

A BLUEPRINT FOR 2020: THE EXPANSION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE IN SCOTLAND

2017-18 ACTION PLAN

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MINISTERIAL FOREWORD



The expansion of early learning and childcare (ELC) in Scotland is one of the most important and transformative changes we are making during this Parliamentary session.

Last October, I launched *A Blueprint for 2020* consultation which set out our vision for an expansion that will almost double the entitlement to free ELC to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds. That vision is underpinned by the principles of Quality, Flexibility, Accessibility and Affordability.

Quality is at the very heart of this expansion. It is widely acknowledged, including by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and EU, that the provision of universally accessible and high quality ELC enriches children with skills and confidence to carry into their schooling, and is a cornerstone for closing the poverty-related attainment gap between our most and least advantaged children. Therefore, quality is the golden thread that runs right through this Action Plan, and there are clear actions to ensure that children get the high quality experiences they deserve to help them succeed in life.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all those who responded to the consultation, in writing or by attending a consultation event. I participated in a number of specific events with parents and other key stakeholders as part of the Blueprint consultation and listened carefully to people's views, often shaped by their own experiences, hopes and desires, on how they wanted to see this transformation develop. An independent analysis of the views expressed through the consultation and at the engagement events is published alongside this Action Plan.

We are now ready to move into the mobilisation phase, working closely with our delivery partners. This Action Plan demonstrates that we've listened to a wide range of views, both from providers and users of ELC, which are shaping the route ahead. It also provides our delivery partners in local authorities, and the private and third sectors, with a clear policy and delivery framework in which to build capacity for 1140 hours.

I am setting out an approach that, first and foremost, will deliver the best outcomes for children, helping to deliver both excellence and equity in education; while also promoting greater choice and flexibility for parents in how they access their entitlement to 1140 hours of free ELC by 2020.

I look forward to continuing to work with our stakeholders and delivery partners as we take forward this ambitious policy and give all of our children the best possible start in life.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark McDonald'.

Mark McDonald

Minister for Childcare and Early Years

March 2017

INTRODUCTION

A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland was launched on 15 October 2016. It sets out our vision for an expansion that will almost double entitlement to free early learning and childcare (ELC) to 1140 hours per year by 2020 for all 3 and 4 year olds and eligible 2 year olds. That vision is underpinned by clear guiding principles:

Quality – the expansion will ensure a high quality experience for all children, which complements other early years and educational activity to close the attainment gap, and recognises the value of those we entrust to give our children the best start in life.

Flexibility – the expansion will support more parents and carers in work, training or study, through greater choice of provider and patterns of provision that are better aligned with working patterns whilst delivering this in a way that ensures a high quality experience for the child.

Accessibility – ELC capacity is sufficient and is as conveniently geographically located as possible – particularly in areas of higher deprivation and in rural communities – to support families and enable parents and carers to work, train and study, while also appropriately meeting the needs of children who require additional support and parents who request ELC through the medium of Gaelic.

Affordability – the expansion will increase access to affordable ELC which will help to reduce barriers to participating in the labour market which parents and carers face.

The consultation questions set out in the Blueprint sought views on our vision and high-level principles for the expansion as well as the key policy choices that had to be made. It included questions on funding models, phasing, encouraging payment of the living wage, role of providers in the private and third sectors, ensuring equality of access, supporting learner transitions and the inspection and regulatory regime.

The consultation closed on 9 January 2017 and we received 336 written responses; 62% of which were from individuals and 38% from organisations. The Minister for Childcare and Early Years hosted a series of consultation events aimed primarily at parents and carers, so that we could balance the responses from providers within the ELC system itself with the users of that system, and ensure that we were listening to the very widest range of opinion.

Empowering teachers, parents and communities to achieve Excellence and Equity in Education – A Governance Review, which reviewed the way that ELC and school education is organised, ran alongside the Blueprint consultation, and closed on 6 January 2017. The Scottish Government is currently carefully considering the responses it received along with evidence from a wide range of sources. We will set out our response to the Governance Review in a Next Steps paper later in the year, and this will provide further clarity on the future approach to inspection and a governance structure that will support the expansion of ELC.

The consultation has helped to inform the development of the policy and delivery framework for the expansion. It is now imperative that we work in partnership with local authorities and other key partners to deliver this vision.

This Action Plan commits us to a series of actions in 2017-18 to ensure that the expansion of ELC is rooted in a high quality experience for our children and to support our delivery partners in building additional capacity.

This Action Plan sets out the policy framework that will underpin the expansion in order to:

- Ensure a high quality experience for the child; improving outcomes for all children, especially those who will benefit most;
- Support the vision of an education system which delivers both excellence and equity for all children in Scotland;
- Provide a key contribution to our wider work to close the attainment gap;
- Support our ambitions to reduce child poverty by contributing to the delivery of our ambitious statutory targets set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill;
- Support transitions through early years settings and into school to ensure continuity and progress through the learner journey;
- Offer parents an increased choice of settings where they can access their funded ELC entitlement;
- Enable a system that is provider neutral with the focus on the settings best placed to deliver quality outcomes for children;
- Increase the flexibility of how the funded entitlement is delivered in order to support more parents to work, train or study, especially those who need routes into sustainable employment and out of poverty;
- Provide the opportunity for an enhanced role for childminders in delivering the funded entitlement;
- Help support parents to improve and enrich the home learning environment by integrating ELC with the range of family support;
- Enable payment of the Living Wage and the promotion of Fair Work practices;
- Be underpinned by a funding model which ensures the long-term sustainability of the system;
- Provide substantial new employment opportunities across all of Scotland with a range of roles across different qualification levels, supporting local economies; and
- Reduce the costs that parents and carers face in paying for childcare, with total ELC entitlement providing an estimated annual saving of £4,500 per child per year.

There are two sections to this Action Plan. Section One focuses specifically on quality and sets out the conditions, support and investment that will drive quality experiences and ensure ELC plays a key role in addressing inequalities in child outcomes. Section Two sets out how we will ensure that we build the structures and capacity – both infrastructure and workforce – required to deliver 1140 hours in a way that is flexible, accessible and affordable. Quality of the child’s experience is the single most important goal and it will be clear how this has driven all of the decisions that have been taken and the actions set out across this plan.

There is a full list of actions at the end of this document. Unless otherwise stated, actions are to be achieved **by March 2018**.

We intend to publish annual action plans and themed progress reports along the route to 2020; starting with a focus on quality in October 2017, with others on: workforce development and expansion; inclusion; infrastructure; and family engagement and nurture to follow between now and 2020.

SECTION 1: SECURING A HIGH QUALITY EXPERIENCE FOR ALL CHILDREN

A high quality experience for all children is the driving force of the expansion of ELC entitlement to 1140 hours. We know, from a range of research, that high quality ELC provision promotes longer-term benefits for children and young people, offering them the best possible start in life. A recently published report from the Study of Early Education and Development provides the following useful summary of the evidence:

“There has been a substantial amount of research on the quality of early years provision and the potential benefits of attending a high quality provider for child development. A number of studies have shown that accessing early childhood education and care, in good quality provision in particular, can have a positive effect on the educational, cognitive, behavioural and social outcomes of children, both in the short and long term. Some evidence suggests that the positive impact is greatest on children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds. This suggests that early childhood education and care has the potential to make a key contribution to narrowing the gap in development between groups of children.”¹

Developing a Quality Action Plan

The development of policy on ELC and the planning for expansion to 1140 hours has already been driven by a clear focus on quality. To ensure that this remains at the heart of our agenda as we build to 2020, we will produce a Quality Action Plan in close consultation with key stakeholders who best understand, not only what drives quality, but also what more needs to be done to strengthen this. The next few months will be an opportunity to take stock of that and think systematically about the key drivers of quality in ELC and how they link to child outcomes, to make sure we have a comprehensive policy framework for improving quality. This will include consideration of the drivers of structural quality (how the system is designed and organised) as well as process quality (practice within ELC settings).

As well as considering the provision of formal ELC, the Quality Action Plan will consider how we can support parents to improve and enrich the home learning environment by integrating ELC with the range of family support available. Research shows that when parents and carers support their children’s learning, and when children live in a stimulating home learning environment, it improves children’s attainment and achievement. Family learning encourages family members to learn together, fostering positive attitudes to lifelong learning.

- **We will produce a Quality Action Plan, by the end of October 2017, that sets out what more needs to be done to strengthen quality in ELC, and will use this as a driver for improving children’s outcomes.**

¹ Study of Early Education and Development: Good Practice in Early Education. Meg Callanan et al. Research Report January 2017

Developing the ELC workforce

We know that the most important driver of quality in ELC is a dedicated, highly skilled and well-qualified workforce, whose initial and continued training enables them to fulfil their own potential and equip our young children to do the same. We will ensure that leadership development opportunities feature prominently in our Quality Action Plan, supporting professionals as they continue in or move into leadership roles.

Through implementation of the Quality Action Plan and Skills Investment Plan for ELC, we will ensure that there are high quality and flexible learning opportunities available to the ELC workforce at all levels, including access to distance and virtual learning opportunities, part-time and out-of-hours college provision and work-based learning.

Access to graduate-level early years educators

The EU's Key Principles of a Quality Framework² underlines the importance of well-qualified staff in pursuing quality in ELC. The Education Scotland report *Making the Difference: The impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years* found that the graduate-level qualifications (specifically, the BA Childhood Practice Award) were having a positive impact on children's learning in the early years:

*"Staff have a clearer understanding of child development and feel more confident and motivated in delivering the curriculum. We know that staff are using their new knowledge and skills to improve learning for children, for example outdoor learning. They are delivering more child-led learning which promotes deeper and challenging learning experiences."*³

Our plans for expansion of ELC need to recognise that the graduate workforce is changing. The introduction of the BA Childhood Practice in 2009 has increased the number of non-teacher graduates who have specialist early years expertise and knowledge. The course completion figures indicate that around 1,200 have now graduated with this degree and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) estimate that around 280 people complete graduate-level courses each year. The introduction of the M.Ed Early Years (offered by the University of Strathclyde and the University of Aberdeen) in 2009-10 has also enhanced skills at post-graduate level with an annual intake of around 30-40 students each year.

We will continue to invest in graduate and post-graduate level training specifically to promote early years education, including consideration of whether new direct entry undergraduate courses are required to support development of the workforce. As part of our work to develop the Quality Action Plan, we will work with professional bodies to consider how we can further strengthen the role of teachers in delivering learning in ELC settings.

Curriculum for Excellence has provided a coherent curriculum from 3-18 years which supports continuity and progression. It has supported a shift in how children are engaged in learning by introducing a broader curriculum, more hands-on learning and play-based opportunities. This is supplemented by *Building the Ambition*, published by Scottish Government in 2014, which contains guidance for ELC practitioners who work with children from 0-5 years old; and, sets out how high quality interactions and experiences can be delivered within caring and nurturing environments.

2 Key Principles of a Quality Framework for Early Childhood Education and Care: report of the Working Group on Early Childhood Education and Care (under the auspices of the European Union) (October 2014)

3 'Making the Difference: The impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years', Education Scotland (2012)

We will continue to ensure that pedagogy is adequately reflected in the training of our ELC workforce, particularly for graduate-level practitioners, and that undergraduate courses offer a balance between child development, pedagogy and management.

- **We will increase support for the M.Ed Early Years Pedagogue courses at Aberdeen and Strathclyde Universities from the 2018-19 academic year.**
- **We will improve the quality of data available on the graduate workforce, by supplementing the data on teachers with information on the number of staff with a relevant graduate level qualification working within the sector.**

Robust quality standards and inspection

We will continue to ensure that the ELC entitlement is underpinned by national quality standards which focus on delivering positive experiences for children and are directed at achieving positive outcomes. The Scottish Government's new statutory National Care Standards, due for publication in 2017, will strengthen this further by setting out child-centred and outcome-focused expectations of quality across all care and health provision, including ELC.

- **As part of our response to the Education Governance Review, we will ensure we have the right inspection arrangements in place for fair, transparent and consistent assessment of quality in ELC. In particular, we will consider how we can build on the excellent work the inspectorates have undertaken in recent years to create a more streamlined and holistic system supporting quality improvement in ELC.**

Securing a role for childminders

Childminders will have a key role in delivering the expanded funded entitlement. A recurring theme in the consultation was that childminders should have more opportunities to access training using both formal and informal learning mechanisms, from mandatory courses, to sharing best practice across networks.

We are committed to delivering a new standard of best practice for childminders. As part of this we have provided additional funding to the Care Inspectorate to take forward the development of a Learning and Development Pathway for all childminders. We have extended this funding into 2017-18.

- **We will work with the Care Inspectorate and other partners to launch a new Learning and Development Pathway for childminders in September 2017.**

A number of respondents to the Blueprint consultation highlighted that, under the current system, childminders who provide the funded entitlement are not subject to the same qualification requirements as other ELC workers. We know that childminders are already delivering high quality provision: childminders are more likely than most other childcare services to achieve Care Inspectorate grades of very good and excellent.⁴ However, the skills base of the sector is often overlooked or not understood by parents, carers and other professionals working in the sector.

⁴ Early Learning and Childcare Statistics 2015, November 2016, Care Inspectorate, <http://www.careinspectorate.com/images/documents/3591/Early%20Learning%20and%20Childcare%20statistics%20report%202015.pdf>

We believe that a minimum qualification could provide reassurance, in respect of quality of provision, for parents who are facing choices over the best option for childcare. However, we know that we would need to ensure that the necessary infrastructure, including flexible training options and financial support arrangements, is in place before this could be implemented. We would need to support the profession in moving towards qualification requirements over time.

- **We will work with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), the Care Inspectorate, the SSSC and other key delivery partners to consider, as part of the best practice standard for childminders, the potential for a requirement for those childminders delivering the funded ELC entitlement to be qualified to the same level as an ELC practitioner.**

Effective partnership working to support transitions into, through, and out of, ELC

Children face a number of transitions throughout their learner journey: from the home to early learning and childcare, across different ELC settings, within those settings, and into school. The system must ensure that these transitions support continuity, coherence and progression. Consultation responses emphasised the need for clear transition plans to support children through their early-learner journey. They highlighted the need for effective partnership at transition stages, with allied professionals and specialists identified as having valuable contributions to make to smooth transitions. The need to share relevant information about children was a common theme.

Working across organisational boundaries and putting children and their families at the heart of decision making, is a central feature of Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) – the Government’s national approach that aims to improve outcomes for all children and young people in Scotland. Our approach underpins all of our work with children and young people and plays a fundamental part in realising the Scottish Government’s goal of giving all our children and young people the best possible start in life. Our approach is about everyone working together to support every child and young person’s wellbeing – by spotting and dealing with issues as early as possible, and working with parents and services rather than waiting until they escalate into potential crisis.

- **As set out in the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan⁵ we will provide clarity on how appropriate data on children’s progress is shared between professionals working with children from the early years onwards. This should help to support transitions.**

The Attainment Scotland Fund, including the Pupil Equity Fund, can be used to support transitions, which can include the transition from ELC to primary. The Scottish Attainment Challenge funds are already being used in this way in Dundee, where funding has been used to employ (in partnership with the NHS) speech and language therapists for all nurseries attached to attainment challenge schools. Early years staff are also working in partnership with families to develop early vocabulary and early literacy skills in children from 2 years old, using well-evidenced programmes. These examples have been shared on the National Improvement Hub as good practice examples of ‘Interventions for Equity’.

- **We will identify and share examples of how the Attainment Scotland Fund and the Pupil Equity Fund are being used to support transitions from ELC to primary school.**

5 2017 National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, Scottish Government 2017

Closing the attainment gap

We know that the socio-economic gap in cognitive development opens up well before children start primary school. Narrowing this gap in the pre-school years must be part of our strategy to promote equity and excellence.

We also know from the Growing Up in Scotland Study that children from disadvantaged backgrounds are no less likely – compared to those from more advantaged backgrounds – to attend pre-school settings of the highest quality.⁶ This means that ELC can play a key role in closing the attainment gap.

The Children and Young People Act (Scotland) 2014 extended entitlement to funded ELC to around a quarter of 2 year olds whose parents are in receipt of certain benefits, ensuring those who will benefit most from funded ELC are able to take advantage from age 2. Improving uptake of funded ELC by families of eligible 2 years olds could make a significant contribution to closing the attainment gap before children begin primary school. We will continue to work with local authorities, and others, to promote and increase the flexibility and uptake of the expanded provision as we move towards the expansion to 1140 hours. We recently published research on the drivers and barriers to uptake amongst 2 year olds,⁷ which will underpin our policy development and the Children and Young People Improvement Collaborative is testing approaches to improving the up-take of funded ELC for eligible 2 year olds.

- **We will continue to explore options through UK legislation to enable the sharing of data by DWP and HMRC to allow local authorities to identify eligible families.**
- **We will provide dedicated support to local authorities to help improve uptake amongst eligible 2 year olds.**

We have started work to implement our commitment to provide an additional graduate in nurseries in Scotland's most deprived areas by August 2018. An extra 435 graduates working directly with children will be in place by 2018, with every local authority area set to increase graduate numbers. We are providing funding of £1.5 million to the Scottish Funding Council to increase teacher training and other ELC-related graduate places in the 2017-18 academic year.

- **We will continue to work with local authorities to produce guidance on implementation of the additional graduate commitment. Local authorities will be asked to submit action plans to show how they intend to deploy their additional graduates.**

As part of the expansion, and in order to improve health and wellbeing at this crucial stage in a child's development, we will provide free lunches for all children receiving their 1140 hours of entitlement, whether provided by the local authority or providers in the private and third sector delivering the funded entitlement. Our good design guidance, due to be published in June 2017, will include guidance on appropriate catering facilities.

⁶ Tackling Inequalities in The Early Years: Key messages from 10 years of the Growing Up in Scotland study, Scottish Government, 2015

⁷ Drivers and Barriers to take-up of Early Learning and Childcare amongst 2 year olds, Scottish Government, March 2017, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2017/02/4813>

Strengthening inclusion

ELC provision must ensure equality of access for, and account for the varying needs of, all children. These needs can vary depending on a number of factors, including whether a child is disabled or has additional support needs (ASN), is from an ethnic minority background, lives in a deprived area or has challenging family circumstances.

We will continue to support implementation of the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 (as amended), to ensure children's ASN are identified and provided for. That includes those who are identified from birth as having a disability and are brought to the attention of the education authority as needing additional support. We already have plans to revise and improve the statutory guidance on the Additional Support for Learning Act 2004 Act, in particular by clarifying responsibilities.

Accessibility will be promoted in the design principles for new ELC infrastructure, recognising the impact of good design principles on children with ASN and disabilities, with good examples of sensory rooms and space to create relaxed, calm environments for children to be highlighted within the section about use of space.

- **We will create a fund that enables staff to support children with ASN or disabilities. This could cover funding for specialist training for ELC staff as well as funding for equipment for adaptations, providing sensory areas, or establishing equipment banks in local areas.**
- **We will improve the data collected on children with ASN to enhance our understanding of additional support needs of this age group, and the support plans in place for them.**

Access to outdoor learning, exercise and play

We know the benefits of outdoor learning, exercise and play for young children in terms of their health and wellbeing, physical and cognitive development. ELC settings have embraced Curriculum for Excellence's emphasis on a broader learning experience, including active learning and learning outdoors.

In 2016, the Care Inspectorate published guidance called *My World Outdoors*, which aims to act as a catalyst to encourage further development of high quality outdoor play. It highlights that the quality of children's experience is generally very positive. As well as the specialist outdoor-based provision, mainstream building-based services have improved children's outdoor play experience using both their own outdoor play areas and the natural environment locally.

Our good design guidance for all ELC settings, due to be published in June 2017, will promote well-designed outdoor space in all new-built and refurbished or extended ELC settings created as part of this expansion. We will build on the commitment to a minimum of one hour per week outdoors by encouraging all providers to have access to a stimulating outdoor play area for children, including daily opportunities to spend time outdoors and, for full-time children, part of their day should be spent outdoors.

Some of our delivery model trials focus on outdoor learning and play. One, in Edinburgh, is exploring the establishment of outdoor nursery provision through a nature kindergarten and another in Angus, involves the conversion of a small nursery to focus on outdoor learning. The potential to further develop outdoor ELC provision across the country is being considered as a key theme emerging from the trials programme.

We will also encourage early learning providers to organise a 'Daily Mile' run or age-appropriate equivalent activity for all children.

- **We will publish guidance on delivering the Daily Mile in ELC by autumn 2017.**

SECTION 2: CREATING THE CAPACITY AND SUPPORTING STRUCTURES FOR 1140 HOURS

A service model that guarantees quality and unlocks choice

Our policy vision will be underpinned by a more progressive service model, which prioritises and safeguards quality provision of ELC while offering parents a greater choice of settings.

Local authorities will continue to play a vital role in delivering ELC – as the primary guarantor of quality and the key enabler of flexibility and choice. Authorities will retain statutory responsibility for ensuring that funded ELC entitlement is available to all eligible children in their area.

Families across Scotland have the right to expect a consistent approach to service delivery reflecting national policy, but interpreted in light of local circumstances.

Our approach is fundamentally provider neutral – prioritising the settings that are best placed to deliver quality outcomes for children and supporting our ambition to close the attainment gap, regardless of whether they are provided by the public, private or third sectors.

We will work in partnership with local authorities to develop a Funding Follows the Child approach for national implementation in 2020. This approach will ensure financially sustainable provision, and deliver Fair Work practices, across all sectors.

Funding for delivery of the ELC entitlement of 600 hours is currently included within the general revenue grant provided to local authorities, but we know from our Financial Review that this funding doesn't always reach frontline delivery. The new funding model will ensure that funding provided for ELC directly supports our young children and their families, enabling and promoting a holistic approach to service delivery, while allowing local authorities to negotiate funding rates at local level which deliver national policy priorities.

We know from our Financial Review and responses to the *Blueprint* consultation that there are two key barriers to private and third sector providers delivering funded ELC: (1) the current partnership agreement process, which can be cumbersome and restrictive; and (2) the hourly rate offered by local authorities doesn't meet the costs of provision. The new service model will be underpinned by a more open, proportionate and consistent approach, which makes it more attractive for high quality providers to deliver funded ELC.

- **We will establish an ELC Service Models Working Group with local authorities to:**
 - **develop the details of the new Funding Follows the Child model; and**
 - **produce a national standard for a more open process to becoming a funded provider.**
- **Through our Quality Action Plan, we will work with stakeholders to define the quality dimensions of the national funded provider standard. This will draw heavily on existing quality standards used by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. Our response to the Education Governance review will provide clarity on responsibilities for the overall monitoring of standards.**

There was some support from consultation respondents to the introduction of early learning and childcare accounts, through for example a system similar to that proposed by the Commission for Childcare Reform.⁸ Such accounts would see parents and carers receive funding for ELC provision directly, which they can then spend at a provider of their choice. While we consider there to be some merit in this approach, including creating a wholly digital platform for administration, we recognise that more time would be required to

⁸ The Commission for Childcare Reform: Final Report, June 2015, <http://www.commissionforchildcarereform.info/>

develop the necessary systems and data sharing arrangements and the focus for the next three years needs to be on building additional capacity to deliver expanded provision. To ensure that we are well placed to consider the introduction of ELC accounts at the appropriate time:

- **We will commission a feasibility study to explore the potential costs and benefits of introducing an Early Learning and Childcare Account in the future.**

Delivering more flexible provision

Responses to our consultation make clear that the level of flexibility offered by local authorities does not always reflect the expectations of the local community. It will be important that local parental demand remains the primary driver of local flexibility, but within a system which safeguards high quality provision.

Our new service models will ensure that parents have a greater choice of providers from which they can access funded ELC. We also need to consider the flexibility of provision offered by those providers and settings, building on the provisions in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. The same Act places a duty on local authorities to consult with parents and carers, every two years, about how they would like to see the provision being delivered.

New and innovative models for delivering ELC which offer more flexibility are being explored in the ELC Delivery Model trials which commenced in January 2017. The Scottish Government is providing £1 million of investment to support this programme of trials.

- **We will consult on the legislative changes required to ensure that existing provisions on flexibility, including consultation requirements, remain appropriate to deliver our policy vision for 2020.**
- **We will publish guidance on delivering flexibility in early 2018, drawing on the operation of, and learning from, the ELC delivery model trials to help local authorities design their provision for 2020.**

Delivering 1140 hours

Delivering the expansion to 1140 hours will require additional resource, both revenue and capital, to support the necessary investment to increase both the workforce and the physical infrastructure. We will invest over £60 million in 2017-18 to support the first phase of capacity building.

We have launched an ELC expansion planning process to help local authorities produce robust implementation plans, supported by guidance on working through key questions on infrastructure, workforce and delivery models for 1140 hours. This will ensure that our national programme is built on local plans. Local authorities will work towards finalising these plans by the end of September 2017.

We will support the delivery of 14 trials of new service delivery models across the country over 2017-18 and will share the learning from these with local authorities and other partners on an ongoing basis, starting with an initial national event on 4 May 2017. Monitoring and evaluation of the trials programme will be embedded within an evaluation framework for ELC expansion.

To enable local authorities to deliver the capacity required for the full roll-out of 1140 hours from August 2020:

- **We will establish and provide delivery support to local authorities. This multi-disciplinary team, which has been co-designed with local authorities, will provide access to additional service innovation and redesign capacity and to professional and technical expertise on common and complex issues.**

Maximising the contribution of childminders

Childminders and community childminders have a key role in delivering the expanded entitlement, especially for younger children. This could be through, for example, increased use of 'blended models' which involve children spending time in both a nursery setting and with a childminder.

Childminders have played a relatively limited role in providing funded entitlement up to now, with SCMA reporting that of the 5,954 professional childminding services in Scotland only 118 are delivering funded ELC.⁹ The expansion provides an opportunity for childminders to have an enhanced role in delivering funded ELC and to increase choice and flexibility; and achieve a good blend of home and external, and individual and group, provision.

Our programme of delivery trials will provide helpful learning on making optimum use of childminders in delivering funded provision, with 10 of the 14 trials involving childminders.

Building capacity within the early years workforce

As already highlighted, the most important driver of quality in ELC is a dedicated, highly-skilled and well-qualified workforce, whose initial and continued training enables them to fulfil and refresh their professional role. Scotland is already leading the way across the UK in its ambition to have a highly qualified and regulated workforce.

The expansion will see this workforce grow substantially, resulting in the creation of new positions across all grades providing employment opportunities for new entrants to the sector, as well as progression opportunities for existing staff.

To inform our strategic approach to expanding the workforce, we commissioned a Skills Investment Plan (SIP) for the sector from Skills Development Scotland (SDS). SDS has now published the SIP Prospectus,¹⁰ with a detailed action plan to follow later in the year. Produced in conjunction with key partners and stakeholders, this provides a helpful reference point from which to take forward our actions to grow the ELC workforce.

We are providing local authorities with £21 million in 2017-18 to invest in the first phase of the workforce expansion – both increasing the size of the workforce and equipping existing staff with new skills. This local investment will be complemented by an increase in the number of places available on further and higher education courses in the 2017-18 academic year. The Scottish Funding Council will provide an additional 350 graduate-level places (which includes places to support the Additional Graduate commitment) and 650 places for practitioner-level qualifications across our further and higher educational institutions.

- **We will increase the number of ELC Modern Apprenticeships by 10% year on year up to 2020.**
- **We will review the financial contributions and eligibility criteria for ELC related apprenticeships for those over 25, to create new opportunities to join the ELC workforce.**
- **We will work with local authorities and delivery partners to develop recruitment and career pathways which assist in both attracting and retaining high-calibre candidates within the ELC workforce, and which also improve the gender balance across the sector.**

⁹ A Summary Report on the current use of childminding services to deliver funded Early learning and Childcare to eligible 2 year olds – Scottish Childminding Association 2017

¹⁰ Skills Investment Plan: Prospectus – For Scotland's early learning and childcare sector, Skills Development Scotland (2017)

Valuing the ELC workforce

There are few more important jobs than caring for, and educating, our youngest children. Scotland already has a dedicated and highly qualified ELC workforce, but we know that we can do more to change perceptions about a career in ELC and to ensure it's an attractive and long-term career choice.

This will require the promotion of Fair Work practices across the sector, including ensuring that staff are fairly remunerated.

Public sector staff working in ELC already receive the Living Wage. It was disappointing, and concerning, that our Financial Review found that around 80% of practitioners and 50% of supervisors in private and third sector settings delivering the funded entitlement are paid below the Living Wage.¹¹ We want to see all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement, across all sectors, paid at least the Living Wage from the introduction of the entitlement to 1140 hours in 2020.

As part of our reform of the funding model, we will provide sufficient additional revenue funding to allow local authorities to agree rates with funded providers in the private and third sectors that enables them to pay the Living Wage to care workers providing the funded entitlement. We will work with local authorities and delivery partners through our new Service Models Working Group to take forward this commitment.

We will also work with delivery partners to encourage the promotion of Fair Work practices, and payment of the Living Wage, across all of the ELC sector in Scotland. This will include encouraging ELC settings to offer flexible working arrangements for ELC staff.

Work is already underway to engage with schools and colleges to promote the sector to students. We are also working with the SSSC who already have ELC career ambassadors on the ground and engaging with schools and colleges. SDS are already developing online tools to show the range of opportunities available within the ELC sector.

- **We will launch a recruitment marketing campaign in autumn 2017. This will positively promote careers in ELC and the opportunities to transform the lives of our children.**
- **We will work with SDS to produce updated guidance on opportunities in ELC for careers advice organisations, ensuring that this reflects the range of roles available in the sector.**

Creating a more diverse ELC workforce

Our aim is for an ELC workforce that better reflects wider society. The benefits of a more balanced workforce are clear – diversity in the workforce brings a variety of approaches, outlooks and styles to working with children. In the same way that males can bring a different perspective to ELC, so can those from black and minority ethnic groups (who are also currently under represented), as well as those who have had careers in other areas. Those who wish to change career, whose employment circumstances may have changed, or who have retired, can bring fresh perspective and a range of experience to the workforce.

- **We will work with delivery partners, who already have excellent links to communities across Scotland, to raise the profile of a career in ELC amongst underrepresented groups. This will be complemented by our recruitment marketing campaign.**

¹¹ The Financial Review of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland: The Current Landscape, Scottish Government, September 2016, <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/09/8729>

The ELC workforce remains overwhelmingly female, with men representing only 4% of the workforce. Recruiting more males to the workforce will, in time, provide a virtuous cycle where boys will have more male role models influencing them in the early years and therefore will view a career in ELC more positively in the future. Our consultation suggests that improved pay and conditions in the sector will help to attract more men into careers in ELC, and increasing the proportion of outdoor learning opportunities should do likewise. The proportion of males working in outdoor daycare is just over 9%, more than double the sector average. Our forthcoming recruitment marketing campaign will raise the profile of males in the workforce by using case studies, including outdoor examples, to illustrate the success and job satisfaction among men in ELC.

Building a high quality physical environment

Physical settings can have a direct impact on the quality of experience and learning for children. We have been working with partners, including the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Futures Trust, to develop new good design guidance for all ELC settings to ensure that we learn from best practice at home and internationally.

- **We will publish a new good practice design guide for ELC in June 2017, which will promote good innovative design for both indoor and outdoor space.**
- **We will commission the Scottish Futures Trust to produce an ELC infrastructure progress report to ensure we can learn and share lessons to inform the capital investment between now and 2020 and highlight the opportunities that this investment programme presents to support wider economic growth.**

Ensuring provision is accessible

As ELC delivery models become more flexible, it is vital to ensure that provision is accessible to all.

As part of the expansion, consideration will also be given to the availability of good quality Gaelic Medium provision, particularly in areas where there is high potential for continuity through to Gaelic Medium Primary Education. We expect to see evidence of this in local authority's expansion plans.

We are committed to further empowerment of ELC settings, and particularly where community empowerment could encourage and develop community-led provision, especially in remote and rural areas which face unique delivery challenges. As we consider the expansion of ELC we are open to innovative delivery approaches where they can add value. There may be specific opportunities to encourage expansion in the number of providers who are social enterprises, and to support our wider ambitions for the social enterprise sector.

We know that proximity of ELC provision to places of work or study can be important for some parents. A particular issue that has been raised is the extent of on-site provision within the Higher and Further Education estates. We are currently taking forward research to explore this issue in more detail.

- **We will publish an analysis of the extent of on-site childcare provision in Scotland's Higher and Further Education estates in early summer 2017.**

Ensuring provision is affordable

The expansion will almost double the number of free hours of ELC entitlement available to parents and carers, substantially reducing the childcare costs they face. The total average saving to families from 1140 hours of funded entitlement is estimated to be worth over £4,500 per child per year. However, there are other economic barriers to accessing ELC. In particular, upfront childcare costs – which can include deposits, administration fees and the payment of the first month's fees in advance – can create a barrier for some parents on low incomes who require hours beyond the entitlement.

Targeted support with childcare costs is available to certain groups, including students. The Review of Student Support, due to report in autumn 2017, will consider the effectiveness of the current student support system for childcare costs.

- **We will implement a programme of pilot approaches in 2017-18 to explore how additional support can be tailored to help reduce the burden of upfront childcare costs. The pilots will focus on trialling deposit guarantee schemes. We will set out more details in summer 2017.**

Phasing of the entitlement to 1140 hours

The expansion will require substantial levels of investment in workforce and infrastructure which will be phased in from 2017-18 onwards to ensure that the required capacity is in place by 2020 to enable full roll-out of the expanded entitlement. Given the transformative nature of the expansion, and the potential structural changes that could result in the sector, it is challenging to assume that the system would be able to move smoothly from providing 600 hours to 1140 hours overnight.

Local authorities will have flexibility to determine the most appropriate way to phase entitlement in their local area as they build the necessary capacity to deliver 1140 hours. We have made clear in the expansion planning guidance issued to local authorities that plans for phasing should reflect the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation to ensure that the families and communities who stand to benefit most from the expansion also benefit first.

Monitoring and evaluation

We are working with a range of key stakeholders to develop a robust monitoring and evaluation framework for the ELC expansion. We recognise that this framework needs to remain flexible to adapt to changes in delivery, and we will ensure it remains proportionate, minimises duplication, costs and utilises existing data wherever possible. It is anticipated that the outputs from this evaluation will be published regularly, to ensure that we have an open and transparent approach, encompassing the views and shared vision of our stakeholders.

- **We will publish the first in a series of evaluation reports by the end of 2017. This will include an evaluation of the current expansion to 600 hours per annum as well as baseline indicators for monitoring progress towards the expansion to 1140 hours.**

SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

1. We will produce a Quality Action Plan, by the end of October 2017, that sets out what more needs to be done to strengthen quality in ELC, and will use this as a driver for improving children's outcomes.
2. We will increase support for the M.Ed Early Years Pedagogue course at Aberdeen and Strathclyde Universities from the 2018-19 academic year.
3. We will improve the quality of data available on the graduate workforce, by supplementing the data on teachers with information on the number of staff with a relevant graduate level qualification working within the sector.
4. As part of our response to the Education Governance Review, we will ensure we have the right inspection arrangements in place for fair, transparent and consistent assessment of quality in ELC. In particular, we will consider how we can build on the positive work the inspectorates have undertaken in recent years to create a more streamlined and holistic system supporting quality improvement in ELC.
5. We will work with the Care Inspectorate and other partners to publish a new Learning and Development Pathway for childminders in September 2017.
6. We will work with the Scottish Childminding Association (SCMA), the Care Inspectorate, the SSSC and other key delivery partners to consider, as part of the best practice standard for childminders, the potential for a requirement for those childminders delivering the funded ELC entitlement to be qualified to the same level as an ELC practitioner.
7. As set out in the National Improvement Framework and Improvement Plan, we will ensure that appropriate data on children's progress is shared between professionals working with children from the early years onwards. This should help to support transitions.
8. We will identify and share examples of how the Attainment Scotland Fund and the Pupil Equity Fund are being used to support transitions from ELC to primary school.
9. We will continue to explore options through UK legislation to enable the sharing of data by DWP and HMRC to allow local authorities to identify eligible families.
10. We will provide dedicated support to local authorities to help improve uptake amongst eligible 2 year olds.
11. We will continue to work with local authorities to produce guidance on implementation of the additional graduate commitment. Local authorities will be asked to submit action plans to show how they intend to deploy their additional graduates.
12. We will create a fund that enables staff to support children with ASN or disabilities. This could cover funding for specialist training for ELC staff as well as funding for equipment for adaptations, providing sensory areas, or establishing equipment banks in local areas.
13. We will improve the data collected on children with ASN to enhance our understanding of additional support needs of this age group, and the support plans in place for them.
14. We will publish guidance on delivering the Daily Mile in ELC in autumn 2017.
15. We will establish an ELC Service Models Working Group with local authorities to: develop the details of the new Funding Follows the Child model; and produce a national standard for a more open process to becoming a funded provider.

16. Through our Quality Action Plan, we will work with stakeholders to define the quality dimensions of the national partnership standard. This will draw heavily on existing quality standards used by Education Scotland and the Care Inspectorate. Our response to the Education Governance review will provide clarity on responsibilities for the overall monitoring of standards.
17. We will commission a feasibility study to explore the potential costs and benefits of introducing an Early Learning and Childcare Account in the future.
18. We will consult on the legislative changes required to ensure that existing provisions on flexibility, including consultation requirements, remain appropriate to deliver our policy vision for 2020.
19. We will publish guidance on delivering flexibility in early 2018, drawing on the operation of, and learning from, the ELC delivery model trials to help local authorities design their provision for 2020.
20. We will establish and provide delivery support to local authorities. This multi-disciplinary team, which has been co-designed with local authorities, will provide access to additional service innovation and redesign capacity and to professional and technical expertise on common and complex issues.
21. We will increase the number of ELC Modern Apprenticeships by 10% year on year up to 2020.
22. We will review the financial contributions and eligibility criteria for ELC related apprenticeships for those over 25, to create new opportunities to join the workforce.
23. We will work with local authorities and delivery partners to develop recruitment and career pathways which assist in both attracting and retaining high calibre candidates within the ELC workforce, and which also improve the gender balance across the sector.
24. We will launch a recruitment marketing campaign in autumn 2017. This will positively promote careers in ELC and the opportunities to transform the lives of our children.
25. We will work with SDS to produce updated guidance on opportunities in ELC for careers advice organisations, ensuring that this reflects the range of roles available in the sector.
26. We will work with delivery partners, who already have excellent links to communities across Scotland, to raise the profile of a career in ELC amongst underrepresented groups. This will be complemented by our recruitment marketing campaign.
27. We will publish a new good practice design guide for ELC in June 2017, which will promote good, innovative design for both indoor and outdoor space.
28. We will commission the Scottish Futures Trust to produce an ELC infrastructure progress report to ensure we can learn and share lessons to inform the capital investment between now and 2020, and highlight the opportunities that this investment programme presents to support wider economic growth.
29. We will publish an analysis of the extent of on-site childcare provision in Scotland's Higher and Further Education estates in early summer 2017.
30. We will implement a programme of pilot approaches in 2017-18 to explore how additional support can be tailored to help reduce the burden of upfront childcare costs. The pilots will focus on trialling deposit guarantee schemes. We will set out more details in summer 2017.
31. We will publish the first in a series of evaluation reports by the end of 2017. This will include an evaluation of the current expansion to 600 hours per annum as well as baseline indicators for monitoring progress towards the expansion to 1140 hours.



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