

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education and Children's Services</b>
DATE	<b>14<sup>th</sup> September 2017</b>
REPORT TITLE	<b>Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan</b>
REPORT NUMBER	<b>ECS/17/042</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
REPORT AUTHOR	<b>Eleanor Sheppard</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-**

The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval to submit the statutory Draft Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan to The Scottish Government by 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) Approve the Draft Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan attached as Appendix A to the report;
- (ii) Instruct the Director of Education and Children's Services to submit the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan to The Scottish Government by 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017; and
- (iii) Instruct the Director of Education and Children's Services to present the final Early Learning and Childcare financial plan attached as Appendix B to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2017 for approval.

### **3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

#### **3.1 The National Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC)**

The Scottish Government is committed to expanding the provision of funded early learning and childcare (ELC) from 600 hours to 1140 hours by 2020. The expansion will prioritise a high quality experience for the child to capitalise on the significant contribution that ELC can make to a child's development and to closing the poverty related attainment gap. The Scottish Government recognises that existing ELC provision will have to be transformed to deliver 1140 hours in line with the Ministers' Blueprint for 2020

and encourages Local Authorities to innovate to improve service delivery and design a model that reflects and is responsive to community need.

- 3.2 All Local Authorities are asked to develop a statutory Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan to guide proposed expansion plans. The Draft Aberdeen City Council Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan is structured in keeping with national documentation and takes account of guidance provided by the National Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Team. Opportunities to engage with colleagues from across the Northern Alliance have helped shape our Delivery Plan. The Scottish Government ELC Team anticipate a period of engagement with all Local Authorities following submission of plans to interrogate the data and guide an equitable allocation of funding.
- 3.3 Effective use of Improvement Methodology will result in an evolving Delivery Plan as Local Authorities respond to the findings of national tests of change, advice and guidance from The Scottish Government, clarification of funding, changes in local circumstances and changes in the way parents use services; changes resulting from the Governance Review may also impact on how the Local Authority ensures quality in the years ahead.
- 3.4 The following key principles underpin our Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan.

**Quality** is the driving principle of the ELC Expansion Programme. The early years provides the foundations for promoting secure attachment, better health, social and learning behaviours with long-term impact on improved outcomes for children. Promoting child development, curriculum, pedagogy, alignment with child and family nurture services, closing the attainment gap and transitions to the next stage of the learning journey will be a key focus of our expansion plans.

**Accessibility** will be addressed to ensure that constraints of current service design are removed wherever possible. This includes specific existing issues around capacity in particular locations and ensuring access for children with additional support needs.

**Flexibility** is a key driver for change as provision will become more flexible and responsive to parental demand. This will include more settings offering all year round provision and/or longer opening hours, thus enhancing flexibility and choice for families. Expansion plans will set out the intention to deliver against parental need for flexible access, whilst taking account of two caveats:

- Is it good for children and for families?  
The impact of any flexible offer on the experience of the child and, in turn, their family must be taken into account.
- Is it operationally sustainable?  
Where operational sustainability is a concern, it is assumed that consideration will be given to other ways to meet the need, for example, use of childminders in a blended approach.

**Affordability.** Reducing the cost of accessing ELC for parents is a significant driver in the ambition to extend the ELC entitlement. This must be set alongside the redesign of ELC services in a manner that is also affordable for Local Authorities and The Scottish Government and delivers long-term value for money to create a financially sustainable service model which makes most effective use of public funds. It is likely that this will include investment in Local Authority services and in new arrangements with the private and third sectors.

The Scottish Government circulated the financial plan required in the Delivery Plan on 25<sup>th</sup> August 2017 and the format is currently being populated. The full financial template will replace the financial plan contained within this draft Plan and be appended prior to The Delivery Plan being lodged with The Scottish Government by 29<sup>th</sup> September 2017. The Scottish Government plan to review both the Delivery and Financial Plan when determining the level of funding that will be made available to each Local Authority. The full financial template with proposed costs will be presented to the Education and Children's Services Committee on 16<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and is attached in Appendix B for information only at this point.

### 3.5 **The Vision for ELC in Aberdeen City**

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.

We aim to fulfil our vision of ELC by:

- Offering ELC up to 50 weeks a year of ELC in partnership with partner providers and local childminders following a review of our contracting arrangements to support growth.
- Prioritising the three Priority Areas in the first instance and then other areas of socio-economic disadvantage in the City.
- Working with families to develop a range of options in the right places and at the right times.
- Considering how the provisions currently attached to primary schools should be used and what other options need to be created in order to provide capacity, quality, accessibility and flexibility.
- Ensuring that decisions taken enhance and not hamper emerging community capacity and further empower enterprising activity.
- Looking holistically to ensure that services being provided in each community are complementary to deliver best value.

- Allocating a skilled Manager to each Locality to ensure quality across all provisions. 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.
- Continuing to work with The Scottish Government, Association of Directors of Education (ADES) and The Northern Alliance to explore approaches to extending ELC provision and share local knowledge.

3.6 It is anticipated that the Delivery Plan be kept under 6 monthly review to reflect changes in local circumstances.

### 3.7 **Phasing, Communication and Design Lag**

The expansion will require substantial levels of investment in workforce and infrastructure which will be phased in from 2017-18 onwards to ensure that the required capacity is in place by 2020.

Aberdeen City Council will prioritise the three Community Planning Partnership Priority Areas in the first instance to ensure that families most likely to benefit have access to expanded provision first. Priority will be on deprivation and complexity thereafter.

### 3.8 **Governance**

The Project will be governed by a Project Board comprising the Project Sponsor, Delivery Team and representatives from across the Council including Finance and Economic Development. The Project Board will meet regularly to monitor progress and mitigate against any emerging risks.

## 4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 Additional funding to support the revenue and capital costs associated with the Delivery Plan will be allocated from The Scottish Government and from the re-design of existing service budgets.

The actual level of funding from the Scottish Government will not be finalised until after all Local Authorities have submitted their Delivery Plans with decisions around the level of funding expected at the beginning of 2018. Clarity around levels of Scottish Government funding in January will result in the review of the Delivery Plan and associated Financial Plan.

This is a major change initiative and it will be important to closely monitor the financial implications of such changes as the Delivery Plan is implemented to ensure that expenditure is in line with available funding.

The Finance Service will be a member of the Project Board to ensure that any financial deviations are quickly identified and addressed.

## **5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act guides our consultation and engagement with communities to ensure that the expanded provision impacts positively on longer term outcomes.
- 5.2 All Local Authorities will have a duty to provide 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for eligible two year olds and all three and four year olds by 2020. The ELC Delivery Plan will help us manage the transformational change necessary to deliver expanded services by 2020.

## **6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

### **6.1 Financial**

The Scottish Government has indicated that £400 million capital funding will be available up to 2020. The Scottish Government has yet to confirm how much revenue funding will be available but has stated that the expansion will be fully funded.

£1.035 million (capital) has been provided to Aberdeen City Council in 2017/2018 with an additional £725,000 to cover revenue costs for this first year. Levels of future revenue and capital funding from The Scottish Government will be determined following submission of the ELC Delivery Plan. The Scottish Government intend to hold a series of meetings with Local Authorities to challenge the assumptions contained within the plan before allocating funding.

The expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare will require very careful budget monitoring and financial planning to mitigate the risk of funding being insufficient to realise the expansion. The service is working with Finance staff on the potential costs of expansion with a view to ensure that the submission of the funding requirements to The Scottish Government is sufficiently robust.

The Project Manager will monitor progress on a daily basis and advise the Project Sponsor of any emerging risks to ensure that risks are mitigated at the earliest opportunity. The Early Learning and Childcare Project Board will oversee financial planning and spending to further mitigate the risks so that they remain low.

### **6.2 Employee**

Not being able to recruit sufficient numbers of Practitioners to support the delivery of the expansion is a high risk. A detailed workforce development plan has been included within the Delivery Plan. This plan includes the establishment of an Early Learning and Childcare Academy to increase the number of practitioners and also increase the number of routes into the

profession. The workforce plan will be reviewed and amended on a 6 monthly basis and this will ensure that the risk remains low.

### **6.3 Customer / citizen**

Our youngest children and eligible 2s will benefit most from the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare through the provision of local high quality services. There are significant benefits for families who will be able to use the extended hours to enable them to return to employment or access training.

There is a need to undertake research to determine how best to design services that will have the greatest impact on children and families to ensure that we maximise the reach of the expansion. The Educational Psychology Service are supporting this work to identify the features of expanded provision most likely to improve outcomes for vulnerable families to ensure that we capitalise on the opportunities offered through this expansion to directly improve outcomes for children and families. Intergenerational approaches will be supported wherever possible due to the significantly positive impact this has on all parties.

This approach will ensure that the risk remains low.

### **6.4 Environmental**

Full environmental assessments will be undertaken prior to confirming any sites for expansion or extension and feasibility studies will be undertaken where appropriate. This level of scrutiny will ensure that environmental risks remain low.

### **6.5 Technological**

There is a risk that technology is not in place to support the transformation and particularly the 'funding follows the child' model being advocated. Work is on-going across The Scottish Government and The Northern Alliance to mitigate this risk to ensure it remains low.

### **6.6 Legal and Reputational**

The reputational risks of not being in a position to roll out 1140 hours from 2020 are considerable. This is being mitigated through early planning, clear governance arrangements and close working between teams across Aberdeen City Council to ensure that the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare is being planned for across all teams.

## **7. IMPACT SECTION.**

### **7.1 Economy**

The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare will be an economic enabler for many parents and carers and will positively impact on those who wish to retrain or return to work.

### **7.2 People**

The Directorate is committed to improving the life outcomes for all people in Aberdeen, especially the most vulnerable. For this reason, the initial focus of the expansion will be on the three Community Planning Partnership Priority Areas to support families to enter the workforce.

### **7.3 Place**

In the first instance the Delivery Plan will impact positively on families living in the three Priority Areas identified by the Community Planning Partnership.

### **7.4 Technology**

A technological application will be required to support the 'funding follows the child' model and this is currently not available, this presents a high risk to delivering flexibility for parents and carers. This is being mitigated by working with The Scottish Government and Northern Alliance to develop an appropriate solution. This approach will ensure that the risk is managed.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Ministers' Blueprint for 2020

## **9. APPENDICES (if applicable)**

Aberdeen City Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan  
Financial Planning template

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