
Report to: Clackmannanshire Council

Date of Meeting: 30th January 2025

Subject: Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Review

Report by: Adrienne Aitken, Senior Manager

1.0 Purpose

1.1 This paper provides an update on the Change Areas set out in the Early Learning and Childcare Review agreed at Council on 5th October 2023.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that Council notes:

2.2 The updates and progress against the Change Areas as set out in the October 2023 paper.

3.0 Background

3.1 In October 2023, Council agreed to a new delivery model for Early Learning and Childcare which would provide efficiencies, namely:

Change Area 1 – Centralised Admissions

Change Area 2 – Continued suspension of admissions to Banchory ELC

Change Area 3 – 48 week per year operating model for Stand Alone ELCs

Change Area 4 – Contractual hours of 32.5 hours per week for all new posts

3.2 Change Area 1 – Centralised Admissions

3.2.1 In October 2023 the introduction of new a centralised admissions process was agreed. The new process was implemented in February 2024. As part of this process families are asked to identify their first, second and third choice of ELC for their child.

3.2.2 Almost all families were allocated their first choice of ELC setting at enrolment in February 2024. Where allocating their first choice was not possible, they were offered, and accepted, their second choice. There have been no appeals. The model is now fully implemented with a fully digitalised offer in place for admissions from February 2025.

3.3 Change Area 2 – Banchory ELC

3.3.1 In October 2023, Council agreed to the suspension of enrolments at Banchory ELC and gave a commitment to keep this under review. This resulted in no children in Banchory ELC from session 24/25. Families living in the catchment area of Banchory Primary school were prioritised as part of the centralised admissions process for 24/25 and received their first choice of ELC setting.

3.3.2 Banchory Primary school was able to benefit from re-purposing the space previously dedicated to the ELC provision. This enabled the provision of nurturing spaces to meet a wide range of children's needs. However, the Banchory school roll has continued to fall. This follows a pattern across most schools in Clackmannanshire due to falling birth rates. Banchory PS school roll in session 24/25 is 135. This has fallen from 201 since 2021/22. From session 22/23 there have been a total of 2 placing requests into Banchory with no placing requests this session. Over the same period, there has been a high number of placing requests outwith the Banchory catchment into other Tullibody primary schools. This means that there is now sufficient space within the school to maintain adequate flexible/nurture space within the school, at the same time, reinstating space for ELC. This offers an opportunity to re-open admissions from February 2025 for session 25/26 and beyond. An updated Learning Estate Strategy will be brought to Council later in 2025.

3.3.3 Initial engagement with the parent council has taken place and parents/carers will be advised that admissions will re-open for 3 and 4 year olds from February 2025. 16 places will be available in Banchory ELC as part of the Centralised Admissions process.

3.4 Change Area 3 – 48 week Operating Model

3.4.1 The 4 Stand Alone ELC settings (Tulach, Menstrie, Park and Sauchie) have now moved to a 48 week provision. This has resulted in continued choice of provision for families for example five mornings, 2.5 days or five days during term time. All options provide children with 1140hours of quality early learning and childcare.

3.5 Change Area 4 – New 32.5 hrs per week contracts

3.5.1 Early years educator vacancies and new posts are advertised at 32.5 hours. To date seven new staff have been employed on this basis. This has resulted in a more efficient service whilst maintaining quality experiences for children and families.

4.0 Sustainability Implications

4.1 No sustainability implications are identified.

5.0 Resource Implications

5.1 Financial Details

5.2 Savings related to the ELC Review, as agreed in 23/24 and 24/25 Budgets, will be achieved.

5.3 Staffing

Re-opening of Banchory ELC can be implemented within existing budgets.

6.0 Exempt Reports

6.1 Is this report exempt? No

7.0 Declarations

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

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

Complies with relevant Council Policies

8.0 Equalities Impact

8.1 Have you undertaken the required equalities impact assessment to ensure that no groups are adversely affected by the recommendations?

Yes No

9.0 Legality

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

10.0 Appendices

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

None

11.0 Background Papers

11.1 Have you used other documents to compile your report? YES (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)

Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) Review, 5th October 2023

<https://www.clacks.gov.uk/document/meeting/1/1201/7695.pdf>

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