

A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland.

A Scottish Government Consultation

Glasgow City Council Response

Overview

Glasgow welcomes the move towards expansion of quality early years entitlement. The city has a breadth and depth of provision unequalled in Scotland and our existing extended day facilities coupled with a wide range of partnership services have been a much valued contribution to improvement in the lives of our most vulnerable young children and their families.

We have welcomed the partnership with Scottish Government officials in developing plans but have some serious reservations about our ability to deliver our shared ambition not because we are not committed and supportive but because of the constraints being placed upon us as set out below.

It is disappointing that the focus of development activity thus far has largely been infrastructure led and not strategic. Key enablers, such as a workforce plan and a national training and development programme to meet future staffing requirements, capacity building to support third sector, co-operative and public social partnership models, and visibility of commissioning funding for private sector partners, have not secured appropriate priority in early resource allocation and progress.

At this stage, we would have expected a clear delivery plan with milestones and associated capital and revenue funding streams. A one year revenue funding commitment cannot provide a robust platform for a sustained expansion of provision. The emergence of pilot activity is welcome but we hope that the associated bidding, assessment and evaluation processes will not detract from strategic delivery capacity, particularly where innovative operating models and partnerships are already in place.

The lack of cohesion might best be exemplified where the recent capital bidding process has been initiated without any reference to the associated revenue funding impact – we face the prospect, therefore, of a facility being in place whilst bereft of the necessary revenue funding stream to operate.

The capital project delivery constraint of March 2018 detracts from an optimised strategic delivery capacity. For example, capital investment in the resourcing of infrastructure planning and design activity at this stage would be a key enabler for timeous physical construction activity when future years capital funding becomes available.

Innovation is also constrained – our emerging partnership with Glasgow Kelvin College to construct a combined 100 place ELC facility in an area of multiple deprivation coupled with ELC student training facilities and operating on a social enterprise model is unlikely to meet the March 2018 target.

We have, nonetheless, submitted bids for both of these elements in the hope that some latitude will be afforded in light of their demonstrable benefits to the delivery of the expansion.

Glasgow looks forward to a sharing of good practice and an appropriate alignment of national and local resources, skills and capacity in the delivery of this much valued expansion.

1. How do we ensure children are fully supported at the transition stages throughout their early-learner journey? What support should be provided to ensure that the ELC workforce and teachers have the skills, knowledge and capacity to support transitions?

In line with GIRFEC principles there is a need to make sure that there is a holistic approach to assessment for children at all stages from birth on. Information should be shared between professionals, including health information. The 30 month assessment should be readily accessible to Child Development Officers. This is inconsistent at the moment in Glasgow and it is reported as being inconsistent across other local authorities and health board areas too.

There are opportunities at an early stage to establish a positive relationship, to involve parents and wider families in ways that help to support the child's move to the next stage and to establish a solid platform for engagement at future stages in the child's learning.

ELC staff working together with primary school staff at transition is critical. Sharing meaningful information from nurseries to primary Schools that supports the child's learning and is used by primary staff, assists the continuity of learning.

There is a huge benefit in teachers/CDOs working in each other's settings. There is existing good practice where primary school staff visit children in the nursery prior to transition and examples of ELC staff attending primary schools post transition. However, in an urban environment where primary schools can take children from a high number of nurseries this model is not always practicable. Models of good practice like this should be shared on the National Improvement Hub and built into initial practitioner education and career long learning. The development of common pedagogy in ELC and primary would smooth the transition process and will be essential when we move to 1140 hours of ELC.

Joint staff development between ELC and primary school staff provides the opportunity of shared understanding, skills and knowledge development.

2. What support is required to ensure that the ELC workforce have the skills, knowledge and capacity to deliver high quality provision for two year olds? How can the ELC sector best meet the specific learning, developmental and environmental needs of two year olds? What approach should be taken on the transition for these children when they turn three?

Significant work around training is required to make sure that the workforce takes account of pre-birth to 3 and Building the Ambition. A holistic approach to learning including the development of literacy and numeracy should be adopted. A sound understanding of child development and a focus on family engagement to support learning should underpin all the work in this area.

Consistency in quality and standards of training is required across college and private training providers.

Education Scotland should encourage the sharing of good practice through the National Improvement Hub.

3. How can the qualification routes and career paths that are open to early learning and childcare practitioners be developed to ensure that the ELC sector is seen as an attractive long-term career route?

An approach to the career long professional development needs of ELC practitioners similar to Teaching Scotland's Future, Report of a Review of Teacher Education in Scotland, Graham Donaldson 2010 would benefit the sector. For example, at the moment, there is no time built into the early years' workforce contractual arrangements for continuous professional learning, similar to teachers. If we are serious about quality then this needs to be addressed and appropriately funded.

There is too much disparity in terms of pay between private providers and local authorities. Moves to creating a more equal position in terms of pay, terms and conditions across the sector would be welcomed in helping to prevent the flow of staff from the independent sector to local authority sector.

In Glasgow, we are committed to a well-qualified workforce. We promote opportunities for staff to gain additional qualifications beyond the minimum SCQF level 7 that we ask for child development officers. Therefore, we want to work towards a position where all promoted members of staff such as team leaders, deputies and heads are either working towards or hold a qualification at SCQF level 9 or above and, moving forward, to get to a position of having a degree level workforce at all levels.

Note that the degree programmes for the sector need to include more emphasis literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing and on ELC pedagogy.

There is a requirement for high quality leadership skills within the sector and the ability of Heads of establishments to conduct consistently high quality conversations at Professional Development Planning Sessions. The development of a Masters Qualification would equip and skill future leaders within the sector.

Other countries are advanced in providing a virtual college approach for ELC practitioners. There is potential to extend the remit of the Scottish College for Education Leadership to include an on line programme of development.

An ELC pedagogy role which merges with Primary level degree should be explored.

4. How can we increase the diversity of the ELC workforce, in particular increasing the gender balance in the sector?

There is a need to provide a qualified workforce with career pathways and good remuneration to attract a diverse workforce.

There are initiatives to attract more males into the workforce such as Glasgow City Council's *Approved by Dads*. Cultural change is required to change parental and other professional's attitudes to the sector. Strong role models to promote the sector as a positive career pathway should continue. Further work is needed with secondary school colleagues to help to promote the sector as a positive career choice for all.

Parental attitudes to male members of staff in the sector needs a culture change. Continuing to promote the sector by using men as ambassadors will help to break down barriers.

There is an opportunity to use the development of outdoor ELC as an enabler to attract more men into the sector as Care Inspectorate statistics show a higher percentage of men working in outdoor provision.

Expansion of provision beyond term time aligned with improved pay and conditions is likely to attract more men to the sector.

Equity in pay in local authority, private and voluntary sector provision would assist in attracting recruits to the sector.

5. How can payment of the Living Wage and wider Fair Work practices be encouraged across the ELC sector?

There needs to be recognition at government level that this cannot be done cheaply due to the cost of delivery particularly when ratios need to be maintained.

Building in the Living Wage and Fair Work practices as a requirement to local authority procurement strategies would help to ensure this is standard practise across the independent sector, subject to funding.

6. What actions should be taken to support increased access to outdoor learning, exercise and play?

The Care Inspectorate's *My World Outdoors* is a good model and needs to be used and applied. Health and safety can be managed effectively though there appears to be a lack of consistency in Care Inspectorate risk assessments.

In Glasgow, we have many examples of best practice where children are actively engaged in risk assessing their own play. We have invested in outdoor play and appropriate clothing for children and staff. However, parents and staff need to be

more engaged to make sure they understand the benefits of outdoor learning and play to health and well-being and the range of experiences available and support it.

The Care Inspectorate registration should be more flexible and creative to take account of outdoor space and should include outdoor space attached to nursery buildings as part of registration.

Continual access to outdoor space for learning and play is fundamental for quality provision.

The Castlemilk Jeely Piece Club is a good example of a community based outdoor learning space which is being further developed in a collaborative model to be accessed by all local nurseries, public, private and voluntary sector.

7. How could accountability arrangements for early learning and childcare be improved?

Consistency, particularly in applying the regulation needs to be ensured as difficulties have been experienced with the Care Inspectorate. This extends to differences in views between inspectors, inconsistent treatment of different sector providers and anomalies within the regulations themselves. There is also a need for consistency of standards across Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate.

Due to the expansion of the service within local authorities it would be good to have associate assessor roles for local authority staff within the Care Inspectorate as well as Education Scotland to improve practice and consistency subject to appropriate resourcing.

It would be helpful to conduct further research, similar to Growing Up in Scotland research, on the impact of the Care Inspectorate and Education Scotland to understand the impact on learners.

ELC is the most regulated area of the education sector and a more proportionate approach should be taken. Moving to a single inspectorate should be part of the consideration.

8. What factors must be considered in delivering flexible ELC provision, while continuing to ensure a high quality service? To what extent could funded ELC support parents and carers with non-standard working hours, such as working shifts and weekends?

Consultation, communication and listening to the voices of parents is needed in user friendly language.

If there is a demand for a service in non-standard hours and there is a gap in provision then this could be provided. The needs of the child should be considered in the design of any such provision.

Issues with staffing this kind of provision could be problematic in attracting staff and is likely to be more expensive. A more cost effective option would be to consider the use of registered childminders for non-standard hours.

9. How can we ensure fair and sustainable funding for all providers offering the ELC entitlement?

National support to agree a consistent commissioning rate across the sector would assist with this. Some variation will be needed to take account of factors such as rurality and high levels of poverty.

Consideration should also be given to capping fees for additional hours to keep provision affordable for parents although this may have some impact on private sector provision to grow profits. See also the response to Q17.

10. What more can we do to promote and support the involvement of childminders in the entitlement to ELC? What are the barriers, if any, to becoming a childminder? How can we ensure quality while preserving the unique value of home-based care?

Glasgow is already engaged with SCMA to provide the ELC entitlement through selected registered childminders. Engagement with the local authority to provide ELC removes the burden from childminders of having to find and manage their own customer base. It also gives them access to high quality CPD and certificated qualifications.

Childminders could be linked to nurseries where they can access training and support, quality assurance and share good practice models locally. Planning regulation is a barrier though local authorities can help to provide a structure around this.

11. How do we ensure that the voice of children and their families is heard as we plan this expansion?

Meaningful consultation that is accessible to parents and children is essential. Involvement of partnership providers in the expansion programme to relate their experiences and experiences of parents and children is to be welcomed.

Our nurseries have built the trust and confidence of children and families. They are well-placed to actively engage children and their families and to listen to their views.

Community level engagement supported by third sector organisations has proven a successful model in Glasgow particularly with harder to reach parents and communities.

12. How can we ensure equality of access for all children? What barriers do children with disabilities and additional support needs currently face in accessing early learning and childcare? What further action is required to address these barriers?

Issues arise when children with additional needs arrive at an establishment with no prior notice given to the centre. In such cases planning and preparation to meet physical and personal support needs is not possible. Strong relationships with Health Visitors needs to be in place to avoid such instances. Sharing information and planning between the services is critical.

Ensuring that transition at all levels are well planned and managed is essential.

The capital investment programme needs to future proof the buildings and design of buildings should consider the needs of the child. For example, consideration also needs to be given to the provision of smaller spaces suitable for children with specific support needs such as children on the autistic spectrum.

Assessment of need is central along with the development of specialist knowledge for staff. However, given the pace of development of a young child this can be challenging. Therefore, regular and up to date training is required for staff. There is a challenge too around costs. It is not possible to accurately specify what the staff:child ratio should be as every child has individual needs which can then vary as they develop. Some can have complex care and learning needs, which require individual support either all day or at specific times of the day, planning the staffing for this to be flexible and responsive is not straightforward.

13. How can we support higher take-up rates amongst eligible two year olds, and other groups less likely to access entitlement?

In Glasgow we have always committed to two year olds through our extensive Council provision and in the past five years we have extended this so we had a strong uptake of two year olds.

Close partnership working to encourage enrolments is critical to address this. Engaging with community based third sector services who are providing for this age group could help with early identification.

Other professionals who work with children can help to encourage registration.

DWP job centre staff have a role to play to promote the service. Matching housing benefit data with families could be a route to identifying eligible families.

14. How can more social enterprises, and third sector providers, be encouraged to enter the early learning and childcare sector?

There is a need for capacity building and support in order to increase the sector's appetite and capability to contribute meaningfully to the opportunities ELC expansion

may offer. A number of pilots are underway in Glasgow and emerging outcomes are favourable from both council and third sector perspectives. There is a need to build from this modest platform.

Enablers such as pump priming funding, support of business plans and property investment and utilisation are key to further expansion of the model.

15. How can the governance arrangements support more community-led ELC provision particularly in remote and rural areas?

The degree to which we can be flexible in terms of procurement requirements would assist in supporting development of this type of provision.

16. How can the broader system for promoting, accessing, and registering for a place in an ELC setting be improved? Please give examples of any innovative and accessible systems currently in place?

Information should be available for parents on the full range of services where they may access their child's ELC entitlement. Where there is an admissions policy e.g. in local authority provision the policy should be clear, widely known and easily accessible.

The Glasgow Family Information Service www.gfis.org.uk, GFIS is a good example of providing easily accessible information. There is potential for an app to be developed for the site.

NAMs is not yet fit for purpose. Good systems that can be easily understood need to be developed that will result in an increased and better use of ICT. This could be an appropriate early investment in the expansion programme.

However, the challenge of maintaining real-time data should not be under-estimated. This combined with the varying patterns of attendance in nurseries make it very difficult to ensure that parents can get up-to-date information to assist them when making their choices about ELC.

17. Do parents and carers face any barriers in accessing support with the costs of ELC provision (beyond the funded entitlement)? What more can we do to ensure additional hours are affordable?

Support could be provided for parents through a fee cap for additional hours, deposits and retention fees. The challenge will be the very wide disparity between the cost of ELC for under 3s compared to 3 and 4 year olds when the new entitlement comes into effect. There could be the unintended consequence of making under 3 provision unaffordable to many families due to the need for providers to potentially increase costs to make profit/cover costs.

18. How can ELC providers, particularly private and third sector providers, be encouraged to extend capacity?

Please refer to response given at question 14 as the same approach could apply to private providers.

A de-risking of options for a provider to expand would be required in order to have some guarantee of future provision. This must be underpinned by a sound and sustainable funding model and a platform through which a collaborative approach to meeting demand is achieved.

We must also not forget the importance of retaining an emphasis on quality – this cannot be sacrificed at the expense of expansion.

19. What funding model would best support our vision for high quality and flexible ELC provision, which is accessible and affordable for all?

Funding model 1 is the only model that reflects a supply side model as opposed to models 2-4 which are all different models of funding following the child and parent led demand.

It is very unlikely that the market would be in a position to respond in time to grow sufficient capacity without a supply side model being applied. There would be a significant risk that we would reach 2020 and, whilst parents would have access to funding, there would be no service for them to access.

There is also international evidence that where an attempt is made to expand services too rapidly quality suffers significantly.

20. If it were possible for aspects of the entitlement to be phased in ahead the full roll out by 2020, how should this be implemented?

The evidence shows that up to 30 hours per week of high quality ELC makes the most difference to children from deprived communities. Therefore, it makes sense to taper provision in these communities in the first instance. This could be done through a carefully planned admissions policy to ensure that mobile parents don't take the places with increased hours. This targeted approach could be twin tracked with an incremental approach to growing the hours from 600 -1140.