

**THE EXPANSION OF FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN
SCOTLAND– ARGYLL AND BUTE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE UPDATE**

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress being made by the Education Service in preparing for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and the implementation of 1140 hours of funded ELC in Argyll and Bute.

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Specifically the report provides information on:

- Removal of the statutory duty to deliver 1140 hours of ELC from 5/10 Td ()

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- there no COVID-19 restrictions;
- Note the progress of implementation to date;
 - Request that the Executive Director with responsibility for Education brings forward progress updates in relation to the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to future meetings as more information is provided from Scottish Government.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress being made by the Education Service in preparing for the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and the implementation of 1140 hours of funded ELC in Argyll and Bute.

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partnership with colleagues from other services in ensuring 1140hrs could be implemented across Argyll and Bute from August 2020 were there no COVID-19 restrictions;

- Note the progress of implementation to date;
- Request that the Executive Director with responsibility for Education brings forward progress updates in relation to the Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to future meetings as more information is provided from Scottish Government.

4.0 DETAIL

4.1 Progress towards full implementation of 1140hrs

The Scottish Government announced as a policy commitment the expansion of the provision of funded ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours by 2020. However, it should be noted that due to the impact of COVID-19, the Scottish Government have of April 2020 removed the statutory duty to complete the implementation of 1140 hours of ELC available to each eligible child from 1 August 2020. Education and Property Service have continued to progress the expansion plans where possible and will be in a position to resume key projects as soon as restrictions on lockdown are lifted. A number of refurbishments are now likely to be delayed until next summer but this will not affect our ability to deliver 1140hours from August should the COVID-19 situation allow.

The priority for the expansion to 1140 hours is to improve children's outcomes and close the poverty-related attainment gap. In addition, the expansion aims to support parents into work, study or training. The Scottish Government's four principles of the ELC expansion are: quality, flexibility, affordability, and accessibility.

Scottish Government has stated that quality is 'at the heart' of the expansion and that achieving a high-quality ELC experience for children is a key objective.

The theory of change for the expansion is that, by delivering ELC that is high-quality, flexible, affordable and accessible, parents will be encouraged to take up their child's entitlement to funded ELC,

New setting at Rosneath - when construction restarts works restart it will take 5 weeks to complete

this project will take up to 7 weeks to complete and remains a priority to open in August to ensure 1140 could be delivered across Oban.

Lochnell Primary ELC is another priority. The building warrant is being sought and billing proceeding to allow us to go to tender. If this work can't be progressed this summer 1140 hours could still be delivered.

Salen Primary English and Gaelic Medium ELC, planning is in place, building warrant being sought and a consultant being used to progress more quickly to tender. If a contractor submits a tender within budget, subject to COVID 19, it is possible to complete this project by end of October. A landscape architect has been commissioned to create a high quality secure outdoor area to allow separation between Gaelic and English medium ELC. Care Inspectorate have agreed to this and increased the registered places from 20 to 24. This solution could run for the full academic year offering 1140hrs if needed.

Taynuilt Primary ELC contractor is in place ready to start subject to COVID 19. This project will require 7 weeks access with no children.

Strath of Appin Primary ELC is ready to go to tender. If tendered within budget and a confidence in the contractor's ability to deliver in a 7 week period we will proceed, COVID 19 dependant. Otherwise we will delay until summer 2021.

It is anticipated that we can offer all children 1140 hours across OLI. Within Oban some parents will not get their first or second choice due to the delay on Willowview.

All parents will have their child's nursery setting confirmed by June. However, the start date and pattern of attendances can only be subsequently confirmed and are COVID 19 dependant.

4.3 Staffing

We are continuing with recruitment and expect to have all required staff in post by August 2020 with the exception of Willow View which we will begin recruitment for in June.

4.4 Finance

To support Partner Providers and Child Minders and ensure they are financially viable for 1140 hours we have made an upfront payment for their services until the end of July, in line with national guidance.

From August 2020, in line with the new Early Years National Standards, we will pay our Partner Providers and Child Minders at the start of each calendar month.

We have increased the hourly rate for 3 and 4 year olds in partner providers from £4.45 to £5.31. In addition we have undertaken an exercise to check this rate is sustainable and reflects national policy priorities, including funding to enable payment of the real Living Wage to all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement. The Early Years Team are supported in this exercise by finance,

procurement and the Research and Engagement Officer and are currently analyzing the seven responses made.

4.5 **Developing Workforce**

To support the quality of deliver of 1140 hours the Early Years Team offers an extensive training catalogue free to staff working in Local Authority and Partner Providers.

4.6 **Partnership Working**

We continue to work closely with colleagues in property to ensure we

6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics

The Delivery Plan aims to respond to the challenge of reducing inequality and improving outcomes for children and their families within the diverse geographical and social context of Argyll and Bute.

6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty 1140 hours must be free at the point of entry. By any new deadline, all children in ELC will receive a free healthy and nutritious meal.

6.5.3 Islands By August we could deliver 1140 hours across our island settings.

6.6. Risk A number of risks exist with workforce recruitment and development, provision of a free meal by 2020 and, as yet unknown levels of uptake within communities.

6.7 Customer Service Our youngest children and eligible 2 year olds will benefit most from the expansion of ELC. There are significant benefits for families with parents/carers able to use the extended hours to enable them to return to employment, reduce childcare costs and access training

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Argyll and Bute Early Years 1140 Hours Phasing Plan