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**REPORT TO: EDUCATION, CHILDREN'S AND LEISURE SERVICES  
COMMITTEE ON 14 MAY 2024**

**SUBJECT: BRIEFING REPORT: RECEIPT OF PETITION TO REQUEST A  
REVIEW OF THE POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR THE  
ALLOCATION OF EARLY LEARNING AND CHILDCARE PLACES  
IN MORAY**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (EDUCATION, COMMUNITIES AND  
ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT)**

**1. PETITION DETAILS**

1.1 Title of Petition: To request a review of the policy and procedures for the allocation of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) places in Moray.

1.2 Petitioner: Clare Stables, who has submitted the petition on behalf of the Buckie Community and over 150 residents.

1.3 Petition Statement:

We, the undersigned, call on The Moray Council to review the policy and procedures for allocation of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) places in Moray to ensure:

- a) there is adequate provision within each secondary school area to enable families living in that area to access appropriate ELC within their 20 minute neighbourhood.
- b) that, where reasonably practicable, children can receive their funded entitlement at times and locations that best support their learning and development, and fit with the needs of their parents/carers.
- c) that the criteria used to allocate places takes particular account of the needs of vulnerable families and children with additional support needs, including minimising travel time and cost, enable siblings to attend the same provision, and ensuring smooth transition to Primary School.

- 1.4 Reasons for the petition/concerns raised by the petitioner: These are contained in the petition, a copy of which is attached as **APPENDIX A** and are summarised as follows:
- Travel distance for families that do not have access to their own transport.
  - Cost of public transport
  - Co-ordination of drop off/pick up if siblings are not at the same ELC provision
  - Concerns around continuity of provision, particularly when children transition into Primary 1

## 2. **BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Buckie Associated Schools Group (ASG) currently has ten ELC settings, including Teddy Bear Developmental Group, that offer a mixture of term time and year round models to support families accessing up to 1140 hours of funded ELC. ELC settings differ from school in as much as there are no “catchment” areas and instead parental choice is the reasoning for place allocation, where there is capacity.
- 2.2 Alongside the ten ELC settings we also have nine childminders that support the Buckie ASG.
- 2.3 Six of the ELC settings are run by the local authority and the other four are private providers in contract with Moray Council to offer the funded hours. The childminders all run as private business with three of them being in contract to offer funded hours to eligible 3-5 year olds.

## 3. **CURRENT POSITION**

- 3.1 Currently funded childcare places are allocated with priority given as follows:
- Child with existing attendance in the nursery
  - Child resident in secondary catchment area and sibling in the nursery
  - Child resident in secondary catchment
  - Child with [Co-ordinated Support Plan \(CSP\)](#), and/or assessment by the Education Authority
  - Child outwith secondary catchment area and sibling in the nursery
  - Child outwith the secondary catchment area

Priority within any of the six categories above, where it is necessary to be determined, will be given to older children first and then to those resident closest to the setting (distance being calculated by the straight line method)

- 3.2 This [allocation process](#) was originally published in 2000 and was last reviewed in 2010. At the time the policy noted Moray Council will attempt, where possible, to match admissions to parents' wishes.
- 3.3 The current policy complies with the Scottish Government requirements as per the [Funding follows the child guidance](#).

3.4 Currently, both in Buckie High ASG and across Moray, there is sufficient capacity to accommodate all of the children that are eligible for funded 3-5's places. Capacities are reviewed on annually based on Community Health Index (CHI) data.

#### **4. PETITION PROCESS**

4.1 In terms of the [process](#) for considering petitions this is the preliminary hearing. In terms of paragraph 8.4.2 of the process the petitioner should be given up to 5 minutes time to introduce their petition (extendable at the discretion of the Chair) with a similar amount of time being given to an appropriate officer to respond.

4.2 The Committee may decide as follows:-

- Direct that the petition (in whole or part) proceed to a full hearing, at the next available date of that service committee, another appropriate service committee or full council, at which a further report will be presented detailing the full background to the issues in the petition and addressing any points of particular interest to the committee.
- Reject the petition (in whole/part) stating reason
- For simple issues instruct immediate action by the council without any further hearing or report
- Pass the petition to the relevant director and chairperson to look into, with or without any specific direction as to action.

#### **5. Summary Response to Petition**

5.1 It is clear that there are different and potentially conflicting views around the availability and allocation of ELC places across Moray and more specifically in Buckie High ASG. However it should be noted currently there are sufficient ELC spaces across the ASG.

5.2 The ELC service has a clear policy for allocation of spaces and this reflects similar approaches to allocations of funded places across Scotland.

5.3 Consideration would need to be given to whether a review of policy is warranted, however, this is not recommended due to there being sufficient capacity already within the ASG. While it is recognised that it is not always possible to meet parental preference, the practical reality is that although ELC provision is made in a number of locations within the ASG it is not always possible to ensure this matches with local demand for particular settings and adequacy of provision must be considered across the whole ASG. The current policy already makes provision to accommodate parental preference as far as possible. If the Committee directs that petition should proceed to a full hearing, further information will be provided on the background to the petition, relevant considerations and to address the points from the petitioner.

**6. CONCLUSION**

- 6.1 It is clear that there is a concern from local people as reflected in the petition regarding allocation of ELC services in Moray. However**
- 6.2 the Committee is also asked to consider the key points noted in 3.2, 3.4 and section 5 outlining the service advice that there are sufficient ELC spaces in Buckie ASG, that the policy already reflects parental choice as far as possible, and therefore the recommendation is to reject this petition on that basis.**

Author of Report: Hazel Sly, Early Years' Service Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: SPMAN-1315769894-509 / SPMAN-1315769894-507