

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 17 MAY 2016

FUTURE EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PROVISION

REPORT BY MARGO WILLIAMSON, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR – CHILDREN AND LEARNING

ABSTRACT

This report advises elected members of developments within early years and outlines the approach adopted to prepare for the future expansion of early years services. These steps will ensure Angus Council is prepared to meet the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver 1140 hours early learning and childcare by the end of the next parliamentary term.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that Committee agree the set of guiding principles set out in section 5.1 of this report as the basis on which to develop a strategic plan for the future development of early learning and childcare in Angus.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/COPORATE PLAN

- 2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:
- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
 - Individuals are involved in their communities

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Reference is made to report number 435/15 that set out the Directorate's Statement of Ambition for the Children and Young People of Angus. It contains the commitment to helping children and young people grow safely and happily and the stretch aim of increasing the number of our children meeting their developmental milestones before they start school (STRETCH AIM – 9 out of 10 children). Key to fulfilling this commitment, and meeting the stretch aim, is the provision of high quality early learning and childcare.
- 3.2 Reference is also made to report number 138/16 schedule 3 that advised members of progress in implementing the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and made to report number 7/15 that set out arrangements for admissions and priority categorisation for early learning and childcare provision.
- 3.3 Part 6 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 focuses on increasing the number of hours of early learning and childcare that three and four-year-olds, and some two-year-olds, are entitled to receive. The following groups are currently entitled to 600 hours of early learning and childcare:
- all three and four year olds, starting from around the first term after their third birthday
 - two year old children from the point they are looked after, under a kinship care order, or with a parent appointed guardian;
 - two year olds, starting from the first term after their second birthday with a parent in receipt of qualifying benefits; or, the first term after their parent starts receiving qualifying benefits.

Once a child becomes entitled to early learning and child care, they will stay entitled even if their parent becomes employed, or their situation with a parent or carers changes.

Children will stop being entitled to early learning and child care at the start of the autumn term in August in the same year that they become 5 when they would normally start school. Children who become 5 in January or February can have an additional year of early learning and childcare if their parent or carer wants their child to start school at 5 ½ years rather than 4 ½ years

- 3.4 The Scottish Government has announced its intention to extend the provision of early learning and childcare to 1140 hours per annum by the end of the next parliamentary term. This presents significant challenges in terms of the current availability of early learning and childcare provision in Angus, should this proceed. In effect, the level of childcare and early learning provision required in the future will nearly double. Whilst specific details as to how this policy will be implemented are not yet available, the Council needs to start planning if it is to meet this increase in the future.

4. CURRENT POSITION

- 4.1 Angus currently offers 600 hours early learning and childcare provision for all three and four year olds through funded places:

- in 49 nursery classes within school settings
- in 12 private nurseries who are currently in partnership with Angus Council
- in 21 voluntary providers, playgroups, who are currently in partnership with Angus Council

- 4.2 Eligible two year old funded places are also offered through partner providers, community child minders and in four school settings.

- 4.3 The Carnoustie Childcare Project is a pilot scheme offering parents the option of splitting their early learning and childcare funding between partner providers and the local authority nursery. Small numbers of parents have taken advantage of this. Further evaluation of this project will determine roll out to other localities.

- 4.4 Currently, there is additional provision over the core 600 hours for children in three rural school settings offering additional charged sessions or in partner private nurseries where parents can pay for additional hours.

- 4.5 Across Angus, all Council early learning and childcare provision is currently situated within school premises and operates within school hours. The exception to term-time opening is Strathmore that operates in the afternoons over 48 weeks of the year for two and a half hour sessions.

- 4.6 A number of adaptations to current buildings have taken place and more are planned. Capacity has been increased in some settings, space has been created for 2 year olds and a number of playgroups have been integrated into schools.

5. THE FUTURE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE

- 5.1 In light of the proposed future increase in early learning and childcare there is a need to develop a detailed strategic plan as to how Angus Council will meet future demand for early learning and child care.

In order to meet potential future demand it is recognised that the Council, as well as seeking to enhance its own provision, will require to continue to work in partnership with partner providers to meet the particular needs of the four localities. It is also recognised that there will be a need to maximise use of existing provision by extending both opening hours and accessibility over holiday periods.

In order to assist in the future planning and development of early learning and childcare a set of key guiding principles has been developed as follows:

The Council will

- seek to offer parents and carers flexibility and choice;
- take account of demographic changes as well as the planned expansion of early learning and childcare;
- develop high quality childcare and learning opportunities that meet the needs of individual children, families and local communities; develop and work a range of partner providers including childminders, local playgroups, Third sector providers and the private sector to provide a mixed blend of opportunities
- adapt and extend current local authority provision where this is the best way to meet local demand. This may include the development of new Early Learning and Childcare Centres;
- seek to ensure that at least one local authority facility in each locality offers 48-50 week placements where there is evidence of demand,
- seek to ensure that at least one local authority facility in each locality will offer early learning and childcare from 8am – 6pm , where there is evidence of demand,
- review current Service Level Agreements with partner providers to offer parents flexibility in the provision of any funded hours.

6. LOCALITY ISSUES

- 6.1 Pressure points have been identified in Monifieth/Carnoustie and Forfar/Kirriemuir where demand is currently close to outstripping capacity. Moreover, in these localities, capacity is also under pressure due to new house building.
- 6.2 Within the Brechin/Montrose locality, there is sufficient provision to meet current demand. However, there is a need to review the standard of accommodation across a number of rural settings.
- 6.3 Within Arbroath, provision within the new school developments has been made for early learning and childcare. This along with the addition of two new private nurseries partnerships will be sufficient to meet current demand and a small increase into the future.
- 6.4 In light of the policy intention of 1140hrs there is likely to be the requirement for early learning and childcare developments in each of the locality areas in the future. These developments will be taken forward as new resources are made available. However, given the current pressures in Monifieth/Carnoustie and Forfar/Kirriemuir, the directorate is currently undertaking options appraisals about how we can best deliver early learning and childcare in these localities taking into account the totality of current resources available. The outcomes from these option appraisals will be reported to Committee when complete.

7. PROPOSALS

It is proposed that the Council adopt the principles set out in Section 5.1 of this report as the basis of for the future development and expansion of early learning and childcare in Angus.

8. OTHER IMPLICATION

- 8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been completed in respect of this report.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Whilst there are no financial implication arising directly from this report the future expansion of early learning and childcare has significant revenue and capital financial implications that cannot be fully quantified until further details of the Scottish Governments policy intentions of increasing early learning and childcare provision to 600hrs are made available.

9.2 The Scottish Government has indicated its intention to prioritise funding towards the future expansion of early learning and childcare.

NOTE: No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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