
EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE REDESIGN

Report by Service Director Children & Young People

Executive Committee

26 May 2015

1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides the Education Executive with an update of the progress of the redesign of early learning and childcare (ELCC) provision across the Borders following the introduction of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.**
- 1.2 Following the implementation of 600 hours of childcare for 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds as set out in the Act, the Education Committee received an update on the work undertaken across the Early Years Service in November 2014 and a presentation was also given on Early Years Centres at the March Education Executive meeting.
- 1.3 To provide an increased level of flexibility of care and meet the needs of young children and parents, a revised model of delivery of ELCC has been developed. The model comprises a revised staffing model, proposed pilot of full year/full day care and in addition a new procurement framework for the delivery of ELCC places from private and voluntary sector providers. This new model will enhance the quality of service delivery and provide a responsive and modern service to enable our youngest children to have the best start to their learning journey.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 I recommend that the Education Executive :-**
 - (a) Agrees to the next steps of the redesign of ELCC provision which includes introducing a revised staffing model following consultation with staff, development of a pilot phase of full year/full day ELCC and establishing a new procurement framework for private and voluntary sector providers with an enhanced engagement and consultation process.**

3 INTRODUCTION OF 600 HOURS OF ELCC

- 3.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and 'Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance', which outlines the policy changes which are necessary to implement the provisions in the Act, set out clear direction for flexible early years provision that supports the Scottish Government's ambition to make Scotland the 'best place to grow up'. The subsequent National Practice Guidance, 'Building the Ambition' sets the context for high quality Early Learning and Childcare and has been shared with all early years practitioners working in school, private and voluntary settings. The changes agreed in the Act affect all provision where ELCC funded places are required and, in Borders, this includes nursery classes in schools, private nurseries playgroups and child-minders. The Act encourages services to be developed in partnership with families to offer flexibility.
- 3.2 Over the past year an interim model has been implemented to meet the entitlement of eligible 2yr olds and all 3 and 4 yr olds to 600 hrs of ELCC. Due to the short timescale for implementation provision has been less flexible for parents with sessions of 3hr10min each day being the norm in SBC (school) ELCC settings. This is not ideal for many parents in terms of finding paid employment to suit the hours their children are in early years funded provision.
- 3.3 The interim model has resulted in settings having a number of temporary staff in for varying lengths of time, resulting in a lack of consistency of key people for the child and an inability to provide a range of flexible models for parents. To provide a modern flexible service which meets the needs of all of our youngest children, ensuring they have the best start to their learning journey whilst meeting the needs and expectations of parents, work is underway to develop an improved model of ELCC service delivery. Development of the model has 3 parts: introduction of a revised staffing model, improving flexibility through providing full year/full day childcare and raising the quality of all provision.

4 INTRODUCTION OF REVISED STAFFING MODEL FOR ELCC

- 4.1 Over the last year, there have been engagement events with staff across all ELCC school provision to inform and engage staff on new legislation and guidance as well as to discuss changed approaches that are needed to fulfil the requirements of the Act. These meetings have included consultation on a number of aspects of the service including staffing redesign. All practitioners have had the opportunity to take part in in-service days and workshop sessions on the changes being introduced through the legislation. To further inform development of the new staffing model, a session was held with school practitioners from across learning communities to look at roles and remits and staff discussed how roles might develop in the future.
- 4.2 To enable senior managers to test out some initial conclusions from this consultation and gather further information, a new team structure is being piloted within 5 ELCC schools settings. The feedback which has been reviewed by a working group, has been positive and a proposed new staffing structure with job descriptions has been developed for wider consultation. The new structure will provide each school setting with a core team of staff, management time and access to a highly skilled and experienced team of teachers.

- 4.3 This proposed new structure will have a positive impact by recognising the professionalism of current staff by proposing a name change from Nursery Nurse to Early Years Officers and Practitioners and creating a progressive career pathway. New posts will be created at entry level: Modern Apprentice and Early Years Support Worker which will enable staff to train for further qualifications on the job. A new higher level post, Senior Early Years Officer will be based in schools where there is provision for ELCC 2 – 4 year olds and combinations of these staffing posts will make up the core staffing in all school settings. Teacher time will not be included in ELCC ratios and a new team of experienced teachers will be established to provide advice and practical support for school setting as well as private and voluntary groups. To enable senior managers in schools to build capacity, develop skills and provide support and advice to core staff teams in ELCC management time will be devolved to each school.
- Posts will be permanent which will provide stability for staff. Children and parents will benefit from a consistent staff group which will ensure strong and trusting relationships are built which are vitally important in early learning and establishing a stable staff team will enhance the quality of the ELCC service.
- 4.4 There is to be further development of the proposed model to enable schools to implement the model when changes arise within their existing staffing establishment. Following the extensive consultation programme required to implement staffing changes of this scale the timeline for full implementation of the new staffing model and increased flexibility is August 2016.
- 4.5 Alongside the implementation of the revised staffing model, it is proposed to develop a pilot model to enable delivery of full year / full day care provision within school ELCC settings. The lack of SBC full day, full year ELCC provision has become problematic in meeting the needs of all of our children, particularly those most in need of additional support. To tackle inequalities and support families to give their children the best start in life, it has become increasingly apparent that this is an essential model to be taken forward. It is envisaged that this increased flexibility will be provided across localities and there is the potential that this could be provided through the new Early Years Centres. This extension to the service will look at staffing requirements, flexibility of provision and it is intended this will enable the most vulnerable children to be supported in high quality extended full day care provision. The scope of the extended provision along with timescales are currently being developed by the Early Years Team.

5 DEVELOPMENT OF A PROCUREMENT MODEL FOR ARRANGEMENTS WITH PRIVATE AND VOLUNTARY PROVIDERS

- 5.1 As outlined in the report given to the Education Committee in November 2014, work has progressed to develop a procurement process for the commissioning of ELCC places with private and voluntary sector providers. This makes use of the Framework Agreement model with providers who meet the required criteria being accepted onto the Framework to deliver ELCC for 2 academic years with an option for this to be extended for a further year. This Procurement process will see approved providers being accepted onto the Framework Agreement and this will ensure that providers comply fully with the increased expectations of set out in national policy in recent years. This will mean there is compliance with the requirements of the new legislation including the implementation of the Getting it Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) approach as well as supporting children with additional needs.

- 5.2 This has been informed by initial consultation with Early Years Service Managers from the private and voluntary sector. The underpinning principle of the need for high quality services was emphasised and views were sought on quality indicators. A further meeting was held in April 2015 to consult with partners on the proposed format and the Profile of Education Provision (PEP) was presented, which is a key quality assurance document with the service provider outlining the service they propose to deliver.
- 5.3 Preparation work for the formal procurement process started in February 2015. The required documentation is being jointly prepared by SBC's Early Years Team in conjunction with Procurement. The aim is to complete this process by June 2015 when the Invitation to Tender will be placed on the Portal. Private and voluntary sector providers will be invited to attend information sessions in June regarding the procurement process and all interested parties will be required to submit tenders by the end of September. There will be engagement with providers around rates of payment. These discussions will be informed with national rates of payment in comparator authorities and details on what support is included in these rates. There will be negotiation on future rates and the outcome will be shared with the Executive (Education).

6 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial

- (a) The Scottish Government has provided funding to enable Councils to implement the requirements of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- (b) Capital Funding has also been made available from the government to expand and improve our ELCC settings and a programme of improvements is underway.

6.2 Risks and Mitigations

- (a) Introducing a revised staffing model will enable an improved quality of service with more flexibility to meet the needs of families in Scottish Borders and this will reduce the risk of being unable to provide a supportive service to the most vulnerable children in the Scottish Borders.
- (b) There are risks within the procurement processes that some providers will not reach the quality criteria required to be on the framework. The availability of provision needs to be readdressed along with work with providers to address the quality issues.
- (c) Developing full year/ full day care provision could be construed as entering into direct competition with the private and voluntary sector. A full impact analysis needs to be undertaken as part of the pilot phase to understand any implications.
- (d) Increased expectations across all provision and providers will mitigate against poor Care Inspectorate/HiME inspections

6.3 Equalities

- (a) As the review would have a focus on children from disadvantaged backgrounds: supporting parents to work; providing economic security and routes out of unemployment and poverty, including supporting parents with the cost of ELCC, the plans to introduce full year and day care provision would be beneficial to families on low incomes and those who currently receive benefits as this provision

would increase childcare options for these groups and enable them to take up job and training opportunities.

- (b) The further roll out of the Early Years centres within the most disadvantaged communities within Scottish Borders provides opportunities to work with some of the most hard to reach families. A range of services is delivered through the Centres, providing practical support and advice for vulnerable families and this includes welfare benefits. Through building capacity, the aim is to improve the living standards of these families and the life chances of the children.

6.4 **Acting Sustainably**

There will be economic benefits delivered through the review with the extension of the full year and full day care in some areas and this will mean that families will be able to take up training and job opportunities where previously this was not feasible.

6.5 **Carbon Management**

There are no significant effects on carbon emissions arising from the proposals contained in this report.

6.6 **Rural Proofing**

The plans for the pilot programme for Early Years is likely to see enhanced ELCC introduced to areas of the Borders where this has been previously unavailable.

6.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no changes to be made to either the Scheme of Administration or the Scheme of Delegation as a result of the proposals contained in this report.

7 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Service Director Strategy and Policy, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR, and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and their comments have been incorporated into the final report.

Approved by

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Background Papers: Update on Early Years, Education Committee, November 2014

Note – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. Yvonne McCracken can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

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