

2020 Vision for Early Years, Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan

Report by Grace Vickers, Head of Education

1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Cabinet on:
- I. The submission of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan and Financial Template to the Scottish Government
 - II. The submission of the Graduate Plan to the Scottish Government

2 Background

- 2.1 The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 increased the number of hours of free early learning and childcare provided to parents and carers from 475 hours per year to 600 hours and introduced an entitlement for certain 2 year olds, both in 2014. The further increase to 1,140 hours has not yet been set in legislation however the Scottish Government has committed to the expansion, to be fully implemented by August 2020.
- 2.2 Local authorities were required to submit an expansion plan and completed financial template to the Scottish Government by the 29th of September. Midlothian Council's plan and financial template are attached as additional documents to this report. The report includes proposals that many settings will revise their Early Learning and Childcare delivery model and/or significantly alter the school around them. As these plans are draft and will be reviewed when the final financial settlement is announced by the Scottish Government the changes proposed to settings are subject to review and it has not been appropriate to discuss the proposals with staff at this time. Discussions with staff will take place once plans are firmed up.
- 2.3 The Scottish Government also announced that each Early Learning and Childcare setting in an area of high deprivation will get an additional graduate or teacher, with Midlothian receiving three. The Council was also required to submit an action plan setting out how it intended to allocate these three places by the 29th September 2017. This plan is also attached as an additional document to this report.

3 Financial Information

The revenue and capital implications to the Council are set out in the expansion plan.

4 Resource Implications

- 4.1 While the Scottish Government have stated that the increase in free Early Learning and Childcare hours will be fully funded, there are significant implications for resources across the Council and its partners. It will require the collaboration and input across a broad range of services: early years practitioners; head teachers; central admission support staff; finance; human resources; property; catering; facilities management etc. A resources development plan has been drawn up regarding early years staff numbers across the Council and partners.

5 Risk

5.1 There are a number of risks associated with the Council meeting its expected legislative requirements regarding the increase in free Early Learning and Childcare hours and these will be monitored and addressed through a risk register. The Scottish Government has stated that the implementation of the expansion will be fully funded and the submission of the Expansion Plan and Financial Template are the first steps towards confirming the funding that will be made available. Once the Scottish Government confirms the funding the Expansion Plan will be revised to fall into line with this.

5.2 Each expansion project will have its own set of risks and the significant overall risk to fulfilling the legislative duty is in recruiting and training the staff required.

5.3 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☐ Sustainable growth
- ☒ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

5.4 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

The expansion is relevant to all of the GIRFEMC outcomes for 2017/18 to 2019/20:

- Children in their early years and their families are being supported to be healthy, to learn and to be resilient
- All Midlothian children and young people are being offered access to timely and appropriate support through the named person service
- All care experienced children and young people are being provided with quality services
- Children and young people are supported to be healthy, happy and reach their potential
- Inequalities in learning outcomes have reduced

5.6 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

The expansion will impact upon all five of the GIRFEMC outcomes and will have a long-lasting impact upon the last two.

5.7 Adopting a Preventative Approach

The provision of high quality, flexible, accessible and affordable Early Learning and Childcare is by its very nature preventative, and sets the foundation upon which future outcomes for the children as they grow up and progress through the education system and then onto adulthood are based.

5.8 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires the Council to consult at least once every 2 years with parents and carers on the provision of early learning and childcare and to have regard to the views expressed. A parent and carer survey was carried out in May 2017 that included questions on the expansion and a further survey will be carried out shortly to gather more detailed information. Stakeholders are represented on the Implementation Working Group and subgroups. Further engagement activity will be carried out as implementation of the expansion progresses.

5.9 Ensuring Equalities

By 2020 the increased hours for 3 and 4 year olds will be universally available while 2 year olds will be eligible in line with the Scottish Governments' qualifying criteria. During the transition phase as capacity is increased towards full implementation in 2020 criteria for increased duration places will be developed in consultation with stakeholders with a view to ensuring those most in need are prioritised. An Integrated Impact Assessment carried out on the criteria as they are drawn up. All settings being expanded will be reviewed to consider equality of access, for example for children, parents and carers, and staff with a disability.

5.10 Supporting Sustainable Development

Each project within the expansion plan will be appraised to ensure its sustainability.

5.11 IT Issues

IT requirements will be identified and progressed within each expansion project, where necessary.

6 Recommendation

It is requested that Cabinet:

- Note the content of this report regarding the submission of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan and Financial Template to the Scottish Government
- Note the content of this report regarding the submission of the Graduate Plan to the Scottish Government
- Authorise officers to report on the submission of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan and Financial Template and Graduate Plan to Council
- Authorise officers to report on the submission of the Early Learning and Childcare Expansion Plan and Financial Template and Graduate Plan to the Community Planning Partnership

Date: 10 October 2017

Report Contact:

Julie Fox, Schools Group Manager, (Early Years)

Tel No 0131 271 3725

Julie.Fox@midlothian.gov.uk

Background Papers:

Midlothian Council 2020 Vision for Early Years

Midlothian Council ELC Expansion Plan - Finance Template

Additional Graduate Commitment – Action Plan Midlothian