

FALKIRK COUNCIL

Subject: NURSERY PROVISION
Meeting: EDUCATION EXECUTIVE
Date: 28 May 2013
Author: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update elected members on the progress made in developing nursery provision in the Council, outline the current provision and propose a way forward for further development.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In Falkirk, we have been very successful in extending our early years' provision. In February 2004, Falkirk Council agreed the development of:

- A nursery class in each primary school where appropriate to provide nursery education for 3-4 year olds.
- Early Years Centres to provide integrated childcare and education operating all year round on an extended day basis. This was to be achieved through a programme of amalgamations of existing day nurseries and nursery schools.

- 2.2 Nursery Capacity: we now have nursery classes for 3-4 year olds in 45 out of 50 primary schools. Only our smallest schools do not have nursery classes attached. Over the past eight years we have increased our nursery places by 31% from 3148 places to 4146.

- 2.3 New Early Years Centres: through the amalgamation process we now have Early Years Centres with education and childcare provision for babies, toddlers and pre-school children in:

Early Years Centre	Babies	Toddlers	3-4 year olds
Denny	12	25	56
Camelon	12	30	48
Grangemouth	12	25	60
Queen Street	-	23	80
TOTALS	36	103	244

- 2.4 These centres have proved successful in extending services to young children and their parents with extended hours and all-year provision. The benefits of these centres are:

- provision of more places to support vulnerable children and their families

- a threefold increase in the number of baby places
- a 50% increase in the number of toddler places
- increased capacity across the three groups of extended day provision
- increased capacity of full year provision
- affordable childcare that meets the needs of parents in training, education and employment and supports the local economic strategy.

2.5 A number of challenges still remain:

- Falkirk Council currently has a policy which ensures that children in their pre-school year are allocated sessions at the nursery attached to their local primary school. This provides a smooth transition for the child and their family from nursery into Primary one. However, it also means that a few children in their ante-pre-school year do not receive a place in the nursery of their local primary school. This may lead to some parents not taking up their entitlement to 12.5 hours pre-school education. Instead they decide that their child will not attend nursery until they get a place in the nursery of their choice. Although we have enough places for our pre-school population, as an aggregate across the authority, in a few areas, there may not always be enough places locally to ensure that every child gets a place in the nursery attached to their designated catchment primary.
- The Scottish Government has announced that in 2013 they will legislate for an increase in the funded annual provision from 475 hours pre-school education for 3 and 4 year olds to a minimum annual provision of 600 hours early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds. The Scottish Government accepts that for August 2014, local authorities should be able to deliver the 600 hours in as practical a way as possible and without the additional requirement of more flexibility for parents. They have estimated that for the first year of implementation that this will cost around £48.78 million (part year delivery August 14 - March 15). The Scottish Government has already made it clear that while it has offered a commitment to fund the 600 hours proposal, the exact sum provided to local government will depend on future budgetary decisions. The first year of implementation 2014/15 is within the current spending review, so there is more certainty that this resource will be made available to local authorities. However, there is less certainty in future years as spending reviews and elections could have a bearing on what resources are finally allocated to local government. Therefore there is a high risk in future years that local government will be legally required to provide these services at the expense of reducing other services.

It is the Scottish Government's desire that flexibility for parents is increased gradually from 2015/16 onwards. As additional flexibility costs more to deliver, this is reflected in the profile of funding - £70.89 million in 2015/16 rising to £96.19 million in 2018/19. Government are no longer suggesting that local authorities will have to deliver a range of different models, but have stated that parents will need to be consulted over how early learning and childcare is delivered. By not prescribing a set range of options, local authorities are granted more flexibility on how the 600 hours are to be delivered in future years. While this is a welcome recognition of challenges faced by local authorities, there remain concerns that parental expectation over what will be delivered could, if not managed properly, lead to a demand for services which outstrip the resource available. The requirement to provide 600 hours education and childcare will also apply to Looked After two year olds and two year olds in Kinship Care. A mechanism for delivering this entitlement will be discussed with colleagues in Social Work.

The service will bring a report on how it proposes to implement the 600 hours at a future meeting of the education Executive.

3. NEXT STEPS

3.1 The sections below give a summary of the provision on a cluster-by-cluster basis with recommendations for future developments as resources allow.

3.2 **Bo'ness**

3.2.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	350	270	310	320

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Toddlers	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

3.2.2 Summary

Though there are adequate nursery places for pre-school and ante-pre-school children, there is no provision for babies and toddlers

3.2.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Develop a nursery campus in one of the existing primary schools in Bo'ness to operate on a similar basis to the existing early years centres. This would provide places for babies, toddlers and 3-5 year olds, appropriate childcare for parents who are in education, training or work and additional care and support for vulnerable children and families. This would be additional to existing nursery classes.

3.3 **Grangemouth**

3.3.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	498	399	448	468

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	12	12	12	12	16
Toddlers	25	25	25	25	7

3.3.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in Grangemouth to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.3.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Continue to monitor provision in Grangemouth.

3.4 **Braes**

3.4.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	420	267	314	324

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/June 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Toddlers	0	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

3.4.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in the Braes to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.4.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Continue to monitor provision in Braes.

3.5 Larbert

3.5.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/June 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	854	614	634	674

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/June 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	9	9	9	9	27
Toddlers	20	20	20	20	6

3.5.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in Larbert to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.5.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Develop Inchlair Nursery School and Larbert Day Nursery as a single early years centre but to operate on two sites using both the buildings.
- The new centre would provide places for pre-school and ante-pre-school children as well as for toddlers and babies.
- Develop detailed proposals on operational and management structures.

3.6 Graeme

3.6.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	804	556	612	642

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Toddlers	33	33	33	33	21

3.6.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in Graeme to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.6.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Continue the development of the nursery campus at St Margaret's to provide baby and toddler places, as planned.
- Review the provision of nursery facilities at Queen Street and Woodburn nurseries and make a series of recommendations designed to ensure that the quality of accommodation is fit for purpose in the medium to long term..

3.7 **Denny**

3.7.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	704	592	662	686

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	12	12	12	12	15
Toddlers	25	25	25	25	4

3.7.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in Denny to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.7.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Continue to monitor provision and planned housing developments in Denny.

3.8 **Falkirk**

3.8.1 Provision

Nursery Provision		Staffed for		
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013
Total	638	546	586	596

Babies and Toddlers		Staffed for			Waiting List
	Registered/ Capacity	Sept/Dec 2012	Jan/March 2013	April/June 2013	
Babies	15	15	15	15	31
Toddlers	37	37	37	37	21

3.8.2 Summary

There are sufficient nursery places in Falkirk to meet current demand, though there is unmet demand for places for babies and toddlers.

3.8.3 Recommended Next Steps

- Continue to monitor provision in Falkirk.

4. **CONCLUSIONS**

4.1 To continue to develop nursery provision in line with Council policy and aspirations for early years, it is proposed that further actions are undertaken in the following cluster areas:

- Bo'ness
- Graeme
- Larbert

4.2 It is proposed that Education Services undertakes further work to develop the proposals in these areas and reports back to members with detailed proposals and costings.

4.3 To ensure that children from the catchment area have an increased chance of getting a place in the nursery class of the local school in both the pre and ante-pre-school years, places will be ring-fenced for the January and April intakes. Priority will also be given to parents who wish to use at least four morning or afternoon sessions. In nurseries where places are limited, it may not be possible to provide fewer places than four.

5. **EQUALITIES AND POVERTY**

5.1 The effect of the proposals in this report on groups who share protected characteristics in terms of the Equality Act 2010 and those experiencing poverty has been considered. The expansion of nursery places, particularly baby and toddler places in areas where there is currently no Council provision, will have a positive impact on women, lone parents, disabled parents and young parents, all of whom are groups more likely to make use of these services. The ongoing monitoring of provision across the Council area will allow us to continue to address potential inequalities.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 It is recommended that:

- (i) proposals are developed for the Bo'ness, Graeme and Larbert clusters for further consideration by the Education Executive; and**
- (ii) admissions are prioritised as outlined in paragraph 4.3.**

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Director of Education

Date: 16 May 2013

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LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL