Item 3

25th April 2024

Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

Contact: Heather Douglas Ext: 74493

BIRTH TO THREE SERVICES & STAFF DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK : NURTURING MY POTENTIAL

Purpose of Report:
To update Committee on delivery of nursery services for children from birth to 3 years old and the implementation of "Nurturing My Potential", a staff development framework to support this.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that Committee notes the progress in this area.

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

***PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING**:*

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1. SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AGED FROM BIRTH TO 3

In alignment with Glasgow City Council's commitment to providing comprehensive support and services for all its citizens, especially the most vulnerable groups, this paper outlines the range of nursery services catering to children aged from birth to 3 years old ; describes the Scottish Government aspiration and local delivery of further enhancement ; and shares detail of the Council's recently developed "Nurturing My Potential" CPD framework for early years staff.

1.1 Glasgow has a long history of providing nursery services for children who are not yet 3 years old dating back over many decades. This has been maintained in recognition of the needs of families within the city, despite the fact that most children under 3 do not have any statutory entitlement to nursery provision so services for most children in this age group are not centrally funded by government.

1.2 The only children not yet 3 who have a statutory entitlement to 1140 hours of funded nursery provision are the children considered to be eligible 2 year olds, with eligibility criteria linked primarily to poverty or other vulnerability. Of the 2 year olds accessing Council nurseries currently, slightly over 52% meet the eligibility criteria for a funded place and beyond that, priority is given to low income working families. Where no statutory entitlement to funded provision exists, parents are expected to meet the cost of their child's nursery place – although in Council nurseries a range of exemptions and reductions in charges may apply.

1.3 Currently, across Council operated nurseries, 29.6% of all registered places are for children aged under 3. The Council provides 499 fte places for babies aged 0-2 years and 1,252 fte places for children aged 2-3 years old. Places for children aged 0-3 years as well as 3-5 years are available across 40 Council nurseries, with a further 24 offering places from age 2-5 years old and the remaining 46 nurseries offering places for children aged 3-5 years only.

1.4 Demand for places in Council nurseries for children under 3 is extremely high, with 1,900 children currently taking up places but there are a further 1,700 children aged 0-2 years on waiting lists at present. The allocation of places is managed through the Council's Nursery Admissions Policy which gives priority to more vulnerable families in the first instance.

1.5 The City's Funded Provider nursery sector also offer a very significant number of places for children in the 0-3 age group with 1,518 fte registered places for children 0-2 years and 1,687 fte places for children aged 2-3 years. Currently 3,166 children are taking up places in the 0-3 age group in the Funded Provider sector, with only 9% of those meeting the criteria for an eligible 2's funded place. The majority of families taking up places for children under 3 in this part of the sector are working families who are meeting the costs themselves.

1.6 Demand for places for babies is increasing slightly as mothers find themselves returning to work earlier than in the past due to cost of living pressures. There is limited scope to expand services, however, across any part of the early years sector due to significant ongoing recruitment challenges as well as the lack of central funding.

1.7 Places for children under 3 are also available with Registered Childminders working from their own homes. There are currently 42 childminders working as part of the Council's Early Learning & Childcare (ELC) contract framework – this represents around 35% of the total number of childminders in the city and they offer 140 places for children under 3. Currently 7.8% of the children using these places meet the criteria for an eligible 2's funded place.

Work is underway, supported by the Scottish Childminding Association and Scottish Government. to expand the numbers of childminders in the city but demand for this model from parents remains low.

1.8 In their Best Start: Strategic Early Learning & School Age Childcare Plan 2022-2026, published October 2022 - https://www.gov.scot/publications/best-start-strategic-early-learning-school-age-childcare-plan-scotland-2022-26/documents/ - Scottish Government set out their aspiration to embed the benefits of the 1140 hours nursery expansion and continue to expand childcare.

The subsequent Programme for Government 2023/24 made clear that the further development of childcare services would be rooted in the work around tackling child poverty. As previously reported to Committee, Glasgow is one of 6 local authorities tasked with testing innovative models with a view to developing a targeted system of childcare for families with children from age 9 months to the end of primary school.

1.9 As an example of developing innovative services, in addition to securing and delivering registered nursery places, the Council has been working with a group of 3rd sector providers to pilot an alternate model of providing 1140 hour places for eligible 2 year olds within community based services - where parents stay with their child and are able to access family support and signposting to a range of other services at the same time.

The pilot began in 2020 with 3 services – Stepping Stones for Families (Townhead) ; TASK (Gorbals) ; Early Years Scotland (Barmulloch & Bridgeton) – but in 2023 spread to include the Jeely Piece Club (Castlemilk) and is about to grow again to included Crossreach (Govanhill).

These services are small but have begun to see good outcomes for families. Work is beginning as part of the Council's Scottish Government funded piloting of All Age Childcare models to test the potential to further expand services of this nature.

2. NURTURING MY POTENTIAL – BIRTH TO THREE FRAMEWORK

2.1 In February 2020, Education Scotland published "Realising the Ambition : Being Me", (RtA) refreshed national practice guidance for anyone working with babies and young children across nurseries and into the early stages of primary school. It also includes a section on practice guidance for childminders.

Full embracing of the new guidance was delayed due to the impact of Covid and the focus on completing the 1140 expansion plans for August 2021, however, over time links were made with national inspection frameworks and practitioners began to embrace the principles of RtA.

2.2 Over late 2021 and 2022/23, the central ELC Team, worked closely with one of the authors of the national RtA guidance who developed a bespoke leadership programme for Glasgow early years, linking practice and pedagogy to leadership of nursery services.

This was delivered to all staff at promoted level across Council nurseries and the same offer made to all Funded Provider nurseries, although take up in that part of the sector was lower – impacted by the ability of nurseries to release staff for CPD. Consideration is being given to how to develop the leadership training input flexibly to enable more staff to engage.

2.3 Building on that pedagogical leadership input, in late 2022, the ELC Team, recognised the risk to quality and the increasing complexity of delivering nursery provision in a context of :

- rising numbers of children in nursery who were not yet 3 years old
- children chronologically aged 3-5 years but developmentally functioning at a younger age and needing supported in their learning as such
- increased numbers of children with additional support needs
- the impact of poverty and the cost of living crisis on the experiences of many very young children and their families
- a much bigger ELC workforce resulting from the 1140 expansion but with a significant proportion who were relatively inexperienced or newly qualified

In this context, it was agreed to pull together a working group of experienced ELC practitioners, led by one of the central team's senior managers, to develop local guidance, practice toolkits (2-3 years and 0-2 years) and a training programme to support practitioners and embed high quality practice at the start of Glasgow children's learning journeys.

2.4 "Nurturing My Potential" was the output of the working group and provides a comprehensive framework to support practitioners working with babies and toddlers in their first 1,000 days. The framework refers to Scotland's ELC National Practice Guidance Realising the Ambition and also takes account of wider guidance from the Care Inspectorate, Education Scotland and the Scottish Government. In addition, the framework draws on International practice and

research for example https://www.unicef-irc.org/article/958-the-first-1000-days-of-life-the-brains-window-of-opportunity.html

This framework aims to provide information and knowledge to support quality experiences and growth during a child's first 3 years, putting children's learning and development at the core. It requires practitioners to draw on their professional knowledge, including their in-depth knowledge of child development. The guidance supports effective practice as practitioners increase their knowledge and understanding of child development, creating an enabling environment indoors and outdoors where children will grow and flourish.

2.5 Between November 2023 and March 2024, a senior leaders and practitioner training programme has begun to be delivered across the Glasgow ELC workforce with over 1,400 attending to date. This training will continue over 2024 and although it has begun with Council staff, plans are being developed to make the same offer to Funded Provider staff and also to design the next level of training and practice support for all.

Although Nurturing My Potential focuses on meeting the needs of children not yet 3, the training is also being delivered to those who work with children aged 3-5 years to ensure they are equipped with the skills to take a developmental approach to learning where a child functions below their chronological age.

2.6 The impact of this major investment in high quality focused CPD is being monitored through local management observations of improved practice, improved external inspection results and via the ELC Collaborative Self-Evaluation process which involves peer practice validation by ELC leaders from other settings.

3 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Funded from core ELC budgets
Legal:	N/A
Personnel:	N/A

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 Outcome 14 – improving outcomes in relation to attainment and achievement from the earliest stage of learning
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.	Ensuring availability of high quality ELC services for children under 3 supports 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 information on the delivery of nursery services for children from birth to 3 years old and the implementation of a staff development framework to support this.