



**REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
4 FEBRUARY 2015**

**SUBJECT: EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE – PARENT
CONSULTATION**

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CARE)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the outcome of a recent parental consultation and recommendations on how to deliver early education and childcare in Moray in the future.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (D) (1) and (D) (2) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the functions of the Council as Education Authority and under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **Committee is asked to consider and approve the proposals for delivering early learning and childcare in Moray, namely:**
 - i. **to continue to develop more appropriate early learning and childcare for eligible children by enabling parents to use the funded 600 hours flexibly and by enabling parents to use childminders as well as nursery and playgroups;**
 - ii. **further analyse current children in need data prior to deciding if the provision of additional day care would be of value over other support services currently provided;**
 - iii. **the outcome of this survey to be published with a view to external parties considering the viability of providing flexible day care in Moray; and**
 - iv. **discussion to be held with our economic development partners to establish if there are any options for supporting and encouraging any proposed child care developments.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In January 2014 the Children and Young People's Act was enacted.
- 3.2 A requirement of the Act was that the Local Authorities must consult with parents and their representatives on the provision of various aspects of Early

Learning and Child Care, every 2 years, and must then publish a plan of how we plan to make Early Learning and Childcare available.

- 3.3 In July 2014, such a survey was carried out. The survey was distributed to parents and their representatives, as required by the Act, via the Moray Child Care Partnership to all our Local Authority and partner provider nurseries, the Moray Childcare Partnership Facebook page, the Local Authorities Facebook and Twitter sites, the local press and radio, Mum's Net and by a poster campaign.
- 3.4 Of the nearly 11,000 households in Moray with dependent children (2011 Census), 114 replies were received.
- 3.5 The following questions were posed, with the results in summary, and possible options for delivery/further work:

- **How should the Local Authority make Early Learning and Childcare available in Moray for 2-4 year olds?**

Currently the Local Authority provide eligible 2-4 year old children with 600 hours of funded child care in 3 hour and 10 minute blocks, 5 days a week over term time only in Local Authority and partner provider nurseries. 61% wished the provision to be more flexible eg for parents to be able to use the 600 hours as they wished. 36% wished to be able to access childminders as well as nurseries and playgroups. Both these options are currently being pursued and will be available to parents over the coming year in partner provider nurseries. Local Authority nurseries will continue to offer the 3 hour 10 minute blocks in term time thereby offering a variety of options for parents.

Recommendation – To continue the development of flexible early learning and child care as described above.

- **How should the Local Authority provide day care for children 'in need' outwith normal school/nursery hours?**

The Local Authority has a duty under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to 'safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need; and so far as is consistent with that duty, promote the upbringing of such children by their families, by providing a range and level of services appropriate to the children's needs'. This duty is typically carried out through the provision of support to children in need and their families from social work staff or, if assessed as appropriate, purchased services eg placement at nursery.

For 2 - 4 year olds respondents indicated a fairly equal wish (24%-42% across the 4 choices) for services to be short activity based sessions, whole day care, accessing child minding/alternative family care and giving parents funding to access other options themselves.

For primary school children respondents favoured the provision of short or whole day activities (42% and 32% respectively) and giving parents funding to

access other options themselves (37%) rather than being able to access child minding/alternative family care (24%).

For secondary school children the highest response was for giving parents funding to access other options themselves (39%).

Of these respondents, 69% felt that parents should fund these provisions with provisos of 'if they were able' and suggested that the Local Authority should fund otherwise in order that the child be given the opportunity to break the poverty cycle.

Recommendation - The provision of day care is one of the lesser used provisions of support to children in need. Further analysis of current children in need data should be considered, with the possibility of a further, more specific survey of the families of those in need before deciding if the provision of additional day care would be of value over other support services currently provided.

- **Should the Local Authority provide day care for children NOT 'in need' out with normal school/nursery hours?**

For 2- 4 year olds just less than half felt that day care should be provided during holidays (47%) and during term time (45%)

For school age children 51% felt day care should be provided during holidays and 42% during school terms

Of these, 81% felt that parents should fund these provisions themselves with the proviso 'if they were able'.

- **If you have said day care should be provided, HOW do you think it should be provided?**

Of those who said day care should be provided, the type of provision that should be available was evenly spread across all options eg short activity based, whole day care, funding for parents to access other options, for all ages eg pre-school and school aged children (average 23% per option).

Other comments included the need for more affordable flexible out of school provision, including weekends, particularly for those with additional needs . Historical and anecdotal evidence suggests that, while there is a demand for day care from parents, it is difficult to provide it in a flexible enough manner to make it accessible to families in terms of meeting their needs and being affordable while still being viable to care providers in terms of the cost of providing the service. In addition, with a 0.1% return for this survey it is impossible to determine what the true need is.

Recommendation - the outcome of this survey to be published with a view to external parties considering the viability of providing flexible day care in Moray. Furthermore, that discussions are held with our economic

development partners to establish if there are any options for supporting and encouraging any proposed developments.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Moray 2023: A Plan for the Future/Service Plan

This subject links to the Moray 2023 plan – More ambitious and confident children and young people able to fulfil their potential. It is also linked to the Corporate Priority – More of our children have a better start to life and are ready to succeed, through the provision of flexible early learning and day care and ‘A growing and diverse economy’ through the provision of day care to enable parents to return to work and the possibility of additional day care provision leading to increased employment.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Children and Young People’s (Scotland) Act 2014 (the 2014 Act) requires the Local Authority to provide flexible early learning and child care for eligible 2-4 year olds. The recommendations in this report will support the continued development of this provision.

The 1995 Children’s Scotland Act requires the Local Authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need. This duty is already met but the recommendations in this report would enable it to be met more effectively.

The 2014 Act requires that the Local Authority consult with parents and their representatives has already been met but must be followed up with a plan on how the provision of day care will be provided. The recommendations in this report will ensure that this duty is met.

(c) Financial implications

The cost of providing flexible early learning and day care to eligible 2-4 year olds has been met through Government funding already reported to the Children and Young People’s Services Committee on 30 April 2014 (para 16 of the minute refers).

There are no additional costs anticipated as a direct result of implementing the recommendations in this report.

(d) Risk Implication

The risks associated with the recommendations in this report not being approved are varied. The provision of flexible early learning and child care for eligible 2-4 year olds, the publishing of a plan regarding the delivery of day care and supporting children in need is statutory and therefore must be met.

If and how day care is provided for those not in need or eligible for early learning and child care may have impact on the economic development of Moray as flexible day care can support the return to work of parents and increase their commitment at work if they know their children are well cared for and enjoying the day care provision they are accessing.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications as a direct result of this report.

(f) Property

There are no direct implications associated with this report.

(g) Equalities

The recommendations in this report enable parents of eligible children eg those from workless families and who are Looked After and those defined as being 'in need' to contribute their ideas on how support is provided to allow them to return to work or be supported in a way which meets their needs thereby improving their outcomes. This will include those who are most vulnerable and disadvantaged.

(h) Consultations

Children & Young People's Partnership, The Early Years Strategy Group, Corporate Director (Education and Social Care), Willie Findlay, Police Scotland, Tracie Gervaise, NHSG, Katrina McGillivray, Senior HR Adviser, Sheena Duffus, Quality Improvement Officer, Margaret Forrest, Legal Services Manager, Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant and Don Toonen, Equal Opportunities Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are in agreement with the content relating to their areas of responsibility.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The proposals set out in this report will see the continued implementation of the Children and Young People's Act 2014 and the continued development of flexible child care within Moray.

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