

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE10 June 2021Report by Director of EducationEARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update members on the approaches taken to develop Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services. The report outlines the steps taken to improve further the quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability of provision and experiences for young children.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note the continued progress of the delivery of 1140 hours ELC and comment on the contents as outlined in this paper.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government set a transformational agenda for Early Learning and Childcare for 2020 which was published in March 2017. The vision was to almost double the entitlement to free ELC from 600 hours to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds and is underpinned by the key principles of quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability.

4. In September 2017 Education Committee approved East Renfrewshire's expansion plan including the 1140 hours models of delivery for early learning and childcare. The Council has a reputation for providing high quality early learning and childcare, which is flexible, affordable and accessible to all families in their local community. Families have valued such over the years and our expansion plan built upon these principles.

5. The Scottish Government announced on Tuesday 31 March 2020 that as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic they had taken the decision to remove the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020.

6. The Education Department considered the implications of this decision, in particular the delay to our planned infrastructure programme and the impact on our 'grow our own' workforce completing their necessary qualifications and the likelihood that families were planning both their childcare and financial needs on the basis of 1140 hours early learning and childcare being available from August 2020.

7. In June 2020, Education Committee approved the department's proposal to continue to progress with plans to deliver 1140 hours of early learning and childcare for all eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old children from August 2020 albeit in a more limited way given the impact of COVID-19 on plans.

8. In December 2020 the Scottish Government confirmed its commitment to every eligible 2, 3 and 4 year old child receiving 1140 hours of free early learning and childcare, with a new implementation date of August 2021.

REPORT

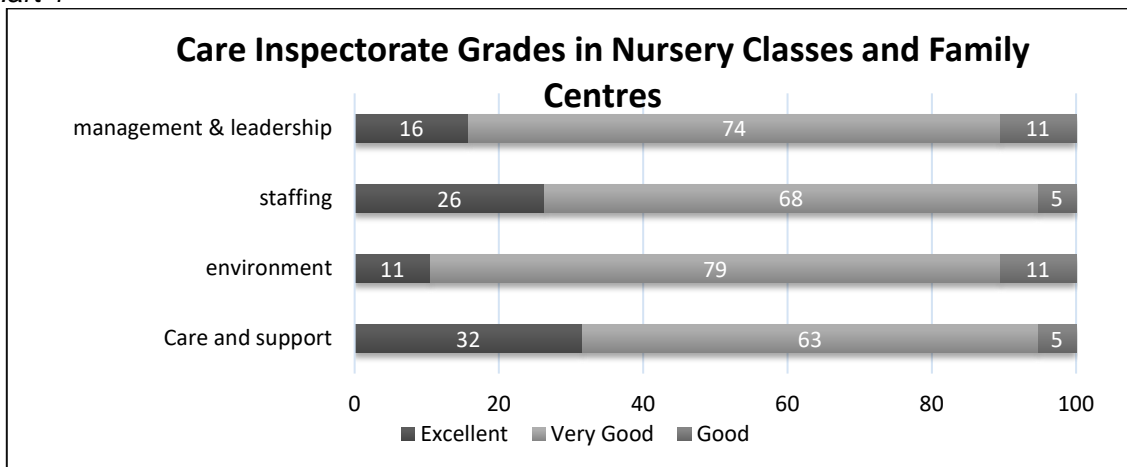
Quality

9. Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. In January 2020 a report on the Quality of the Council's Early Learning and Childcare Services was shared with Members of this committee, noting the high quality of the Council's early learning and childcare service which meets the relevant criteria of the National Standard for delivery of the funded entitlement of 1140 hours of ELC.

10. The Care Inspectorate suspended routine inspection activity from March 2020 and introduced a virtual system for inspection, including self-evaluation from settings to gather intelligence and assess risks for those operating within the pandemic.

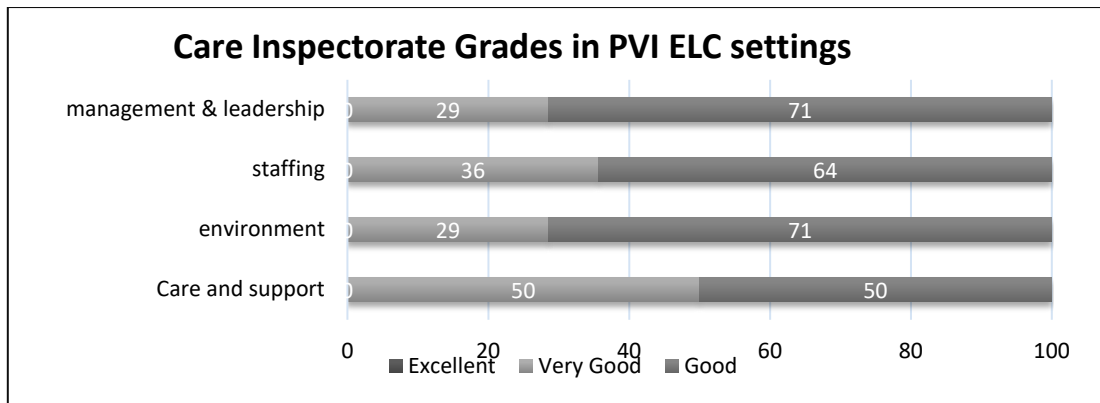
11. In order to deliver funded ELC settings must meet the National Standard which includes achieving grades of good or better across the range of criteria reported on by the Care Inspectorate. The quality of ELC in our local authority settings exceeds the National Standard with most settings achieving grades of very good or better as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1



12. These grades reflect the 19 settings which had been inspected by the Care Inspectorate between 2016 and March 2020. The 3 new settings registered with the Care Inspectorate since August 2019, namely Maidenhill Nursery Class, St Cadoc's Nursery Class and Cross Arthurlie Nursery have not yet been formally inspected. The registration process is rigorous and requires settings to demonstrate how they will meet the National Standard, in addition St Cadoc's and Maidenhill were required to submit self-evaluation evidence in August 2020 to the Care Inspectorate following their first full year of service delivery and received very positive feedback.

Chart 2

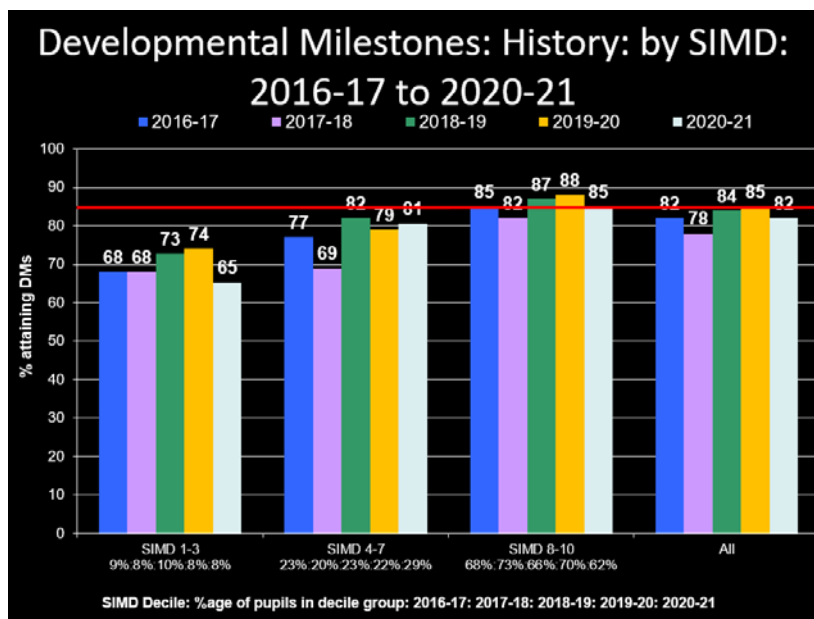


13. All Private and Voluntary settings delivering funded ELC in East Renfrewshire also meet and, in some cases, exceed the National Standard requirement to achieve grades of good or better.

14. Since 2013-14 data has been gathered on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following developmental components are assessed: Social, Emotional, Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour. Between 2016-17 and 2019-20, there had been a steady increase in the percentage of children achieving their developmental milestones within the least affluent communities, SIMD deciles 1-3. However, most recent data reflects a reversal in the previous reduction in the gap between the achievement of those from the most affluent, SIMD 8-10, and least affluent, SIMD 1-3 residencies, which was 14% in 2019-20 and has risen to 20% in 2020-21.

15. A possible reason for this shift is the period of time children did not attend nursery during the first lockdown and nursery closures (March 2020 and June 2020). Young children learn and develop best in social contexts and the period of closure brought isolation for many. Primary schools are aware of this and there has been targeting of additional resource to support all children and young people with learning loss. In addition the quality of remote learning on offer during the second lockdown was of a very high standard. Chart 3 below details the Developmental Milestones history by SIMD.

16. Chart 3



17. This data also reflects the findings of the Public Health Scotland Report which found that COVID-19 and in particular the infection control measures, including lockdown, have had a profound impact on 2–4 year old children in Scotland. At this age it is important that children have opportunities to mix with others. This was severely restricted during lockdown without access to Early Learning and Childcare, and other play and learning experiences. The areas of emotional development, attention, language, communication, and fine motor skills presented the greatest difference between children from the most and least affluent communities.

18. A Baseline Assessment has been in place since 2005-06 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one. In contrast to the Developmental Milestones, overall performance in literacy and numeracy remained consistent with previous years. However the poverty measured attainment gap, using SIMD as a characteristic, has increased from 9 points in 2019-20 to 13 points in 2020-21 for numeracy and reduced slightly in literacy from 16 points in 2019-20 to 15 points in 2020-21.

19. A digital tool for tracking children's development and attainment throughout their nursery experience was developed by a group of early years professionals in 2017/18. An evaluation of the Tracking Tool in January 2021 showed that practitioners have found it to be an effective tool which supports them in documenting children's progress, planning next steps and identifying children who may require some support. This tool will be key to supporting children at transition to primary 1.

20. All our ELC establishments continue to offer excellent services for families as they continue their journey towards Gold Family Focused accreditation. The Family Centred Approaches framework was reviewed to support a digital approach to accreditation and highlight the work settings had undertaken in engaging children and families remotely. This has resulted in one family centre achieving Gold Family Focused status and a nursery class being re-accredited at Gold. This new online process will enable a further 3 establishments to go for Gold accreditation before the end of term.

Quality of the Early Years Workforce

21. The final round of recruitment panels took place in March 2020 ensuring that we had the necessary workforce in place to implement our 1140 plans from August 2020. We successfully appointed 157 CDOs between 2019 and 2020, including many of our staff who had completed their qualification through our 'Grow Our Own' pathway. Eighty percent of Cohorts 1-3 of the HNC delivered in partnership with West College Scotland secured employment as Child Development Officers. Cohort 4 experienced a delay in completion due to Covid-19, 8 candidates finished their qualification in January 2021 and are now eligible to apply for vacancies as they arise.

22. Through our recruitment exercise we have begun to increase the diversity of our ELC workforce which now includes 13 men who provide important male role models for children in settings which are predominantly staffed by women. We have also increased the proportion of staff from black and minority ethnic backgrounds with 21 now working in our settings.

23. East Renfrewshire Council continues to invest in its current and future workforce to ensure that all our staff are highly skilled and motivated. This investment continues to take various forms including a focus on Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) and professional enquiry.

24. Throughout 2020-21 the group of ELC leaders continued to develop the '0-6 Pedagogy' online hub in response to the changing needs of the sector. This online resource provides staff in local authority and funded provider settings with an increasing range of high-quality learning materials. These materials were particularly well utilised when staff were working remotely. These materials include; online training videos, SWAY presentations, research articles, video clips, photographs and interviews with experienced practitioners. Further resources to support staff wellbeing and delivery of remote learning were added during the recent period of nursery closure. Usage data shows a high level of engagement with the materials in 2020-21 with Outdoor Learning being a particular focus for practitioners in line with the National Coronavirus Guidance to maximise opportunities for outdoor play and experiences to limit transmission of the virus.

25. Senior and Depute Head of Centre forums shifted focus this session to support staff with the challenges of delivering 1140 hours of high quality ELC within the pandemic restrictions. Evaluations show that these forums have been vital in supporting middle leaders as they work with their staff teams to implement the expansion to 1140 hours and develop new ways of working in response to Public Health guidance.

26. East Renfrewshire has continued with its commitment to every 3 and 4 year old child within a local authority nursery having daily access to a teacher. During nursery closure teachers took a lead role in the delivery of remote learning to ensure that children and families had access to a suitable range of play experiences and ideas to enrich learning at home, in addition to co-ordinating learning within the ELC hubs. Teachers from ELC settings also worked closely with their primary colleagues to facilitate transitions for children in new and innovative ways in response to the pandemic restrictions.

27. A peripatetic teacher was funded to support all East Renfrewshire children who attend a funded provider. Enhanced risk assessments and access to testing enabled this support to continue during periods when partner nurseries were open and the use of outdoor spaces and experiences for learning provided further mitigation of risk.

28. The aspiration of a graduate workforce (100% qualified staff) in early years continues to make significant progress in East Renfrewshire. The number of staff working in an early years setting holding, or working towards a degree level qualification has increased to 62, or 24% of the expanded workforce compared to a national average of 19%. The introduction of a PDA Childhood Practice Level 8 award delivered in partnership with Glasgow Kelvin College at Barrhead High School Vocational Wing, has further supported this ambition with 14 practitioners due to complete this in June 2021. This year we were able to support a further 5 practitioners currently undertaking their BA by funding the cost of some of their study modules.

29. Our staff continue to benefit from our involvement in the West Partnership (Glasgow City Region Education Improvement Collaborative). The West Partnership has formed a relationship with Edinburgh University, allowing us to access extremely high quality professional learning linked to current research, policy and theory underpinned by the principles of Friedrich Froebel, one of the earliest pioneers of early childhood education. A further 20 practitioners from our schools and nurseries were due to begin this learning opportunity in April 2020, however this was delayed until September with delivery moving online. All of our ELC settings, and the majority of our primary schools now have trained staff who have embraced this approach to early learning focusing on relationships, connections, wellbeing and outdoor learning.

30. In addition 11 practitioners embarked on Masters level learning in partnership with South Lanarkshire Council undertaking a Post Graduate Certificate in Early Years Leadership. This was implemented online and is due for completion in June 2021. The participants report

that they gained a lot of professional knowledge from this opportunity which has helped them to develop their skills as leaders.

Flexibility

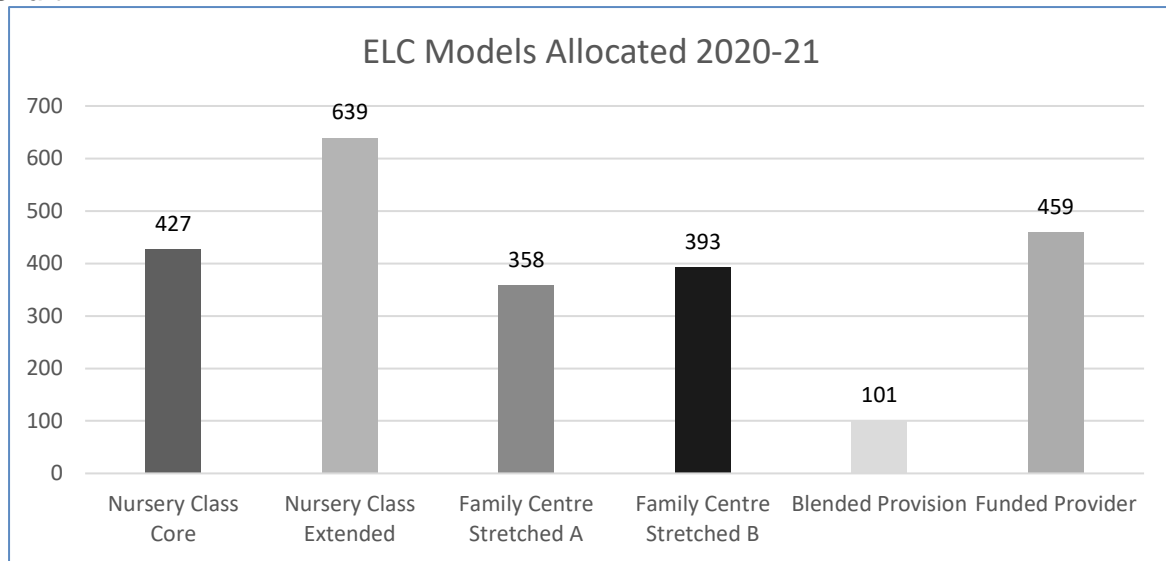
31. Since August 2015 the Education Department has continued to increase incrementally the flexibility on offer to parents to support with childcare, training and work commitments. Elected members will recall that the department was mindful that families would have been depending on the offer of 1140 hours from August 2020 both in terms of childcare needs and reducing family expenses. It was recognised that during this period of unexpected financial stress and concern for many families, it was crucially important to enable them to plan ahead with knowledge of how their early learning and childcare needs would be met and without additional financial concerns.

32. The following models were made available to families from August 2020:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| a. Core Provision | - | 5 sessions of 6 hours per week
(school days over the school year) |
| b. Extended Day Provision | - | 3 sessions of 10 hours per week
(longer days over the school year) |
| c. Stretched Provision A | - | 5 sessions of 4 hours 45 minutes per week
(half days over a longer year) |
| d. Stretched Provision B | - | 2 sessions of 9 ½ hours and 1 session of 4
hours 45 minutes per week
(mix of full and half days over a longer year) |
| e. Blended Provision | - | 15 hours in LA Establishment and 15 hours
with another provider working in partnership
with ERC per week. |
| f. Funded Provider Provision | - | 30 hours per week fully funded provision with a
funded provider working in partnership with ERC,
including private, voluntary and independent
(PVI) sector providers and childminders. |

33. Chart 4 below shows the number of places allocated using the 1140 hours models.

Chart 4



34. All nursery places are allocated using the published priorities with a ballot being held where demand exceeds space available. In session 2020-21 88% of families were allocated their first choice of setting with 72% also receiving their first choice of model.

35. A consultation was carried out with parents in autumn 2020 to seek their views on the provision available and to help shape the department's next steps. Within the consultation parents were asked to rate how well their child's current allocation meets the early learning and childcare needs of their family. Respondents were asked to rate their allocation on a 6 point scale from 1 – Not at all well to 6 – Extremely well. Eighty percent of respondents selected a positive response between 4 and 6 demonstrating a high level of overall satisfaction with the delivery of 1140 hours of ELC.

36. This was further illustrated through the comments where one of the most common themes was of gratitude and appreciation that East Renfrewshire Council was delivering 1140 hours despite the difficulties associated with the pandemic. Respondents were appreciative of the work being carried out in our settings. This theme is exemplified by the following comments:

“Well done on providing the additional hours in these circumstances. It has made a huge difference to my family.”

“I just want to thank the teachers for everything they do. As keyworkers they are dealing with the pandemic head on which must be stressful and uncertain. They come to work with energy, enthusiasm and a smile on their face.”

37. Families reported that the new hours suited their work and family life, relieving financial pressures and reducing the amount of time grandparents were being asked to provide childcare. They recognised the high quality of early learning and childcare that their children received in both local authority and funded provider settings where their children were thriving.

38. Various themes emerged through the consultation including parent's frustration at the lack of capacity for families to purchase additional hours over and above their 1140 hours entitlement. The use of 'bubbles' to minimise the risks associated with Covid-19 following

Scottish Government guidance, combined with the need to provide interim placements for children where nursery buildings were delayed has meant that very few families have been able to purchase additional hours since August 2020. Ensuring compliance with any on-going Public Health guidance the department will re-introduce the facility to purchase additional hours, where space is available, through Parent pay from August 2021.

39. Another prominent theme in the consultation was the popularity of the Core Hours model. Thirty seven percent of all applications for 3 year olds for session 2020/21 requested Core as their first choice of model, this was often paired with a desire to attend a particular nursery class. However families accessing family centres due to their geographical location also indicated that they would prefer Core Hours as they only intended to use ELC during term time and would not make use of the setting during school holiday periods. These families expressed concern that their child would not benefit from their full entitlement to 1140 hours of ELC. This model has been introduced to family centres from August 2021.

40. The Early Years Intervention Group (EYIG) allows the department to respond and support children and families who need our help most, through the allocation of a range of services and resources. In session 2020-21, 163 referrals have been made through the EYIG to date. Twenty-three point five percent received additional free early learning and childcare hours over their entitled 1140 hours, 26% were allocated a nursery place prior to their entitlement, 10.8% were given a placement in the Preschool Assessment and Development Unit (PSADU), 8.4% were referred for further assessment / intervention with Educational Psychology Service, 3.6% were allocated to the Sensory Support Service and 4.2% referred to Family First. 18% of referrals resulted in no resource allocation being made.

41. The Reaching Out Programme which enables staff from the PSADU to work with staff in mainstream ELC settings building their capacity and skills to support children who require additional support to develop social and interaction skills was unable to operate this year, due to the pandemic restrictions.

42. In October 2019, the Scottish Government committed to legislate to ensure that all children who defer their primary 1 start are able to access funded ELC. The Scottish Government have been working closely with COSLA and ADES to agree arrangements for implementation, including resource implications. The Scottish Statutory Instrument was laid in Parliament on 7 December 2020 but for now, there is no change in the law. All children who are still 4 years old at the start of the school year can be deferred and start primary one the following year. Children with a birthday in January or February who defer school entry are automatically entitled to another year of funded ELC.

43. A new online solution was introduced in January 2021 to enable families to apply to defer entry to primary school for session 2021-22. A total of 134 parents applied to defer their child, of these 126 have been granted an additional year of funded early learning and childcare, with 6 parents choosing to withdraw their request. The number of requests for discretionary deferrals increased for the fifth consecutive year rising from 8 for session 2017-18 to 43 for session 2021-22, representing 32% of all deferral requests.

44. East Renfrewshire reviews requests for an additional year of funded ELC on an individual basis, however it is important to note that when the new legislation comes into effect in 2023 that all requests will be granted, consequently this will have a significant impact on capacity and could see as many as 300 new applications for ELC each year in East Renfrewshire.

45. The department received 2 applications from parents wishing to apply for early entry to primary school. These applications are still under review.

ACCESSIBILITY

46. As we continue to develop our digital capacity we have made improvements to the application process for ELC enabling parents to complete and submit their application on line from January 2021. One thousand and thirty seven applications were received electronically and parents were able to accept or decline their place via an online form as part of this new process.

47. The department continues to promote the entitlement of 1140 hours Early Learning and Childcare for all eligible 2 year olds in partnership with our colleagues including Health Visitors, Social Workers and Family First Workers who are fully aware of the eligibility criteria and encourage families to apply for places. Places are allocated through a Local Admissions Panel (LAP).

48. From August 2020 all eligible two year olds were offered 1140 hours of ELC with the majority accessing the Stretched A and B Family Centre models which allow 2 children to take up one place. For this reason the council was able to meet the demand for places for eligible 2 year olds comfortably for the seventh consecutive year, with 120 children allocated through the Local Admissions Panel or EYIG, an increase of 63% on the previous year. As well as providing Early Learning and Childcare for eligible and vulnerable 2 year olds, where there was capacity to do so we were also able to support working families with the offer to purchase nursery places, with Arthurlie, Cart Mill, Glen, Madras and McCready Family Centres providing this opportunity. A further 122 children and families in this age group benefitted from this service, including keyworkers who required the provision during the lockdown period in January 2021.

49. Table 2 below details the capacity for two year olds in each local authority nursery from August 2021. The delivery models determine how these places are used.

Table 2

Establishment	Staffing Capacity
Arthurlie Family Centre (2 year old provision)	30
Cart Mill Family Centre (2 year old provision)	15
Glen Family Centre (0-3 provision)	25
Isobel Mair Family Centre (0-3 provision)*	15
Madras Family Centre (2 year old provision)	15
McCready Family Centre (0-3 provision)	30

** Isobel Mair Family Centre provision is for children with Additional Support Needs.*

50. Detailed in Table 3 is the number of available places for 3 and 4 year olds in each local authority setting from August 2021 as determined by the delivery models. To maximise efficiency staff budgets for each setting are determined according to the number of children who have been allocated a place.

Table 3

Establishment	Available Places
Arthurlie Family Centre	160
Busby Nursery Class**	77
Braidbar Nursery Class	93
Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class	120
Carlibar Family Centre	112
Carolside Nursery Class**	93
Cart Mill Family Centre	88

Crookfur Family Centre**	152
Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class**	77
Eaglesham Nursery Class**	128
Giffnock Nursery Class	40
Glenwood Family Centre**	152
Hazeldene Family Centre	120
Isobel Mair Family Centre*	24
Madras Family Centre	136
Maidenhill Nursery Class	99
Mearns Nursery Class	77
Netherlee Nursery Class	107
Overlee Family Centre	64
St Cadoc's Nursery Class	77
Thornliebank Nursery Class	43
TOTAL	2,040

*Within Isobel Mair Family Centre there is provision for children with Additional Support Needs.

**New/extended settings

51. As detailed in table 4 below, all 14 providers within East Renfrewshire continue to work in partnership to deliver 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare.

Table 4

Provider	Status	2020/21 Successful(✓) Unsuccessful (x)
Belmont Nursery Class	Independent	✓
Broom Nursery	Voluntary	✓
Clarkston Nursery	Voluntary	✓
Elmwood Nursery	Private	✓
Enchanted Forest Nursery	Private	✓
Greenbank Woodland Play	Private	✓
Happy Days Too (Busby)	Private	✓
Happy Days Too (SF)	Private	✓
Innocence Nursery	Private	✓
Kirkhillgait Nursery	Private	✓
Kirktonholme	Private	✓
Orchardpark Nursery (Thornliebank)	Private	✓
Orchardpark Nursery (Newton Mearns)	Private	✓
Railway Cottage	Private	✓

52. In addition to the nurseries listed above, 17 childminders are also in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare. At present 11 of these childminders are providing funded placements for children.

53. The main phase of our early year's expansion was dependent on the construction of new facilities that were planned to be available for August 2020. This comprised a new family centre within the grounds of Eastwood Park to replace the existing Glenwood Family Centre building as well as providing more places; two new build larger replacements for Busby and Eaglesham primary school nursery classes; two new build family centres on the sites of Crookfur and Overlee pavilions; and a new extension at Cross Arthurlie Primary School to establish a nursery class. The new Crookfur Family Centre extends and replaces Crookfur Nursery Class and remains under the leadership and management of Crookfur Primary School.

54. Due to the Coronavirus Pandemic, building work was delayed, however almost all of the new settings began to welcome children between December 2020 and April 2021, with the exception of Overlee Family Centre which will open in August 2021. Also under construction was the small extension at Carolside Primary School Nursery Class which was completed in December 2020.

55. The department deployed contingency measures to mitigate the impact of the delay to the infrastructure programme. This included reducing choice and flexibility, limiting the purchase of additional hours and making greater use of outdoor space.

56. All children who had applied for Crookfur Family Centre and Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class and the majority of new applicants for Eaglesham Nursery Class were offered interim placements in alternative settings within their own community. The children who were allocated interim placements were carefully supported in the transition to their original choice of setting on completion of building works with staff making good use of digital technology to share pictures and videos of the new settings with children and families.

57. The Statutory Guidance under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, states that it is the responsibility of the local authority that a child resides in to secure an Early Learning and Childcare place, however many parents are now seeking provision for their children in neighbouring authorities to support with working or training arrangements.

58. The Scottish Government planned to introduce a Funding Follows the Child (FfC) policy from August 2020. This was postponed as part of the decision to delay the legislative requirement to deliver 1140 hours in full until August 2021. Interim guidance was issued which encouraged local authorities to continue to work towards the principles of Funding Follows the Child, within available resources. The principles of Funding Follows the Child are that parents can take some or all of their child's entitlement to funded early learning and childcare at a certain provider, they can expect to be able to do so provided that:

- the provider meets the National Standard
- the provider has a space available
- the provider is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority
- the provider is able to offer the funded hours in line with local ELC delivery plans

59. The Funding Follows the Child policy is intended to offer increased parental choice and responsiveness of the local funded ELC offer within a framework which promotes and safeguards high quality experiences for children. However, it means that local authorities can no longer set a specific budget for the number of places they buy from specific funded providers, as doing so would limit choice and flexibility. The department however still has to ensure best value for the Council and as such ensure that places are not funded where there is no physical or financial capacity to support.

58. To support with the implementation of FfC, an admission policy with a set admission window is in place. All applications received within the application window from February to 31 May will be automatically funded. Any late applications would be considered on a case by case basis in accordance with the published priorities and within the physical and financial capacity available.

60. In the same spirit of FfC, parental choice may extend to parents wishing to access their funded entitlement in another local authority. East Renfrewshire Council has committed to a formal protocol with neighbouring authorities to allow us to support families wishing to access their ELC in this way. Again this has to be within the application window and take into consideration the physical and financial capacity of resident local authorities. There was an increased demand for cross boundary funding in 2020-2021, however, we were able to fund

all applications which were received within the application window. In recognition of the circumstances linked to the pandemic and as financial capacity allowed we were able to extend this application window to September 2020. Where late applications could not be funded we fulfilled our duty to provide early learning and childcare by offering available spaces within local authority settings.

61. A group of staff from the education department, and early learning and childcare settings, including funded providers, have begun to plan for the implementation of the Funding Follows the Child policy which will come into full effect from August 2021. This will include working with colleagues in communications department to ensure that parents are fully informed about the choices available to them.

62. The Education Department has successfully implemented almost all of elements of the 1140 Expansion, with the exception of the provision of free meals for all children attending ELC. The Interim Guidance on Funding Follows the Child which was published by the Scottish Government on 30 July 2020 indicated that local authorities should continue to work towards this whilst recognising the impact of Covid19 guidelines. The programme of minor works at existing ELC centres to facilitate the provision of meals to children during their session was delayed due to the pandemic. These will now be taken forward in early 2021 in readiness for full implementation in line with Scottish Government timescales so that every child will receive the offer of a free hot meal, from August 2021, regardless of their attendance pattern.

63. In recognition of the circumstances some of our families live in the department continued to provide free food for children most in need. This offer was advertised in family centres and targeted to, but not exclusively, those who would be entitled to a free school meal if attending school.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

64. The national Funding Follows the Child Policy as detailed in paragraph 58 could potentially have a significant impact on the department's budget. The department will continue to monitor parental choice and demand for places in funded providers to allow us to forecast the potential cost of this policy to East Renfrewshire Council and where necessary highlight this as a budget pressure through the annual budget process.

65. The provision of a free hot lunch was forecast at £3.00 per child, per day, however with inflationary rises, the living wage and the demands of the nutritional guidelines, this cost is likely to increase. The Scottish Government is also allocating some additional funding to provide milk and healthy snack to eligible children in nursery, which is to be introduced in August 2021. We await the details of this funding.

66. Income from the purchase of additional hours will be variable, dependent on available capacity and staffing levels within individual settings after entitled places are allocated. The department will also monitor this to inform the net expenditure of early years.

67. 2021/22 is the last year of the multi-year revenue funding package from the Scottish Government for the expansion of 1140 hours of early learning and childcare. Elected members will recall previous reports highlighting that there is an annual shortfall in East Renfrewshire's funding from 2021/22 (i.e. the first full financial year of delivering 1140 hours). To date the department has utilised the flexibility associated with the multi-year funding to maximise the amounts carried forward each year to plan for the anticipated shortfall; and officers have continued to lobby the Scottish Government and COSLA as part of the national review being undertaken to determine the funding methodology beyond 2022. We await the outcome of this national review on the funding approach from 2022/23 onwards; and any impact locally.

RECOMMENDATION

68. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the contents as outlined in the paper.

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June 2021

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