

**REPORT TO:** Education Committee

**MEETING DATE:** 8 June 2021

**BY:** Executive Director for Education and Children's Services

**SUBJECT:** Update on Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 1140 Hours

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## **1 PURPOSE**

- 1.1 To update the Committee on the implementation of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare in East Lothian.

## **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
- i. Note the way in which COVID-19 restrictions in Scottish Government and Public Health Guidance continue to impact on the provision of 1140 hours.
  - ii. Note the progress made in making 1140 hours available to families in East Lothian through all providers including Local Authority nurseries and partnership working with funded providers.
  - iii. Note the numbers of children currently accessing 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare and the models and hours to be made available through local authority nurseries for the academic year 2021 – 2022.
  - iv. Note the work undertaken to ensure quality as a key principle of the expansion.
  - v. Note the work undertaken in recruiting appropriately trained and qualified staff to ensure the continued success of the 1140 hours programme and the job opportunities this has created.

### **3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 As a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, the Scottish Government set before Parliament, a Bill to remove the duty on local authorities to provide 1140 hours of early learning and childcare from August 2020. A Bill setting a date for a revised timeline of August 2021, was passed during a Parliamentary sitting at the end of 2020 with the new date confirmed as August 2021.

Members will be aware that the Education service reinstated the majority of local authority settings previously offering 1140 hours. The restrictions in place to ensure compliance with both Scottish Government and Public Health Guidance continues to impact the ways in which 1140 hours is implemented. In particular, the restrictions of 33 children in any one “bubble”, staff not being able to work across two groups of children in any one day, and the requirement for intensive cleaning between different groups of children means that models of different groups of children attending each day are not possible at this stage. To ensure continued compliance with the guidance in this school session, 600 hours has been offered in a model of two longer days Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday and alternate Fridays.

- 3.2 As reported at full Council in December 2020, we have reinstated the 38 week model of 1140 hours in place prior to lockdown with the exception of Musselburgh Burgh Nursery, where the demand for places exceeds the maximum of 33 children at any one time. Capacity is 48 children, and to ensure that no child was displaced, the model of two longer days Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday and an alternate Friday has been introduced.

- 3.3 The 1140 hours programme board continues to meet monthly and provides oversight, governance and scrutiny to the overall programme. The board is chaired by the Executive Director – Education and Children’s Services and has representation from across Council services, Head Teachers, Trade Unions and funded providers. The board is also attended by a senior official from the Scottish Government. Fortnightly updates on the progress of the plan are also presented to the Council’s Corporate Management Team.

- 3.4 The Scottish Government and the Improvement Service have maintained ongoing engagement, support and scrutiny of East Lothian’s expansion plan since its inception.

#### **3.5 Update**

- 3.5.1 Following the Easter break, Haddington, St Mary’s and Letham Mains Primary School Nurseries extended the number of weeks of nursery provision from the existing 38 week term time model to a model of 48 weeks. The model of 48 weeks makes nursery available through the year including all holidays other than Christmas, New Year, Bank Holidays and in-service days. In June 2021, Dunbar and Sanderson’s Wynd Primary School Nurseries will move to offer 1140 hours over 48 weeks. The model

will be two longer days and an alternate Friday. These nurseries will remain open over the summer.

By Easter 2021, the number of children accessing 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, at local authority and funded provider settings across East Lothian was 1,034. With the offer of 1140 hours at both Dunbar Primary School and Sanderson's Wynd Primary School from June 2021, the number of children able to access additional hours will increase to 1,331. The remaining children will be offered the extended hours from August 2021 including eligible two year olds and those where a deferred year has been agreed.

3.5.2 Whilst the Scottish Government Guidance on numbers of children in each "bubble" and restrictions on staff moving between cohorts of children remains in place, the 1140 hours models in local authority nurseries for the academic 2021/2022 year will be:

- Over 38 weeks, with 30 hours a week being offered over five days in the form of longer days Monday to Thursday and a Friday morning. During their time at nursery, children will receive one snack and a lunch, which will be free of charge. Thirteen local authority nurseries will offer the 38 week model.
- Over 48 weeks, nineteen local authority nurseries will offer the 1140 hours in the form of two longer days, Monday/Tuesday or Wednesday/Thursday and an alternate Friday. During their time at nursery children will receive a snack in the morning, lunch and a snack in the afternoon, of which one snack and a lunch will be free of charge.

3.5.3 East Lothian Council currently works with a total of sixteen funded providers in the form of private nurseries and voluntary organisations, all of whom offer 1140 hours to parents either in full or guidance permitting, as part of a blended model. In addition to the private and voluntary organisations 21 childminders currently have funded providers' status and as with private nurseries offer parents 1140 hours either in full or as part of a blended model. A further eleven childminders have applied to become funded providers for August 2021. The number of funded providers and local authority provision offering 1140 hours now, and for August 2021, gives parents' choice and flexibility in accordance with the Scottish Government's principles of 'funding follows the child' as set out in the "*Blueprint for 2020 – The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland - Funding follows the child*"

3.5.4 A section of the Council's website, explaining the models and availability of 1140 hours across East Lothian, has been created, [www.eastlothian.gov.uk/1140-hours](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/1140-hours) and went live on Monday 17 May 2021, alongside a social media and press launch. The website also includes information on all funded providers. The timing of the launch coincides with letters being sent to parents allocating places to children for August 2021.

- 3.5.5 As part of the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours, the Scottish Government introduced a National Standard which requires local authorities to be guarantors of quality in all local authority and funded provider settings. Considerable work has been undertaken by the Early Learning and Childcare Support Team who have developed Quality Assurance Guidance. This guidance and the advice and support being provided by the team has been well received by both local authority early years settings and our funded providers. This document has also been shared with the Scottish Government and other authorities across Scotland as a model of good practice.
- 3.5.6 Throughout the pandemic, the Early Learning and Childcare Support Team has continued to develop and deliver training to local authority and funded providers to support professional development, quality improvement and leadership development. Support has been facilitated online and in preparation for the reopening of settings, the team has worked with providers to ensure compliance with the Scottish Government's regulations for reopening Early Learning & Childcare provision. The Support Team continues to work on quality improvement, with the aim of supporting all settings to be at, and maintain the National Standard as they offer the extended hours. The standard will also be scrutinised by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate as part of their national role in monitoring the quality of early learning and childcare.
- 3.5.7 The increase in hours and changes in work patterns across all settings has created employment opportunities at all levels. To date, an additional 45 staff have been employed or offered posts. This number is in addition to existing staff who, in working part-time, have opted to increase their working hours. Recruitment of staff continues on a rolling programme to ensure that there are sufficient staff to support the delivery of the expanded hours.
- 3.5.8 Throughout the pandemic, funded providers in the form of private nurseries, larger childminding services and latterly childcare for school age children, have been able to apply for grants through the Transitional Support Fund, and two phases of the Temporary Restriction Fund. These were administered by East Lothian Council on behalf of the Scottish Government and were aimed at minimising shortfalls in income whilst settings were closed and to ensure sustainability for the future.

### 3.6 **Conclusion**

Despite the significant challenges of the last year on the early learning and childcare sector and on Council staff working across a wide range of services, East Lothian Council remains on track to fully deliver the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 1140 hours, for August 2021. We are confident that, as required, all children who wish to access extended hours will be offered the opportunity to do so. The offer for families will include places at a local authority nursery and funded providers within the community offering flexibility and choice. We will continue to review our models during school session 2021/2022 and seek

feedback from staff and parents which will support us in making any improvements for the following session.

#### **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 None

#### **5 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

5.1 The subject of this report does not affect the wellbeing of the community or have a significant impact on equality, the environment or economy.

#### **6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 Financial – The expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours will be delivered within the financial allocation from the Scottish Government.

6.2 Personnel – A number of Centre Managers, Senior Early Years Practitioners, Early Years Practitioners and Support Workers have been recruited to ensure that the correct staffing ratios are in place and are maintained, as we move to different models and patterns of early learning and childcare provision.

6.3 Other – none.

#### **7 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

7.1 None

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