
Report to: Clackmannanshire Council

Date of Meeting: 5th October 2023

Subject: Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Review

Report by: Senior Manager ELC, Primary and Libraries

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This paper provides details of identified change areas within the Early Learning and Childcare service delivery model. The change areas provide the opportunity to implement a more efficient service delivery whilst retaining high quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) for families.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Council note and approve the efficiencies of the proposed changes to early learning and childcare organisation and delivery which incorporates a new centralised admissions process.

3.0 Background

3.1 Scottish Government's expansion of funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) instigated a number of changes to the way Clackmannanshire council deliver ELC services. All ELCs, including Partner Providers offer 1140 hours per year, to all eligible children. This has been in place in Clackmannanshire since August 2020, a year ahead of the Government deadline. Families have the flexibility to take up the provision of 1140 hours at an ELC of their choice. The expansion to 1140 hours increased a child's term time entitlement from 15 hours and 50 minutes per week to 30 hours per week. This required an almost doubling of the service capacity and included:

- new build of Mentrerie ELC
- provision of Tulach ELC within the new Tullibody South Campus
- refurbishment of Sauchie ELC
- addition of a new ELC class within Craigbank PS
- provision of a new Park ELC and move from ELC class to full year standalone
- closure of ABC ELC provision

3.2 In order to further sustain an efficient service model delivery, key change areas have been identified. The proposed change areas are designed to increase efficiencies whilst maintaining a high quality service for children and families.

4.0 Change Area 1 – Centralised Admissions

4.1 As of April 2023, 1094 children aged 2-5 were receiving all or part of their funded ELC 1140 hours in Clackmannanshire.

4.2 Overall 76% of children aged 2-5 received their funded entitlement in a Local authority setting with 2% attending a partnership childminder and the remaining 22% attending a partner private nursery.

4.3 As part of Clackmannanshire's 1140hrs early learning and childcare offer, families choose the setting that best meets their needs, either in a full year stand alone ELC, an ELC class in a primary school, a Private Nursery, Partner Childminder or a blended placement. A blended placement is where a family may choose for their child to attend 2 settings and have the 1140hours divided between them. Currently families enrol directly with individual settings.

4.4 Each ELC setting has a maximum number of children who can be in attendance; this is set by the Care Inspectorate in relation to the size of the premises. Adult/child ratios are defined by the age of the child and are a statutory requirement.

4.5 Under a new centralised Admissions process, families would apply to a central point of contact using a digital application form. Places in ELC settings will then be allocated taking account of families preferred choices; priority will be given where siblings are already in attendance. Once a place has been allocated a full enrolment process will take place within the identified setting. This centralised allocation of places will ensure a more efficient staffing model where existing staffing ratios can be maximised. Not all primary schools have an ELC class and therefore there are no catchment areas for ELCs.

4.6 The new Admissions process will include a support system for those using the new digital format and for those without digital access. ELCs will be able to support families with this process ensuring full accessibility for all. In addition an appeals process will be developed. The new Admissions process will be ready for implementation January 2024 to align with academic session 2024/25 enrolments.

4.7 In addition, under a centralised process, savings could be achieved by introducing flexibility of staff contracts. For example introduction of a 25 hour contract to best meet the needs of children where there is higher demand for morning places.

- 4.8 The financial savings from the impact of the centralised admissions process could amount to 6fte educators at Grade 6 of £228,505 over a full year.

5.0 Change Area 2 – Banchory ELC

- 5.1 Council agreed in March 2023 to suspend all new admissions for Banchory ELC class for academic session 23/24. As a result no new 3 year old children were enrolled. The families of 3 year old children who were not accepted into Banchory ELC for session 23/24 were offered their first choice of alternative ELC establishment. There are currently 25 pre-school children enrolled in Banchory ELC for session 23/24, all of whom are eligible to start school in August 2024.
- 5.2 It is proposed that this period of suspension should continue into academic session 24/25, resulting in no children enrolling into Banchory ELC. Any request from the 25 Banchory families to defer their child's start to school would be accommodated within an alternative ELC provision
- 5.3 This presents an opportunity in August 2024 to repurpose the ELC space and provide valuable increased capacity within Banchory Primary without incurring additional building costs.
- 5.4 ELC staff vacancies during session 2024/25 in ELC settings attached to primary schools will be offered to Banchory permanent staff.
- 5.5 To accommodate these redeployments no permanent vacancies will be advertised from Aug 2023, resulting in full year staff cost savings of £120,000. Initial discussions have already taken place with staff and trade unions.

6.0 Change Area 3 – 48 weeks per year provision across our extended year ELC standalones (Tulach, Sauchie, Menstrie, Park)

- 6.1 The ELC funded year of 1140 hours runs from 1st August – 31st July. Currently our ELC classes attached to schools provide a term time provision which aligns to the academic school year. Our 4 extended year standalone ELC settings (Tulach, Menstrie, Park, Sauchie) currently offer 49 weeks of early learning and childcare.
- 6.2 Moving to a 48 week provision means that children would be entitled to a session time of 4 hours and 45 mins. Under a 49 week provision the session time is 4 hours and 39 mins. The longer session time associated with a 48 week model provides an opportunity for families to have access to more convenient/sensible session timings.
- 6.3 To achieve a 48 week opening model each of the 4 extended year ELCs would be required to close for an additional 5 days. Currently these settings are closed for 7 public holidays, 5 staff development days and the period

between Christmas Day and New Year Years day. It is proposed that the additional week would be identified as one of the two October school holiday weeks. Two of our four standalones would be closed week 1 of the schools' October holiday and two would be closed week 2 of the schools' October holiday. Under this arrangement, there would be one extended ELC setting open to the East and to the West of Alloa. This arrangement of having two ELC settings open during week 1 and week 2 of the October holiday would ensure we could provide provision under exceptional circumstances should it be required.

6.4 In addition, within the 48 week model, there is an opportunity to offer families extended time over and above the 1140 hour entitlement. This offer would be restricted to ensure we were able to accommodate late applications for entitled places.

6.5 A 48 week model would align Clackmannanshire to the majority of other Local Authorities and initial discussions with trade unions have begun. This change does not affect ELC classes within Primary schools.

6.6 Moving to a 48 week model and a reduction in new contracts to reflect this would achieve a potential salary cost saving of approximately £1000 for every new contract and would be a rolling saving as staff left and were replace.

7.0 Change Area 4 – All new contracts offered as 32.5hrs per week

7.1 There are 170.09 full time equivalent staff employed across our ELC settings, they are a mixture of part time and full time staff.

7.2 Currently full time staff are contracted to work a 35 hour week. Moving to a part time post of 32.5 hours for all new posts would increase the cost efficiency of our staffing model. A 32.5 hour contract would be inclusive of 30 hours contact time with children plus a flexible 2.5 hours for preparations and staff meetings for example.

7.3 Based on the pattern of recruitment for 2023/24, projected potential financial savings of £52,843 could be achieved through offering 32.5 hour contracts as appropriate in all new posts.

8.0 Sustainability Implications

8.1 No sustainability implications are identified.

9.0 Resource Implications

9.1 Financial Details

- 9.2 The financial savings from the impact of the centralised admissions process could amount to 6 fte educators at Grade 6 of £228,505 over a full year.
- 9.3 Suspending admissions into Banchory ELC and moving existing staff into vacancies will provide staff cost savings of £124,500 in the period August 2024- March 2025
- 9.4 Moving to a 48 week model and a reduction in contracts to reflect this would achieve a potential salary cost saving of approximately £1,000 for every new contract.
- 9.5 On-going savings of £2,530 for every new 32.5hr post term time and on-going savings of £2,840 for every new 32.5hr post extended year. This amounts to potential projected savings in 2024/25 of £52,840

10.0 Exempt Reports

- 10.1 Is this report exempt? No

11.0 Declarations

The recommendations contained within this report support or implement our Corporate Priorities and Council Policies.

- (1) **Our Priorities** (Please double click on the check box)

- Clackmannanshire will be attractive to businesses & people and ensure fair opportunities for all
- Our families; children and young people will have the best possible start in life
- Women and girls will be confident and aspirational, and achieve their full potential
- Our communities will be resilient and empowered so that they can thrive and flourish

- (2) **Council Policies** (Please detail)

Redeployment Policy and Procedure

12.0 Equalities Impact

- 12.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations? **Yes**

13.0 Legality

- 13.1 It has been confirmed that in adopting the recommendations contained in this report, the Council is acting within its legal powers.

Yes

14.0 Appendices

14.1 Please list any appendices attached to this report. If there are no appendices, please state "none".

None

15.0 Background Papers

15.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? (All documents must be kept available by the author for public inspection for four years from the date of meeting at which the report is considered)

No

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Approved by

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