

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education Operational Delivery Committee
<b>DATE</b>	12 November 2019
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	OPE/19/416
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Rob Polkinghorne
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Graeme Simpson
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Louise Beaton
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	General Delegation 7.1

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The aim of the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy is to give clear guidance to staff and parents/carers on the admissions process and procedures for local authority ELC settings.
- 1.2 This report seeks Committee approval of the new Early Learning and Childcare Admissions (ELC) Policy which takes account of Early Learning and Childcare Expansion and Aberdeen City Council's commitment to deliver the increased entitlement of up to 1140 hours funded ELC provision by August 2020.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION**

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approve the revised Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020, and instructs the Chief Operating Officer to implement the policy with effect from 1 December 2019.

### **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 by 2020.
- 3.2 Currently all three and four-year olds, and eligible two-year olds, receive 600 hours of funded ELC per year. Under the new plans, this will almost double by August 2020. This means more funded hours, more choice of where children can go to access their ELC entitlement and more flexible models of ELC.
- 3.3 The guiding principles which underpin Early Learning and Childcare expansion are:
  - Quality
  - Flexibility
  - Affordability
  - Accessibility

#### **The Local Context**

- 3.4 The Aberdeen City: Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan was approved by Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee on 16 November 2017. This set out the Council's plan to provide local, flexible ELC which is accessible, affordable and of high quality.
- 3.5 Each local offer will be designed around the needs of families in each locality. The provision of universally accessible and high quality ELC will play a vital role in helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap.
- 3.6 Parents will have the choice to apply for the additional hours, up to 1140 hours per year. There is no legal requirement nor expectation for parents or carers to take up their full entitlement. Families can choose what works best for them.
- 3.7 In keeping with initial plans approved by Committee, Aberdeen City Council will offer a range of flexible models in each locality / Associated School Group (ASG):
  - Full day provision
  - Half day provision – morning or afternoon
  - Blended provision – a combination of local authority and funded provider / childminder provision.

- 3.8 School settings and funded providers, including private nursery settings and childminders (when in partnership), will be offering the additional hours. Continued partnership working is important. A significant number of children use funded providers and we would like to ensure additional hours can continue to be used in a range of settings.
- 3.9 All settings delivering 1140 hours are required to meet the National Standard (Grade 4 or above) to ensure a high quality ELC service is being delivered to the children of Aberdeen. This extends to local authority settings as well as private nurseries and childminders in partnership with the Council.

### **Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy**

- 3.10 The previous Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy was approved by the Education and Children's Services Committee on 28 January 2016 and amended by delegated powers in November 2018.
- 3.11 The Policy gives clear guidance to staff and parents/carers about Aberdeen City Council's Early Learning and Childcare admissions process and procedures for local authority ELC settings. It also outlines all Early Learning and Childcare options available via Associated School Group (ASG). For the first time this will include Funded Providers and Childminders, which will give parents more information, choice and flexibility about accessing their ELC entitlement to meet their needs.
- 3.12 The Policy is structured in two sections:
1. Policy – for example, our statutory duties, entitlement, eligible 2's and Additional Support Needs provision and criteria for admissions.
  2. Guidance – for example, application procedure, guidelines for induction and class composition.
- 3.13 It is proposed the Criteria for Early Learning and Childcare Admission is changed from Primary School Zone to Associated School Group (ASG) Zone to reflect the range of flexible models which will be offered in each locality / Associated School Group (ASG).
- 3.14 All children continuing in an ELC setting, where the model offered there meets their needs, will be guaranteed a place. For all new Local Authority applications, ELC places will be allocated according to the following list of criteria:
1. All children looked after or assessed as 'in need' defined in the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. A Professional Support for Application to ELC form must be completed to determine whether a child meets the criteria.
  2. All applications for children who are currently attending an Eligible 2's place. A limited number of places may be reserved for Eligible children who will turn 2 during the school session.
  3. All applications for children in the Associated School Group (ASG) zone, oldest first. In the event of there being more applications than places at a

setting, priority will be given to children living in the Primary School Zone in which the setting is based.

4. All applications for children who have a sibling in the school parents are applying for, in accordance with section 23(3A) of the Education (Scotland) Act 1980. The sibling criteria will only come into effect when children have a sibling in ELC or Primary 1-6 at the time of the application. Siblings from the same family, although not living together at the same address, can apply under this criteria.
  5. All other applications from children resident in the City. Places will be allocated in the first instance to children who have childcare in the ASG zone and then to children who live out of ASG zone, oldest first.
  6. Children who are resident outwith the City. For children resident outwith the city boundary, not including children with a sibling (as they will come under band 4), the address of a childminder or carer within the city does not entitle the child to an ELC place. Places will be allocated oldest first.
- 3.15 Cross boundary arrangements are currently being developed at Northern Alliance Level. Proposals will be accepted to come forward and the policy will be revised accordingly in line with annual review.
- 3.16 The list of all Early Learning and Childcare settings by Associated School Group (ASG) has been updated to include all Local Authority and Funded Provider settings. (Appendix B) This reflects the 'provider neutral' approach underpinned by the National Standard as part of Funding Following the Child which places choice into the hands of parents and carers.

### **Consultation**

- 3.17 The following people have been consulted during the process of drafting the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy:
- Aberdeen City Council Early Years Team
  - Aberdeen City Council Head Teachers
  - Aberdeen City Council Early Years Practitioners
  - Aberdeen City Council Chief Officer – Integrated Children's and Family Services
  - Aberdeen City Council Chief Education Officer
  - Aberdeen City Council Chief Operating Officer
  - Funded Providers, e.g. Private Nurseries
  - Parents
  - Aberdeen City Council Assurance Manager
  - Aberdeen City Council Chief Officer Digital and Technology
  - Aberdeen City Council Data Protection Officer
  - Finance Partner
  - Legal Services Manager
- 3.18 Four Focus Groups were held in September to discuss the Policy with key stakeholders and to seek their views. The majority of stakeholders were in agreement with the proposals on the Policy and the criteria for ELC admissions.

3.19 An Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Consultation is currently underway seeking the views of parents, carers and parents-to-be on the increased ELC entitlement and uptake and to shape the ELC offer in each Locality. The consultation opened on 30 September and has had over 800 responses. It closes on 1 November 2019.

3.20 The Consultation will give us the following information:

- If parents and carers would use the increased 1140 hours?
- What parents and carers would use the additional hours for? For example, to work, to study, for family support etc.
- What model parents and carers would most likely use?
- What factors are important when choosing Early Learning and Childcare? For example, close to home, close to work, close to other services etc.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

4.2 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 Early Learning and Childcare which will increase from 600 hours to 1140 hours from August 2020. This will continue in 2020/21. Officers have worked with finance colleagues to ensure that our plans realise a sustainable Early Learning and Childcare provision. The funding will form part of the Grant Aided Expenditure (GAE) from 2021/22 but the level of funding has not yet been confirmed.

#### **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) will bring 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. This entitlement will increase from 600 hours to 1140 hours in August 2020.
- 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 families in the city.

#### **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

6.1 This report is brought to the November meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee in order to have the Policy approved in time for the commencement of the Admissions Process for August 2020 in January 2020.

6.2 Any delay in commencing the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions process, could cause risks to customer, employee and reputation. For example, applications not being processed, and places not being allocated in time.

6.3 The following risks have been considered as part of the overall Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Delivery Programme:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Risk</b>	<b>Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
<b>Financial</b>	Risk of building a financially unsustainable model	<b>Low</b>	Care has been taken to redesign ELC around improving quality rather than simply doubling to reflect the additional hours.
<b>Legal</b>	Risk of not meeting statutory obligations around 1140 hours	<b>Low</b>	Mitigated by the work of the ELC Programme Board and associated projects
<b>Employee</b>	Risk of not attracting enough new practitioners into the workforce	<b>Low</b>	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 September 2018.
<b>Customer</b>	Risk of not designing an offer around the needs of our customers	<b>Low</b>	Mitigated through consultation with communities and the creation of Early Learning and Childcare Locality Leader Officer Posts which support Early Learning and Childcare in each Locality.
<b>Environment</b>	N/A		
<b>Technology</b>	N/A		
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of not delivering on legal obligations by 2020	<b>Medium</b>	Mitigated by the work of the ELC Programme Board and associated projects

## 7. OUTCOMES

- 7.1 Early Learning and Childcare can make a significant positive contribution to a child's development. The expansion of ELC can reduce the poverty-related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families.
- 7.2 The expansion of ELC will also support parents and carers to return to work or study and enable them to better support their children and contribute positively to a prosperous city.
- 7.3 The delivery of Early Learning and Childcare is one of the main drivers in ensuring that all children have the best start in life, delivering on the ambitions set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), the Children's Services Plan (CSP) and our National Improvement Framework (NIF).
- 7.4 The Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020 is of interest to parents and carers with young children.

<b>Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Prosperous Economy</b>	<p>The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare will have an extremely positive impact on this priority theme and will help to deliver the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 'to increase the number of people employed in growth sectors by 5% by 2021.</p> <p><u>Example 1:</u> The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 1 – 10% increase in employment across priority and volume growth sectors by 2026.</p> <p>The workforce needs to increase significantly in order to deliver the increase in ELC provision.</p> <p>29 Aberdeen City Council employees have recently retrained as Early Years Practitioners. A further 30 are currently undergoing training with another cohort of 30 due to start re-training in early 2020.</p> <p>There will be more Modern Apprenticeship opportunities available with the introduction of a Modern Apprenticeship role in Local Authority ELC settings for the first time, providing a positive destination and career pathway for approximately 50 young people per 2 years.</p>

	The provision of 1140 hours of funded Early Learning and Childcare will enable many families, who were previously unable to access affordable provision, the opportunity to return to training or employment.
<b>Prosperous People</b>	<p>The provision of high quality ELC will have an extremely positive impact on this priority theme. Equity of access to universal provision, will support families to provide the best care they can for their children.</p> <p>The provision of universally accessible and high quality ELC will play a vital role in helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap.</p>
<b>Prosperous Place</b>	<p>The provision of high quality ELC will have a positive impact on this priority theme.</p> <p><u>Example 2:</u> The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – No one in Aberdeen will go without food due to poverty by 2026. For those children receiving the 1140 hours they are entitled to a funded meal if their session is longer than four hours.</p> <p>Furthermore, this will also support families who experience ‘holiday hunger’ as Early Learning and Childcare will be delivered outwith school term-time in some settings in each Associated School Group (ASG).</p>

<b>Design Principles of Target Operating Model</b>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Customer Service Design</b>	The proposed approach is designed around the needs of each community.
<b>Organisational Design</b>	The central team structure is more collaborative and focussed on the needs of the customer.
<b>Governance</b>	Clear governance arrangements for Early Learning and Childcare Expansion are in place through the Programme Board.



	Governance arrangements for the Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy is via the Education Operational Delivery Committee.
<b>Workforce</b>	Aberdeen City Council is investing in and empowering the current and future workforce in line with the Aberdeen City: Workforce Delivery Plan - Early Learning and Childcare approved by Education Operational Delivery Committee on 6 September 2018.
<b>Technology</b>	Aberdeen City Council will implement a new national Management Information System for Early Learning and Childcare Admissions in August 2020.
<b>Partnerships and Alliances</b>	The model of delivery is founded on effective GIRFEC practice which requires close partnership working to improve outcomes for children and families.

## 8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

<b>Assessment</b>	<b>Outcome</b>
<b>Equality &amp; Human Rights Impact Assessment</b>	EHRIA completed.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required.
<b>Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty</b>	Not applicable.

## 9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

## 10. APPENDICES

Appendix A - Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy 2020 (Draft)

Appendix B - Early Learning and Childcare Settings in Aberdeen City Listed by Associated School Group (ASG)

## 11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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