
Report To:	Education & Communities Committee	Date:	14 June 2022
Report By:	Corporate Director Education, Communities & Organisational Development	Report No:	EDUCOM/35/22/LW
Contact Officer:	Linda Wilkie	Contact No:	01475 712812
Subject:	Early Learning and Childcare Update Report		

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to give an update on developments in the Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) sector.

2.0 SUMMARY

- 2.1 This report contains updates on the following:

- Blairmore Nursery School Leadership;
- Early Years Earmarked Reserve;
- Early Years Admissions;
- Happitots Inverkip and Greenock;
- West College Scotland;
- Parental Consultation.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The Education and Communities Committee is asked to note the updates contained within this report.

Ruth Binks
Corporate Director
Education, Communities & Organisational Development

4.0 BLAIRMORE NURSERY SCHOOL

- 4.1 Blairmore Nursery School is located in the East End of Greenock. It shares a campus with All Saints Primary School. The School provides ELC for 72 children aged 3 -5 years and 15 children aged 2 – 3 years. Family support services are provided within the school and the community.
- 4.2 The current Head teacher retires in August 2022. As a result there is a need to consider the future leadership of the school and begin an informal consultation around this. An acting Head teacher will be sought for the year 2022/23 to allow for an initial informal consultation and then a possible formal consultation to be carried out. A further paper on this will be brought to the September 2022 committee.

5.0 EARMARKED RESERVE

- 5.1 Inverclyde Council has received specific revenue grant funding from Scottish Government since 2018. This funding has increased incrementally since this date and is ring fenced to support the roll-out of the 1140 hours expansion. Over the past 2 years there has been a significant underspend in this budget.
- 5.2 The use of the earmarked reserve for 22 / 23 focusses on recovery and almost all interventions approved for session 2021 / 22 will continue.

Details of the interventions are provided in the table below:

COVID-19 Recovery Interventions	
Intervention	Detail
Staffing	Teachers, ELC practitioners and support staff to support children and close the attainment gap.
Resources	Additional resources to support recovery and curriculum developments.
Family support work in local authority settings	Family Support Workers to support families within ELC settings and in the home and community.
Family support work in 3 rd sector	Intensive family support work delivered by a 3 rd sector provider.

Health and Wellbeing Interventions	
Intervention	Detail
Music	A staff training programme and direct delivery of a therapeutic music programme.
Emotional Literacy	Development work, training and implementation of an emotional literacy programme to support the emotional wellbeing and recovery of children and families.
Communication and Language	Joint project between Speech and Language therapy and Education Service to close gap in children's development which is evidenced in the findings of the 27 – 30 month health review.

Play Pedagogy (Early Level)	
Intervention	Detail
Staffing	A range of 1 year secondments for leaders and practitioners to support the implementation of the entitlement to Play Pedagogy (ELC and Primary 1 and 2)
Professional Learning	An expansive programme of professional learning for leaders, practitioners and support workers.
Funding allocation	An allocation of funding to all Primary Schools for training and learning and teaching resources.

Infrastructure Developments	
Intervention	Detail
Direct Access	Development of direct access to outdoor learning as per Care Inspectorate legislation.
Shelters / canopies	To ensure children and staff are appropriately protected in the outdoor environment.
Environmental Improvements	To improve the outdoor environment in line with best practice advice from Care Inspectorate.
Resources	An allocation of funding for outdoor equipment, loose parts and waterproof clothing.

ICT Developments	
Intervention	Detail
Kit	Resources to support learning, teaching and assessment and resources as advised by Education Scotland.
Wifi	An upgrade to WiFi capacity in some settings.

Other	
Intervention	Detail
Wraparound Income	Reduction in wraparound income due to increased entitlement.
Contingency	Projects still to be confirmed

6.0 ELC ADMISSION SUMMARY FOR SESSION 2022 / 23

- 6.1 The admissions process for children aged 3 – 5 years is undertaken annually in March and April. The admissions process is centralised; however establishments are responsible for collating applications and submitting to HQ for processing and allocation.
- 6.2 In session 22 / 23 1,311 children aged 3 – 5 years will receive ELC. This can be broken down as follows:

Category	Number of Children
January / February deferred entries (automatic)	43
August to December deferred entries (discretionary)	23
Returning children (pre-school)	661
New applicants (ante-pre-school)	584

- 6.3 Out of the 584 new applicants 85.6% were allocated a place in a local authority setting; 13.3% were allocated a place in private, voluntary or independent setting, 1.1% were allocated a blended place (childminder / ELC settings).

All applicants have been allocated an ELC place from choices on the application form or an offer of a place from within their defined area. Allocation percentage rates are as follows:

Parental Choice of Establishment	% of Applications
1 st	80.6%
2 nd	6.5%
3 rd	5.3%
4 th	0%
5 th	0.1%
Offer	7.5%

This data evidences that most families were allocated their 1st choice establishment. Almost all applicants received one of their identified choices.

- 6.4 As reported to previous Committees there are some pressures on allocation of places. For session 22 / 23 these are:

Capacity

Across the Authority there is an increased pressure on capacity. The reasons for this include:

- An increased number of deferred entries;
- The closure of West College Nursery;
- Lower uptake of places at one PVI setting;
- Lower uptake of places with childminders.

There is a particular challenge in the Port Glasgow locality. The service will continue to monitor capacity and uptake and where possible adjust services to meet demand. Officers will continue to engage with families who are unhappy with their allocation.

Model of Attendance

As in previous years Model 1 (Term-time 09:00 – 15:00 hours) is oversubscribed in some areas. We continue to review the number of Model 1 places available and increase this where capacity allows. For session 22 / 23 there are 919 Model 1 places across the Authority. 40 applications for this model were unsuccessful.

Deferred Entries

The number of deferred entries has increased for session 22 / 23. From August 2023 all children born between August and December will be entitled to an automatic deferred entry. It is likely that additional places to meet this demand will be required. Information on funding from Scottish Government for this is not yet available.

7.0 HAPPITOTS GREENOCK AND INVERKIP UPDATE

- 7.1 Inspections by the Care Inspectorate of Happitots (Greenock) and Happitots (Inverkip) in 2021 resulted in both settings failing to meet Scottish Government's national standard and Inverclyde Council's contract.

Officers from Education Services have continued to provide support and challenge to both settings. Since the reduction in COVID 19 restrictions more meetings are taking place face-to face. This enables Officers to make more robust judgements.

- 7.2 There is evidence of progress in both settings. Inverkip is making significant progress with slower progress noted in Greenock. This has been addressed by changing the management structure in Greenock.

Officers will continue to monitor progress during the improvement period. Scottish Government has recently announced flexibility in this timeline which allows the improvement period to be extended until June 2023

- 7.3 Happitots' current contracts to provide funded Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) finish in July 2022. In line with Scottish Government guidance both nurseries will receive a fixed term contract from August 2022 until the end of the extended improvement period in June 2023. It is anticipated both setting will meet both Scottish Government's national standard and Inverclyde Council's contract by this time.

8.0 WEST COLLEGE SCOTLAND NURSERY

- 8.1 West College Scotland nursery is located in the Finnart Campus in Greenock. The service is registered to provide 48 Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) places. It provides childcare for students and is contracted by Inverclyde Council to provide ELC places for children in the community. On 15 December 2021 Education Services was informed that a decision has been taken

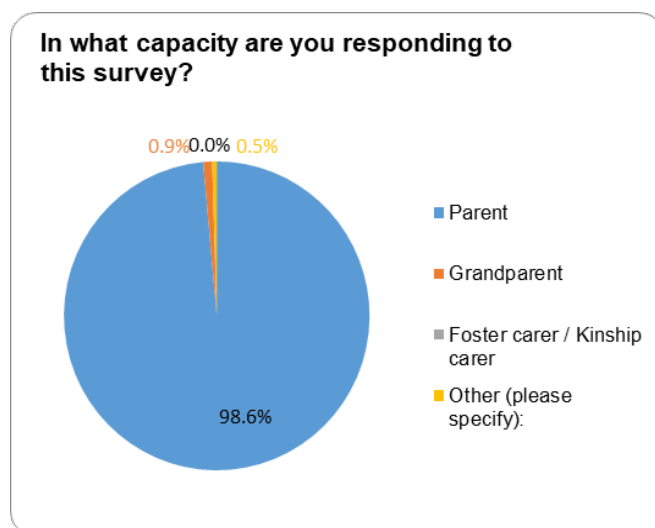
to close the nursery on 17 June 2022.

- 8.2 Currently 23 children receive their ELC entitlement in West College Nursery. 13 of this cohort will move on to school and will therefore not be affected by the closure. The 10 children who are ante pre-school and are returning for another year of ELC have been allocated an alternative placement. Transition work is currently underway.
- 8.3 Childcare staff from the nursery are being supported in relation to employment opportunities within the local authority. This includes interview support; automatic entry on to supply register and a guaranteed interview for posts where they meet the essential criteria.

9.0 EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE CONSULTATION

- 9.1 Local authorities have a statutory duty to consult every two years on the provision of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC), to inform the planning and delivery of services. Inverclyde Council (Education Services) consulted with the public between 15th November 2021 and 6th December 2021. This consultation should have been undertaken in 2020 but was delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 9.2 The consultation aimed to gain insight around the following areas:
- Information on the current service delivery ;
 - The future delivery of ELC;
 - Anticipated needs around childcare.
- 9.3 The survey was promoted across the Inverclyde area by Corporate Communications and educational establishments. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic the consultation was completed as an online survey. There were no public events.
- 9.4 211 people responded to the consultation. This is a reduction in responses in comparison to the 280 responses received in 2019. The virtual nature of the survey due to the COVID-19 pandemic may have had an impact on the response rate as the previous consultation included face to face events.
- 9.5 The following section shows the responses to the questions asked in the survey.

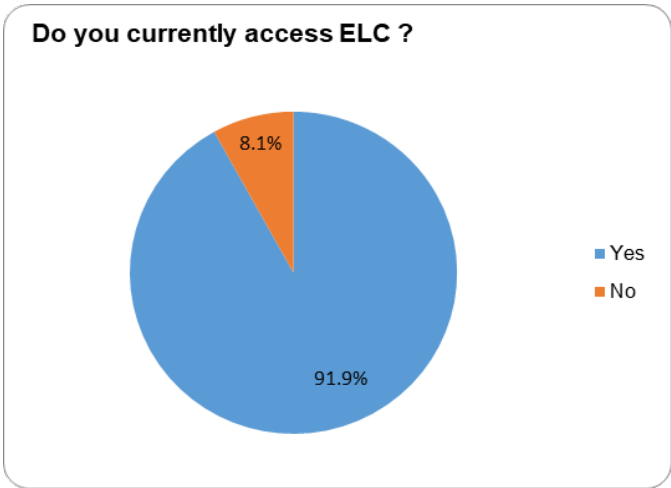
Table 1:



Note:

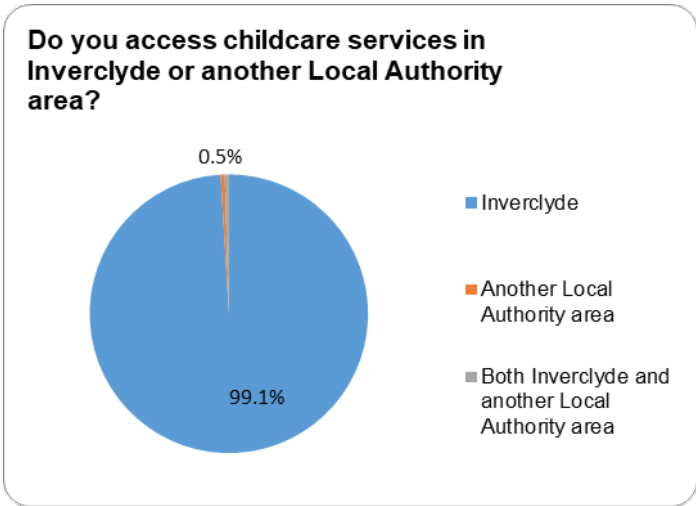
The response rate of parents completing this survey is slightly higher in comparison to the 2019 survey where the percentage rate was 97.6%.

Table 2:



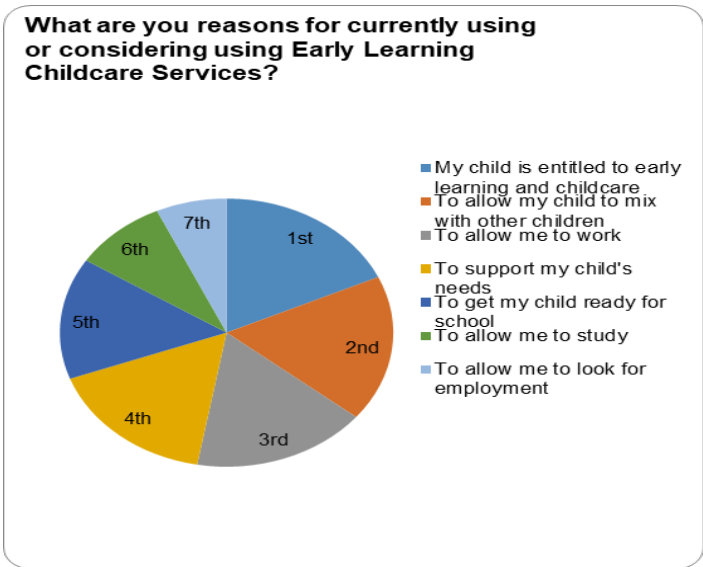
Note:
The response rate of those currently accessing ELC is higher than the 2019 survey. This is likely to relate to the increase in the ELC offer.

Table 3:



Note:
Almost all families access provision in Inverclyde. A few families access provision in neighbouring authorities. This is related to respondents' employment location.

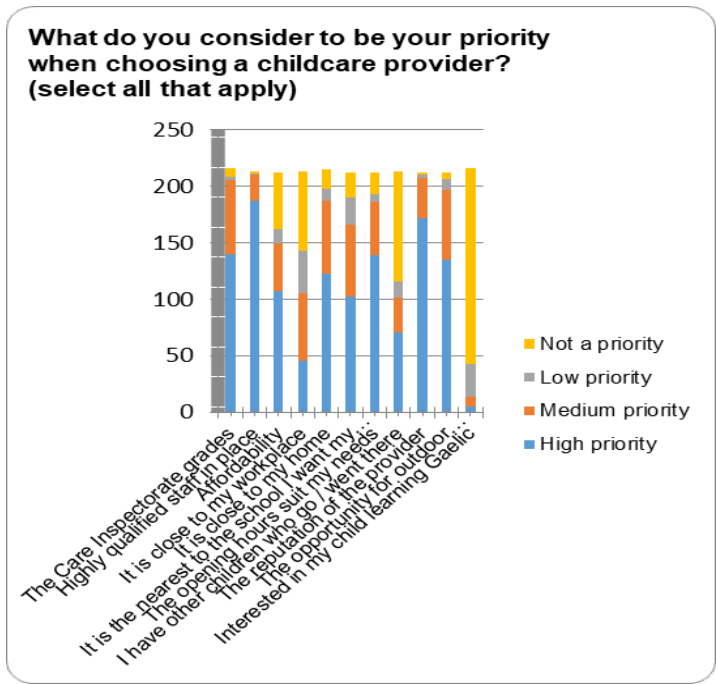
Table 4:



Notes:
The most important reasons for using or considering ELC is in relation to entitlement, supporting their child and for employment.

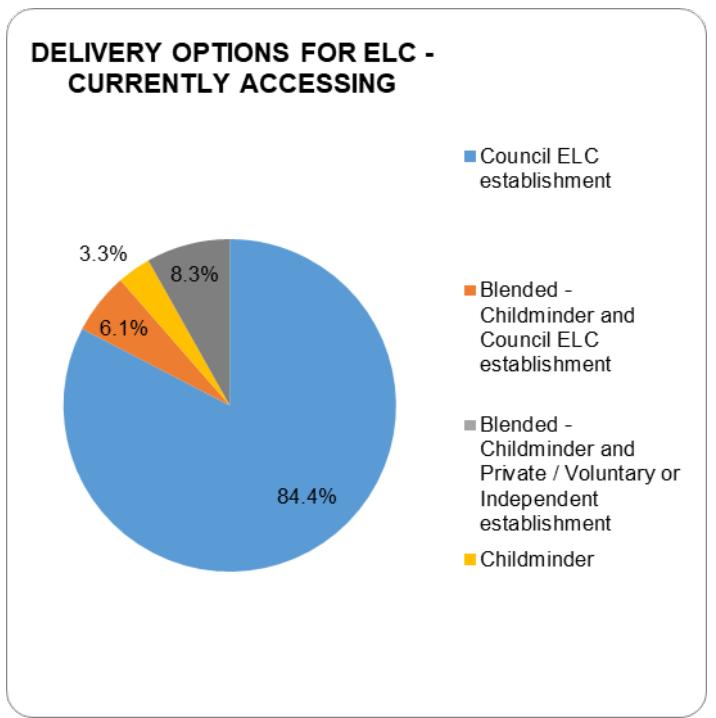
Fewer families identified looking for employment, studying and getting child ready for school as reasons for using or considering ELC.

Table 5:



Note:
The highest priority for choosing a childcare provider related to the quality of the provision including staff; Care Inspectorate grades and reputation. The lowest priority being Gaelic medium education.

Table 6:



Note:
Local Authority settings were the most popular setting with 84.4% of respondents identifying this option.

9.6 The survey asked respondents to provide feedback on the current service delivery; future delivery of ELC and anticipated needs for childcare. These responses have been grouped into categories in the table below:

Comments	Next Steps
Availability of models to suit family need and ability to personalise placements.	<p>In every defined ELC area there is choice of term-time and extended year provision. There are 5 models of delivery including full days, part days, term time and extended year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">81% of Local authority 3-5 places are delivered as a term time model;17% are delivered as extended year model;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2% are allocated to wrapround places. <p>The 1140 hours expansion programme of hours has been implemented in line with Scottish Government blueprint that provides a range of delivery options:</p> <p>We will continue to review models and availability on an annual basis.</p>
Publicity and flexibility in blended care.	<p>Information on blended care is publicised online and information is included on Inverclyde Council's ELC application form; however this will be further developed in response these comments.</p> <p>Blended care places have to maximise the capacity at establishments and to ensure the sustainability of childminders. This can limit flexibility in patterns offered.</p>
Development of wrapround provision and bespoke packages of ELC.	<p>Flexibility is continuing to be developed. There will continue to be different models (eg length of day) and availability dependant on the type / size of setting.</p> <p>There will be a further expansion in April 2022 when wrapround will be available in all establishments.</p> <p>We will ensure that improved information is available to assist parents make informed choices.</p>
Availability of term-time model and the lack of school aged childcare meaning that extended day is not suitable for families with children in both ELC and Primary.	<p>The council recognises the demand for term-time placements. The majority of nursery places are term-time; however we recognise that this model is the preferred option of most parents. We will continue to increase availability where capacity allows.</p> <p>There is a commitment from Scottish Government to developing school aged childcare in the course of the current parliament.</p>
The implications of implementing the 1140 hours expansion during a pandemic	<p>Inverclyde Council was ready to implement the expansion programme at the original implementation date including recruitment of new staff and infrastructure.</p> <p>Feedback from almost all families has been extremely positive.</p> <p>We continue to review the implementation of the expansion programme and make changes as required.</p>
Lack of childcare for working parents with children under 3	<p>The Local Authority does not have a duty to provide childcare / wrapround places but continues, where capacity allows, to increase places for children under 3.</p> <p>As part of the expansion programme there has been a significant increase in places for children who are entitled to 2 year old place. This supports working families on a low income.</p> <p>Childcare placements are available in the private, voluntary and independent sector.</p>
Issues relating to defined areas and nursery class allocations	<p>Each locality in Inverclyde has a range of provision to ensure no family is disadvantaged if their closest setting does not offer the service they require e.g. extended day, provision for children under 3.</p> <p>There is no correlation between ELC defined areas and school</p>

	catchment areas. All ELC settings are non-denominational and placements are allocated as per the Admission policy. This does not prioritise children who will attend the primary school.
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9.7 Conclusion / Next Steps

The consultation exercise did not identify significant issues or gaps in the current delivery of ELC across the Authority. Many of the issues raised, for example term-time provision and wrapround / childcare, are recognised by the ELC service. Where capacity allows we will continue to develop these services.

Across Inverclyde there is a high level of provision for children under 3; however this is prioritised for vulnerable children and for children who meet Scottish Government's criteria for funded provision. The Authority does not have duty to provide private childcare for children under 3; however where there is capacity we offer this. The Government has plans, in the current parliamentary term, to develop funded childcare for children under 3 which may resolve this issue.

We will improve information and publicity on provision, placements, flexibility, wrapround care and blended care.

A full report on the consultation will be published. All actions identified will be included in the ELC delivery plan for 2023.

10.0 IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Finance

Financial Implications:

One off Costs

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	Budget Years	Proposed Spend this Report	Virement From	Other Comments
N/A					

Annually Recurring Costs/ (Savings)

Cost Centre	Budget Heading	With Effect from	Annual Net Impact	Virement From (If Applicable)	Other Comments
N/A					

10.2 Legal

None.

10.3 Human Resources

None.

10.4 Equalities

Equalities

- (a) Has an Equality Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES
X	NO – This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a substantive change to an existing policy, function or strategy. Therefore, no Equality Impact Assessment is required

(b) Fairer Scotland Duty

If this report affects or proposes any major strategic decision:-

Has there been active consideration of how this report's recommendations reduce inequalities of outcome?

	YES
X	NO

(c) Data Protection

Has a Data Protection Impact Assessment been carried out?

	YES – This report involves data processing which may result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of individuals.
X	NO

10.5 Repopulation

None.

11.0 CONSULTATIONS

11.1 None.

12.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

12.1 None.