Item 1

25th January 2024

Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

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EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE DELIVERY UPDATE AND FURTHER PLANS FOR EXPANSION

Purpose of Report:

To update Committee on delivery of early learning and childcare including the piloting of targeted school aged childcare in some areas of the city.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee notes the progress and issues around developing childcare services and asks the Executive Director to continue to bring update reports, as required.

Ward No(s): Citywide: ✓

Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No √ consulted: Yes ☐ No √

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1. EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE (ELC)

1.1 Glasgow City Council delivered its planned expansion of universal access to 1140 hours of statutory early learning and childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds and some 2 year olds in August 2021. Scottish Government had delayed the original implementation date by one year due to the impact of the pandemic, however, the system is now fully in place with over 15,000 children per year accessing statutory ELC. Following a small dip in numbers accessing nursery in 2020/21, the figures have now returned to pre-Covid levels.

1.2 Statutory ELC is delivered in a mixed model across local authority nurseries (110), Funded Providers (128) in the private, voluntary and independent school sector, and via Registered Childminders (51) who are part of the Council's ELC framework.

1.3 Funding is provided per child for up to 1140 hours of nursery/childminding provision per year, although the parent can choose to take fewer hours or alternatively can purchase additional hours over and above 1140 should they need them, for example, to support their working hours. Around 64% of eligible children access their entitlement in a Council setting, with the remaining 36% using Funded Provider nurseries or a Registered Childminder.

1.4 In response to demand from parents, Glasgow City Council has changed its dominant delivery model for nursery provision over the past 6 years since planning for nursery expansion began. Repeated consultation exercises from 2015 onwards, showed a strong demand from families for services which operate all year round and which are open from 8am to 6pm. As a result, the delivery model has shifted and now more than 2/3rds of Council nurseries operate in the parent preferred extended model. Almost all of our Funded Providers also operate in an extended model.

1.5 Some challenges have arisen as a result of such a major programme of nursery expansion, the most significant of which is recruitment and retention of suitably qualified staff. In moving from a 600 hour to an 1140 hour universal entitlement, the early years system almost doubled in size and the requirement for additional staff across the entire sector has brought pressures.

1.6 There are mandatory qualification and registration requirements for those who work in early years and the demand for staff, across the sector, is currently outstripping the supply. Retention is also an issue, more particularly for the Funded Provider sector, as the job demands are high in terms of meeting children's needs, parent aspirations and working in shift patterns across the extended nursery day and year.

1.7 Glasgow has had some success in developing workforce growth models whereby staff are recruited and trained within our own system and the need for creative models to secure the workforce continues.

1.8 For example, over a number of years we have operated a parent focused model of early years training, called First Steps to Childcare, which recruits parents in our nurseries on a voluntary basis, puts them through formal training and guarantees an interview upon successful achievement of the qualification. Over 100 Glasgow parents have entered the Council's early years workforce in this way and the programme continues, now working alongside colleagues in employability services to maximise the potential of the Parent Employability Support Fund.

Similarly, during the expansion period we offered Council staff from other departments seeking to reduce their workforce, the opportunity to retrain with Education early years and to move into a new career in ELC upon completion and again, over 100 Council employees successfully made that move.

Training programmes tackling diversity in the workforce have also operated targeting the recruitment of men and applicants from BAME communities both of which generated increased numbers of staff – with particular success from the BAME programme which attracted over 40 individuals.

1.9 Structurally, to support retention within Council early years, we have established a career pathway within ELC in Glasgow which allows an unqualified individual to enter the workforce and then gives them access and funding to support them to undertake the mandatory qualifications for the sector and with experience to progress up the career ladder to senior posts.

The funding support to achieve mandatory qualifications is also made available to staff working elsewhere in the childcare sector not solely to Council employees enabling partner services to attract staff from a wider pool.

1.10 As well as shifting the nursery delivery model towards full year provision, Glasgow established an ambition to support childrens' early learning and care in the outdoors wherever possible. Significant research exists which evidences the benefits to children of spending time outdoors and many of Glasgow's children do not have access to a garden, particularly in some of our communities most challenged by poverty.

1.11 A programme of training and development of high quality learning spaces began in 2017 and since then the number of fully outdoor nursery spaces across the city has risen from 80fte to 280fte – a more than threefold increase. Further plans are still being pursued and Glasgow now has more registered outdoor nursery provision than any other Scottish local authority.

1.12 Over and above delivery for 3-5 years and some 2 year olds, Glasgow's nurseries also provide places for children under 2 years old and increasingly for children

over 5 years old whose parents have chosen to defer their entry to primary school. In August 2023, legislation came into force which allows the parents of all children who are not yet 5 years old on the first day of term in August to access a further year of funded 1140 hours provision for their child. Previously, only children with January / February birthdays had that right and all others had to apply for a discretionary place.

1.13 Glasgow was one of a small group of local authorities which piloted the change in legislation so the entitlement was introduced for Glasgow parents in August 2022. Over the pilot year and the current school year, the number of families choosing to access this additional benefit has begun to rise. In 2021, 588 children deferred entry to school, this rose to 623 in 2022 (pilot year) and then to 781 in 2023 when the legislation came into force nationally.

1.14 During the pilot year, parents who had chosen to defer were asked to complete a survey as to why they had made this choice. The most significant response (65.9%) said they felt their child was not socially or emotionally ready to start school at the time they made the decision. Other parents had made the choice on the advice of the nursery or because they believed that children should start school at a later age than is current practice in Scotland.

1.15 Although deferred children only represent 5.2% of the current nursery population, the rise in uptake over the past 2 years has been 32%. If figures continue to rise year on year, there may come a point when the nursery system struggles to cope with numbers as if older children remain in nursery, then the space for younger children to join the nursery is reduced unless there is further nursery expansion.

1.16 There may also be challenges for the school system as we move to a position of increasing variance in terms of the age range of children and young people at each stage. At present, a child starting P1 may be as young as 4.5 years old or may have their 6th birthday on day 2 of the term in August. This age variance will continue throughout a child's school career.

2. SCHOOL AGED CHILDCARE TOWARDS ALL AGED CHILDCARE

2.1 In October 2022, Scottish Government published their "Best Start – Strategic Early Learning and School Age Childcare Plan 2022 too 2026". (https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-strategic-early-learning-school-age-childcare-plan-scotland-2022-26/) This plan set out the aspiration to embed the benefits gained from the universal 1140 hours and to develop a system of school aged childcare (SAC) and early years care for children under 2, starting with those who would benefit most.

2.2 Glasgow was selected as one of 4 local authorities (Dundee, Clackmannanshire and Inverclyde are the other 3) to begin to test out how a system for school aged childcare, targeted at the poorest families, might work. Funding of £226,000 was made available between October 2022 and the end of March 2023 to begin this work. Further funding of £595,721 was subsequently made available for financial year 2023/24.

2.3 Work with the school aged childcare sector in Glasgow has been underway for over 25 years since the launch in 1998 of the national document *"Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland",* however, until 2022 no funding was ever made available specifically for the provision of SAC places.

Nonetheless, the sector has been well supported in Glasgow with subsidised access to lettable space within schools, funding for mandatory qualifications and professional learning, support to access the national quality improvement framework for SAC and for the last decade, provision of an annual conference for the sector.

2.4 There are currently 84 sites delivering registered SAC, across 62 organisations, operating from 60 schools and 24 community buildings, caring for c. 5,000 children (approx. 12% of the primary school aged population - c.1 place for every 10 children city wide). Registered Childminders can also offer school age childcare and have been included in this development work.

SAC is predominantly delivered by 3rd sector partners – 62% 3rd sector services, 38% Private sector services. The Council does not deliver any SAC services directly.

Quality is supported through GCC funding the Scottish Out of School Network to work with services on the *"Achieving Quality Scotland"* quality improvement framework. As a direct impact of this investment, 42% of Glasgow SAC services routinely achieve Very Good/Excellent grades at inspection, against a national average of 25%.

2.5 As part of the pilot work, beginning in 2022, we were asked to identify two early adopter communities which had both a number of existing SAC providers and where the demographics indicated that many families would fall within one of the 6 priority family types set out in the Scottish Government's Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2022 to 2026.

Two wards, Drumchapel/Anniesland and East Centre, were chosen against this criteria and by Christmas 2022, families who were accessing the SAC services and who met the priority criteria, were receiving assistance with their childcare bill for their school aged children.

2.6 Over 2023 a further ward, Southside Central, has been brought into scope, the processes around identifying eligible families have been refined and the range of services worked with has begun to expand. It is clear that this is not viewed as a capital expansion programme – although a small amount of capital (£796,000) was made available to SAC providers this year – but is rather about creating a system of all sorts of services which may support children and help families.

Scottish Government are keen that we engage with activity clubs as part of this so, for example, work has just begun in Drumchapel with "On the Ball" to explore what part they might play in developing a system of school aged childcare.

2.7 In September 2023, the First Minister set out in his Programme for Government, the intention to broaden the school aged childcare work and to begin to test a system of All Age Childcare, from 9 months to the end of primary school, inviting two further local authorities, Fife and Shetland, to be part of the small early adopters group. Each of the 6 early adopter local authorities has been invited to submit a much larger funding bid for 2024/25 to support the development of this work.

2.8 Glasgow has submitted a bid slightly over £4 million for the next financial year and if successful, will roll out further testing of delivery to another 5 ward areas – Calton, Linn, Canal, Garscadden/Scotstounhill and Govan. We are aligning the work being done with the Child Poverty Pathfinder and a significant element of the programme will focus on co-design with local families, communities and providers to identify needs and shape services to best meet those needs within the available resource.

3 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Fully funded by Scottish Government. Awaiting confirmation of funding for 2024/25.
Legal:	Legal services have reviewed GDPR requirements and the application process

Personnel:	All personnel implications will continue to be managed in line with health advice and in discussion with unions.
Council Strategic Plan:	Reduce poverty and inequality in our communities Increase opportunity and prosperity for all our citizens

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Yes Outcome 1 – lack of access to childcare is a significant barrier for women entering employment or training
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Positive impact
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	The delivery of universal ELC and the targeted SAC Programme support the Council's Equality Outcomes through tackling poverty by providing access to high quality early learning and childcare for all age groups, supporting families to access work, training or education.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	No
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	N/A
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	N/A

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:	No
Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N	
If Yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

4 Recommendations

It is recommended that Committee notes the progress and issues around developing childcare services and asks the Executive Director to continue to bring update reports, as required