

Agenda Item	10
Report No	EDU/28/26

The Highland Council

Committee:	Education
Date:	26 August 2026
Report Title:	Delivery Plan Monitoring and Progress Update – Person Centred Solutions Q1 2026/27
Report By:	Assistant Chief Executive - People

1.	Purpose/Executive Summary
1.1	The Delivery Plan 2024-2027 consists of 66 projects/programmes, managed through 6 Portfolio Boards. This number will fluctuate as future work is developed, current projects close or work is restructured in order to improve an approach for successful delivery. Each project is reported to a relevant committee for consideration and scrutiny in terms of the Portfolio Reporting Cycle agreed at Council on 14 May 2026. Exceptions to this general rule may apply when, for example, circumstances merit a standalone project/programme report to either committee or Council. If exceptions apply this report will signpost to where the relevant reporting can be found.
1.2	This report provides financial, performance, risk and general information on the following Delivery Plan projects/Programme: • Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) and Childcare • Learning without Boundaries (New Project)
1.3	The content and structure of the report is intended to: • assist Member scrutiny and performance management • inform decision making and aid continuous improvement, and • provide transparency and accessibility
2.	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: i. Note the Delivery Project updates provided in this report; ii. Note the revised format of this report, which includes the use of portfolio board project dashboards from the Performance and Risk Management system (PRMS), with accompanying project narrative sections aligned to the content of these.

3.	Implications
3.1	Resource There are no resource implications arising as a direct result of this report. Any resource implications (if any) for delivery plan projects or programmes will be detailed in the Financials sections of each of the project updates provided below.
3.2	Legal This report contributes to the Council's statutory duties to report performance and secure best value in terms of Section 1(1)(a) of the Local Government Act 1992, and Section 1 of the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003, respectively.
3.3	Risk There are no risk implications arising as a direct result of this report. Project/Programme risks are assessed via the Council risk management process and monitored through the Portfolio Boards.
3.4	Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.
3.5	Gaelic There are no implications arising as a direct result of this report.
4.	Impacts
4.1	In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
4.2	Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
4.3	This is an update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.
5.	Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) and Childcare
5.1	<u>Overall Project RAG & Milestones</u> Below is an extract of the first page of the PRMS project dashboard which contains the Overall Project RAG and Key Project Milestones against which, project progress is tracked.

Workstream: Capacity Building

Project: Early Learning & Childcare [ELC] / Childcare

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Increasing more effective childcare solutions for families across the Highland area.

ACTIVITY:
Develop flexible, place-based, childcare solutions, rooted in the needs of local communities in collaboration with partners. Focus on sustainable delivery models. Address barriers to providing quality, flexible childcare solutions, including training, recruitment, regulation and business viability. Support communities and partners to bring forward childcare solutions (i.e. wraparound/ blended approach). Work towards a single care model.

PROJECT ELEMENTS:
- Developing, supporting and commissioning childcare solutions.
- PVI viability, compliance and regulatory support.
- Service delivery in collaboration with partners.
- Single Care Model providing care to both adults and children.

Portfolio: Person Centred Solutions

Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive

MILESTONES

CURRENT STATUS

Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24	ELC/Childcare: Commence Engagement	M3 24/25 Completed
Starts Apr24 / Completes Jun24	ELC/Childcare: Launch Assertive Highland Campaign	M3 24/25 Completed
Starts Aug24 / Completes Jan 25	ELC/Childcare: Implementation plan in place	M10 24/25 Completed
Starts Jan25 / Completes Mar25	ELC/Childcare: Engagement to agree next steps/solutions for settings with falling rolls	M12 24/25 Completed
Start Jan25 / Completes May25	ELC/Childcare: Community wealth building	M12 24/25 Completed
Starts Dec24 / Completes Jun25	ELC/Childcare: Agree governance for changes to provision and delivery model	M1 25/26 Completed
Starts Apr25 / Completes Aug25	ELC/Childcare: Offers giving flexibility and choice in delivery models available to communities	M5 25/26 Completed
Starts Dec24 / Completes Jul26	ELC/Childcare: Support for business development & compliance	M3 26/27 On Target
Starts Mar25 / Completes Jul26	ELC/Childcare: Engage with procurement to develop a robust procurement and contracting process for ELC partners	M3 26/27 On Target
Starts Oct26 / Completes Mar27	ELC/Childcare: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	

5.2

Overall Project RAG

- The project is currently RAG-rated Green, with delivery progressing as planned.
- The procurement process for contracting Private and Voluntary Sector (PVI) Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) partners has been agreed and is now underway.
- The Early Years team is providing ongoing support to partners to complete the procurement requirements.
- All partners are on track to be successfully procured for the delivery of funded ELC provision during 2026/27.

As set out in the People Cluster Audit Plan, an Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) audit has been undertaken by the Council’s Internal Audit Team and will be reported to the Audit Committee in August. An action plan has been developed to address the audit findings and strengthen business compliance, governance, and financial controls across the service.

5.3

Milestones

- Working in partnership with the Employability Service and the Scottish Childminding Association, 9 childminders have been recruited across Highland, 3 in Skye/Lochalsh and 6 in the Inner Moray Firth. To date, 2 have expressed an interest in becoming commissioned providers of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) but are not yet in position to apply.
- A new childcare delivery model is being piloted in Ardnamurchan through a ‘Workclub’ approach, where parents can work remotely from a shared location while their young children are cared for nearby.
- Funding in principle has been agreed by the Scottish Government to test unregulated, activity-based school-age childcare across eight sites in Highland, encompassing urban, rural and remote rural communities.

	Progress continues on the development and testing of the Single Care Model, with current activity focused on Ullapool and Ardnamurchan in partnership with LUCT and Urram.																												
5.4	<u>Key Risks & Measures of Success</u> Below is an extract of the second page of the PRMS project dashboard which sets out the Key Risks and Measures of Success for the project. <table><tr><th colspan="2">MEASURES OF SUCCESS</th><th>CURRENT STATUS</th><th colspan="2">KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE</th><th>CURRENT RISK RATING</th><th>RESPONSE</th></tr><tr><td></td><td>Operating Model: Early Years Delivery Model: Savings FY 26-27 (Current FY Forecast)</td><td>£ 411,000</td><td colspan="2">ELC/Childcare: Savings Not Achieved</td><td>10</td><td>Tolerate</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>ELC/Childcare: Number of new providers delivering funded ELC - Starts reporting FY24/25 - Annual</td><td>3</td><td colspan="2">ELC/Childcare: Insufficient Childcare Availability</td><td>9</td><td>Tolerate</td></tr><tr><td></td><td>ELC/Childcare: No. of new ELC Delivery Models used - Starts reporting FY24/25 - Annual</td><td>3</td><td colspan="2"></td><td></td><td></td></tr></table>	MEASURES OF SUCCESS		CURRENT STATUS	KEY RISKS ASSESSED / RESPONSE		CURRENT RISK RATING	RESPONSE		Operating Model: Early Years Delivery Model: Savings FY 26-27 (Current FY Forecast)	£ 411,000	ELC/Childcare: Savings Not Achieved		10	Tolerate		ELC/Childcare: Number of new providers delivering funded ELC - Starts reporting FY24/25 - Annual	3	ELC/Childcare: Insufficient Childcare Availability		9	Tolerate		ELC/Childcare: No. of new ELC Delivery Models used - Starts reporting FY24/25 - Annual	3				
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5.5	<u>Key Risks</u> Mismatch between parental expectations and sustainability and deliverability of flexibility and choice in funded and non-funded childcare provision across Highland. Savings may not be achieved in full.																												
5.6	<u>Financial Measures</u> i) Savings To date £411,000 of savings have been identified and confirmed against a target of £500,000.																												
5.7	<u>Performance & Measures of Success</u> Measures of Success are on track.																												
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	Workstream: Learning Without Boundaries Project: Learning Without Boundaries A ACTIVITY Develop and deliver a coherent, system-wide approach to supporting children and young people who are out of school or at risk of losing their school placement. Learning Without Boundaries will bring together specialist provision, alternative learning, tuition and targeted support for care-experienced children and young people under a unified framework. Central to this activity is strengthened leadership through the Head of the Future Highland Academy, providing strategic oversight and consistency across specialist provision, and the Virtual Headteacher (VHT) for Care-Experienced Children and Young People, ensuring strong educational advocacy, oversight and continuity for this cohort. The activity will establish flexible, trauma-informed pathways that enable learners to move smoothly into support and, wherever appropriate, back to their base school, with a clear focus on stability, belonging and meaningful progress. PROJECT ELEMENTS · Strategic leadership and oversight: Provide clear system leadership through the Head of the Future Highland Academy, supported by robust governance and shared accountability across Learning Without Boundaries provision. · Virtual Headteacher role for care-experienced CYP: Deliver dedicated educational leadership and advocacy through the VHT for Care-Experienced Children and Young People, supporting educational progress, stability and well-planned transitions, including returns from out-of-authority placements in line with The Promise. · Unified specialist provision model: Establish a single Future Highland Academy framework bringing together The Bridge, An Cala, Flexible Learning Academy and Airport House, promoting consistency, quality assurance and a shared ethos. · Integrated tuition and reintegration pathways: Align the Tuition Service with specialist provision to support continuity of learning, consistent expectations and effective reintegration to base schools. · Workforce and change management: Support staff through transition and implementation, ensuring workforce implications are understood early and managed sensitively in partnership with HR and service leaders.	Portfolio: Person Centred Solutions Portfolio Sponsor: Assistant Chief Executive <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2">MILESTONES</th> <th>CURRENT STATUS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Starts Jan25 / Completes Aug25</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Evaluation completed and key recommendations determined</td> <td>M5 25/26 Completed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep25</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Financial review of current provision costings undertaken</td> <td>M6 25/26 Completed</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Aug25 / Completes Jun26</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Virtual Headteacher Appointed</td> <td>M3 26/27 Some Slippage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Aug25 / Completes Jul26</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Financial and resource review completed to support the unified academy model and dedicated care experienced provision</td> <td>M3 26/27 Some Slippage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Mar26 / Completes Aug26</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Head of the Future Highland Academy and Virtual Headteacher roles embedded</td> <td>M3 26/27 Some Slippage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Apr26 / Completes Dec26</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Pathways of support for children within this cohort are developed</td> <td>M3 26/27 Some Slippage</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27</td> <td>Learning Without Boundaries: Project Closure and transfer to BAU</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	MILESTONES		CURRENT STATUS	Starts Jan25 / Completes Aug25	Learning Without Boundaries: Evaluation completed and key recommendations determined	M5 25/26 Completed	Starts Aug25 / Completes Sep25	Learning Without Boundaries: Financial review of current provision costings undertaken	M6 25/26 Completed	Starts Aug25 / Completes Jun26	Learning Without Boundaries: Virtual Headteacher Appointed	M3 26/27 Some Slippage	Starts Aug25 / Completes Jul26	Learning Without Boundaries: Financial and resource review completed to support the unified academy model and dedicated care experienced provision	M3 26/27 Some Slippage	Starts Mar26 / Completes Aug26	Learning Without Boundaries: Head of the Future Highland Academy and Virtual Headteacher roles embedded	M3 26/27 Some Slippage	Starts Apr26 / Completes Dec26	Learning Without Boundaries: Pathways of support for children within this cohort are developed	M3 26/27 Some Slippage	Starts Mar27 / Completes Mar27	Learning Without Boundaries: Project Closure and transfer to BAU	
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6.2	Overall Project RAG Measures of success for this programme focus on both financial and non-financial outcomes. These will include: • Appointment of a Virtual Headteacher with responsibility to report upon educational outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People both in and outwith mainstream educational establishments. • Appointment of a Head Teacher for a Future Highland Academy with responsibility for the Highland Tutoring Service but also for those educational provisions providing support to those young people who are not accessing mainstream education principally as a result of social emotional and behavioural needs. These are the Bridge, An Cala, Alness Learning Academy, Airport House, and Clachnaharry. • Alignment of the budget in terms of this cohort so that educational provision is delivered and provided in terms of the available budget. • Development of criteria managing eligibility criteria for these services bearing in mind the presumption of mainstream. The project is marked as amber as there has been a delay in appointing to the envisaged posts which has arisen principally in terms of ensuring that any impact on staff is kept to a minimum and also ensuring that the educational outcomes of those young people in those provisions impacted continue to be met.																									
6.3	Milestones Further milestones linked to the measures of success will be developed once the appointments set out in para 6.2 above have been made.																									

6.4	<u>Key Risks & Measures of Success</u> Key Risks, Measures of Success and further Milestones will be developed once the two key roles have been filled.
	Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - People Date: 20 July 2026 Author: Fiona Malcolm, Chief Officer Integrated People Services Hayley Brown, Senior Manager Early Years Brian Scobie, Portfolio Manager – People Cluster Background Papers: N/A Appendices: N/A