

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEETHURSDAY 23 JUNE 2022Report by Director of EducationEARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE ANNUAL REPORT**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. The purpose of the report is to update Education Committee 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. Education Committee is 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 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, with underpinning 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.

5. In March 2020 the Scottish Government delayed the statutory duty on education authorities to make 1140 hours of early learning and childcare (ELC) available to each eligible child from August 2020 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. 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.

7. 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***

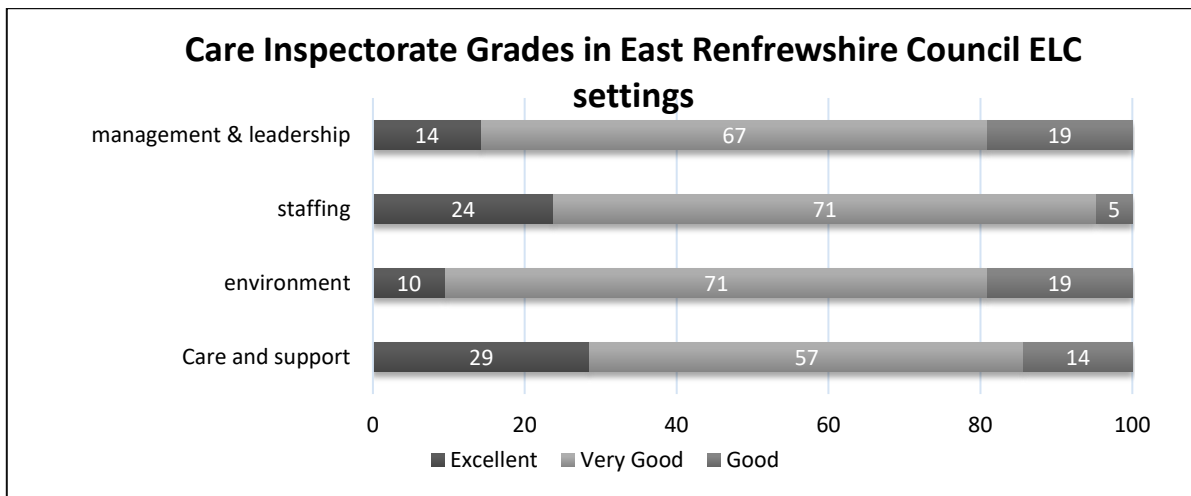
8. Quality is at the heart of the delivery of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) entitlement. Despite the challenges of Covid-19, the Care Inspectorate re-introduced routine

inspection activity from August 2021 visiting establishments in person. Two local authority settings and 2 Funded Providers have been visited this session as part of this regime.

9. In order to deliver funded places ELC settings will be required to meet the National Standard which includes achieving grades of good or better across the range of criteria reported on by the Care Inspectorate. The Scottish Government has provided some flexibility for providers, in recognition of the challenges posed by the pandemic, through publication of Interim Guidance on Funding Follows the Child and the National Standard which will remain in place for session 2022/23.

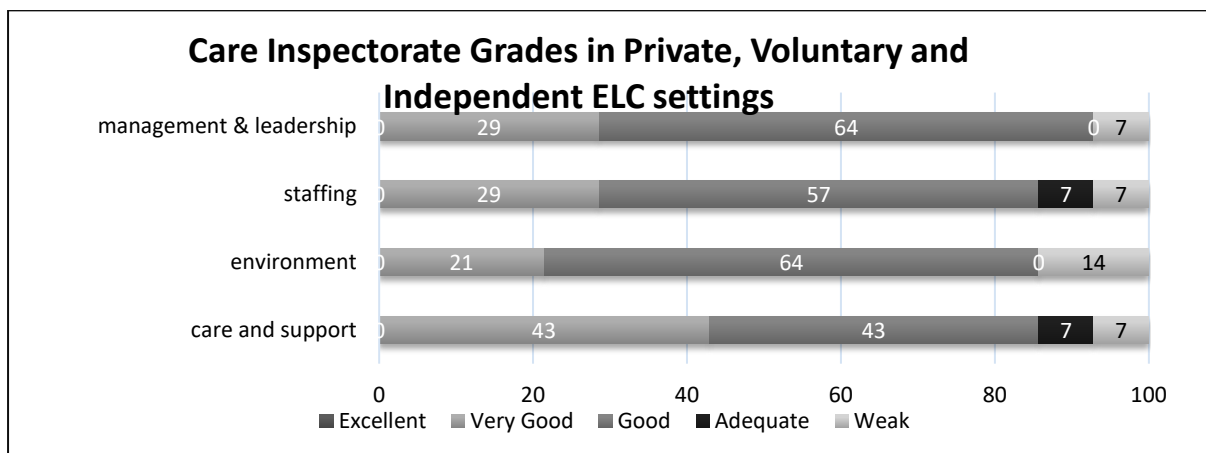
10. The quality of ELC in our local authority settings exceeds the National Standard with most settings achieving grades of very good or better as shown in Chart 1 below.

Chart 1



11. These grades reflect the 21 settings which had been inspected by the Care Inspectorate between 2016 and May 2022. Maidenhill and St Cadoc's Nursery Classes were inspected for the first time this session, having opened in August 2019. Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class and Overlee Family Centre have not yet been formally inspected.

Chart 2



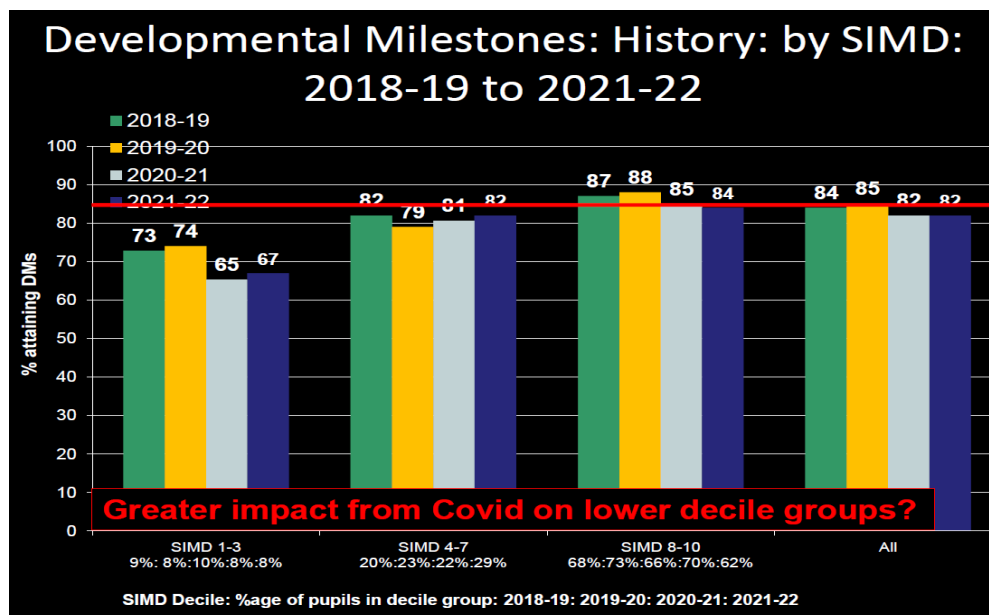
12. Most Funded Providers delivering funded ELC in East Renfrewshire also meet and, in some cases, exceed the National Standard requirement to achieve grades of good or better. Two settings however have seen a reduction in their evaluations in recent inspections. As

such, these settings are engaging in Service Improvement Periods with the Education Department and are receiving further support from the Care Inspectorate Improvement Programme along with another setting seeking support to improve.

13. 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, Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation deciles 1-3. However, following the lockdown periods during 2020/2021 there was a significant 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 deciles, with the gap being 14% in 2019-20 which rose to 20% in 2020-21.

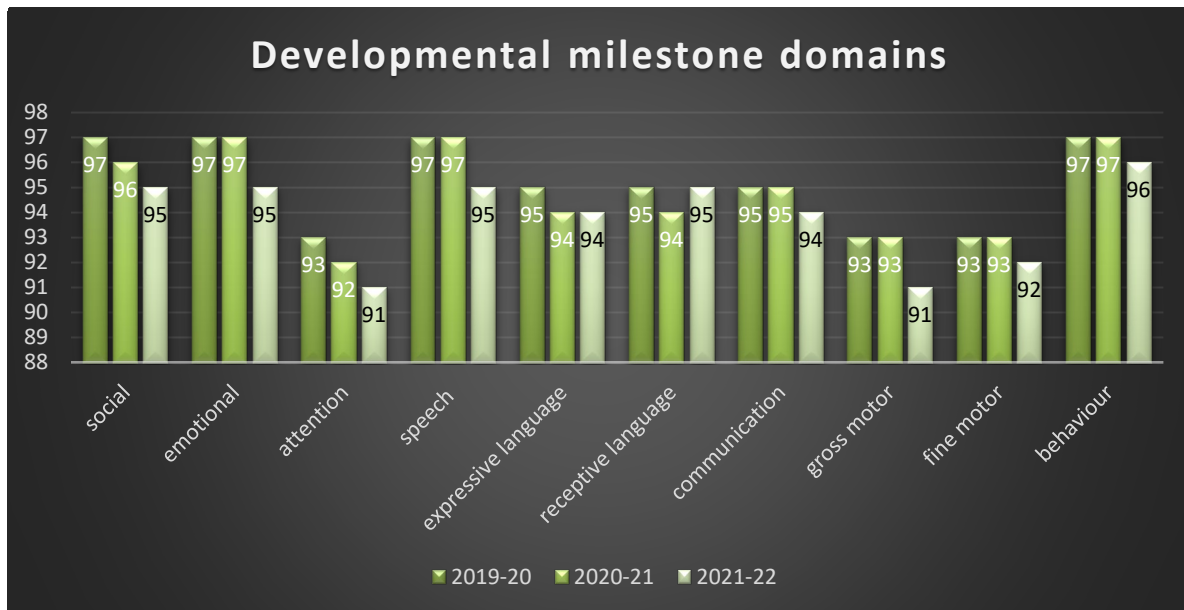
14. In 2021-22 there has been a reduction in the gap to 17%, although this is attributed to an increase in performance of children living in SIMD 1-3 and a small reduction in the performance of those in deciles 8-10 and remains higher than pre-pandemic levels. This cohort of children had experienced nursery closures in both their ante-pre- and pre-school years, from March – June 2020 and in January/February 2021. However, from August 2020 they were able to access 1140 hours of ELC compared to the previous session when 600 hours was still the norm. Chart 3 below details the Developmental Milestones history by SIMD.

Chart 3



15. Chart 4 shows the impact of the pandemic on the different developmental domains, with some areas showing a decrease for the first time compared to 2019-20 and 2020-21.

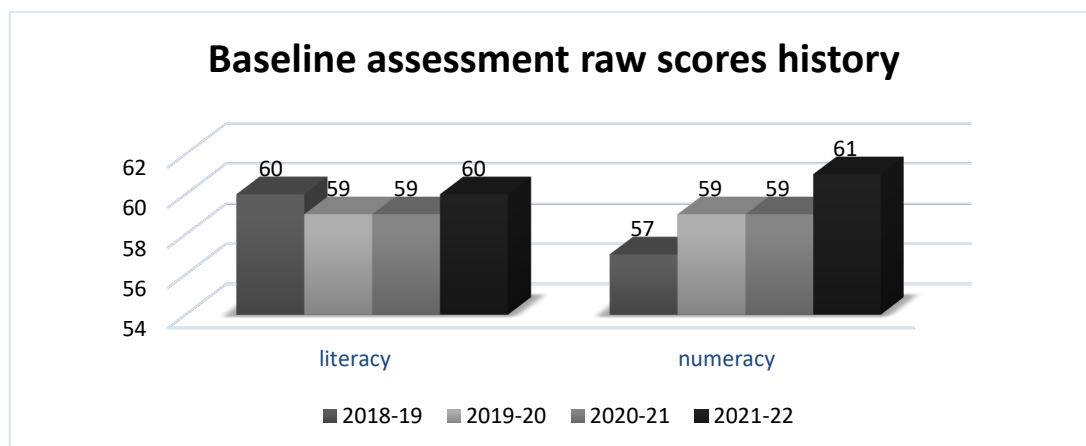
Chart 4



16. This data also reflects the findings of the national COVID-19 [Early Years Resilience and Impact Survey \(CEYRIS\)](#) report published in January 2022 which found that for a substantial proportion of parents and carers perceived the pandemic to have had a negative impact on child and family health, wellbeing and development.

17. 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, with a slight increase in numeracy as shown in Chart 5.

Chart 5



18. There continues to be a gap between the attainment of those living in SIMD 1-3 and those in SIMD 8-10. This poverty related attainment gap has remained at 9 points for numeracy compared to the previous year and reduced in literacy from 10 points in 2020-21 to 7 points in 2021-22. This positive result may be attributed to the high quality remote learning which was available during the periods of school closure and the increased provision of 1140 hours ELC which these children received. Resources from recovery monies were effectively deployed to support the recovery curriculum with a focus on literacy, numeracy and health and wellbeing.

19. The East Renfrewshire digital tool for tracking children's development and attainment throughout their nursery experience has been further developed and improved by a group of early years professionals to make it more user friendly. As a result, this is now being routinely used by all local authority ELC settings to track children's progress, identify next steps and provide support or challenge for those children who need it. From August 2021 the data from the tracking tool was shared with primary schools ensuring progressive transitions in children's learning as they moved between sectors and through the early level of Curriculum for Excellence.

20. The internal Family Centred Approaches Accreditation Framework, provides an opportunity for all ELC settings to measure how well they support children and families in their care. ELC settings adopted digital approaches, enabling adherence to public health restrictions, whilst still working alongside families. Two family centres achieved Gold Family Focused status this session bringing the total to 26% of local authority ELC settings with Gold accreditation, with 57% at Silver and the four newest nurseries which have opened since 2019 working towards Bronze (17%).

Quality of the Early Years Workforce

21. East Renfrewshire Council continues to invest in its current 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 inquiry.

22. Throughout 2021-22 ELC practitioners have continued to make effective use of the '0-6 Pedagogy' online hub which was developed as part of the ELC expansion plan. This online resource provides staff in local authority and funded provider settings with an increasing range of high-quality learning materials. These include; online training videos, SWAY presentations, research articles, video clips, photographs and interviews with experienced practitioners. Usage data shows a high level of engagement with the materials with 3029 views in 2021-22, an increase of 53% on the previous year. New staff benefitted from the induction resources and materials sharing the theory and background of ELC practice. Quality Mealtimes was also a focus for many this session (122) as practitioners began the implementation of the lunch provision associated with 1140 hours, as was the implementation of the Early Years Tracking Tool (255).

23. Senior and Depute Head of Centre forums maintained a focus this session on supporting staff with the challenges of delivering 1140 hours of high quality ELC within the varying levels of public health restrictions still in place. Evaluations show that these forums have been vital in supporting middle leaders as they work with their staff teams to review and evaluate their practice in response to Public Health guidance. An example of this is the focus on parental engagement and involvement to overcome the challenges faced when parents have had only limited access to the ELC settings since March 2020. The forums were held 3 times a year prior to the expansion planning when they increased to quarterly. Now that 1140 hours has been successfully implemented and Covid recovery is well underway, these will revert to 3 times a year from August 2022.

24. A peripatetic teacher was funded to support all children who attend a Funded Provider nursery in East Renfrewshire. Enhanced risk assessments and access to testing enabled this support to continue this session and the use of outdoor spaces and experiences for learning provided further mitigation of risk. Qualitative data indicates Funded Providers value this support immensely.

25. The aspiration of a graduate workforce (100% qualified staff) in early years continues to make significant progress in East Renfrewshire. This year we were able to support 8

practitioners currently undertaking their Bachelor of Arts Degree (BA) by funding the cost of some of their study modules. We also developed a new partnership with University of West of Scotland to provide Graduate Apprenticeships for 2 child development officers.

26. As ongoing restrictions have curtailed the annual ELC Conference, introduced in 2017, an alternative was offered through the Springtime Seminar Series. Over 10 weeks practitioners were able to sign up to inspiring CLPL sessions with leaders in early years thinking. All of these sessions were fully subscribed and the impact was evident through social media posts demonstrating changes being made to practice as a result of the ideas shared.

27. 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 12 practitioners from our schools and nurseries benefitted from this opportunity in 2021-22 and were commended by the University for the high quality of their work. A further 4 practitioners have taken their learning further by engaging with the Froebelian Futures Professional Enquiry Programme. This has led to improved experiences for children in these setting with projects shared on a national digital resource.

Flexibility

28. The following models were available for families to choose for session 2021-22:

- | | | |
|------------------------------|---|---|
| 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 (school year) fully funded
provision with a funded provider working in
partnership with ERC, including private, voluntary
and independent (PVI) sector providers and
childminders or 23 hours 45 minutes over 42
weeks |

29. In August 2021, following the biannual parental consultation, Core Provision was made

available in Family Centres as well as Nursery Classes. A total of 2525 children were provided with funded ELC in 2021/22, an increase of 6% on the previous year. Chart 6 below shows the number of places allocated for each model.

Chart 6



30. All nursery places are allocated using the published priorities with a ballot being held where demand exceeds space available. In session 2021-22 91% of families applying for ELC for the first time were allocated their first choice of setting with 75% also receiving their first choice of model. This is a 3% increase in both measures from the previous year reflecting the increased capacity across the authority with all new buildings fully operational from August 2021.

31. Parents told us in the biannual consultation that they were frustrated by the lack of capacity to purchase additional hours over and above their 1140 hours ELC entitlement. The on-going use of 'bubbles' to minimise the risks associated with Covid-19, combined with staff absences related to Covid meant that very few families have been able to purchase additional hours since August 2020. It had been hoped that the facility to purchase additional hours, where space permitted, would be re-introduced from August 2021. The on-going impacts of the pandemic have however meant that this was delayed until March 2022 where a new approach has been piloted across a small number of nurseries in one ELC community. This pilot has been successful with 23 families benefitting from the opportunity to purchase additional hours above their statutory entitlement. This small-scale initial pilot has generated over £1,800 a month in additional revenue through the use of unoccupied nursery spaces. This will now be extended to all settings where capacity allows from August 2022 to enable more families to benefit and further increase additional revenue.

32. 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 2021-22, 165 referrals have been made through the EYIG to date. 9% received additional free early learning and childcare hours over their entitled 1140 hours, 35% were allocated a nursery place prior to their entitlement, 14% were given support by the Preschool Assessment and Development Unit (PSADU), 9% were referred for further assessment / intervention with Educational Psychology Service, 3% were allocated to the Sensory Support Service, 2% received support from the Home Visiting Teacher and 2% were referred to Family First. 28% of referrals resulted in no resource allocation being made.

33. 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. Children with a birthday in January or February who defer school entry are automatically entitled to another year of funded ELC. In the current system, where a child's birthday falls between the start of term in August to December, that is children not yet aged 5 years old when starting Primary 1, education authorities are required to exercise discretion as to whether an additional free year of preschool education be granted. Legislation has been laid in the Scottish Parliament which will mean, from August 2023, all children who defer will automatically be able to access funded ELC.

34. It should be noted that approximately 50% of East Renfrewshire parents of eligible children take up their right for an additional year of funded ELC. Using this rate as a guide, once the new legislation comes into effect in 2023, we could see a significant impact on capacity with as many as 300 children requesting an additional funded year of ELC.

35. The department continues to implement its Deferred Entry to School Policy and reviews funding requests on an individual basis. A total of 125 parents applied to defer their child for session 2022-23, of these 118 have been granted an additional year of funded early learning and childcare, with 5 parents choosing to withdraw their request. As in session 2021-22 discretionary deferrals represented 32% of all requests.

36. The department received 2 applications from parents wishing to apply for early entry to primary school. These applications were declined.

ACCESSIBILITY

37. Digital applications for ELC went live online in January 2022. 1102 applications were received electronically and parents are again able to accept or decline their place online.

38. The department continues to promote the entitlement of 1140 hours ELC for all eligible 2 year olds in partnership with 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).

39. All eligible two year olds continue to be 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 eighth consecutive year, with 134 children allocated through the Local Admissions Panel or EYIG, an increase of 12% 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. A further 102 children and families in this age group benefitted from this service.

40. There is a commitment to tackle child poverty in East Renfrewshire, and provide ELC support for more families in low income households. The Education Department collaborated with colleagues across the Council to widen the local priority criteria for 2 year old children to consider indications of poverty. A copy of the updated priorities can be found as an appendix to this report.

41. Table 1 below details the current capacity for 2 year olds in each local authority nursery. The delivery models determine how these places are used.

Table 1

Establishment	Staffing Capacity
Arthurlie Family Centre (2 year old provision)	30
Cart Mill Family Centre (2 year old provision)	20
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.

42. Detailed in Table 2 is the number of available places for 3 and 4 year olds in each local authority setting, as determined by the delivery models, from August 2022. To maximise efficiency staff budgets for each setting are determined according to the number of children who have been allocated a place. Where capacity allows additional spaces will be available for parents to purchase.

Table 2

Establishment	Available Places
Arthurlie Family Centre	184
Busby Nursery Class	72
Braidbar Nursery Class	77
Calderwood Lodge Nursery Class	101
Carlubar Nursery Class	107
Carolside Nursery Class	93
Cart Mill Family Centre	64
Crookfur Family Centre	152
Cross Arthurlie Nursery Class	84
Eaglesham Nursery Class	107
Giffnock Nursery Class	41
Glenwood Family Centre	160
Hazeldene Family Centre	120
Isobel Mair Family Centre	24
Madras Family Centre	136
Maidenhill Nursery Class	107
Mearns Nursery Class	77
Netherlee Nursery Class	107
Overlee Family Centre	64
St Cadoc's Nursery Class	77
Thornliebank Nursery Class	43
TOTAL	1997

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

43. As detailed in table 3 below, all 14 providers within East Renfrewshire continue to work in partnership to deliver 1140 hours of funded early learning and childcare having entered into a 3-year agreement in 2020. All were successful in providing sufficient annual evidence to continue to provide funded ELC, however three settings are being supported through a Service Improvement Period to ensure the quality of their provision.

Table 3

Provider	Status	Successful(✓) Unsuccessful(x)
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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	✓

44. In addition to the nurseries listed above, 17 childminders are also in partnership to deliver funded early learning and childcare. At present 13 of these childminders are providing funded placements for children.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

45. The need for families to purchase additional hours over and above 1140 hours of ELC, and the lack of revenue funding to staff our settings to capacity, has resulted in an increase in parents exercising the Funding Follows the Child Policy and selecting funded providers who offer more flexibility and ability for additionality. 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.

46. Likewise, income from the purchase of additional hours will continue to be variable, dependent on parental demand, capacity and staffing levels within individual settings

47. The provision of a free hot lunch was forecast to cost £3.00 per child, per day, however with inflationary rises and the demands of the nutritional guidelines, this cost is likely to increase.

48. Local authorities commission ELC places from funded providers. At present ERC commissions at a rate of £5.31 per hour for 3 to 5 year olds and £8.50 for 2 year olds. A recent exercise by Ipsos Mori on behalf of the Scottish Government is intended to support LAs in setting a sustainable rate moving forward. East Renfrewshire will use the evidence from Ipsos Mori to work with partners across the West Partnership to set a rate.

49. An anticipated recurring annual funding shortfall for ERC, following the full rollout to 1140 hours of early learning and childcare, has been well documented since the announcement in 2018 of the multi-year grant funding to support expansion. Whilst this has been partly addressed for 2022/23 via a revised national distribution methodology for ELC, taking account of factors such as recent population data, inflation and the impact of COVID on delivery, the accompanying transitional arrangements mean that there continues to be pressure on this budget. To date, the department has utilised the flexibility associated with expansion funding to maximise amounts carried forward in the years leading up to the full 1140 hours rollout to help address this gap. Pending the outcome of the wider national review of overall ELC funding from 2023/24 onwards we will continue to seek to manage the costs of early years and the impact of subsequent funding allocations closely through the annual budget setting exercise.

RECOMMENDATION

50. Education Committee is asked to note and comment on the contents as outlined in the paper.

Mark Ratter
Director of Education
June 2022

Report Authors
Rosamund Rodriguez
Tel: 0141 577 3222
Rosamund.Rodriguez2@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Janice Collins
Tel: 0141 577 3204
Janice.Collins@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

Convener Contact Details
Councillor Anderson, Convener for Education and Equalities
Tel: 07341 640 825
Tel: 0141 577 3107
Email: andrew.anderson@eastrenfrewshire.gov.uk

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Order of Priorities for Allocation of Eligible 2 Year Old Places within East Renfrewshire Council Early Learning and Childcare Establishments

Effective for Session Commencing August 2022 and Beyond
For use when applications exceed available places

1. East Renfrewshire resident where one of the following conditions has been met: child protection, prevention, or additional support needs. *Automatic entry will be given to any child considered by the Social Work Department to be in need of protection, who is looked after by the authority, or whose admission will prevent reception in to care.*
2. East Renfrewshire residents who meet the statutory criteria from the Scottish Government and/or residents who meet East Renfrewshire's discretionary criteria;
 - children who are not otherwise eligible, residing in SIMD deciles 1 and 2
 - children whose mothers have been part of the Family Nurse Partnership Programme
 - children who are homeless
 - children whose family has undergone an affordability check through the MART team which shows that they cannot afford childcare but require it to work/train
 - children whose parent/s qualify for the Best Start/Best Food Grant
 - children who are at greater risk of poverty due to one or more of the following factors:
 - households with a disabled person,
 - three or more children,
 - a baby aged under 1,
 - minority ethic,
 - young mothers aged under 25,
 - lone parent families
3. Where a sibling attends the establishment and will continue to do so in the next session.
4. East Renfrewshire resident with no other listed priority.
5. Non East Renfrewshire resident.

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