

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Delivery Plan 2022-24

Introduction / Executive Summary

Aberdeen City Council 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 will respond to local need and reflect the diversity of communities in Aberdeen. The 2022-24 Delivery Plan follows on from the 2017 Delivery Plan and is informed by the findings of the Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC programme, together with the outcomes of a Parent and Carer Consultation and engagement with key stakeholders including staff.

Background

The National Context

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

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. 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

Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC

A comprehensive Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC, against our ELC Delivery Plan approved in 2017, was undertaken in 2021. The Evaluation was approved by Aberdeen City Council Education Operational Delivery Committee in January 2022.

http://councilcommittees.acc.gov.uk/documents/s128023/Appendix%20B_%20Interactive%20ELC%20Impact%20Evaluation-compressed%202.pdf

Despite the challenges of delivering the ELC Expansion Programme during the Covid-19 pandemic, the objectives were successfully met. Key achievements included:

- All eligible children able to access 1140 hours from August 2021;
- 90% of on-time applications were offered their 1st choice ELC option, with 76% overall being offered their 1st choice ELC option.
- Evidence of highly effective Programme governance;
- Evidence of an increase in the quality of provision;
- Expansion of the Local Authority ELC workforce 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;
- Successful delivery of 27 capital projects;
- 82.9% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the location of their ELC provision;
- 82.4% of parents and carers who responded to a recent survey indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's experience of expanded ELC to date; and
- The Programme was delivered on time and on budget as of December 2021.

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 (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.

Learning points from the evaluation include a need to:

- 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.
- Continue to work towards the delivery of intergenerational support as public health guidance allows.

Vision for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in Aberdeen City

Monitoring of demand and consultation with parents and carers validates the vision set in the 2017 Delivery Plan.

Our vision is to provide ELC which is accessible, affordable, is of high quality and is 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.

Guiding Principles

The following guiding principles will be used to inform our practice. All ELC provision across Aberdeen City will:

- 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 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.

Key Themes for Development

Based on the outcomes of our Evaluation of the Expansion of ELC, our consultation with parents and carers, and our engagement with key stakeholders, including staff voice, the key themes for development over the next 2 years are:

Workforce Support

Transitions

Community Partnerships

Family Support

Improvement activity and actions for next 2 years are detailed in the following pages.

How will we deliver Early Learning and Childcare?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
<p>Maintain a mix of Local Authority and Funded Provider delivery models across all Associated School Groups (ASGs)</p>	<p>Continue to monitor demand across the city and in individual ASGs.</p> <p>Ongoing consultation and engagement with families to establish any changing patterns in service usage.</p> <p>Continue to monitor uptake with Funded Providers.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Funded Providers</p>	<p>Families are able to access a range of delivery models within their ASG.</p> <p>% of first choice applications.</p> <p>ELC Parent and Carer Consultation</p>
<p>Continue to offer all children attending ELC regular and routine access to high quality learning outside.</p>	<p>Ongoing development of Duthie Park and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries</p> <p>Provision of professional learning (including at Duthie and Hazlehead Outdoor Nurseries)</p> <p>Opportunities for staff to shadow at Duthie Park and Hazlehead Nurseries.</p> <p>Promotion and Quality Assurance of Outdoor Learning across all ELC settings.</p> <p>Childminders – Promoting environmental and community work.</p>	<p>Outdoor Manager</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Outdoor Manager</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Childminders</p>	<p>Provision of and evaluations of professional learning</p> <p>Evaluations from Quality Improvement Visits</p> <p>Number of staff engaging in job shadowing.</p> <p>Number of childminders participating.</p>

<p>Increase the number of childminders to promote choice</p>	<p>Monitor demand for childminders.</p> <p>Target recruitment activity according to demand and in priority regeneration areas.</p> <p>Devise new systems for childminders applications in partnership with Legal Services.</p> <p>Continue to evaluate and improve the support afforded to funded provider childminders.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p>	<p>Monitor application process.</p> <p>Secure current numbers of funded providers.</p> <p>Increase in the numbers of Childminders and Funded Provider Childminders across the city.</p> <p>Increase in the numbers of Childminders and Funded Provider Childminders in priority regeneration areas.</p>
<p>Increase uptake for eligible 2 year old children</p>	<p>Monitor demand for eligible 2 places.</p> <p>Secure places at Local Authority and Funded Provider ELC settings including childminders</p> <p>On-going collaboration with multi-agency partners to identify eligible 2s.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>All ELC Settings</p> <p>Scottish Childminding Association</p>	<p>Monitor application process.</p> <p>Families are able to access delivery models within their ASG which meet their needs and any change in demand.</p> <p>Increase in % of eligible 2 year old children taking up their ELC entitlement.</p>
<p>Provision of top up hours to support families to study and work</p>	<p>Identify capacity for selling hours.</p> <p>Promotion of top up hours.</p> <p>Pilot in one or two ASGs initially.</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Settings</p>	<p>Uptake of top up hours.</p> <p>Income generated.</p>

How will we ensure quality?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
<p>Deliver a comprehensive Quality Assurance programme</p>	<p>Alignment of Quality Improvement visits with school Quality Assurance calendar for all ELC providers, including the work of trio groups supporting Local Authority settings across the city.</p> <p>Implementation of robust Quality Improvement Framework for Local Authority and Funded Provider settings incorporating reference to national guidance documents such as Realising the ambition - Being me.</p> <p>Identification of areas for targeted support, pre and post inspections.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p>	<p>Improved evaluations from HMle and Care Inspectorate</p>
<p>Support and enhance smooth transitions</p>	<p>Review transition processes with early in person transition and early engagement with staff, where practicable.</p> <p>Pilot some more creative transition processes within Local Authority ELC settings.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>ELC Settings</p>	<p>Feedback from children, parents/carers and staff.</p> <p>Increased wellbeing of children – using Leuven Scale to evaluate this in observations.</p> <p>Reflective dialogue on transitions with practitioners during visits and ASG meets.</p>

			Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.
Work in partnership with families and communities including through a Peep offer in all settings as part of a partnership Family Support offer	<p>ELC and Peep colleagues will work together to ensure that at least one member of staff from each ELC setting has been Peep trained and support will be given to staff when delivering Peep sessions.</p> <p>Monitor uptake to identify if there are any barriers preventing these from taking place in order to remove them.</p> <p>Liaise with colleagues from Family Learning to ensure that settings are maximising Family Support sessions offered.</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Peep</p> <p>Family Learning Team</p>	<p>Increase in the number of children meeting developmental milestones.</p> <p>Increase in the number of parents and carers who have awareness of how to support their children's learning and development at home.</p> <p>Improved relationships with families.</p>

How will we support and develop our workforce?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
<p>Create positive pathways into careers in ELC and provide access to funding for accredited qualifications</p>	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers will use the ABZworks platform to link with ELC employers and training providers to promote positive pathways into ELC careers.</p> <p>Continue to offer Modern Apprenticeship opportunities in Local Authority ELC settings, building this role into our staffing model in a variety of settings that deliver different models of ELC.</p> <p>Partnerships with local training providers to widen the offer of the Foundation Apprenticeship Children and Young people in Aberdeen City Council secondary schools.</p> <p>Collaborating with People and Organisation to create an internal 'Introduction to ELC' course to be available to young people in secondary schools.</p> <p>Offer Workforce Development and Expansion funding annually to support workforce, across the city, to undertake accredited qualifications and meet SSSC registration requirements. Additionally,</p>	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>ABZworks</p> <p>Training Providers</p>	<p>Increase in number of applicants for vacancies.</p> <p>Increase in applicants for Foundation Apprenticeship in Early Years course.</p> <p>Supply staff moving into permanent posts providing continuity for children and staff.</p> <p>Increase in the number of staff attaining accredited qualifications across all levels.</p> <p>Number of young people accessing the 'Introduction to ELC' course.</p> <p>Supply staff reporting increasing confidence.</p>

	<p>supporting staff to gain qualifications above what is required to allow for further career progression.</p> <p>Promote grants for those undertaking qualifications to support routes out of poverty and maximise funding available.</p> <p>Development and expansion of supply pool support workers in order to create additional pathway into the sector, supporting their progression into permanent posts in order to complete qualifications.</p> <p>Development of professional learning opportunities for supply staff to enhance understanding of the sector and opportunities for progression.</p>		
<p>Deliver high quality professional learning for all</p>	<p>Understand the needs of current staff through questionnaires and findings of inspections or quality assurance visits.</p> <p>Develop resources for CLPL both internally and utilising external resources.</p> <p>Bespoke CLPL delivery for localities, delivered by ELC Locality Lead Officers.</p>		<p>Staff will have access to relevant and meaningful learning opportunities which will upskill them to continue to be able to provide the most current best practice. This will be evidence by both internal quality assurance and external inspection reporting ensuring that settings are meeting the national standard.</p>

	<p>Continue to grow our online CLPL platform via an accessible platform for access to materials that can be used flexible and in collaboration with others. Provide tutorial sessions based on content provided online to facilitate further collaboration and discussion for ELC practitioners sector wide.</p> <p>Promote and facilitate collaborative working within ASG's.</p> <p>Build capacity through both digital offer and face to face opportunities.</p>		
Support and upskill ELC Teams to provide a fully inclusive offer.	Build capacity and confidence through observations, shadowing and training.	<p>Early Years Team</p> <p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Autism Outreach Team</p> <p>VSA ASNAP</p>	<p>Increased staff confidence.</p> <p>Reduction in Requests for Assistance.</p>
Offer opportunities for collaboration locally and cross-boundary to increase capacity and maximise resources	Work in partnership across ASGs and Authorities where appropriate.	<p>ELC Locality Lead Officers</p> <p>Northern Alliance</p>	Staff will have access to relevant and meaningful learning opportunities which will upskill them to continue to be able to provide the most current best practice. This will be evidence by both internal quality assurance and external

			inspection reporting ensuring that settings are meeting the national standard.
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How will we communicate, engage and consult?

Improvement Activity	This is how we'll do it	By whom / By when	Evidence of Impact
Regular engagement and consultation with parents and carers	Statutory consultation with parents and carers every 2 years	Early Years Team / Autumn 2023	Consultation Report
	Regular engagement across ASGs	Locality Lead Officers	ASG Feedback
Regular engagement and consultation with all Partners and Key Stakeholders	Regular engagement city-wide and across ASGs	Early Years Team ELC Locality Lead Officers	Feedback from Partners and Key Stakeholders
Provision of accurate and up to date information on ACC communication channels	Communicate key information through social media channels. Maintain and update ELC pages on Aberdeen City Council website	Early Years Team / Webmonitor	Number of views and shares
Ongoing promotion of ELC models, options and Gaelic Medium provision	Promote all ELC models across the city. Promote Gaelic Medium provision. Promote blended ELC offer.	Early Years Team	Evidence of uptake Increased uptake of Gaelic Medium provision Increased uptake of blended ELC offer

	Ensure Early Learning and Childcare Information for Parents and Carers booklet is maintained, updated and accessible.		
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