered additional hours in excess of their 23 hour core contracts, and this will be covered by the additional income that is generated.
- 5.1.3 If the proposal to change the staffing structure is approved, Out of School Care Staff will require a formal consultation relating to their current posts and future deployment.

- 5.1.4 Management Time will be negotiated with schools, depending on the level of flexibility they are to deliver from August 2016 and depending on the overall management structure arrangements for the school.
- 5.2 **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.
- 5.3 **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 Highland, it is inevitable that local challenges will arise.
- 5.4 **Gaelic:** It is envisaged that more flexible delivery will lead to opportunities for parents of children in Gaelic medium provision to opt for models that deliver an enhanced Gaelic medium experience.
- 5.5 **Rural:** Due to the fluctuating and often very low numbers in rural communities, it is important that a flexible approach is adopted to ensure that the models can change from year to year, to ensure that there is stability for the whole school and that the needs of all pupils, parents and staff are best addressed.
- 5.6 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** By moving away from 5 sessions per week, to delivery over three or four days in rural areas, travel costs and impact on the environment can be reduced.

6. Recommendation

- 6.1 The Committee is asked to continue to support the flexible approach in determining the model of delivery adopted by each school setting, and:
- Agree the negotiated approach to the allocation of management time depending on the level of flexibility being implemented from August 2016;
 - Approve the change to the staffing structure of school nursery settings of removing posts of Out of School Care Assistant and Auxiliary from the provision for 3 and 4 year olds but retaining them for the childcare for school age children; and
 - Agree to support the further refinement of the staffing structure to create a clear structure to support the future expansion and career development opportunities.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 9 May 2016

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