

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 23 November 2021

BY: Executive Director for Education and Children's Services

SUBJECT: Update on Implementation of 1140 hours of Early Learning and Childcare

1 PURPOSE

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

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to note:
- i. The Education Service has now fully implemented the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours and that COVID-19 restrictions and mitigations continue to impact on the flexibility. Note the way in which provision over the traditional summer break in 5 local authority nurseries was managed and received by parents and the increased opportunities made available to staff through enhanced training opportunities leading to career development and progression.
 - ii. The plans to review the implementation of the policy and to seek feedback from parents, carers and staff. Note the very successful cross-service collaboration which supported the implementation of the policy.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 A full update on progress with the implementation of the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours was provided to Education Committee on 8 June 2021. This report seeks to confirm that the Education Service has now implemented the policy and provides an update on the planned next steps.

- 3.2 In preparation for the full implementation, the Council created an 1140 hours website, providing detailed information for parents and carers on both the 38- and 48-week models available across the county. The information provided included both local authority nurseries and funded providers to ensure that parents and carers could access appropriate information to inform their choice of provider and also how they could access a 'blended model' if required.
- 3.3 The impact of COVID-19 and the ongoing mitigations has meant that some restrictions have remained in place, particularly a limit to the number of children in any one cohort and staff not moving between cohorts of children, or different settings in any one day. In addition, enhanced cleaning has been required and specifically between cohorts of children attending the nursery. The Council has plans in place to ensure that there could be continuity for children if the restrictions were further increased during the course of the year and to avoid displacing any children.

3.4 **Update**

- 3.4.1 Following the early implementation of the 1140 hour 48-week model at Haddington, St Mary's, Letham Mains, Dunbar and Sanderson's Wynd, parents with children attending these nurseries were offered places during the school summer break. Whilst take up in some nurseries was lower than expected, this gave staff the opportunity to settle into the new work pattern, plan for the new session and provided opportunities and experiences for the children which differed from those available during term time, for example off site visits in the local community. The opening of these nurseries during the summer also provided the opportunity to trial new systems and processes ahead of the start of session 2021/2022. Meetings with staff working over the summer have provided valuable feedback on the successes and challenges of this model. In addition, the feedback provided by Head Teachers and practitioners has helped inform planning and changes for October.

Informal feedback from parents has indicated the benefits a 48-week model has to offer. In particular, parents have commented positively about being able to continue in work without having to worry about childcare, the continuation of routines for young children, the range of different activities and experiences and having a meal provided.

- 3.4.2 The Council has a range of responsibilities in regard to Criteria 1 of the National Standard - Staffing Leadership and Management, and provides an appropriate induction programme and professional learning opportunities for all local authority staff throughout their careers.
- 3.4.3 In recent years, new roles have been introduced that offer progression for early years staff to progress in their career. Professional Learning opportunities exist at all levels, with staff starting their career at Support Worker level given the support and opportunities they require to progress and gain qualifications to further their careers. Those working at a more senior level have been given the opportunity to attend the Management and Leadership course devised and implemented by the Early Learning and Childcare Support Team. This provides an opportunity for existing staff to further develop their knowledge, skills and confidence in preparation for a move to senior posts within the sector.

3.4.4 Opportunities also exist for staff working in the private, voluntary and independent sector. These include twilight sessions devised and facilitated by the Support Team and workshops provided by colleagues within the Council and outside organisations.

3.4.5 As a guarantor of quality, East Lothian Council has a responsibility to ensure that all settings, including funded providers, meet and maintain the National Standards as they offer the extended hours. Quality assurance and improvement continues to be a key focus for this academic session.

The Early Learning and Childcare support team is carrying out monitoring visits for all settings over the coming months.

Our newly developed quality assurance guidance, which aims to support staff in improving standards and outcomes for young children, will be used during these visits. Settings falling short of the standard expected will be offered additional support and visits to help them achieve and maintain the standard

3.4.6 The Council is keen to take stock on the implementation of the expansion of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours and to gather feedback from parents/carers and staff. We intend to seek feedback via a questionnaire on the Council's Consultation Hub "Have your Say", early in 2022. Those parents who are not able to access the questionnaire online will be able to request paper copies to complete. The consultation will be widely advertised through social media, local authority nurseries and via our funded providers. This timeline gives parents the opportunity to settle into the individual models of 1140 hours, and for those starting at the beginning of the academic year 2021-22 to have, where provided, experience of the extended weeks. Draft questions for the survey for parents and carers are attached at Appendix A. Survey questions for staff are currently being developed.

3.4.7 The proposed timeline for consultation also gives time for responses to be collated, and information provided will be used to inform any future changes to the models being offered. Any changes to the model being provided in a setting will be dependent on the removal of COVID restrictions and also the demand for places in that area. Any changes to the model will also need to be met from within the funding provided by the Scottish Government.

3.4.8 Since the inception of the 1140 hours programme, the Project Board has provided very effective oversight of the implementation of 1140 hours, and through regular meetings, has found solutions to the many challenges posed throughout the years. The Project Board has proved to be an efficient and successful way of keeping all parties informed of progress whilst providing opportunities for open discussion, support and challenge. The Project Board has also benefitted from the involvement of a Scottish Government official who has acted as a 'critical friend'.

3.4.9 Given that the expansion has now been fully implemented, the Project Board will be stood down. Matters relating to building works that are still being completed will be considered by the Learning Estate Senior Managers' group as appropriate. In addition, the project team which was the operational group reporting to the board have also concluded their work. This group has been a cross-service working group and has benefitted from the opportunity to

collaborate and problem solve throughout the development of the programme in a truly 'One-Council' approach.

3.5 Conclusion

3.5.1 Despite the significant challenges presented over the years, with COVID being the most significant, East Lothian Council has delivered the expansion of Early Learning and Childcare to 1140 hours, by the statutory timescale of August 2021. To date all children who wish to access extended hours have been offered the opportunity to do so.

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 has been delivered within the financial allocation from the Scottish Government.

6.2 Personnel –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.

6.3 Other – none.

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 None

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| DATE | 23 November 2021 |

Appendix A. – draft Survey Questions for parents/carers

About you and your child

Your Name (optional)

Your Child's Name (optional)

Nursery/Funded provider your child attends

Is your child receiving 1140hours as:

- An eligible 2 year old
- A child aged between 3 & 5 years

Do you (tick all that apply):

- 'Blend' across more than one setting
- Pay for additional hours above your 1140hours entitlement

About the model

We're keen to know how 1140hours is working for our parents and carers. This section will ask you questions about the model/pattern of hours that your child attends early learning and childcare.

Do you use a (tick all that apply)

- Local authority 38 week model
- Local authority 48 week model
- Partner nursery
- Partner community group
- Partner childminder

When choosing where your child would attend, did you make your decision based on:

- The setting only
- The model only
- A mixture of model and setting
- Other

I am happy with the model of childcare that I receive

- Agree
- Disagree
- Other

Is there anything else you about the model that you would like to share with us?

[space for comments]

Settings

We want to know how well our settings support 1140hours. If your child attends more than one setting (for example, as a blended model) please answer for the place where they spend most time. You can use the comments box to share information on the second provider if you wish.

What factors influenced your decision to send your child to the setting they attend? Please tick all that apply:

- The model suited me best
- The location suited me best
- The type of setting suited me best – for example, a childminder
- It is our catchment primary school
- I have other child(ren) already at this setting
- Other (please explain)

Does your child receive their 1140 hours across more than one setting?

- Yes
- No
- Other

Is there anything else you about the setting that you would like to share with us?

[space for comments]

Aims of 1140hours

We are keen to know how 1140 hours in East Lothian supports the Scottish Government's aims for its introduction.

My child receives high-quality early learning and childcare

- Yes
- No
- Other

The extra funded hours have allowed me to (tick all that apply):

- Increase my hours at work
- Access employment
- Undertake training
- Return to education
- Reduce my childcare costs
- None of the above
- Other (please explain)

I was able to choose whether to take my hours at a council setting or with a partner nursery, childminder or community group

- Yes
- No
- Other

Is there anything else you wish to feed back to us about 1140 hours of early learning and childcare in East Lothian?

[space for comments]