

ECYE35. Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) – 1140 Expansion Plan Update

The Education, Children and Young People Executive considered a report by the Director of Children's Services which provided an update on progress with the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Expansion Plans. The report set out updated information on the Scottish Government's announcements on the temporary Restrictions Fund, the Deferred Places Pilot and Progress Reports; the next phases and proposals to expand early intervention support; proposals to increase capacity to meet anticipated growth in demand for statutory places, and an update on the overall financial position.

The St Francis PS project had been completed and it was expected that Nethermain PS and Parkhill ELCC would be completed by the next meeting. 18 projects were on-going and full details of the projects were contained in an appendix to the report.

It was proposed to increase the Capacity for Eligible 2-Year Olds. It was expected that as a result of the financial and economic insecurity caused by the pandemic, there would be a consequential increase in the number of families that would meet the qualifying criteria for a statutory 2-year old place. From August 2021, as part of the agreed planned expansion, capacity for 2-year olds was due to be increased by 15 places.

Across the ELC estate, there were 7 centres providing 57 baby places. All places were currently used by families who paid for non-statutory childcare. The proposal re-prioritised 27 places for the purpose of providing statutory early intervention and prevention support for very young children who were referred by Health or Social Work as being deemed to be at risk or vulnerable. The places would be re-prioritised only as and when the current fee-paying places were vacated. No one who currently had a baby place would be displaced.

The Scottish Government had recently announced a further package of £3.8m of financial support as part of the Temporary Restrictions Fund (TRF) for all private nurseries and out of school care providers for each 4-week period that they remained open to provide childcare to support key worker and vulnerable families. Falkirk's share was £80,000 plus a £2,000 administration fee. The payments were fixed based on the registered capacity of each establishment. They ranged from £575 to £2,800.

Decision

The Education, Children and Young People Executive:-

- (1) noted the updates provided on the remaining projects as detailed in appendix 1 to the report;**
- (2) agreed the proposals outlined in sections 4.3.2 - 4.3.4 of the report regarding the progression of the of early intervention strategies;**

- (3) noted the early intervention pilot project and next phases as outlined in Sections 4.3.5 and 4.3.6 of the report;**
- (4) noted that Children's Services officers would be responsible for the administration of the recently announced Temporary Restrictions Fund as outlined in section 4.4 of the report;**
- (5) agreed to the proposal, regarding increasing statutory place capacity as detailed in section 4.5 of the report, and**
- (6) noted the financial position as detailed in section 6.1 and appendix 2 of the report.**