

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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<b>COMMITTEE</b>	Education Operational Delivery Committee
<b>DATE</b>	14 June 2022
<b>EXEMPT</b>	No
<b>CONFIDENTIAL</b>	No
<b>REPORT TITLE</b>	Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24
<b>REPORT NUMBER</b>	OPE/22/084
<b>DIRECTOR</b>	Rob Polkinghorne
<b>CHIEF OFFICER</b>	Eleanor Sheppard
<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Louise Beaton
<b>TERMS OF REFERENCE</b>	1.1.1

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### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Committee approval for our new Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 in line with our statutory duties to prepare and publish a plan.

### 2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 Approves the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24;
- 2.2 Instructs the Chief Education Officer to deliver the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 in line with statutory guidance; and
- 2.3 Instructs the Chief Education Officer to report on the progress and outcomes of the Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 in 2 years' time.

### 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.
- 3.3 We have a statutory duty to produce an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan every 2 years.

### **The Local Context**

- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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).
- 3.6 We have delivered against the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Delivery Plan approved in 2017 and have fully implemented the expansion of ELC across the city, in partnership with all of our stakeholders including our workforce and our Funded Providers.
- 3.7 We also consulted with parents and carers (Appendix A). In November 2021 we consulted with parents, carers and future parents and carers to seek their views to inform the evaluation report and to help develop the next Delivery Plan. Key headline points from the 453 returns included:
- 72% of respondents were very satisfied or satisfied with the range of ELC providers and models within their local area / Associated School Group (ASG).
  - 75.8% were 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 were 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% were 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.
- 3.8 The ELC Expansion Programme was delivered on time and on budget. As a result of the ELC Expansion Programme, Aberdeen City now offers a mixed delivery model of ELC provision:
- In 46 of our primary schools;
  - In 46 Funded Providers;
  - At the multi-agency Links Hub;

- At our Gaelic Medium Unit based in Gilcomstoun Primary School;
  - At our 2 Outdoor Nursery provisions at Duthie and Hazlehead Parks; and
  - Through 70 childminders
- 3.9 The ELC Expansion Programme was evaluated against the Delivery Plan. This was approved by Education Operational Delivery Committee on 20 January 2021.  
[http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s128023/Appendix%20B\\_%20Interactive%20ELC%20Impact%20Evaluation-compressed%202.pdf](http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s128023/Appendix%20B_%20Interactive%20ELC%20Impact%20Evaluation-compressed%202.pdf)
- 3.10 Learning points from the 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;
  - Further promote Gaelic Medium ELC provision;
  - Monitor demand for childminders;
  - Monitor demand for eligible 2s placements; and
  - Continue to work towards the delivery of intergenerational support as public health guidance allows.
- 3.11 Education Operational Delivery Committee instructed the Chief Education Officer to prepare a new Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan for 2022-24 based on the findings of the evaluation for presentation at the next meeting of this Committee.

### **Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24**

- 3.12 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.
- 3.13 The Plan has to respond to local need and reflect the diversity of communities in Aberdeen. The evaluation and the learning points identified have been used to inform the development of our Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan for 2022-24.
- 3.14 The 2022-24 Delivery Plan will follow on from the 2017 Delivery Plan and will be informed by the findings of the Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC programme, including the views of parents and carers.
- 3.15 A one-page infographic has been produced (Appendix B) which sets out the proposed direction of travel for the next two years. It was shared widely with key stakeholders, including staff, to show how the ELC Delivery Plan 2022-24 (Appendix C) will set out:
- How will we deliver ELC?
  - How will we ensure quality?
  - How will we communicate, engage and consult?
  - How will we support and develop our workforce?

3.16 The underpinning principles continue to be that ELC should be:

- High quality
- Affordable
- Accessible
- Flexible

3.17 Based on the outcomes of our Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC, our consultation with parents and carers (Appendix A), and our engagement with key stakeholders, including staff voice (Appendix D), we suggest that our key themes for development over the next 2 years are:

- Workforce Support
- Transitions
- Community Partnerships
- Family Support

3.18 Improvement activity and actions for next 2 years are detailed in the Early Learning and Learning Delivery Plan 2022-24 in Appendix C.

#### **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 realise a sustainable ELC provision.

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 and is an action within the ELC Delivery Plan 2022-24. 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 and a more stable staffing situation now that COVID-19 restrictions have been lifted). 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:

- The provision of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for eligible two year olds and all three and four year olds.
- 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.
- Aberdeen City Council is responsible for preparing and publishing an Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan every 2 years.

5.2 The ELC Delivery Plan will help us to manage the actions necessary to continue to deliver and develop high quality ELC in the city.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 No negative environmental impacts have been identified. A cornerstone of the ELC expansion programme was 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. Across all ELC settings, good use is also made of outdoor and green spaces where practicable and feasible to do so.

## 7. RISK

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H)  *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
<b>Strategic Risk</b>	No risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Compliance</b>	Risk of not meeting statutory obligations	Mitigated through delivery of the Expansion Programme and subsequent	L	<b>Yes</b>

	around 1140 hours.	monitoring of supply and demand of ELC places.		
<b>Operational</b>	Risk of not attracting enough new practitioners into the workforce.	Mitigated through the ongoing activities being undertaken to support workforce development as approved in Aberdeen City: Workforce Delivery Plan – Early Learning and Childcare approved by Education Operational Delivery Committee on 6 December 2018.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Financial</b>	Risk of building a financially unsustainable model.	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.	M	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Reputational</b>	Risk of not delivering on legal obligations	Mitigated through delivery of the Expansion Programme and subsequent monitoring of supply and demand of ELC places.	L	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Environment / Climate</b>	No risks identified	N/A	N/A	N/A

## 8. OUTCOMES

<u><b>COUNCIL DELIVERY PLAN</b></u>	
	<b>Impact of Report</b>
<b>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</b>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of Policy Statement 3 (People) – To work with the Scottish Government to provide flexible and affordable Early Learning and Childcare for families on the lowest incomes.</p> <p>The provision of free Early Learning and Childcare has the potential to be transformational for many families, but especially for those with the lowest incomes in the city.</p>
<u><b>Aberdeen City Local Outcome Improvement Plan</b></u>	
<p>Prosperous Economy - 500 Aberdeen City residents upskilled/ reskilled to enable them to move into, within and between economic opportunities as they arise by 2026</p>	<p>The Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 will continue to have a positive impact on this priority theme and will help to deliver the LOIP.</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> <p>There will be ongoing opportunities to join the Early Learning and Childcare workforce in Aberdeen and to retrain, to upskill and for career progression.</p>
<p>Prosperous People - 95% of all our children, including those living in our priority neighbourhoods, will sustain</p>	<p>The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare has contributed positively to supporting positive destinations.</p>

<p>a positive destination upon leaving school by 2026</p> <p>95% of children (0-5 years) will reach their expected developmental milestones by the time of their child health reviews by 2026</p>	<p>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> <p>Our work in partnership with families and communities including through a Peep offer in all settings as part of a partnership Family Support offer will support children to reach their expected milestones. It will also increase the number of parents and carers who have awareness of how to support their children's learning and development at home.</p> <p>Furthermore, every child who attends Early Learning and Childcare over a lunchtime period 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> <p>Early Learning and Childcare can improve long term outcomes for children and families.</p>
<p>Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will help to deliver the LOIP.</p> <p>The increase in funded ELC will enable more families to take up employment and training opportunities, thus reducing poverty. More hours are now available in Local Authority ELC settings and Funded Provider ELC settings are now 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>
<p><b>Regional and City Strategies</b></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the Strategic Development Plan by supporting the workforce. The</p>

Strategic Development Plan Children's Services Plan National Improvement Framework Plan	<p>provision of high quality Early Learning and Childcare will:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Support families to take up employment and training opportunities;</li> <li>2. Develop the Young Workforce; and</li> <li>3. Support business to recruit and retain staff.</li> </ol> <p>The Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 is aligned to the Children's Services Plan and the National Improvement Framework Plan and work to address poverty in the Child Poverty Action Plan.</p>
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## 9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
<b>Integrated Impact Assessment</b>	Full impact assessment required. Submitted to the Equalities Team.
<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment</b>	Not required
<b>Other</b>	None

## 10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 10.1 Early Learning and Childcare Evaluation  
[http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s128023/Appendix%20B\\_%20Interactive%20ELC%20Impact%20Evaluation-compressed%202.pdf](http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s128023/Appendix%20B_%20Interactive%20ELC%20Impact%20Evaluation-compressed%202.pdf)

## 11. APPENDICES

- 11.1 Appendix A – Early Learning and Childcare Parent and Carer Consultation 2021  
11.2 Appendix B – Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 Infographic  
11.3 Appendix C – Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24  
11.4 Appendix D – Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 Consultation with Stakeholders  
11.5 Appendix E – Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan 2022-24 (Design/PDF Version)

## 12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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