

Education, Children and Families Committee

10am, Tuesday, 3 March 2015

Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy

Item number 7.7
Report number
Executive/routine
Wards

Executive summary

To seek members approval for an Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy. The proposed policy is attached at Appendix 1.

The purpose of the proposed policy is to ensure clarity and consistency in pursuance of the Local Authority duty to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare to eligible children as required under Part 6 of Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

The policy encompasses the requirement to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare for children aged 2, 3 and 4 years old who are eligible, and the duty of the local authority to consider provision to meet the needs of vulnerable children aged 0-2 years of age.

Links

Coalition pledges [P1](#)
Council outcomes [CO1](#), [CO2](#) and [CO3](#)
Single Outcome Agreement [SO3](#)

Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy

Recommendations

- 1.1 To seek members approval of a policy statement in respect of Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy. The proposed policy is attached in Appendix 1.

Background

- 2.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Act) increases the responsibility of the Local Authority to provide 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare for all four year olds, 3 year olds in the term following their 3rd birthday and 2 year olds who meet particular criteria.
- 2.2 The Policy identifies the priority for allocating places in accordance with the requirements laid down in the Act, including the need to provide continuity of service should a family or child's circumstances change.
- 2.3 The needs of vulnerable children aged 0-3 years have historically been met in the Council's Early Years Centres (former Child and Family Centres), with the emphasis being placed on a move to universal provision following their 3rd birthday if possible. While the availability of places for children aged 0-2 years will remain in the Early Years Centres, the availability of places for children from the age of 2 years old is being extended to wider settings. These include primary schools and nursery schools, and in new provision where possible and where required.
- 2.4 The Policy is underpinned by the core components, values and principles within "*Getting it right for every child*", which are also fundamental to the detailed guidance and procedures developed in order to implement the policy.

Main report

- 3.1 The Policy identifies the order of priority given to children who are eligible for 600 hours of early learning and childcare, either because of their age or other criteria as identified in the [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act](#).
- 3.2 The Policy is applicable in nursery schools, nursery classes and early years centres and prioritises children who are resident within the boundaries of the City of Edinburgh Council. There are no catchment areas applied to nurseries and therefore, parents continue to have choice in provision as capacity allows.

- 3.3 The Policy reflects the increase in hours of early learning and childcare from 475 hours to 600 hours as determined by the Act, and the core configuration of these hours currently available within local authority settings i.e 3 hours 10 minutes per day over 38 weeks.
- 3.4 The authority intends to develop more flexible delivery models to build on the current configuration of available hours. Consultation with parents is underway to identify how this flexibility might be achieved. Possible options could enable parents to access 600 hours over two 8 hour days per week, four 4 hour days per week and provision over school holiday periods.
- 3.5 The Act provides the local authority with the powers to provide more or less than 600 hours, should this be consistent with an assessment of need and agreed through a child's planning process. This same process will also identify the requirement for a service for children aged 0-2 years, the allocation of additional support for children consistent with Additional Support for Learning Act, the allocation of hours beyond the school terms, and the allocation of support to parents and carers.
- 3.6 Once a child is identified as eligible from the age of 2 years, their entitlement to early learning and childcare will remain, regardless of changes to parental/family circumstances. The Policy reflects the child's need for continuity of service should a transition between settings be required e.g. from an early years centre to a nursery school or class.

Measures of success

- 4.1 The Policy seeks to provide clarity to parents/carers, council staff and elected members about the duties of the local authority to meet its statutory duties in the delivery of early learning and childcare. Guidance regarding detailed procedures which reflect the duties and priorities outlined in the Policy will be prepared.

Financial impact

- 5.1 There are no further financial implications with regard to the duties outlined within the Policy. The local authority will be informed of additional funding in the event of any increase to the current statutory entitlement.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 The Policy on Early Learning and Childcare Admissions meets the Council's requirement to have governing decision making in the allocation of resources and in relation to service standards.
- 6.2 The Policy will need to be updated in accordance with decisions communicated by the Scottish Government with regard to any modifications in entitlement.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 There is no adverse impact on equalities as a consequence of the content of the Policy.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Not Applicable

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 The local authority has a duty to consult regularly with parents about the delivery of provision, and the current delivery of these hours (i.e. 3hrs10mns over 38 weeks) was identified as a consequence of such a consultation. The local authority is now expected to plan for flexible delivery of these hours in the coming year. Options for delivery will be explored through further consultation, and reviewed every 2 years thereafter, or as a consequence of any modifications to entitlement communicated by the Scottish Government.
- 9.2 The Early Years Strategy Group led by the Senior Education Manager, Early Stages has representation that includes staff from the range of local authority early years settings. This group has responsibility for the development of consultation and reviewing of developments and delivery of early learning and childcare as identified within the Policy.

Background reading/external references

[Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)

[Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000](#)

[Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#)

Gillian Tee

Director of Children and Families

Contact: Aileen Mclean, Senior Education Manager, Early Years

E-mail: aileen.mclean@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 469 3300

Links

Coalition pledges	P1 - Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care.
Council outcomes	CO1 - Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed CO2 - Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities CO3 - Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3 - Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential
Appendices	1 –Early Years: Early Learning and Childcare Admissions Policy

Early Years: Early Learning and Childcare Admissions

Implementation date: 03 March 2015

Control schedule

Approved by	
Approval date	
Senior Responsible Officer	Aileen McLean
Author	Liz Ersoy
Scheduled for review	June 2016

Version control

Version	Date	Author	Comment
0.1			

Committee decisions affecting this policy

Date	Committee	Link to report	Link to minute
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Policy statement

This policy is required to ensure clarity and consistency in pursuance of the Local Authority duty to provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare to eligible children as required under Part 6 Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

1.1 The Act defines those children who have an entitlement to 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare as:

- All 4 year olds.
- 3 years olds in the term following their third birthday (Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000).
- Any child aged 2 or over, who is or has been since aged 2, looked after by any local authority or has been the subject of a kinship care order.
- Children aged 2, in the term following their second birthday, living in households where the parent/carer is in receipt of one or more of the following benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Income based Jobseekers Allowance
 - Income based Employment and Support Allowance
 - Incapacity Benefit
 - Severe Disablement Allowance
 - Pension Credit

Part 12 (3) of the Act identifies a child who is considered to be at risk of becoming looked after as eligible.

Once a child is identified as eligible their entitlement to early learning and childcare will remain, regardless of changes to parental/family circumstances.

This policy will safeguard and promote the welfare of children who are in need and so far as is consistent with that duty, promote the upbringing of children by their families, by providing a range and level of service appropriate to their need (Children (Scotland) Act 1995).

Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) in Edinburgh seeks to build on existing structure and best practice that supports early intervention whenever possible. This policy is underpinned by GIRFEC and considers the core components, values and principles which bring meaning and relevance at a practice level to this single-agency, multi-agency and inter-agency approach, to meet the needs of all children.

All children within the eligible groups will be entitled to 600h early learning and childcare over a school year (3h 10m over 38 weeks). This is a current core configuration to entitlement based upon consultation with parents. Alternative models to increase flexibility for families will be considered and this guidance further developed.

Scope

- 2.1 The Policy relates to the following specific services within Local Authority provision:
- 600 hours early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds.
 - 600 hours early learning and childcare for 2 year olds who are of have been since aged 2, looked after by a local authority or under a kinship care order.
 - 600 hours early learning and childcare for 2 year olds whose parents/carers are or have been since the child was aged 2, in receipt of specified benefits.
 - Early learning and childcare services for children aged under 2 years.

Attendance at a particular Nursery School, Nursery Class or Early Years Centre does not guarantee a child's entry into a specific Primary School. The provision of early learning and childcare in early years establishments is not governed by catchment areas.

The legislative duty of the Local Authority will be met in ensuring that 600 hours of early learning and childcare is available for those entitled within the Local Authority though not necessarily within a specific establishment.

Definitions

- 3.1 "Term" following their second or third birthday: as per school session dates. Term 1 – Autumn term, Term 2 – Spring term, Term 3 – Summer term. See [term dates](#).

There is provision to secure a place for a child earlier, immediately following their second or third birthday where a SHANARRI need has been identified through the child's planning process.

Policy content

Underpinning Principles

- 4.1 The principles underlying the policy apply regardless of the type of service accessed and are as specified in legislation :
- New universality and entitlement of early learning and childcare to specific groups.
 - Centrality of the rights, needs and views of children and their families.
 - Accessibility and flexibility of high quality services.
 - Socially inclusive provision for families, incorporating additional support as appropriate through the integrated assessment and child planning process as outlined in GIRFEC.
 - A commitment to cooperative values and the principles of equity of opportunity, social justice and to tackling social exclusion.

Implementation

Allocation of spaces

- 4.1 The criteria for allocation of places and for providing additional services apply across all early years settings. Parents/carers are expected to show evidence of a child's identification in the form of the birth certificate prior to placement. Early Years Centres will also provide a range of services which prioritises those children and families identified as being "in need".

Additionality criteria

- 4.2 Any service delivery which does not reflect the baseline 600 hour entitlement will be made through the integrated assessment and child's planning process. This would include the allocation of additional resources (which may include additional time), a reduction in hours needed and those children who do not meet the eligibility criteria (eg those aged under 2).

Nursery Schools, Nursery Classes and Early Years Centres

- 4.3 These settings provide 600 hours of early learning and childcare hours to 3 and 4 year old children and to 2 year olds who meet the eligibility criteria, under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 4.4 Places will be allocated in order of birth date. Where the integrated planning process has identified a child in need they may be allocated a placement as a priority.
- 4.5 Some settings will have spaces specifically created for 2 year olds.

- 4.6 Whilst settings will take into account a parent's preference for a morning or afternoon placement, the Head of Establishment will ensure that there is a balance of use across morning and afternoon sessions to ensure a high standard of experiences and outcomes for children, in addition to the most efficient use of resources.
- 4.7 The audit process will consider children with additional support for learning needs and how best they can be supported within the nursery setting.
- 4.8 Bright Start placements for children with exceptionality will be accessed via the Children's Management Review Group (CMRG).
- 4.9 The allocation of places to children resident in the City of Edinburgh will be made in the order of priority listed below. Once a child is identified as eligible from the age of 2, priority will be given for them to receive a place when aged 3. This reflects the requirement in the Act for the entitlement to remain and the importance of smooth transitions for our youngest citizens.
- Children who require additional support to enable them to reach their full potential (*Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2009*), or who meet the eligibility criteria as identified in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
 - Children accessing a retained year (i.e. children of statutory school age who are assessed as requiring another year of pre-school education).
 - Children with deferred entry to Primary School (i.e. children who are eligible to go to school but have applied for and been granted a deferred year or where a parent has a right to choose delayed entry when the child's birth month is January or February).
 - Children in their pre-school year in order of their birth date, oldest first.
 - Children who have reached their third birthday and are born within the dates of eligibility, in order of their birth date, oldest first (Appendix 4)
 - Children who have reached their third birthday and are not yet eligible based on the eligibility date but who have been assessed as meeting the criteria in section 4.2.
- 4.10 If vacancies exist in local authority settings after places have been allocated to Edinburgh residents, places may be offered to those living out with the City of Edinburgh. Attention will be paid to the numbers of children in Edinburgh who require places throughout the year before placement allocation to children out with Edinburgh will be considered.

Split placements

- 4.11 An aim of integrating early learning and childcare is to provide greater consistency for children and reduce the need for split placements if this is not in the best interests of the child and family.
- 4.12 If a split placement is considered as the most appropriate arrangement in meeting the needs of a child and family this can be accommodated at the discretion of the Head of establishment and will be for no less than two days.
- 4.13 Where there is a high demand for placements (i.e. 10 children or more on the waiting list), the Head of establishment will allocate split placements on a discretionary basis.
- 4.14 Consideration must be given to the best use of resources and staffing. All split placements should therefore make up the equivalent of one full week, Monday to Friday. Due to varying demand and availability, discussions regarding the provision of split places will be agreed with the service manager on an annual basis.

Allocation of additional services/supports

- 4.15 Any decision for a child and family to receive additional services will be allocated as a result of an integrated assessment and child's planning meeting as per Getting it Right for Every Child.
- 4.16 These decisions will be informed by the use of the GIRFEC practice tools: the wellbeing indicators (SHANARRI) and the resilience matrix where required. Decisions will be recorded as part of the Child's Plan and will refer to the child's identified and specific additional support needs.
- 4.17 Decisions to allocate additional hours or modify the allocated hours as an emergency intervention may be taken by the Head of Establishment and will relate to a child's safety, an emergency situation which has adverse effect on the family or the prevention of child from being looked after by the local authority. A child's planning meeting may then consider any additional supports/actions required as a result of such an emergency.

Selling of Additional Hours

- 4.18 Some settings have early learning and childcare hours available for purchase which may include wraparound care between the hours of 8am and 5.45pm and which may include available hours over school holiday periods. Some settings have places specifically identified for this purpose and may therefore be in a position to offer services more flexibly. The majority of settings will require to review the selling of additional hours each term in order to consider the waiting list for entitled children.
- 4.19 Priority for these places will be given to those parents in employment or education.
- 4.20 The Local Authority will continue to review the current favoured configuration of 600 hours in consultation with stakeholders.

Responsibilities

Early Years and Childcare Managers

Related documents

- [Children and Young People \(Scotland\) Act 2014](#)
- [Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000](#)
- [Children \(Scotland\) Act 1995](#)

Equalities and impact assessment

For details of the completed Record of Equality and Rights Impact Assessment (ERIA) form, contact the named author of the policy.

Strategic environmental assessment

Not applicable

Review

June 2016