

ANGUS COUNCIL

FAMILY, EDUCATION AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE – 26 MARCH 2024

AMENDMENTS TO EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ENROLMENT ARRANGEMENTS

REPORT BY KELLY MCINTOSH, DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

1. ABSTRACT

This report seeks approval to amend the current arrangements for application and enrolment to Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision.

2. ALIGNMENT TO THE COUNCIL PLAN AND COUNCIL POLICIES

The proposals in this report align to:

(i) Council Plan 2023-28

- Support children, young people and adults to access appropriate opportunities which allow them to progress in their learning.
- Deliver our statutory obligation and core functions, tailored to suit our available resources and making best use of our data and performance information.

Angus Schools for the Future Strategy

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Approve the removal of the non-statutory additional admission of children to Early Learning and Childcare in October; and
- (ii) Approve the revised start dates for Early Learning and Childcare provision as set out in Part 6 of this report.

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Scottish Government [Early Learning and Childcare Statutory Guidance](#) sets out ELC starting dates for eligible two year olds and all three year olds. Children are entitled to commence ELC from the beginning of the first term (autumn, spring or summer) after the child's second or third birthday.
- 4.2 Committee report [7/15](#) sets out the revised arrangements for admission to pre-school education provision in Angus, reducing from eight intakes to four intakes per year to ensure more practicable arrangements, aligning with other neighbouring authorities and exceeding Scottish Government requirements.
- 4.3 Committee report [71/16](#) outlined the Children and Learning Committee's approval for admission dates to be reviewed annually and for two year olds in a funded place to be eligible for the ongoing funding for their place from the date of their third birthday.

5. CURRENT POSITION

- 5.1 In Angus, all eligible two year olds are admitted to settings as soon as their application is processed. As per committee report 71/16 Angus Council currently offers four intakes per year to ELC for all three and four year olds with dates of application up to the first date of each term. Angus Council currently offers a non-statutory October intake in addition to the mandatory August, January and April intakes. This position no longer aligns with almost all other local authorities, including our neighbouring local authorities, who facilitate only the three statutory admissions of early learning and childcare per year.

- 5.2 Since participating in the deferral pilot project in August 2021 and following subsequent legislation from August 2023 (as per the amended Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014), parents of any child who has not yet turned five before starting school can defer their entry to school. Any deferred child can access an additional funded year of early learning and childcare provision. The number of children deferring entry to school has increased since 2020 (Figure 1). Combined with increased uptake of funded ELC places for eligible two year olds the increase in numbers of children across a broader age range places additional demands on the early years staffing and resources.

Figure 1- Number of children deferred each year

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023
Deferrals	165	198	197	262

- 5.3 The uptake of October places has been steadily decreasing over the last three years. Each year an average of 11 children who were eligible to start in the October session chose instead to enrol in January.

Figure 2- Number of 3 year olds starting ELC provision in October

Year	2020 (COVID)	2021	2022	2023
Local Authority	49	75	65	50
Partner providers	63	74	55	32
Total	112	149	120	82

6. PROPOSALS

- 6.1 In light of the increased availability and flexibility of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision in Angus through the introduction of 1140 hours of delivery, additional year provision within legislation and Angus Council's immediate access for eligible two year old provision, it is proposed that the Family, Education and Justice Committee approves the removal of the additional non-statutory admission of children to ELC in October.
- 6.2 If the above is approved, it is proposed that the Family, Education and Justice Committee implement three statutory intakes for children aged three to five in ELC from August 2024 as follows:

Children born between	Will be eligible from
16 April 2021 and 31 August 2021	13 August 2024 (Autumn term)
1 September 2021 and January 2022	6 January 2025 (Winter term)
7 January 2022 and 22 April 2023	22 April 2025 (Summer term)

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 If approved, based on 2023 data there is expected to be an annual saving of circa £75,000. Approximately £30,000 of this saving will be derived from removing the requirement to employ additional staff for Angus Council settings between October and December each year. The remaining £45,000 will be derived from reduced payments to Private & Voluntary providers in the same period.

8. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 8.1 Corporate Risk Register:
- Financial Sustainability
 - Partnerships

9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no direct environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

10. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT, HUMAN RIGHTS AND FAIRER SCOTLAND DUTY

10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and is attached as Appendix 1.

11. CONSULTATION

11.1 The Director of Finance and the Director of Legal, Governance & Change have been consulted in the preparation of this report. Angus Council does not hold information about children who may come into the service in future. As the potentially impacted cohort is very small, it would not be proportionate to consult the whole community regarding this proposal.

NOTE: The background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) which were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report are:

- [07/15](#)
- [71/16](#)

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List of Appendices:

Appendix 1 – EIA.