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To: Councillor Malik, Convener; Councillor Imrie, Vice Convener; Councillor Jennifer Stewart, the Depute Provost; Councillors Alphonse, Bell, Cameron, Lesley Dunbar, Greig, Houghton, Hutchison, Macdonald, MacGregor and Mennie; and Mrs Frances Cardno (Parent Representative - Primary Schools/ASN), Reverend Shuna Dicks (Church of Scotland Religious Representative), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Mike Paul (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools), Mr Madhav Regmi (Third Religious Representative), Mr Rick Sansom (Parent Representative - Secondary / ASN) and Miss Pamela Scott (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools).

Town House,
ABERDEEN, 18 January 2022

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE

The Members of the **EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE** are requested to meet in the **Council Chamber - Town House** on **WEDNESDAY, 26 JANUARY 2022 at 10.00am**. This is a hybrid meeting and Members may also attend remotely.

Members of the press and public are not permitted to enter the Town House at this time. The meeting will be webcast and a live stream can be viewed on the Council's website. <https://aberdeen.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

FRASER BELL
CHIEF OFFICER - GOVERNANCE

B U S I N E S S

NOTIFICATION OF URGENT BUSINESS

1.1 There are no items of urgent business at this time

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

2.1 There are no items of exempt business

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 Members are requested to declare any interests

DEPUTATIONS

4.1 There are no requests for deputation at this time

MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

5.1 Minute of Previous Meeting of 25 November 2021 (Pages 3 - 10)

NOTICES OF MOTION

6.1 There are no notices of motion at this time

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

7.1 Committee Business Planner (Pages 11 - 14)

REFERRALS FROM COUNCIL, COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES

8.1 There are no referrals at this time

PERFORMANCE AND RISK

9.1 Inspection Reporting - OPE/22/009 (Pages 15 - 24)

GENERAL BUSINESS

10.1 Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare - OPE/22/001
(Pages 25 - 138)

10.2 How Children and Young People Want to Address Climate Change -
OPE/22/015 (Pages 139 - 152)

10.3 Supporting Learners - OPE/22/010 (Pages 153 - 202)

10.4 Statutory Consultation Report: Proposed new catchment areas for Gaelic
Medium Education - RES/01/022 (Pages 203 - 224)

Should you require any further information about this agenda, please contact Stephanie Dunsmuir, email sdunsmuir@aberdeencity.gov.uk

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE

ABERDEEN, 25 November 2021. Minute of Meeting of the EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE. Present:- Councillor Malik, Convener; Councillor Imrie, Vice-Convener; Councillor Jennifer Stewart, the Depute Provost; and Councillors Alphonse, Bell, Cameron, Copland (as substitute for Councillor Mennie), Lesley Dunbar, Greig, Houghton, Hutchison, Macdonald and MacGregor. External Members:- Mrs Louise Bruce (Parent Representative, Primary/ASN); Reverend Shuna Dicks (Church of Scotland Religious Representative), Mr John Murray (Roman Catholic Religious Representative), Mr Mike Paul (Teacher Representative - Secondary Schools), Mr Madhav Regmi (Third Religious Representative), Mr Rick Sansom (Parent Representative - Secondary / ASN) and Miss Pamela Scott (Teacher Representative - Primary Schools).

The agenda and reports associated with this minute can be found [here](#).

Please note that if any changes are made to this minute at the point of approval, these will be outlined in the subsequent minute and this document will not be retrospectively altered.

ANNOUNCEMENT

1. The Convener advised Members that Mr Madhav Regmi, the recently appointed third religious representative, was in attendance for his first meeting of the Committee. He welcomed Mr Regmi to the Committee and added that he looked forward to his contributions.

DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT BUSINESS

2. The Convener proposed that the Committee consider item 11.1 (Community Campus Model – Exempt Appendix) with the press and public excluded.

The Committee resolved:-

in terms of Section 50(A)(4) of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude the press and public from the meeting during consideration of item 11.1 on the agenda so as to avoid disclosure of exempt information of the class described in paragraph 8 of Schedule 7(A) of the Act.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3. There were no declarations of interest.

MINUTE OF PREVIOUS MEETING OF 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

4. The Committee had before it the minute of its previous meeting of 23 September 2021 for approval.

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

The Committee resolved:-

to approve the minute as a correct record.

COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER

5. The Committee had before it the committee business planner as prepared by the Chief Officer – Governance.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that item 11 (Inspection Reporting) had been delayed to January 2022 as the inspection report in question had still to be made publicly available;
- (ii) following a query from Mr Sansom on item 22 (School Estate Plan) in respect of dates being added to the planner in relation to Countesswells, to note that the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord had confirmed that dates would be updated for the next meeting of the Committee; and
- (ii) to otherwise note the planner.

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REPORT - COM/21/276

6. The Committee had before it the annual committee effectiveness report by the Director of Commissioning for consideration. The annual effectiveness reports were introduced in 2018/19 following a recommendation from the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) as part of the Council's work towards securing that organisation's accreditation in governance excellence.

The Convener stated that he wished to thank all Members and officers for their assistance and participation during the reporting period, adding that he was pleased to note that 32 out of the 35 reports considered had been approved unanimously, showing that the Committee had worked well together.

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) provide comments and observations on the data contained within the annual report; and
- (b) note the annual report of the Education Operational Delivery Committee.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT JOURNEY - CUS/21/281

7. The Committee had before it an interim tracking report by the Director of Customer Services for the 2020-21 academic year, against the suite of Educational Improvement Journey Key Performance Indicator measures, supporting the Excellence and Equity agenda within the Aberdeen City Council National Improvement Framework Plan.

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) note the content of this report presenting the pre- review outcomes from the 2021 Alternative Certification Model, releases provided through the Insight Tool, and Attendance and Exclusion information;
- (b) note the content of Appendix A, outlining the progress of actions supporting the Education Improvement Journey; and
- (c) provide comment on the approach taken to presenting the data within the report to inform future reporting styles.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that the Chief Officer – Education would clarify to Members outwith the meeting if the wellbeing project at Northfield Academy was due to run through to Summer or if it would end at Christmas;
- (ii) to thank all staff involved in delivering the Afghanistan resettlement scheme for their hard work in making the scheme a success;
- (iii) to agree the data trends submitted within the report against the various measures were positive, whilst pupil attendance remained high in comparison to national and urban benchmarks;
- (iv) to agree the approach taken to presenting the data within the report met with the Committee's approval; and
- (v) to otherwise note the report.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK - EDUCATION OPERATIONS - CUS/21/282

8. With reference to article 4 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which presented an update on the status of key performance measures relating to the Education Operational cluster.

The report recommended:-

that the Committee note the report and provide comments and observations on the performance information contained in the report Appendix.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

CLUSTER RISK REGISTER - EDUCATION / INTEGRATED CHILDREN'S & FAMILY SERVICES - OPE/21/293

9. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Officer – Education and the Chief Officer – Integrated Children’s and Family Services which presented the Cluster Risk Register and Assurance Map in accordance with Education Operational Delivery Committee Terms of Reference to provide assurance that risks were being managed effectively within the Children’s and Family Services Cluster.

The report recommended:-

that Committee note the Cluster Risk Register and Assurance Map set out in Appendices A–B to the report.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the report.

UPTAKE OF FREE SCHOOL MEALS IN SECONDARY SCHOOLS - CUS/21/298

10. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Customer Services which provided information on actions being taken to maximise the number of eligible secondary school pupils taking free school meals and sought approval to extend eligibility criteria.

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) agree the actions being progressed to maximise the number of eligible secondary school pupils taking free school meals; and
- (b) approve the extension of free school meal criteria to include parents/grandparents in receipt of the Child element within Guaranteed Pension Credits.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to thank officers for the work towards ensuring that more eligible young people had access to free school meals; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

ACADEMIES OF NASHVILLE STUDY VISIT - OPE/21/299

11. The Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer which sought permission for education staff to participate in an all-expenses paid Academies of Nashville Study Visit. The report advised that the visit was part of the Excelerate Programme, which placed partnerships at the heart of education, creating a collective sense of responsibility to prepare young people for the world of work and was fully funded by The Wood Foundation.

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) note the content of the report; and
- (b) approve the involvement of 13 members of staff in the Academies of Nashville Study Visit subject to Public Health guidance in place as of March 2022.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to thank the Wood Foundation for their continued support; and
- (ii) to approve the recommendations.

**OUTCOMES FOR CARE EXPERIENCED CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE -
OPE/21/274**

12. With reference to article 5 of the minute of its previous meeting, the Committee had before it a report by the Chief Operating Officer which provided an overview of the attainment of care experienced children and young people which took account of the individual and often complex needs of the group and considered next steps.

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) note the approach taken to evaluating the extent to which we met the needs of care experienced children and young people outlined in the report;
- (b) note the evaluation of the range of interventions put in place over 2020/2021 in response to on-going assessment of the identified barriers to achieving successful outcomes;
- (c) note the commentary on the key measures which provided an overview of the current performance of care experienced children and young people;
- (d) note the extent of the work currently being undertaken across the Council and wider partnership to support care experienced children and young people;
- (e) instruct the Chief Officer - Education to continue to take an agile approach to the identification of any barriers to care experienced children and young people achieving successful outcomes and take swift action to address them;
- (f) instruct the Chief Education Officer to implement plans to align further resource to the Virtual School to support those returning from Out of Authority placements; and
- (g) instruct the Chief Education Officer to present an annual report on the progress of care experienced children and young people to the Committee, commencing in September 2022.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) in relation to section 3.5.6 of the report and the query in respect of the nine young people involved in the RiteWorks pilot programme, to note that the Chief Officer – Education would investigate whether all were care experienced, or whether that applied to only seven of the young people, and provide that detail to Members outwith the meeting;

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

- (ii) to thank the Chief Officers for Education and Integrated Children's and Family Services and their teams for the work done to support care experienced young people given the additional challenges as a result of the pandemic;
- (iii) to agree the report presented gave a clear sense of how the education service, Council and wider partnership were collaborating to support our care experienced children and young people; and
- (iv) to approve the recommendations.

CAMPUS MODEL FOR SCHOOL PROVISION - RES/21/296

13. The Committee had before it a report by the Director of Resources which provided an update on the work to develop a Community Campus model for future school and community service provision within the city, and also demonstrated how the model could be applied to one of the Council's new masterplanned developments at Countesswells.

The report recommended:-

that Committee –

- (a) approve the Community Campus model principles for future education and service provision within the city;
- (b) instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to ensure that the principles of the Community Campus model were reflected within the forthcoming School Estate Plan to be presented to Committee in June 2022; and
- (c) note the revised school capacity figures for secondary schools as detailed in Appendix 3 to the report, which would be used to inform planning for future implementation of the Community Campus model.

The Committee resolved:-

- (i) to note that officers would circulate the weblink to the revised school forecast data to Members once it was available;
- (ii) to approve the Community Campus model principles for future education and service provision within the city;
- (iii) to nevertheless recognise that the campus model may not be either suitable or possible in some circumstances;
- (iv) to instruct the Chief Officer Corporate Landlord to ensure that the principles of the Community Campus model were reflected within the forthcoming School Estate Plan to be presented to Committee in June 2022;
- (v) to note the revised school capacity figures for secondary schools as detailed in Appendix 3 which would be used to inform planning for future implementation of the Community Campus model within the School Estate Plan;
- (vi) to agree that officers should as part of the School Estate Plan indicate preference for Aberdeen City Council's first Community Campus taking into consideration the vision and strategic objectives highlighted at 3.12 of the report noting that those objectives were key to increasing attainment in schools within regeneration areas; and

EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE
25 November 2021

- (vii) to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord and Chief Officer - Education to jointly advise the Parent Councils regarding the updated school capacities.

In accordance with the decision taken under article 2 above, the following item was considered with the press and public excluded.

CAMPUS MODEL FOR SCHOOL PROVISION - RES/21/296 - EXEMPT APPENDIX

14. The Committee had before it an exempt appendix which related to the Community Campus model report considered elsewhere on the agenda. Members heard from officers in relation to the content of the appendix and asked a number of questions.

The Committee resolved:-

to note the exempt appendix.

- **COUNCILLOR M. TAUQEER MALIK, Convener**

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	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	EDUCATION OPERATIONAL DELIVERY COMMITTEE BUSINESS PLANNER The Business Planner details the reports which have been instructed by the Committee as well as reports which the Functions expect to be submitting for the calendar year.								
2	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
3	26 January 2022								
4	Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare	EODC Committee 20/01/2021 - to note that officers would be undertaking a review of the expansion to be concluded by December 2021 and to request that the evaluation be taken to Committee thereafter. Council Budget 11/03/21 - to instruct the Chief Education Officer to report to the first meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee in 2022 on the suitability of the provision of 1,140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare in the city		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.1		
5	How Children and Young People Want to Address Climate Change	EODC 23/09/21 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Education to liaise with all schools in Aberdeen regarding COP26 being held in November, exploring what new initiatives and ideas the Council could look at introducing as a means of tackling climate change within their school and beyond; and bring forward a report of any new initiatives and /or ideas brought forward by the schools to the committee in January 2022 in order for the Council to consider any further exploratory work before any agreed implementation		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.2		
6	Statutory Consultation Report - Proposed New Catchment Areas for	EODC 03/06/21 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to report back to the Committee on the outcomes of the consultation at its next available meeting following conclusion of the consultation process		Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Resources	1.1.1 / 1.1.2		
7	Supporting Learners	EODC 03/06/21 - The Committee resolved to (a) note the approach being taken and progress made to date; and instruct the Programme Manager to report on the programme within 3 committee cycles; and (b) to note that officers would include an update on the work being done to promote the use of the Early Intervention Consultation option and the impact of this in the next report back to Committee.		Craig McDermott	Education	Operations	1.1.1		
8	Performance Management Framework Report – Education Operations	To present the latest performance for the cycle		Alex Paterson	Data and Insights	Customer	1.1.3	R	Due to availability of data covering Q3 & the national metrics releases officers have advised that the report would be very data light this time round so recommended that it be withdrawn from the January meeting. Officers will however provide ongoing service updates around pupil attendance and absence/ELC provision.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2	Inspection Reporting	A standing item to report on the outcome of school inspections if required		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.6		
9									
10	14 June 2022								
11	Free School Meals Annual Update	EOD Committee 19/04/18 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Early Intervention and Community Empowerment to bring a report to Committee prior to the close of each school year (a) detailing the numbers registered for and taking free school meals by school and (b) assessing the progress made by implementing the new workstreams and detailing any required adjustments for the following school year		Derek McGowan / Neil Carnegie	Early Intervention and Community Empowerment	Customer	1.1.1		
12	School Estate Plan	<p>Council 6/3/18 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Corporate Landlord to bring a review of the School Estate report within the next 9 months to the Education Operational Delivery Committee, thereafter to forward the report to the Capital Programme Committee (now to be submitted to City Growth and Resources Committee instead of CPC in line with the changes to the Terms of Reference agreed by Council in March 2019)</p> <p>Council 03/03/21 - (i) to note the process and timeline required to be followed in delivering the School Estate Plan, and instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to present the finalised School Estate Plan to the Education Operational Delivery Committee in Summer 2022, in line with this timetable; and (ii) to instruct officers to arrange a meeting with the External Members of EODC before 17 March to advise them of this report and to explain why officers cannot deliver the School Estate Plan until Summer 2022.</p> <p>EOD Committee 25/11/21 - (i) to instruct the Chief Officer - Corporate Landlord to ensure that the principles of the Community Campus model are reflected within the forthcoming School Estate Plan and (ii) to agree that officers should as part of the School Estate Plan indicate preference for Aberdeen City Council's first Community Campus taking into consideration the vision and strategic objectives highlighted at 3.12 of the report noting that those objectives are key to increasing attainment in schools within our regeneration areas</p>	<p>Officers met with external committee members prior to 17 March 2021, to explain the reasons why the school estate plan required to be presented in summer 2022.</p> <p>Officers are currently reporting that the first new Countesswells primary school will be operational in Summer 2023.</p>	Andrew Jones	Corporate Landlord	Resources	1.1.2		
13	Education Improvement Journey and National Improvement Framework	EOD Committee 19/04/18 - to instruct the Chief Operating Officer to track progress against the proposed KPIs in order to report progress to the Education Operational Delivery Committee. Reporting will comprise (a) a yearly progress report based on validated data and (b) a six monthly update to provide an indication of progress to that point.		Reyna Stewart	Data and Insights	Customer	1.1.3		
14	Inspection Reporting	A standing item to report on the outcome of school inspections if required		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.6		
15	Performance Management Framework Report – Education Operations	To present the latest performance for the cycle		Alex Paterson	Data and Insights	Customer	1.1.3		

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
	Report Title	Minute Reference/Committee Decision or Purpose of Report	Update	Report Author	Chief Officer	Directorate	Terms of Reference	Delayed or Recommended for removal or transfer, enter either D, R, or T	Explanation if delayed, removed or transferred
2									
16	08 September 2022								
17	Performance Management Framework Report – Education Operations	To present the latest performance for the cycle		Alex Paterson	Data and Insights	Customer	1.1.3		
18	Outcomes for Care Experienced Children and Young People	EODC 25/11/21 - to instruct the Chief Officer - Education to present an annual report on the progress of care experienced children and young people to the Committee, commencing in September 2022		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Customer	1.1.1		
19	Digitisation of Music Service	EODC 23/09/21 - to instruct the Chief Officer – Education to present an evaluation of the impact of the changes to Committee within one calendar year; and to instruct the Chief Officer - Education to implement the continuity of instructors for the provision of musical education noting that this is a vital component in the delivery of the music curriculum		Shona Milne	Education	Operations	1.1.1		
20	Inspection Reporting	A standing item to report on the outcome of school inspections if required		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.6		
21	08 November 2022								
22	Performance Management Framework Report – Education Operations	To present the latest performance for the cycle		Alex Paterson	Data and Insights	Customer	1.1.3		
23	Inspection Reporting	A standing item to report on the outcome of school inspections if required		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.6		
24	Cluster Risk Register - Education / Integrated Children's & Family Services	To report on the cluster risk register		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.4		
25	DATE TO BE CONFIRMED - DEPENDENT ON START DATE OF CONCESSION CONTRACTS								
26	ELC Concession Agreements	Strategic Commissioning Committee 15/04/21 - in relation to the Early Learning & Childcare Concession (Tillydrone and Northfield Cummings Park Nurseries) business case, instruct the Chief Officer - Education to review the operation of the concession agreements, 12 months from their commencement, and report the findings of that review to the Education Operational Delivery Committee		Eleanor Sheppard / Aisling MacQuarrie	Education	Operations	1.1.1		
27	2023								
28	Accessibility Plan	EOD Committee 17/09/20 - to instruct the Chief Education Officer to review the impact of the plan in three years' time		Eleanor Sheppard	Education	Operations	1.1.5		
29	Minimising Exclusion Policy	To present the revised exclusion policy for approval		Mhairi Shewan	Education	Operations	1.1.5		
30	Annual Committee Effectiveness Report	To present the annual EODC effectiveness report	Date to be confirmed	Rob Polkinghorne / Andy MacDonald	Operations / Customer	Operations / Customer			

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Inspection Reporting
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/009
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Eleanor Sheppard
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.6

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report aims to provide Elected Members with oversight of Education Scotland and Care Inspectorate inspection reporting.

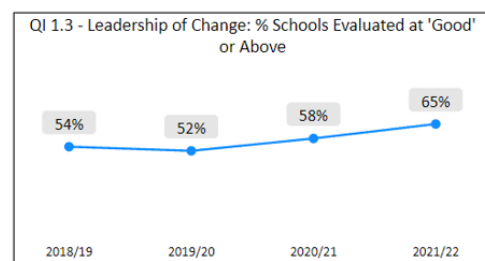
2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:

- 2.1 note the content of this report for assurance; and
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to continue to support Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) settings and schools to implement improvements in keeping with the Quality Frameworks.

3. INSPECTION ACTIVITY TO DECEMBER

- 3.1.1 School and ELC Inspections were suspended in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Education Scotland and The Care Inspectorate resumed their inspection regime in October 2021 for settings and schools where a return inspection had been planned.
- 3.1.2 In March 2020, Members were advised of two broad themes emerging from schools and settings due for a return inspection. These were
- leadership of change; and
 - inconsistent approaches to Learning, Teaching and Assessment
- 3.1.3 Considerable work has been undertaken to address these areas and improvement is clearly evident in the Leadership of Change quality indicator.



- 3.1.4 Work to address inconsistent Learning, Teaching and Assessment has also progressed at pace, although approaches had to be amended in light of the need to deliver the curriculum remotely. Efforts to improve the quality of the remote curriculum offer led to 97% of children and young people engaging in their curriculum during the second period of school closure.
- 3.1.5 Restrictions in place due to the Return to School guidance meant that 'learning walks' and classroom observations were not possible until into session 2021/22. As a result Senior school leaders and central officers were unable to quality assure classroom practice against our agreed Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standard in person and this will have hampered progress in this area. Classroom observation has now fully resumed.

3.2 THE FOCUS OF RETURN INSPECTIONS

- 3.2.1 Visits to schools and settings have comprised a blend of virtual and in-person engagement. Local Authority Officers were invited to participate in almost all school inspection activity by Education Scotland and this has been helpful.
- 3.2.2 During the visits, Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) have evaluated progress against the areas for improvement identified pre-pandemic. Inspectors recognise that some of the areas for improvement will have been impacted by COVID-19 and that the focus of improvement may have changed to reflect the very different circumstances.
- 3.2.3 Following the visit, HM Inspectors publish a brief report.
- 3.2.4 6 Aberdeen City schools participated in full inspection activity with HM Inspectors over late October through to early December 2021:
- Harlaw and Hazlehead Academies
 - Milltimber, Dyce and Kingsford Primaries
 - Orchard Brae School
- 3.2.5 In addition, HM Inspectors undertook virtual visits with Gilcomstoun and Loirston Primary Schools in November 2021.
- 3.2.6 The inspection reports will continue to be published over the coming weeks. Those not included in this report will be shared through a Service Update when published.

3.3 NATIONAL THEMATIC INSPECTIONS

- 3.3.1 HM Inspectors also completed a programme of national thematic inspections to explore:
- Approaches to supporting children's and young people's wellbeing
 - Outdoor learning
 - Local approaches to recovery

3.3.2 The Education Service continue to engage positively with the thematic inspections and Northfield Academy, Airyhall Primary, Dyce Primary and Heathryburn Primary were all visited over November 2021.

3.4 EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE INSPECTION PROCESS

3.4.1 Early Learning and Childcare settings are inspected by both Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. Education Scotland use the associated Quality Indicators from How Good Is Our Early Learning and Childcare to inspect whilst The Care Inspectorate make use of the Health and Social Care Standards. The inspection approaches are broadly similar and often take place at the same time.

3.4.2 The Care Inspectorate currently inspect:

- Quality of care and support
- Quality of environment
- Quality of staffing
- Quality of management and leadership

3.5 ARRANGEMENTS FROM JANUARY

3.5.1 In September 2021 plans to resume Education Scotland inspections from January 2022 were announced. Given the concerns around staffing levels and concerns around the new variant of COVID-19, this situation has now changed and Officers were advised in December 2021 that the full programme will now not resume as planned.

3.5.2 From February 2022 following the mid-term school holiday, if COVID-19 conditions allow, HM Inspectors will carry out 'recovery visits' to a selection of early learning and childcare settings and schools. During these visits, HM Inspectors will focus on how settings and schools are addressing the impact of COVID-19.

3.5.3 HM Inspectors will explore with staff the range and quality of learning children and young people are experiencing; and the work being done to meet children's and young people's learning and wellbeing needs. They will not report on specific quality indicators or assign summative grades as part of the visits.

3.5.4 Members will be kept informed of any such visits to our schools and settings by HM Inspectors.

3.5.5 The Care Inspectorate inspections are also likely to be reduced significantly due to the Omicron variant.

3.6. INSPECTION ACTIVITY AT DYCE PRIMARY SCHOOL

3.6.1 Dyce Early Learning and Childcare was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in September 2021 to assess progress against the findings and recommendations from the Care Inspectorate report of March 2019.

3.6.2 The inspection of March 2019 identified a number of recommendations. These were to:

- ensure each child receives appropriate care and support and their needs are met the head teacher and staff should ensure:
 - personal plans are developed and implemented that reflect children's current needs and provide clear guidance to staff on how they will meet each child's needs.
 - The personal plans are used by staff to effectively meet each child's needs.
- support children to progress and achieve staff should:
 - develop their skills and knowledge of effective interaction to support and extend learning
 - be supported to reflect on their practice and develop new ways of working.
- ensure all children received the support, interaction and attention they need to meet their needs the provider, head teacher and senior staff should ensure staff have the time to effectively support, care and speak with children
- ensure children receive high quality care, support and early learning experiences and the provider, manager and staff should ensure effective quality assurance systems are developed and implemented. To achieve this clear roles and responsibilities should be defined for senior staff.

3.6.3 The inspection team found that all recommendations had been met and that considerable progress had been made since the last inspection.

Area of scrutiny	March 2019	September 2021
Quality of care and support	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
Quality of environment	Good (4)	Good (4)
Quality of staffing	Adequate (3)	Good (4)
Quality of management and leadership	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)

3.6.4 The full Care Inspectorate report for Dyce Primary ELC is available on the Care Inspectorate site <https://www.careinspectorate.com/>

3.6.5 Dyce School and ELC provision was then inspected by HM Inspectors in late October 2021. The inspection of 2016 (and subsequent returns) had highlighted a need to:

- Develop a more consistent use of robust data across the curriculum to inform improvements to learning and teaching and raise attainment so that all children are working to their potential

- Across the school and nursery, further develop effective self-evaluation processes to focus more directly on improving outcomes for all learners
- Increase the pace of curriculum development across the school and nursery as a priority to ensure that all children's needs, aspirations and entitlements are fully met.
- Further develop leadership at all levels, including children leading learning, to ensure this effectively improves outcomes for all children.

3.6.6 HM Inspectors were happy that all recommendations had been met. Their report states, *'Understandably, Dyce Primary School and Nursery Class has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. They have successfully turned the challenges into opportunities to reflect on learning and teaching and brought about significant curricular change. In doing so, staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to Dyce Primary and Nursery Class in connection with the original inspection. Aberdeen City Council will continue to inform parents about the school and nursery's progress as part of its usual arrangements for reporting on the quality of its education service'*.

3.6.7 The full HM Inspectors report is available [here](#)

3.7 INSPECTION ACTIVITY AT LOIRSTON PRIMARY SCHOOL

3.7.1 Loirston Early Learning and Childcare was inspected by the Care Inspectorate in October 2021 to assess progress against the findings and recommendations from the Care Inspectorate report of January 2020.

3.7.2 The inspection of January 2020 identified a number of recommendations.

These were:

- To ensure children receive high quality early learning and childcare and their individual needs are met, the provider should: a) implement a robust and effective quality assurance process b) promote a culture of continuous improvement.
- To ensure children's care and support meet their needs and is right for them, the provider must develop care plans that provide comprehensive and effective information and ensure staff use these effectively to meet children's needs.
- To support children to progress and achieve staff should develop their skills and knowledge of: - observation, assessment and planning - effective interaction to support and extend learning

3.7.3 The inspection team found that all recommendations had been met and that considerable progress had been made since the last inspection.

Area of scrutiny	January 2020	October 2021
Quality of care and support	Adequate (4)	Very Good (5)
Quality of environment	Good (4)	Good (4)
Quality of staffing	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)

Quality of management and leadership	Adequate (3)	Very Good (5)
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3.7.4 The full Care Inspectorate Report is available on the Care Inspectorate site <https://www.careinspectorate.com/>

3.7.5 Loirston School and ELC provision was then inspected by HM Inspectors through a virtual visit in November 2021. The inspection of May 2017 (and subsequent returns) had highlighted a need to:

- Establish effective approaches to self-evaluation and strategic planning, which support leadership at all levels to secure improvements across the school and nursery.
- Develop the school's curriculum, taking full account of national guidance and expectations to ensure learning experiences lead to improvements in children's attainment across all curricular areas.
- Develop and implement robust processes to plan, assess, track and monitor children's learning. This includes the need to review the school's arrangements for meeting the needs of children requiring additional support.

3.7.6 Inspectors commended the improvements made at the school and stated in their report to parents that, *'Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are implementing plans to support recovery. Staff have addressed the recommendations from the original inspection successfully. As a result, we will make no more visits to the school in connection with the original inspection'*.

3.7.7 The full report is available [here](#)

3.8 INSPECTION ACTIVITY AT HARLAW ACADEMY

3.8.1 Harlaw Academy was inspected in November 2021 by Education Scotland in order to assess progress against the findings and recommendations from the inspection report of February 2020.

3.8.2 The report of February 2020 identified a number of recommendations. These were to:

- Streamline approaches to improvement so that self-evaluation activities clearly identify priorities which will make the biggest difference to outcomes for young people.
- Continue to improve the quality of learning, teaching and assessment so that young people's experiences engage them and meet their needs. Develop more fully an ethos for learning with high expectations and mutual respect.
- Strengthen approaches to monitoring young people's progress across all subject areas so that staff at all levels have a clear overview of learners' progress. Continue to raise the attainment of young people at all stages.

3.8.3 Inspectors noted the early impact of the new Head Teacher but recognised that his appointment just prior to the first period of national lockdown had impacted progress against the recommendations. Inspectors state, *‘Understandably, the school has been responding to the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. These have had a significant impact on the work of the school. Staff are prioritising their plans to support recovery. As a result, the school needs more time to take forward the recommendations from the original inspection. We will carry out another visit to the school within one year of the publication of this letter. When we carry out another visit, we will write to you informing you of the progress the school has made’.*

3.8.4 The full inspection report is available [here](#)

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications from this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Standards In Scotland’s Schools Etc. Act 2000 places an obligation on Local Authorities to secure improvement in all schools whilst the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on Local Authorities to provide 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare from 2021. Settings not able to provide a service rated as ‘Good’ or better will not be eligible to offer the expanded entitlement.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Risk of employees feeling overwhelmed by the many improvements required.	L	Support in place from the Local Authority Education Service
Compliance	Failure to deliver on legal duties and inability to delivery 1140 hours of ELC if evaluations are poor.	L	Team of locality leads in place to monitor and support quality
Operational	Potential for children or young people to be disadvantaged by not having access to a quality educational experience.	M	Close monitoring of progress by the Education Service through the revised education structure
Financial	NA		

Reputational	Risk of reputational damage for school and service	M	This report will provide some assurance that plans being implemented are effective
Environment / Climate	NA		

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>			
			Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement			
UNICEF Child Friendly accreditation			Delivering a high quality education requires schools and services to engage with children and young people to help them shape the provision available to them.
Work with the Scottish Government to provide flexible and affordable childcare for working families on the lowest incomes.			The provision of 1140 hours of ELC will only improve outcomes if settings deliver a high quality service.
Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners in the city.			The provision of high quality education can help to close the attainment gap and outcome gap for those living in poverty.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan			
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes			Ensuring a high quality curriculum and provision of flexible pathways will contribute towards an increase in employment.
Prosperous Outcomes	People	Stretch	Working with partners to develop a senior phase offer that meets the needs of all learners will help to support our young people into positive sustainable destinations
Prosperous Outcomes	Place	Stretch	Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is achieving excellence and equity for all.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes			
			<p>The Education (Scotland) Act 1980</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Duty to provide adequate and efficient education for our area. <p>The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Duties with regard to meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.

	<p>The Equality Act 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Duty to ensure we are not discriminating disabled learners <p>The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000 · Raising standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> · Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools The National Improvement Framework · Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

None

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/001
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Louise Beaton and Aisling MacQuarrie
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents Committee with an Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare Programme as agreed at the Education Operational Delivery Committee of 20th January 2021. The report also seeks an instruction to develop an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan for 2022-2024 based on this evaluation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 approve the Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare available in Appendix A and B;
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to prepare a new Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan for 2022-24 based on the findings of this evaluation for presentation at the next meeting of this Committee; and
- 2.3 note the reduction of £4.6m in ring-fenced grant funding for the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare next year and instruct the Chief Officer - Finance to include details of the impact, alongside the other implications of the 2022/23 financial settlement, in the budget report to be presented to the Council on 7 March 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

The National Context

- 3.1 A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare, published in March 2017, outlined the Scottish Government commitment to expanding the provision of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1140 hours.

- 3.2 Since August 2021 all three and four year-olds, and eligible two-year olds receive 1140 hours of funded ELC per year. This means more funded hours, more choice of where children can go to access their ELC entitlement and more flexible models of ELC are available to support families.

The Local Context

- 3.3 Aberdeen City Council welcomed the opportunity to expand services in recognition of how the expansion of ELC could help reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. The Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan was approved by the then Education and Children's Services Committee on 16 November 2017.
- 3.4 The Delivery Plan presented an ambitious vision of ELC for Aberdeen City Council which extended beyond the national policy intention in order to ensure that the programme would help support the delivery of outcomes stipulated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP). The Expansion of ELC has been evaluated against the Delivery Plan.
- 3.6 The expansion required the delivery of a multi-faceted cross council programme of work to ensure that families were able to claim their 1140 hours of ELC from August 2021. Following the approval of the Delivery Plan in 2017 the ELC programme was overseen by a Programme Board as part of the Council's executive governance arrangements. Membership reflected the cross council nature of the programme with representation from Education, Capital, Finance, Corporate Landlord, Legal and People & Organisational Development.
- 3.7 The Programme Board governed and provided strategic direction. The Board also monitored the finances and subsequent delivery of benefits, both financial and non-financial.

How well did the programme improve quality?

- 3.8 The restructure of the Early Years team enabled the creation of Locality Lead Officers to oversee both quality assurance and the delivery of professional learning across a community.
- 3.9 There is emerging evidence that the new Early Years structure, provision of Locality Lead Officers, improved quality assurance activity and professional learning to build capacity is successfully driving an improvement in quality. At the time of writing the Delivery Plan in 2017, there was historical trend data evidencing that a higher proportion of Funded Provider settings were securing positive inspection gradings than those of the Local Authority. This trend is no longer apparent with a more even distribution of quality grades.
- 3.10 The inspection regime was suspended in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in August 2021. Two settings have been inspected since the resumption with both gaining awards of good or better. Both settings have significantly improved gradings from their last inspection.
- 3.11 There is considerable evidence that the focus on quality is helping to improve outcomes for children. Data will continue to be monitored carefully to ensure that an agile approach is taken to continuous improvement. Work undertaken

has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

How well did the programme increase the workforce?

- 3.12 To support the expansion of ELC, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen City Councils collaborated with Training Providers and Funded Providers to establish an ELC Academy in 2017. The ELC Academy supported the recruitment and retention of quality ELC staff in the North East Scotland and was identified as national best practice.
- 3.13 Officers were aware of the wider ELC sector and wanted to limit movement of staff from our Funded Providers. This led to the development of a bespoke in-house traineeship programme, where existing internal council employees, looking for a new challenge, could train to become an Early Years Practitioner, on a secondment basis.
- 3.14 Three cohorts of staff, 76 employees in total, undertook the bespoke and innovative traineeship from across the Council. Of these, 63 have successfully completed the traineeship (83%) and gained permanent Early Years Practitioner roles. This proactive approach to 'growing our own' has significantly aided the Council workforce and financial planning and addressed a potential risk in the delivery of 1140 hours of ELC. Feedback from settings has been very positive about the quality of practitioners.
- 3.15 Staffing structures were reviewed to help provide a wider range of progression pathways in the sector and now includes Support Roles and Modern Apprenticeships. The establishment of an ELC Modern Apprentice (MA) role has provided an opportunity for young people, aged 16-24, to undertake a tailored apprenticeship in Early Years, on an 'earn whilst you learn' approach and has seen the service attract a higher proportion of young people to the workforce.
- 3.16 The Apprenticeship programme has been very successful, to date we have 37 ELC Modern Apprentices, (increasing from 7 in 2019) with a mixture of hours and working patterns, who are supported to complete their qualification by 3 local training providers. The inclusion of Modern Apprentices also allows our current Practitioners to take on the role of a mentor and develop their coaching and leadership skills.
- 3.17 Work to expand the workforce has been varied and has included supporting staff to gain qualifications, develop new skills in the provision of outdoor learning and leadership and amending the contracts of existing staff. Work to amend contracts was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and this was sadly unavoidable and led to new teams being formed for August 2021 which placed pressure on settings to establish routes at pace.
- 3.18 The increase in the workforce and diversification of skills sets has considerably aided our work to expand provision across the city. The provision of a wider range of roles has introduced a clear career pathway with more entry routes. This change is helping to utilise the skills and expertise from a broader demographic and has helped us diversify the workforce. Work

undertaken has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

How effective was communication and engagement?

- 3.19 A communications strategy was developed and regularly reviewed to ensure that key transformation messages and specific project information were shared with all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, that the views and experiences of stakeholders continued to contribute to the development and delivery of the programme. A series of engagement events took place with different stakeholders – school senior leadership groups, the early years workforce, facilities colleagues, funded providers and families – while the specific interests of each group differed the team sought to ensure that communication was purposeful, clear and of value.
- 3.20 Consultation with families (in 2017 and 2019) was used to help shape the delivery models offered in Aberdeen. Parents told us that they wanted choice in service delivery models with some families keen to secure their full entitlement over a few longer days (8am – 6pm) and others looking for access to daily provision for shorter periods. Some parents and carers were keen to access provision all year round with others preferring a term time only model.
- 3.21 Families wanted to access provision locally with the most favoured option being provision at their local school or in their immediate community.
- 3.22 In November 2021 we consulted again with parents, carers and future parents to seek their views to inform the evaluation report available in the appendices and help develop the next Delivery Plan. Appendix A is the text version of the full evaluation report and Appendix B is the interactive version of the report. Headline points from the 453 returns from November 2021 include:
- 72% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (ASG).
 - 75.8% have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG.
 - 82.9% of respondents were satisfied with the location of their ELC provision.
 - 82.4% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date.
 - 68.3% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their child's induction process.
 - The majority of respondents, at almost 65%, identified an improvement in their child's social skills with over half of the respondents seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills.
 - 51.2% of respondents stated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare
 - 38.7% of respondents indicated that they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family
 - 28.5% are now considering a return to work or study
 - 26.1% stated improved wellbeing /respite as a positive impact from the expansion of ELC, with 24.3% of respondents finding they now have more time to themselves.

- 3.23 The restrictions resulting from the pandemic led to greater use of technology to share progress and help families tour buildings when physical visits were not permitted. These innovations were helpful given the constraints in place at the time but Officers are keenly aware of the need to resume 'in person' communication when possible and to support the delivery of 'in person' transition arrangements when restrictions are eased.
- 3.24 A range of communication and engagement methods were utilised but the Covid-19 restrictions did impact on the level of satisfaction of parents and carers in induction arrangements and in staff given the lack of in-person engagement. The team were highly flexible and agile and responded to the pandemic related restrictions positively and in keeping with national Public Health guidance. Despite the challenges, consultation and engagement was in keeping with the Plans set out in the Delivery Plan of 2017.

How effective was the Capital programme?

- 3.25 At the time of writing the Delivery Plan, it was clear that there were considerable implications for our infrastructure. The previous Aberdeen City Council ELC offer had been delivered using a traditional model based in schools and did not fully utilise space in each building. There was a need to maximise the use of buildings whilst recognising that some buildings would be unable to offer the flexibility so only be able to provide an ELC Offer of 600 hours.
- 3.26 A comprehensive review of the suitability of school based provisions was undertaken to determine local circumstances and inform each local offer based on the agreed delivery models. The provision of a quality outdoor learning environment was prioritised in recognition that such a provision will enable coherent delivery of the curriculum over a mix of sessions. Two sites were also identified for Outdoor Nursery provision which will see Aberdeen City being the only Local Authority to offer two Outdoor Nurseries.
- 3.27 Buildings thought suitable to offer a higher number of ELC places if internal and external spaces were improved were identified in order to make best use of buildings already in place. The feasibility of each was scoped to ascertain the long term efficiency of undertaking this work to ensure that capital resource was spent wisely.
- 3.28 The accessibility of services was analysed. Careful analysis of uptake of services evidenced that some families chose not to access their entitlement as they didn't perceive provision to be accessible.
- 3.29 The completed capital projects span the city with a mix of new build, refurbishment and light internal works to enable the delivery of a flexible model to families across each Associated Schools Group (ASGs). A total of 27 capital projects were delivered in total, a number of which are profiled in the full Evaluation in Appendix A (text report) and Appendix B (interactive version of the report). The considerable increase in the number of children accessing provision (98% of 4 year olds in November 2021 compared to only 91% in 2017 for example) suggests that provisions are well located across the city.

3.30 The pandemic led to considerable supply chain issues which triggered a need for value engineering. Despite the challenges, the capital programme has delivered high quality and fully accessible settings which are being enjoyed by our children.

Funded providers

3.31 The planning and partnership working which has underpinned our work with funded providers has contributed to ensuring there is sufficient capacity across the city to deliver the expansion. Throughout this programme we have been cognisant of the needs of the sector, demonstrated in our approach to identifying the sustainable rate, which was transparent and reflective of evidence of costs of delivery.

3.32 The introduction of a concessionaire to occupy and deliver ELC from two of our purpose-built buildings contributes to delivering greater parity of choice within our priority areas. This is particularly the case for families with eligible 2-year-olds. Indeed, successive parent/carer consultations reveal the need for a range of different models and types of provision to meet the varying and evolving circumstances of every family. The recent cross boundary agreement is an extension of these principles - assuring families that the choice available is not restricted by local authority boundaries and there is a level of flexibility to meet the requirements of parents.

3.33 As we move forward, it will be vital to monitor the sustainability of providers and their capacity to meet the National Standard. Against the context of workforce challenges (retaining and recruiting staff), the sustainable rate, which enables the payment of the Living Wage, should contribute to creating a more level playing field across the sector. Nevertheless, while funded providers are expected to pay the Living Wage to staff delivering funded hours, this cannot be enforced by the local authority. This observation has also been echoed in the recent Audit Scotland ELC Expansion report (2020). While it cannot be enforced, we seek to encourage partners to commit to the Living Wage. To this end, inflationary and real Living Wage increases to the sustainable rate will be reviewed on a regular basis.

3.34 While the commissioning arrangements to deliver the expanded hours have been successfully implemented, they also need to be viewed against the context of workforce recruitment and retention. Workforce challenges, experienced at a local, regional and national level, have the potential to test the sustainability of the private, voluntary and independent sector. These challenges are further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic. This is a risk that the service will continue to monitor. It will seek to strengthen some of the mitigations already in place – building on the work of the ELC Academy, which showcased clear career pathways into the sector and progression routes; access to the Workforce Development Fund and the Modern Apprentice scheme. The challenges of retention and recruitment serve to underscore the importance of the implementation of the Living Wage to create to greater equity of opportunity across the sector and contribute to attracting and retaining practitioners.

Overarching evaluation

- 3.35 Despite the challenges of delivering the Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project team have successfully met their objectives. Key achievements include:
- All eligible children were able to access 1140 hours from August 2021;
 - There is evidence of highly effective Programme governance;
 - There is evidence of an increase in the quality of provision;
 - The ELC workforce expanded from 224.16 FTE to 461.30 FTE (expressed in headcount this is an increase from 358 employees in 2017 to 539 in 2021). This is as a result of the inclusion of Support Workers, Modern Apprenticeships and amended contracts of existing staff;
 - The successful delivery of 27 capital projects;
 - 82.9% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision; and
 - 82.4% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of expanded ELC to date.
- 3.36 The Programme was delivered on time and on budget as of December 2021.
- 3.37 The evaluative report (Appendix A and B) evidences a multi-faceted and cross Council programme of work delivered to ensure that all families were able to take up their 1140 hours of statutory ELC entitlement from August 2021. Learning points from this evaluation include a need to now:
- Review transition processes to allow in person transition as soon as public health guidance allows
 - Be mindful of the need for early in-person engagement with staff if public health guidance allows
 - There is a need to further promote Gaelic Medium ELC provision
 - Monitor demand for childminders
 - Monitor demand for eligible 2s placements
 - Continue to work towards the delivery of intergenerational support as public health guidance allows
- 3.36 The Local Authority has a statutory duty under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to prepare and publish an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan to set out the strategic direction for the delivery of ELC in the city. The Plan has to respond to local need and reflect the diversity of communities in Aberdeen. It is proposed that this evaluation and the learning points identified be used to inform the development of a Delivery Plan to be presented to the next meeting of this Committee.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Aberdeen City Council, as primary guarantor of quality and key enabler of flexibility and choice, is currently funded by a specific grant from the Scottish Government to deliver ELC. Officers have worked with finance colleagues to ensure that our plans realised a sustainable ELC provision based on the known funding constraints. In December 2021 the Local Government financial settlement for 2022/23 was published as part of the Scottish Budget and officers

are currently collaborating to ascertain the impact of a reduction in like for like ring-fenced revenue grant funding of £4.6m. In 2021/22 the ring-fenced funding is £25.1m and for 2022/23, on a like for like basis the value is £20.5m. Officers continue to consider the implications of this reduction in preparation for the Council budget setting meeting. The impact of this reduction will have to be incorporated into the 2022/23 budget, and the Council will make decisions on this on 7 March 2022.

4.2 Reciprocal arrangements are in place via a Cross Boundary Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. This means that an equal number of ELC places will be provided by each neighbouring Local Authority. For example, if Aberdeen City Council provide more funded ELC places than Aberdeenshire Council, the additional places will be recharged to Aberdeenshire Council in line with the Reconciliation and Payments part of the Cross Boundary Agreement on a quarterly basis. This ensures equity and Best Value for both Authorities, whilst offering flexibility and choice to families from both Authorities.

4.3 The selling of surplus places is currently being explored as a way of income generating for the Council. We may be able to sell additional hours / sessions of ELC to parents and carers who require additional wrap around care (subject to the availability of places). In our most recent consultation, we asked if parents and carers would be interested in purchasing additional hours / sessions over and above the statutory 1140 hours funded entitlement. Nearly one third of respondents said, that if made available they would purchase extra hours of ELC, with a further third of respondents indicating that they would possibly purchase additional hours of wrap around care should they be available in the future.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The expansion of ELC has brought a number of duties on the Local Authority under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014:

- Aberdeen City Council will retain the statutory responsibility for ensuring that funded ELC entitlement is available to all eligible children in the city.
- Aberdeen City Council will continue to be the primary guarantor of quality and key enabler of flexibility and choice, ensuring that there is a range of options for all families in the city.
- Aberdeen City Council is responsible for engaging and consulting with parents and carers on a regular basis (minimum of every 2 years) on the provision of ELC delivered locally.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Risk of not delivering on legal obligations by August 2021 given the supply chain	Low	Mitigated by the work of the ELC Programme Board and 'one team' approach to delivery.

	issues and pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.		
Compliance	Risk of not meeting statutory obligations around 1140 hours	Low	Mitigated through regular meetings of the Programme Board to identify and address issues at pace.
Operational	Risk of not designing an offer around the needs of our customers.	Low	Mitigated through consultation with communities and the creation of Early Learning and Childcare Locality Lead Officer posts which support ELC in each Locality.
	Risk of not attracting enough new practitioners into the workforce.	Low	Mitigated through the activities being undertaken as approved in Aberdeen City: Workforce Delivery Plan – Early Learning and Childcare approved by Education Operational Delivery Committee on 6 December 2018.
Financial	Risk of building a financially unsustainable model.	Medium	Care has been taken to redesign ELC around improving quality rather than simply doubling to reflect the additional hours and a more sustainable staffing model has been put in place. Now that the financial settlement is known Officers are considering the implications of this on our delivery model and will describe these as part of the Council budget report for 2022/23.
Reputational	Risk of not delivering on legal obligations by August 2021	Low	Mitigated by the work of the ELC Programme Board and associated projects.
Environment / Climate	Risk of not utilising the expansion to develop awareness in our youngest learners.	Low	Mitigated through the development and roll out of Mud, Mess and Magic and on-going support for the development of outdoor learning spaces.

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement 3 (People) – To work with the Scottish Government to provide flexible and affordable childcare for working families on the lowest incomes.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	<p>The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare will have a positive impact on this priority theme and will help to deliver the LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 ‘10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026’.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>The workforce has increased significantly in order to deliver the increase in ELC provision.</p> <p>63 Aberdeen City Council employees retrained as Early Years Practitioners over 3 cohorts of a Retraining Programme, gaining an SVQ Level 3 qualification. We have also recruited 110 Early Learning and Childcare Support Workers.</p> <p>In addition, we have introduced a Modern Apprenticeship position into our ELC staffing structure. This involves training young people to become Early Years Practitioners as part of our ‘Grow Our Own’ workforce strategy. This is a new role in our Local Authority ELC settings and provides a positive destination and career pathway for our young people as well as strengthening our workforce. We currently have 37 Modern Apprenticeships working across the city.</p>
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	<p>The provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will help to deliver the LOIP Stretch Outcome 3 ‘95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026’.</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>The provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will support early speech, language and literacy; will ensure that families receive the parenting and family support they need; and will</p>

	better enable families to take up employment and training opportunities.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	<p>The provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will also help to deliver the LOIP Stretch Aim 13 ‘No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026’</p> <p>Example:</p> <p>The increase in funded ELC will enable more families to take up employment and training opportunities, thus reducing poverty. More hours will be available in Local Authority ELC settings and Funded Provider ELC settings will be an option for many families who could not afford this previously.</p> <p>Furthermore, every child who attends Early Learning and Childcare receives a minimum of one free meal per session attended as part of their statutory entitlement, as well as a portion of milk and fruit or vegetables daily via the Scottish Milk and Healthy Snack Scheme.</p>
Regional and City Strategies	<p>The proposals within this report support the Strategic Development Plan by supporting the workforce. The provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support families to take up employment and training opportunities; 2. Develop the Young Workforce; and 3. Support business to recruit and retain staff.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>The report sets out the Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Aberdeen to date.</p> <p>As well as reviewing the expansion programme and its impact to date, this will also meet our statutory duties under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Deliver 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare per annum to all eligible 2 year olds and all 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish to take up this statutory entitlement; 2. Consult with parents and carers on a regular basis; and 3. Prepare and publish an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan which will set out the strategic direction for the delivery of ELC in the city for the next 2 years, responding to

	local need and reflecting the diversity of communities in Aberdeen.
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Education and Children's Services Committee – Thursday 14th September 2017 ECS/17/042 Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan

10. APPENDICES

- Appendix A – Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (text version)
- Appendix B – Evaluation of the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (interactive version)

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The Aberdeen City Council expansion of Early Learning and Childcare

Executive summary

The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1140 hours required the delivery of a multi-faceted cross council programme of work to ensure that families were able to claim their 1140 hours of ELC from August 2021.

Despite the challenges of delivering the Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project team have successfully met their objectives. Key achievements include:

- All eligible children were able to access 1140 hours from August 2021;
- There is evidence of highly effective Programme governance;
- There is evidence of an increase in the quality of provision;
- The ELC workforce expanded from 224.16 FTE in 2017 to 460.31 FTE in 2021 (expressed as headcount this is an increase from 358 employees in 2017 to 539 in 2021). This is as a result of the inclusion of Support Workers, Modern Apprenticeships and amended contracts of existing staff;
- The successful delivery of 27 capital projects;
- 82.9% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision; and
- 82.4% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of expanded ELC to date.

The Programme was delivered on time and on budget.

Background

A number of clusters across Aberdeen City Council collaborated to expand the provision of funded ELC from 600 to 1140 hours. Work across the organisation ensured that all eligible families were able to take up their expanded offer of ELC from August 2021.

The policy intention of the expansion was to support child development through the provision of high-quality services and in doing so support parents to return to work or study. Scottish Government stipulated that services should deliver:

- quality;
- flexibility;
- accessibility; and
- affordability.

Aberdeen City Council welcomed the opportunity to expand services in recognition of how the expansion of ELC could help reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. Planning for the Expansion was detailed in the Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan which was approved by the then Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2017.

The Delivery Plan presented an ambitious vision of ELC for Aberdeen City Council which extended beyond the national policy intention in order to ensure that the programme would help support the delivery of outcomes stipulated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

This report seeks to evaluate delivery of the programme against the approved Delivery Plan in order to identify any early feedback and inform the development of the next ELC Delivery Plan.

Vision for Early Learning and Childcare across Aberdeen City

The Aberdeen Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan of 2017 detailed a local vision for the expansion programme.

'We will provide local flexible early learning and childcare which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and builds on provision already in place to develop a flexible ELC offer, available up to 50 weeks of the year.'

Provision will be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community and will support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty.

Each local offer of ELC will be designed around the needs of residents in each locality wherever possible. Quality and availability will be overseen by a skilled individual who will support families to design the flexible offer most likely to meet their individual needs. The skilled individual will also be well placed to advise how the local offer should continue to be amended or enhanced to meet local need'.

The Aberdeen City Council Delivery Models

Consultation with families was used to help shape the delivery models approved by Committee in 2017. Parents told us that they wanted choice in service delivery models. Some families were keen to secure their full entitlement over a few longer days (8am – 6pm) with others looking for access to daily provision for shorter periods. Some parents and carers were keen to access provision all year round with others preferring a term time only model. Parents wanted to be able to purchase additional hours of ELC if helpful for their family.

Families wanted to access provision locally with the most favoured option being provision at their local school or in their immediate community.

As a result of our consultation with families, 2 delivery models were approved as part of the Delivery Plan:

Delivery Model 1

Children would be able to access local ELC provision offering all 1140 hours in a fully flexible way over 50 weeks a year. Provision to be available from 8am to 6pm

Delivery Model 2

Children would be able to access provisions offering shorter blocks of ELC, in the traditional term time structure, 9am to 3pm.

In order to ensure the focus on quality, the following parameters were applied:

- The 1140 offer should be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks from the start to end of each academic year (including school holidays)
- An ELC session will not be less than 2.5 hours or more than 10 hours
- No more than 2 providers will be accessed (3 when childminders are used) to ensure continuity of relationships and care for children
- Children accessing their ELC entitlement over lunchtime (12.30 - 13.30) will be entitled to a free lunch
- Where school based provisions were unable to deliver a fully flexible provision, flexibility would be made across the Associated School Groups (ASGs).

Guiding Principles

As the initial Delivery Plan was being developed stakeholders expressed preferences for how settings should operate and the following guiding principles were used to inform our approach. It was agreed that all ELC provision across Aberdeen City should:

- Capitalise on intergenerational support
- Offer a level of personalisation to ensure maximum gains for children
- Be nurturing, inclusive and offer a holistic service to children and families in keeping with GIRFEC
- Feel owned by the community
- Fully utilise outside space to promote wellbeing
- Be staffed by skilled practitioners who have opportunities to develop their skills further through a suite of professional learning suited to their individual needs and situation
- Be quality assured across a locality by one skilled practitioner who will have a key role in supporting parents to fully capitalise on the local offer and shape subsequent offers

The vision, delivery models and guiding principles were used to inform the ELC Delivery Programme and all three have all been used to help evaluate the programme.

Central Structures to support high quality delivery of 1140

The Delivery Plan outlined the need to review the Early Years Structure to ensure that the service was able to support a transformed model of service delivery. The need to ensure that services worked more closely together across a locality to address some of the wider policy benefits of the programme guided thinking alongside the need to focus on improving quality.

A new Early Years Structure was developed, consulted upon and approved in 2018. The service worked with colleagues in People and Organisational Development to move to the new structure.

Self-evaluation and inspection reports evidence that the new structure is helping to improve the quality of the ELC offer across the city. Undertaking the restructure at an

early stage of the expansion was invaluable in helping ensure the Education Service were well placed to deliver on the policy objectives.

Governance of the Expansion of ELC

Following the approval of the Delivery Plan in 2017 the ELC programme was overseen by a Programme Board as part of the Council’s executive governance arrangements. Membership of the Programme Board reflected the cross-council nature of the programme with representation from Education, Capital, Finance, Corporate Landlord, Legal and People & Organisational Development.

The Programme Board governed and provided strategic direction to the 5 main programmes of work: Quality, Workforce, Communications and Engagement, Capital, and Funded Providers. The Board monitored the finances and subsequent delivery of benefits, both financial and non-financial.

The ELC Board was chaired by the Director of Customer and membership consisted of:

ELC Programme Board	
Director of Customer	Talent Manager, Resources, People and Organisation
Chief Operating Officer	Solicitor, Legal
Chief Officer Education	Programme Manager
Chief Officer Capital	Principal Architectural Officer
Chief Officer Corporate Landlord	Estates and Assets Manager
Chief Officer Finance	Building Standards Manager
Finance Partner	

Meetings of the Board were scheduled monthly with collaboration between times as required.

The Programme Board provided highly effective oversight of the programme with the frequency of meetings and proactive approach to identifying and addressing emerging issues identified as a key strength. This approach helped Officers collaborate to address any potential risks timeously to keep the programme on track. The frequency of meetings was particularly helpful during the final stages of the programme due to supply chain issues experienced as a result of the pandemic.

The governance arrangements capitalised on the range of expertise across the Council and are thought to be a very good example of a ‘one Council’ approach to the delivery of a major programme.

Programme 1 – Improve Quality

Locality Lead Officers

The restructure of the Early Years team enabled the creation of Locality Lead Officers to oversee both quality assurance and the delivery of professional learning across a community. This approach continues to work well due to Locality Lead Officers having good awareness of practice and development needs across their locality.

There is emerging evidence that the new Early Years structure and provision of Locality Lead Officers is successfully driving an improvement in quality. At the time of writing the Delivery Plan in 2017 there was historical trend data evidencing that a higher proportion of Funded Provider settings securing positive inspection gradings than those of the Local Authority. This trend is no longer apparent with a more even distribution of quality grades. The pausing of the inspection programme has hampered our ability to evidence this change fully and Members will be able to check progress through the regular performance reports presented to the Education Operational Delivery Committee.

The inspection regime was suspended in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in August 2021. Two settings have been inspected since the resumption with both gaining awards of good or better. Both settings have significantly improved gradings from their last inspection.

The local knowledge held by Locality Lead Officers (LLOs) is helping to provide invaluable insights into the needs of each community to ensure that the models offered meet the needs of children and families. This local knowledge will help LLOs advise Nursery teams on how to shape the local offers made to Parents and Carers through Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) and will also help to inform our work in the years ahead.

Quality Assurance arrangements

A new quality assurance programme was successfully developed and implemented. As well as a core programme, the team can now respond proportionately to need at pace and offer a higher level of support and challenge where required. Provisions in need of additional support can access an increased number of visits and Locality Leads make themselves available to model and coach the development of best practice. This more agile approach is helping us address emerging risks more quickly. Analysis of quality data indicates that our current arrangements are far more effective and that the central team have greater oversight of quality in each setting.

The refreshed quality assurance framework is more fully aligned with the school improvement framework and this is helping to ensure most effective use of central team resource. Improvement required across the Early Years is now targeted through the National Improvement Framework Plan and delivered as part of the wider education service improvement plan. This is helping address some of the disconnect evident previously.

Improvement Planning

Staff teams are encouraged to link with their Locality Lead Officer and reflect on their improvement plans in order to engage with professional learning opportunities

appropriate for their service improvement. This approach has made a more direct link between areas for improvement and the provision of high quality professional learning. As a result ELC practitioners engage more effectively within a 'cycle of involvement' now and have greater ownership of improvement planning.

Developing Leadership Capacity

The 'Stepping into Leadership' programme was developed to increase confidence levels amongst Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) and address existing skills gaps which prevented EYPs moving into a Senior Early Years Practitioner (SEYP) role. It also aimed to support higher level thinking skills, including reflection and critical analysis to take account of the need for more strategic planning in the SEYP role. The programme aimed to maximise internal progression and develop talent pipelines by 'growing our own' senior staff. Staff entered the programme with varying levels of confidence and understanding of the SEYP role.

The programme has been a great success. The seven sessions were designed to empower, upskill and support internal EYPs in applying for the role of SEYP, with a focus on leadership and management themes.

A total of 30 practitioners participated in cohort 1, with 18 of these having now been successfully appointed to the role of SEYP. Following the success of cohort 1, this programme has been repeated, with 27 practitioners in attendance, with a further 20 progressed to the role of SEYP.

The programme was highly effective in clarifying the additional duties and responsibilities expected of those in a senior role and empowered those with leadership potential to develop the skills and the confidence to apply for and secure leadership positions effectively.

'Empowering Us' Programme

In light of the ELC Expansion, it was recognised that our current ELC leaders would benefit from the opportunity to develop their current skills/practice. In collaboration with colleagues within People & Organisational Development, Family Learning, Excellence and Equity Practitioners and the wider education team, the ELC Locality Lead Officers designed a long term voluntary CLPL programme, aimed at ELC Leaders (SEYPs and DHTs) to upskill the current workforce and promote quality ELC provision. The programme utilised digital tools for online delivery, timetabled to meet the needs of the workforce.

The intended outcomes for the programme were:

- Increased knowledge and skills in ELC leadership practices.
- Increased awareness in the expectations of leaders in ELC.
- High quality ELC provision for all children and families in Aberdeen City enhanced by skilled staff.
- In line with the 'Funding Follows the Child' approach, equitable ELC offer regardless of provider.
- Improved quality grades across the city, particularly in Leadership and Management.

Sessions were well attended by a mixture of SEYP, PT and DHT staff. Feedback was positive and highlighted that having space to reflect with other ELC leaders was beneficial for staff development. Inspection reports are evidencing higher leadership gradings and this is thought to be partially attributable to this programme.

Provision of high-quality professional learning for the workforce

A highly skilled workforce is critical for the delivery of a quality service and the Early Years team refreshed approaches to ensure a wide range of opportunities were available by drawing on the ACC capability framework and Learning Academy.

Both the change to ELC operational times and the COVID 19 Pandemic presented challenges to staff accessing professional learning. To combat this, the Early Years team have taken a digital delivery approach, utilising the platform ACC Learn and the digital capability available across the Council. The Council wide investment in digital has positively impacted on staff in Local Authority settings and in Funded Provider settings.

A combination of accessible and flexible online materials can now be accessed independently/as a staff team via the ACC Learn portal with virtual sessions delivered termly via Microsoft teams. The materials include continuous reflective questions, prompts for further development and opportunities to link with other teams in the locality via the online discussion boards as well as sign-posting to further materials or training opportunities in Aberdeen City (i.e. – specialist outdoor work with Juliet Robertson). The discussion board for sharing good practice has been welcomed by colleagues who report being able to make links with other settings within the community with greater ease. The digital organisation of the offer enables senior leaders to reflect on their improvement plan for the year and engage with the online materials appropriate for their teams' development.

Reflections made with staff in both the local authority sector and the Funded Providers sector indicate that professional learning is more successful when delivered to multiple members of the team in order to create a shared ethos. Practitioners also note that professional learning is more impactful when they engage in the 'cycle of involvement' that includes opportunities for small group work, large group work, self-study and reflection with others. A number of practitioners who took part in a recent survey (58.8%) are happy to access materials online.

Now that this approach is well established, live sessions are reviewed annually to take account of inspection feedback/quality assurance visits to meet the sector's needs. Previous live sessions become online materials to enable them to be accessed by others. The team have developed and continue to deliver a good mix of national, regional and local offers as well as leading supportive collaborative groups to share practice.

The refreshed approach to the delivery of professional learning has improved accessibility, enabled greater personalisation and helped staff make connections with others to share best practice. The agility and responsiveness of the model is thought to be a major strength.

Uptake for Eligible 2s

In keeping with the Delivery Plan, the provision of effective support for eligible 2s was reviewed, as only 7% of eligible 2s accessed their offer in 2017. This was lower than the national uptake of 9%.

A recent *Public Health Scotland* 'Early Years Expansion – learning from the baseline' survey (October 2021) observes that uptake of eligible 2-year-old places remains modest with the national average continuing to remain at 9%. Consultation with eligible families to understand this better identified issues with the accessibility of services and branding which have been addressed through the expansion programme and led to a local increase in uptake to 9% in keeping with the national average.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will increase demand for eligible 2s places, particularly as the post-pandemic picture emerges. To encourage greater engagement and uptake with families, the Early Years team will continue to work closely with health visitors and other professionals, to identify eligible families and ensure that children receive the benefits of their entitlement.

Eligible 2s: Improving Accessibility and Flexibility

A 'Stay, Play and Learn' trial was commissioned to help inform our approach. The trial provided a flexible mode of delivery for up to 20 families and was highly evaluated by those who participated, although the uptake of eligible 2s places continued to be low. Further exploration with families highlighted that families found it hard to commit to the model and would prefer to access provision not limited to eligible 2s.

The Delivery Plan highlighted a need for a proactive strategy to address issues with 'branding' around provision for Eligible 2s. A review of current research was led by The Educational Psychology Service to inform future service delivery and the decision was taken to make the offer for Eligible 2s available in mainstream ELC settings.

In response to the ask of families, the service integrated eligible 2s into several of our school nursery settings rather than restricted to a stand alone 'Me2 service'. To this end, in our capital projects we increased capacity and refurbished settings to create enabling learning environments that would enhance the ELC experience of eligible 2-year-olds and their families, with particular focus in our priority areas.

The table below outlines the capacity within our local authority settings in 2020/21 and 2021/22, which has increased by 66 spaces. There is scope to further increase spaces, in some of our other capital projects, which are not currently registered with the Care Inspectorate for eligible 2-year-olds, which provides additional flexibility to the service. The Early Years team will continue to monitor demand as this integrated approach to eligible 2s embeds in our local authority settings.

2020/2021		2021/2022	
Setting [2020/2021]	Operating Capacity	Setting [2021/2022]	Operating Capacity
Ashgrove Children's Centre	24	Ashgrove Children's Centre	24
Williamson Family Centre	20	Muirfield School Nursery	10
Deeside Family Centre	24	Walker Road School Nursery	10
Riverbank	10	Riverbank School Nursery	10
Seaton	30	Links Nursery and Hub	40
		Woodside School Nursery	10
		Gilcomstoun School Nursery	10
		Tillydrone Nursery	20
		Cummings Park Nursery	40
Total	108	Total	174

Families seeking to use their entitlement also have the option of accessing ELC at a funded provider or childminder, the latter not having been an option for families prior to the implementation of the expanded hours. In 2020/21 there were 24 eligible 2-year-olds accessing up to 1140 hours of ELC with a childminder. However, at the time of writing for session 2021/22 eligible 2-year-old families have not sought to access provision from a childminder. Further research will be undertaken by the service to identify the reasons for this shift in use – while speculative at this stage – greater promotion of childminders as an option may need to be undertaken to raise their visibility amongst families and health professionals. As outlined in the aforementioned Public Health Scotland survey, for the most disadvantaged children who are eligible for ELC at age 2, developmental outcomes improve after a year of funded ELC, with the exception of gross motor development. To this end, the service will be seeking to collaborate further with partners and local communities to promote the eligible 2-year-old entitlement.

Eligible 2s: Quality

In preparation for the expansion to 1140 hours of ELC, the Educational Psychology team have developed an invaluable 'Ready, Steady, 2' resource to support staff to work with Eligible 2s and those who have not met developmental milestones.

Five pilot nurseries (Kirkhill, Muirfield, Riverbank, Tullos, and Woodside) have accessed virtual training sessions developed by the Educational Psychology Service to complement and build on key messages within the Ready Steady 2 resource. SEYPs from each of these settings have participated in group coaching facilitated by the Educational Psychology Service, to support the implementation of the approaches recommended in Ready Steady 2. The virtual training sessions are available for all ELC settings within Aberdeen City to access. The Educational Psychology Service, Early Years Team and Scottish Childminding Association are promoting this universal resource across the City.

Feedback from staff is positive and the qualitative evidence from families accessing eligible 2 provision is also reflective of a positive ELC experience. Parents/carers have responded in their end year of review forms:

“I really appreciate all your efforts in looking after my son. Since he started nursery I have noticed so many changes and development – especially in his language.”

“I’m more than happy with how my daughter has been getting on at nursery. She’s more than happy to come every morning and see her teachers and friends.”

“My son seems to really enjoy nursery, especially the outdoor play.”

By investing in the upskilling of staff, practitioners are better able to support families who are in vulnerable situations and provide targeted support to children who are at risk of poor outcomes. The service will continue to monitor demand and evaluate the impact of change to ensure we are improving outcomes for our eligible 2-year-olds.

Excellence and Equity Practitioners

As part of the expansion programme, a new role of Excellence and Equity Practitioner (EEPs) was established and recruited to Bramblebrae, Kittybrewster, Riverbank, Seaton and Woodside schools. The 5 EEPs were allocated to settings serving areas of deprivation to provide additionality to help address the poverty related attainment gap. Each EEP has worked closely with leadership teams to determine the focus of their work.

Work has been undertaken to improve knowledge of the impact of poverty on families. The introduction of EEPs in the ELC workforce has had a positive impact on supporting children and their families in our priority areas. In partnership with community groups the EEPs have been involved in initiatives such as ‘Healthy Family Fun Day’ which showcases a variety of services across the community that are available to support and advise families. Through the delivery of PEEP groups, outdoor learning sessions and Book Bug sessions they have supported the positive engagement of families in their children’s learning. Early engagement with families through links with toddler groups has supported the building of relationships and smooth transitions into the ELC setting.

The EEP role has been welcomed by staff, children and by families. The Covid-19 restrictions hampered some planned work as EEPs have worked to help mitigate the risk of setting closure due to staffing shortages as a result of staff being required to isolate pending PCR test. We will continue to monitor the impact of the EEPs as the Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

PEEP Learning Together Programme

At the heart of the ELC Expansion is increasing family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents, so as a Local Authority we took the opportunity to put significant resources into the PEEP ‘Learning Together’ Programme for ELC staff in both our school nurseries and funded provider settings.

The programme is designed for practitioners who work with parents and babies/ young children, to contribute to:

- strong parent-child relationships;

- increased parental knowledge and confidence in how to support their child's learning and play in day-to-day life; and
- children's personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, early literacy and maths, and health and physical development.

Sessions are delivered online via Microsoft Teams over four half day sessions and are ongoing. The practitioners engage with a small group during the training in order to develop confidence using the PEEP resources and are then introduced to the PEEP Team Network. 106 practitioners from ELC settings in Aberdeen City have completed the programme and are qualified to deliver PEEP as part of our universal family support offer. The delivery of the programme to parents and carers has been hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions although settings are using remote delivery where possible.

ELC Admissions

Key policies were refreshed to help deliver the expansion, including the ELC Admissions Policy. Routine cycles of review have been put in place to ensure that these key policies continue to meet the needs of families. Delays to the nationally delivered Early Years SEEMiS system have hampered progress with the development of associated systems and will not be available until summer 2022 at the earliest. To this end, in collaboration with web development colleagues we have built an interim online system to accept ELC applications and support the allocation process.

This interim system was put in place in January 2021, moving away from what had traditionally been a paper-based application system. With greater choice and patterns of attendance available to families, the online system facilitated the high number of applications to be processed effectively due improved data quality. The move to a digital application also offered greater convenience to families allowing them to apply any time or day within the admissions period.

Rapid uptake of the online admission system was reflected in the first week of admissions opening on 25 January 2021, with **1540** number of applications received. By the close of the admissions period on 18 February 2021, a total of **2562** applications had been submitted.

Following the allocation of ELC spaces, **90%** families received their 1st choice as per their ELC application. There have been **3002** 1st choice offers sent in total. 2301 1st choice offers were to On Time applications. There have been 3949 applications received as of today (10 January 2022).

- 76% got 1st choice offers in total
- 90% of On-Time applications got 1st choice offers.

In the absence of the National Early Years SEEMiS system, we continue to refine the interim online system to be open for ELC Admissions in 2022/2023. This is an iterative process as we continue to build on the feedback from families and improve the backend processing of the platform.

Building confidence in the delivering the curriculum outdoors

Considerable work has been undertaken to develop the use of outdoor space in order to improve the quality of provision.

Significant progress has been made in this area with two Aberdeen City settings recently featuring in a national conference: Learning Estates, which took place November 2021. The two videos below from Dyce and Middleton Park school nurseries show case the transformation of their environment and the impact specifically in relation to children's physical development.

[Our Journey to a Movement Rich Environment by Middleton Park Nursery on Vimeo](#)



Dyce ELC Outdoor Spaces: <https://vimeo.com/644276155>

How satisfied are parents and carers with their child's experience to date?

We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with their child's experience of Early Learning and Childcare to date.

Of the 454 parents and carers who responded, 82.4% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date.

We asked parents and carers if they would be interested in purchasing additional hours / sessions over and above the statutory 1140 hours funded entitlement, should Aberdeen City Council be able to sell additional hours / sessions of Early Learning and Childcare to parents and carers who require additional wrap around care (subject to the availability of places).

29.2% of respondents said, that if made available, they would purchase extra hours of ELC.

A further 34.5% suggested that they would possibly purchase additional hours of wrap around care should they be available in the future.

22.9% said they would not purchase extra hours.

13.4% stated they were not sure if they would purchase more hours.

There is considerable evidence that the focus on quality is helping to improve outcomes for children and there is an appetite from parents to purchase additional hours. Data will continue to be monitored carefully to ensure that an agile approach is taken to continuous improvement. Work undertaken has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Programme 2 – Workforce

Reviewing staffing structures

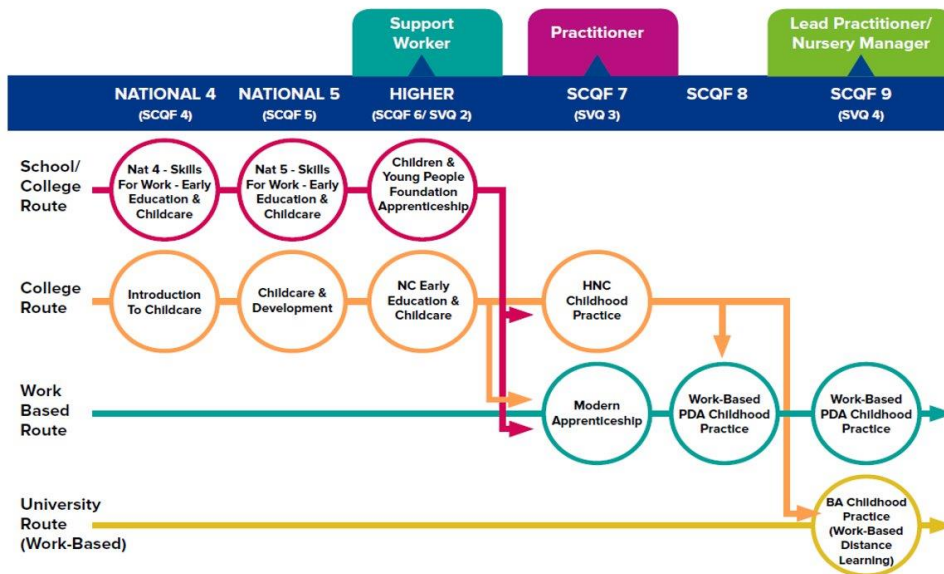
Analysis of the average cost of an ELC space in Aberdeen City in 2017 confirmed that the cost per learner was high compared to other Local Authorities and higher than the national average. This led to considerable work being undertaken to agree a sustainable staffing structure which would help develop a pipeline of talent into the sector whilst meeting quality standards. The approved new structure was implemented from August 2021 with a wider range of roles now evident with Support Worker roles and Modern Apprenticeships now available across settings. The impact of this change will be monitored closely but staff report that there is now a clear career progression pathway and there is evidence of greater diversity in the workforce in terms of age, gender and race.

Establishing the Early Learning and Childcare Academy

The Delivery Plan outlined that an innovative approach would be required to ensure we had a sufficient number of qualified staff to deliver an expanded offer of ELC.



To support the expansion of ELC, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen City Councils collaborated with Training Providers and Funded Providers to establish an ELC Academy in 2017. The ELC Academy supported the recruitment and retention of quality ELC staff in the North East Scotland and was identified as national best practice. Noting the importance of developing appropriately targeted and engaging material to encourage school pupils into a career in ELC, the ELC Academy developed a Virtual School Roadshow with an animation and a toolkit for Guidance Teachers to promote ELC Careers to young people.



The materials were designed to clarify all of the different pathways into ELC. Details about the ELC Academy was circulated to all secondary schools and supported by a Social Media campaign and workshops offered across all three Local Authorities.

[ELC Animation 04 June 2019 1](#)



In collaboration with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils under the umbrella of the ELC Academy Scot, we have been able to fund and deliver external trainers for ELC staff more cost effectively using digital delivery and this continues to be a long term agreement between the authorities. Feedback for these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive.

The ELC Academy launched the first Celebrating ELC Awards in 2019 to celebrate and share good practice across the ELC sector. The aim of the project was to promote collaborative working across the authorities and create 'benchmarks' for good practice and improvement. The categories included Working in Partnership, Outdoor Environment, Indoor Environment and Team. In Aberdeen City 7 ELC settings successfully achieved an award.

The Scottish Government launched a national recruitment campaign "Early Learning and Childcare Recruitment 2 Careers Changers/Returning to work audience" in January 2019. ELC staff supported the campaign by being available for field stands at Union Square and other central locations. ELC staff ensured that potential candidates were linked to local employers and training providers. In addition to this, the ELC Academy implemented a recruitment campaign with ELC pop-up shops rolled out across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire (including a drop-in session at Bon Accord Centre).



The establishment of the Early Learning and Childcare Academy helped raise the profile of careers in the sector and clarify the routes available to staff. The success of the model influenced the recently launched ABZ works website and associated social media platforms.

Growing our own

The potential shortage of highly qualified staff required to meet the needs of the expansion was a key consideration. We were also aware of the wider ELC sector and wanted to limit movement of staff from our Funded Providers. These factors led us to develop a bespoke in-house traineeship programme, where existing internal council employees, looking for a new challenge, could train to become an Early Years Practitioner, on a secondment basis from their substantive role (on their existing terms and conditions of employment).

Three cohorts of staff, 76 employees in total, undertook the bespoke and innovative traineeship from across the council. Of these, 63 have successfully completed the traineeship (83%) and gained permanent Early Years Practitioner roles. This proactive approach to 'growing our own' has significantly aided Council workforce and financial planning and addressed a risk in the delivery of 1140 hours of ELC. Feedback from settings has been very positive about the quality of practitioners.

Modern Apprentice Programme

A further initiative developed in future-proofing the ELC workforce, and addressing the need for increased staff sector wide in Aberdeen, was to include an ELC Modern Apprentice (MA) role within the new staffing structure. Once again this is a 'grow your own' approach and provides an opportunity for young people, aged 16-24 to undertake a tailored apprenticeship in early years, on an 'earn whilst you learn' approach.

The Apprenticeship programme has been very successful, to date we have 37 ELC Modern Apprentices, (increasing from 7 in 2019) with a mixture of hours and working patterns, who are supported to complete their qualification by 3 local training providers. The inclusion of MAs also allows our current Practitioners to take on the role of a mentor and develop their coaching and leadership skills.

On successful completion of the MA programme, our apprentices can apply for Support Worker or qualified EYP roles, with our guaranteed interview scheme. This again provides that talent pipeline in Early Years, providing developing opportunities for staff, aiding retention and supporting our workforce for the future.

Developing Outdoor Practice

In October 2019, 19 Early Learning and Childcare professionals went on an ERASMUS funded mobility study visit to Saltamontes Outdoor Nursery in Madrid. The group spent 5 days in Spain, learning outdoors, every day. They returned to share their experiences and to adapt and progress their working practices in Aberdeen.

The study visit equipped the group with reignited passion and extended knowledge, with 100% of the participants engaging in outdoor learning professional development sessions in the year following their trip, as well as continuous professional dialogue and sharing of outdoor practice within the network and beyond. Around 40% of the ERASMUS participants have become part of Specialised Interest Groups, where they are undertaking innovative research projects alongside other network members and will showcase their findings at an open Outdoor Conference.

A second ERASMUS study visit, to North Germany, was cancelled in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a virtual conference enabled us to visit Waldkindergarten, in Flensburg, in June 2021, joining Petra Jäger for three days of training.





In June 2019, WIGLS, a Community of Practice (Working In Green Local Spaces), was developed to support practitioners in their outdoor ELC work. Beginning with 38 practitioners from 30 settings it quickly grew to 78 practitioners from 38 settings, enabling the development of a shared outdoor perspective in many of the city's ELC settings.

WIGLS has built capacity in our ELC workforce by offering on-line and in-person training, participation in ERASMUS conferences, hospitality visits across the city, small practitioner research groups (SIGs) and peer-mentoring groups. The programme was successfully moved on-line and is still on-going. The wider dissemination of this work is under way, to be shared city-wide and further afield.



Mud, Mess and Magic

In Collaboration with Creative Star, Mud, Mess and Magic was developed as a guide for ELC staff to naturalise their outdoor environment. The guide enabled staff to create, enhance and physically improve the ELC outdoor space in order to create spaces ideally suited to delivery of the curriculum.

The guide has supported staff teams to enhance approaches to gardening, the promotion of biodiversity and realise other climate friendly benefits. In some cases school gardens are now providing fruit, vegetables and berries that help children make connections by preparing these for snacks and celebrations.

The promotion and investment in outdoor learning has been critical to our response to the pandemic given the clear positive wellbeing impacts on children and staff and all settings enjoy sustained periods of time outside.

A number of settings applied to be part of a pilot scheme in partnership with Juliet Robertson, Education consultant, using the Mud, Mess and Magic document as a baseline for developing practitioner knowledge and the physical outdoor space. The impacts of the covid 19 pandemic meant that the settings involved opted to pause the pilot until Jan 2022.

Increasing the Number of Childminders to promote choice

A key change to the expansion to ELC was the ability of childminders to deliver up to 1140 hours as part of the funded entitlement, this had not been the case previously.

The Early Year team worked closely with Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to build relationships with the childminding community of Aberdeen. As of 2020/21 there are approximately 130 registered childminders operating in Aberdeen.

The childminders are key partners in delivering the expanded hours. Some children cope better in home like environments with childminders as they have low adult/child ratios. For many children, this 'home from home' experience is exactly what they need to provide the most nurturing environment. The childminder sector occupies a very distinctive place in the provision of early childhood services and family support. In many places, they offer an attractive and flexible provision for parents many of whom have working commitments. They often provide highly valued services in home settings where other services may be at time unavailable or are less flexible.

To increase choice and capacity across the city we undertook a procurement exercise to bring childminders who met the National Standard into partnership with Aberdeen City Council. A series of engagement sessions were held in Autumn 2019 and Winter 2019/2020 with the childminding community. The engagement sessions were an opportunity to discuss the policy drivers and benefits of the introduction of the expanded hours for children and families.

Following this exercise, 72 childminders have now entered into partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver the expanded hours. Prior to this we had 6 childminders in place piloting the entitlement. This reflects an increase of 1100%. Out of the total of 130 childminders currently operating in Aberdeen, 55% of the city's

registered childminding sector, who meet the criteria set out in the National Standard, are in partnership to deliver the expanded hours.

The impact of this increase results in greater choice to families and provision being more evenly distributed geographically. As of April 2021, 135 eligible pre-school children accessed up to 1140 hours from childminders across the city. Families have improved flexibility with some childminders starting their working days at 7am and others working as late as families.

Building Capacity in our childminders

All of Aberdeen City Council partner provider childminders have been through specific training and meet the requirements of our Quality Assurance procedures. Crucially, they also meet Scottish Government's National Standard for delivery of ELC.

In order for childminders to be used by families as part of the universal offer of 1140 they require to be registered and quality assured by the Care Inspectorate. The Early Years' service has successfully utilised the Learning Pathway for childminders to increase the number of fully qualified childminders across Aberdeen City. Approximately 8 childminders working in the city in 2017 held a qualification at SVQ Level 3 and were fully registered to deliver funded ELC, this has now extended to 72 fully qualified staff. A further 17 Funded Provider childminders are currently undertaking SVQ Level 3 qualification and 2 are undertaking BA Childhood Practice. Additionally, most of our childminders now have access and have logged into ACC Learn to support their on-going development. The service will continue to work with SCMA to support best practice.

Work to bring childminders into partnership has been highly effective to date and will be on-going.

Supporting practitioners to gain the qualifications they require

Aberdeen City Council is committed to expanding, developing and training the ELC workforce and offers funding annually to support workforce development and expansion in the early learning & childcare and out of school care sectors.

The purpose of the funding is to:

- Support early learning & childcare and out of school care staff to undertake recognised accredited qualifications;
- Ensure workers are appropriately qualified for their current job role and to meet Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements;
- Support Managers and/ or lead practitioners to meet the entry requirements for the PDA Childhood Practice Award at SCQF Level 9.
- Support Managers and/ or lead practitioners to undertake the BA Childhood Practice at The University of Aberdeen

Since 2017, 279 ELC workers have been funded to undertake accredited qualifications, at Support Worker, Practitioner and Manager levels. Aberdeen City Council has agreed to continue this commitment for the next 3 years through a joint Framework Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. This will ensure we can support staff training, retention and career progressions whilst achieving best value.

Changing contracts of current staff for the new delivery model

The introduction of delivery models which extend beyond traditional school opening hours and school terms led to a need for our workforce to provide the staff cover to support this change. A review of contractual hours and working patterns of our existing ELC workforce was undertaken to determine what was needed to support the change.

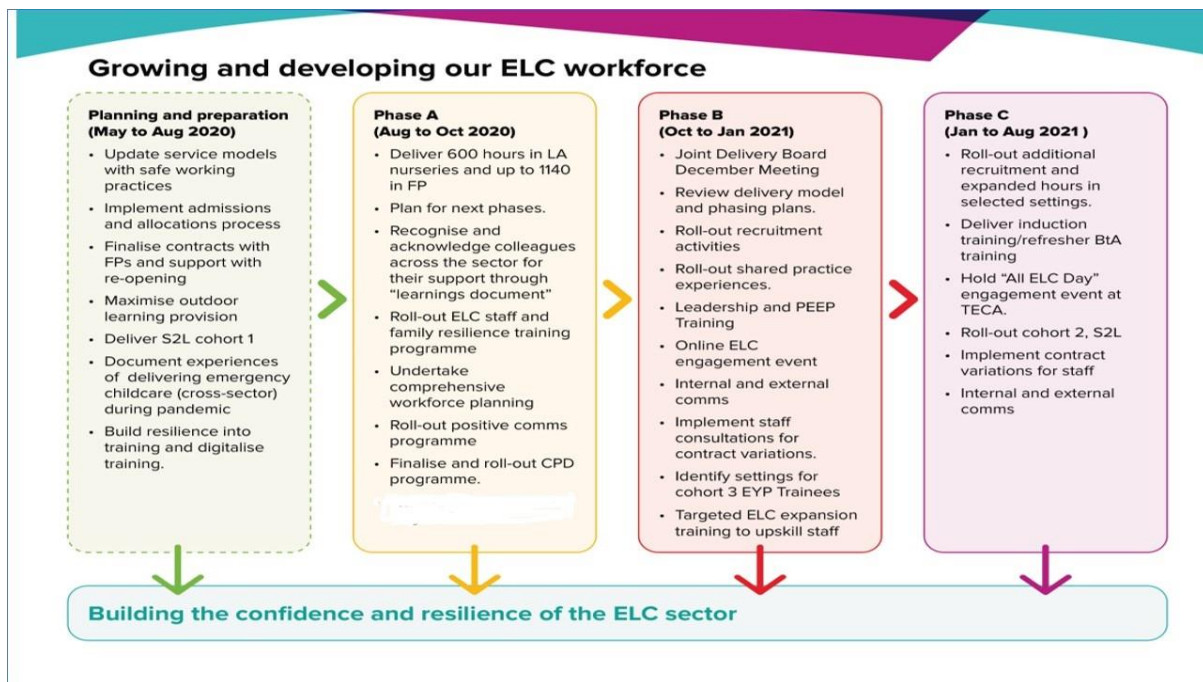
A period of engagement and consultation with staff had begun at the start of 2020 but had to be put on hold to enable the service to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Close working with People & Organisational Development and Trade Union colleagues saw this work resume from February 2021 with a significant engagement and consultation exercise to enable staff to state their preferred working patterns within the new model.

Despite the challenging timescale, revised working patterns to support the new models were implemented in August 2021, and in the vast majority of cases employee's preferences were able to be accommodated. To deliver the new model has resulted in some employees moving from 39 to 52-week contracts, increasing their contractual hours and in some cases moving to alternative settings depending upon their contractual preference. Of existing Early Years staff that chose to move onto a 52-week model approximately 150 contract variations were processed as part of the change to the service.

The delay in this process due to the pandemic led to many new teams not being in a position to form until August 2021 and this placed a pressure on settings to build a sense of teamwork at the same time as they welcomed children to access their expanded offer. There is no doubt that this presented challenges for settings, and we are exceptionally grateful for the professionalism of staff shown.

In a like manner, Facilities colleagues also undertook a period of consultation with staff to discuss the changes to ELC delivery. Throughout this process the programme team tried to align staff consultations across Education and Facilities teams to ensure information was shared within the same period. With sites open for more hours and many settings effectively operating all year-round additional support is required of janitorial, catering and cleaning colleagues. The expansion of ELC offered an opportunity for existing Facilities staff to increase hours if they wished to do so, and in the case of catering colleagues move onto a 52-week contract. Approximately, 38 contract variations were processed for catering colleagues.

The service are extremely grateful for the flexibility and engagement of Trade Union colleagues in supporting solutions to meet the needs of all staff.



Diversifying our workforce

Progressive steps have been undertaken to increase the diversity of the workforce in relation to age, gender and race.

There is clear evidence of a changing age profile with a significant increase in younger age groups now represented and this will greatly support workforce planning in the longer term. In 2017, there were only 31 employees within the 16-24 age range working in ELC. This has increased to 61 in 2021 and is thought to be due to the wider range of roles now available (figures are expressed as headcount). The introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship programme for Early Years, which targets young people aged 16-24 has directly led to an increased number of younger employees within the overall ELC workforce.

There is also some evidence of a very slight increase in the number of male staff choosing to work in the sector. In 2017 the ELC workforce had only 6 members of staff identified as male, this has now increased to 11.

Based on the available evidence the programme has contributed to greater diversity within the ELC workforce. To note, data is limited as it is optional whether employees wish to provide this information. Based on responses from employees who chose to provide this information, as of 1st September in 2017, there were 9 employees who identified as being of an ethnic minority (excluding white minority) background. In 2021, this number increased to 17, with a smaller number identifying as 'Other' <5.

The service will seek to continue to develop the progressive growth in the diversification of the workforce by building on the initiatives set out by the ELC Academy and the Modern Apprentice scheme. In doing so the Service hopes to connect with a diverse range of audiences and raise the profile of ELC as a career choice.

The increase in the workforce and diversification of skills sets has considerably aided our work to expand provision across the city. The provision of a wider range of roles has introduced a clear career pathway with more entry routes. This change is helping to utilise the skills and expertise from a broader demographic and has helped us diversify the workforce. The delay in consultation and engagement with staff led to ELC teams forming for August 2021 and the pressure this placed on staff teams is recognised although could not have been mitigated. Work undertaken has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Programme 3 – Communication, Engagement and Digital

Central to the work of the ELC Expansion programme was our communication and engagement activities. Communication cut across all our workstreams. This took on further importance as the programme adapted to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. We sought to align local communications with national initiatives wherever possible.

A communications strategy was developed and regularly reviewed to ensure that key transformation messages and specific project information were shared with all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, that the views and experiences of stakeholders continued to contribute to the development and delivery of the programme. A series of engagement events took place with different stakeholders – school senior leadership groups, the early years workforce, facilities colleagues, funded providers and families – while the specific interests of each group differed the team sought to ensure that communication was purposeful, clear and of value.

Child and Family Centred Provision

In line with the ethos of the ELC Delivery Plan (2017) we continued to consult with families to ensure we delivered an ELC provision that was child and family centred. The programme maintained high levels of engagement with parents, grandparents, carers and potential parents. A survey undertaken between September and November 2019, gained 881 responses. This was followed up in January 2020 in-person engagement sessions held with parents/carers in each ASG across the city, which reached approximately 1000 parents in total. Most participants who responded to the survey and attended the engagement sessions, had one or two children, and a significant number of respondents had children between the ages of 2-3 years old and 3-4 years old for their first and second child. This being the cohort of children who would immediately benefit from the implementation of the policy. A summary of the results from our consultation and research was made publicly available on the Aberdeen City Council website and directly influenced our work:

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/Results%20of%20ELC%20Parents%20and%20Carers%20Survey%20-%20November%202019.pdf>

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/ELC%20Focus%20Group%20Presentation%20-%20January%202020.pdf>

Sharing Progress

To build on the levels of engagement with families and to highlight the transformative level of investment being made in Early Years, a series of press releases, online content and short films were released. This enabled parents and the wider community to follow the progress of the programme and see first-hand how the programme sought to deliver on the ask from families. In relation to the capital programme of works we sought to highlight how we were creating enabling environments for children to learn and play; embedding nurseries within the community – ensuring that facilities were accessible and local to families; and developing family learning and support.

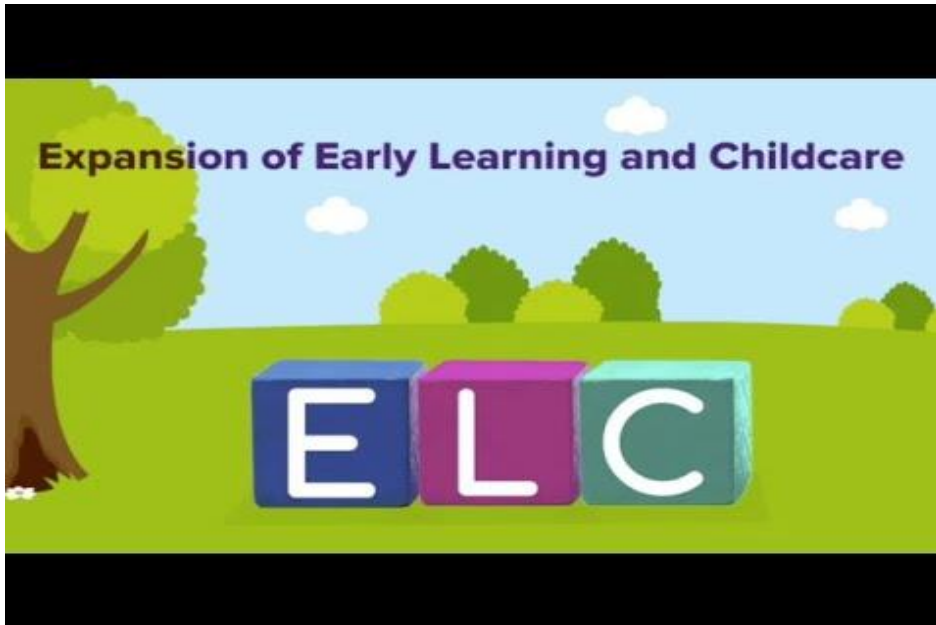
The use of multi-media and online content took on greater importance due to the challenges of the pandemic. We invested more heavily in multi-media and virtual tours to help share progress with families and the wider community, with the most recent film showing completed settings being utilised by children.

Project Reel: LC Projects Progress (28 January 2021)



[ELC schools Final HD 1080p - YouTube](#)

Project Reel: ELC Projects Completed (24 November 2021)



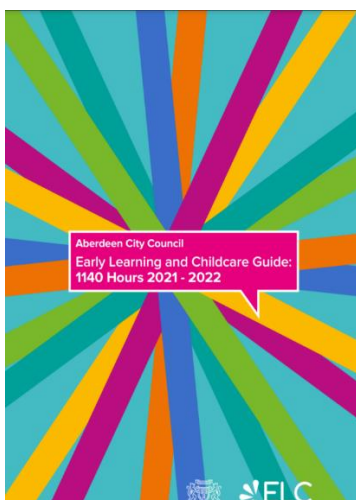
[Final ELC school build 1 ELC HD 1080p - YouTube](#)

Policy Development

The Early Learning and Childcare admissions policy was refreshed to take account of the new delivery model. Following approval at Committee, routine cycles of review have been put in place to ensure that this key policy continues to meet the needs of families. The timely approval of the policy enabled effective communication with families about the offer available to them from August 2021. To that end, a comprehensive jargon free guide was developed on the expansion of ELC for families to access. This guide was also promoted via the Family Information Service, made available on the Aberdeen City Council website and referenced in the ELC admissions applications.

A copy of the guide can be found here:.

https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/ELC%20Guide%201140%20Hours_2021_2022.pdf



Feedback on the communication from families is generally positive. However, despite the range of communication methods utilised the latest ELC parent/carer consultation highlighted that only 51.5% of 453 parents and carers who responded were aware of Gaelic Medium provision.

51.5% of parents and carers are aware that Gaelic medium Education is an option at Gilcomstoun school, with 48.5% being unaware.

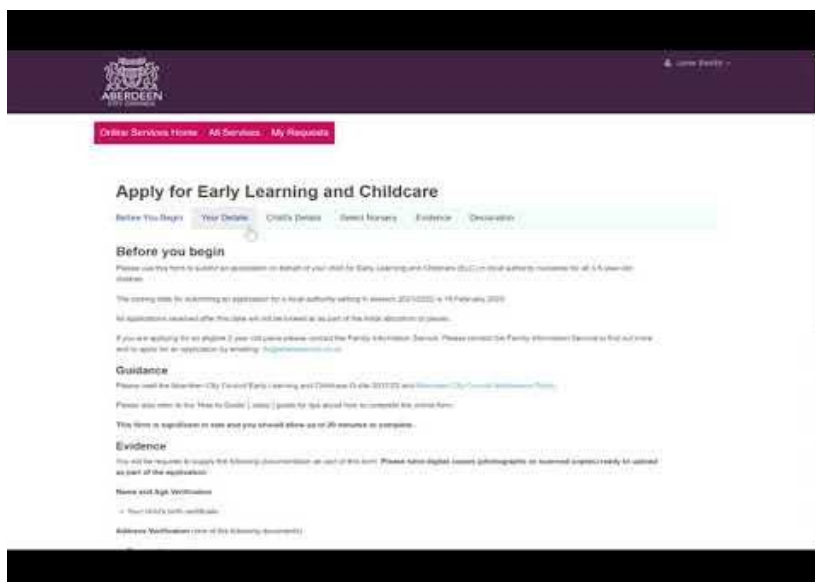
The vast majority of parents and carers (69.8%) indicated that they would not be interested in a Gaelic medium education in ELC, whilst 12.8% were interested in a Gaelic medium education in ELC. 12.8% of respondents did not know.

There is a need to promote provision at Gaelic Medium. The service will take this as a learning point.

Allied to the change to the admissions policy, the programme team also sought to support parents through the admissions application process. To raise awareness around the changes to ELC - the team worked closely with colleagues in Customer to produce customer communications, online help videos and updated the online chat bot with frequently asked questions.

The introduction of the aforementioned digital triage tools enabled the Admissions team to make better use of resources, during this busy period. Approximately, 17% of all applicants accessed the online 'how to videos', while this figure isn't a high percentage, we anticipate the utilisation of such support tools will steadily increase as the online system and ELC expansion embeds.

ELC Application 'How to Videos': https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oN_CMDvADrQ



To continue to ensure high engagement with families during the admissions period, we will continue to work with Customer colleagues to draw on their expertise to sense check usability and accessibility as we strive to deliver a positive customer experience.

Using technology to share progress

We used social media to share information and promote good practice and opportunities via our Twitter feed @EduAbdnELC. With over 550 followers, this helps to reach parents, providers and everyone with an interest in ELC in Aberdeen and beyond.

The Education Newsletter was used to share progress towards the expansion of ELC and allowed the service to share some visuals given the restrictions on in-person visits to new settings. Ideally, we would have welcomed communities into new settings and this will be considered as the restrictions in place as a result of Covid-19 are eased.

Given the restrictions in place, a number of films were commissioned to help families tour provisions virtually. Although families would have undoubtedly appreciated an in-person visit, the 3D walk throughs were an innovative tool that we applied to support nursery inductions and enable children and families to explore and connect with the new settings. The immersive 3D walk throughs focused on some of our newly completed nursery projects: Tillydrone nursery; Cummings Park nursery; Kingsford School nursery and Gilcomstoun School nursery / Sgoil-Araich.

The walk throughs offered an opportunity to explore the recently completed nursery projects and virtually tour the buildings. The high resolution 360 degree walk throughs were shared with schools and made available to families and the wider community. Settings will prioritise welcoming children into new settings as soon as restrictions are eased.

To access the 3D walk throughs please click the links next to the bullet point below:

Kingsford School Nursery, Mastrick (64 place nursery)

- [Kingsford](#)

The Links Nursery, Seaton (90 place nursery)

- [Link Nursery](#)

Tillydrone Nursery, Tillydrone (56 place nursery)

- [Tilydrone ELC](#)

Cummings Park Nursery, Northfield (80 place nursery)

- [Northfield ELC](#)

Gilcomstoun School Nursery / Sgoil-Araich, City centre (88 place nursery)

- [Gilcolmstoun](#)

Engagement with families registered for outdoor provision

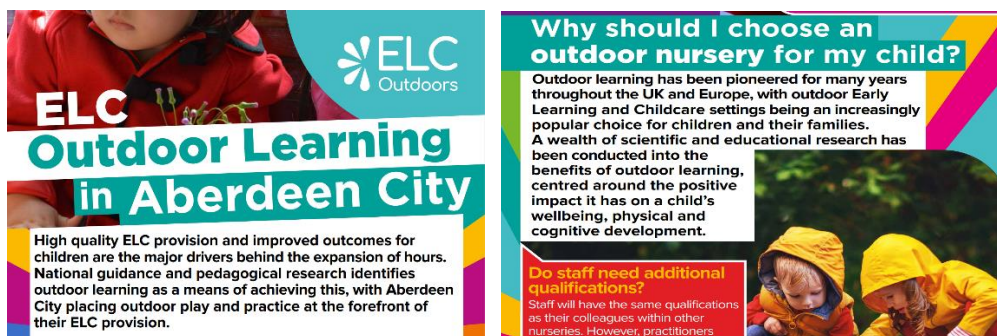
A cornerstone of the programme has been the investment in outdoor learning, and this is keenly reflected in the establishment of two new outdoor nurseries at Duthie Park and Hazlehead Park. Both will have an outdoor focus in their education and provision, but each will offer unique and varied experiences for children, families, staff and the wider communities. The establishment of the two new outdoor nurseries is a first for Aberdeen city and a pioneering provision for the Early Years sector. Regrettably, due

to the impact of the pandemic on the supply chain the completion time for the aforementioned projects was extended and both will be operational from January 2022.

The Early Years team have sought to provide more insight and understanding into the world of an outdoor nursery through the eyes and experiences of children and families by sharing information posters and video links.



<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/Outdoor%20Learning%205760x1080px>.



For parents who had applied for a place at the outdoor nurseries an online welcome/introduction session was hosted by the Outdoor ELC Manager at the

beginning of Term 1. Due to Covid-19 restrictions it was felt this would be a positive opportunity for families to meet the skilled practitioners that would be working with the children. Furthermore, it was also an occasion to discuss the values, aims and overarching pedagogy.

Those parents that had applied for a place at the outdoor nurseries are currently receiving their ELC entitlement at a contingency setting. The programme team have sought to keep families up to date with site progress sharing information bulletins and site photos. However, in a recent survey of parents undertaken by the outdoor nursery team families have reported that they would have preferred more information on the timings of moving into the new outdoor settings. The team appreciate that parents and carers seek certainty that is hard to provide in a rapidly changing context of supply chain issues exacerbated further by storm Arwen. Nonetheless, families reported confidence in the outdoor nursery team and positive experiences for their children:

“Thank you so much for providing a positive formative experience for my child, I know how important and valuable it is, and thank you all for contributing to that foundation.”

“The children all seem to have developed great relationships with the teachers, and AI never stops chatting about them! We’ve felt very supported.”

Engagement with key partners

Working with SCMA has improved quality as we all work together to support both childminders and families. We have regular ACC and SCMA meetings with childminders so that we can keep them up to date with changes and give them the opportunity to tell us how they are. Additionally, this gives us a chance to assess training needs. ACC have devised a communication procedure to ensure we have consistency for children and their families. We have been promoting strong communication between childminders and nurseries during our meetings and when on QI visits, this supports best outcomes for each child who is taking part in a blended placement.

Communication and engagement with settings

Regular communication was established to share updates on the programme with Local Authority settings. The service faced considerable challenges during the early stages of pandemic and this impacted on the frequency of communications. This was rectified by engaging with Head Teachers more frequently during Head Teacher meetings although the service recognise that communication would have benefited from being ‘in person’ in some cases.

The Locality Lead Officers played a more considerable role in helping settings plan for the expanded model and engaged with individual teams to explore staffing arrangements, this helped free up the Programme Manager to support the final stages of the capital programme. Some settings report that they felt apprised of progress whilst others would have welcomed more frequent communication. This will be taken as a learning point for consideration in any future programmes of work.

Consulting with children to shape service delivery

As stated in *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland*, a key element of the 1140 ELC programme is to enable “ELC experiences [which] provide children with an important opportunity for maximising healthy eating and establishing healthy eating habits in the earliest years.” (p. 40, 2018) Many of our settings have embraced this new routine, with one shaping their approach to this by auditing continuous reflective dialogue with staff and collating observations and feedback from their children. Using this information, the setting changed their lunchtime routine to ensure it was meeting individual needs and providing the most nurturing experience for all children. In moving the location of this mealtime to a space within the Nursery, children shared their evaluations explaining that they liked having their food in the new area “because it’s still Nursery”, “it’s a nicer room”, “we just wash our hands and come through” and “I just like all of it!” The Early Years team continue to support settings to utilise this approach.

How satisfied are parents and carers with the induction process?

We asked parents and carers how satisfied they were with their child’s induction process, keeping in mind the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and Scottish Government guidance that all Early Learning and Childcare settings are following. The majority of the 454 parents and carers who responded were satisfied with the process.

68.3% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their child’s induction process.

13.1% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

10.2% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

The service recognises the need to review induction arrangements as soon as public health measures allow.

A range of communication and engagement methods were utilised but the Covid-19 restrictions did impact on the level of satisfaction of parents and carers in induction arrangements and in staff given the lack of in-person engagement. This will be taken as a learning point.

Programme 4 – Capital

Planning the location of capital works

At the time of writing the Delivery Plan, it was clear that there were considerable implications for our infrastructure. The previous Aberdeen City Council ELC offer has been delivered using a traditional model based in schools and did not fully utilise each building. There was a need to maximise the use of buildings whilst recognising that some would be unable to offer the flexibility so only able to provide ELC offer of 600 hours.

Projects were split into three Phases with an overall capital budget for the ELC Expansion Programme of £23million. Phase 1 of the expansion programme focused on areas that have the greatest difficulty in accessing services and targeted those most likely to benefit first. Phase 2 covered the other areas identified where there is a clear need for additional provision and the remaining Phase 3 projects addressed minor enabling and refurbishment works at other sites across the city.

ELC Expansion Capital Programme		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duthie Park Outdoor Nursery • The Links Nursery (formerly Woodlands) • Tillydrone Nursery • Cummings Park Nursery • Westpark School • Kingsford School • Woodside School • Tullos School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culter School • Cults School • Hazlehead Park Outdoor Nursery • Kingswells School • Kirkhill School • Broomhill School • Charleston School • Gilcomstoun School • Loirston School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danestone School • Dyce School • Glashieburn School • Forehill School • Fernielea School • Scotstown School • Kittybrewster School • Greenbrae School • Walker Road School

In total the capital investment comprised of works to 27 settings, of these 8 were new stand alone facilities, 2 were extensions and significant refurbishments of a standalone nursery, 1 was an extension to a school to form a new nursery, 2 were significant refurbishments within an existing school nursery, 1 was a significant refurbishment of a non-operational building to convert it into a new nursery and 12 were minor work refurbishments of existing nursery settings.

A comprehensive review of the suitability of school-based provisions was undertaken to determine local circumstances and inform each local offer based on the agreed delivery models. The provision of a quality outdoor learning environment was prioritised in recognition that such a provision will enable coherent delivery of the curriculum over a mix of sessions.

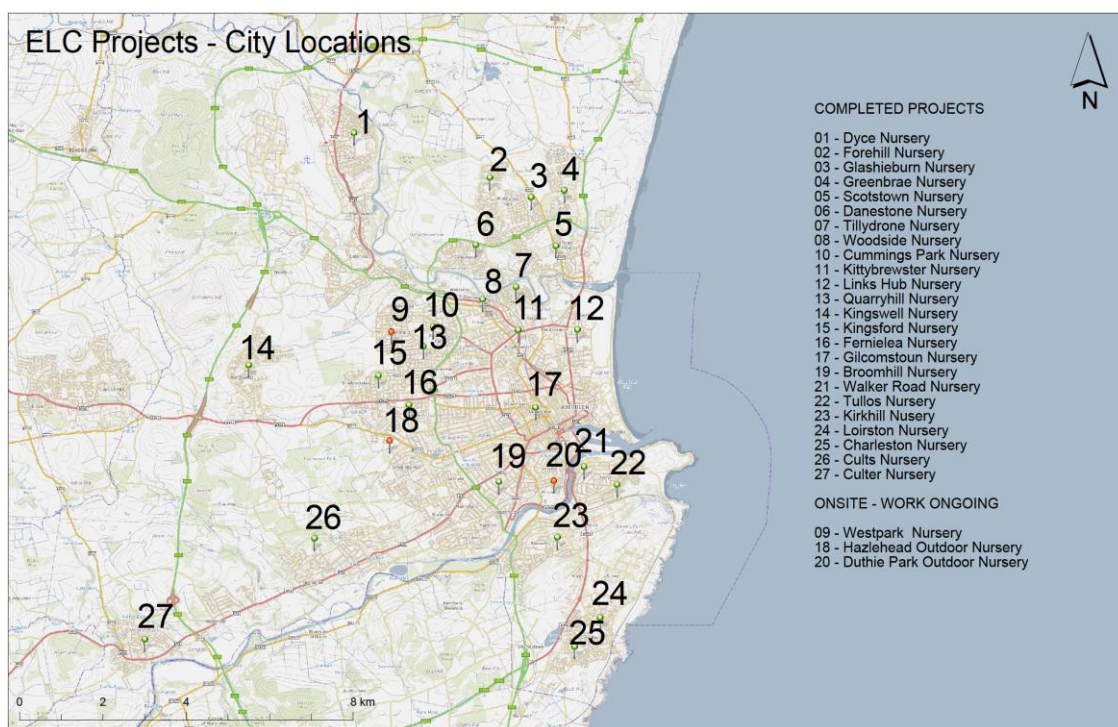
Buildings thought suitable to offer a higher number of ELC places if internal and external spaces were improved were identified. The feasibility of each was scoped to ascertain the long-term efficiency of undertaking this work to ensure that capital resource was spent wisely.

Aberdeen City Council's internal design team and appointed consultants were commissioned to produce a series of feasibility reports covering each site under consideration for expansion works. These studies were based on a design brief developed in collaboration with the Early Years Team, Design Team as well as Operational and Facilities Teams across the Council. This enabled a uniform approach to be taken across the estate when reflecting on existing facilities and new operational priorities moving forward under expansion.

To ensure a consistent approach across the city existing nursery facilities were reviewed to ensure the quality of their facilities were comparable to that of a new build. This is to ensure that for parental choice and staff retention the quality of the facilities is uniform across the city and to ensure the best outcomes for delivery of the ELC Programme.

The accessibility of services was analysed. Careful analysis of uptake of services evidenced that some families chose not to access their entitlement as they didn't perceive provision to be accessible and considerable consideration was given to travelling distances to remove this barrier.

The agreed capital projects spanned the city with a mix of new build, refurbishment and light internal works to enable the delivery of a flexible model to families across each Associated Schools Group. The map below outlines the geographic spread of the 27 ELC Expansion capital projects.



Oversight of the Capital programme

Oversight was provided by the ELC Programme Board. This cross-council approach was critical as the team managed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such challenges were managing national material shortages, extended delivery times and an increasing number of staff in the supply chain who had to self-isolate, all of which impacted on the availability of materials. Against this challenging landscape the programme team undertook a value engineering exercise to ensure that the programme remained on track financially.

The design team also worked closely with the main contractor to evaluate the impact on the programme with regard to Scottish Government guidance and the requirement to comply with physical distancing measures as well.

Framework

The framework considered and used was the Major Projects Procurement Hub Framework. This framework allowed one main contractor to be used across all the 27 projects ensuring a close collaborative approach and best market value. It also had the benefit of sharing knowledge between the design team and the main contractor at an early stage of the design process to ensure there was a slim lined procurement route.

Following the lockdown and the introduction of COVID 19 restrictions, to manage the pandemic, the close collaboration approach with the main contractor allowed us to maintain progress onsite and resolve issues across the whole capital programme to maximise savings and mitigate delays to the programme.

Design Approach

A brief was issued by the client in line with the Northern Alliance documents. This brief outlined the number of spaces and facilities required as well as identifying each location and the number of learners in each setting. Each location had a unique identity and issues to overcome whether it was an internal refurbishment or an extensive extension of an existing building or a new build.

Before starting the design of the individual properties by the individual designers a holistic approach was considered regarding the overall feel of the buildings. It was agreed that a light and bright open space with a welcoming feel was the approach to adopt. Spaces were to be welcoming and practical with the learners the main focus for the design. Investigation was undertaken regarding the materials to be used both internally and externally and a palette of materials and finishes were chosen by the client to be used across all the projects. The below extract was a useful tool when choosing considering this:

‘For years there was a prevailing mindset that children should be surrounded by bright colour. Walls, carpets, curtains and even furniture were done in vivid hues from green, to red, yellow, purple or orange. Children actually find it difficult to relax and concentrate in an environment reverberating with loud colour. You rather want your setting to be homelike, with plants, area rugs, and wall hangings.’ – Extract from Space for Children

The individual designers all approach the design to suit the different location, but all used the basis as above. This has resulted in a varied design solutions at each location, however the overall approach has been maintained across the board.

Capacity and Flexibility

A review of supply and demand data was undertaken in 2017 and again in 2019 to identify the required capacity and flexibility required by the service. This process enabled the team to have a high level of confidence in the projects being progressed and ensure that capital projects were being provided where most needed. The

programme team worked closely with the Improvement Service to sense check supply and demand data and welcomed the external challenge.

Combining the capacity from local authority settings and funded provider partner purchased provision across the city it was estimated that there would be a total capacity of 6,046,560 hours in 2021, which is effectively 5,304 bundles of 1140 hours of ELC. The required additional capacity for each ASG was identified and specified per setting to ensure that we had sufficient mix of delivery models available locally.

A total of 579 additional physical indoor spaces have been created as part of the ELC Expansion capital programme with no family asked to travel outwith their local area for ELC provision unless requested by them. This confirms that the capital projects have met the policy intentions outlined in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Service Model Redesign

Two service delivery models were identified to deliver 1140 hours of ELC:

- 9am-3pm x term time
- 8am-6pm x 46 weeks (offering a long morning; long afternoon or two and half days)

The new model of 8am-6pm x 46 weeks when applied enables the service to maximise the physical capacity of the building and effectively doubles the operating capacity. When current operating models for session 2021/22 are applied to our capital projects we have created 1,676 additional ELC spaces despite only creating 579 additional physical indoor spaces. This demonstrates the efficiency of the approach taken.

This provides additional flexibility and headroom to enable the service to meet and respond to demand as required. In the case of capital projects, the table below outlines physical capacity prior to works; physical capacity post work; current capacity based on some settings delivering a mixture of term time and full year models; and the final column highlights the maximum capacity when the 8am-6pm model is applied to all the capital projects. This ensures that we have a sustainable model and places us in an advantageous position if eligibility for ELC changes.

Project Name	Physical Capacity Prior to Works	Physical Indoor Capacity Post Works	Operating capacity based on current models applied for 21/22	Maximum operating capacity if 8am-6pm model applied to all capital projects
Greenbrae School	40	48	96	96
Walker Road	60	65	130	130
Quarryhill School	40	48	96	96
Tullos School	40	48	96	96
Links Nursery	0	90	135	180
Kingsford School	40	64	96	96
Tillydrone	0	56	112	112

Northfield/Cummings Park	0	80	160	160
Woodside School	55	80	120	160
Broomhill School	40	56	112	112
Gilcomstoun School	40	81	162	162
Culter School	40	48	96	96
Charleston School	30	40	80	80
Cults School	40	64	128	128
Danestone School	20	56	84	112
Duthie Park	0	20	40	40
Dyce School	60	60	80	120
Fernielea School	40	40	60	80
Forehill School	30	48	96	96
Glashieburn School	30	60	60	120
Hazlehead Park	0	40	40	80
Kingswells School	40	40	80	80
Kirkhill School	40	64	96	128
Kittybrewster School	30	30	60	60
Loirston School	60	60	120	120
Scotstown School	40	40	40	80
Westpark School	40	48	96	96
Total Spaces	895	1474	2571	2916

In total there are 45 local authority settings offering 1140 hours and 4 settings delivering 600 hours due to physical limitations of the building/nursery environment.

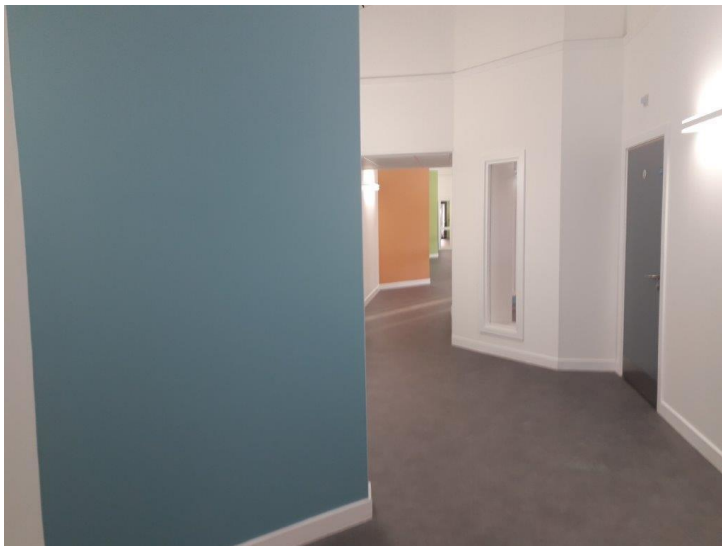
An overview of local authority settings and models delivering 1140 hours since the start of the new term (August 2021) can be found here: https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/ELC%20Guide%201140%20Hours_2021_2022.pdf

Spotlight on The Links Nursery and Hub

The Links was an existing building owned by Aberdeen City Council, but the original use had ceased. Being an existing building there were restraints when approaching the design. Structural works were undertaken to open the space and increase the size of the windows. This allowed the building to be brighter and allow for interesting spaces due to the existing building layout.



Picture above shows bright open space with access to the outdoors.



Creating an interesting space using the existing buildings layout.

The Links Nursery and Hub opened on the 16th August 2021. The renovated building is now an important part of our continuum for up to 90 children and their families who would benefit from a multi-agency response. The service aims to:

- Provide high quality provision, learning and experiences for all the children and families attending our setting.
- Improve children's outcomes and help close the poverty- related attainment gap.
- Increase family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents
- Support parents into work and study or training.

Currently 21 Eligible 2s and 25 3–5-year-olds access the ELC provision. Approximately 44.2% of children who attend the Early Learning and Childcare provision have English as an additional language (EAL).

The Links Nursery and Hub has a Health Visitor on site and one Band 3 Nursery Nurse who is employed by Health and currently awaiting start date. As the provision develops, there is the possibility of introducing additional multi-agency representation based on site, i.e. Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and Children's Social Work. The Hub enjoys a close working arrangement with the Family Learning team. This model provides an opportunity to test the benefits of the Community Campus principles agreed by Committee in November 2021.

Spotlight on Broomhill

Broomhill school nursery is a stand-alone facility with a capacity for 56 3 and 4 year old children at any one time. The nursery is located in the school playground, which enables the school and nursery setting to maintain a close relationship. Prior to the expansion programme, the original Broomhill nursery was split between a demountable in the school playground and an upstairs classroom. The latter room lacked free flow and children could not independently access the outdoor space.

The new nursery has a secure outdoor area to the rear, which the children are fully utilising and enjoying in all weathers. In line with our other settings Broomhill now has all the facilities identified by the Early Years Team as necessary to support the full offering of 1140 hours including improved staff facilities and Family spaces which allow staff to support and work with families alongside the children.



Broomhill nursery outdoor space



The activity space of the new Broomhill nursery is light and airy. The snack kitchen is integrated into the playspace enabling practitioners to have a clear line of sight of the children at all times. Adjacent to the main activity space are auxiliary facilities including a dedicated laundry and nappy change room. Consideration was given to the proximity of these spaces and the general layout of the building to ensure staff to children ratios aren't impacted and maximise the support available to children.





The school have been complimentary of their new nursery and shared, “what a difference to what they had!”

Spotlight on Kingsford

The new Kingsford nursery has increased capacity from 40 to 64 children at any one time. The nursery benefits from having two play spaces (physical capacity of 32:32). The play spaces have the option of being interconnected or separated by double doors with vision panels. The inclusion of the two play spaces provides flexibility to the service to offer a mixed model e.g. term time and full year-round, which increases choice and flexibility for parents. In the development phase of the project, design team colleagues thought of the use of building from the perspective of young children as well as adults. For example, windows are either full length or at child height to enable children to see outdoors. Details such as the positioning of soap dispensers and paper towel holders have been installed with children in mind - accounting for the height and reach of pre-school children.

The layout of Kingsford means there are very few corridors, so rooms and spaces are linked with the main entrance leading into a central cloak area/flexible hall allowing families into the heart of the building. This maximises the amount of usable available floor area for the building as well as bringing staff and families together to build close relationships and feel part of the nursery alongside the children. The central cloak area leads directly to family support spaces and both activity rooms so support families and children together.



Kingsford Nursery exterior and freeflow playspace (l to r)



Kingsford Nursery activity space and staff room (l to r)

Research identified the lack of appropriate staff space for practitioners in some of our existing nursery buildings. To this end, we have sought to offer high quality staff space and auxiliary accommodation. This staff space can also be used flexibly as a multi-purpose room if required.

Spotlight on Woodside

Woodside nursery was a substantial extension to an existing nursery building. The new nursery has the capacity for 80 children at any one time and offers ELC to eligible 2-year-olds as well as 3 and 4 year old children. The old nursery at Woodside did not have adequate free flow and to access the nursery children had to climb several flights of stairs. The new nursery space enables children to access the outdoors and offers them a rich learning environment in which to learn and play. Woodside like Kingsford has two play spaces and this offers a mixed model to be delivered from the nursery and meet the individual needs of families.



Woodside Nursery

Spotlight on Dyce

The scope of Phase 3 projects generally encompassed minor works and/or refurbishments. Examples of work undertaken in Phase 3 projects ranged from new flooring, redecoration, refurbishment of toilets, creation of a laundry room or nappy change. Dyce school nursery is one such example of a Phase 3 project. The works carried out comprised of new flooring, redecoration and the refurbishment of the toilets. The result was an enhanced nursery space that was fit for purpose for the delivery of 1140 hours. Dyce nursery has a capacity for 60 at any one time and offers a mixed model of 9am-3pm over term time and 8am-6pm over 46 weeks. The school were delighted with the results and described their refurbished playroom as ‘beautiful.’





Spotlight on Culter

To deliver the additional hours at Culter school nursery the existing nursery was extended and the internal spaces remodelled to create a fit for purpose environment. The flow of the nursery has been improved and the activity space is light and airy with free flow. The outdoor area is fenced and there is a mix of hard standing and grass areas, the nursery also has access to a 'secret garden', which the children can enjoy. The extension also enabled the required supporting accommodation to be included: nappy change, new toilets, a snack kitchen, a family room, accessible toilets and staff accommodation, staff toilets and a reception room. A laundry, internal store and comms room as well as cleaner's store and external store were also part of the works.

The design team considered the situation of the nursery and opted for a brick extension and reused the granite from the existing nursery to create a facility that was in keeping with the surrounding buildings and area. Physical capacity increased from 40 to 48 children at any one time.



Culter school nursery



New Culter school nursery entrance



Culter school nursery playspace – free flow doors and bright and light windows. Internal resource store off the activity space.



Culter school nursery snack kitchen integrated into activity space. Note:- low level sinks for children to access and clear line of sight for staff from kitchen area into the play room.



Culter nursery laundry room and nappy change room.

Spotlight on Cults

Cults nursery project involved a substantial extension and remodelling of internal spaces. Two interconnected nursery playspaces with free flow were created. Previously, the nursery did not have fit for purpose free flow. New toilets, nappy change facilities, resource store, family room, office space, new cloak area, a laundry room and comms room were also created as part of the building works. The outdoor space is extensive and secured with a perimeter fence. The outdoor area features a slabbed area and turfed external play areas. Cults nursery has increased from a registered capacity of 40 to 64 preschool children at any one time. The nursery is delivering an 8am-6pm model over 46 weeks of the year.





Children at Cults nursery learning and playing

Parents and children can enter through main reception, to the right of the reception area is a reception office. Barrier matting covers the reception area. Families and children enter through double doors, which leads them into a corridor space from which they can access the nursery rooms.

Roof lights keep this area light and they can be opened for ventilation.

Off the main reception area are the auxiliary spaces – office space; family room; visitor toilet and accessible toilet.

Playroom 1 has two low level sinks; one adult height sink and free flow with external doors to access the outside space. Flooring is nonslip and barrier matting has been laid down at the external door entrance.

The room is bright and light with floor to ceiling windows to the front and external free flow doors to enable the independent access to outside. Playroom 2 is a similar space with free flow access.

Staff accommodation is located off the left of the main reception area of the nursery and has fobbed secure access. All doors to the auxiliary accommodation are secured and accessed via a fob.

The Family room is located off the reception area. Staff have been PEEP trained and the addition of a family room within the nursery, enables staff to support and build relationships with families. The room has been designed with a small kitchen area as well to create a comfortable and homely environment.

Spotlight on Tillydrone and Cummings Park

The ELC Expansion capital programme has established new standalone nursery facilities within the Tillydrone and Northfield areas of Aberdeen. The newly built nurseries are fit for purpose and have created high quality and impactful learning environments. The total number of children that the nurseries can accommodate at any one time is as follows:

- Tillydrone nursery – 56 children at any one time

- Cummings Park nursery – 80 children at any one time

Aberdeen City Council sought to appoint an ELC provider to deliver funded ELC to 2–5-year-old children, within the two aforementioned Council owned purpose-built nursery settings. The nurseries are situated centrally within both communities. The location and design of the nurseries drew on the feedback from parent/carer consultations undertaken as part of the ELC Delivery Plan as well as quantitative evidence of supply and demand. The expansion team sought to ensure there was sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community to support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment.

Virtual tours of the stand alone provision can be accessed via the links below:

Tillydrone Nursery,

- [Tillydrone ELC](#)

Cummings Park Nursery, Northfield

- [Northfield ELC](#)

The new facilities allow for a provider to deliver ELC in new, purpose-built nursery settings. It is also an opportunity for the provider to build relationships and work in partnership with the community to improve outcomes for children and young people.



Tillydrone nursery



Tillydrone nursery - activity space



Cummings Park nursery

Spotlight on our Outdoor Provisions



[credit Halliday Fraser Munro]

Despite the delay to our two outdoor provisions as a result of supply chain issues, children, families and staff of Duthie Park Outdoor Nursery and Hazlehead Park Outdoor Nursery have effectively transitioned and established themselves in their temporary bases.

The Outdoor ELC staff have built strong, nurturing relationships with children and families, resulting in full attendance of children who were previously tentative in accepting their temporary offer. Families from both provisions have provided positive feedback on the practitioners' pedagogies and approaches to parent partnership working, sharing thanks "for the trouble [they] have taken in helping [their son] to settle in well and a special thank you to [his Key Worker] for her detailed daily reports as to their son's progress; they are reassuring, helpful and much appreciated." Another parent added how "lovely [it is] to hear how close the Hazlehead outdoor kids have become and [their son] is very comfortable in nursery with his buddies and teachers."

Furthermore, parents have expressed how effective the induction process has been for their children where they "speak so fondly of everyone there". Lastly, a family have shared their delight in the progress they have observed in their child's wellbeing, development and self-regulation, where they have seen a "massive change in him, much more open, controls better his frustration, his confidence is much better now, he is singing songs all day, starts to make up sentences...and I must say he is very much used to coming every morning as he wakes up himself at 06.15, eats and is ready pulling his Dad's hand to come to the nursery."

Both ELC teams have also maximised this opportunity of collaborative working across their provisions, as well as with colleagues outwith, to share and build upon their outdoor pedagogy and assist in the development of two other outdoor spaces of new ELC builds. In the lead up to the completion of Duthie Park and Hazlehead Park outdoor settings, the Outdoor team are now planning the transition process to ensure

children, families and staff have opportunities to begin to build a connection with their new spaces and be involved in this exciting next step in shaping their provision. Our Lead Outdoor Early Years Practitioners have also focussed on making links with the Environmental Service team and wider community organisations in order to lay foundations for future collaborative work.



Duthie Park outdoor nursery rear extension

Realising Change

The transformation of the buildings and environments enables the transformative nature of ELC to be realised, making a real and meaningful difference to the lives of children and families in Aberdeen.

We have received positive feedback from staff that we have created positive and enabling environments for children to learn and play. While it has been challenging to deliver a programme on this scale against the backdrop of the pandemic, schools have commented that seeing the “children enjoying the new space has made it all worth it”.

The provision of quality outdoor learning environments has been a key ambition for the ELC expansion programme in recognition that such provision has a positive impact on a child’s development. The programme has sought to either create or enhance free flow in our ELC settings to enable children to independently access the outdoor space. Schools have feedback that this is supporting children’s creativity, health and wellbeing as they learn and explore their outdoor environment.

The inclusion of a family room in many of our projects has created a space for skilled Early Years practitioners to offer family support in an inclusive and supportive environment. As previously discussed, we have sought to ensure that spaces are welcoming, light and bright for staff, families and children to enjoy.

A key element that has contributed to the successful delivery of the ELC programme is the adoption of a ‘one team’ approach with colleagues across clusters - Capital, Corporate Landlord and Education - working in a coordinated and integrated manner. This approach contributed to the delivery of fit for purpose nurseries in which skilled Early Years practitioners can improve outcomes for children and families.

What do parents tell us about the choices available now?

454 parents responded to a recent survey on our provision of Early Learning and Childcare. Responses were gleaned from all eleven of the Aberdeen City’s ASGs with responses from those accessing provision through the Local Authority and from Funded Providers.

Associated School Groups (ASGs)	Responses	Percentages
Aberdeen Grammar School	45	9.9%
Bridge of Don	26	5.7%
Bucksburn	67	14.8%
Cults	45	9.9%
Dyce	4	0.9%
Harlaw	35	7.7%
Hazlehead	49	10.8%
Lochside	68	15%
Northfield	33	7.3%
Oldmachar	31	6.8%
St Machar	51	11.2%

Parents tell us that 75.8% have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG. 83 respondents (18.3%) have either not yet applied or found the question not applicable.

There is clear evidence of a range of choices across all ASGs with no feedback on gaps in provision. Some parents are very satisfied with the longer hours available whilst some parents (2) would prefer more 9-3 places.

“All settings should offer a 9-3 option. All settings should be truly flexible which they are not.”

“Very satisfied as it really helps a lot but may be more appreciated if there's a provision for full section five days a week so that parent can have more time to work. Many thanks”

As a result of the capital programme, an additional 1, 676 spaces have been made available to children and accessibility issues have been addressed. Nursery settings are modern purpose-built environments which the staff and children are enjoying their time in. The focus on free flow access to the outdoor space is aiding delivery of a high-quality curriculum and the provision of Family Support space will help staff support families as we recover from the pandemic. Supply chain issues associated with the pandemic only impacted on the two outdoor nursery provisions but appropriate contingency arrangements were put in place.

Programme 5 – Funded Providers

Maintaining the balance of provision

The challenge for the programme was to ensure that Aberdeen has sufficient capacity to deliver every child's funded ELC entitlement. Approximately, 75% of all ELC was accessed from local authority settings in 2017, which was in keeping with the national profile. The remaining 25% of ELC was delivered via Funded Providers and this balance would have to be retained or increased to ensure that Funded Provider settings would be sustained. This has been maintained. A cross representation of private, independent, and voluntary settings continue to deliver funded ELC with the addition of new providers coming into partnership. At the time of writing one setting has indicated they are due to close. In this specific case, the impact of Covid-19 has been a contributory factor to the closure as has changes to the pattern of parent led demand. The service will continue to monitor the impact of pandemic on the sector.

Prior to the introduction of 1140, there were 40 funded (contracted) providers delivering 600 hours. From the 40 providers in partnership, 30 were delivering fully flexible wrap around provision to meet the needs of individual families.

The Scottish Government introduced, Funding Follows the Child, alongside the statutory roll out of the expanded entitlement, to ensure that funded entitlement is delivered in high quality settings. Under Funding Follows the Child, local authorities set a rate locally that is paid to funded providers to deliver the funded entitlement. This approach is 'provider neutral' and underpinned by the National Standard, so that all settings entering into contract with local authorities are of a high standard (Care Inspectorate Grade 4 or above).

A procurement exercise was undertaken to establish a non-competitive, flexible framework of ELC providers. The most significant change was the opportunity for childminders to enter into partnership to deliver funded hours (previously childminders had not been eligible). Following a review of commissioning arrangements we sought to ensure the sustainability of the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector and that parents were able to access funded hours free at the point of delivery.

Developing a sustainable rate

The sustainable rate is the "hourly rate that is paid to funded providers [...] to deliver the funded entitlement ensuring they can remain financially viable while offering funded hours to eligible children," [*Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard, 2018*]. Aberdeen City Council adopted the Scotland Excel guidance and template procurement documents (including model terms and conditions) to support the contracting process.

A series of engagement sessions were held from summer 2019 through to early 2020 with funded providers to discuss the options available to identify a sustainable rate. Understandably, there was apprehension about the application process and the roll out of the funded entitlement. To that end, the Early Years and Expansion team worked closely with providers and held a series of engagement events, drop-in sessions (subject to demand) and offered 1-2-1 meetings to discuss the process and the rollout. In addition, providers were signposted to support organisations: P4P, SenScot,

Supplier Development Programme Scotland. Partnership working was key to enable the successful roll out of the expanded hours.

In line with Scottish Excel guidance, a cost survey approach was adopted to identify a rate. The engagement sessions were a valuable opportunity for colleagues to outline the process, answer questions and for providers to share feedback and raise areas for consideration.

The 'provider cost survey' provided as accurate an estimate as possible of the costs associated with their provision of ELC for children under school age to inform the planning and modelling for the sustainable rate. This process was transparent and accessible for providers to engage in.

The result was a healthy response rate with 20 out of the 40 contracted nurseries providing a response. The survey collected information on costs, income, capacity and occupancy. There was cross representation from across the city, with responses received from a mixture of private, third and public sector organisations. In the case of childminders, costs information was also collected from a sample (n=6) of childminders. The rate for meals was calculated by identifying the average rate paid per meal by funded providers. This was then adjusted for inflation and market uncertainties.

This exercise enabled the Council to work out the current average cost of service provision across the survey, ensuring that the rates set for the introduction of 1140 hours, were truly reflective of cost and represented value for money. The outcome agreed was a rate of £5.45 for 3- and 4-year-olds and £6.05 for eligible 2-year-olds for Funded Providers. For childminders a rate of £5.35 for 3- and 4-year-olds and £5.65 for eligible 2-year-olds. The rate for a meal £2.75. The agreed rate is sustainable for partners and reflective of national policy priorities, including funding to enable the payment of the real Living Wage to all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement.

Funded Providers: 1140 hours

In line with Funding Follows the Child, Aberdeen City Council are committed to reducing the administrative burden on providers, and this extends to the application process used for contracting. The recommended approach was flexible enough to allow new private and third sector providers, including childminders, to become funded providers.

Prior to the introduction of 1140 hours, the Council delivered 600 hours of ELC and operated 48 ELC settings (47 of which were in schools). ELC sessions provided part time places over 5 days during school term time and offered limited flexibility to parents. Following the contracting process, we increased capacity across the city – welcoming a range of new providers into partnership whilst also renewing our partnership with existing providers. Following this process there are currently 38 providers and over 70 childminders working in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver up to 1140 hours. The profile of providers in partnership with the Council comprises of:

Funded Provider Type	Number
Independent	4
Private	25
Workplace	4
Voluntary (including Playgroups)	5

This diverse profile is advantageous to the city. There is increased choice for families around the different types of setting available and the range of models on offer to meet the needs of families.

Concessionaire arrangements: Tillydrone and Cummings Park nurseries

While there are a high number of funded providers in partnership Aberdeen City Council delivering expanded hours, it is notable that providers are not geographically evenly spread across the city. There are fewer funded providers operating in our priority areas compared to other localities such as the Grammar ASG, which has the highest concentration of funded providers offering a fully flexible model. The ELC expansion programme has sought to readdress this imbalance.

The route adopted was to undertake an open tender to let a concession agreement to appoint a provider(s) to occupy and deliver an ELC service from two of our purpose-built stand-alone nurseries within Tillydrone and Northfield. This was an opportunity to increase capacity across the city and specifically within our priority areas. The tender also presented an excellent opportunity to allow providers to access a purpose-built facility without incurring the upfront/ capital costs. Crucially, current practice has demonstrated that those providers operating within our priority communities are able to successfully engage with families and uptake of eligible 2s is higher within our funded providers than local authority settings. Appointing a provider to deliver ELC from the aforementioned facilities, builds on the good practice that providers are delivering within both communities and enhances our ELC offer to families, particularly to our more vulnerable families. Consultation with the local communities highlighted the preference to have greater diversity of the types of ELC provision available within the local area – adopting the concession approach enabled us to respond to this ask from families.

Hitherto a concession contract approach has not been applied to ELC. This approach subsidises the cost of ELC provision at Tillydrone and Cumming Park nurseries by attracting a rental income and a percentage of profit/surplus generated above a specified threshold value. The service worked closely with colleagues in Procurement and Legal throughout this process to realise this arrangement.

There is an initial contract duration of 4 years with the option to extend by a further 4 years. The tender was scored on quality alone ensuring the provider met the National Standard and Fair Working practices. Quality was central to this process. Indeed, without high quality ELC – from both a structural and process point of view – the positive benefits of ELC will not be realised. Investing at the Early Years level can mitigate against the long-term costs and supports, hence the imperative that the tender be fully weighted on quality.

Following the procurement process, Flexible Childcare Services, has been appointed as the successful provider to occupy and deliver ELC from both nurseries. Flexible Childcare Services are a North East provider with a wealth of ELC experience and a keen commitment to work in partnership with the communities of Tillydrone and Northfield. The new provider will enhance the choice available to communities offering a fully flexible model to eligible 2-year-olds to those children not yet attending primary school. The increase in capacity and choice in our priority areas will support parents/carers seeking to return to work or study. Moreover, the provider's commitment to offer family support and their experience of building relationships built on support and trust, aligns with our approach to early intervention and prevention.

Cross boundary arrangements

Under Funding Follows the Child, families are not restricted to provision within their own local authority area. To that end, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council worked in partnership to agree a cross boundary agreement to provide choice and flexibility to families. This was agreed in April 2021. Cross boundary patterns of uptake indicate that there is consistent parent led demand from Aberdeenshire based residents accessing ELC provision in Aberdeen city. At the end of 2020, there were 171 Aberdeenshire resident families accessing funded Aberdeen based ELC providers (including childminders) and 24 Aberdeenshire families accessing local authority ELC settings. To deliver on the principles of Funding Follows the Child, the cross-boundary agreement covered: applications and admissions; reconciliation of payments; data sharing and communications (in the event of complaints, issues or concerns). The cross-boundary agreement sets out a framework in which the host and resident authorities can work effectively together to deliver the best for families. It also outlines clearly the process of financial reconciliation between the authorities to ensure arrangements are both effective and sustainable. By implementing this agreement, families are assured that the choice available is not restricted by local authority boundaries.

The Living Wage

As we move forward, it will be vital to monitor the sustainability of providers and their capacity to meet the National Standard. Against the context of workforce challenges (retaining and recruiting staff), the sustainable rate, which enables the payment of the Living Wage, should contribute to creating a more level playing field across the sector. Nevertheless, while funded providers are expected to pay the Living Wage to staff delivering funded hours, this cannot be enforced by the local authority. This observation has also been echoed in the recent Audit Scotland ELC Expansion report (2020). While it cannot be enforced, we seek to encourage partners to commit to the Living Wage. To this end, inflationary and real Living Wage increases to the sustainable rate will be reviewed on a regular basis.

While the commissioning arrangements to deliver the expanded hours have been successfully implemented, they also need to be viewed against the context of workforce recruitment and retention. Workforce challenges, experienced at a local, regional and national level, have the potential to test the sustainability of the private, voluntary and independent sector. These challenges are further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as Brexit. This is a risk that the service will continue to monitor. It will seek to strengthen some of the mitigations already in place – building on the work of the ELC Academy, which showcased clear career pathways into the

sector and progression routes; access to the Workforce Development Fund and the Modern Apprenticeship scheme. The challenges of retention and recruitment serve to underscore the importance of the implementation of the Living Wage to create to greater equity of opportunity across the sector and contribute to attracting and retaining practitioners.

The planning and partnership working which has underpinned our work with funded providers has contributed to ensuring there is sufficient capacity across the city to deliver expansion. Throughout this programme we have been cognisant of the needs of the sector, demonstrated in our approach to identifying the sustainable rate, which was transparent and reflective of evidence of costs of delivery.

The introduction of a concessionaire to occupy and deliver ELC from two of our purpose-built buildings contributes to delivering greater parity of choice within our priority areas. This is particularly the case for families with eligible 2-year-olds. Indeed, successive parent/carer consultations reveal the need for a range of different models and types of provision to meet the varying and evolving circumstances of every family. The recent cross boundary agreement is an extension of these principles - assuring families that the choice available is not restricted by local authority boundaries and there is a level of flexibility to meet the requirements of parents.

Has the programme delivered against the vision, delivery models and guiding principles set out in the Delivery Plan?

What has the impact of the changes been on uptake?

As of June 2017 7% of 2 year olds, 82% of 3 year olds and 91% of 4 year olds accessed ELC provision in Aberdeen City.

At the current time, 9% of 2 year olds (33.03% of eligible 2 year olds) are attending but with numbers anticipated to rise again later in the year as children reach their second birthday. 90.7% of 3 year olds and over 98% of 4 year olds are attending ELC provision. This suggests that the new delivery models are better meeting the needs of children and families.

Has the programme delivered against the vision agreed by Committee?

A flexible model of Early Learning and Childcare is available to families which is fully accessible. Quality grades are improving and provision is in place for families to access provision outwith school holiday periods.

We asked parents and carers what impact the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare has had on their child.

Although 19.4% of respondents suggested their attendance at ELC had no impact on their child's development, most service users did identify improvements to their child's development since attending an ELC setting.

The majority of respondents, at almost 65%, identified an improvement in their child's social skills with over half of the respondents seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills.

Almost half of all respondents recognised an improvement to their child's emotional development, creativity, listening skills and numeracy.

Over a third of respondents highlighted improvements within literacy, fine motor skills, and physical development.

A third of respondents had also seen an improvement in their child's problem solving and attention span.

The expansion programme has delivered against the vision agreed by Committee in 2017.

Has the programme delivered against the proposed delivery models agreed by Committee?

The two delivery models agreed by Committee have been delivered.

We asked parents and carers which model of provision they would prefer to use in the future in order to determine if the delivery models agreed in 2017 remain appropriate to meet the needs of families.

Most respondents at 229 (50.4%) said they would prefer a full day placement in the future.

126 respondents (27.8%) said they would prefer a half day AM placement with 51 respondents (11.2%) requiring a half day PM placement.

119 respondents (26.2%) would require a term time place with 141 respondents (31.1%) requiring an all-year-round placement.

66 respondents (14.5%) said they would look to have a blended space with 47 respondents (10.4%) requiring an Outdoor provision.

This feedback suggests that the models remain appropriate.

We went on to ask parents and carers how satisfied they are with the range of providers and models of Early Learning and Childcare offered in their local area / ASG

72% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (ASG).

14.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

13.1% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the availability of ELC provisions and models available.

This feedback suggests that the delivery models remain appropriate to meet the needs of families.

“We feel the extra hours have helped considerably for many reasons. Firstly, R loves nursery and gets lots out of it, not just social interactions but lots of learning and more therapy than previously, she also sleeps a bit better as she works hard during the day. It's great for her confidence and overall wellbeing and the extra sleep improves her (and our!) health overall. Also, because both of us work, it's lessened the worry of childcare, which is always a minefield with ASN kids. This has a good knock on effect on our mental health and means we're not worrying about the financial side of things as well as everything else. It's also meant that the 2 days I don't work, I can give L my full attention, something she missed out on since birth due to lockdown. This means that hopefully she'll grow up knowing that despite her sister needing extra care, she won't lose out. I feel this is incredibly important for a sibling of an ASN child. The downside is that we have less time with R and I do miss her a bit.

The previous afternoon sessions were great for all of the above, but the extended hours have really helped us as a family, and most importantly, R. A

Has the programme delivered against the guiding principles agreed by Committee?

The programme is ideally placed to capitalise on intergenerational support although progress has been limited due to the current COVID-19 restrictions in place. The restrictions have also limited the extent to which the facilities feel owned by communities.

The appointment of Locality Lead officers and more focussed approaches to setting improvement are helping to drive greater personalisation. This is aiding quality improvement approaches.

The provision at the Links Hub is being used to test approaches to partnership delivery to children and families.

All settings are utilising and promoting outdoor learning to promote wellbeing.

Staff have access to a wide range of professional learning to develop their professional skills.

The guiding principles have directly influenced the programme and will continue to do so as restrictions are eased.

We asked parents and carers what impact the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (from 600 hours to 1140 hours) has had on them and your family

51.2% of respondents stated that they had more time for other responsibilities as a result of the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare.

38.7% of respondents indicated that they had more money/disposable income as a positive impact on their family.

28.5% are now considering a return to work or study.

26.1% stated improved wellbeing /respite as a positive impact from the expansion of ELC, with 24.3% of respondents finding they now have more time to themselves.

This data suggests that the programme has delivered against the guiding principles with the exception of intergenerational approaches which were limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This area will be developed further as restrictions are eased.

Has the programme been delivered on budget?

At this stage of the financial year we believe the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare will be delivered on budget, this includes staffing, meals, furniture and capital works. However, this will be subject to the completion of the outdoor nurseries at Duthie and Hazlehead Parks.

Summary Evaluation

This evaluative report evidences a multi-faceted and cross council programme of work delivered to ensure that all families were able to claim their 1140 hours of ELC from August 2021.

The pandemic has impacted on the success of some engagement due to the lack of face to face contact and the service will continue to develop the model in keeping with the guiding principles with regard to enabling intergenerational support for children. However, despite the considerable challenges of delivering the Programme during a pandemic the Project team have successfully met their objectives. Key achievements include:

- All eligible children were able to access 1140 hours from August 2021;
- There is evidence of highly effective Programme governance;
- There is evidence of an increase in the quality of provision;
- The ELC workforce was expanded from 224.16 FTE to 460.31 FTE (inclusive of amended contracts; support workers / Modern Apprenticeships / 63 trainee EYPs)

- The successful delivery of 27 capital projects;
- 82.9% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision; and
- 82.4% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of expanded ELC to date.

The Programme was delivered on time and on budget as of December 2021.

Learning points to be built into the next ELC Delivery Plan:

- Review transition processes to allow in person transition as soon as public health guidance allows
- Be mindful of the need for early in-person engagement with staff if public health guidance allows
- There is a need to further promote Gaelic Medium ELC provision
- Monitor demand for childminders
- Monitor demand for eligible 2s placements
- Continue to work towards the delivery of intergenerational support as public health guidance allows

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The Aberdeen City Council expansion of Early Learning and Childcare

Executive summary

The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) from 600 to 1140 hours required the delivery of a multi-faceted cross council programme of work to ensure that families were able to claim their 1140 hours of ELC from August 2021.

Despite the challenges of delivering the Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, the Project team have successfully met their objectives. Key achievements include:

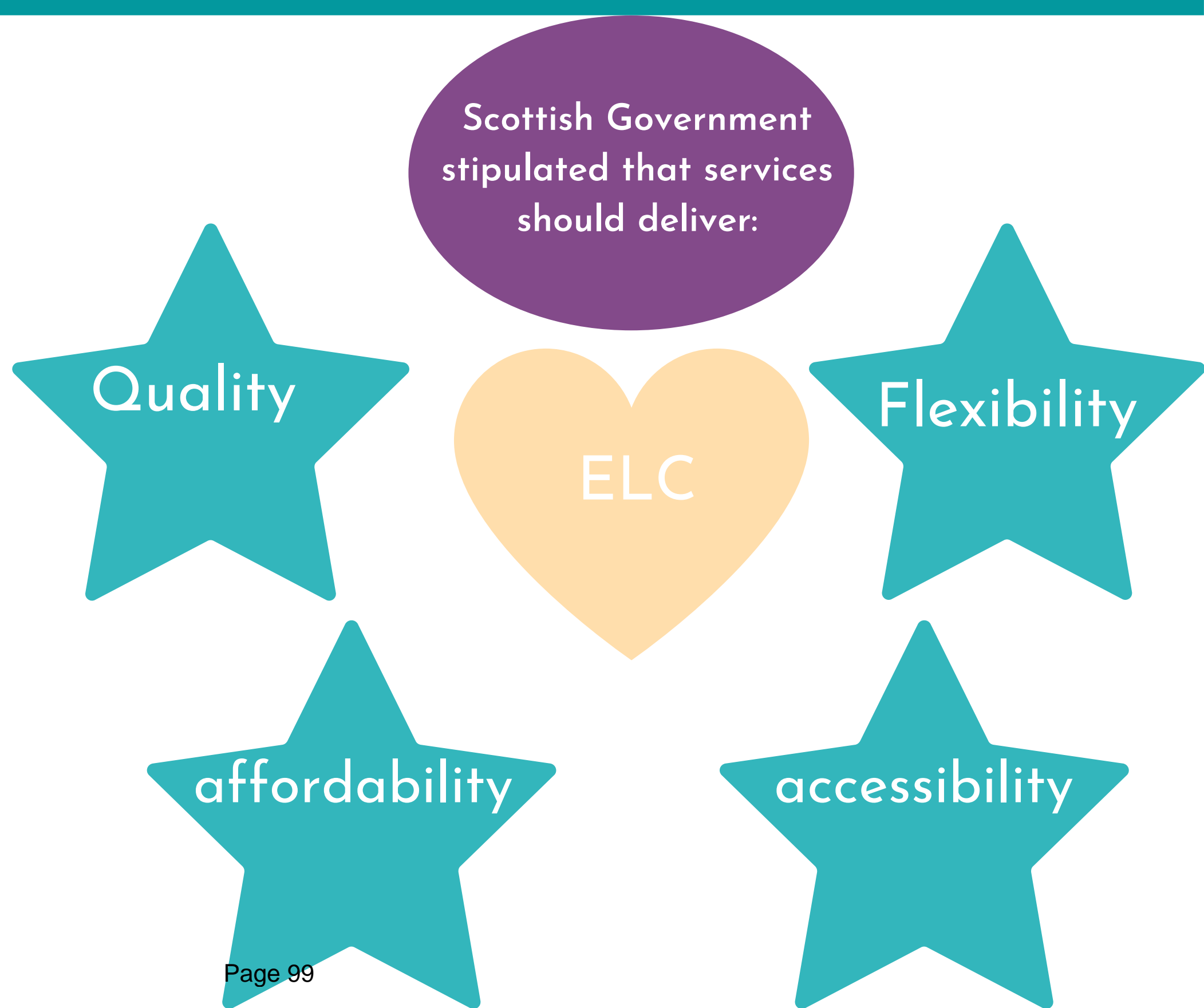
- All eligible children were able to access 1140 hours from August 2021;
- There is evidence of highly effective Programme governance;
- There is evidence of an increase in the quality of provision;
- The ELC workforce expanded from 224.16 FTE in 2017 to 460.31 FTE in 2021 (expressed as headcount this is 358 employees in 2017 to 539 in 2021). This is as a result of the inclusion of Support Workers, Modern Apprenticeships and amended contracts of existing staff;
- The successful delivery of 27 capital projects;
- 82.9% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision; and
- 82.4% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of expanded ELC to date.

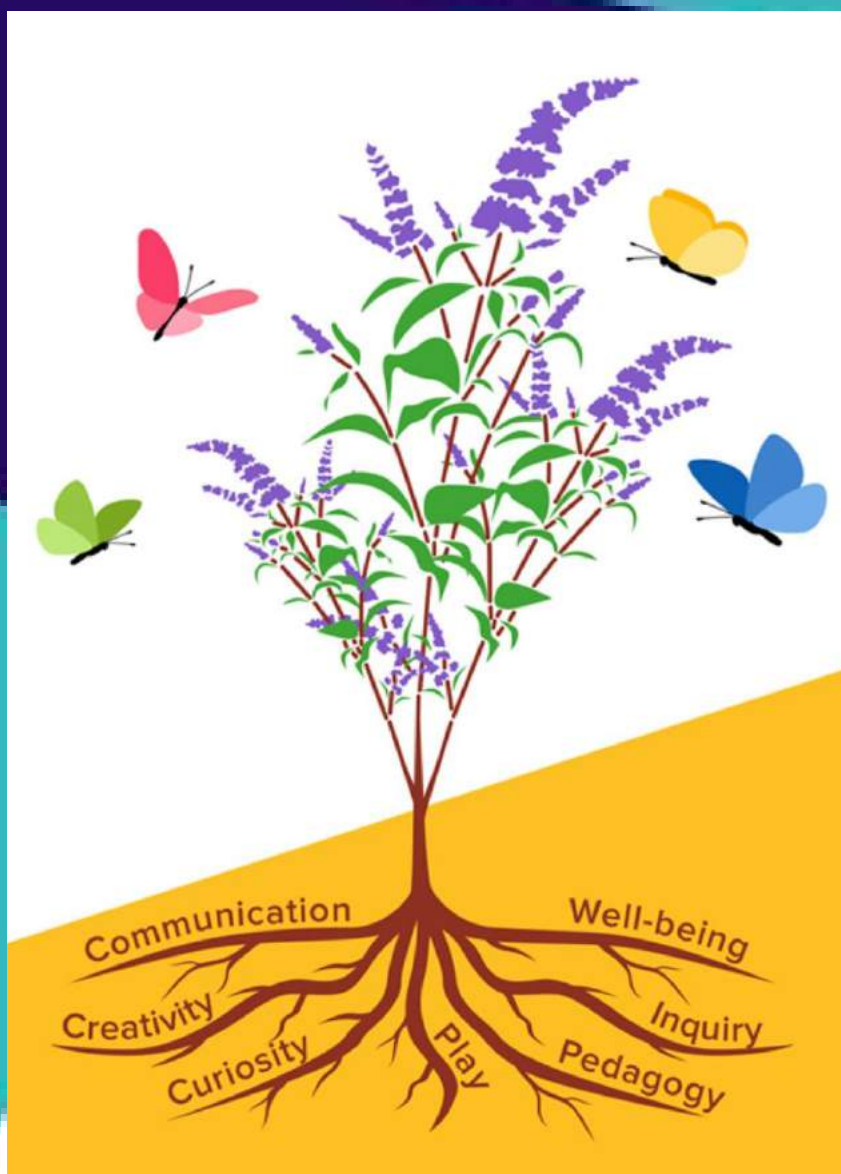
The Programme was delivered on time and on budget.

Background

A number of clusters across Aberdeen City Council collaborated to expand the provision of funded ELC from 600 to 1140 hours. Work across the organisation ensured that all eligible families were able to take up their expanded offer of ELC from August 2021.

The policy intention of the expansion was to support child development through the provision of high quality services and in doing so support parents to return to work or study.





'We did access ELC but it was only 600hrs for our son. The increase to 1140 would have been a huge help to us as a family.'

Aberdeen City Council welcomed the opportunity to expand services in recognition of how the expansion of ELC could help reduce the poverty related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. Planning for the Expansion was detailed in the Aberdeen City Council Delivery Plan which was approved by the then Education and Children's Services Committee in September 2017.

The Delivery Plan presented an ambitious vision of Early Learning and Childcare for Aberdeen City Council which extended beyond the national policy intention in order to ensure that the programme would help support the delivery of outcomes stipulated in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP).

This report seeks to evaluate delivery of the programme against the approved Delivery Plan in order to identify any early feedback and inform the development of the next ELC Delivery Plan.

Vision for Early Learning and Childcare across Aberdeen City

The Aberdeen Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan of 2017 detailed a local vision for the expansion programme.

'We will provide local flexible early learning and childcare which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and builds on provision already in place to develop a flexible ELC offer, available up to 50 weeks of the year.

Provision will be sufficiently flexible to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community and will support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty.

Each local offer of ELC will be designed around the needs of residents in each locality wherever possible. Quality and availability will be overseen by a skilled individual who will support families to design the flexible offer most likely to meet their individual needs. The skilled individual will also be well placed to advise how to the local offer should continue to be amended or enhanced to meet local need'.

The Aberdeen City Council Delivery Model

Consultation with families was used to help shape the delivery models approved by Committee in 2017. Parents told us that they wanted choice in service delivery models. Some families were keen to secure their full entitlement over a few longer days (8am - 6pm) with others looking for access to daily provision for shorter periods. Some parents and carers were keen to access provision all year round with others preferring a term time only model. Parents wanted to be able to purchase additional hours of ELC if helpful for their family.

'It is great that so many options are currently provided'

Families wanted to access provision locally with the most favoured option being provision at their local school or in their immediate community.

As a result of our consultation with families, 2 delivery models were approved as part of the Delivery Plan:

Delivery Model 1

Children would be able to access local ELC provision offering all 1140 hours in a fully flexible way over 50 weeks a year. Provision to be available from 8am to 6pm

Delivery Model 2

Children would be able to access provisions offering shorter blocks of ELC, in the traditional term time structure, 9am to 3pm.



In order to ensure the focus on quality, the following parameters were applied:

- The 1140 offer should be taken over no fewer than 38 weeks from the start to end of each academic year (including school holidays)
- An ELC session will not be less than 2.5 hours or more than 10 hours
- No more than 2 providers will be accessed (3 when childminders are used) to ensure continuity of relationships and care for children
- Children accessing their ELC entitlement over lunchtime (12.30 - 13.30) will be entitled to a free lunch
- Where school based provisions were unable to deliver a fully flexible provision, flexibility would be made across the Associated Schools Group (ASGs)

Guiding Principles

As the initial Delivery Plan was being developed stakeholders expressed preferences for how settings should operate and the following guiding principles were used to inform our approach. It was agreed that all ELC provision across Aberdeen City should:

- Capitalise on intergenerational support
- Offer a level of personalisation to ensure maximum gains for children
- Be nurturing, inclusive and offer a holistic service to children and families in keeping with GIRFEC
- Feel owned by the community
- Fully utilise outside space to promote wellbeing
- Be staffed by skilled practitioners who have opportunities to develop their skills further through a suite of professional learning suited to their individual needs and situation
- Be quality assured across a locality by one skilled practitioner who will have a key role in supporting parents to fully capitalise on the local offer and shape subsequent offers

The vision, delivery models and guiding principles were used to inform the ELC Delivery Programme and all three have all been used to help evaluate the programme.

'On the whole the nursery staff are brilliant, all so warm and welcoming and kind. My daughter loves them all and is very happy there. Thank you all so much for all your hard work. She had come on leaps and bounds the last 6 months with the extra hours'

Central Structures to support high quality delivery of 1140

The Delivery Plan outlined the need to review the Early Years Structure to ensure that the service was able to support a transformed model of service delivery. The need to ensure that services worked more closely together across a locality to address some of the wider policy benefits of the programme guided thinking alongside the need to focus on improving quality.

A new Early Years Structure was developed, consulted upon and approved in 2018. The service worked with colleagues in People and Organisational Development to move to the new structure.

Self-evaluation and inspection reports evidence that the new structure is helping to improve the quality of the ELC offer across the city. Undertaking the restructure at an early stage of the expansion was invaluable in helping ensure the Education Service were well placed to deliver on the policy objectives.

Governance of the Expansion of ELC

Following the approval of the Delivery Plan in 2017 the ELC programme was overseen by a Programme Board as part of the Council's executive governance arrangements. Membership of the Programme Board reflected the cross council nature of the programme with representation from Education, Capital, Finance, Corporate Landlord, Legal and People & Organisational Development.

The Programme Board governed and provided strategic direction to the 5 main programmes of work: quality, workforce (inclusive of funded providers); capital; communications and engagement and digital. The Board monitored the finances and subsequent delivery of benefits, both financial and non-financial.

The ELC Board was chaired by the Director of Customer and membership consisted of:

Meetings of the Board were scheduled monthly with collaboration between times as required.

The Programme Board provided highly effective oversight of the programme with the frequency of meetings and proactive approach to identifying and addressing emerging issues identified as a key strength. This approach helped Officers collaborate to address any potential risks timeously to keep the programme on track. The frequency of meetings was particularly helpful during the final stages of the programme due to supply chain issues experienced as a result of the pandemic.

ELC Programme Board	
Director of Customer	Talent Manager, Resources, People and Organisation
Chief Operating Officer	Solicitor, Legal
Chief Officer Education	Programme Manager
Chief Officer Capital	Estates and Assets Manager
Chief Officer Corporate Landlord	Principal Architectural Officer
Chief Officer Finance	Building Standards Manager
Finance Partner	

The governance arrangements capitalised on the range of expertise across the Council and are thought to be a very good example of a 'one Council' approach to the delivery of a major programme.

Programme 1 – Improve Quality

Locality Lead Officers

The restructure of the Early Years team enabled the creation of Locality Lead Officers to oversee both quality assurance and the delivery of professional learning across a community. This approach continues to work well due to Locality Lead Officers having good awareness of practice and development needs across their locality.

There is emerging evidence that the new Early Years structure and provision of Locality Lead Officers is successfully driving an improvement in quality. At the time of writing the Delivery Plan in 2017 there was historical trend data evidencing that a higher proportion of Funded Provider settings securing positive inspection gradings than those of the Local Authority. This trend is no longer apparent with a more even distribution of quality grades. The pausing of the inspection programme has hampered our ability to evidence this change fully and Members will be able to check progress through the regular performance reports presented to the Education Operational Delivery Committee.

The inspection regime was suspended in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in August 2021. Two settings have been inspected since the resumption with both gaining awards of good or better. Both settings have significantly improved gradings from their last inspection.

The local knowledge held by Locality Lead Officers (LLOs) is helping to provide invaluable insights into the needs of each community to ensure that the models offered meet the needs of children and families. This local knowledge will help LLOs advise Nursery teams on how to shape the local offers made to Parents and Carers through Parents Early Education Partnership (PEEP) and will also help to inform our work in the years ahead.

[Loirston Primary School ELC Report](#)

[Dyce Primary School ELC Report](#)

Quality Assurance arrangements

A new quality assurance programme was successfully developed and implemented. As well as a core programme, the team can now respond proportionately to need at pace and offer a higher level of support and challenge where required. Provisions in need of additional support can access an increased number of visits when required and Locality Leads make themselves available to model and coach the development of best practice. This more agile approach is helping us address emerging risks more quickly. Analysis of quality data indicates that our current arrangements are far more effective and that the central team have greater oversight of quality in each setting.

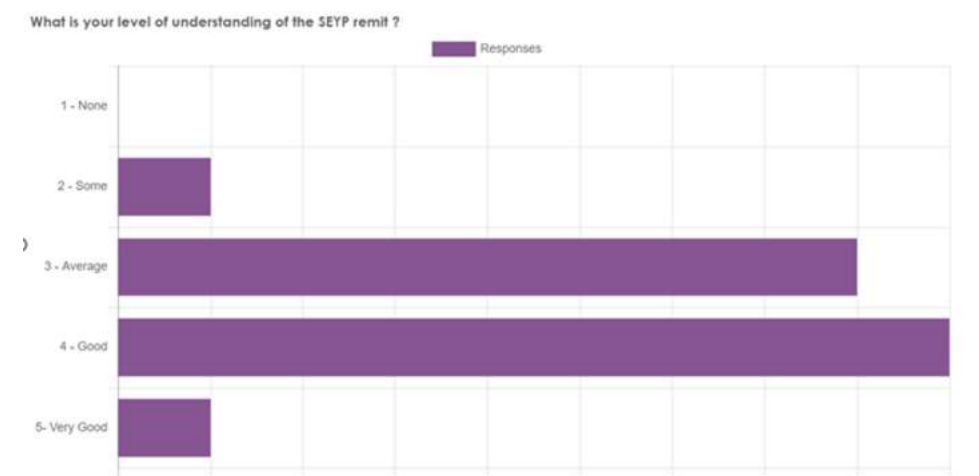
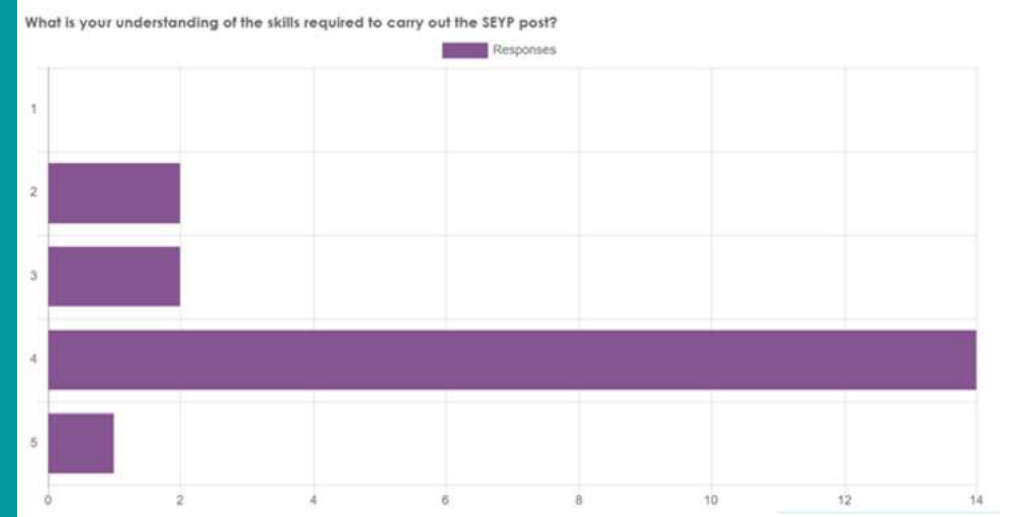
The refreshed quality assurance framework is more fully aligned with the school improvement framework and this is helping to ensure most effective use of central team resource. Improvement required across the Early Years is now targeted through the National Improvement Framework Plan and delivered as part of the wider education service improvement plan. This is helping address some of the disconnect evident previously.

Improvement Planning

Staff teams are encouraged to link with their Locality Lead Officer and reflect on their improvement plans in order to engage with professional learning opportunities appropriate for their service improvement. This approach has made a more direct link between areas for improvement and the provision of high quality professional learning. As a result ELC practitioners engage more effectively within a 'cycle of involvement' and have greater ownership of improvement planning.

Developing Leadership Capacity

The 'Stepping into Leadership' programme was developed to increase confidence levels amongst Early Years Practitioners (EYPs) and address existing skills gaps which prevented EYPs moving into a Senior Early Years Practitioner (SEYP) role. It also aimed to support higher level thinking skills, including reflection and critical analysis to take account of the need for more strategic planning in the SEYP role. The programme aimed to maximise internal progression and develop talent pipelines by "growing our own senior staff". Staff entered the programme with varying levels of confidence and understanding of the SEYP role.



Townhouse
Feb 2020

The programme has been a great success. The seven sessions were designed to empower, upskill and support internal EYPs in applying for the role of SEYP, with a focus on leadership and management themes.

A total of 30 practitioners participated in cohort 1, with 18 of these having now been successfully appointed to the role of SEYP. Following the success of cohort 1, this programme has been repeated, with 27 practitioners in attendance, with a further 20 progressed to the role of SEYP.

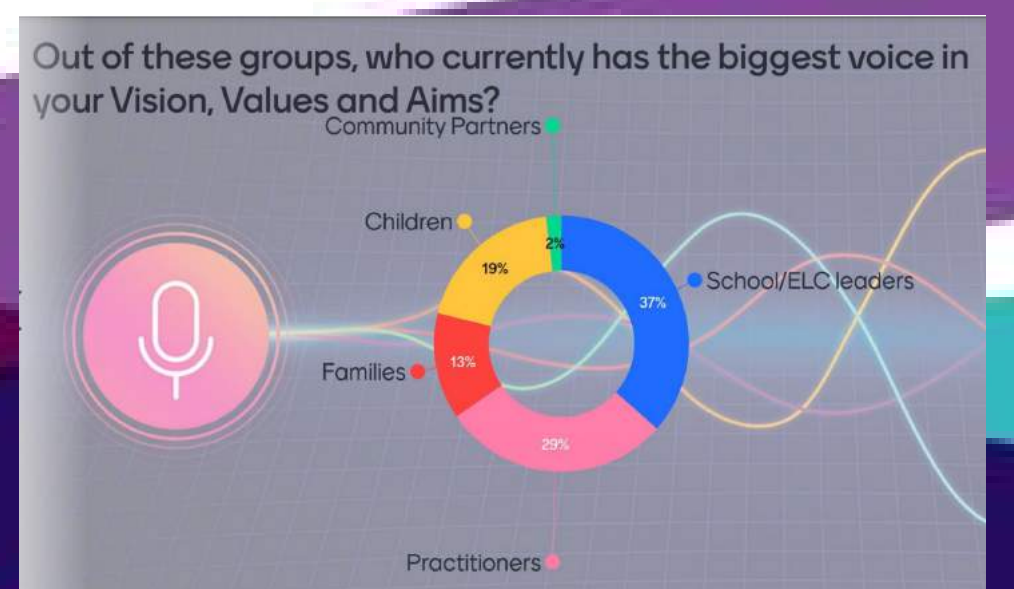
The programme was highly effective in clarifying the additional duties and responsibilities expected of those in a senior role and empowered those with leadership potential to develop the skills and the confidence to apply for and secure leadership positions effectively.



Stepping into Leadership Evaluation

'Empowering Us' Programme

In light of the ELC Expansion, it was recognised that our current ELC leaders would benefit from the opportunity to develop their current skills/practice. In collaboration with colleagues within People & Organisational Development, Family Learning, Excellence and Equity Practitioners and the wider education team, the ELC Locality Lead Officers designed a long term voluntary CLPL programme, aimed at ELC Leaders (SEYPs and DHTs) to upskill the current workforce and promote quality ELC provision. The programme utilised digital tools for online delivery, timetabled to meet the needs of the workforce.



The intended outcomes for the programme were:

were:

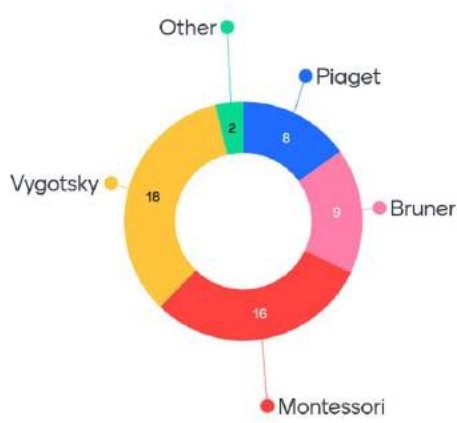
- Increased knowledge and skills in ELC leadership practices.
- Increased awareness in the expectations of leaders in ELC.
- High quality ELC provision for all children and families in Aberdeen City enhanced by skilled staff.
- In line with the ‘Funding Follows the Child’ approach, equitable ELC offer regardless of provider.
- Improved quality grades across the city, particularly in Leadership and Management.

SESSION	STARTING	ENDING	SESSION	STARTING	ENDING
ELC EXPANSION & THE ATTAINMENT GAP	25 th March 4:00pm	6:00pm	MY ROLE IN PRACTITIONER WELLBEING & PASTORAL SUPPORT	20 th May 4:00pm	6:00pm
PEDAGOGICAL LEADERSHIP	15 th April 4:00pm	6:00pm	HOW EXPANSION EMPOWERS OUR CHILDREN & FAMILIES	25 th May 4:00pm	6:00pm
PRACTICAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS & EXPECTATIONS	22 nd April 4:00pm	6:00pm	PARTNERS IN LEARNING: CREATING AN ELC COMMUNITY - SOCIAL PEDAGOGY	2 nd June 4:00pm	6:00pm
LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS	29 th April 4:00pm	6:00pm	UNIVERSAL & TARGETED INTERVENTIONS FOR FAMILY LEARNING IN ABERDEEN	9 th June 4:00pm	6:00pm
INTRODUCTION TO SCLIP	4 th May 1:00pm	3:00pm			
DEVELOPING A SHARED VISION, VALUES & AIMS IN AN ELC CONTEXT	11 th May 4:00pm	6:00pm			

Attendance Data – live sessions: derived from Eventbrite bookings (April 2021)

Session 1	Session 2	Session 3	Session 4	Session 5	Session 6	Session 7	Session 8	Session 9	Session 10
38	37	49	33	33	34	34	30	30	34

Which theorist's work features strongly in your practice or particularly resonates with you?



Sessions were well attended by a mixture of SEYP, PT and DHT staff. Feedback was positive and highlighted that having space to reflect with other ELC leaders was beneficial for staff development. Inspection reports are evidencing higher leadership gradings and this is thought to be partially attributable to this programme.

Provision of high quality professional learning for the workforce

A highly skilled workforce is critical for the delivery of a quality service and the Early Years Team refreshed approaches to ensure a wide range of opportunities were available by drawing on the ACC capability framework and Learning Academy.

Both the change to ELC operational times and the COVID 19 Pandemic presented challenges to staff accessing professional learning. To combat this, the Early Years team have taken a digital delivery approach, utilising the platform ACC Learn and the digital capability available across the Council. The Council wide investment in digital has positively impacted on staff in Local Authority settings and in Funded Provider settings.

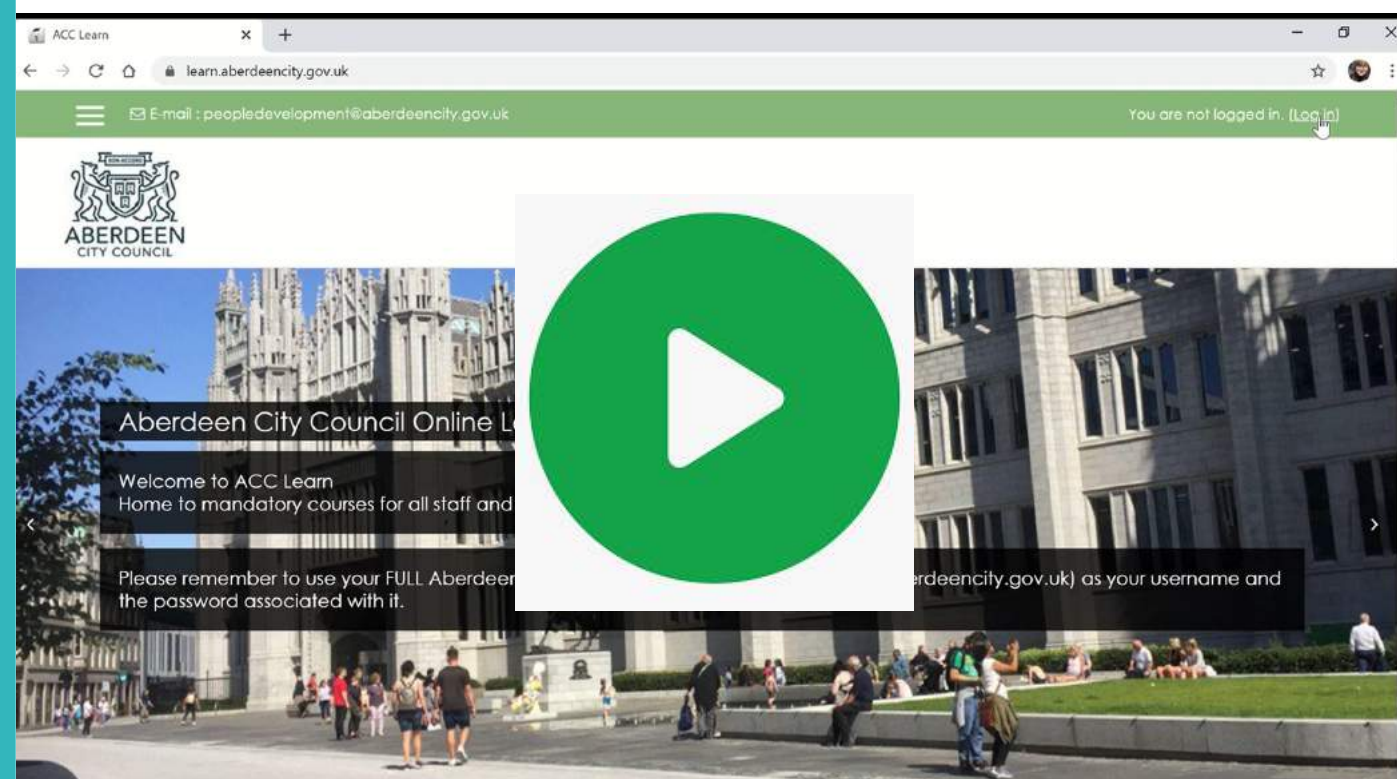


A combination of accessible and flexible online materials can now be accessed independently/as a staff team via the ACC Learn portal with virtual sessions delivered termly via Microsoft teams. The materials include continuous reflective questions, prompts for further development and opportunities to link with other teams in the locality via the online discussion boards as well as sign-posting to further materials or training opportunities in Aberdeen City (i.e. - specialist outdoor work with Juliet Robertson). The discussion board for sharing good practice has been welcomed by colleagues who report being able to make links with other settings within the community with greater ease. The digital organisation of the offer enables senior leaders to reflect on their improvement plan for the year and engage with the online materials appropriate for their teams' development.

Reflections made with staff in both the local authority sector and the Funded Providers sector indicate that professional learning is more successful when delivered to multiple members of the team in order to create a shared ethos.

Practitioners also note that professional learning is more impactful when they engage in the 'cycle of involvement' that includes opportunities for small group work, large group work, self-study and reflection with others. A number of practitioners who took part in a recent survey (58.8%) are happy to access materials online

Now that this approach is well established, live sessions are reviewed annually to take account of inspection feedback/quality assurance visits to meet the sector's needs. Previous live sessions become online materials to enable them to be accessed by others. The team have developed and continue to deliver a good mix of national, regional and local offers as well as leading supportive collaborative groups to share practice.



The refreshed approach to the delivery of professional learning has improved accessibility, enabled greater personalisation and helped staff make connections with others to share best practice. The agility and responsiveness of the model is thought to be a major strength.

Uptake for Eligible 2s

In keeping with the Delivery Plan, the provision of effective support for eligible 2s was reviewed, as only 7% of eligible 2s accessed their offer in 2017. This was lower than the national uptake of 9%.

A recent Public Health Scotland 'Early Years Expansion - learning from the baseline' survey (October 2021) observes that uptake of eligible 2-year-old places remains modest with the national average continuing to remain at 9%. Consultation with eligible families to understand this better identified issues with the accessibility of services and branding which have been addressed through the expansion programme and led to a local increase in uptake to 9% in keeping with the national average.

The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic will increase demand for eligible 2s places, particularly as the post-pandemic picture emerges. To encourage greater engagement and uptake with families, the Early Years team will continue to work closely with health visitors and other professionals, to identify eligible families and ensure that children receive the benefits of their entitlement.

Eligible 2s: Improving Accessibility and Flexibility

A 'Stay, Play and Learn' trial was commissioned to help inform our approach. The trial provided a flexible mode of delivery for up to 20 families and was highly evaluated by those who participated, although the uptake of eligible 2s places continued to be low. Further exploration with families highlighted that families found it hard to commit to the model and would prefer to access provision not limited to eligible 2s.

The Delivery Plan highlighted a need for a proactive strategy to address issues with 'branding' around provision for Eligible 2s. A review of current research was led by The Educational Psychology Service to inform future service delivery and the decision was taken to make the offer for Eligible 2s available in mainstream ELC settings.

In response to the ask of families, the service integrated eligible 2s into several of our school nursery settings rather than restricted to a stand alone 'Me2 service'. To this end, in our capital projects we increased capacity and refurbished settings to create enabling learning environments that would enhance the ELC experience of eligible 2-year-olds and their families, with particular focus in our priority areas.

The table below outlines the capacity within our local authority settings in 2020/21 and 2021/22, which has increased by 66 spaces. There is scope to further increase spaces, in some of our other capital projects, which are not currently registered with the Care Inspectorate for eligible 2-year-olds, which provides additional flexibility to the service. The Early Years team will continue to monitor demand as this integrated approach to eligible 2s embeds in our local authority settings.

2020/2021		2021/2022	
Setting [2020/2021]	Operating Capacity	Setting [2021/2022]	Operating Capacity
Ashgrove Children's Centre	24	Ashgrove Children's Centre	24
Williamson Family Centre	20	Muirfield School Nursery	10
Deeside Family Centre	24	Walker Road School Nursery	10
Riverbank	10	Riverbank School Nursery	10
Seaton	30	Links Nursery and Hub	40
		Woodside School Nursery	10
		Gilcomstoun School Nursery	10
		Tillydrone Nursery	20
		Cummings Park Nursery	40
Total	108	Total	174

Families seeking to use their entitlement also have the option of accessing ELC at a funded provider or childminder, the latter not having been an option for families prior to the implementation of the expanded hours. In 2020/21 there were 24 eligible 2-year-olds accessing up to 1140 hours of ELC with a childminder. However, at the time of writing for session 2021/22 eligible 2-year-old families have not sought to access provision from a childminder. Further research will be undertaken by the service to identify the reasons for this shift in use - while speculative at this stage - greater promotion of childminders as an option may need to be undertaken to raise their visibility amongst families and health professionals. As outlined in the aforementioned Public Health Scotland survey, for the most disadvantaged children who are eligible for ELC at age 2, developmental outcomes improve after a year of funded ELC, with the exception of gross motor development. To this end, the service will be seeking to collaborate further with partners and local communities to promote the eligible 2-year-old entitlement.

Eligible 2s: Quality

In preparation for the expansion to 1140 hours of ELC, the Educational Psychology team have developed an invaluable 'Ready, Steady, 2' resource to support staff to work with Eligible 2s and those who have not met developmental milestones.

Five pilot nurseries (Kirkhill, Muirfield, Riverbank, Tullos, and Woodside) have accessed virtual training sessions developed by the Educational Psychology Service to complement and build on key messages within the Ready Steady 2 resource. SEYPs from each of these settings have participated in group coaching facilitated by the Educational Psychology Service, to support the implementation of the approaches recommended in Ready Steady 2. The virtual training sessions are available for all ELC settings within Aberdeen City to access. The Educational Psychology Service, Early Years Team and Scottish Childminding Association are promoting this universal resource across the City.

Feedback from staff is positive and the qualitative evidence from families accessing eligible 2 provision is also reflective of a positive ELC experience. Parents/carers have responded in their end year of review forms:

"I really appreciate all your efforts in looking after my son. Since he started nursery I have noticed so many changes and development - especially in his language."

"I'm more that happy with how my daughter has been getting on at nursery. She's more than happy to come every morning and see her teachers and friends."

"My son seems to really enjoy nursery, especially the outdoor play."

By investing in the upskilling of staff, practitioners are better able to support families who are in vulnerable situations and provide targeted support to children who are at risk of poor outcomes. The service will continue to monitor demand and evaluate the impact of change to ensure we are improving outcomes for our eligible 2-year-olds.

Excellence and Equity Practitioners

As part of the expansion programme, a new role of Excellence and Equity Practitioner (EEPs) was established and recruited to. The 5 EEPs were allocated to settings serving areas of deprivation to provide additionality to help address the poverty related attainment gap. Each EEP has worked closely with leadership teams to determine the focus of their work.

Work has been undertaken to improve knowledge of the impact of poverty on families. The introduction of EEPs in the ELC workforce has had a positive impact on supporting children and their families in our priority areas. In partnership with community groups The EEPs have been involved in initiatives such as 'Healthy Family Fun Day' which showcases a variety of services across the community that are available to support and advise families. Through the delivery of PEEP groups, outdoor learning sessions and Book Bug sessions they have supported the positive engagement of families in their children's learning. Early engagement with families through links with toddler groups has supported the building of relationships and smooth transitions into the ELC setting.

Kittybrewster Case Study

In recent months it has been observed that many of our children struggle with attention and listening, the basic skills required for language development. A review of the newly refurbished setting in August encouraged staff to ensure the environment supported speech, language and communication needs. CIRCLE Collaboration (2011) Up,up and away! provided audit tools and strategies while encouraging reflection, and NHS Grampian Speech and Language Team were asked to deliver targeted training on Intensive Interaction. This work was led by the EEP. One result of this Intensive Interaction piece of work was that a non-verbal child who struggled with communicating his needs now uses occasional words and has much better eye contact with adults.

Highland Literacy's Teddy Talk is being delivered as a universal support and a Lending Library continues engagement out with the setting. The outcomes of these pieces of work have resulted in children being more engaged with staff during experiences and interactions.



Links Hub Case Study

At Links Nursery and Hub, As part of our curricular offer we have dedicated Fridays to families to establish links at home and Nursery. Family Friendly Fridays provide fun outdoor activities for all children and families in the local community. Through our Family friendly Fridays, we have explored the Coastal Project with Family Learning, Outdoor Learning with Book Bug being our first visitor and PEEP sessions which has been incorporated in our outdoor Learning Sessions. Our families have joined our sessions in all weathers and have expressed how much they enjoy being part of Links Nursery and Hub.

The EEP role has been welcomed by staff, children and by families. The Covid-19 restrictions has hampered some planned work as EEPs have worked to help mitigate the risk of setting closure due to staffing shortages as a result of staff being required to isolate pending PCR test. We will continue to monitor the impact of the EEPs as the Covid-19 restrictions are eased.



PEEP Learning Together Programme

At the heart of the ELC Expansion is increasing family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents, so as a Local Authority we took the opportunity to put significant resources into the PEEP 'Learning Together' Programme for ELC staff in both our school nurseries and funded provider settings.

The programme is designed for practitioners who work with parents and babies/ young children, to contribute to:

- strong parent-child relationships;
- increased parental knowledge and confidence in how to support their child's learning and play in day-to-day life; and
- children's personal, social and emotional development, communication and language, early literacy and maths, and health and physical development.

Sessions are delivered online via Microsoft Teams over four half day sessions and are ongoing. The practitioners engage with a small group during the training in order to develop confidence using the PEEP resources and are then introduced to the PEEP Team Network. 106 practitioners from ELC settings in Aberdeen City have completed the programme and are qualified to deliver PEEP as part of our universal family support offer. The delivery of the programme to parents and carers has been hampered by the Covid-19 restrictions although settings are using remote delivery where possible.

The logo for 'people' is written in a lowercase, rounded, blue font.

'My child loves it, he improved his talking and confidence a lot!'

ELC Admissions

Key policies were refreshed to help deliver the expansion, including the ELC Admissions Policy. Routine cycles of review have been put in place to ensure that these key policies continue to meet the needs of families.

Delays to the nationally delivered Early Years SEEMiS system have hampered progress with the development of associated systems and will not be available until summer 2022 at the earliest. To this end, in collaboration with web development colleagues we have built an interim online system to accept ELC applications and support the allocation process.

This interim system was put in place in January 2021, moving away from what had traditionally been a paper-based application system. With greater choice and patterns of attendance available to families, the online system facilitated the high number of applications to be processed effectively due to improved data quality. The move to a digital application also offered greater convenience to families allowing them to apply any time or day within the admissions period.

Rapid uptake of the online admission system was reflected in the first week of admissions opening on the 25th January 2021, with 1540 number of applications received. By the close of the admissions period on 18th February 2021, a total of 2562 applications had been submitted. Following the allocation of ELC spaces, 90% families received their 1st choice as per their ELC application.

There have been 3002 1st choice offers sent in total. 2301 1st choice offers were to On-Time applications. There have been 3949 applications received as of today (10 January 2022). 76% got 1st choice offers in total 90% of On-Time applications got 1st choice offers.

In the absence of the National Early Years SEEMiS system, we continue to refine the interim online system to be open for ELC Admissions in 2022/2023. This is an iterative process as we continue to build on the feedback from families and improve the backend processing of the platform.

Building confidence in the delivering the curriculum outdoors

Considerable work has been undertaken to develop the use of outdoor space in order to improve the quality of provision.

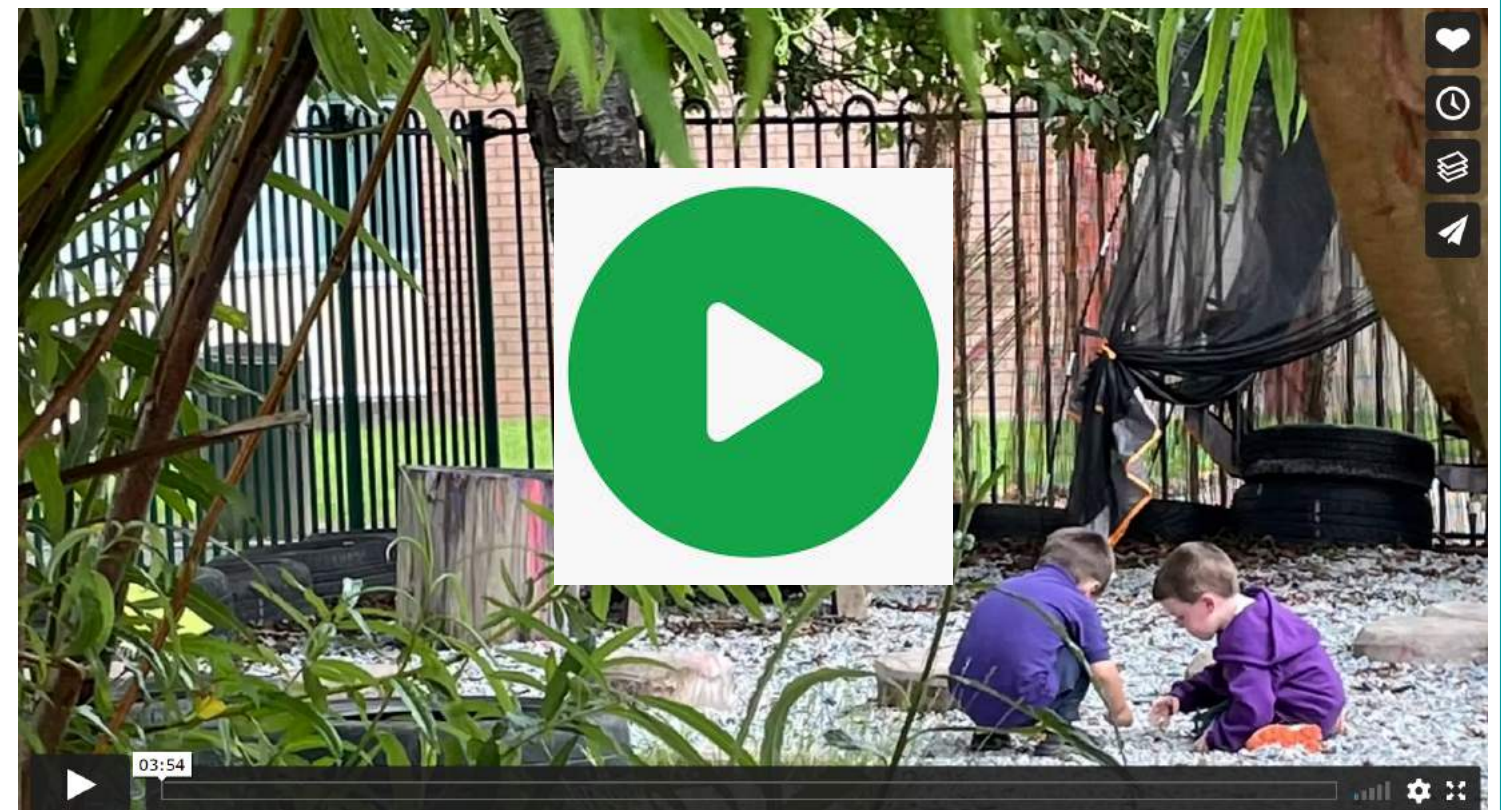
Driven by Juliet Robertson, a variety of different training inputs have been offered both citywide and bespoke to individual settings.

Significant progress has been made in this area with two Aberdeen City settings recently featuring in a national conference: Learning Estates, which took place November 2021. The two videos below from Dyce and Middleton Park school nurseries show- case the transformation of their environment and the impact specifically in relation to children's physical development.

Middleton Park Case Study



Dyce Case Study



How satisfied are parents and carers with their child's experience to date?

We asked parents and carers how satisfied they are with their child's experience of Early Learning and Childcare to date?

We asked parents and carers if they would be interested in purchasing additional hours / sessions over and above the statutory 1140 hours funded entitlement, should Aberdeen City Council be able to sell additional hours / sessions of Early Learning and Childcare to parents and carers who require additional wrap around care (subject to the availability of places).

13.4% stated they were not sure if they would purchase more hours.

and
22.9% said they would not purchase extra hours.

Of the 454 parents and carers who responded, 82.4% of respondents stated that they are satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of ELC to date.

29.2% of respondents said, that if made available, they would purchase extra hours of ELC.

A further 34.5% suggested that they would possibly purchase additional hours of wrap around care should they be available in the future.

There is considerable evidence that the focus on quality is helping to improve outcomes for children and there is an appetite from parents to purchase additional hours. Data will continue to be monitored carefully to ensure that an agile approach is taken to continuous improvement. Work undertaken has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Programme 2 – Workforce

Reviewing staffing structures

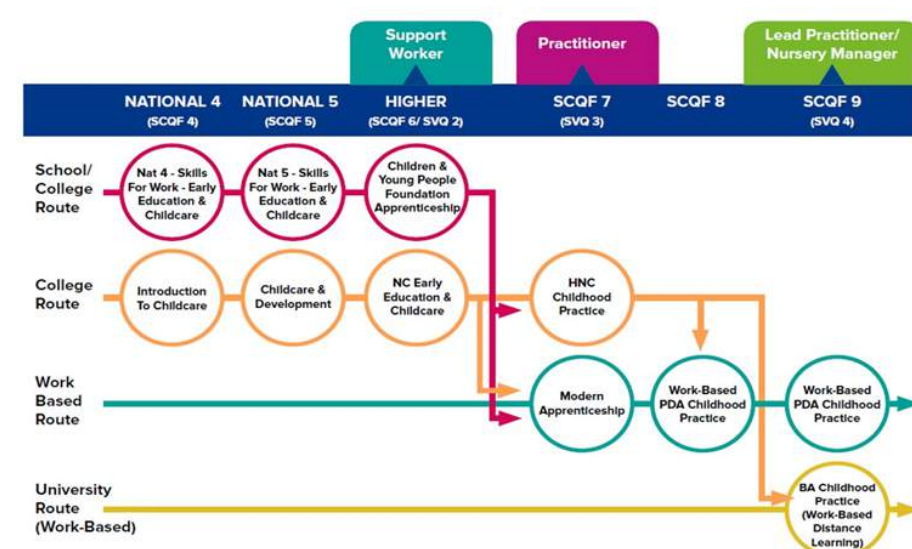
Analysis of the average cost of an ELC space in Aberdeen City in 2017 confirmed that the cost per learner was high compared to other Local Authorities and higher than the national average. This led to considerable work being undertaken to agree a sustainable staffing structure which would help develop a pipeline of talent into the sector whilst meeting quality standards. The approved new structure was implemented from August 2021 with a wider range of roles now evident with Support Worker roles and Modern Apprenticeships now available across settings. The impact of this change will be monitored closely but staff report that there is now a clear career progression pathway and there is evidence of greater diversity in the workforce in terms of age, gender and race.



Establishing the Early Learning and Childcare Academy

The Delivery Plan outlined that an innovative approach would be required to ensure we had a sufficient number of qualified staff to deliver an expanded offer of ELC.

To support the expansion of ELC, Aberdeenshire, Moray and Aberdeen City Councils collaborated with Training Providers and Funded Providers to establish an ELC Academy in 2017. The ELC Academy supported the recruitment and retention of quality ELC staff in the North East Scotland and was identified as national best practice. Noting the importance of developing appropriately targeted and engaging material to encourage school pupils into a career in ELC, the ELC Academy developed a Virtual School Roadshow with an animation and a toolkit for Guidance Teachers to promote ELC Careers to young people.



The materials were designed to clarify all of the different pathways into ELC. Details about the ELC Academy was circulated to all secondary schools and supported by a Social Media campaign and workshops offered across all three Local Authorities.



In collaboration with Aberdeenshire and Moray Councils under the umbrella of the ELC Academy Scot, we have been able to fund and deliver external trainers for ELC staff more cost effectively using digital delivery and this continues to be a long term agreement between the authorities. Feedback for these sessions has been overwhelmingly positive.

The ELC Academy launched the first Celebrating ELC Awards in 2019 to celebrate and share good practice across the ELC sector. The aim of the project was to promote collaborative working across the authorities and create 'benchmarks' for good practice and improvement. The categories included Working in Partnership, Outdoor Environment, Indoor Environment and Team. In Aberdeen City 7 ELC settings successfully achieved an award.



We are excited to share a collaborative CLPL opportunity. Anne O'Connor will be joining us to deliver a session focusing on Positive Transitions. Anne has more than twenty years' experience and leadership in nursery, infant and primary schools in inner London. Please note - all sessions will cover the same topics.

<p>Tuesday 4th May 12pm - 1pm</p> <p><i>Book via:</i> https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elc-academy-scot-positive-transitions-with-anne-oconnor-tickets-152097097513</p> 	<p>Tuesday 4th May 5pm - 6pm</p> <p><i>Book via:</i> https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elc-academy-scot-positive-transitions-with-anne-oconnor-tickets-152097771529</p> 	<p>Wednesday 12th May 5pm - 6pm</p> <p><i>Book via:</i> https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/elc-academy-scot-positive-transitions-with-anne-oconnor-tickets-152098188777</p> 
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The Scottish Government launched a national recruitment campaign "Early Learning and Childcare Recruitment 2 Careers Changers/Returning to work audience" in January 2019. ELC staff supported the campaign by being available for field stands at Union Square and other central locations. ELC staff ensured that potential candidates were linked to local employers and training providers. In addition to this, the ELC Academy implemented a recruitment campaign with ELC pop-up shops rolled out across Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire (including a drop-in session at Bon Accord Centre).

The establishment of the Early Learning and Childcare Academy helped raise the profile of careers in the sector and clarify the routes available to staff. The success of the model influenced the recently launched ABZ works website and associated social media platforms.

Early Learning and Childcare Careers

What will I learn?

- Language and literacy
- Theory of play
- Social & emotional development
- Brain development








Growing our own

The potential shortage of highly qualified staff required to meet the needs of the expansion was a key consideration. We were also aware of the wider ELC sector and wanted to limit movement of staff from our Funded Providers. These factors led us to develop a bespoke in-house traineeship programme, where existing internal council employees, looking for a new challenge, could train to become an Early Years Practitioner, on a secondment basis from their substantive role (on their existing terms and conditions of employment).



Three cohorts of staff, 76 employees in total, undertook the bespoke and innovative traineeship from across the council. Of these, 63 have successfully completed the traineeship (83%) and gained permanent Early Years Practitioner roles. This proactive approach to 'growing our own' has significantly aided Council workforce and financial planning and addressed a risk in the delivery of 1140 hours of ELC. Feedback from settings has been very positive about the quality of practitioners.



Modern Apprenticeship Programme

A further initiative developed in future-proofing the ELC workforce, and addressing the need for increased staff sector wide in Aberdeen, was to include an ELC Modern Apprenticeship (MA) role within the new staffing structure. Once again this is a 'grow your own' approach and provides an opportunity for young people, aged 16-24 to undertake a tailored apprenticeship in early years, on an 'earn whilst you learn' approach.

The Apprenticeship programme has been very successful, to date we have 37 ELC Modern Apprentices, (increasing from 7 in 2019) with a mixture of hours and working patterns, who are supported to complete their qualification by 3 local training providers. The inclusion of MA also allows our current Practitioners to take on the role of a mentor and develop their coaching and leadership skills.

On successful completion of the MA programme, our apprentices can apply for Support Worker or qualified EYP roles, with our guaranteed interview scheme. This again provides that talent pipeline in Early Years, providing developing opportunities for staff, aiding retention and supporting our workforce for the future.

Developing Outdoor Practice

In October 2019, 19 Early Learning and Childcare professionals went on an ERASMUS funded mobility study visit to Saltamontes Outdoor Nursery in Madrid. The group spent 5 days in Spain, learning outdoors, every day. They returned to share their experiences and to adapt and progress their working practices in Aberdeen.

The study visit equipped the group with reignited passion and extended knowledge, with 100% of the participants engaging in outdoor learning professional development sessions in the year following their trip, as well as continuous professional dialogue and sharing of outdoor practice within the network and beyond. Around 40% of the ERASMUS participants have become part of Specialised Interest Groups, where they are undertaking innovative research projects alongside other network members and will showcase their findings at an open Outdoor Conference.

A second ERASMUS study visit, to North Germany, was cancelled in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a virtual conference enabled us to visit Waldkindergarten, in Flensburg, in June 2021, joining Petra Jäger for three days of training.



In June 2019, WIGLS, a Community of Practice (Working In Green Local Spaces), was developed to support practitioners in their outdoor ELC work. Beginning with 38 practitioners from 30 settings it quickly grew to 78 practitioners from 38 settings, enabling the development of a shared outdoor perspective in many of the city's ELC settings.

In October 2019, a group of 20 practitioners travelled to Saltamontes Nursery, north of Madrid, in Spain, on an ERASMUS study visit. The group spent 5 days in Spain, learning outdoors, every day. They returned to share their experiences and to adapt and progress their working practices in Aberdeen.

A second ERASMUS study visit, to North Germany, was cancelled in April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a virtual conference enabled us to visit Waldkindergarten, in Flensburg, in June 2021, joining Petra Jäger for three days of training.

WIGLS has built capacity in our ELC workforce by offering on-line and in-person training, participation in ERASMUS conferences, hospitality visits across the city, small practitioner research groups (SIGs) and peer-mentoring groups. The programme was successfully moved on-line and is still on-going. The wider dissemination of this work is under way, to be shared city-wide and further afield.



Mud, Mess and Magic

In Collaboration with Creative Star, Mud, Mess and Magic was developed as a guide for ELC staff to naturalise their outdoor environment. The guide enabled staff to create, enhance and physically improve the ELC outdoor space in order to create spaces ideally suited to delivery of the curriculum.

The guide has supported staff teams to enhance approaches to gardening, the promotion of biodiversity and realise other climate friendly benefits. In some cases school gardens are now providing fruit, vegetables and berries that help children make connections by preparing these for snacks and celebrations.

The promotion and investment in outdoor learning has been critical to our response the pandemic given the clear positive wellbeing impacts on children and staff and all settings enjoy sustained periods of time outside.

A number of settings applied to be part of a pilot scheme in partnership with Juliet Robertson, [Education consultant](#), using the Mud, Mess and Magic document as a baseline for developing practitioner knowledge and the physical outdoor space. The impacts of the covid 19 pandemic meant that the settings involved opted to pause the pilot until Jan 2022.

[Test of change information for pilot schools - click for full document..](#)

Click image to see full document



Increasing the Number of Childminders to promote choice

A key change to the expansion to ELC was the ability of childminders to deliver up to 1140 hours as part of the funded entitlement, this had not been the case previously.

The Early Year team worked closely with Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA) to build relationships with the childminding community of Aberdeen. As of 2020/21 there are approximately 130 registered childminders operating in Aberdeen.

The childminders are key partners in delivering the expanded hours. Some children cope better in home like environments with childminders as they have low adult/child ratios. For many children, this 'home from home' experience is exactly what they need to provide the most nurturing environment. The childminder sector occupies a very distinctive place in the provision of early childhood services and family support. In many places, they offer an attractive and flexible provision for parents many of whom have working commitments. They often provide highly valued services in home settings where other services may be at time unavailable or are less flexible.

To increase choice and capacity across the city we undertook a procurement exercise to bring childminders who met the National Standard into partnership with Aberdeen City Council. A series of engagement sessions were held in Autumn 2019 and Winter 2019/2020 with the childminding community. The engagement sessions were an opportunity to discuss the policy drivers and benefits of the introduction of the expanded hours for children and families.

Following this exercise, 72 childminders have now entered into partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver the expanded hours. Prior to this we had 6 childminders in place piloting the entitlement. This reflects an increase of 1100%. Out of the total of 130 childminders currently operating in Aberdeen, 55% of the city's registered childminding sector, who meet the criteria set out in the National Standard, are in partnership to deliver the expanded hours.

The impact of this increase results in greater choice to families and provision being more evenly distributed geographically. As of April 2021, 135 eligible pre-school children accessed up to 1140 hours from childminders across the city. Families have improved flexibility with some childminders starting their working days at 7am and others working as late as families.

Building Capacity in our childminders

All of Aberdeen City Council partner provider childminders have been through specific training and meet the requirements of our Quality Assurance procedures. Crucially, they also meet Scottish Government's National Standard for delivery of ELC.

In order for childminders to be used by families as part of the universal offer of 1140 they require to be registered and quality assured by the Care Inspectorate. The Early Years' service has successfully utilised the Learning Pathway for childminders to increase the number of fully qualified childminders across Aberdeen City. Approximately 8 childminders working in the city in 2017 held a qualification at SVQ Level 3 and were fully registered to deliver funded ELC, this has now extended to 72 fully qualified staff. A further 17 Funded Provider childminders are currently undertaking SVQ Level 3 qualification and 2 are undertaking BA Childhood Practice. Additionally, most of our childminders now have access and have logged into ACC Learn to support their on-going development. The service will continue to work with SCMA to support best practice. Work to bring childminders into partnership has been highly effective to date and will be on-going.



Supporting practitioners to gain the qualifications they require

Aberdeen City Council is committed to expanding, developing and training the Early Learning and Childcare workforce and offers funding annually to support workforce development and expansion in the early learning & childcare and out of school care sectors.

The purpose of the funding is to:

- Support early learning & childcare and out of school care staff to undertake recognised accredited qualifications;
- Ensure workers are appropriately qualified for their current job role and to meet Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) registration requirements;
- Support Managers and/ or lead practitioners to meet the entry requirements for the PDA Childhood Practice Award at SCQF Level 9.
- Support Managers and/ or lead practitioners to undertake the BA Childhood Practice at The University of Aberdeen

Since 2017, 279 ELC workers have been funded to undertake accredited qualifications, at Support Worker, Practitioner and Manager levels. Aberdeen City Council has agreed to continue this commitment for the next 3 years through a joint Framework Agreement with Aberdeenshire Council. This will ensure we can support staff training, retention and career progressions whilst achieving best value.

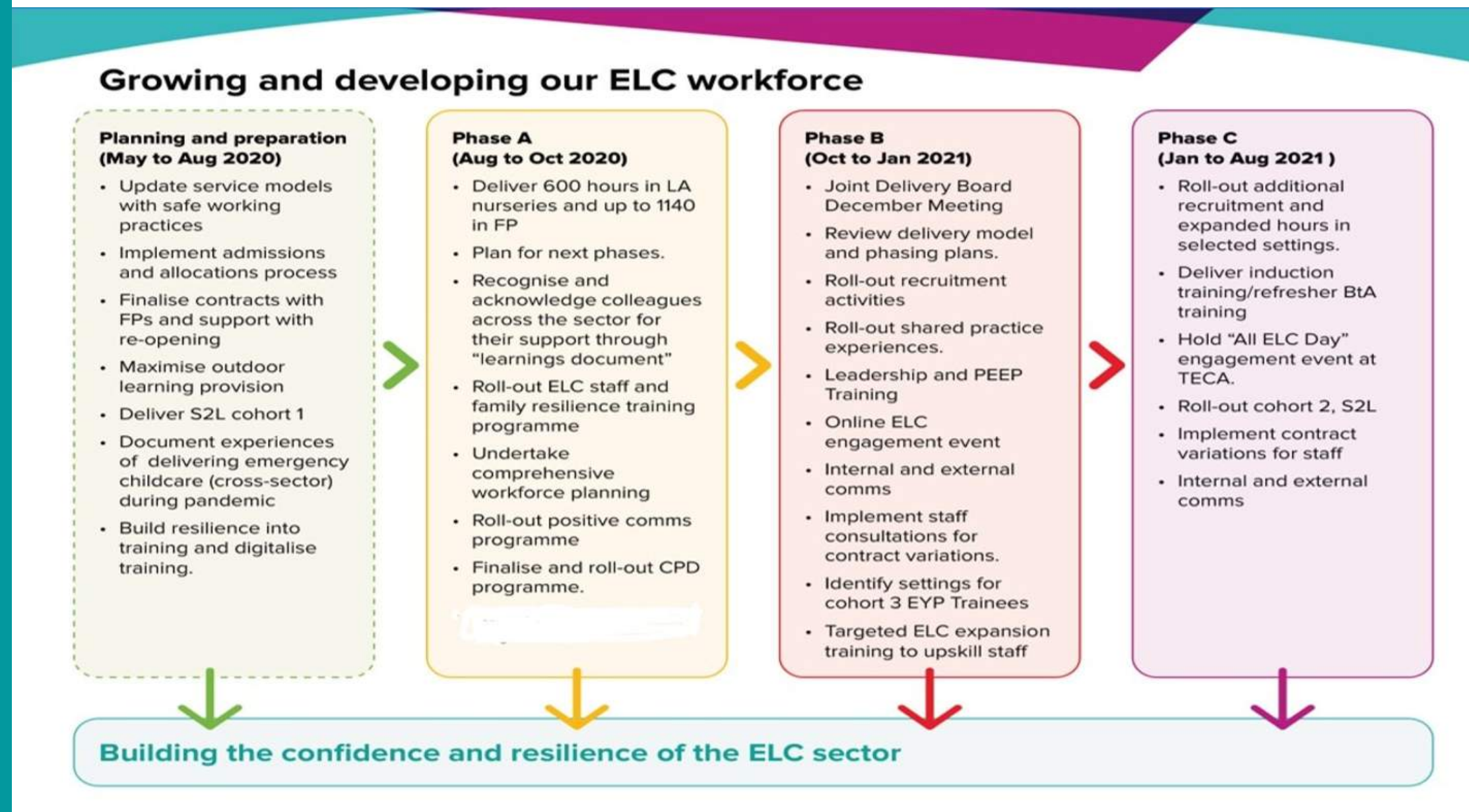
Changing contracts of current staff for the new delivery model

The introduction of delivery models which extend beyond traditional school opening hours and school terms led to a need for our workforce to provide the staff cover to support this change. A review of contractual hours and working patterns of our existing ELC workforce was undertaken to determine what was needed to support the change.

A period of engagement and consultation with staff had begun at the start of 2020 but had to be put on hold to enable the service to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Close working with People & Organisational Development and Trade Union colleagues saw this work resume from February 2021 with a significant engagement and consultation exercise to enable staff to state their preferred working patterns within the new model.

Despite the challenging timescale, revised working patterns to support the new models were implemented in August 2021, and in the vast majority of cases employee's preferences were able to be accommodated. To deliver the new model has resulted in some employees moving from 39 to 52-week contracts, increasing their contractual hours and in some cases moving to alternative settings depending upon their contractual preference. Of existing Early Years staff that chose to move onto a 52-week model approximately 150 contract variations were processed as part of the change to the service.

The delay in this process due to the pandemic led to many new teams not being in a position to form until August 2021 and this placed a pressure on settings to build a sense of teamwork at the same time as they welcomed children to access their expanded offer. There is no doubt that this presented challenges for settings, and we are exceptionally grateful for the professionalism of staff shown.



In a like manner, Facilities colleagues also undertook a period of consultation with staff to discuss the changes to ELC delivery. Throughout this process the programme team tried to align staff consultations across Education and Facilities teams to ensure information was shared within the same period. With sites open for more hours and many settings effectively operating all year-round additional support is required of janitorial, catering and cleaning colleagues. The expansion of ELC offered an opportunity for existing Facilities staff to increase hours if they wished to do so, and in the case of catering colleagues move onto a 52-week contract. Approximately, 38 contract variations were processed for catering colleagues.

The service are extremely grateful for the flexibility and engagement of Trade Union colleagues in supporting solutions to meet the needs of all staff.

Diversifying our workforce

Progressive steps have been undertaken to increase the diversity of the workforce in relation to age, gender and race.

There is clear evidence of a changing age profile with a significant increase in younger age groups represented now and this will greatly support workforce planning in the longer term. In 2017, there were only 31 employees within the 16-24 age range working in Early Learning and Childcare. This has increased to 61 in 2021 and thought to be due to the wider range of roles now available (figures are expressed as headcount). The introduction of the Modern Apprenticeship programme for Early Years, which targets young people aged 16-24 has directly led to an increased number of younger employees within the overall ELC workforce.

There is also some evidence of a very slight increase in the number of male staff choosing to work in the sector. In 2017 the ELC workforce had only 6 members of staff identified as male, this has now increased to 11.

Based on the available evidence the programme has contributed to greater diversity within the ELC workforce. To note, data is limited as it is optional whether employees wish to provide this information. Based on responses from employees who chose to provide this information, as of 1st September in 2017, there were 9 employees who identified as being of an ethnic minority (excluding white minority) background. In 2021, this number increased to 17, with a smaller number identifying as 'Other' <5.

The service will seek to continue to develop the progressive growth in the diversification of the workforce by building on the initiatives set out by the ELC Academy and the Modern Apprentice scheme. In doing so the Service hopes to connect with a diverse range of audiences and raise the profile of ELC as a career choice.

The increase in the workforce and diversification of skills sets has considerably aided our work to expand provision across the city. The provision of a wider range of roles has introduced a clear career pathway with more entry routes. This change is helping to utilise the skills and expertise from a broader demographic and has helped us diversity the workforce. The delay in consultation and engagement with staff led to ELC teams forming for August 2021 and the pressure this placed on staff teams is recognised although could not have been mitigated. Work undertaken has successfully delivered the ambition contained in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Programme 3 – Communication, Engagement and Digital

Central to the work of the ELC Expansion programme was our communication and engagement activities. Communication cut across all our workstreams. This took on further importance as the programme adapted to the impact of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. We sought to align local communications with national initiatives wherever possible.

A communications strategy was developed and regularly reviewed to ensure that key transformation messages and specific project information were shared with all relevant stakeholders. Moreover, that the views and experiences of stakeholders continued to contribute to the development and delivery of the programme. A series of engagement events took place with different stakeholders - school senior leadership groups, the early years workforce, facilities colleagues, funded providers and families - while the specific interests of each group differed the team sought to ensure that communication was purposeful, clear and of value.

Child and Family Centred Provision

In line with the ethos of the ELC Delivery Plan (2017) we continued to consult with families to ensure we delivered an ELC provision that was child and family centred. The programme maintained high levels of engagement with parents, grandparents, carers and potential parents. A survey undertaken between September and November 2019, gained 881 responses. This was followed up in January 2020 in-person engagement sessions held with parents/carers in each ASG across the city, which reached approximately 1000 parents in total. Most participants who responded to the survey and attended the engagement sessions, had one or two children, and a significant number of respondents had children between the ages of 2-3 years old and 3-4 years old for their first and second child. This being the cohort of children who would immediately benefit from the implementation of the policy.

A summary of the results from our consultation and research was made publicly available on the Aberdeen City Council website and directly influenced our work:



**ELC Parents and Carers Survey
Summary Report
27 September - 1 November 2019**

Expanding Early Learning and Childcare in Aberdeen

Parent and Carer Focus Groups

Sharing Progress

To build on the levels of engagement with families and to highlight the transformative level of investment being made in Early Years, a series of press releases, online content and short films were released. This enabled parents and the wider community to follow the progress of the programme and see first-hand how the programme sought to deliver on the ask from families. In relation to the capital programme of works we sought to highlight how we were creating enabling environments for children to learn and play; embedding nurseries within the community - ensuring that facilities were accessible and local to families; and developing family learning and support.

The use of multi-media and online content took on greater importance due to the challenges of the pandemic. We invested more heavily in multi-media and virtual tours to help share progress with families and the wider community, with the most recent film showing completed settings being utilised by children.



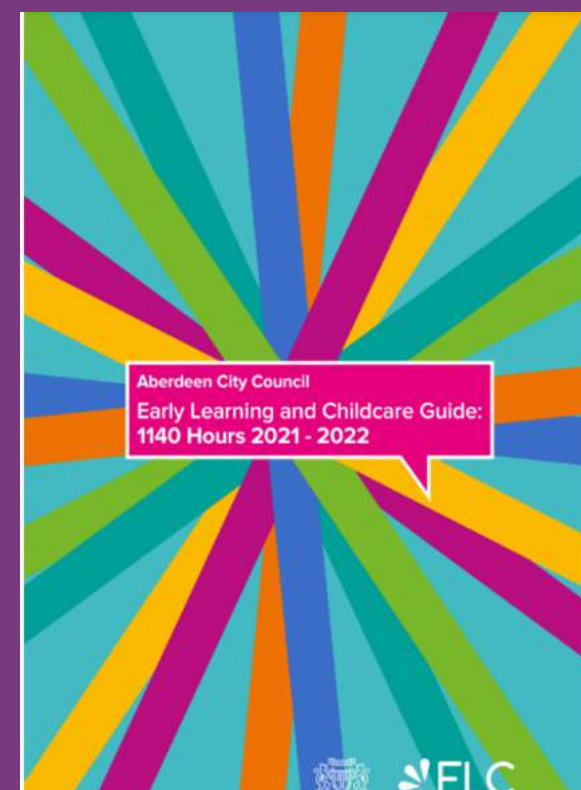
[Project Reel: LC Projects Progress \(28 January 2021\)](#)

[Project Reel: ELC Projects Completed \(24 November 2021\)](#)



Policy Development

The Early Learning and Childcare admissions policy was refreshed to take account of the new delivery model. Following approval at Committee, routine cycles of review have been put in place to ensure that this key policy continues to meet the needs of families. The timely approval of the policy enabled effective communication with families about the offer available to them from August 2021. To that end, a comprehensive jargon free guide was developed on the expansion of ELC for families to access. This guide was also promoted via the Family Information Service, made available on the Aberdeen City Council website and referenced to the ELC admissions applications.



A copy of the guide can be found here:
https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/ELC%20Guide%201140%20Hours_2021_2022.pdf

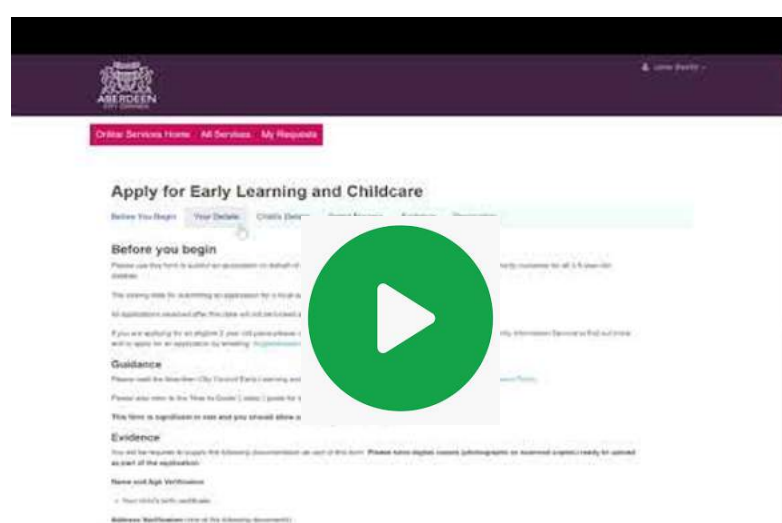
Feedback on the communication from families is generally positive. However, despite the range of communication methods utilised the latest † ELC parent/carer consultation highlighted that only 51.5% of 453 parents and carers who responded were aware of Gaelic Medium provision.

51.5% of parents and carers are aware that Gaelic medium Education is an option at Gilcomstoun school, with 48.5% being unaware.

The vast majority of parents and carers (69.8%) indicated that they would not be interested in a Gaelic medium education in ELC, whilst 12.8% were interested in a Gaelic medium education in ELC. 12.8% of respondents did not know.

There is a need to promote provision at Gaelic Medium. The service will take this as a learning point.

Allied to the change to the admissions policy, the programme team also sought to support parents through the admissions application process. To raise awareness around the changes to ELC - the team worked closely with colleagues in Customer to produce customer communications, online help videos and updated the online chat bot with frequently asked questions.



ELC Application 'How to Videos'

The introduction of the aforementioned digital triage tools enabled the Admissions team to make better use of resources, during this busy period. Approximately, 17% of all applicants accessed the online 'how to videos', while this figure isn't a high percentage, we anticipate the utilisation of such support tools will steadily increase as the online system and ELC expansion embeds.

To continue to ensure high engagement with families during the admissions period, we will continue to work with Customer colleagues to draw on their expertise to sense check usability and accessibility as we strive to deliver a positive customer experience.

Using technology to share progress

We used social media to share information and promote good practice and opportunities via our Twitter feed @EduAbdnELC. With over 550 followers, this helps to reach parents, providers and everyone with an interest in ELC in Aberdeen and beyond.

The Education Newsletter was used to share progress towards the expansion of ELC and allowed the service to share some visuals given the restrictions on in-person visits to new settings. Ideally, we would have welcomed communities into new settings and this will be considered as the restrictions in place as a result of Covid-19 are eased.

Given the restrictions in place, a number of films were commissioned to help families tour provisions virtually. Although families would have undoubtedly appreciated an in-person visit, the 3D walk throughs were an innovate tool that we applied to support nursery inductions and enable children and families to explore and connect with the new settings. The immersive 3D walk throughs focused on some of our newly completed nursery projects: Tillydrone nursery; Cummings Park nursery; Kingsford School nursery and Gilcomstoun School nursery / Sgoil-Araich.

The walk throughs offered an opportunity to explore the recently completed nursery projects and virtually tour the buildings. The high resolution 360 degree walk throughs were shared with schools and made available to families and the wider community. Settings will prioritise welcoming children into new settings as soon as restrictions are eased.



To access the 3D walk throughs please click the links below

[Kingsford School Nursery, Mastrick \(64 place nursery.\)](#)

[The Links Nursery, Seaton \(90 place nursery.\)](#)

[Tillydrone Nursery, Tillydrone \(56 place nursery.\)](#)

[Cummings Park Nursery, Northfield \(80 place nursery.\)](#)

[Gilcomstoun School Nursery / Sgoil-Araich, City centre \(88 place nursery.\)](#)

Engagement with families registered for outdoor provision

A cornerstone of the programme has been the investment in outdoor learning, and this is keenly reflected in the establishment of two new outdoor nurseries at Duthie Park and Hazlehead Park. Both will have an outdoor focus in their education and provision, but each will offer unique and varied experiences for children, families, staff and the wider communities. The establishment of the two new outdoor nurseries is a first for Aberdeen city and a pioneering provision for the Early Years sector. Regrettably, due to the impact of the pandemic on the supply chain the completion time for the aforementioned projects was extended and both will be operational from January 2022.



The Early Years team have sought to provide more insight and understanding into the world of an outdoor nursery through the eyes and experiences of children and families by sharing information posters and video links.

<https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-03/Outdoor%20Learning%205760x1080px>



For parents who had applied for a place at the outdoor nurseries an online welcome/introduction session was hosted by the Outdoor ELC Manager at the beginning of Term 1. Due to Covid-19 restrictions it was felt this would be a positive opportunity for families to meet the skilled practitioners that would be working with the children. Furthermore, it was also an occasion to discuss the values, aims and overarching pedagogy.

Those parents that had applied for a place at the outdoor nurseries are currently receiving their ELC entitlement at a contingency setting. The programme team have sought to keep families up to date with site progress sharing information bulletins and site photos. However, in a recent survey of parents undertaken by the outdoor nursery team families have reported that they would have preferred more information on the timings of moving into the new outdoor settings. The team appreciate that parents and carers seek certainty that is hard to provide in a rapidly changing context of supply chain issues exacerbated further by storm Arwen. Nonetheless, families reported confidence in the outdoor nursery team and positive experiences for their children:

"Thank you so much for providing a positive formative experience for my child, I know how important and valuable it is, and thank you all for contributing to that foundation."

"The children all seem to have developed great relationships with the teachers, and AI never stops chatting about them! We've felt very supported."

Engagement with key partners

Working with SCMA has improved quality as we all work together to support both childminders and families. We have regular ACC and SCMA meetings with childminders so that we can keep them up to date with changes and give them the opportunity to tell us how they are. Additionally, this gives us a chance to assess training needs. ACC have devised a communication procedure to ensure we have consistency for children and their families. We have been promoting strong communication between childminders and nurseries during our meetings and when on QI visits, this supports best outcomes for each child who is taking part in a blended placement.

Communication and engagement with settings

Regular communication was established to share updates on the programme with Local Authority settings. The service faced considerable challenges during the early stages of pandemic and this impacted on the frequency of communications. This was rectified by engaging with Head Teachers more frequently during Head Teacher meetings although the service recognise that communication would have benefited from being 'in person' in some cases.

The Locality Lead Officers played a more considerable role in helping settings plan for the expanded model and engaged with individual teams to explore staffing arrangements, this helped free up the Programme Manager to support the final stages of the capital programme. Some settings report that they felt apprised of progress whilst others would have welcomed more frequent communication. This will be taken as a learning point for consideration in any future programmes of work.

Consulting with children to shape service delivery

As stated in A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland, a key element of the 1140 ELC programme is to enable "ELC experiences [which] provide children with an important opportunity for maximising healthy eating and establishing healthy eating habits in the earliest years." (p. 40, 2018) Many of our settings have embraced this new routine, with one shaping their approach to this by auditing continuous reflective dialogue with staff and collating observations and feedback from their children. Using this information, the setting changed their lunchtime routine to ensure it was meeting individual needs and providing the most nurturing experience for all children. In moving the location of this mealtime to a space within the Nursery, children shared their evaluations explaining that they liked having their food in the new area "because it's still Nursery", "it's a nicer room", "we just wash our hands and come through" and "I just like all of it!" The Early Years team continue to support settings to utilise this approach.

How satisfied are parents and carers with the induction process?

We asked parents and carers how satisfied they were with their child's induction process, keeping in mind the ongoing Covid-19 restrictions and Scottish Government guidance that all Early Learning and Childcare settings are following. The majority of the 454 parents and carers who responded were satisfied with the process.

68.3% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with their child's induction process.

13.1% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

10.2% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied

The service recognises the need to review induction arrangements as soon as public health measures allow.

A range of communication and engagement methods were utilised but the Covid-19 restrictions did impact on the level of satisfaction of parents and carers in induction arrangements and in staff given the lack of in-person engagement. This will be taken as a learning point.

Programme 4 – Capital

Planning the location of capital works

At the time of writing the Delivery Plan, it was clear that there were considerable implications for our infrastructure. The previous Aberdeen City Council ELC offer has been delivered using a traditional model based in schools and did not fully utilise each building. There was a need to maximise the use of buildings whilst recognising that some would be unable to offer the flexibility so only able to provide ELC Offer of 600 hours.

Projects were split into three Phases with an overall capital budget for the ELC Expansion Programme of £23million. Phase 1 of the expansion programme focused on areas that have the greatest difficulty in accessing services and targeted those most likely to benefit first. Phase 2 covered the other areas identified where there is a clear need for additional provision and the remaining Phase 3 projects addressed minor enabling and refurbishment works at other sites across the city.

In total the capital investment comprised of works to 27 settings, of these 8 were new stand alone facilities, 2 were extensions and significant refurbishments of a standalone nursery, 1 was an extension to a school to form as new nursery, 2 were significant refurbishments within an existing school nursery, 1 was a significant refurbishment of a non-operational building to convert it into a new nursery and 12 were minor work refurbishments of existing nursery settings.

ELC Expansion Capital Programme		
Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duthie Park Outdoor Nursery • The Links Nursery (formerly Woodlands) • Tillydrone Nursery • Cummings Park Nursery • Westpark School • Kingsford School • Woodside School • Tullos School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culter School • Cults School • Hazlehead Park Outdoor Nursery • Kingswells School • Kirkhill School • Broomhill School • Charleston School • Gilcomstoun School • Loirston School 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Danestone School • Dyce School • Glashieburn School • Forehill School • Fernielea School • Scotstown School • Kittybrewster School • Greenbrae School • Walker Road School

A comprehensive review of the suitability of school-based provisions was undertaken to determine local circumstances and inform each local offer based on the agreed delivery models. The provision of a quality outdoor learning environment was prioritised in recognition that such a provision will enable coherent delivery of the curriculum over a mix of sessions.

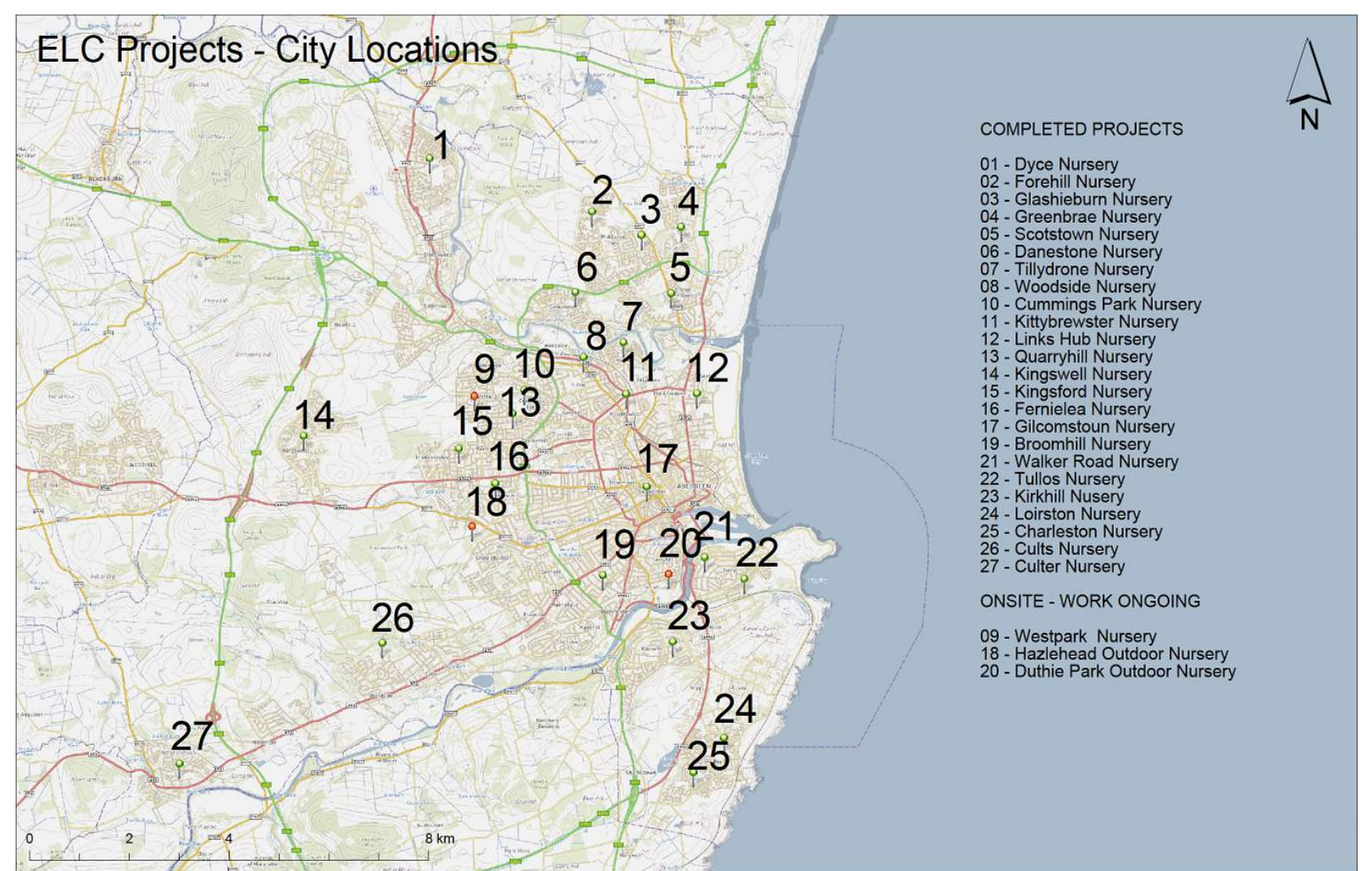
Buildings thought suitable to offer a higher number of ELC places if internal and external spaces were improved were identified. The feasibility of each was scoped to ascertain the long-term efficiency of undertaking this work to ensure that capital resource was spent wisely.

Aberdeen City Council's internal design team and appointed consultants were commissioned to produce a series of feasibility reports covering each site under consideration for expansion works. These studies were based on a design brief developed in collaboration with the Early Years Team, Design Team as well as Operational and Facilities Teams across the Council. This enabled a uniform approach to be taken across the estate when reflecting on existing facilities and new operational priorities moving forward under expansion.

To ensure a consistent approach across the city existing nursery facilities were reviewed to ensure the quality of their facilities were comparable to that of a new build. This is to ensure that for parental choice and staff retention the quality of the facilities is uniform across the city and to ensure the best outcomes for delivery of the ELC Programme.

The accessibility of services was analysed. Careful analysis of uptake of services evidenced that some families chose not to access their entitlement as they didn't perceive provision to be accessible and considerable consideration was given to travelling distances to remove this barrier.

The agreed capital projects spanned the city with a mix of new build, refurbishment and light internal works to enable the delivery of a flexible model to families across each Associated Schools Group. The map below outlines the geographic spread of the 27 ELC Expansion capital projects.



Oversight of the Capital programme

Oversight was provided by the ELC Programme Board. This cross-council approach was critical as the team managed the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Such challenges were managing national material shortages, extended delivery times and an increasing number of staff in the supply chain who had to self-isolate, all of which impacted on the availability of materials. Against this challenging landscape the programme team undertook a value engineering exercise to ensure that the programme remained on track financially.

The design team also worked closely with the main contractor to evaluate the impact on the programme with regard to Scottish Government guidance and the requirement to comply with physical distancing measures as well.

Framework

The framework considered and used was the Major Projects Procurement Hub Framework. This framework allowed one main contractor to be used across all the 27 projects ensuring a close collaborative approach and best market value. It also had the benefit of sharing knowledge between the design team and the main contractor at an early stage of the design process to ensure there was a slim lined procurement route.

Following the lockdown and the introduction of COVID 19 restrictions, to manage the pandemic, the close collaboration approach with the main contractor allowed us to maintain progress onsite and resolve issues across the whole capital programme to maximise savings and mitigate delays to the programme.

Design Approach

A brief was issued by the client in line with the Northern Alliance documents. This brief outlined the number of spaces and facilities required as well as identifying each location and the number of learners in each setting. Each location had a unique identity and issues to overcome whether it was an internal refurbishment or an extensive extension of an existing building or a new build.

Before starting the design of the individual properties by the individual designers a holistic approach was considered regarding the overall feel of the buildings. It was agreed that a light and bright open spaces with a welcoming feel was the approach to adopt. Spaces were to be welcoming and practical with the learners the main focus for the design.

Investigation and was undertaken regarding the materials to be used both internally and externally and a palette of materials and finishes were chosen by the client to be used across all the projects. The below extract was a useful tool when choosing considering this:

‘For years there was a prevailing mindset that children should be surrounded by bright colour. Walls, carpets, curtains and even furniture were done in vivid hues from green, to red, yellow, purple or orange. Children actually find it difficult to relax and concentrate in an environment reverberating with loud colour. You rather want your setting to be homelike, with plants, area rugs, and wall hangings.’ - Extract from Space for Children

The individual designers all approach the design to suit the different location, but all used the basis as above. This has resulted in a varied design solutions at each location, however the overall approach has been maintained across the board.

Capacity and Flexibility

A review of supply and demand data was undertaken in 2017 and again in 2019 to identify the required capacity and flexibility required by the service. This process enabled the team to have a high level of confidence in the projects being progressed and ensure that capital projects were being provided where most needed. The programme team worked closely with the Improvement Service to sense check supply and demand data and welcomed the external challenge.

Combining the capacity from local authority settings and funded provider partner purchased provision across the city it was estimated that there would be a total capacity of 6,046,560 hours in 2021, which is effectively 5,304 bundles of 1140 hours of ELC. The required additional capacity for each ASG was identified and specified per setting to ensure that we had sufficient mix of delivery models available locally.

A total of 579 additional physical indoor spaces have been created as part of the ELC Expansion capital programme with no family asked to travel outwith their local area for ELC provision unless requested by them. This confirms that the capital projects have met the policy intentions outlined in the ELC Delivery Plan of 2017.

Service Model Redesign

Two service delivery models were identified to deliver 1140 hours of ELC:

- 9am-3pm x term time
- 8am-6pm x 46 weeks (offering a long morning; long afternoon or two and half days)

The new model of 8am-6pm x 46 weeks when applied enables the service to maximise the physical capacity of the building and effectively doubles the operating capacity. When current operating models for session 2021/22 are applied to our capital projects we have created 1,676 additional ELC spaces despite only creating 579 additional physical indoor spaces. This demonstrates the efficiency of the approach taken.

This provides additional flexibility and headroom to enable the service to meet and respond to demand as required. In the case of capital projects, the table below outlines physical capacity prior to works; physical capacity post work; current capacity based on some settings delivering a mixture of term time and full year models; and the final column highlights the maximum capacity when the 8am-6pm model is applied to all the capital projects. This ensures that we have a sustainable model and places us in an advantageous position if eligibility for ELC changes.

Project Name	Physical Capacity Prior to Works	Physical Indoor Capacity Post Works	Operating capacity based on current models applied for 21/22	Maximum operating capacity if 8am-6pm model applied to all capital projects
Greenbrae School	40	48	96	96
Walker Road	60	65	130	130
Quarryhill School	40	48	96	96
Tullos School	40	48	96	96
Links Nursery	0	90	135	180
Kingsford School	40	64	96	96
Tillydrone	0	56	112	112
Northfield/Cummings Park	0	80	160	160
Woodside School	55	80	120	160
Broomhill School	40	56	112	112
Gilcomstoun School	40	81	162	162
Culter School	40	48	96	96
Charleston School	30	40	80	80
Cults School	40	64	128	128
Danestone School	20	56	84	112
Duthie Park	0	20	40	40
Dyce School	60	60	80	120
Fernielea School	40	40	60	80
Forehill School	30	48	96	96
Glashieburn School	30	60	60	120
Hazlehead Park	0	40	40	80
Kingswells School	40	40	80	80
Kirkhill School	40	64	96	128
Kittybrewster School	30	30	60	60
Loirston School	60	60	120	120
Scotstown School	40	40	40	80
Westpark School	40	48	96	96
Total Spaces	895	1474	2571	2916

In total there are 45 local authority settings offering 1140 hours and 4 settings delivering 600 hours due to physical limitations of the building/nursery environment.

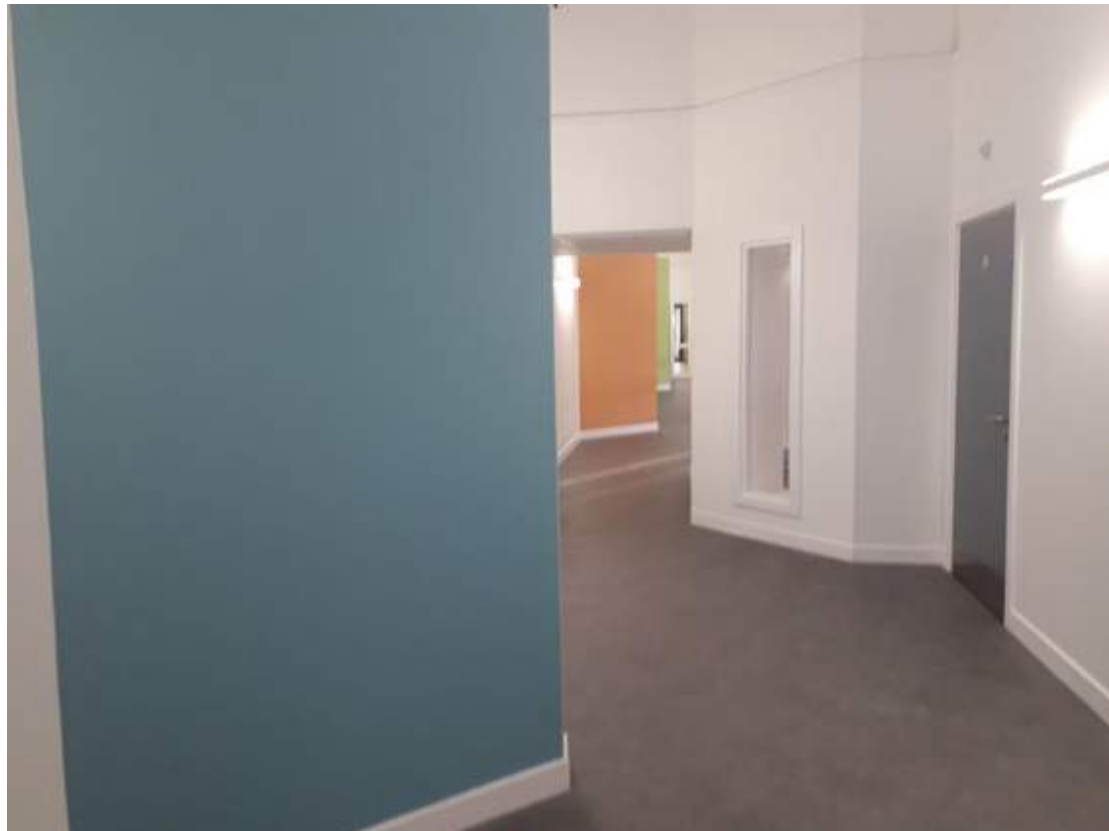
An overview of local authority settings and models delivering 1140 hours since the start of the new term (August 2021) can be found here: https://www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2021-01/ELC%20Guide%201140%20Hours_2021_2022.pdf

Spotlight on The Links Nursery and Hub

The Links was an existing building owned by Aberdeen City Council, but the original use had ceased. Being an existing building there were restraints when approaching the design. Structural works were undertaken to open the space and increase the size of the windows. This allowed the building to be brighter and allow for interesting spaces due to the existing building layout.



Picture above shows bright open space with access to the outdoors.



The Links Nursery and Hub opened on the 16th August 2021. The renovated building is now an important part of our continuum for up to 90 children and their families who would benefit from a multi-agency response. The service aims to:

- Provide high quality provision, learning and experiences for all the children and families attending our setting.
- Improve children's outcomes and help close the poverty- related attainment gap.
- Increase family resilience through improved health and wellbeing of children and parents
- Support parents into work and study or training.

Currently 21 Eligible 2s and 25 3-5-year-olds access the ELC provision. Approximately 44.2% of children who attend the Early Learning and Childcare provision have English as an additional language (EAL).

The Links Nursery and Hub has a Health Visitor on site and one Band 3 Nursery Nurse who is employed by Health and currently awaiting start date. As the provision develops, there is the possibility of introducing additional multi-agency representation based on site, i.e. Speech and Language Therapy (SALT) and Children's Social Work. The Hub enjoys a close working arrangement with the Family Learning team. This model provides an opportunity to test the benefits of the Community Campus principles agreed by Committee in November 2021.

Spotlight on Woodside

Woodside nursery was a substantial extension to an existing nursery building. The new nursery has the capacity for 80 children at any one time and offers ELC to eligible 2-year-olds as well as 3 and 4 year old children. The old nursery at Woodside did not have adequate free flow and to access the nursery children had to climb several flights of stairs. The new nursery space enables children to access the outdoors and offers them a rich learning environment in which to learn and play. Woodside like Kingsford has two play spaces and this offers a mixed model to be delivered from the nursery and meet the individual needs of families.



Spotlight on Broomhill

Broomhill school nursery is a stand-alone facility with a capacity for 56 3 and 4 year old children at any one time. The nursery is located in the school playground, which enables the school and nursery setting to maintain a close relationship. Prior to the expansion programme, the original Broomhill nursery was split between a demountable in the school playground and an upstairs classroom. The latter room lacked free flow and children could not independently access the outdoor space.

The new nursery has a secure outdoor area to the rear, which the children are fully utilising and enjoying in all weathers. In line with our other settings Broomhill now has all the facilities identified by the Early Years Team as necessary to support the full offering of 1140 hours including improved staff facilities and Family spaces to which allow staff to support and work with families alongside the children.



The activity space of the new Broomhill nursery is light and airy. The snack kitchen is integrated into the playspace enabling practitioners to have a clear line of sight of the children at all times. Adjacent to the main activity space are auxiliary facilities including a dedicated laundry and nappy change room. Consideration was given to the proximity of these spaces and the general layout of the building to ensure staff to children ratios aren't impacted and maximise the support available to children.



The school have been complimentary of their new nursery and shared, "what a difference to what they had!"

'Much better start and finish times now for working parents!!'

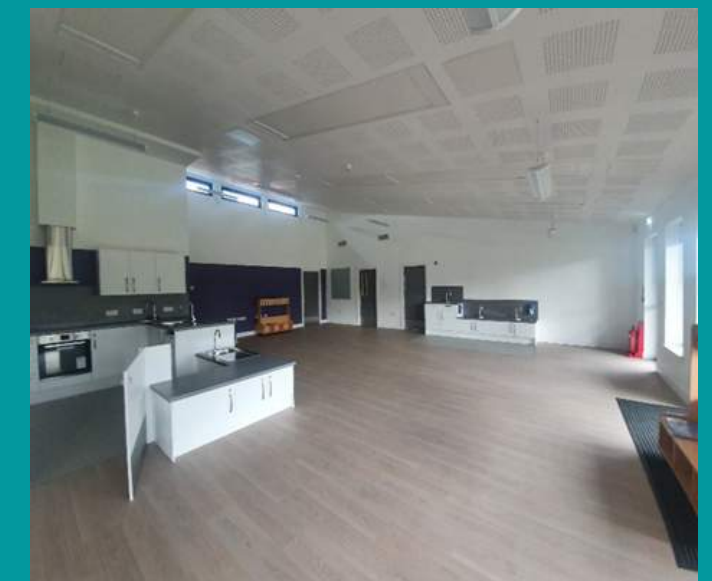


Spotlight on Kingsford

The new Kingsford nursery has increased capacity from 40 to 64 children at any one time. The nursery benefits from having two play spaces (physical capacity of 32:32). The play spaces have the option of being interconnected or separated by double doors with vision panels. The inclusion of the two play spaces provides flexibility to the service to offer a mixed model e.g. term time and full year-round, which increases choice and flexibility for parents. In the development phase of the project, design team colleagues thought of the use of building from the perspective of young children as well as adults. For example, windows are either full length or at child height to enable children to see outdoors. Details such as the positioning of soap dispensers and paper towel holders have been installed with children in mind - accounting for the height and reach of pre-school children.



The layout of Kingsford means there are few corridors, so rooms and spaces are linked with the main entrance leading into a central cloak area/flexible hall allowing families into the heart of the building. This maximises the amount of usable available floor area for the building as well as bringing staff and families together to build close relationships and feel part of the nursery alongside the children. The central cloak area leads directly to family support spaces and both activity rooms so support families and children together.



Research identified the lack of appropriate staff space for practitioners in some of our existing nursery buildings. To this end, we have sought to offer high quality staff space and auxiliary accommodation. This staff space can also be used flexible as a multi-purpose room if required.



Spotlight on Dyce

The scope of Phase 3 projects generally encompassed minor works and/or refurbishments. Examples of work undertaken in Phase 3 projects ranged from new flooring, redecoration, refurbishment of toilets; creation of a laundry room or nappy change. Dyce school nursery is one such example of a Phase 3 project. The works carried out comprised of new flooring, redecoration and the refurbishment of the toilets. The result was an enhanced nursery space that was fit for purpose for the delivery of 1140 hours. Dyce nursery has a capacity for 60 at any one time and offers a mixed model of 9am-3pm over term time and 8am-6pm over 46 weeks. The school were delighted with the results and described their refurbished playroom as 'beautiful.'



Spotlight on Culter

To deliver the additional hours at Culter school nursery the existing nursery was extended and the internal spaces remodelled to create a fit for purpose environment. The flow of the nursery has been improved and the activity space is light and airy with free flow. The outdoor area is fenced and there is a mix of hard standing and grass areas, the nursery also has access to a 'secret garden', which the children can enjoy. The extension also enabled the required supporting accommodation to be included: nappy change, new toilets, a snack kitchen, a family room, accessible toilets and staff accommodation, staff toilets and a reception room. A laundry, internal store and comms room as well as cleaner's store and external store were also part of the works.

The design team considered the situation of the nursery and opted for a brick extension and reused the granite from the existing nursery to create a facility that was in keeping with the surrounding buildings and area. Physical capacity increased from 40 to 48 children at any one time.



Spotlight on our Outdoor Provisions

Despite the delay to our two outdoor provisions as a result of supply chain issues, children, families and staff of Duthie Park Outdoor Nursery and Hazlehead Park Outdoor Nursery have effectively transitioned and established themselves in their temporary bases.

The Outdoor ELC staff have built strong, nurturing relationships with children and families, resulting in full attendance of children who were previously tentative in accepting their temporary offer. Families from both provisions have provided positive feedback on the practitioners' pedagogies and approaches to parent partnership working, sharing thanks "for the trouble [they] have taken in helping [their son] to settle in well and a special thank you to [his Key Worker] for her detailed daily reports as to their son's progress; they are reassuring, helpful and much appreciated." Another parent added how "lovely [it is] to hear how close the Hazlehead outdoor kids have become and [their son] is very comfortable in nursery with his buddies and teachers." Furthermore, parents have expressed how effective the induction process has been for their children where they "speak so fondly of everyone there". Lastly, a family have shared their delight in the progress they have observed in their child's wellbeing, development and self-regulation, where they have seen a "massive change in him, much more open, controls better his frustration, his confidence is much better now, he is singing songs all day, starts to make up sentences...and I must say he is very much used to coming every morning as he wakes up himself at 06.15, eats and is ready pulling his Dad's hand to come to the nursery."



Both ELC teams have also maximised this opportunity of collaborative working across their provisions, as well as with colleagues out-with, to share and build upon their outdoor pedagogy and assist in the development of two other outdoor spaces of new ELC builds. In the lead up to the completion of Duthie Park and Hazlehead Park outdoor settings, the Outdoor team are now planning the transition process to ensure children, families and staff have opportunities to begin to build a connection with their new spaces and be involved in this exciting next step in shaping their provision. Our Lead Outdoor Early Years Practitioners have also focussed on making links with the Environmental Service team and wider community organisations in order to lay foundations for future collaborative work.

Spotlight on Cults

Culds nursery project involved a substantial extension and remodelling of internal spaces. Two interconnected nursery playspaces with free flow were created. Previously, the nursery did not have fit for purpose free flow. New toilets, nappy change facilities, resource store, family room, office space, new cloak area, a laundry room and comms room were also created as part of the building works. The outdoor space is extensive and secured with a perimeter fence. The outdoor area features a slabbed area and turfed external play areas. Culds nursery has increased from a registered capacity of 40 to 64 preschool children at any one time. The nursery is delivering an 8am-6pm model over 46 weeks of the year.



Parents and children can enter through main reception, to the right of the reception area is a reception office. Barrier matting covers the reception area. Families and children enter through double doors, which leads them into a corridor space from which they can access the nursery rooms.

Roof lights keep this area light and they can be opened for ventilation.

Off the main reception area are the auxiliary spaces - office space; family room; visitor toilet and accessible toilet.

Playroom 1 has two low level sinks; one adult height sink and free flow with external doors to access the outside space. Flooring is nonslip and barrier matting has been laid down at the external door entrance.

The room is bright and light with floor to ceiling windows to the front and external free flow doors to enable independent access to outside. Playroom 2 is a similar space with free flow access.

Staff accommodation is located off the left of the main reception area of the nursery and has fobbed secure access. All doors to the auxiliary accommodation are secured and accessed via a fob.

The Family room is located off the reception area. Staff have been PEEP trained and the addition of a family room within the nursery, enables staff to support and build relationships with families. The room has been designed with a small kitchen area as well to create a comfortable and homely environment.

Spotlight on Tillydrone and Cummings Park

The ELC Expansion capital programme has established new standalone nursery facilities within the Tillydrone and Northfield areas of Aberdeen. The newly built nurseries are fit for purpose and have created high quality and impactful learning environments. The total number of children that the nurseries can accommodate at any one time is as follows:

- Tillydrone nursery - 56 children at any one time
- Cummings Park nursery - 80 children at any one time

Aberdeen City Council sought to appoint an ELC provider to deliver funded ELC to 2-5-year-old children, within the two aforementioned Council owned purpose-built nursery settings. The nurseries are situated centrally within both communities. The location and design of the nurseries drew on the feedback from parent/carer consultations undertaken as part of the ELC Delivery Plan as well as quantitative evidence of supply and demand. The expansion team sought to ensure there was sufficient flexibility to meet the needs of individual children, parents/carers and the wider community to support parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment.

Virtual tours of the stand alone provision can be accessed via the links below:

[Tillydrone Nursery](#)

[Cummings Park Nursery](#)



The new facilities allow for a provider to deliver ELC in new, purpose-built nursery settings. It is also an opportunity for the provider to build relationships and work in partnership with the community to improve outcomes for children and young people.



Realising Change

The transformation of the buildings and environments enables the transformative nature of ELC to be realised, making a real and meaningful difference to the lives of children and families in Aberdeen.

We have received positive feedback from staff that we have created positive and enabling environments for children to learn and play. While it has been challenging to deliver a programme on this scale against the backdrop of the pandemic, schools have commented that seeing the “children enjoying the new space has made it all worth it”.

The provision of quality outdoor learning environments has been a key ambition for the ELC expansion programme in recognition that such provision has a positive impact on a child’s development. The programme has sought to either create or enhance free flow in our ELC settings to enable children to independently access the outdoor space. Schools have feedback that this is supporting children’s creativity, health and wellbeing as they learn and explore their outdoor environment.

The inclusion of a family room in many of our projects has created a space for skilled Early Years practitioners to offer family support in an inclusive and supportive environment. As previously discussed, we have sought to ensure that spaces are welcoming, light and bright for staff, families and children to enjoy.

A key element that has contributed to the successful delivery of the ELC programme is the adoption of a ‘one team’ approach with colleagues across clusters - Capital, Corporate Landlord and Education - working in a coordinated and integrated manner. This approach contributed to the delivery of fit for purpose nurseries in which skilled Early Years practitioners can improve outcomes for children and families.

What do parents tell us about the choices available now?

454 parents responded to a recent survey on our provision of Early Learning and Childcare. Responses were gleaned from all eleven of the Aberdeen City’s ASGs with responses from those accessing provision through the Local Authority and from Funded Providers.

Associated School Groups (ASGs)	Responses	Percentages
Aberdeen Grammar School	45	9.9%
Bridge of Don	26	5.7%
Bucksburn	67	14.8%
Cults	45	9.9%
Dyce	4	0.9%
Harlaw	35	7.7%
Hazlehead	49	10.8%
Lochside	68	15%
Northfield	33	7.3%
Oldmachar	31	6.8%
St Machar	51	11.2%

Parents tell us that 75.8% have been able to secure a funded ELC place in their local area/ASG. Only 27 respondents (5.9%) were unable to secure a local ELC placement. 83 respondents (18.3%) have either not yet applied or found the question not applicable.

There is clear evidence of a range of choices across all ASGs with no feedback on gaps in provision. Some parents are very satisfied with the longer hours available whilst some parents (2) would prefer more 9-3 places.

“All settings should offer a 9-3 option. All settings should be truly flexible which they are not.”

“Very satisfied as it really helps a lot but may be more appreciated if there's a provision for full section five days a week so that parent can have more time to work. Many thanks”

As a result of the capital programme, an additional 1, 676 spaces have been made available to children and accessibility issues have been addressed. Nursery settings are modern purpose-built environments which the staff and children are enjoying their time in. The focus on free flow access to the outdoor space is aiding delivery of a high-quality curriculum and the provision of Family Support space will help staff support families as we recover from the pandemic. Supply chain issues associated with the pandemic only impacted on the two outdoor nursery provisions but appropriate contingency arrangements were put in place.

Programme 5 – Funded Providers

Maintaining the balance of provision

The challenge for the programme was to ensure that Aberdeen has sufficient capacity to deliver every child's funded ELC entitlement. Approximately, 75% of all ELC was accessed from local authority settings in 2017, which was in keeping with the national profile. The remaining 25% of ELC was delivered via Funded Providers and this balance would have to be retained or increased to ensure that Funded Provider settings would be sustained. This has been maintained. A cross representation of private, independent, and voluntary settings continue to deliver funded ELC with the addition of new providers coming into partnership. At the time of writing one setting has indicated they are due to close. In this specific case, the impact of Covid-19 has been a contributory factor to the closure as has changes to the pattern of parent led demand. The service will continue to monitor the impact of pandemic on the sector.

Prior to the introduction of 1140, there were 40 funded (contracted) providers delivering 600 hours. From the 40 providers in partnership, 30 were delivering fully flexible wrap around provision to meet the needs of individual families.

The Scottish Government introduced, Funding Follows the Child, alongside the statutory roll out of the expanded entitlement, to ensure that funded entitlement is delivered in high quality settings. Under Funding Follows the Child, local authorities set a rate locally that is paid to funded providers to deliver the funded entitlement. This approach is 'provider neutral' and underpinned by the National Standard, so that all settings entering into contract with local authorities are of a high standard (Care Inspectorate Grade 4 or above).

A procurement exercise was undertaken to establish a non-competitive, flexible framework of ELC providers. The most significant change was the opportunity for childminders to enter into partnership to deliver funded hours (previously childminders had not been eligible). Following a review of commissioning arrangements we sought to ensure the sustainability of the private, voluntary and independent (PVI) sector and that parents were able to access funded hours free at the point of delivery.

Developing a sustainable rate

The sustainable rate is the "hourly rate that is paid to funded providers [...] to deliver the funded entitlement ensuring they can remain financially viable while offering funded hours to eligible children," [Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard, 2018]. Aberdeen City Council adopted the Scotland Excel guidance and template procurement documents (including model terms and conditions) to support the contracting process.

A series of engagement sessions were held from summer 2019 through to early 2020 with funded providers to discuss the options available to identify a sustainable rate.

Understandably, there was apprehension about the application process and the roll out of the funded entitlement. To that end, the Early Years and Expansion team worked closely with providers and held a series of engagement events, drop-in sessions (subject to demand) and offered 1-2-1 meetings to discuss the process and the rollout. In addition, providers were signposted to support organisations: P4P, SenScot, Supplier Development Programme Scotland. Partnership working was key to enable the successful roll out of the expanded hours.

In line with Scottish Excel guidance, a cost survey approach was adopted to identify a rate. The engagement sessions were a valuable opportunity for colleagues to outline the process, answer questions and for providers to share feedback and raise areas for consideration.

The 'provider cost survey' provided as accurate an estimate as possible of the costs associated with their provision of ELC for children under school age to inform the planning and modelling for the sustainable rate. This process was transparent and accessible for providers to engage in.

The result was a healthy response rate with 20 out of the 40 contracted nurseries providing a response. The survey collected information on costs, income, capacity and occupancy. There was cross representation from across the city, with responses received from a mixture of private, third and public sector organisations. In the case of childminders, costs information was also collected from a sample (n=6) of childminders. The rate for meals was calculated by identifying the average rate paid per meal by funded providers. This was then adjusted for inflation and market uncertainties.

This exercise enabled the Council to work out the current average cost of service provision across the survey, ensuring that the rates set for the introduction of 1140 hours, were truly reflective of cost and represented value for money. The outcome agreed was a rate of £5.45 for 3- and 4-year-olds and £6.05 for eligible 2-year-olds for Funded Providers. For childminders a rate of £5.35 for 3- and 4-year-olds and £5.65 for eligible 2-year-olds. The rate for a meal £2.75. The agreed rate is sustainable for partners and reflective of national policy priorities, including funding to enable the payment of the real Living Wage to all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement.

Funded Providers: 1140 hours

In line with Funding Follows the Child, Aberdeen City Council are committed to reducing the administrative burden on providers, and this extends to the application process used for contracting. The recommended approach was flexible enough to allow new private and third sector providers, including childminders, to become funded providers.

Prior to the introduction of 1140 hours, the Council delivered 600 hours of ELC and operated 48 ELC settings (47 of which were in schools). ELC sessions provided part time places over 5 days during school term time and offered limited flexibility to parents. Following the contracting process, we increased capacity across the city - welcoming a range of new providers into partnership whilst also renewing our partnership with existing providers. Following this process there are currently X providers and X childminders in partnership with Aberdeen City Council to deliver up to 1140 hours. The profile of providers in partnership with the Council comprises of:

Funded Provider Type	Number
Independent	4
Private	25
Workplace	4
Voluntary (including Playgroups)	5

This diverse profile is advantageous to the city. There is increased choice for families around the different types of setting available and the range of models on offer to meet the needs of families.

Concessionaire arrangements: Tillydrone and Cummings Park nurseries

While there are a high number of funded providers in partnership Aberdeen City Council delivering expanded hours, it is notable that providers are not geographically evenly spread across the city. There are fewer funded providers operating in our priority areas compared to other localities such as the Grammar ASG, which has the highest concentration of funded providers offering a fully flexible model. The ELC expansion programme has sought to readdress this imbalance.

The route adopted was to undertake an open tender to let a concession agreement to appoint a provider(s) to occupy and deliver an ELC service from two of our purpose-built stand-alone nurseries within Tillydrone and Northfield. This was an opportunity to increase capacity across the city and specifically within our priority areas. The tender also presented an excellent opportunity to allow providers to access a purpose-built facility without incurring the upfront/ capital costs. Crucially, current practice has demonstrated that those providers operating within our priority communities are able to successfully engage with families and uptake of eligible 2s is higher within our funded providers than local authority settings. Appointing a provider to deliver ELC from the aforementioned facilities, builds on the good practice that providers are delivering within both communities and enhances our ELC offer to families, particularly to our more vulnerable families. Consultation with the local communities highlighted the preference to have greater diversity of the types of ELC provision available within the local area - adopting the concession approach enabled us to respond to this ask from families.

Hitherto a concession contract approach has not been applied to ELC. This approach subsidises the cost of ELC provision at Tillydrone and Cumming Park nurseries by attracting a rental income and a percentage of profit/surplus generated above a specified threshold value. The service worked closely with colleagues in Procurement and Legal throughout this process to realise this arrangement.

There is an initial contract duration of 4 years with the option to extend by a further 4 years. The tender was scored on quality alone ensuring the provider met the National Standard and Fair Working practices. Quality was central to this process. Indeed, without high quality ELC - from both a structural and process point of view - the positive benefits of ELC will not be realised. Investing at the Early Years level can mitigate against the long-term costs and supports, hence the imperative that the tender be fully weighted on quality.

Following the procurement process, Flexible Childcare Services, has been appointed as the successful provider to occupy and deliver ELC from both nurseries. Flexible Childcare Services are a North East provider with a wealth of ELC experience and a keen commitment to work in partnership with the communities of Tillydrone and Northfield. The new provider will enhance the choice available to communities offering a fully flexible model to eligible 2-year-olds to those children not yet attending primary school. The increase in capacity and choice in our priority areas will support parents/carers seeking to return to work or study. Moreover, the provider's commitment to offer family support and their experience of building relationships built on support and trust, aligns with our approach to early intervention and prevention.

Cross boundary arrangements

Under Funding Follows the Child, families are not restricted to provision within their own local authority area. To that end, Aberdeen City Council and Aberdeenshire Council worked in partnership to agree a cross boundary agreement to provide choice and flexibility to families. This was agreed in April 2021. Cross boundary patterns of uptake indicate that there is consistent parent led demand from Aberdeenshire based residents accessing ELC provision in Aberdeen city. At the end of 2020, there were 171 Aberdeenshire resident families accessing funded Aberdeen based ELC providers (including childminders) and 24 Aberdeenshire families accessing local authority ELC settings. To deliver on the principles of Funding Follows the Child, the cross-boundary agreement covered: applications and admissions; reconciliation of payments; data sharing and communications (in the event of complaints, issues or concerns). The cross-boundary agreement sets out a framework in which the host and resident authorities can work effectively together to deliver the best for families. It also outlines clearly the process of financial reconciliation between the authorities to ensure arrangements are both effective and sustainable. By implementing this agreement, families are assured that the choice available is not restricted by local authority boundaries.

The Living Wage

As we move forward, it will be vital to monitor the sustainability of providers and their capacity to meet the National Standard. Against the context of workforce challenges (retaining and recruiting staff), the sustainable rate, which enables the payment of the Living Wage, should contribute to creating a more level playing field across the sector. Nevertheless, while funded providers are expected to pay the Living Wage to staff delivering funded hours, this cannot be enforced by the local authority. This observation has also been echoed in the recent Audit Scotland ELC Expansion report (2020). While it cannot be enforced, we seek to encourage partners to commit to the Living Wage. To this end, inflationary and real Living Wage increases to the sustainable rate will be reviewed on a regular basis.

While the commissioning arrangements to deliver the expanded hours have been successfully implemented, they also need to be viewed against the context of workforce recruitment and retention. Workforce challenges, experienced at a local, regional and national level, have the potential to test the sustainability of the private, voluntary and independent sector. These challenges are further exacerbated by the impact of the pandemic as well as Brexit. This is a risk that the service will continue to monitor. It will seek to strengthen some of the mitigations already in place - building on the work of the ELC Academy, which showcased clear career pathways into the sector and progression routes; access to the Workforce Development Fund and the Modern Apprentice scheme. The challenges of retention and recruitment serve to underscore the importance of the implementation of the Living Wage to create to greater equity of opportunity across the sector and contribute to attracting and retaining practitioners.

The planning and partnership working which has underpinned our work with funded providers has contributed to ensuring there is sufficient capacity across the city to deliver expansion. Throughout this programme we have been cognisant of the needs of the sector, demonstrated in our approach to identifying the sustainable rate, which was transparent and reflective of evidence of costs of delivery.

The introduction of a concessionaire to occupy and deliver ELC from two of our purpose-built buildings contributes to delivering greater parity of choice within our priority areas. This is particularly the case for families with eligible 2-year-olds. Indeed, successive parent/carer consultations reveal the need for a range of different models and types of provision to meet the varying and evolving circumstances of every family. The recent cross boundary agreement is an extension of these principles - assuring families that the choice available is not restricted by local authority boundaries and there is a level of flexibility to meet the requirements of parents.

Has the programme delivered against the vision, delivery models and guiding principles set out in the Delivery Plan?

What has the impact of the changes been on uptake?

As of June 2017 7% of 2 year olds, 82% of 3 year olds and 91% of 4 year olds accessed ELC provision in Aberdeen City.

At the current time, 9% of 2 year olds (33.03% of eligible 2 year olds) are attending but with numbers anticipated to rise again later in the year as children reach their second birthday. 90.7% of 3 year olds and over 98% of 4 year olds are attending ELC provision.

This suggests that the new delivery models are better meeting the needs of children and families.

Has the programme delivered against the vision agreed by Committee?

A flexible model of Early Learning and Childcare is available to families which is fully accessible. Quality grades are improving and provision is in place for families to access provision out with school holiday periods.

We asked parents and carers what impact the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare has had on their child.

Although 19.4% of respondents suggested their attendance at ELC had no impact on their child's development, most service users did identify improvements to their child's development since attending an ELC setting.

The majority of respondents, at almost 65%, identified an improvement in their child's social skills with over half of the respondents seeing an improvement in their child's communication skills.

Almost half of all respondents recognised an improvement to their child's emotional development, creativity, listening skills and numeracy.

Over a third of respondents highlighted improvements within literacy, fine motor skills, and physical development.

A third of respondents had also seen an improvement in their child's problem solving and attention span.

The expansion programme has delivered against the vision agreed by Committee in 2017.

'Flexibility has been found when he was finding things difficult. Staff worked really hard to make him feel comfortable'

'I think my nursery are doing a great job'

'Much better start and finish times now for working parents!!!'

ELC Snapshots – ELC Leaders May 2021

Starting point.....

Why?

- Create a pipeline of qualified staff for increase in promoted posts available in light of the ELC 2020 expansion plans and maximise internal promotion
- Implement a 'grow your own' approach
- Feedback from Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland has highlighted that improvements need to be made under the categories 'Leadership and Management' and the Attainment agenda

The Stepping into Leadership programme aimed to increase confidence levels amongst EYPs and address existing skills gaps moving from a Practitioner post into SEYP role. It also aimed to support higher level thinking skills, including reflection and critical analysis. It aimed to maximise internal promotions and to "grow our own staff".

Staff comms for expansion

'They have come on so much in a short space of time, I am very satisfied.'

Has the programme delivered against the proposed delivery models agreed by Committee?

The two delivery models agreed by Committee have been delivered.

We asked parents and carers which model of provision they would prefer to use in the future in order to determine if the delivery models agreed in 2017 remain appropriate to meet the needs of families. Most respondents at 229 (50.4%) said they would prefer a full day placement in the future.

126 respondents (27.8%) said they would prefer a half day AM placement with 51 respondents (11.2%) requiring a half day PM placement.

119 respondents (26.2%) would require a term time place with 141 respondents (31.1%) requiring an all-year-round placement.

66 respondents (14.5%) said they would look to have a blended space with 47 respondents (10.4%) requiring an Outdoor provision.

This feedback suggests that the models remain appropriate.

We went on to ask parents and carers how satisfied they are with the range of providers and models of Early Learning and Childcare offered in their local area / ASG

72% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area (ASG).

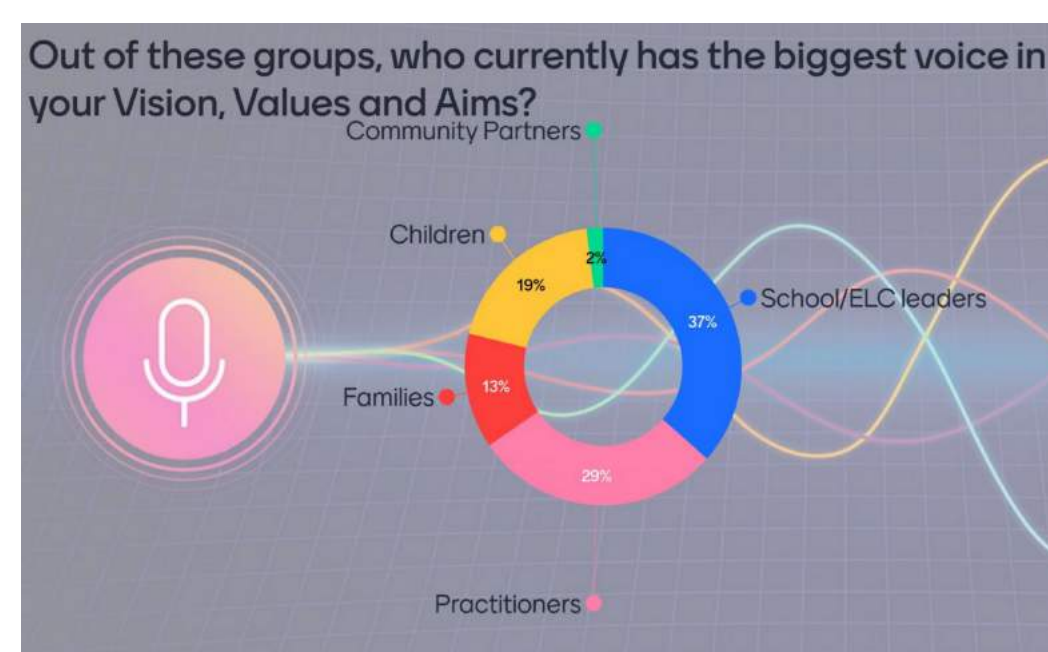
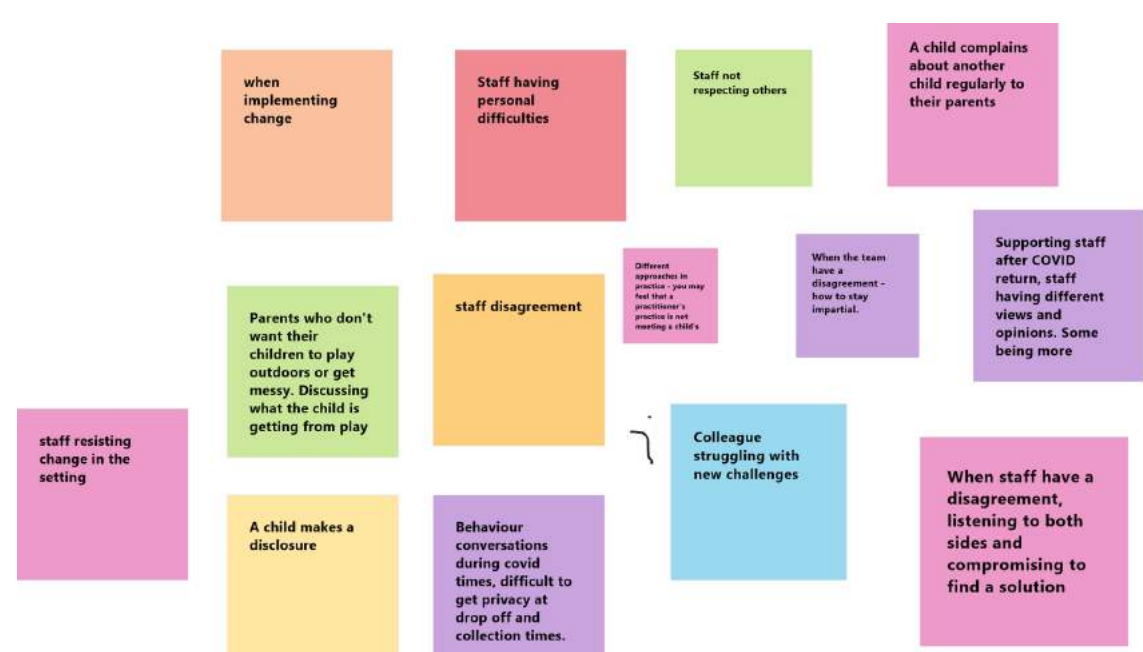
14.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied.

13.1% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the availability of ELC provisions and models available.

This feedback suggests that the delivery models remain appropriate to meet the needs of families.

"We feel the extra hours have helped considerably for many reasons. Firstly, R loves nursery and gets lots out of it, staff having just social interactions but lots of learning and more therapy than previously, she also sleeps a bit better as she works hard during the day. It's great for her confidence and overall wellbeing and the extra sleep improves her (and our!) health overall. Also, because both of us work, it's lessened the worry of childcare, which is always a minefield with ASN kids. This has a good knock on effect on our mental health and means we're not worrying about the financial side of things as well as everything else. It's also meant that the 2 days I don't work, I can give L my full attention, something she missed out on since birth due to lockdown. This means that hopefully she'll grow up knowing that despite her sister needing extra care, she won't lose out. I feel this is incredibly important for a sibling of an ASN child. The downside is that we have less time with R and I do miss her a bit.

'The previous afternoon sessions were great for all of the above, but the extended hours have really helped us as a family, and most importantly, R. A'



ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	How children and young people want to address climate change
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/015
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Stuart Craig
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 At its meeting of 23 September 2021, the Education Operational Delivery Committee instructed the Chief Education Officer to liaise with children and young people in city schools to capture their ideas to help address climate change, and to bring forward a report of any new initiatives and / or ideas in order for the Council to consider any further exploratory work before any agreed implementation.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee: -

- 2.1 note the work already being undertaken in schools to address climate change;
- 2.2 instruct the Chief Officer – Education and Chief Officer – City Growth to progress the development of accessible information for children and young people relating to Net Zero; and
- 2.3 consider the suggestions on how to address climate change from our children and young people and decide which can be taken forward to be looked at in more detail.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Schools operate a range of pupil committees where children and young people have an opportunity to set and influence improvements across their school and local communities. All structures are different and the exact make up is often driven by the thinking of children and young people.
- 3.1.2 A survey of pupil groups and school leaders was conducted to help gather up to date information on the changes that had already been made in response to suggestions from children and young people. The survey also aimed to capture

the ideas of children and young people on how the school and Council could further improve their response to the Climate Change agenda.

- 3.1.3 1635 children and young people from across all city schools responded to the pupil survey and 40 nominated staff Eco contacts returned the staff survey.

WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE TOLD US ABOUT THEIR WORK

- 3.2.2 Despite the challenges of the last 2 years, 40% of pupil committees continued to meet during periods of school closure to ensure that pupils were able to continue to drive improvement. 78% of the children and young people who responded felt that they had influenced positive change in their school community.
- 3.2.3 Pupil committees have driven a range of improvements over the past few years with some impacting only on the school community and some extending into the local community.
- 3.2.4 An impressive array of improvements to their school community were shared by our pupils including initiatives to improve the natural environment, those designed to increase waste collection and recycling and those designed at making the school environment sustainable. Full details are available in Appendix A.

AWARNESS OF NET ZERO AND COP26

- 3.3.1 Children and young people are very connected to the Climate Change agenda and 80% of those who responded to the survey were aware of COP26. The survey has made it clear that COP26 has provided a stimulus for learning across all Aberdeen City Schools with all schools having used COP26 as a context for learning.
- 3.3.2 Although children and young people have been sharing their thoughts about climate change at school level as they work to become global citizens, only 38% of children and young people were aware of what is meant by Net Zero. This demonstrates a need to ensure that our young people are fully informed of how the city will change over the coming years to address the ambition plans held by the Council. There are implications for the Council in terms of how strategies are made accessible to our young people given their interest and ambitions in this area.

3.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGES AT CITY LEVEL

- 3.4.1 Suggestions for change were received from all city schools. Analysis of the responses shows several key themes emerging. These include:
- Environmental improvements
 - More recycling and a reduction in waste
 - Greater investment in clean and renewable energy production
 - Buying local produce and reducing consumption

Further details of the pupils' ideas can be found in Appendix A.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report from an educational perspective as schools have all already established ECO groups with future work linking in with these interested pupils and staff. Depending on which of the pupil recommendations are implemented would likely lead to broader financial implications for the local authority.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:

The Education (Scotland) Act 1980

- Duty of Education Authority to provide adequate and efficient school education for our area

The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000

- Raising standards
- Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools
- Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004

- Duties regarding meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	N/A	N/A	N/A
Compliance	N/A	N/A	N/A
Operational	Risk of not having capacity in all schools to engage pupils in environmental activities and awareness raising.	L	Mitigated by schools having all already established ECO groups with future work linking in with these interested pupils and staff.
Financial	N/A	N/A	N/A
Reputational	Risk of local authority not engaging with environmental responsibilities and awareness raising.	L	Mitigated by policies and commitment to Net Zero and environmental concerns.

Environment / Climate	Risk of local authority not being seen to contribute positively to the environment and reducing emissions and larger environmental impact.	L	Mitigated by policies and commitment to Net Zero and environmental concerns and by schools having all already established ECO groups with future work linking in with these interested pupils and staff.
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7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Children & Young People Stretch Outcome 7 in the LOIP: Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 14: Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen's carbon emissions by 42.5% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our changing climate.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>The Education (Scotland) Act 1980</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to provide adequate and efficient education for our area. <p>The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duties with regard to meeting the needs of children and young people with additional support needs. <p>The Equality Act 2010</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Duty to ensure we are not discriminating disabled learners <p>The Standards in Scotland's Schools Etc. Act 2000</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Raising standards Requirement that education be provided in mainstream schools <p>The National Improvement Framework</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education Authorities are under a duty to endeavour to secure improvement in the

	quality of education of school education which is provided in the schools managed by them and to carry out the duty with a view to achieving the strategic priorities set out in the National Improvement Framework.
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8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

Appendix A – School Climate Change Update

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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Eco Groups: School Feedback

All schools across Aberdeen City were asked to share the achievements and aspirations of their pupil committees in October 2021 to better understand the influence of pupil voice at school level. 40 schools took the opportunity to respond.

What structures are in place to enable pupils to influence their school community?

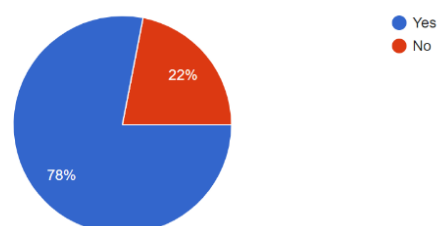
All schools have an Eco Group or similar and these have operated for many years. Focus has often been on local projects that impact the environment of the school, both inside and outside the building. Recycling programmes have been developed in almost all schools as well as awareness raising of energy saving options and behaviours. Improving sustainable travel options also featured in many responses with groups working to improve bike storage areas.

Throughout the past 18-19 months it has been more challenging for school pupil groups to meet due to COVID-19 mitigations. However just over 34% have still met in the past 18 months with plans in place to reconvene the groups.

What impact have these pupil led structures had on school communities?

Just over 78% of groups have clear evidence of improvement they have driven.

It is possible to theme the many initiatives driven by young people into those concerning the natural environment, those leading to improvements in the school approach to waste and recycling and those designed to enhance the school environment.



How have the groups made positive changes to the natural environment?

A range of improvements have been made to the natural environment both in school grounds and in the local community. Initiatives include:

- Tree and bulb planting
- Planting of a hedgerow to link a wildlife corridor
- Planting and selling of flowers from the school and wildflower planting
- Extending biodiversity in school grounds and bird feeders being installed
- Bug hotels and improvements/establishment of school wildlife gardens to encourage pollinators.
- Gardening/horticulture group established
- Planting vegetables and creation of a market garden
- Creation of sensory gardens
- Visits to a school allotment



This work has been extended in many cases to include the development of school gardens, planting of orchards and redevelopment of outdoor courtyards as positive spaces for learning. As these spaces have developed and as the outdoor environment has been used more extensively as a context for learning, groups have designed and displayed planters and invested in outdoor picnic tables as well as purchasing resources to support learning outside.

How have the groups driven improvements in waste management and recycling?

A range of actions have been taken including litter picks in the community and making adaptations to account for challenges in the community such as the installation of seagull proof bins.

A key focus in many schools has been on recycling with a wide range of initiatives driven forward including:

- Creation of compost bins
- Wastepaper collections in class
- Recycling batteries and plastics
- Reuse of old school uniforms
- Paperless issues of newsletters
- Install a rag bag clothing bank to promote recycling
- 'Wrapper Free Wednesday' for snacks


As these initiatives have become established children have extended their recycling to include toy recycling and book swaps and the development of a sustainable eating cooking club.

How have the groups helped enhance the school environment?

Groups are increasingly focussing on how they can make a difference in their communities and extending their reach across the school campus and beyond. Schools such as Airyhall Primary School have developed Climate Actions which they are using to focus their work. Combined with this Airyhall Primary School are encouraging pupils to become "Eco Achievers" where any environmental actions from pupils are positively recognised:

Airyhall pledges to help stop climate change with these 10

Climate Actions

-  Take a five minute shower, instead of a bath.
-  Eat a plant based meal at least once a week.
-  When shopping, always use a reusable bag.
-  Turn off the lights when leaving the room.
-  Ask an adult to unplug chargers or appliances when not in use.
-  Reuse or recycle plastic waste.
-  Walk, cycle or scoot to school, instead of taking the car.
-  Turn off the tap when you are brushing your teeth.
-  Try to make sure that your lunch box is free of single use plastic.
-  Donate old clothes and books so they can be reused. You can do this at school.

Taking care of our planet today and planning for the future!



AIRYHALL ACHIEVER **ECO**

Class: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

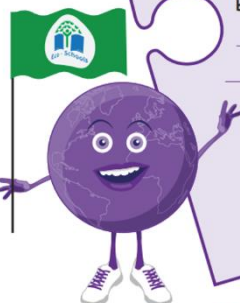


I am a responsible citizen because _____

Awarded By: _____

Sustainability (sus-tain-a-bil-i-tee) noun
Definition: the quality of causing little or no damage to the environment and therefore able to continue for a long time.

A S P I R E S

Airyhall School's Vision
To enable children to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors who will make a positive contribution to the world.

Pupils are taking their work forward in a range of different ways with some setting up a taskforce to help with the collection of recycling around the school and others holding events like bike to school weeks, park and stride or 'switch off technology and lights' campaigns. There are many examples of young people developing their own action plans and budgets to support implementation. Hazlehead Primary have updated their pupil created Eco Code, which is central to the environmental values of the school:

Hazlehead Primary School's ECO CODE

Everyone is **responsible** for looking after our planet
Cycle or walk when you have the opportunity
Only use or eat as much as you need – always recycle

Care for and respect our plants, trees and wildlife
Only use water and energy when you need it
Do be fair to the environment and put your litter in the bin
Everyone should have the courage to follow our Eco Code

Many schools have invested in water fountains and the promotion of reusable water bottles whilst others continue to work to reduce the amount of paper used in school by asking families to support the writing of one Christmas card to the class for example.

Schools continue to use a range of means of heightening the awareness of children and young people through pupil led environmental campaigns and by making use of the Sustainable Development Goals.

COP26: School Feedback & Events

The COP26 event took place in Glasgow from 31st October to the 12th of November 2021. A lot of schools used this event to promote greater environmental awareness in their pupils through school assemblies, lessons, and mock COP events.

COP 26 as a stimulus for learning

All schools used COP 26 as a stimulus for students to participate in debate and discussion on environmental issues. Some students participated in a mock COP Aberdeen University event with others participating in an online Nature Climate Festival. Some schools held their own virtual summits and invited guest speakers to participate.

There are numerous examples of children across all sectors (ELC, primary, secondary and special) engaging with the themes emerging from the conference and being given the time and space to consider their personal response to the issues in order for them to develop as global citizens.

Bucksburn Academy undertook "Stop for COP" at the very start of the day during COP26 where pupils were shown a 5-minute presentation on the previous day's conference and were then given a challenge/competition.

Many schools used the opportunity to refocus and revive Eco Committees and share current aims and actions plans with the school community. This led to some children making small changes to everyday routines, including:

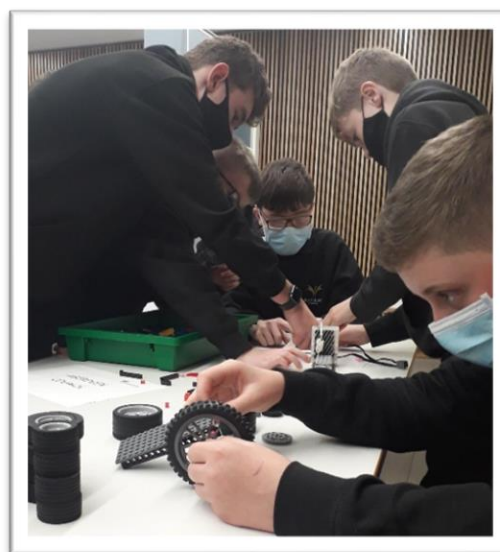
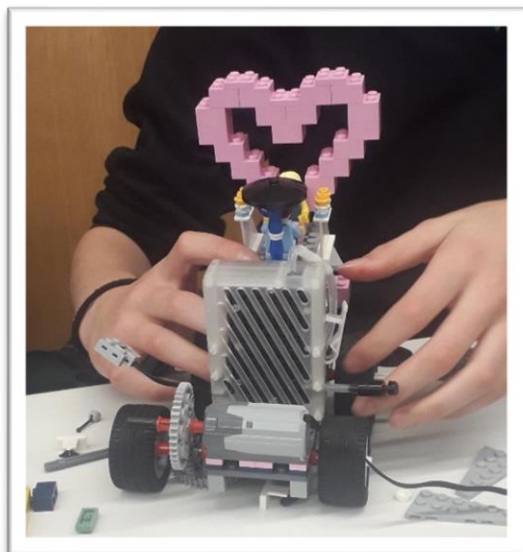
- promoting Wrapper Free Wednesday
- promoting recycling crisp packets (to reuse in another everyday item, such a blankets)
- setting up environmental/community fundraising events

Some young people developed a Climate pledge for their school community whilst other created class or individual pledges which will be reviewed for impact later in the year.



Some classes have a continued focus on the environment by studying 'Our Fragile Planet', 'We Care' or 'Our Sustainable Planet' as a context for learning over the term and many continue to engage in homework challenges involving discussion around energy use and climate change with parents and carers.

Schools also took part in several competitions including the NESCAN/Aberdeen Climate Action competition and Hydrogen challenge undertaken by all secondary schools across the city with some pupils attending COP26 in the final.



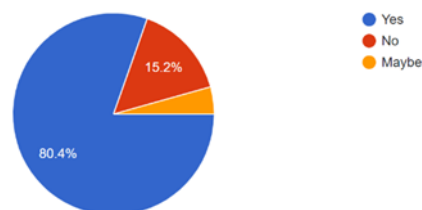
There were a wide variety of innovative approaches taken including a mountain climb at Harlaw Academy (using stairs) to highlight the plight of the planet and raise money for charity.

What difference will this make to children and young people?

1635 children responded to a survey used to determine the impact of COP26 on our children and young people. The survey ran from 26th October 2021 until 25th November 2021.

Over 80% of pupils who responded had heard of COP26. 53% had gained their awareness from activities in school. A further 49% had gained an awareness from Television news. Family and friends were a source of information on COP26 for 32% of pupil respondents.

1,635 responses



Social media were a source of information on COP26 for 32% of the pupil respondents. The last major source of information for pupils on COP26 was from school Assemblies. It is thought that the event being held in Scotland really helped increase levels of awareness in children and young people.

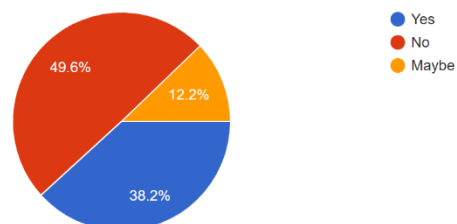
As a result of the focus on COP 26 more children and young people are aware of how their voice can be heard and actioned and how it is now up to them to play their part in the future. Young people have welcomed the opportunity to make their own pledges to tackle climate change.

Net Zero: Pupil Feedback

The same survey of children and young people was used to help determine the awareness of our young people of the term Net Zero.

Have you heard of NET ZERO?

1,635 responses



Pupils do not have as strong awareness of Net Zero when compared to their awareness of COP26. This highlights Net Zero as an area of focus in the coming months and years as [Aberdeen shifts](#) from an Oil Capital to an Energy Capital and promoting the [vision](#) that exists for the future of Aberdeen.

Only 38% of pupils had heard of Net Zero, but how much depth of knowledge they would have could be questioned. Almost 50% had not even heard of Net Zero highlighting that this needs to be communicated more effectively to our children and young people. Those pupils who had heard of Net Zero received their knowledge from Television news: 28%. Classroom activities was a source of knowledge for 24% of pupils who had heard of Net Zero. Social media accounted for 19% of pupils as a knowledge base for Net Zero, with family and friends a source for 17% of pupils.

How do children and young people believe we should work towards Net Zero?

Children and young people were asked for their views on how we could work to improve both their local and wider environment.

As you would anticipate a range of views were expressed with a significant number of responses suggesting improvements to the environment such as the planting of more trees and the development of more green space. The protection of the sea and our beaches was raised by 95 young people with 49 young people asking for us all to consider our consumption of water and for the installation of more fresh water drinking fountains around the city.

There was widespread agreement of the need for more litter picking and more recycling with a plea for more bins to enable recycling in schools and across the city. 518 young people referred to there being a need for more bins in the city and 368 felt there should be a greater focus on recycling. Children and young people were also keen to see if local businesses could be encouraged to produce less waste and were keen to see if pressure could be put on some of the big brands to use recyclable packaging for products (particularly the fast-food outlets).

There was broad agreement from young people that the city should invest in energy production and storage and the identification of a need to encourage the public and business to invest in energy storage both electrical (batteries) and thermal (hot water/PCM) and solar. The need to encourage better insulation of buildings was also noted. The promotion of renewable energy was a recurring theme with reference made to the need to invest in green energy and to promote heat air/ground pumps in place of gas/oil boilers.

Single use plastics also features heavily in responses with a desire to move away from their use and desire to see more shops selling refills of things like cereals. There was also an interest in the greater promotion of buying local produce to limit food miles.

The need to reduce the consumption of animal products was also noted.

How do children think we should develop our transport policies?

Children and young people have strong views on sustainable transport and would welcome the use of more electric vehicles and investment in charging locations. 110 pupils supported the promotion of more electric cars and the inclusion of no car zones to reduce emission.

The need to make safe provision for cyclists was noted with 51 pupils feeling that making a safe place for cyclists to travel would encourage more people to cycle around the city and make it safer for people who already cycle on the road.

Bike sharing schemes such as those available in London were noted as an opportunity.

Children and young people supported the promotion of public transport and walking and would be keen to see an increase in the number of hydrogen buses. Our students would be keen to see delivery companies replace their fleets with electric or hydrogen vehicles. Greater use of hydrogen to fuel our cars was mentioned by 25 pupils with 157 pupils believing that there should be a greater promotion of electric and hydrogen vehicles.

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ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Supporting Learners
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/22/010
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Eleanor Sheppard
REPORT AUTHOR	Craig McDermott
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1

1.1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1.1 This report seeks to update Members on the progress of the work undertaken in respect of Supporting Learners in Aberdeen City.
- 1.1.2 As agreed at the meeting of the Committee on 3 June 2021, this report includes information about the work undertaken to promote the Early Intervention Consultation (EIC) option offered by the Authority's Educational Psychology Service (EPS).

2.1 RECOMMENDATIONS

That Committee:-

- 2.1.1 note the approach being taken and progress made to date; and
- 2.1.2 instruct the Chief Education Officer to report on the programme within 1 calendar year.

3.1 BACKGROUND

- 3.1.1 Since November 2019 a series of reports have been presented to Committee as our Supporting Learners Workstream has sought to build a stronger continuum for children and young people. This work has been overseen by a Work Group comprising central officers, an Educational Psychologist, school senior leaders, and Trade Union representatives. The group have made effective use of a range of data to support agile decision making with local data informing initial planning.
- 3.1.2 The work programme is now largely based on the recommendations of the National Review of Additional Support for Learning – *All Our Children and All*

Their Potential undertaken by Angela Morgan and published in June 2020. The recommendations were accepted nationally in October 2020.

- 3.1.3 In addition to the main programme of work, associated issues have been addressed in partnership through the work group such as the establishment of a Health & Safety sub-group. The Sub-group, comprising of the Programme Manager, a Corporate Health and Safety Officer, and Trade Union Colleagues, met monthly to review data sets (Near Miss and Incident Reporting included), and the Sub-group's recommendations and discussions were fed-back into the main Supporting Learners Work Group. The sub-group sought to engender greater consistency in the use of the Council's corporate Health and Safety Reporting System to support greater accuracy of data collection. The sub-group have developed, consulted on and published protocols to promote consistent practice.
- 3.1.4 Significant work has been undertaken to secure greater agility and flexibility within supporting learners' systems and structures within Aberdeen City. This included the restructure and redesign of Additional Support Needs (ASN) Outreach Services and the establishment of a single Head Teacher and Leadership Team to oversee the work and strategic direction of the Service in the context of the National Review and the ongoing analysis of local data. This oversight will be critical as we continue to respond with agility and speed to the changing needs of children/young people and families.

3.2 THE ASN & OUTREACH SERVICE

- 3.2.1 Following consultation and formal approval, the business case for Additional Support Needs (ASN) Outreach Services was implemented on 16 August 2021. The unified Service ("the ASN & Outreach Service") brings together several teams of specialist staff comprising of:
- Hearing Support (including Aberdeen School for the Deaf)
 - Vision Support
 - English as an Additional Language
 - Dyslexia Outreach
 - Fit Like? Aberdeen's Education Wellbeing Team
 - Links Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)
 - Child's Planning Support
- 3.2.2 Each team within the service retains their specialist skills and knowledge. Recruitment processes undertaken since August 2021 would evidence an appetite for staff to join these areas of specialism, which is important and encouraging from a sustainability perspective. In-keeping with The Requirements for Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005, a rolling programme of post-graduate study is in place for both 'Teachers of the Hearing Impaired' and 'Teachers of the Visually Impaired' to ensure the Education Authority fulfils its obligations in this regard.
- 3.2.3 During school building closures resulting from the pandemic, outreach services made use of digital innovations (such as Google Suite for Education, Microsoft Teams, and See Saw) to maintain continuity and contact with learners and families. Following limitations to movement between schools last session, the

Service welcomes the relaxing of mitigations, which means peripatetic staff can attend multiple schools per day to support learners on their caseloads. Staff continue to make use of the digital advances gleaned during school building closures: this is particularly effective for connecting with colleagues across the city to attend Multi-Agency Meetings, offer consultation sessions, and/or deliver professional learning. Overall, this blend of face-to-face and virtual working maximises capacity across the Five Roles of Support for Learning: Direct Teaching, Cooperative Teaching, Consultancy, Provision of Professional Learning, and Multi-Agency Working.

3.2.4 A Head Teacher was recruited in Term 4 of session 2020-2021 and they took up post on 16 August 2021. In addition to the recruitment noted in 3.2.1, since taking up post the Head Teacher has sought to recruit to vacant senior and middle leadership positions with high-quality, highly-qualified, and experienced candidates having been secured for:

- Depute Head Teacher – Vision Support
- Depute Head Teacher – Language and Communication
- Principal Teacher – Child’s Planning Support
- Principal Teacher – Secondary English as an Additional Language (EAL) and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)
- Principal Teacher – Fit Like? Education Wellbeing Team
- Centre Manager – Links ELC

This work will continue throughout this academic session to ensure all Leadership Team vacancies are recruited to by April 2022. Remits of the senior leaders will be finalised as recruitment continues, but they will broadly align to: Safeguarding, Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion; Professional Learning and Leadership; Learning, Teaching and Assessment; Raising Attainment and Achievement, and Partnerships.

3.2.5 Since August, opportunities have been created for colleagues to work both within and across staff teams. Early feedback indicates this way of working is welcomed by staff with positive feedback being received both anecdotally and formally. “Mixed Groups” were launched during the November INSET day: these mixed-team groups are designed to provide staff with a go-to support network, which is designed to facilitate sharing of knowledge and best-practice across areas of expertise with the ultimate aim of securing high quality provision for learners and families. In a similar vein, the Extended Leadership Team are leading a ‘What We Do’ project that all staff teams are feeding into: the purpose of the project is to share similarities and differences in practices across staff teams for the purposes of increasing understanding and consistency. This work forms a strong basis on which to launch improvement activity planned for Terms 3 and 4 in relation to Learning, Teaching and Assessment.

3.2.6 Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Links Hub is a new, standalone, 90-place provision, which was developed and established as part of the Local Authority’s response to the 1140 hours ELC expansion; it is housed in the former Woodlands building on Regent Walk, Seaton, and operates an 8am-6pm, 52-week service. ELC Links opened to learners and families on 16 August 2021 and the setting’s roll has increased steadily since: at the time of writing (December 2021) 45 learners are enrolled with an anticipated rise to

approximately 60 during January 2022. Led by the Centre Manager, the provision supports eligible 2s, ante pre-school, and pre-school aged learners.

- 3.2.7 ELC Links Hub's operating model is founded upon the GIRFEC multi-agency principles and based on the work of Fit Like? Aberdeen's Family Wellbeing Hubs, whereby partners are readily available – on site – to support children and families. The Centre Manager has worked with managers in National Health Service (NHS) Grampian to appoint an on-site Health Visitor and Nursery Nurse to ensure education-health communication is strong for the purposes of delivering timely support to families.
- 3.2.8 Historically, each of the constituent services produced their own Improvement Plan, and Standards and Qualities Report. Since taking up post, the Head Teacher has worked with staff to ready an ASN & Outreach Service Standards, Qualities and Improvement Plan (SQulP), which takes cognisance of the national and local landscapes, recognises the strengths individual staff teams bring to the new collaboration, and the anticipated needs of the aligned Service over the next three years. Alongside the National Review, the plan acknowledges recently updated National Guidance for Child Protection (2021), the ongoing review of the national Getting It Right For Every Child (GIRFEC) practice model, The Promise, and the continued focus on children's rights as we work to become a Child Friendly City.
- 3.2.9 Scotland's National Vision for Children and Young People with Additional Support Needs was launched in early August 2021. As a result, defining the local vision for ASN & Outreach forms a key part of this year's SQulP. Staff "Mixed Groups" have started this work in October/November 2021 and engagement with children/young people and parents/carers – led by Service staff – is ongoing. An accessible and context-reflective vision statement is anticipated by April 2022 with accompanying values and aims to be identified thereafter.
- 3.2.10 The Programme Manager/Head Teacher attended meetings of the Aberdeen City Parents' Forum (ACPF) in February, April, and August 2021. This gave an opportunity for updates to be provided alongside dialogue about the business case and progress towards implementation. The Head Teacher wrote to all Aberdeen City parents/carers of ELC and school-aged children in late September 2021 for the purposes of providing an introduction and establishing a Parent/Carers' working group for the ASN & Outreach Service. Following a positive response, a virtual information evening convened in mid-November; this was supported by central education officers and members of the Service's senior leadership team. Subsequently, several parents formally offered to join the working group. Initial contact was made with the group members pre-Christmas to ensure the group was ready to commence their work in January 2022: they will be instrumental in constructing the ASN & Outreach Service's Parents'/Carers' Group's constitution and aims. Fundamentally, it seeks to ensure the voice of parents/carers forms an integral part of the Service's improvement journey, including the development of the SQulP.
- 3.2.11 The Service's website is – at the time of writing (December 2021) – under development, but a prototype is anticipated to "go-live" in early 2022. It is

designed to be an information hub for children/young people, families, and staff as previous feedback indicated useful information was not always centralised. The site will contain (amongst other things) information about the Service, including details of what we provide and how support is accessed, advice/guidance, sources of professional learning, and links to local and national support bodies such as Enquire, SACRO ASN Mediation, CALL Scotland etc.

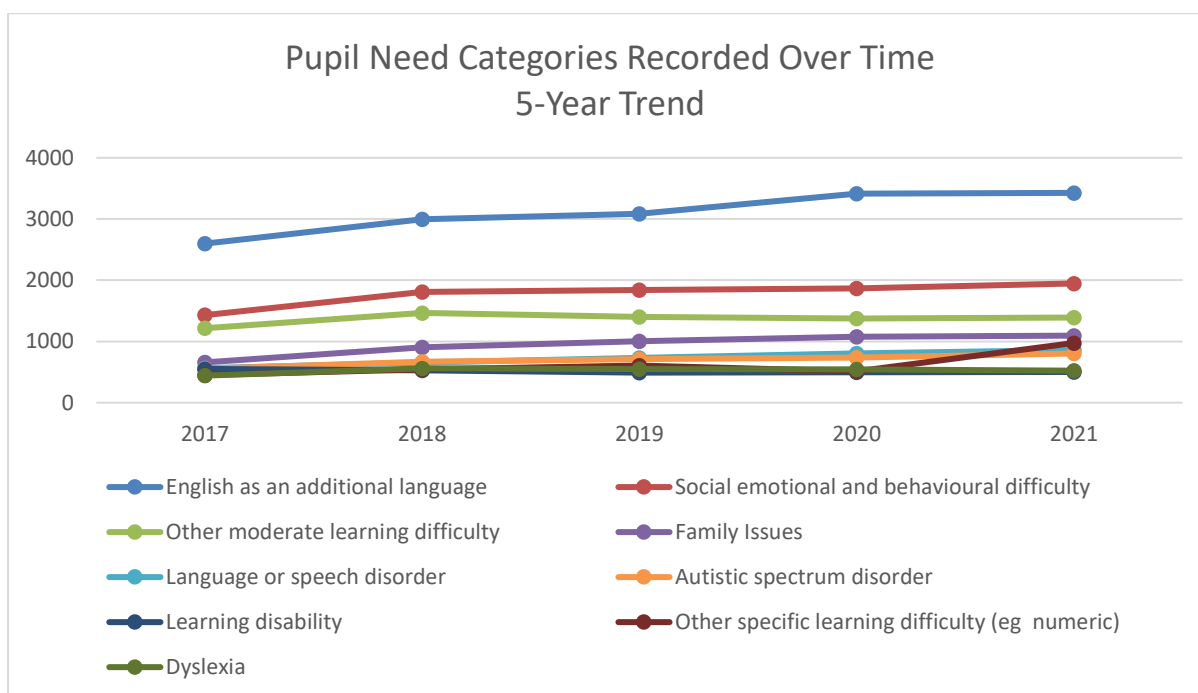
3.2.12 A key part of the Service's role is responding to data relating to Aberdeen City's demographic and the changing needs of children/young people, families and staff; this is particularly relevant in the context of the pandemic. As an example of how the aligned service generates the necessary flexibility to operate in this way, recent recruitment has been targeted towards data generated through request for assistance and/or referral from specialist health teams such as Ophthalmology and Audiology: vacancy across the Service has been used to increase the number of 'Teachers of the Hearing Impaired' and 'Teachers of the Visually Impaired'. The same is true of requests seeking opportunities for learners to benefit from the support of programmes such as Forest Schools and the positive impact evidenced through access to outdoor education: we have actively sought to recruit Teachers of Wellbeing - Outdoor Learning and Outreach.

3.2.13 A full review of data has been undertaken in light of the 2021 ScotXed (annual) census, and this is presented in the section that follows. It should be noted that – at the time of analysis (November 2021) – data validation checks were still ongoing: this may account for variation when national statistics are published in March 2022.

3.3 REVIEW OF DATA: ABERDEEN CITY DEMOGRAPHIC, REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE, AND FURTHER ACTIONS TAKEN TO ADDRESS THE FINDINGS

3.3.1 The National Review concluded that 30.9% of Scotland's children/young people have an additional support need, which was based on National data collected in 2019. National data published in 2020 states that 32.3% of children/young people on the roll of a Scottish school have an Additional Support Need. Analysis of the most recent data snapshot from SEEMiS (schools' Information Management System) evidences that 37.8% of school-aged children/young people in Aberdeen City are recorded as having (an) additional support need(s), as recognised by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended. There is clear evidence that the pandemic has impacted considerably on the number of children/young people recognised as having an additional support need.

3.3.2 Pupil Need categories are determined Nationally and schools choose from a drop-down list within SEEMiS when recording the needs of learners. These link directly to the annual census referred to in 3.2.11. When broken down by said Pupil Need category, the five-year trend data for the nine most prolifically recorded categories presents as follows:



3.3.3 Work was undertaken during sessions 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 to address consistency in the recording of these categories in SEEMiS. When compared side-by-side, variation between the 2020 and 2021 for the same categories presented in 3.3.2, in relation to respective learner populations, is as follows:

	% 2020 Pop	% 2021 Pop	Variation
English as an additional language	14.2%	14.1%	-0.1%
Social emotional and behavioural difficulty	7.7%	8.0%	0.3%
Other moderate learning difficulty	5.7%	5.7%	0.0%
Family Issues	4.5%	4.5%	0.0%
Language or speech disorder	3.4%	3.5%	0.2%
Autistic spectrum disorder	3.1%	3.3%	0.2%
Learning disability	2.1%	2.1%	0.0%
Other specific learning difficulty (eg numeric)	2.1%	4.0%	1.9%
Dyslexia	2.3%	2.2%	-0.1%

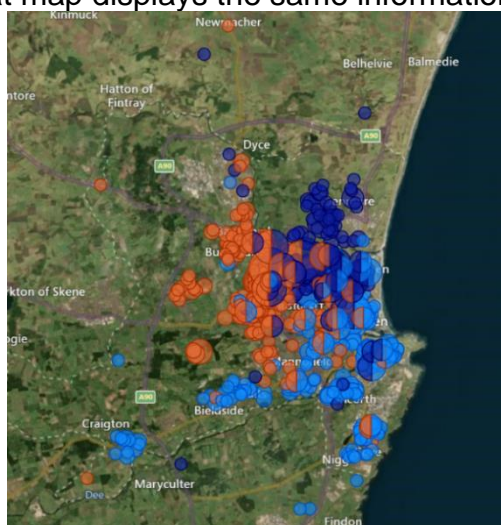
3.3.4 The Single Request for Assistance System (RfA) was launched across Integrated Children and Family Services in October 2020. RfA is utilised when the Team Around the Child wish to seek advice and support from a partner service and/or agency, including: Child's Planning, Children's Social Work, Language Support Provision, Fit Like? Aberdeen, Outreach, and School Nursing Service Support. Outreach services include: Autism Outreach, ASN & Outreach Service's Teams, Educational Psychology, and the Virtual School. Unlike previous RfA (or referral) systems, the single RfA produces a single data set, which provides a live picture of need across Aberdeen City's learning establishments.

3.3.5 1038 requests have been made since the system went live, which represents a weekly average (mean) of 18.54.

3.3.6 When analysed by City locality, request for assistance distribution presents as follows:

Locality	% Requests
Dee	29.4
Don	30.4
West	40.8

The following heat map displays the same information in pictorial form:



The respective learner population (as per census data) for each locality is presented in the following table, which also displays comparator data for RfA per 1000 learners:

Locality	% Learner Population	RfA per 1000
Dee	43.4	28.9
Don	29.1	44.4
West	27.5	63.2

3.3.7 Many of the issues faced by children and young people begin in early childhood and it is hoped that getting to, and addressing, the root causes will help to build more sustainable change in the longer term. It is important to appreciate that many of the stresses and strains impacting families are financial/poverty related. As part of the Education Recovery Grant, Youth Workers, Family Learning Workers and improved access to financial inclusion services have been established for session 2021/22. These resources have been allocated through Partnership Forums with a clear remit for early intervention and targeting those children, young people and families most at risk of disengaging from education. This approach enables each Forum to decide their priorities for use of the resource and ensures that the necessary resource can be accessed in a timely manner, with no unnecessary delay. A record of all

interventions using this grant and the impact of these is being maintained to inform a year end impact report.

- 3.3.8 CALL Scotland has been engaged to provide specialist guidance on the use of assistive technologies, with an initial focus on Orchard Brae School. CALL Scotland is a research and development branch of Edinburgh University, funded by Scottish Government, to help children and young people overcome barriers to learning, primarily using technology. Ongoing engagement with CALL Scotland will provide research-based support to meet the needs of learners where there are complex requirements.
- 3.3.9 The same pupil need categories utilised by SEEMiS are recorded as part of the RfA process. A side-by-side comparison evidences the prevalence of need is not in direct proportionality to the percentage of associated RfA:

Need Category	% of Requests		% of Learners
Social, Emotional, Behavioural	44.3	↑	8.0
Family Issues	29.8	↑	4.5
Autistic Spectrum Condition	23.1	↑	3.3
Mental Health Need	23.4	↑	1.1
English as an Additional Language	22.6	---	14.1
Communication Support Need	15.9	---	1.7
Interrupted Learning	15.7	↑	1.1

A ↑ is used to indicate where an increase of >1% is evident when compared to data previously reported in June 2021 (OPE/21/132 – *Supporting Learners*). The variation in two categories was negligible at <0.1%. The number of requests referencing Dyslexia has fallen, which may be attributed to service-delivery improvements outlined in the paragraphs 3.3.15 – 3.3.18.

- 3.3.10 The Compassionate and Connected Communities Resource and Training provides targeted professional learning on evidence-based practice, which compliments nurturing approaches and contributes to staff understanding and practice around the effects of trauma and adverse childhood experiences. We have over 60 staff from primary, secondary and specialist provision who have undertaken the train-the-trainer programme to support delivery of this programme across all ACC schools. Staff supporting Fit Like? Aberdeen and our Educational Psychology Service have also undertaken this training to ensure a whole system approach to supporting the wellbeing of all is considered. Trained trainers are now rolling this out within our settings and work has also been undertaken to support parents to understand the impact this will have on school communities.
- 3.3.11 Through a Scottish Government Pilot Project, work has been undertaken in partnership with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and Penumbra to provide Level 1 Distress Brief Intervention Training (DBI) in 4 of our Secondary Schools. Progress shows initial green shoots with regards to

this level of support in schools. Work is being undertaken to increase the number of staff trained in Let's Introduce Anxiety Management (LIAM), which will provide a progressive support pathway for responding to children/young people's mental health.

3.3.12 Fit Like? Family Wellbeing Aberdeen is a collaboration of Integrated Children's Services, Health, and third Sector working together to support the mental health and wellbeing needs of children, young people and families in the City. The support offered is not an alternative to existing support services, they are designed to be an integrated whole system approach to change the way in which early intervention services support families. The whole family approach is a family led strategy, where families set their own goals, use resources, and support networks while strengthening relationships to achieve their potential to have long term sustainable change. The Hubs have 100 staff aligned either fully or partially from multi-agency teams. To date, the hubs have received 608 Requests for Assistance: of those seeking support, 84% go on to engage and receive support from the hubs. The support that families are offered is determined by need and identified goals. Support may range from a light touch, supportive signposting, single agency support, to a multi-agency response to a family in an integrated, collaborative approach. Based on the identified needs at the point of RfA, there is a noticeable trend, which mirrors data presented about regarding social, emotional, and mental health needs.

3.3.13 CIRCLE (Child Inclusion Research into Curriculum Learning and Education) has been developed through a ten-year research and implementation process by a collaborative partnership consisting of teachers, therapists and academics. The CIRCLE Framework has been created to support the development of inclusive practice as best practice in all schools and ELCs. It brings together and shares good practice and ideas from education staff, focusing on advice and strategies for improving the participation and achievement of learners with additional support needs. Colleagues from Speech and Language Therapy and School Specialists have delivered a session on this framework for all Head Teachers and further work will be taken forward to consider the impact of using this framework consistently across our settings to meet the needs of all learners. In addition, a pilot programme has been launched in 3 ELC settings – following an evaluation, this can be cascaded further.

3.3.14 Sharing of good practice through Digital Postcards has been well received by staff: these provide a platform for schools and individuals to share their work and learn from one another. We are about to launch Health & Wellbeing Postcards to provide this same level of support with a key focus on "Healthy body, Healthy mind, Healthy you!". Quality Improvement activity identified strong practice in respect of Wellbeing, Equality and Inclusion across schools in Aberdeen. Head Teachers have been invited to share with their peers during twice-weekly, virtual Head Teachers' meetings. Topics shared and discussed include: mental health and wellbeing, emotional literacy and management, and projects such as 'Northfield... I matter' (supporting the whole-school community with targeted Health & Wellbeing plans) and Glashieburn Primary School's 'No.8 Wellness Way' (a whole-school approach to greater understanding emotions).

3.3.15 Qualitative request for assistance data evidenced an under confidence and professional learning need around the identification pathway for dyslexia. As a result, the Dyslexia Outreach Team sought to adapt their model of support to address this gap; the programme is modelled on the national Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit and identification pathway. Delivered by a Dyslexia Outreach Teacher and Pupil Support Assistant, schools undertake a four-day intensive programme (called “Whole School Dyslexia Development”), which involves learners, families, and staff. A fifth day is organised the preceding term for follow-up support, advice, and guidance. The model was launched in October 2021 following a pilot with two schools in August/September. A further 18 schools are signed-up to undertake the programme this academic session.

3.3.16 To ensure the Dyslexia Outreach Team are equipped to support a variety of circumstances, they continue to respond to individual requests for assistance using a blend of face-to-face and virtual solutions. Where appropriate, a recommendation to undertake the Whole School Dyslexia Development programme may result. In addition, the Team have developed a Dyslexia Champions’ programme, which commenced in November 2021. The Champions’ programme is designed as another vehicle to share expertise and practice with the aspiration of having a Dyslexia Champion (expert) in every school. Phase 1 of the training saw 36 practitioners sign-up for the eight-week, virtual course.

3.3.17 The Authority’s Dyslexia Guidelines (attached for Members in Appendix A) were updated by a working group of staff: Central Officers, Educational Psychologists, Dyslexia Outreach Teachers, a Head Teacher, and Support for Learning specialists. Following learner and parent/carer focus groups, wider consultation, and extensive proofing, the resource was launched in October 2021. The Guidelines are accompanied by a Family Short Guide, which takes the form of a narrated PowerPoint video, which is hosted on the Aberdeen City Council website alongside the Guidelines. The impact of 3.4.1 – 3.4.3 will be monitored through request for assistance and evaluative data generated via the programmes of support.

3.3.18 As exemplified in 3.2.11, the capacity of the Dyslexia Outreach Team has been similarly increased to meet the demand identified through the request for assistance system.

3.3.19 The request prevalence for Education Outreach Services presents as follows (top four):

Service	% of Requests	
English as an Additional Language	19.3	↑
Educational Psychology	12.9	↓
Autism Outreach	9.3	---
Dyslexia Outreach	5.8	↓

75.6% of requests for English as an Additional Language (EAL) support are for learners who are either “new to” or “early acquisition” stages of English. The EAL Team are supporting schools to engender greater consistency in the use of RfA for this part of the service. In addition, the EAL Team have been instrumental in settling Afghan learners into school and the Scottish education system: whilst every care has been taken to maintain service continuity across the City, a rise in requests may be attributed to diverting the Team’s focus, short term, to the Afghan learners. Again, a declining trend in relation to one-off Dyslexia Outreach requests would suggest an early positive impact of improvements and refinements made to their support models, but it is difficult to determine this conclusively owing to the early stages of their new models and associated self-evaluation. More information about the Educational Psychology Service, as requested by Members in June 2021, is provided in the paragraphs that follow.

3.3.20 The Educational Psychology Service offer an Early Intervention Consultation (EIC) service, which schools can make use of without the need for (or pre-) RfA. The EIC can focus on whole-school improvement factors, classroom-level factors, or the needs of an individual learner. 116 EICs took place between February and June 2021 (period one), and 98.8% of these pertained to the needs of an individual learner. 83.6% of EICs were initial consultations and the remainder were follow-up conversations. Of all EICs that convened during period one, 29.3% resulted in a formal role being identified for the Educational Psychologist, thus leading to a RfA, and the remainder resulted in greater/increased use of universal and school-/classroom-based supports.

3.3.21 109 EICs took place between August and mid-November 2021 (period two) with 90.1% of these focusing on the needs of an individual learner.

3.3.22 When data from the two time periods are compared side-by-side, an increase from 6.4 to 9.9 EICs per week (mean) is evident, which gives an early indication work undertaken by the Educational Psychology Service to increase the profile and visibility of EIC as an early intervention support is positive. The overall breakdown of EIC usage by Locality is as follows:

Locality	% EICs
Dee	39.1
Don	36.0
West	24.9

Overall, the number of requests progressing to formal involvement during period two remains consistent at c.30%. Work is ongoing to ensure better use of the Educational Psychology Service is made within the West Locality. Data – such as that presented above – will be used to monitor the effectiveness of this.

3.3.23 The EICs referenced above focused on the following (top five categories) range of pupil needs:

	% Feb – Jun EICs	% Aug – Nov EICs
Social and Emotional Needs	34.5	33.0
Self Regulation	30.2	40.4
Autistic Spectrum Conditions	27.6	37.6
Literacy Needs/Difficulties	23.3	16.5
Attention/Concentration Needs/Difficulties	22.4	25.7

These data sets broadly align with the pupil need prevalence noted in the wider Request for Assistance analysis presented in 3.3.9.

3.3.24 Child's Planning Support is accessed where the Team Around the Child deem an enhanced or specialist level of planning and support is required, which can also include further advice and support. It is accessed via Request for Assistance. The Child's Plan is used by the Team Around the Child to outline the nature of the child's strengths, needs and the multi-agency interventions employed to meet them. The multi-agency forum reviews the information provided by the Team Around the Child to endorse planning and intervention and/or to offer further support.

3.3.25 Child Plans were reviewed during the two most recent meetings of the Forum in June and November 2021: they represent requests for learners across all stages including ELC, primary, and secondary. Following the multi-agency review of plans, the following levels of planning were identified:

Level of Planning	% Plans Reviewed
Specialist or Enhanced	37.2%
Mainstream with Targeted Support	35.5%
Mainstream with Universal Support	<1.0%
Deferred for Observation, Future Forum etc.	26.4%

The percentage of plans where Specialist/Enhanced or Mainstream with Targeted Support was identified is indicative of increasing consistency in the use of the Child's Planning Support service.

3.3.26 Several plans outlined children for whom transition to Primary 1 or Secondary 1 has been impacted by the pandemic: additional input is ongoing to support learner wellbeing and learning in their new setting beyond what may normally have been delivered by an enhanced transition. Where appropriate, Outreach Services have offered observation, further advice and support in light of the Child's Planning process. Overall, this may account for the increases noted in Pupil Need categories presented in 3.3.9.

3.3.27 Enhanced Provision commenced delivery in August 2021 in Glashieburn Primary, Kaimhill Primary, Bridge of Don Academy, and Cults Academy. The need for, and offer of Enhanced Provision, is identified through Child's Planning Support. The Principal Teacher – Child's Planning Support has worked across

the four provisions to support the transition and settling-in period. Where/When specific need has been identified, professional learning has been delivered to staff and this includes behaviour is communication, and person-centred child planning. The Educational Psychology Service has supported the establishment of an Enhanced Provision Network, which is designed to provide a platform for collaboration and sharing of practice across multi-agency services.

3.3.28 The Child's Planning Support Calendar of Key Dates is reviewed annually to include the preceding 18 months' submission deadlines, forum meetings, and communication dates. The updated calendar is on track for publication in January 2022, which will contain dates up to, and including, Summer 2023. This ensures multi-agency teams have adequate planning and preparation time to support children's/young people's transitions, particularly so for transition into Primary 1 and from Primary 6/7 to Secondary 1.

3.3.29 The Supporting Learners Work Group and Child's Planning Support process identified the need to improve consistency in the use of Individualised Education Programmes (IEPs). A further needs analysis amongst school-based staff identified exemplification as a professional learning gap in this regard. Subsequently, a group of school senior leaders, support for learning/ASN teachers, and educational psychologists produced an IEP best practice and exemplification resource, which went live in June 2021; it is readily available to all staff via EDUSharePoint. The impact of this resource is being monitored via quality improvement activity and request for assistance.

3.3.30 The process for considering Coordinated Support Plans has been streamlined to support understanding of statutory duties. Online Professional Learning has been developed and delivered to education staff and Independent Reviewing Officers. This will also support ensuring all our Looked After Children are considered and the outcome recorded. In order to consider themes and identify where supports may be necessary, data is gathered electronically. Since this was put in place in May 2021, there have been 16 new considerations for a Coordinated Support Plan for learners in Aberdeen: two from ELC, four each from primary and secondary respectively, and six from specialist settings. Of those considered, five met the statutory criteria for a Coordinated Support Plan.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no financial implications resulting from the information outlined in this report. The restructure of the ASN & Outreach Service was undertaken within existing budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:

- The Education (Scotland) Act 1980
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Standards in Schools etc. (Scotland) Act 2000
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004, as amended

- The Requirements for Teachers (Scotland) Regulations 2005
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

5.2 The approach being taken to develop the programme of support outlined in this Report will assist the Council, as Education Authority, to fulfil these duties more effectively, and secure necessary and appropriate education and additional support for our children and young people.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	Risk of not achieving positive outcomes for children and young people.	L	Changes to our provision and service delivery will enable primary prevention and early intervention thereby reducing potential risk.
Compliance	Non-compliance with legislation, financial claims and legal challenge (tribunals).	M	Mitigated by services being realigned to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City and prevent escalation of need.
Operational	Staff are overwhelmed, which leads to low morale as staff feel unable to meet the needs of vulnerable young people. This may trigger an increase in incidents/near miss.	L	Mitigated by offering high quality professional learning for staff to ensure that they meet their statutory duties under The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 and the Equality Act 2010.
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource.	L	Mitigated by realigning service delivery to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City today.
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners. Risk of staff feeling overwhelmed.	L	Data scrutiny drives flexible approach to service delivery to better meet the needs of our young people in Aberdeen City.

Environment / Climate	Risk of environmental factors inhibiting positive outcomes for learners	L	Service realignment will strengthen universal/targeted support and sharing of best practice, thus preventing escalation of need through strengthened practice and reasonable adjustment.
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7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
	Impact of Report
Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement	This report outlines the ongoing programme of improvement activity to strengthen the education authority's position with regards to securing positive outcomes for all learners, whilst meeting statutory requirements associated with additional support needs and equality. The programme proactively subsumed the recommendations of the 'Support for Learning: All Our Children and All Their Potential' Report. In particular, this report links to the Policy Statement in relation to People, 7: 'Commit to closing the attainment gap in education while working with partners across the city'.
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcomes 1 and 6. Continued judicious use of funding and appropriate targeting of additional resources will ensure that children and young people, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are fully accessing education and more likely to achieve their potential and contribute to the economy. Specific links: Stretch outcome 1 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors 2026 Stretch outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026.
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals in this report seek to ensure the best use of resource in the system, promoting an

	<p>understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young people to ensure that appropriate and timely personalised support is available to them.</p> <p>Effective use of all resources and allowing each school community full control of these resources will help to ensure all initiatives and interventions are selected and implemented based on the needs of each school community and planned effectively to impact positively on all children and young people and are particularly targeted at those who are adversely affected by poverty.</p> <p>Specific links to:</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 4 90% of children and young people will report that they feel mentally well by 2026</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 6 95% of children living in our priority localities will sustain a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026,</p> <p>Stretch Outcome 7 Child Friendly City which supports all children to prosper and engage actively with their communities by 2026</p>
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	Underpinning the work of all schools in Aberdeen City is reducing the poverty related attainment gap and achieving excellence and equity for all.
UK and Scottish Legislative and Policy Programmes	<p>Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 as amended (and associated Code of Practice)</p> <p>Equality Act 2010</p>

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	Full impact assessment not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

10. APPENDICES

A – Aberdeen City Dyslexia Guidelines (2021)

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Aberdeen City Council
Dyslexia Guidelines
August 2021



Contents

Section 1	The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) 2004 (as amended) and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
Section 2	Definitions of Dyslexia
Section 3	Profile of Strengths
Section 4	When should we use the term Dyslexia?
Section 5	Factors other than Dyslexia which can contribute to Literacy Difficulties
Section 6	The Importance of Early Experiences
Section 7	Staged Intervention
Section 8	Use of Technology to Support All Learners
Section 9	Assessment Arrangements
Section 10	Transitions
Appendix A	Universal Resources
Appendix B	'Dyslexic-Type Tendencies' – What Does It Actually Mean?

These guidelines are available as a narrated PowerPoint and Video

Section 1 – The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended)

The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 (as amended) provides the legal framework for identifying and addressing the additional support needs of children and young people who face a barrier, or barriers, to learning. The Act aims to ensure that all children and young people are provided with the necessary support to help them work towards achieving their full potential. It also promotes collaborative working among all those supporting children and young people and sets out the rights of children, young people and parents within the system. The Act has been subsequently amended by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, and the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

All children and young people should have the opportunity to make their views known about decisions which affect them. They should have the opportunity to express their opinions and have these opinions taken seriously. Parents must also be encouraged and have the opportunity to be fully involved in discussions and decisions about their children's learning. Professionals need to involve parents and take account of their views on their child's development and education at the earliest opportunity. Partnership with parents is, therefore, central to ensuring that children with additional support needs benefit fully from school education.

Further information is provided in chapter 7 of the Supporting Children's Learning Code of Practice, which considers working with children and families.

The education authority must also take account of any relevant advice and information provided to them by parents on behalf of their child, by the child or the young person. For example, if the parents have privately commissioned an assessment or report on the child or young person, or the child or young person has commissioned the report, then the authority must take that report or advice into consideration if asked to do so.

More information is available via the Supporting Children's Learning: [Statutory Guidance on the Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) Scotland Act 2004 \(as amended\) Code of Practice \(Third Edition\) 2017](#).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) outlines a child's right to protection, provision and participation. Articles 28 and 29 detail their right to an education that develops their individual personality, talents, and abilities to the full. Articles 12 and 13 outline a child/young person's right to be heard and have a say in decisions being taken that affect them. This should not be exclusive to only verbal communication.

Section 2 – Definitions of Dyslexia

The Scottish Government Working Definition of Dyslexia

Dyslexia can be described as a continuum of difficulties in learning to read, write and/or spell, which persists despite the provision of appropriate learning opportunities. These difficulties often do not reflect an individual's cognitive abilities and may not be typical of performance in other areas.

The impact of dyslexia as a barrier to learning varies in degree according to the learning and teaching environment, as there are often associated difficulties such as:

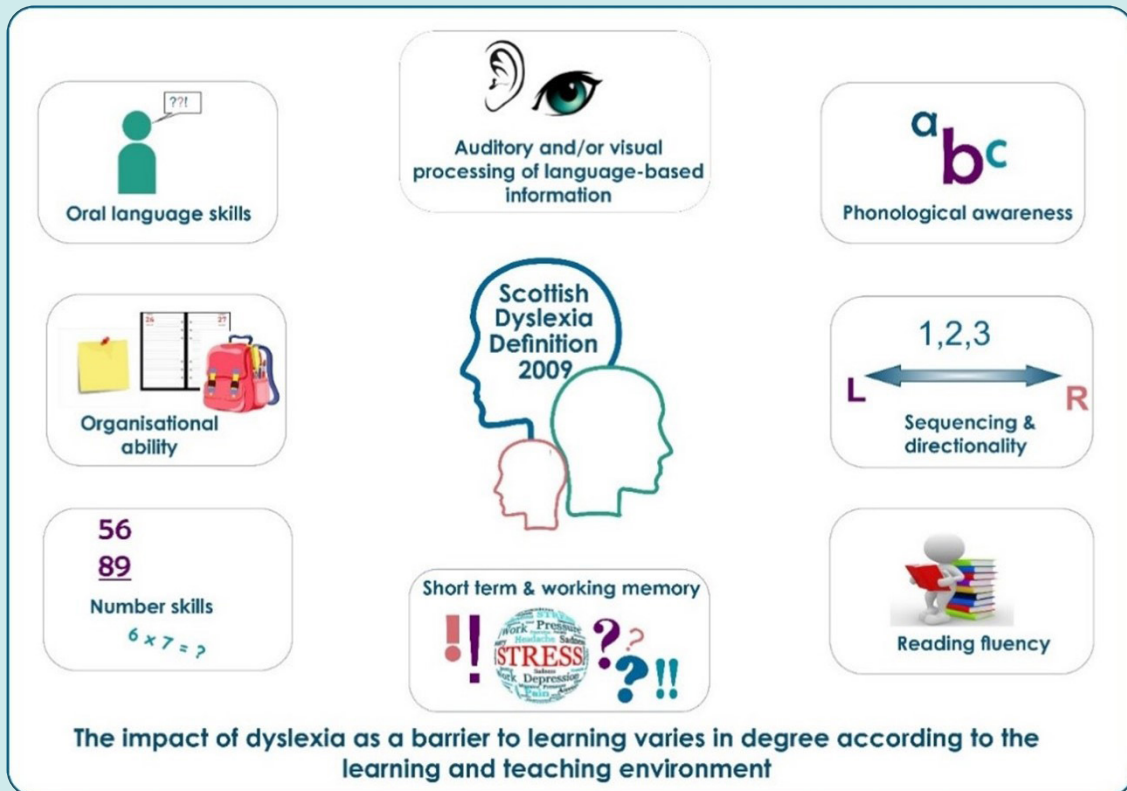
- **auditory and/or visual processing of language-based information**
- **phonological awareness**
- **oral language skills and reading fluency**
- **short-term and working memory**
- **sequencing and directionality**
- **number skills**
- **organisational ability**

Motor skills and co-ordination may also be affected.

Dyslexia exists in all cultures and across the range of abilities and socio-economic backgrounds.

It is a hereditary, life-long, neurodevelopmental condition. Unidentified, dyslexia is likely to result in low self-esteem, high stress, atypical behaviour, and low achievement.

Learners with dyslexia will benefit from early identification, appropriate intervention and targeted effective teaching, enabling them to become successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.



At all stages, dyslexia is on a continuum varying from mild to severe, with a range of strengths and difficulties and, according to the nature of the activity undertaken, the learning environment and any coping strategies and supports in place. As a result, every individual with dyslexia will differ in the range of factors that are affected and in the level of severity experienced. The films in the [Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit](#) provide exemplification.

British Psychological Society Working Definition (2005)

'Dyslexia is evident when accurate and fluent word reading and/or spelling develops very incompletely or with great difficulty. This focuses on literacy learning at the 'word level' and implies that the problem is severe and persistent despite appropriate learning opportunities. It provides the basis for a staged process of assessment through teaching.'

British Psychological Society, (2005). *Dyslexia, Literacy and Psychological Assessment: Report by the Working Party of the Division of Educational and Child Psychology of the British Psychological Society*. BPS: Leicester.

Section 3 – Profile of Strengths

As dyslexia is best thought of as a continuum, not all individuals with dyslexia will present the same way. They may experience strengths and difficulties in several different domains to a greater or lesser extent. It is important to note that the difficulties experienced by individuals with dyslexia are often balanced with particular strengths.

The diagram below provides some examples of the strengths associated with dyslexia:



Section 4 – When Should we use the Term Dyslexia?

‘The term ‘dyslexia’ is used once it has been established that the difficulties are likely to be ongoing and persistent, and the child or young person is likely to need ongoing support.’
(Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit Parental FAQs, 2020).

It is important to talk about the identification of dyslexia, rather than ‘diagnosis’, which is a medical term and should not be used as a result of educational assessment. Following a process of staged assessment and intervention, parents and education professionals must work with the learner in relation to deciding whether the term dyslexia should or should not be used. Individual circumstances should be taken into account when making this decision. It is important to discuss the issues surrounding the use of the term dyslexia privately with parents and the child to establish if, and when, they wish the term to be used (e.g. privately versus publicly), and if the use of the term would help them/others better understand the learner’s strengths and difficulties. For example, many learners who identify as dyslexic prefer to use and share the ‘label’ as it counters any misconceptions of laziness or low cognitive ability. In effect, the label can stop learners blaming themselves, increase understanding and can help them to view themselves more positively.

“All dyslexics are individuals, and we are not all the same. You can have a dyslexic that is really good at reading or really good at spelling. You can have someone who is also very good at being organised and being coordinated. It really depends on the person and what they are struggling with.”

[Dyslexia Scotland Young Ambassador]

“Dyslexia doesn’t have to be a problem. It does not have to be a problem in the classroom. It does not have to be a problem for the dyslexic. It is all about using your dyslexia to boost what you already have and are doing in the class anyway.”

[Dyslexia Scotland Young Ambassador]

Section 5 – Factors Other Than Dyslexia Which Can Contribute to Literacy Difficulties

It is important to note that not all literacy difficulties are due to the individual having dyslexia. Literacy difficulties may arise from other factors and these should be taken into consideration as part of the assessment process. These include:

- **Visual impairment(s)**
- **Visual processing difficulties (including visual stress)**
- **Hearing loss**
- **Factors in early childhood which influence how a child adapts and responds to the learning environment**
- **Gaps in education (e.g. missing out on being taught phonological awareness, phonics or vocabulary assimilation)**
- **Speech and Language difficulties**
- **English as an Additional Language (e.g. the relationship between sounds and symbols are markedly different in alphabetic script compared to logographic script; absence of the letter *k* in Italian, different pronunciation of *ch* in French vs English, similarity of *i* in French to *e* in English, and, seemingly, regional / national differences in pronunciation of *x* in Spanish.)**
- **Social factors (e.g. lack of exposure to print, low value placed on literacy in the family home)**
- **Cultural factors (e.g. oral traditions are much stronger than written ones in Gypsy/Traveller cultures)**

The 'Other Factors to Consider' section of the Addressing Dyslexia Toolkit provides further exemplification of these areas.

Section 6 – The Importance of Early Experiences

It is important to acknowledge that children come into school with a wide range of levels and security of literacy, language and communication skills – some of which may be due to previous learning experiences, but much is related to normal (biological) variation in development. Therefore, taking a developmental approach to literacy supports practitioners to identify the strengths and gaps of each learner within these key skill areas as well as providing planning support to address the identified skill gaps.

As outlined within the Emerging Literacy research, there are five broad skill areas that contribute to children’s success in literacy, language and communication. These are:

- **concepts of print**
- **oral language**
- **pencil control and pre-handwriting**
- **phonological awareness**
- **working memory and executive function**

Some children beyond Primary 1 may have gaps in these foundational literacy skills which can impact on their literacy, language and communication development. It is important to take a developmental approach to match teaching and learning to the child’s stage of development, however it may also be appropriate to consider more targeted support if literacy difficulties appear more persistent.

“My actual experiences at school have been phenomenal because the school knew about it right away. There was never an issue, they got all the help in the infant stage from the start.”

[Parent of a PI learner]

[Highland Literacy](#) and [Bumps to Bairns](#) provide more information.

Section 7 – Staged Intervention

Assessment is a continuous, integral part of the learning and teaching process, and should be regarded as a way of identifying strategies to promote effective learning, not merely as a tool to identify deficits. The [Statutory Guidance on the Education \(Additional Support for Learning\) Scotland Act 2004 \(as amended\) Code of Practice](#) states the purpose of assessment is “to help identify the actions required to maximise development and learning”.

Identifying and assessing dyslexia is an ongoing process of information gathering over a period of time rather than a single test carried out on one occasion. This approach to assessment is referred to as holistic: it accounts for all aspects of the child’s / young person’s learning in the context of their wider world. The [Aberdeen City Learning, Teaching and Assessment Standard \(2020\)](#) provides detail and exemplification to promote quality and consistency.

Holistic assessment often requires collaboration and a sharing of professional knowledge and expertise in order to effectively meet an individual’s needs and promote successful learning. In all cases, professionals, parents/carers and the child work together – as the Team Around the Child – to support the child’s wellbeing. This process sits central to Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and is supported through Aberdeen City’s staged intervention procedures. Staged intervention is based on the notion of meeting need locally at the lowest possible level for the purpose of fully including learners in the life of their local, mainstream school.

The GIRFEC questions help make sense of concerns through the lens of the child's unique context:

- 1. What is getting in the way of this child's wellbeing?**
- 2. Do we have all the information we need to help this child?**
- 3. What can we do now to help this child?**
- 4. What can my service do to help this child?**
- 5. What additional help, if any, may be needed from others?**

The [Aberdeen City Education Service Staged Intervention Framework](#) follows a three-stage model, which mirrors GIRFEC and the personalised support model outlined in Education Scotland's [How Good Is Our School? \(4th Edition\)](#):

- **Universal**
- **Targeted**
- **Specialist**

Universal

Universal support is founded upon reasonable adjustments to ensure all children/young people have equal opportunities to access learning and a curriculum that is suited to their needs. Most learners' needs are met at universal level. Class/Subject Teachers and Learner Support Assistants (PSAs) are usually the first to identify if a learner is experiencing difficulty, although sometimes it can be a parent/carer who first expresses concern. Initially, a response to a concern would be class teacher-led with informal support from Support for Learning/Guidance/Learner Support if appropriate.

Information should be gathered about the learner, including:

- **Attendance**
- **Engagement patterns**
- **Health/Medical needs (such as eyesight, hearing, fine/gross motor skills etc.)**
- **Learning history**
- **Oral skills**
- **Other issues that may be impacting on the learner's literacy development (e.g. speech & language difficulties, English as an additional language etc.)**
- **Preferred learning style (consider the links to teaching style)**
- **Relationships and demeanour**
- **Strengths and difficulties**
- **Wider environmental factors**

Assessment methods – making sense of the information – include:

- **Discussion with parents**
- **Discussion with learner**
- **Observation of learner in class to see how he or she responds to learning and teaching processes, the classroom layout, the resources being used, and the impact existing adjustments have (such as technology, chunking, rest-breaks etc.)**
- **Profile of strengths (see section 3)**
- **Sampling learner’s written work (e.g. comparison of pieces of reading comprehension and extended writing using different strategies – i.e. Independent, Digital, Reader, Scribe)**
- **Use of the Dyslexia Toolkit’s [Identification Pathway](#)**

“My oldest daughter said that just knowing someone is there that understands dyslexia is what I need.”

[Parent of S2 learner]

Provision of support and advice is available from The Educational Psychology Service at universal level through the Early Intervention Consultation process. Involvement is focused on supporting school staff in planning problem-solving strategies to support casework (verbal parental consent required). At this stage the learner is not formally known to the Educational Psychology Service. Schools can also request an Early Intervention Consultation for more general advice and guidance at the classroom or whole school level in order to build capacity in the school to meet the needs of learners. Other sources of professional learning for class teachers are available via the education service and partner providers.

A Personalised Learning Plan (PLP) may be used to capture identified learning and teaching strategies that support the individual learner. This should be reviewed regularly to ensure adjustments and interventions continue to meet their needs. This approach to tracking and monitoring reinforces the role of assessment as an ongoing process of information gathering over a period of time.

Where possible, technology should be used to increase accessibility and maintain learner independence. More information is provided in Section 8. Adapted formats (such as books with increased line or word spacing) may also support accessibility and banks of resources are available from digital libraries such as www.seeingear.org and [Books for All](#).

Targeted

If concerns persist, further formal consultations and collaboration between class teachers and colleagues across the school (for example, Guidance, Learner Support, or Support for Learning) can take place regularly to meet the learner's needs.

Bespoke, summative assessments may be carried out to provide more information e.g. analysis of reading/ spelling ages or pattern of errors, screening software (including observations on affective factors such as motivation, anxiety and how the child approached the assessment). These types of assessment should, however, only be regarded as one small part of a more holistic view of the learner. Single tests provide a snapshot of a child/ young person and their performance on that particular day. Ongoing, holistic assessment will continue to inform the intervention plan for a child/young person.

If it is felt by the learner, parent/carer and school staff that it would be helpful to consult with the Educational Psychology Service in order to support the assessment and intervention planning process, the school must first request an Early Intervention Consultation (verbal parental consent required). At this stage the learner is not formally known to the service. If, following this consultation, a role for the Educational Psychology Service is identified, written parental consent is required. Involvement of the Educational Psychology Service at a more formal level will involve a consultation meeting whereby all relevant professionals, parents/carers and the learner will engage in a collaborative discussion and plan actions and strategies to meet the learner's needs.

Aberdeen City Council's Dyslexia Outreach Service (comprising of a small team of teachers and PSAs) provides support to primary schools with regards to getting it right for learners. A central aim of the Service is to increase staff competence and confidence in monitoring, identifying and supporting learners with dyslexia in their own settings. This may involve:

- **providing specific professional learning for school staff e.g. gathering and making sense of assessment information; specific interventions; target setting and intervention monitoring.**
- **consultation with school staff, parents and/or learners to ensure the most appropriate reasonable adjustments and interventions are utilised.**
- **modelling of best learning and teaching practice following the 'I do, We do, You do' principle of collegiate working.**

The Dyslexia Outreach Service may undertake a period of direct work with a learner, but the focus of this will be modelling practice so school staff can maintain continuity of support for the learner. Where there is an identified role and need, schools – in conjunction with parent(s)/carer(s) and learners – can make a request for Dyslexia Outreach Service assistance (see below). Similar to the Educational Psychology Service, schools can liaise with the Dyslexia Outreach Service informally about non-learner-specific advice and guidance.

Holistic identification and assessment may identify the need for a bespoke, targeted piece of group or individual work with the learner. Where possible, this will be delivered in the child's class by the class teacher, a learner support assistant, and/or a support for learning teacher working cooperatively. Such interventions will be specific, have identified outcomes, time-limited, and reviewed on a regular basis.

An Individualised Education Programme (IEP) should be constructed where holistic assessment identifies curriculum adaptation and/or input from several school staff (or other professionals) is required to meet a child/young person's needs. If everyone in the Team Around the Child agrees that an IEP is appropriate, it will outline SMART targets, which will be decided in conjunction with the child/young person and their parents

Specialist

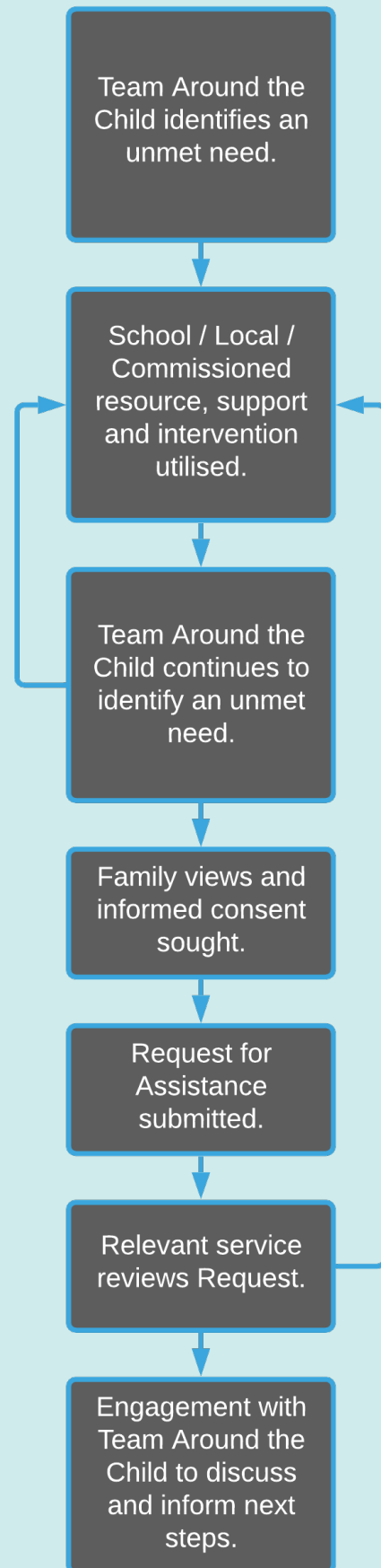
An intervention at specialist level will require a significant degree of coordination and it will likely involve a multi-agency response in order to meet the child's needs. The GIRFEC questions will support the use of assessment information to identify specific, unmet needs that cannot be met at universal or targeted levels and any potential role of multi-agency partners e.g. social work, NHS Grampian, Educational Psychology Service, 3rd Sector partners etc. A Child's Plan will likely be required to coordinate, track and monitor the work of the Team Around the Child. Similarly, consideration should be given to the criteria associated with a Coordinated Support Plan (CSP). The Lead Professional will assume the coordinator's role.

Request for Assistance

The term 'Request for Assistance' is used to describe the process of a Team Around the Child seeking support from a partner service/ organisation. In keeping with the principles of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC), the foundation of request for assistance is partnership working to overcome barriers to wellbeing. This process forms a key part of staged intervention and is summarised as follows:

Requests are reviewed by staff from the relevant service and feedback about next steps is provided to the Team Around the Child.

More information about the Dyslexia Outreach Service can be found via their [website](#).



Section 8 – Use of Technology to Support All Learners

Technology can provide a significant deal of accessibility support whilst allowing the learner to maintain their independence. Smartphones, tablets, laptops, and desktops all have in-built accessibility features that can support reading, writing, and computer-based research. Although features vary device-to-device based on the operating system, most provide access to:

- **Audio description;**
- **Colour filters;**
- **Contrast adjuster;**
- **Immersive reading;**
- **Speech to Text (dictation);**
- **Text magnifier;**
- **Text to Speech (narration or ‘talk aloud’);**
- **Whole-screen zoom.**

All learners and staff in Aberdeen City have access to [TextHelp’s Read&Write](#) toolbar. This works across all Google Suite for Education applications including Google Chrome and includes other plug-ins such as [WriQ](#) (supporting achievement and development in writing) and [SquatIO](#) (creating digital mathematical/scientific formulae and equations). All learners and staff are issued with a user account (gw...@ab-ed.org), which provides access to these tools and more.

The [Digital Hub](#) contains resources for learners, families and professional learning links to which Aberdeen City education staff have access. Several staff across the service have already accessed the Certified Google Educator programme – at both Level 1 and 2 – and their expertise is used to support professional learning, proficiency and confidence in the use of these tools.

The Quality Improvement Officer (Digital) is the lead for digital learning, teaching and assessment. This service provides an updated approach to the service formerly provided by Technological Assessment & Support Service for Children & the Curriculum (TASSCC) in recognition of the considerable advances made in this regard. The QIO (Digital) has responsibility for the strategy associated with digital learning, teaching and assessment, and the use of digital innovations to improve accessibility for all. This role includes making recommendations to schools about the most appropriate software and applications to use. Schools can seek such support by requesting assistance from the QIO (digital). Part of the role will involve maintaining oversight of national best practice and liaising with services such as Communication, Accessibility, Literacy and Learning (CALL) Scotland.

CALL Scotland – an accessibility service based at the University of Edinburgh – recommend a range of **applications (apps)** to support curriculum accessibility. In addition, they offer a **variety of services** for learners, families and staff. They provide a number of other services under different banners:

- **Alternative and Augmentative Communication (AAC) Scotland – alternatives to verbal communication;**
- **Adapted Digital Assessments (ADA) Scotland – see Section 9 on Assessment Arrangements;**
- **Books for All – access to educational textbooks and texts in accessible formats;**
- **Scottish Voice – access to various Scottish text-speech voice samples;**
- **Symbols for All – access to inclusive visual (such as Picture Communication Exchange System (PECS) resources).**

Section 9 – Assessment Arrangements

Assessment arrangements are designed to provide learners identified with additional support needs and/or a disability with appropriate opportunities to access assessment materials without compromising the integrity of the assessment. Assessment arrangements in formal assessment situations will:

- **Replicate those used by the learner on a day-to-day basis;**
- **Increase accessibility to facilitate equal opportunity to demonstrate attainment;**
- **Continue to promote independence in learning as far as possible e.g. a digital/ screen reader will be used in lieu of a human reader.**

Scottish National Standardised Assessment (SNSA)

If used as part of accessibility-widening strategies for day-to-day learning, teaching and assessment, learners with an identified additional support need (including English as an additional language) should have access to the same support when undertaking SNSA. This may include the use of:

- **calculators for individuals who require additional support**
- **bilingual dictionaries to individuals with English as an additional language**
- **computer readers or assistive technology**
- **human reading support or support for completing the assessments (preferably from someone who the child or young person is familiar with)**
- **adjusted timings/breaks to suit the individual needs of children**

More information is available from the [SNSA website](#) (login required).

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) Assessments and Examinations

SQA assessment arrangements are underpinned by four principles:

- Principle 1:** Assessment arrangements are intended to enable candidates to demonstrate their attainment, not to compensate for lack of attainment.
- Principle 2:** Assessment arrangement must not compromise the integrity of the qualification.
- Principle 3:** Assessment arrangements must be tailored to meet a candidate's individual needs.
- Principle 4:** Assessment arrangements should reflect, as far as possible, the candidate's normal way of learning and producing work.

SQA Centres (e.g. all Aberdeen City Secondary Schools) are responsible for adhering to the requisite and stipulated procedures and [quality assurance arrangements](#). Centres must have evidence to support the use of all assessment arrangements, and this is gathered on a candidate-by-candidate, subject-by-subject basis. Evidence is retained by centres as it may be subject to audit and external scrutiny. Arrangements are communicated to SQA by centres on a diet-by-diet (annual) basis using agreed channels e.g. the Assessment Arrangements Request (AAR) system. A calendar of key dates is published annually and Centres plan activity around this.

The SQA's [Information for Centres](#) outlines the full range of assessment arrangements available to candidates, although it is important to note the arrangements in place must result in an evidenced impact on the learner's accessibility. SQA's [Assessment Arrangements](#) page includes access to a variety of resources, including digital versions of past papers and answer books. [Adapted Digital Assessments \(ADA\) Scotland](#) provide additional digital assessment resources.

Section 10 – Transitions

School transitions are likely to be pivotal to the development of children and young people. With transition comes new emotions, different learning environments and fresh social opportunities. For our learners with an identification of dyslexia, transition can be an anxious time and the quality of these points in a learner's education depends greatly on how those working closely with them understand their needs.

Statutory Guidance

Statutory guidance on school transitions for children and young people with additional support needs is stipulated in the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. The Act requires that local authorities take account of the views held by other agencies and partners and begin transition planning for children and young people at least 12 months beforehand (e.g. transition planning should take place 12+ months before a child advances from primary to secondary school). In some instances, it will be beneficial to begin this process earlier than 12 months before the expected transition. This will allow the appropriate individuals involved to account for adaptations in planning and this should help reduce potential difficulties regarding transition timings/arrangements. Likewise, when young people are transitioning to post-school placements, it is advisable that a plan for transition is in place earlier than is required by the Act. Some post-school transition plans may even begin during the early years of secondary school.

The local authority will take account of learners with additional support needs on an individual basis and consider the transitional duties that apply. Transitional duties are most likely to apply to learners who:

- **currently attend a special school, special placement or enhanced provision;**
- **have a co-ordinated support plan;**
- **have additional support needs arising from a disability (as defined by the Equality Act 2010); and/or**
- **are at risk of not making a successful transition (e.g. social, emotional and wellbeing concerns).**

Information Sharing

Schools within the local authority will collaborate to ensure that dyslexic learners have the necessary supports in place to meet their needs when they make a transition between settings. As emphasised above, such arrangements are lawfully required for learners whose dyslexia is considered to be a significant barrier to their learning. Schools should endeavour to ensure that the following 'good practice' procedures (or similar) are actioned prior to transition:

Review Meetings

Schools should organise annual review meetings with the learner, parents/carers and other professionals (where appropriate) to forward plan for an impending school transition. Understandably, these meetings should be celebratory to recognise a learner advancing through their academic career. However, within this positive setting it is vitally important that the professionals from the receiving school gather any assessment/intervention information from the learner's current school and enquire about any assessment/intervention sought privately by parents/carers. This will allow the receiving school to gather information ensuring a rich and holistic view of the learner has been sought. Review meetings are also an opportune time for the voice of the learner and parent/carers to be heard regarding transition and support(s). These meetings can take place in person or virtually via Microsoft Teams/Google Meet.

School to School

A key member of staff from the receiving school (e.g., Principal Teacher of Support for Learning; Principal Teacher of Guidance/Learner Support) should liaise with a learner's current school. These meetings will ensure the sharing of class-based information, records and knowledge of the individual learner. Where possible, it would be beneficial for a key member of staff from the receiving school to conduct an in-person visit to the learner's current provision to meet them and explore the current methodologies and resources used to aid their learning. This will also provide a key member of staff from the receiving school to reassure the learner and provide information on what the supports will look like in their new provision. Furthermore, any relevant documentation regarding the learner should be made available to the identified key member of staff of the receiving school. Relevant information may include:

- **An Individual Education Plan (IEP), Co-ordinated Support Plan and/or a Child's Plan;**
- **Historical and recent assessment information (e.g. dyslexia screeners, standardised test scores, Curriculum for Excellence Achievement of a Level data);**
- **Referrals or reports from outside agencies; and/or**
- **Professional judgement of teachers**

Parents/Carers

The Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Act 2006 recognises that parents, carers and families are the most influential factor in the lives of children and young people. Strong home-school partnerships can help promote positive engagement and learning. It is therefore important for schools to foster positive relationships with parents/carers and openly encourage them to share their perspectives. By building positive working relationships with parents/carers, schools can adapt their practice to meet the needs of individual learners as and when they change. As parents/carers are their child's first and ongoing educators it is vital that they receive the information and support necessary to assist in the development of their child's learning. It is, therefore, important that parents/carers are aware of who the identified key staff member(s) are and how they can be contacted to share their views.

Appendix A – Universal Resources

Accessibility

British Dyslexia Association (2018): Dyslexia Style Guide

SEND Success (2018) – Dyslexia Friendly School Checklist

TES (2017) – 10 Easy Steps to Make Your Classroom Dyslexia-Friendly

Identifying Dyslexia

Addressing Dyslexia – What to Look For Checklist (CfE 1st and 2nd Level)

Addressing Dyslexia – What to Look For Checklist (CfE 3rd and 4th Levels; Senior Phase)

Dyslexia Scotland (2018) – Checklist and Indicators

Dyslexia Scotland – Identification Pathway

Professional Learning and Information

Aberdeen City Council Children and Family Services' Inclusive Practices Professional Learning Sway

Aberdeen City Dyslexia Outreach Service Website

Addressing Dyslexia (2020) – Reading Circle: Supporting the Acquisition of Reading Skills

Dyslexia Scotland – Information Leaflets

GTCS (2020) – Meeting the Needs of Dyslexia Learners

GTCS (2020) – Understanding Neurodiversity in the Contexts of Equality and Inclusive Practice

South Ayrshire Council – Changing Whole School Perceptions of Dyslexia

Useful Phone Numbers

British Dyslexia Association – 0333 405 4567

Dyslexia Scotland – 0344 800 8484

Appendix B – ‘Dyslexic-Type Tendencies’ – What Does It Actually Mean?

The following is lifted from the [Addressing Dyslexia Parents’ FAQs](#):

Question

After assessment, I was told that my child has **“dyslexic-type tendencies”**.

What does this mean? Are they dyslexic or not?

Answer

The terms used around the subject of dyslexia are continually changing! Where it previously might have been acceptable to use this terminology in the past, the use of terms such as ‘tendencies’ or ‘signs’ or ‘dyslexic-type’ which can be potentially confusing for learners and parents, are not generally used. **The Scottish Government definition should allow for a learner either being dyslexic or not.** To what extent will vary along the continuum, so we are generally now more specific and say what the difficulties are, and if they are severe or mild.

It is important that areas of difficulty have been identified and are being addressed. Areas of strength will also have been identified and these will be developed to help overcome any difficulties. Support is not about a medical diagnosis or label, but it may be important to your child to know. If you have any doubts or concerns about the results of assessment you can request a meeting at your child’s school to discuss the matter in more detail.



ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	26 January 2022
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Statutory Consultation Report: Proposed new catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education
REPORT NUMBER	RES/22/011
DIRECTOR	Steve Whyte
CHIEF OFFICER	Stephen Booth
REPORT AUTHOR	Andrew Jones
TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1.1, 1.1.2

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To report to committee on the outcomes of a statutory consultation, on a proposal to introduce school catchment areas for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision in Aberdeen City.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee :-

- 2.1 agrees to establish a catchment area for Gaelic Medium Education provision at Hazlehead Academy, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Hazlehead Academy, Northfield Academy and Aberdeen Grammar School, with effect from 1 August 2022; and
- 2.2 agrees to establish a catchment area for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision at Gilcomstoun School, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Gilcomstoun School, Ashley Road School, Mile End School and Skene Square School, with effect from 1 August 2022.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 At its meeting of 3 June 2021, the Education Operational Delivery Committee instructed the Chief Officer, Corporate Landlord to undertake a statutory public consultation on proposals to establish catchment areas for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision at Hazlehead Academy and Gilcomstoun School, and to report back to the Committee on the outcomes of the consultation at its next available meeting following conclusion of the consultation process.
- 3.2 A public consultation on the above proposal was undertaken from 23 August 2021 to 8 October 2021. When carrying out the consultation, all requirements of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended were met in full.

- 3.3 A full summary of the responses received during the consultation, along with officers' responses to the issues raised, are contained within the Consultation Report at Appendix 1. This also contains a copy of Education Scotland's report on the proposal.
- 3.4 With relation to Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, and having considered all of the information received during the consultation process, officers have reviewed the original proposals carefully, and have concluded that, for the reasons outlined in the Consultation Report at Appendix 1, the proposed catchment areas are appropriate, and that there is no reason to change the proposal.
- 3.5 It is therefore recommended that the proposed new catchment areas for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision at Gilcomstoun School and Hazlehead Academy are implemented, with effect from 1 August 2022.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A proposal to establish the catchment area of a school is a relevant proposal under the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The 2010 Act prescribes the procedural steps the Education Authority must take. This includes:
- preparation of a proposal paper;
 - giving notice of the proposal;
 - ingathering oral and written representations;
 - holding a public meeting;
 - providing Education Scotland with all relevant documentation;
 - reviewing the proposal having regard to the representations received and Education Scotland's report; and
 - thereafter publishing a consultation report containing an explanation of how it has reviewed the proposal and responding to the points raised during the consultation.
- 5.2 The public consultation has complied with these requirements of the 2010 Act. As the proposal does not refer to the proposed closure of any school, any decision to implement it by this Committee cannot be called in by Scottish Ministers. A complaint may be made to Scottish Ministers under section 70 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 where it is alleged that an Education Authority has failed to comply with obligations placed upon it by the 2010 Act. In such instances, if satisfied the Authority is in default the Scottish Ministers may make an order requiring that the statutory duty be carried out.
- 5.3 The Authority has a duty under section 15 of the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 to promote Gaelic Medium Education in its area so far as is reasonably practicable. In carrying out its duty of promotion an Education Authority must

take reasonable steps to ensure it publicises, in such manner as it thinks appropriate, the provision in its area of Gaelic Medium Education. In carrying out its duty of support an Education Authority must:

- take reasonable steps to ensure that teachers in any class where the education is provided have such resources, training and opportunities as are reasonably necessary to adequately and effectively provide the education;
- take reasonable steps to ensure that pupils in any such class have such resources as are reasonably necessary to adequately and effectively receive and benefit from the education; and
- have regard to any guidance under section 9 of the Gaelic Language (Scotland) Act 2005.

5.4 Statutory guidance on Gaelic Education states that “Education authorities should establish catchment areas for GME provision and may wish to consider demand for GME when setting guidelines for placing pupils in GME provision”. The Guidance further states that “the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 places a duty on education authorities to set out catchment areas for their schools and guidelines to be followed when placing pupils in schools. As such, education authority areas will be divided up into a number of school catchment areas, with placing guidelines based on local factors such as distance to the school and the number of pupils living in the area. A catchment area for GME provision should be an area in which the education authority thinks it is reasonable for pupils wishing to receive GME provision to travel to school, and should have the potential to attract parents to choose GME provision for their children. Catchment areas for GME provision will normally overlay a number of school catchment areas”.

5.5 Section 1 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980 provides that it shall be the duty of every education authority to secure that there is made for their area adequate and efficient provision of school education and further education. Section 28 of the 1980 Act provides that in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties under the Act, education authorities shall have regard to the general principle that, so far as is compatible with the provision of suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure, pupils are to be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified		
Compliance	Risk that the Council is seen to make significant changes to schools without considering the views of stakeholders.	L	All aspects of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 have been complied with.

	Risk of successful legal challenge for failing to comply with statutory duties.	L	Regard has been had to statutory duties set out in the 2010, 2016 and 1980 Acts set out above. Prescribed legal processes have been followed.
Operational	Risk that customers' views are not taken into account when introducing new catchment areas	L	All aspects of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended have been complied with and stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on proposals. The consultation report provides a detailed account of the factors taken into consideration by officers which led to the recommendation to proceed with the proposed catchment areas.
Financial	No significant risks identified		N/A
Reputational	Risk that customers' views are not taken into account when introducing new catchment areas	M	All aspects of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 as amended have been complied with and stakeholders have had the opportunity to comment on proposals. The consultation report provides a detailed account of the factors taken into consideration by officers which led to the recommendation to proceed with the proposed catchment areas.
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified	N/A	N/A

7. OUTCOMES

<u>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</u>	
Impact of Report	
Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan	
Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes	
Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of the Children & Young People Stretch Outcomes 3 to 5 in the LOIP. Ensuring that pupil rolls at the schools concerned are maintained at manageable levels will assist in the delivery of quality learning and

	teaching, which will ultimately lead to improved outcomes for young people.
Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes	The proposals within this report support the delivery of Stretch Outcomes 14 and 15 in the LOIP. Ensuring pupils have safe and appropriate routes to school will help to encourage walking or cycling to school and reduce Aberdeen's carbon emissions.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Impact Assessment	A full impact assessment has been completed.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Education Operational Delivery Committee, 3 June 2021: *Proposed consultation to establish catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education – RES/21/133*

10. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Consultation Report : Gaelic Medium Education: Proposed New Catchment Areas

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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CONSULTATION REPORT

Gaelic Medium Education: Proposed New Catchment Areas

This Consultation Report has been compiled in response to a public consultation carried out from August to October 2021, on proposals to establish school catchment areas for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision in Aberdeen City.

The document summarises the feedback received on the proposals set out below and Aberdeen City Council's response to the verbal and written comments submitted by interested parties, in compliance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

Proposals:

To establish a catchment area for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision at Hazlehead Academy, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Hazlehead Academy, Northfield Academy and Aberdeen Grammar School;

And:

To establish a catchment area for the existing Gaelic Medium Education provision at Gilcomstoun School, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Gilcomstoun School, Ashley Road School, Mile End School and Skene Square School;

And:

That the new catchment areas should take effect from 1 August 2022.

Maps illustrating the proposed new school catchment boundaries are included at Annex A of this report.

1. METHODOLOGY

This consultation was conducted in accordance with the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. All requirements of the legislation have been met.

2. INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS

2.1 Public Event

A public consultation event to discuss the proposals was held on 14 September 2021, at 7.00pm. The event took place at Mile End School, and stakeholders were also able to participate in the meeting remotely, via an online platform. The event was attended by 3 members of the public in person, and 39 individuals joined the meeting online.

2.2 Comments Received

61 responses to the consultation were submitted via the Council's online consultation portal. Six written comments were also received via email, including responses from Bòrd na Gàidhlig, Comann nam Pàrant and Aberdeenshire Council.

Overall, 55 respondents, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant, indicated that they were not in support of the proposals, whilst 8 respondents indicated that they were in support of the proposals.

All of the submissions, anonymised as necessary, are available to view on the Council's website: www.aberdeencity.gov.uk/schoolsconsultations

2.3 Issues Raised

The main issues raised at the public meeting and in the written responses to the consultation, are summarised below.

Respondents who indicated that they did not agree with the proposal, raised the following points:

- The point raised most often (by 56% of the total number of respondents), was that the proposed catchment areas are too limited, and are inequitable. It was felt that GME should be available to all, rather than being dependent on postcode, and so the catchment areas should be city wide.
- Around one third of the respondents also stated that the proposals do not promote and support GME (which is a requirement of the statutory guidance on GME provision), and that the proposed catchment areas would make access to GME more difficult.
- 15% of respondents stated that there was no educational benefit to the proposals.
- Concerns were raised (in one sixth of the responses) that pupils currently attending primary GME provision will not be entitled to a place at the secondary provision, because they will not be living in the secondary catchment zone. It was felt that this would mean there would be no continuity from primary to secondary school for these pupils.

- 13% of the respondents were concerned that although there may be sufficient space in the GME provisions now, there may not be in future – and that the Council would not be obliged to make the provision any larger. It was felt that this would mean that placing requests could not be accepted.
- 10% of the responses argued that the proposals discriminate against those who are unable to provide transport for their children. One respondent felt that the availability of financial assistance (for those in financial difficulty) for transport is not made clear to parents.
- Some of the respondents who said they did not support the proposals, appeared to have mistakenly thought that the proposal was about introducing new GME provision, or expanding it across schools. Six respondents stated that GME is not necessary and that the proposal would be a waste of money and / or resources, whilst another felt that GME should only be an option in schools and shouldn't replace English medium education.
- Four of the respondents suggested that the proposed catchment areas would open up the possibility of parents requesting new GME units to be established in other parts of the city (if there are 5 or more parents requesting this), and that this would impact negatively on the existing provisions.
- Two respondents stated that 'reasonable travel distance' does not necessarily mean walking distance, and that parents are likely to be happy to travel further than this.

Respondents who indicated that they were in support of the proposal, gave the following reasons for this:

- One respondent stated that they were in support of the proposal, but felt that GME should be offered to all pupils, as it is important to preserve our Scottish heritage.
- One respondent stated that they welcomed the fact that pupils are not forced to undertake GME, and that it is just an option, whilst another felt that it would be nice to see Gaelic being taught in more schools.
- One further respondent acknowledged that the proposals would provide clarity of provision, and went on to state that resources should be used to focus on other languages, such as Norwegian, Dutch or Mandarin, or at least Spanish or German, as these would make more sense in Aberdeen.

Response from Bòrd na Gàidhlig

In its response to the consultation, Bòrd na Gàidhlig expressed its disappointment about the catchment areas which have been proposed, stating that these would disadvantage the people of Aberdeen, and would not encourage a greater uptake of GME.

The issues highlighted in the organisation's response included a concern that most Aberdeen residents would be excluded from the proposed catchment areas, despite

the GME service being funded as a service for everyone. It was also noted in the response that Local Authorities have a duty to promote GME, and that catchment areas should attract parents to choose GME provision for their children. Bòrd na Gàidhlig's view is that the catchment areas being proposed will not attract families to the GME service in Aberdeen.

There was also a concern expressed about the different catchment areas which are proposed for primary and secondary GME provision. It was felt that this could create confusion and obstacles for parents, and that this approach does not assist with implementing the statutory guidance for local authorities on planning for continuity and progression in GME from P7 to S1.

Response from Comann nam Pàrant

In the response to the consultation submitted by Comann nam Pàrant, concerns were raised about the size of the catchment areas which have been proposed, and it was suggested that generally, a reasonable travel distance for pupils wishing to receive GME is interpreted to mean any distances up to 15 miles. The response noted that since it was established in Aberdeen, GME provision has been city-wide, with families supported to access the provisions at Gilcomstoun School and Hazlehead Academy, and the organisation could not see why this should now change.

It was suggested that to avoid unreasonable travel distances, GME should be introduced to other schools in Aberdeen, as this would ensure that all pupils are treated fairly. The response also argued that the proposed catchment areas would make GME an unattractive option for the majority of families, and would exclude those who are unable, physically or financially, to transport their children to school.

The response from Comann nam Pàrant stated that establishing different catchment areas for primary and secondary GME provision does not promote a 3-18 curriculum, and that the proposal would do nothing to promote the growth of GME in the city. It was felt that there was no educational benefit in the proposals. Concerns were also raised about the future pupil numbers at Gilcomstoun School and Hazlehead Academy, and whether this may in future mean that the GME provisions at those schools will not have available capacity to allow placing requests to be accepted.

Response from Aberdeenshire Council

In its response to the consultation, Aberdeenshire Council confirmed its support for the proposals, noting that pupils outwith the proposed catchment areas would be required to submit a placing request, and so the proposal does not present any changes for families residing in Aberdeenshire.

2.4 Education Scotland Report

An essential element of the statutory consultation process is the involvement of Education Scotland, whose report is provided as Annex B of this Consultation Report.

In its report, Education Scotland noted that the respondents who oppose the proposal, were largely comprised of parents who currently access Gaelic Medium Education, have done so in the past, or who plan to do so in the future. The report highlighted the concerns raised in responses to the consultation, including the view that there was a

lack of rationale to the proposal, and a lack of connection to national policy and statutory guidance for Gaelic. Respondents' view that the proposed catchment area was too small, was also noted in the report.

Education Scotland also noted that there had been no pre-consultation discussions with stakeholders with regard to the proposals. Although it was acknowledged that this is not a statutory requirement, HM Inspectors suggested that this would have been helpful to stakeholders, had it been carried out.

The report referred to concerns that the proposed catchment areas would not enable equal access for children to Gaelic Medium Education, without the need for placing request, and it was stated in the report that more work needs to be done to establish the educational benefits of the proposal, and how any adverse effects of the proposal will be mitigated against. The need to improve transitions between the primary and secondary Gaelic Medium provisions was also highlighted.

3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PERIOD AND CONTAINED WITHIN THE EDUCATION SCOTLAND REPORT

3.1 The proposed catchment areas are too limited, and should be city wide to ensure equity of access

Prior to establishing the catchment area for any provision account must be taken of reasonable travelling distance. When considering the proposed catchment areas, officers took reasonable travelling distance to be the ability to walk to school independently. Access to the provision is available to all City parents who live outwith the catchment area, through submitting a placing request, in line with the general principle that pupils should be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents so long as this is compatible with suitable instruction and training and the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure.

3.2 The proposals do not link to national policy and statutory guidance, do not promote and support GME, and access to GME would be more difficult

The proposals ensure a commitment to support the provision of GME within Aberdeen City, so far as reasonably practicable, which is the Council's statutory duty. The catchment areas overlay a number of school catchment areas in accordance with the statutory guidance. Physical access will not be affected by the proposals. The only change would be the requirement for a placing request for those pupils living outwith the catchment areas.

3.3 There is no educational benefit to the proposals

The educational benefits of the proposals were outlined in the consultation document. The proposals described in this document form part of Aberdeen City Council's overall approach to the promotion of Gaelic medium education, and should be considered alongside other measures being undertaken to promote Gaelic through the Gaelic Language plan.

The educational benefits of bilingualism and the promotion of Gaelic include providing young people with a better sense of the structure of language, and children with access to Gaelic medium education are also likely to find it easier to learn other additional languages.

The creation and confirmation of the proposed new catchment areas will help to demonstrate the Council's commitment to the long-term future of Gaelic Medium education in Aberdeen. This will enable young people in the city to continue to develop these skills for life, and may also help to reduce 'drop-out' rates from GME on the transition from primary school to secondary school.

It is important to note also the alternative views of some respondents to the consultation, who felt that there would be more benefit in employing resources in developing skills in other languages, rather than in Gaelic.

3.4 There would be no continuity from primary to secondary GME provision, and transitions need to be improved

The primary GME catchment area is part of the secondary GME catchment area and therefore promotes the continuity from primary to secondary. The proposed GME primary catchment area is wholly contained within the proposed GME secondary catchment area, so if the proposals are accepted, any children living within the GME primary catchment area and therefore eligible to attend the primary provision, will also be living within the GME secondary catchment area and will also therefore be entitled to progress to the GME secondary provision.

Continuity is about effective transition arrangements for learners and establishing the catchment areas provides assurances around the future of GME in Aberdeen City. A full time teacher has recently been appointed to the GME provision at Hazlehead Academy, and this teacher has already begun to support transition activity between the primary and secondary GME provisions.

3.5 There may be insufficient space for GME provision in future, leading to placing requests being refused

Using data currently available to us regarding our GME provision forecasts, we are confident that future placing requests can be accommodated. Whilst it is suggested in Education Scotland's report that there is a growing demand for GME in some parts of the country, there is little evidence of this happening in Aberdeen.

3.6 The proposals would not allow equal access to GME provision, and would discriminate against those who are unable to provide transport

Transport is not currently being provided for those attending GME provision, and this has had no impact on the numbers in both settings. However, anyone unable to provide transport can request assistance from the Council. In light of comments received during this consultation, officers will ensure that the Council's website is updated, to make the procedure for requesting assistance clearer.

In addition, from 31 January 2022, all children and young people in Scotland aged between 5 and 21 will be eligible for free bus travel.

3.7 There would be a possibility of requests for new GME provision in other parts of the city, which would impact negatively on the existing provisions

The threshold for an obligatory full assessment under the Education (Scotland) Act 2016 is that an education authority is satisfied that there is demand for Gaelic Medium Primary Education (GMPE) in the GMPE assessment area, from the parents of at least five children who are resident in the GMPE assessment area and all in the same pre-

school year group. Should this threshold be reached and the Council is satisfied that there is demand in another area of the city, then the Council would be obliged to undertake a full assessment of primary GMPE in the area. As far as officers are aware, there has not previously been a GMPE parental request for assessment in Aberdeen.

3.8 'Reasonable travel distance' should not be restricted to walking distance

Officers have interpreted the guidance on reasonable travel distance as reasonable walking distance as set out in section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The Statutory guidance on Gaelic Education states that it is up to Education Authorities to determine what is reasonable and does not prescribe or even mention any minimum or specific distance.

3.9 There was no pre-consultation discussion regarding the proposals

There is no statutory requirement to undertake pre-consultation for proposals to alter catchment areas.

3.10 GME provision should be available in all other schools

Rolling out face to face provision in all schools would be problematic as there are insufficient Gaelic speaking teachers available. Funding these additional teachers would also impact on other education budgets and would likely require a reduction in other (English medium) education services provided by the Council.

Whilst recent Scottish Government grants have funded approximately one third of the costs of GME provision with the remainder being covered by the City Council, there is no guarantee that any funding will be made available for any existing or future expansion of GME in the City

However, Gaelic language learning is in fact already available to anyone who wishes to benefit from it, as provision is available to all online. This mode of delivery may help to promote GME more effectively than in-school face-to-face provision, as it is not limited by the number of Gaelic speaking teachers available.

It should be noted that GME provision is not available in any schools in Aberdeenshire, and so pupils living in Aberdeenshire are able to access the provision within Aberdeen City.

4. COMPLIANCE WITH SECTION 9(1) OF THE SCHOOLS (CONSULTATION) (SCOTLAND) ACT 2010 AND CONSIDERATION OF THE PROPOSALS

Following the conclusion of the consultation period, Section 9(1) of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, requires the Council to review the relevant proposal, having had regard to any written representations that have been received by it during the consultation period, any oral representations made to it at the public meeting held on 14 September, and Education Scotland's report.

In terms of Section 10(2) (e) of the said Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010, the Consultation Report is required to contain a statement explaining how the Council complied with its duty under the above Section 9(1) of the Act.

With relation to Section 9(1) of the 2010 Act and having considered all of the information received during the consultation process, officers have reviewed the proposed catchment areas carefully, taking into account the points outlined below:

- Whilst officers have taken on board comments about travelling distances, they have also taken account of the definition of reasonable walking distance as set out in section 42 of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. Officers believe the catchment areas should reflect reasonable walking distance to school. The proposed catchment areas also overlay a number of English medium catchment areas, in accordance with the statutory guidance.
- There is no evidence of an increased demand for GME provision across the local authority. Approximately 21% of the GME pupil population reside in Aberdeenshire. Any children living outwith the proposed new catchment areas can still access the provision, through a placing request. The proposal supports parents being able to access education according to their wishes, whilst avoiding unreasonable public expenditure.
- If the Council was to set the catchment zones to cover the entire city, then it would be obliged to pay transport costs for pupils who live within the new catchment zone but more than a reasonable travel distance from their school (considered to be 2 miles from their primary school or 3 miles from their secondary school). In past years transport costs for GME provision amounted to £56,000 per year. This equates to approximately £1700 per pupil. A decision was taken in 2019 as part of budget savings to remove the provision of free transport for pupils attending GME provision. In exceptional circumstances, however, the Council will still consider the provision of free transport, in line with arrangements for children attending all schools in Aberdeen City.
- By introducing the proposed new catchment areas, the Council would be clarifying its admission guidelines for GME provision, and bringing them in line with the general guidelines which apply to admissions to all schools in Aberdeen City. The Council's commitment to continue to provide GME, along with the offering of online provision, will help to further promote the Gaelic language, through providing flexible choices for families.

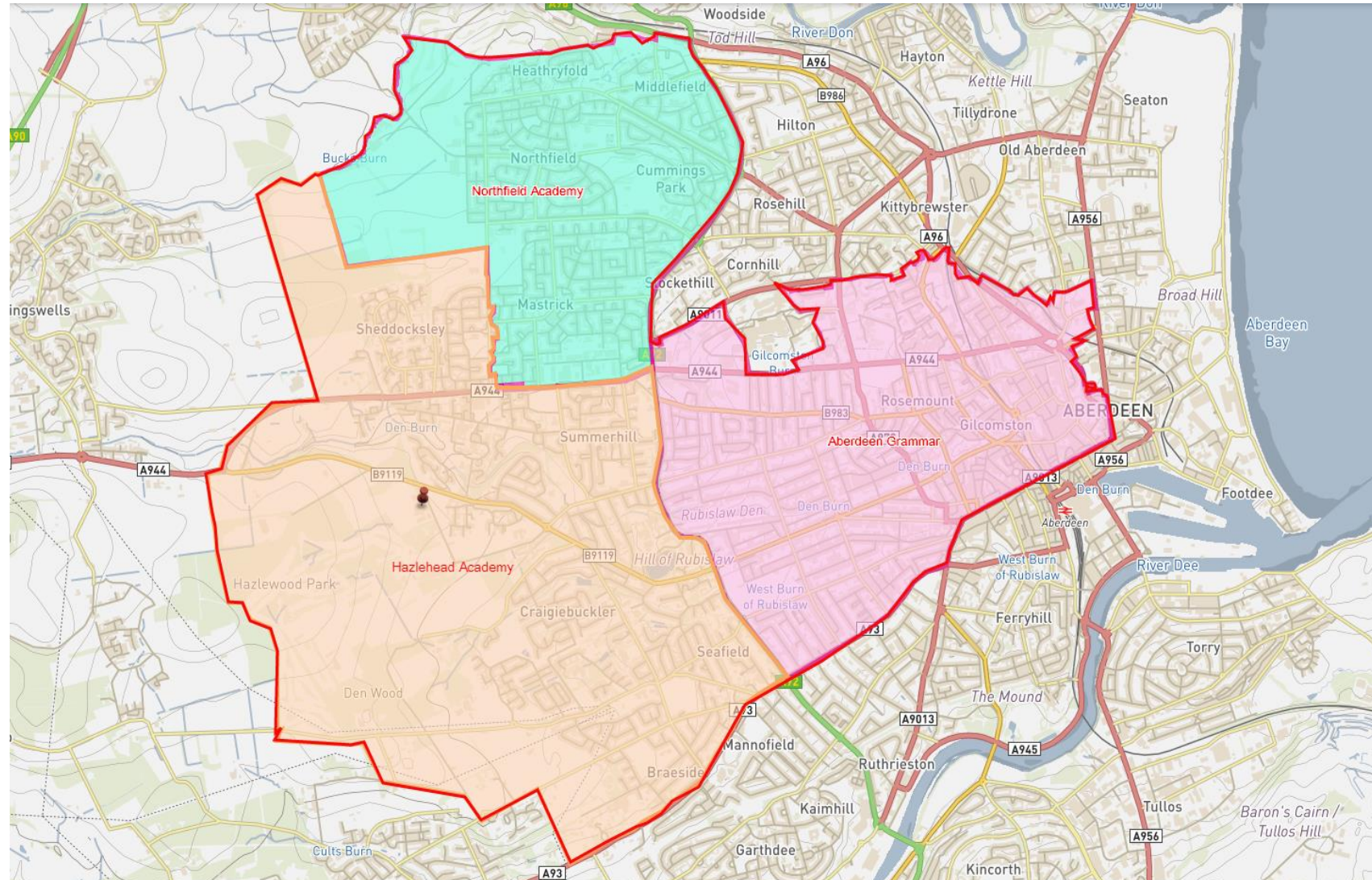
In light of the above points, officers have concluded that the proposed catchment areas are appropriate, and that there is no reason to change the original proposal.

5. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Education Operational Delivery Committee agrees to implement the proposed catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education provision, as defined within the maps at Annex A, with effect from 1 August 2022.

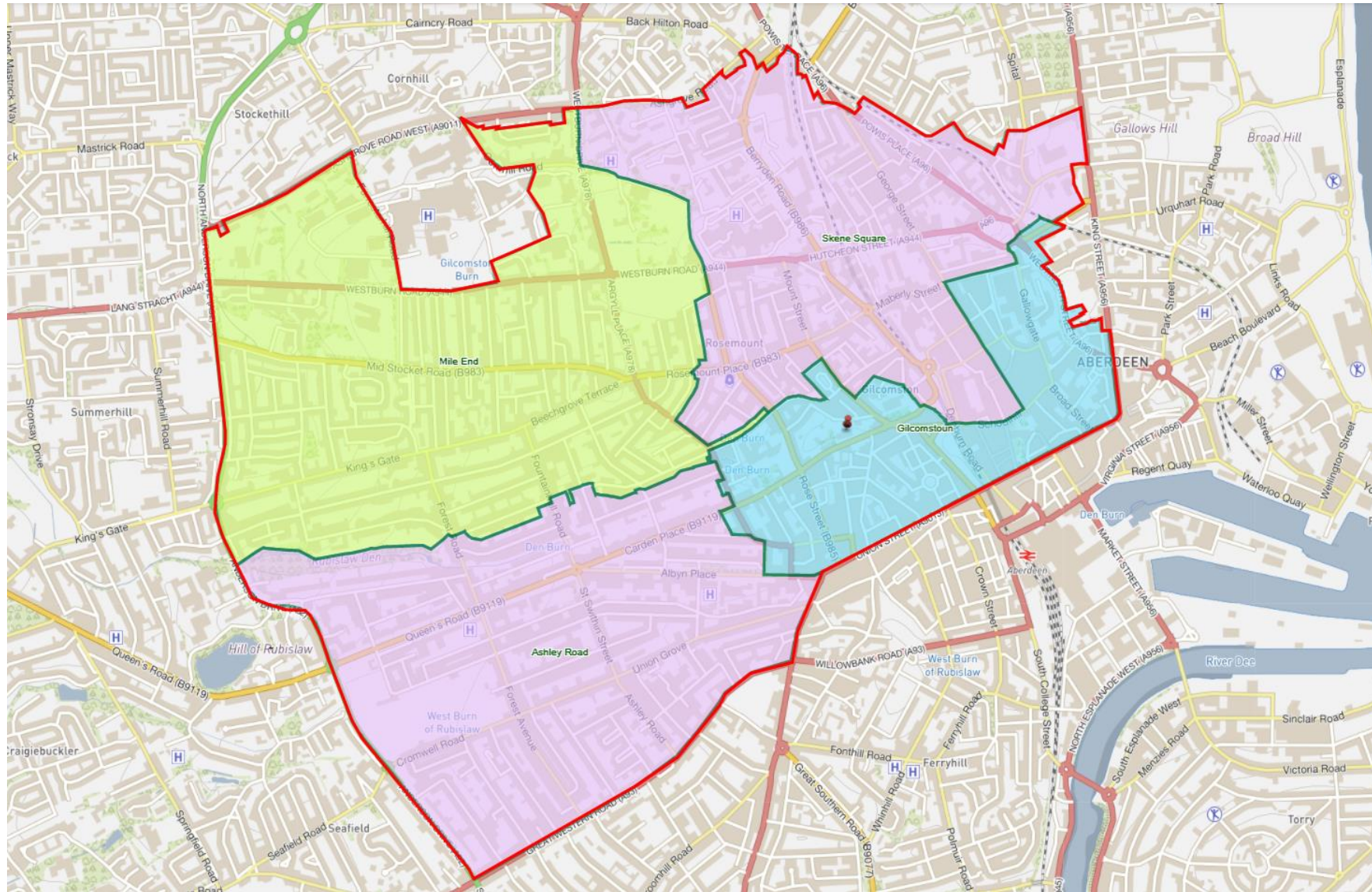
Steve Whyte
Director of Resources
December 2021

Proposed catchment area for secondary GME provision



The proposed catchment area is indicated by the red line, and overlays the existing English Medium school catchment zones for Hazlehead Academy, Northfield Academy and Aberdeen Grammar School. The pin symbol indicates the location of Hazlehead Academy.

Proposed catchment area for primary GME provision



The proposed catchment area is indicated by the red line, and overlays the existing English Medium school catchment zones for Gilcomstoun School, Ashley Road School, Mile End School and Skene Square School. The pin symbol indicates the location of Gilcomstoun School.

REPORT FROM EDUCATION SCOTLAND

Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010

Report by HM Inspectors of Education addressing educational aspects of the proposal by Aberdeen City Council to establish catchment areas for existing Gaelic Medium Education provisions. At Hazlehead Academy, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Hazlehead Academy, Northfield Academy and Aberdeen Grammar School. At Gilcomstoun School, to overlay the existing English medium catchment areas for Gilcomstoun School, Ashley Road School, Mile End School and Skene Square School. The new catchment areas should take effect from 1 August 2022.

November 2021

1. Introduction

1.1 This report from Education Scotland has been prepared by Her Majesty's Inspectors of Education (HM Inspectors) in accordance with the terms of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010 ("the 2010 Act"). The purpose of the report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of Aberdeen City Council's proposal to establish catchment areas for the Gaelic Medium Education provisions at Hazlehead Academy and Gilcomstoun Primary School. Section 2 of the report sets out brief details of the consultation process. Section 3 of the report sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal, including significant views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the 2010 Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include this report and must contain an explanation of how, in finalising the proposal, it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation process and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1.2 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children and young people of the schools; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;
- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and

- the educational benefits the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

1.3 In preparing this report, HM Inspectors undertook the following activities:

- attendance, using virtual connections, at the public meeting held on 14 September 2021 in connection with the council's proposals;
- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- discussion with relevant consultees.

2. Consultation process

2.1 Aberdeen City Council undertook the consultation on its proposal(s) with reference to the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The formal consultation ran from 23 August 2021 to 8 October 2021. The proposal paper was distributed to a wide range of stakeholders and interested parties. Aberdeenshire Council make placing requests to send children and young people to Aberdeen City Council to be educated through the medium of Gaelic. They are supportive of the proposal as it does not impact on families residing in Aberdeenshire. They do not comment on proposal's impact for future families. A dedicated area of Aberdeen City Council's website afforded interested parties both information and an opportunity to respond to the statutory consultation. This attracted 61 responses, with a further six responding by email. Almost all of the respondents, including Bòrd na Gàidhlig and Comann nam Pàrant, did not support the proposed catchment areas. The respondents who oppose the proposal were largely comprised of parents who currently access Gaelic Medium Education, have done so or those who plan to do so in the future. The local Gaelic community, including a few specialist academics also oppose the proposal.

2.2 There were common and consistent themes to the concerns expressed in responses to the statutory consultation. These included a lack of rationale and connection to national policy, practice and statutory guidance for Gaelic, catchment areas being too small, with a different catchment area established for the primary provision to that of the secondary. A significant number of respondents expressed the view that a lack of fairness and equity would result from the proposal, should it be established. There was also a consensus that pre-consultation discussions, although not statutory, would have been helpful prior to stakeholders being presented with the proposals as part of a statutory process. HM Inspectors' evaluative activities confirmed these legitimate concerns. Bòrd na Gàidhlig in their response refer to providing the council with recommendations on the proposed catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education. They report that these have not been taken into account. Bòrd na Gàidhlig view the current proposals as being a disadvantage to the people of Aberdeen and not encouraging a greater uptake of Gaelic Medium Education. This is a statutory duty.

2.3 The public meeting was attended by three members of the public in person, and 39 joined the meeting virtually using technology. Two officers at Aberdeen City Council presented the proposal and received questions on the themes already highlighted in this report. The public meeting offered an opportunity to explore the proposal. HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders that the meeting did not allay concerns and justify the educational benefits from this proposal.

3.1 Aberdeen City Council has one nursery, primary and secondary provision that offers Gaelic Medium Education. In 1991, Gaelic Medium Education was established by Grampian Regional Council (as it existed at the time) for its area in response to parental demand. At that time, strategic planning resulted in Gaelic Medium Education being available to all pupils within the city, should that be parents' preferred option in education. The current Gaelic Medium Education provision is based within schools that also offer education through the medium of English. The council is yet to set up additional provisions, or all Gaelic schools as is happening in some other parts of the country as a result of growth in Gaelic Medium Education. In 2017, Bòrd na Gàidhlig published Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education asking that catchment areas be set up for Gaelic Medium Education to support a sector of education experiencing growth nationally. Aberdeen City Council's proposal would establish catchment areas that do not enable equal access to Gaelic Medium Education for children and young people living in the council area, without the need for placing requests for a large number of residents.

3.2 From our scrutiny activity, HM Inspectors have evidenced that the council has substantial work to do to establish the educational benefits that would result from their proposals, should these be advanced further. The council have also to establish how they will mitigate against adverse effects that may result from the proposal, should it be advanced. They are still to convince parents and other stakeholders of the educational benefits of their proposals. HM Inspectors see the educational benefits statements as being very general aspirations and do not view the proposals as resulting in educational benefits.

3.3 Stakeholders with whom HM Inspectors met confirmed that they were not consulted about the setting of catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education before arrangements were made available to them as part of a statutory consultation. Almost all felt that the council should have undertaken informal consultation in order to listen, explore with, explain and empower parents in setting up catchment areas that result in educational benefits. This consultation could have included how the proposal makes Gaelic Medium Education an attractive option for current and future parents who do and may use Gaelic Medium Education within the city.

3.4 HM Inspectors agree with stakeholders' views on the lack of clarity from the proposal on how these will contribute to meeting outcomes of national and local strategic plans. This includes the targets the council have set as part of their statutory Gaelic Language Plan and how they demonstrate their impact towards national targets for Gaelic. The council should also give further consideration to how their proposals meet the context set in their own paper on their service delivery model. This states that they aim to enact the underpinning principles of strengthening transparency, accountability, engagement, inclusiveness, shared vision and values, and a commitment to joint learning. The council also references their Local Outcome Improvement Plan with its vision for all people, families, businesses and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect. For the majority of parents currently using Gaelic Medium Education, the proposed catchment areas would result in them being out with the catchment area. This resonated with concerns that the catchment areas were too small and should be set for the whole of the city. It was unclear to stakeholders why a different catchment area was set for the primary and secondary. Stakeholders felt that the requirement to make a placing request may have an adverse effect on the future uptake for Gaelic Medium Education. They also did not approve that a catchment area was set around a "reasonable walking distance" when only one Gaelic Medium Education service was available across the city. In practice, it is an established factor of Gaelic Medium Education that, on the whole, pupils do have to travel further for this specialist provision than their counterparts do to receive learning through the medium of English. Parents are also seeking more clarity on their entitlement to 3-18

Gaelic Medium Education as a priority, should school rolls increase in the future. Comann nam Pàrant in their response have said that their request for the council's Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment on the proposal has not been met. The council also needs to address Comann nam Pàrant's concerns that, should the proposal go ahead, inequalities for children, young people and families will be increased rather than reduced. This clarity is particularly required considering that the council has only one provision for Gaelic Medium Education as opposed to multiple provisions in learning through English.

3.5 Stakeholders in their discussions with HM Inspectors reflected on the factors contributing to growth in Gaelic Medium Education in other urban areas of Scotland. HM Inspectors agree that learning from others' success is a reasonable reflection activity that may influence change and improvement for Gaelic Medium Education. A number of stakeholders reported feelings of anxiety, concern, unfairness and inequity resulting from the proposals. They reported that they could not see the educational benefits of the proposal and how it is promoting Gaelic Medium Education. Parents reported additional financial and time burdens as they transported their children to school. This was exacerbated when parents had children at both the primary and secondary stages. The council should consider these factors as part of their focus on equity, inequality and reducing the cost of the school day. Parents need to be advised of how to access financial assistance from the council when they are experiencing such barriers. This should be taken forward in a collaborative, consultative and outcome-focused way. Parents in choosing Gaelic Medium Education are supporting a national target of creating a sustainable future for the language.

3.6 HM Inspectors in recent school inspections for Gilcomstoun School and Hazlehead Academy evidenced that transitions between primary and secondary needed to be improved. In this statutory consultation, the teachers and senior leaders with whom we spoke in Gilcomstoun School and Hazlehead Academy showed commitment in taking this forward. At Hazlehead Academy, staff also spoke to us of improvements to Gaelic Learner Education as part of setting a more conducive ethos for Gaelic Medium Education. Transitions have still to improve so that all young people continue their immersion experiences at the secondary stages, given the additional value for fluency beyond studying Gàidhlig (Gaelic) as a subject in the curriculum. Going forward, there should be a more explicit commitment to improved continuity between primary and secondary Gaelic Medium Education. This proposal as it stands does not result in educational benefits for continuity and transition.

4. Summary

4.1 HM Inspectors have considered Aberdeen City Council's proposal to establish catchment areas for the Gaelic Medium Education provisions at Hazlehead Academy and Gilcomstoun School. We agree that there are legitimate concerns that the council has still to address. We have evidenced very strong opposition from stakeholders who could not agree that the proposals will result in educational benefits. HM Inspectors have not evidenced that the council has prepared an educational benefits statement that includes all of the criteria listed under Section 3 of the Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010. The lack of pre-consultation work has been unhelpful in arriving at a consensus. It has caused a degree of anxiety that may have been avoided. Such pre-consultation could have assisted stakeholders in contributing their specialisms to devising a proposal that takes forward parents' and the council's commitment to national planning for Gaelic. Going forward, stakeholders' legitimate comments need to be taken into account in the strategic development of Gaelic Medium Education within the council. Bòrd na Gàidhlig, as statutory consultees, need to be enabled to be active participants in the consultation.

4.2 The council has significant work still to do to establish the educational benefits of their proposals. It is the view of HM Inspectors that catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education should make learning through Gaelic attractive and feasible, whilst promoting high-quality standards, equity, equality, inclusion and growth as required by national planning. The council in proposing these catchment areas for Gaelic Medium Education leave many potential pupils out with the catchment area. The council need to ensure it is meeting its duty to promote and support Gaelic Medium Education. They also need to ensure they are reducing inequality of outcome for children and young people.

4.3 In its final report, the council needs to make clear how parents make future requests for establishing further Gaelic Medium Education provisions as set out in the Education (Scotland) Act 2016.

**HM Inspectors
November 2021**

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