

## TEACHER PANEL

### THE EXPANSION OF FUNDED EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE AND THE IMPACT ON PRIMARY SCHOOL PROVISION

#### Purpose

1. From August 2020, the entitlement to funded early learning and childcare (ELC) will almost double from 600 to 1,140 hours per year for all 3 and 4-year olds and for eligible 2-year olds. This is the equivalent of 30 hours a week taken across term-time, but families will also have the option to access fewer hours per week across the whole year. This paper provides:
  - an overview of the expected benefits of the increase;
  - some suggested impacts on primary school provision; and
  - a number of discussion points for panel members to consider

#### Expansion of funded early learning and childcare

2. The increase in funded ELC is expected to deliver a number of benefits which are discussed in turn below.

#### *Strengthening the quality of the early learning and childcare offer*

3. Increasing the number of hours of ELC will not, on its own, lead to improved educational outcomes. The increased provision will need to be of high quality.
4. The Scottish Government therefore has a strong focus on further strengthening the quality of provision through the expansion programme. All 15 actions in the [ELC Quality Action Plan](#) (many of which are focused on supporting the professional development of the expanding workforce) will be delivered. In addition, the Scottish Government has also introduced a new [National Standard](#) that all funded providers will be required to meet from August 2020 (a 'funded provider' refers to all ELC settings that are registered with the Care Inspectorate, and provide funded ELC, including local authority, private and voluntary settings). A key element of the National Standard is a requirement to achieve 'good' or better in all four Care Inspectorate evaluation themes. For those settings currently not achieving this (currently around 9% of existing funded providers) the Scottish Government is working in partnership with Education Scotland, the Care Inspectorate and local authorities to put in place targeted quality improvement support. The National Standard also includes criteria design to ensure investment in the induction and development of the ELC workforce and a commitment to provide children with healthy meals.
5. Since the Care Inspectorate data suggests that (with the exception of childminding services) there is no social gradient in access to high quality ELC, this investment in quality should improve outcomes by age 5 for all children, regardless of their socio-economic background.

*An enhanced offer for children living in disadvantaged circumstances*

6. Many children will already be accessing 30 hours a week of ELC using a combination of funded and privately purchased hours. However, we also know that there is a notable difference between ELC use among children from the least and most deprived SIMD quintiles. The Scottish Government's 2017 parent survey found that while 74% of parents in the least deprived quintile purchased extra hours of ELC for their child, this was true for only 46% of parents in the most deprived quintiles.
7. We would therefore expect to see the expansion of funded ELC having the greatest impact, in terms of the number of hours experienced, on children from more disadvantaged backgrounds. This is likely to create more parity in the extent to which children receive formal support with their learning and development in the early years and to help to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap.
8. A targeted earlier ELC offer is available to around a quarter of 2-year olds. This offer applies to: children in care (looked after, kinship, guardianship); those in families receiving certain, no or very low income benefits; and children in families receiving support through an asylum claim. The 2019 Programme for Government confirmed that eligibility would also be extended from August 2020 to children whose parents are care-experienced. The Scottish Government's expectation is that this earlier offer for eligible twos, together with the funding of an extra graduate level practitioner or teacher (an Equity and Excellence Lead) for settings serving our most disadvantaged communities, will make a key contribution to closing the poverty-related attainment gap.
9. However, the uptake of the 2-year old targeted offer has been consistently lower than the universal offer to 3 and 4-year olds. The last published statistics (December 2019) indicate around 11% of the total 2-year old population are accessing funded ELC, while the Scottish Government estimates around 25% are eligible. Two-year-olds living in poverty in Scotland have been entitled to a funded ELC place since 2015, yet only a third of eligible families have taken up this offer. The Scottish Government is therefore working across national and local government, the wider public sector, private and third sector services to increase awareness and uptake of the 2-year old offer and to ensure that the content of the offer best meets the needs of this age group and their families.

*Greater choice of providers*

10. Another of the principles underpinning the expansion is that there should be more flexibility of provision so that parents and children have a greater choice of ELC provider. The model for delivering funded ELC is provider-neutral. The expectation is that parents should be able to access their child's funded hours with any provider that:
  - meets the criteria in the new national standard for funded providers;
  - has a place available; and
  - is willing to enter into a contract with the local authority

This includes childminders. This could mean that children are transitioning to school from a wider range of ELC providers.

11. Although the Scottish Government does not expect a significant increase in the number of nurseries and playgroups offering funded hours in the immediate term, the introduction of the National Standard will support more ELC settings to offer the funded hours, if they meet the criteria.
12. There is, however, potential for a more significant increase in the number of childminders offering funded hours. This year's Scottish Childminding Association Audit found that 3.8% of childminders are currently delivering funded hours, up from 2.3% in 2018. The Scottish Government is aware that local authorities are increasingly seeing the benefits of placing eligible 2-year olds in a nurturing, home-based childminding environment. With the increase to 1,140 hours, local authorities are also looking at 'blended models' where funded hours are split between a nursery or playgroup and a childminder for all eligible children. These approaches have the potential to better support children who find it more challenging to transition into a busier ELC environment and offer flexibility for families. The Scottish Government is keen to more formally evaluate the impacts on children's outcomes through a new childminding study to complement our [Scottish Study of Early Learning and Childcare](#).

#### *Sustaining a multi-professional workforce in ELC*

13. The ELC workforce in Scotland has changed in recent years, in particular since the introduction of the BA Childhood Practice in 2009. This, alongside the Professional Development Award, has increased the number of non-teacher graduates working in early learning. The most recent Census statistics, published in December 2019, show an increase in the number of staff holding or working towards graduate level qualifications in ELC. The total number of staff working in funded ELC holding or working towards graduate level qualifications relevant to early years (including teachers) has increased by 559 FTE (13%) from 4,222 in 2018 to 4,781 in 2019.
14. Within this, there has been a reduction in the number of FTE teachers in ELC settings. The number of FTE teachers in ELC settings decreased from 915 to 798 between 2017 and 2019, although the headcount of teachers in ELC has increased in this most recent year – from 1,527 in 2018 to 1,542 in 2019.
15. The percentage of registrations for funded early learning and childcare (ELC) with access to a teacher has decreased over time: 67% of settings had access to a teacher in 2017, compared to 56% in 2019.
16. This reflects the fact that teachers now form only part of the ELC graduate workforce. There are likely to be a number of factors behind these trends, including the expansion of graduate routes and career progression options in ELC and differing terms and conditions between different parts of the workforce. The introduction of new graduate routes has increased the proportion of the workforce with graduate level

specialist knowledge and understanding of how to support children's development in the early years.

17. The 2012 Education Scotland report 'Making the Difference' stated that high quality experiences for children resulted from the combined strengths and talents of the range of professional staff involved in ELC settings. Continuing to sustain the benefits of this range of professional staff, including teachers, is a collective challenge and opportunity across all parts of the sector. Recent developments, including the creation of a new graduate workforce whose role includes pedagogical leadership in early learning – Equity and Excellence Leads – can help sustain a multi-professional environment (of the Equity and Excellence leads in post at the time of the Census in September 2019, 32 were teachers).
18. There is also cross-fertilisation between the graduate routes into ELC and early learning environments including primary schools. Teachers with experience in ELC are supporting transitions into primary and the development of P1/P2 play-based learning environments. A significant proportion of BA Childhood Practice graduates also go on to do a PGDE to bring their knowledge of early years and child development into the teacher workforce. There is a demand from teachers to learn more about the early years. Around half of those enrolled on the Masters in Early Years and Pedagogy are teachers. We have also introduced a learning and development course for school leadership teams on how provision in ELC sets the foundations for future learning.
19. We are also developing training materials that the whole sector (childminders, ELC staff and teachers) can access. A series of Continuous Professional Learning online modules complement the refresh of 'Building the Ambition' to provide sector-wide professional and practice guidance.
20. There remain areas to explore to improve sustaining a multi-professional workforce in ELC that includes teachers and specialist early years practitioners. Opportunities include examining the focus on early years in initial teacher education and the ability to undertake probationary year experience in early learning environments. Clearer career pathways for teachers in ELC could also attract more to the role.

*Increasing emphasis on outdoor learning*

21. We know that outdoor learning can have a positive impact on physical and mental wellbeing, the engagement of learners, their appreciation of the natural world and that it can be utilised to support delivery of all curriculum areas and subjects. Many ELC settings have already embraced the CfE emphasis on a broader learning experience, including active learning and learning outdoors, and outdoor-based services generally achieve higher inspection grades than the national average for children's daycare.
22. The Scottish Government is working to promote and enhance outdoor learning to ensure it is fully embedded within ELC provision as part of the expansion to 1,140 hours by 2020. A criterion has been included in the National Standard which means that all children in funded ELC should have daily access to outdoor play and learning.

Additionally, Inspiring Scotland has received £862,000 of Scottish Government funding to support eight local authorities to improve and increase outdoor learning as part of the ELC expansion. In March 2019, the Scottish Government also published 'Out to Play' which provides guidance and practical advice on how to access outdoor spaces to create safe, nurturing and inspiring outdoor learning experiences.

23. There are currently 19 fully outdoor nurseries registered in Scotland, with a further 26 planned as part of the expansion delivery. There are also nine satellite settings currently up-and-running with a further eight planned by August 2020.

#### *Phasing and implementation*

24. Local authorities have been phasing in the expansion to 1,140 hours since 2017. The Scottish Government's expansion planning guidance recommended that authorities phase in entitlement locally by reference to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to ensure that those children who stand to benefit most from the expansion also benefit first. Local authorities have taken different approaches – including phasing by locality, phasing-in an intermediate expanded offer (for example 900 hours), and carrying out small local trials ahead of a 'big bang' implementation in August 2020.
25. Many authorities are reviewing their operating models and staffing structures for ELC as they implement the expansion, which may affect teachers working in ELC, and on schools which include nursery classes. These can be related to changing patterns of provision, where families have the option to access their children's ELC entitlement over the whole year, not just in school term-time.

#### **The impact on primary school provision**

26. Based on the above overview of impacts and benefits, it can be concluded that school provision will be required to adapt to some extent to align with changes in the delivery of early learning and childcare to ensure that the benefits of the expansion for children are carried into the next phase of their learning journey. . This will likely be relevant in the following areas.

#### *Supporting the transition of children from a greater number of ELC providers*

27. The early level of CfE purposely spans across early learning and childcare and primary schooling. This helps to ensure that learning continues coherently as a child moves into a school setting. However, for this approach to be successful it is important that ELC settings and primary schools build effective working relationships. In this way schools and their staff can understand ways of working within an ELC setting, identify the individual needs of each child and crucially, identify next steps for learning as each child enters school. These steps help to ensure that a school becomes 'child ready' rather than a child having to become 'school ready'.
28. While it is not clear how many new ELC providers will emerge as a result of the ELC expansion, any increase in the number of providers will see some schools having to adapt the ways in which they support children into school. It is important that schools

understand the practicalities of interacting with children from a potentially increased range of ELC providers in an effort to ensure that learners are well supported and that the early level of CfE is delivered most effectively.

### *Play-based learning*

29. Many primary schools are already delivering play-based learning in the early years of primary. However, the further expansion in expertise and confidence in play-based pedagogy in ELC is already stimulating discussion about the level of confidence in primary. Whilst Pupil Equity Funding and work around the Scottish Attainment Challenge are providing good examples of play-based approaches, inspection evidence in primary has highlighted challenges in ensuring that play experiences support children in making suitable progress in their learning. Alongside this there is a need for further professional learning for primary teachers to develop a shared understanding of what high quality play for learning in primary looks like which engages, motivates and provides sufficient challenge for all children to meet their learning needs. Education Scotland is currently developing a play-based learning resource for the early level and beyond which will provide practitioners with additional support.

### *Outdoor learning*

30. In relation to outdoor learning, the significant investment in practice in ELC may create pressure to deliver a similarly expansive experience in P1 and beyond. Outdoor learning remains a legitimate and effective way to deliver learning within CfE and the Scottish Government's vision is set out in 'Curriculum for Excellence Through Outdoor Learning'. Outdoor learning is utilised in schools across Scotland but the practice is unlikely to be as widespread and consistent as is currently the case in the ELC sector. The Scottish Government has worked with the Scottish Advisory Panel for Outdoor Education (SAPOE) to develop the 'Going Out There' guidance for the school sector, but further work is likely to be required. There is a need to develop a strong culture of outdoor learning in Scotland's schools and to ensure that practitioners are skilled and confident in taking learning outdoors – this includes practitioners understanding what effective outdoor learning looks like and how learning can be assessed in such a setting. Furthermore, work will be required to understand how learning can be most effectively taken outside in a school setting given the much high ratio of learners to practitioners in a primary setting as compared to an ELC setting.

### **Points for discussion**

31. In light of the information provided above, panel members may wish to consider the following points:
- What has been your experience so far of the expansion of early learning and childcare? What learning can you share from early phasing or from the implementation of local expansion plans?

- What roles can teachers play as part of a team of professionals offering high quality early learning and childcare to improve children's outcomes?
- How do initial teacher education and continuous professional development support the role of teachers in delivering high quality early learning and childcare? What changes could be made to enhance that support?
- Is there enough continuity in the learning experience during the CfE early level and, if not, what more can we do to promote that continuity?
- Should schools be doing more to ensure that they have adequate transition arrangements in place with funded providers, including childminders?
- What support should be provided at local, regional and national levels to ensure that primary schools are best placed to effectively adapt to the expansion of funded ELC provision?

Learning Directorate  
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