

Falkirk Council

Title: Early Learning and Childcare
Meeting: Education Executive
Date: 8 November 2016
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- (i) provide the Education Executive with information relating to the consultation exercise recently undertaken to assess service users views on the roll out and introduction of 600 hours of early years provision in August 2014.**
- (ii) provide the Education Executive with an overview of the future options, challenges and direction that face Children's Services taking account of the feedback from this consultation and the Scottish Government's ambitious and challenging plans to expand provision to 1,140 hours per annum and to offer parents more flexible choices of provision by 2020. These expansion plans have just been published by the Scottish Government in their consultative document 'A Blueprint for 2020: - The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland'.**

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 Education Executive is asked to:

- (i) Note the responses from the consultation exercise.**
- (ii) Note the Children's Services responses to the feedback from the consultation exercise and the challenges to be faced in the future regarding the Scottish Government's plans to expand early learning and childcare provision to 1140 hours (per annum) by 2020.**
- (iii) Instruct the Director of Children's Services to bring a further report to Education Executive which provides:**
 - an update on the financial position and infrastructure challenges**
 - options for consideration around offering parents increased flexible choices of early years provision****as further details and information are known regarding the Scottish Government's plans to expand provision within the Early Years sector.**

3. Background

Increase in Childcare Provision from 475 to 600 Hours pa

- 3.1 In August 2014, the Scottish Government introduced increased early learning and childcare provision from 475 to 600 hours per annum for all 3 and 4 year olds.
- 3.2 From 31 October 2014, the Scottish Government extended this provision to include 2 year olds from out of work households.
- 3.3 As part of the undertaking to introduce these changes within the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 it placed a duty on local authorities to undertake further consultation with parents/service users once the increased provision had been introduced.
- 3.4 Within the Falkirk area increased provision has been now successfully been established for eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds within all 9 wards.
- 3.5 Increased core provision has been delivered via Nursery Classes and the use of private partners. In addition more flexible extended day provision is also available at our 8 extended day nurseries and our 3 early year campuses.
- 3.6 A consultation exercise was undertaken during March/April 2016 with our service users.

4. Considerations

4.1 Summary of Feedback from Consultation

There were a total of 408 responses to the survey - full details are attached in Appendix 1.

Analysis of Responses by Age Group

	Replies	%
2 years old	47	12
3 years old	169	41
4 years old	144	35
5 years old	34	9
Non-Specific	14	3
Totals	408	100

Analysis of Responses from Service Delivery Area

	Replies	%
Nursery Classes	291	78
Extended Day Nurseries	42	11
2 Year Old Centres	9	3
Private Partners	30	8
Totals	372	100

Do current arrangements suit?

	Replies	%
Yes	315	78
No	93	22
Totals	408	100

4.2 Key Messages Arising from Consultation

Overall 78% of respondents were satisfied with the current arrangements that are in place.

4.3 Matters for the Service to Consider Regarding Future Provision

The following key questions/challenges arose from the comments respondents provided:

- consider more flexibility in nursery class hours
- consider increasing private partner commissioning
- consider allowing parents to access full day (funded) places at extended day nurseries
- consider using childminders.

4.4 Children's Services Views and Responses to the Questions Raised

4.4.1 Question on Increased Flexibility in Nursery Class Hours/Allowing Full Day (Funded) Access at Extended Day Nursery Establishments

Some respondents were asking for the opportunity to take their 600 hour entitlement over 2.5 days (2 full and 1 half day) rather than 5 half days.

Although this pattern of provision can be facilitated at some of our Extended Day Nurseries we have not been able to implement it at our nursery classes for the following reasons:

- Lunch would need to be provided.
- Additional staff would be needed to cover lunch period and existing staff work patterns altered.

This would require careful timetabling and planning as the majority of our nursery classes operate with high occupancy rates.

4.4.2 Question on Increasing Private Partner Commissioning

- Children's Services current have 6 private partner nurseries.
- Our current strategy allows for expanding private partner provision where there is a shortage of capacity within a specific geographic area. Given the recent infrastructure investment we have made over the last 3 years our early years school estate currently has sufficient capacity to meet the demands from within local catchment/geographic areas.
- This is however an area that we will be continually reviewing over the coming months.

4.4.3 Question on Use of Childminders

Although we currently do not offer parents the use of childminders as part of our fully funded 600 hours provision it again is an area that we will be exploring in the coming months.

4.5 Scottish Government Plans to Increase Early Years Provision to 1,140 hours (per annum)

4.5.1 Although plans have been announced to increase early years fully funded provision to 1,140 hours by 2020 in the Scottish Government's recently published consultation document 'A Blueprint for 2020: - The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland', the exact details of just what core and flexible provision is expected to be delivered is not yet known. However giving parents increased flexibility over choice of provision has already been stated as a Scottish Government priority.

4.5.2 These expansion plans also give the Council significant financial and infrastructure challenges around:

- increasing nursery capacity within the majority of our schools by:
 - internal alterations, external extensions/alterations, new build or by a mix of these and considering wider or increased use of private nursery providers and childminders;
- provision of lunch across all early years establishments
- provision of 'sleep/rest areas' within all early years establishment
- what options we consider around offering parents increased flexibility over selection of early years provision;
- a significant number of suitably qualified early years staff will also be needed;
- staff:pupil staffing ratios (as stipulated by the Care Inspectorate) increase when children are in provision for more than 4 hours. This would mean nursery classes staffing levels increasing to meet a 1:8 ratio compared to 1:10 currently.

Children's Services are already working with the Scottish Futures Trust (SFT) to assess the additional infrastructure and financial (revenue and capital) needs and challenges that such expansion requires.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 Further details of the consultation responses received are provided at Appendix 1.
- 5.2 It is expected that further consultation with appropriate stakeholders and service users will take place as the Service carefully consider the Scottish Government's recently published consultation document 'A Blueprint for 2020: - The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland'.

6. Implications

Financial/Resources

- 6.1 Whilst there are no current financial implications arising immediately from this report there will however be significant financial consequences related to the expansion of capacity to meet 1,140 hour provision, however these will be reported to Education Executive once further information is received from the Scottish Futures Trust/ Scottish Government.

Legal

- 6.2 There are no issues associated with this paper.

Risk

- 6.2 Regular checks are made on demand levels across our early years estate to ensure that as a Council we have:
- sufficient capacity overall to meet the total number of eligible 2, 3 and 4 year olds within the Falkirk area.
 - sufficient capacity within local schools to meet catchment area demand for all 3 and 4 year olds.

Equalities

- 6.4 There are no issues associated with this report.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.5 There are no issues associated with this report.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 Whilst Children's Services are delighted that the majority of service users (78%) are pleased with the current service provision being offered it must be recognised that with the Scottish Government's plans to expand provision to 1,140 hours (per annum) significant financial, planning and infrastructure challenges lie ahead.

- 7.2 Besides the obvious financial challenges the Service remain committed to reviewing the use and availability of current provision, including private nursery partners and other flexible types of provision when considering its response to the Scottish Government's recently published consultation document and in assessing what options we have for delivering early years provision in future years.

Director of Children's Services

Author – Gary Greenhorn, Head of Planning and Resources 01324 506683,
gary.greenhorn@falkirk.gov.uk

Date: 27 October 2016

Appendices

Appendix 1 Introduction of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare - Consultation
March 2016 - Summary of Responses to Consultation

List of Background Papers:

The following papers were relied on in the preparation of this report in terms of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973:

- Scottish Government's Consultation Document 'A Blueprint for 2020: - The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland' (October 2016)

Falkirk Council : Children's Services

Introduction of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare – Consultation March 2016

Summary of Responses to Consultation

Q1. How old is your child?

Total replies – 408

	replies	%
2 years old	47	12
3 years old	169	41
4 years old	144	35
5 years old	34	9
Non-specific	14	3
Totals	408	100

Q2. Which Early Years establishment does your child attend?

Total Replies – 372 Skipped - 36

Nursery Class	Replies	Nursery Class	Replies	Nursery Class	Replies
Airth PS	8	Grange PS	9	St. Mary's RC PS	4
Antonine PS	6	Hallglen PS	4	St. Patrick's RC PS	4
Avonbridge PS	2	Head of Muir PS	6	Stenhousemuir PS	10
Bainsford PS	0	Kinnaird PS	30	Victoria PS	5
Bankier PS	8	Kinneil PS - NC	5	Wallacestone PS	11
Bantaskin PS	3	Ladeside PS	6	Westquarter PS	9
Beancross PS	7	Langlees PS	8	Whitecross PS	0
Bo'ness PS	4	Larbert Village PS	6		
Bonnybridge PS	7	Laurieston PS	1		
Bowhouse PS	3	Maddiston PS	17		
California PS	1	Moray PS	5		
Carmuir PS	0	Nethermain PS	6		
Carron PS	5	Sacred Heart RC PS	2		
Carronshore PS	9	Shieldhill PS	9		
Comely Park PS	17	St. Andrew's	3		
Deanburn PS	11	St. Bernadette's RC PS	6		
Denny PS	3	St. Francis's RC PS	8		
Dunipace PS	4	St. Joseph's RC PS	3		
Easter Carmuir PS	5	St. Margaret's PS - NC	11		
Total No. of Responses - 291 Total % Nursery Classes - 78%					

Extended Day Nurseries	replies	Private Partners	replies
Camelon Nursery	2	Bright Beginnings	2
Denny Nursery	9	Carousel Child Care	3
Heathrigg NS	1	Carronbank House Nursery	3
Inchclair NS	9	Glenbervie Kindergarden	7
Kinneil PS - EY Campus	0	Lochgreen Playgroup	2
Larbert DN	9	The Kidz Stop	0
Queen Street NS	1	Wellside Kindergarden	13
Rannoch Nursery	4	Total No. of Responses	30
St. Margaret's PS - EY Campus	5	Total % Private Partners	8%
Woodburn DN	2		
Total No. of Responses	42		
Total % Extended Day Nurseries	11%		

2 year old Centres	replies
Braes Family Centre	4
Camelon Nursery - 2yr Old Pod	1
Creche Matters	2
Denny Nursery - 2yr Old Pod	0
Langlees Family Centre	2
Rannoch Nursery - 2yr Old Pod	0
Total No. of Responses	9
Total % 2 year old Centres	3%

Analysis of Responses from Service Delivery Area

	No	%
Nursery Classes	91	78
Extended Day Nurseries	42	11
2 Year Old Centres	9	3
Private Partners	<u>30</u>	<u>8</u>
Totals	372	100

Q3. Please indicate how you use the provision

Total Replies – 392 Skipped - 16

	Morning	Afternoon	Full Day
	%	%	%
Monday	53	36	11
Tuesday	52	36	12
Wednesday	53	37	10
Thursday	53	35	12
Friday	55	36	9

Q4. Do current arrangements suit you?

Total Replies – 408 Skipped – 0

	Replies	%
Yes	315	78
No	93	22

Q5. What changes would you suggest that would make this more suitable for you?

Answers summarised within the paper.

Q6. Please provide any further comments you may have on the current ELCC

Answers summarised within the paper.