ELC Expansion:

Exploring innovative delivery models to sustain rural communities

March 2020

Care and Learning Alliance

Index

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SECTION 1: POLICY CONTEXT

1.1 Background

This research project explores new models of rural childcare to support and sustain an inclusive rural economy in the Highlands. The report highlights the following key issues: quality, flexibility, accessibility and affordability. The project is funded by the Scottish Government and the European Social Innovation Fund and led by Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), a third sector Highland Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provider, in partnership with The Shieling Project, the University of Highlands and Islands (UHI), the University of Edinburgh, NHS Highland, Highland Council, Skills Development Scotland, Cantraybridge College and Connecting Communities.

The research focuses on the key issue of how high quality, flexible, accessible and affordable early learning and childcare can be provided in the Highlands and support and sustain an inclusive rural economy. This is explored through the following four key work strands:

- the availability of a strong and sustainable workforce – reviewing the workforce implications of the expansion agenda, including staffing, qualifications and where the future workforce will come from;
- the use of 'alternative' places and times – looking at different venues/facilities and models in ELC, asking how flexibility and accessibility may be impacted by the timings of sessions.
- the value of intergenerational partnerships – assessing the benefits to ELC provision and the wider community of developing intergenerational working and partnerships.
- transport issues - reviewing a wide range of different transport options to support a more mobile approach to the delivery of ELC in rural areas.

Full discussion of these strands can be found in sections 5-8 of this report.

The study includes a review of both national and international models of ELC as applicable to rural communities. Key themes arising from this literature, current ELC practice as well as government policy are reviewed to test new models appropriate to the Highlands. As well as the Highlands the findings and recommendations should be of wider interest and applicable to ELC settings both in rural and non-rural areas elsewhere.

1.2 National agenda

To understand the significance of this research, it is important to appreciate the background, context and potential implications of the wider changes currently happening nationally within the ELC sector.

The main driver behind this research and the need for a review by providers of ELC provision stems from key changes coming into effect in August 2020*, which will expand ELC funded provision, increasing the annual personal entitlement for children ages three and four from 600 to 1140 hours, and extend the provision to include eligible two-year olds (Scottish Government 2018a). *(Due to Covid-19 the transition date has been postponed indefinitely and will not now take place until the crisis has been averted). The transition to 1140 hours has developed from the 'Funding Follows the Child' strategy, which promotes flexibility and accessibility while entrusting parents and guardians with the responsibility of selecting ELC provision for their child, and managing the schedule which best supports their child's needs (Scottish Government 2018a).

The provision of universally accessible high-quality ELC is anticipated to positively influence health, education and employment opportunities whilst helping to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap (Scottish Government 2018a). In *Building the Ambition*, it has been noted that all social groups would benefit from high quality ELC, with children from the poorest backgrounds likely to gain the most from universal provision (Scottish Government 2014, p. 12). Furthermore, a study carried out in 2012 into effective pre-school, primary and secondary education also identified and argued that the benefits of investing in high quality ELC will continue through to the age of 14, particularly for those who would otherwise have experienced a poor home learning environment (Sylva *et al* 2012).

Children at Cantraybridge College

The Scottish Government's commitment to and emphasis on promoting outdoor learning opportunities for children also arguably ties into this wider expansion agenda, as ELC providers will need to review how and from where they expand their provision, whilst maintaining its quality, accessibility and diversity (i.e. not necessarily providing more of the same thing from their existing buildings). In 2010, *Curriculum for Excellence through Outdoor Learning* discussed the learning benefits that can be gained from the outdoor environment, whilst emphasising that learning need not necessarily take place solely within buildings (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010). More recently, the Scottish Government, recognising the positive impacts on personal and life-skills development, understanding of citizenship, and academic attainment have made Learning for Sustainability (a blend of education for sustainable development, global citizenship and outdoor learning) a priority (Christie and Higgins 2020). Whilst *Space to Grow* (Scottish Government 2017a) emphasised that ELC provision can beneficially be a combination of indoor and outdoor provision. Further confirmation of the Scottish Government's commitment to outdoor learning was outlined in the 2017 Health & Social Care Standards: *My Support, My Life*, Standard 1.3.2, stating "as a

child I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment," (Scottish Government 2017b, p. 6). The Care Inspectorate has been working closely with the Scottish Government to support this emerging agenda in terms of registrations and guidance to ELC providers.

In its expansion plans A *Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland*, local authorities were asked to be innovative and look at new models of using the indoor/outdoor experience. The expectation is that the expansion agenda will not in the main be about building new facilities, but about being increasingly innovative with existing facilities, using facilities in partnership with others and building on outdoor learning experiences for children. As such they urge providers to look at what they have, make full use of existing assets within their local authority including the natural environment as well as buildings (Scottish Government 2018a).

Given the significant expansion agenda, a discussion paper and consultation was published in 2016 to obtain feedback from parents, stakeholders and delivery partners to establish views and feedback on the kind of trials that should be undertaken on different delivery models of early learning care leading up to the changes in provision from August 2020. The aim of this being to see what may work, how and where. The feedback from respondents identified most strongly the following key features in any model being: "flexible provision, qualified workforce and quality of provision" (Scottish Government 2016, p. 33).

The discussion above highlights the importance of and the Scottish Government's future reliance on ELC providers taking an increasingly innovative and flexible approach in the way they deliver high quality accessible services to all. The increased delivery hour requirement and the mix of outdoor provision as an option to achieve this mirrors the work-strands that this research project has focused on: a strong and sustainable workforce, alternative places and times, intergenerational partnerships and transport.

1.3 The rural dimension – The Scottish context

Over 900,000 (17%) of Scotland's 5.4 million population live in rural Scotland which makes up 98% of the country's overall land mass. The Highlands are almost completely 'accessible rural' or 'remote rural'. Accessible rural is considered as those communities with a drive of less than 30 minutes to the nearest settlement with a population of more than 10,000, remote rural as a drive of more than 30 minutes. Evidence indicates that factors influencing the migration of people from rural areas include higher education and employment opportunities (Scottish Government, 2018b). This means that employers in the care sector, including ELC, face the additional challenge of the relatively small size of the available workforce pool from which they can recruit suitable, high quality staff (Richardson, 2013).

This indicates the importance of creative use of available staff for ELC provision and other aspects of community services to ensure that children and families in those rural and remote

rural communities reap the benefits of expansion. The available workforce may require to be multi-skilled and qualified to enable sufficient, quality services (see Section 5.6).

The anticipated benefits outlined by the Scottish Government in its expansion plans are very relevant to Highland as indicated in the Highland Council Delivery Plan (2017a) which recognises that rural poverty exists in the Highlands as a result of low income, reduced employment opportunities, the prevalence of seasonal work, lack of transport and poor housing. Moreover, it outlines that this situation is exacerbated by families having to spend "between 10 and 20% more on everyday requirements as basic as food and shelter," (Highland Council 2017a, p. 24). Highland Council support the Government's appraisal of the contribution of rural services, perceiving that the ability to access services promotes equality between urban and fragile rural communities and can redress the poverty gap.

They also discuss the needs of the community and their expectation that the expansion agenda should impact positively on the health, social and economic circumstances of families both through enabling access to employment through the availability of more flexible and affordable childcare and also through training and employment opportunities within ELC. They go on to acknowledge the "increasing evidence that supports the view that the highest rate of social and economic return is through investment in the earliest years of life" (Highland Council 2017a, p. 5).

Taster session at Highland Wildlife Park

The Commission on the delivery of rural education (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013) also observe the importance of comprehensive rural service provision and the role education (including ELC) has in enhancing the viability of rural communities. They point to the strong link that exists between effective childcare and parent's ability to work and hold sustained employment. They also emphasise that particularly in rural areas the availability of childcare and parent's ability to work can be severely limited, with one parent having to stay at home during their children's early years in many cases. Moreover, they identify benefits to be gained from collaborative work calling for a "more integrated, multi-sectoral and place-based approach" and a "coherent and integrated rural regeneration strategy to support social and economic outcomes for rural areas," (ibid p. 13, 7).

In terms of how expansion of ELC provision will be achieved in Highland, Highland Council (2017a) point heavily towards the need for services to be flexible (to best meet the needs of both parents and children), accessible (to ensure access to the child's entitlement), and

affordable. In 2017, a survey carried out by CALA on their behalf identified that the top reason for parents using their full existing entitlement was to enable them to work.

An emphasis on partnership approaches, use of the natural environment where this meets expansion requirements, whilst ensuring quality and learning opportunities also feature in Highland Council's priorities. They identify that constructing new buildings to meet expansion requirements should only be considered if options such as those above are not possible (Highland Council 2017a). It is therefore critical that the transition to the expanded provision is carefully planned and implemented to facilitate the optimal conditions for ELC provision in Highland and other rural communities.

Challenges facing Communities in Highland

Communities in Highland face many challenges. In particular, rural poverty as a result of lower than average income with reduced employment opportunities, the prevalence of seasonal work, poor transport infrastructure and poor housing (Highland Council, 2017). In Highland 52.1% of households are in fuel poverty compared to a national average of 30.7% (ibid, p. 10).

The growing percentage of over-75s in the Highland population, taken together with reduced birth rates and middle band due to migration also creates problems in meeting the service demands required by the elderly and young population. This also impacts on the potential workforce for the early learning expansion. Between now and 2041, Highland Council predict a growing population fall in Caithness of up to 21%, Sutherland 11.9%, Easter Ross, 13.8% and Lochaber 5.9%. Currently 31.2% of settlements in Highland have a population with less than 500 people (ibid, p. 11).

Whilst much of the population decrease can be accredited to falling birth rates, there remains an ongoing issue with out-migration of young people from rural communities. According to Glendinning *et al* (2003) rural communities are often viewed by young people as good places to grow up as a child, but not necessarily for teenagers and young people. This is due to various factors including limited educational and employment opportunities and transport, feelings of being isolated and the constraints of living life in a small community where 'everyone knows everything'. These factors affect privacy, and in some, particularly young women, these factors have knock-on effects for well-being and self-esteem (ibid).

There is a general recognition that more focus on sustaining communities is needed, to attract more people to the Highlands to make it their home as well as stopping the migration of young people, and to support this, investment in transport, broadband connections, affordable housing etc. are all needed. Clearly to attract young families to live and work in rural communities or to live there and commute to work, childcare facilities also need to be readily available and accessible.

Even if Early Learning and Childcare is provided, however, there are already challenges in some rural areas in getting children to these centres. The current lack of transport provision

for early years can potentially mean longer journeys for families, whilst having to take into account other transport needs, including work commitments (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013). Similarly, in the feedback to the Scottish Government's 2016 Discussion paper, rurality was identified as possibly the most challenging of settings for the provision of ELC with "reduced parental choice, greater travel times and transport costs and lack of adequate wrap-around provision" (Scottish Government 2016, p. 33).

There are, therefore, many issues which can prevent rural communities being able to address these challenges in a sustainable fashion. As part of tackling this, there needs to be improved infrastructure, services and support to keep younger families in these areas, and some changes are necessary regarding the experiences we provide for children and the ways in which we provide ELC in communities.

The importance of ELC for Local Communities

Providing childcare, particularly in fragile remote communities, can allow parents to go back to work, or even more basically, live in that place. With no childcare, families with young children might simply not be able or may choose not to live in that location (COSLA/Scottish Government, 2013). The presence of young families in small communities gives a wider demographic, more economic activity and sometimes sustains key community hubs such as schools and shops. The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education suggests that there is a causal link between population decline and rural service provision and often "an associated decline in rationalisation of public and private state provision, which can potentially still further reduce the attractiveness of living in such areas" (ibid, p. 28). Whilst it can also be argued that improving or increasing the delivery of rural services through "strategic investments in specific rural communities" (ibid p. 28) may lead to increases in population and introduce an upward spiral of rural growth and prosperity.

A place-based approach is about strengthening communities, and "one that seeks to address the collective problem of families and communities at a local level, usually involving a focus on community strengthening" (Moore and Fry 2011, p.19). They also argue that place matters for people's well-being, especially for children.

The functional benefits of providing childcare in the community are clear from the discussion above. However, when this can be linked to wider interactions with the community as a whole, further benefits can be obtained. This is discussed in more detail in Section 3 (Literature Context) and in Section 7 (on the benefits of Intergenerational partnerships).

1.4 Conclusion

In reviewing the potential challenges that providers may face with the ELC expansion agenda, maintaining quality of service provision and meeting the quality criteria outlined in the national standards is a further consideration for providers. The focus on this is to ensure that all services are delivered to a consistent high quality. This in itself would not be considered

unusual in terms of a push to ensure that a care service is being provided at a high standard. However, this becomes even more important in terms of early learning and childcare due to the impact that quality ELC can have on a child's developmental and learning outcomes.

Growing up in Scotland (2019), a longitudinal research project which tracked the lives of a cohort of children from their early years, established that the experiences a child receives in their early years can make a significant difference to their life chances, particularly due to the impact on cognitive stimulation and development that quality early learning care can have both in early years and through to teenage years. Similarly, Sylva *et a*l (2012) argues that children who have quality pre-school experiences show benefits in attainment and social behavioural outcomes and continue to do better than peers who experienced lower quality pre-school experiences. It is also understood to impact on a child's school readiness and overall wellbeing (Maher *et al*, 2008). This in turn determines the child's experiences at school, choices and ultimately life chances. However, high quality childcare is also understood to impact more widely than on learning and development goals, to also impact on a child's overall social and emotional development. Conversely, poor quality ELC has been shown to have 'detrimental effects on children' with the quality of the childcare and learning components needing to be of a high standard for children to benefit (NHS Health for Scotland, 2017).

The Scottish Government is committed to delivering on its ELC expansion agenda. It recognises that different models may be required to suit different localities, whilst expecting that all provision will be of high quality, provided flexibly and accessibly, to include affordability, to meet local needs. As such, it has placed an expectation of local authorities to work closely with its delivery partners to deliver this aim.

It is recognised that there are challenges with this ambitious agenda, not least the timescale

Children walking to Summerlings Nursery, Highland

involved in terms of current provision, meeting the expanded hours requirements and in terms of having in place sufficient numbers of trained staff to deliver the increased hours. There are also additional challenges to consider for rural areas. These include, distance to travel, lack of transport provision and the impact of time and costs to parents. The lack of adequate wrap-around childcare provision can compound the issues, making it difficult for working parents.

Through exploring four specific work stands (strong and sustainable workforce, alternative places and times, intergenerational partnerships and transport), this research aims to identify innovative models, some already in place in different areas, and others that have been

identified and tested through this project. It is anticipated that there is learning here for other providers in terms of ensuring quality of provision, whilst promoting choice, accessibility and flexibility for parents. The impact that flexible, accessible, affordable childcare can have in supporting and sustaining a rural economy and the challenges faced by parents living in rural areas distant from centres of population is also considered. An assessment is also made as to whether there is an appetite for true flexibility in childcare hours, i.e. weekends, out of term time etc.

In the following sections we continue to contextualise our research prior to discussing the methodological approach adopted. The research findings are reviewed in Sections 5 to 8 where each of the four strands is discussed in detail.

SECTION 2: EARLY LEARNING & CHILDCARE CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

The move to 1140 hours, the associated expectations in terms of maintaining high quality provision and increasing flexibility in provision are likely to present a range of challenges for ELC providers. Associated expectations include: extending capacity, expanding provision, enhancing quality and developing the workforce. The challenges and benefits of this expansion are likely to be experienced more in rural communities (COSLA/Scottish Government, 2013). For example, it is anticipated that small rural ELC providers are more likely to have less access to a pool of staff and, therefore, less options in terms of flexibility.

Possible barriers to the proposed ELC expansion have been identified by the Scottish Government (2016) as lack of ELC places to meet demand, lack of suitably qualified and experienced staff and particular problems in rural localities in achieving the diversity of the workforce required.

Additionally, as part of the roll out of the extended hours provision, every service that delivers funded ELC will be expected to work to criteria in the National Standards (Scottish Government, 2018a), focused on positive early years' experiences in ten specific areas:

1. Staffing, leadership and management
2. Development of children's cognitive skills, health and wellbeing
3. Physical environment
4. Self-evaluation and improvement
5. Parent and carer engagement and involvement in the life of the setting
6. Inclusion
7. Business sustainability
8. Fair Work practices including payment of the living wage
9. Payment processes
10. Food

As such, each ELC setting will need to undertake varying levels of preparatory work to assure compliance with each criterion, whilst being mindful and working within the framework of its own geographic, demographic, social and economic context.

Whilst it is out-with the scope of this report and the research undertaken to make individual recommendations to all the existing 500+ commissioned ELC providers in Highland, the focus of this report is to identify innovative methods of ELC delivery which can be considered by individual providers within their own contexts.

2.2 The Value of ELC

It is understood that good quality ELC is important in terms of life chances (Scottish Government, 2014) and in terms of cognitive ability as well as social, emotional and educational outcomes (NHS Health for Scotland, 2017). It is also known that outdoor childcare can be fun and healthy (Scottish Government, 2018a; Inspiring Scotland, 2018) but it is also important to consider what the value of good quality childcare can be to the child, the family and the community as a whole.

Summerlings Nursery at the Shieling Project

This project explores flexible, intergenerational, multi-venue or mobile childcare, as well as considering the implications for the workforce. In all of the elements of practice within this study, we believe that there could be a higher chance of exposure to all parts of the community and local landscape. If and when such a range of opportunities become available, children may be able to spend time with older people or others in the community, in different places, learning with different practitioners. Parents could access childcare which is local to them, which celebrates and develops what there is in their local community. It is argued that this more 'place-based' childcare has the potential to help strengthen communities (Moore and Fry, 2017; COSLA/Scottish Government, 2013) whilst recognising that due to work commitments, not all parents will place their child locally.

One approach would be to start young children's educational experience with the aim of developing a broad understanding and love of the landscape they grow up in, with a sense of the diversity of the local community and the potential that living and working there might hold; something that they may then hold on to later in life in whatever community they live in. So, in this context, what kinds of ELC will be most appropriate? Given this consideration a mix of exposure to the locality as it is now, and transferable core skills, will be essential. Skills such as building relationships with a variety of people, being able to see changes in the

landscape and learn about them, having the resourcefulness to cope with change and challenges are all essential for an uncertain future

To address some of the questions raised above and how these approaches might happen, we wanted to find out from ELC providers how prepared they were to meet the expansion agenda and whether they thought that the four strands we were proposing offered possible support for them. We approached this through carrying out a survey (see Section 2.3). We also felt that it was important to obtain feedback from rural parents in Highland on the challenges they face, and whether they feel that the extended hours entitlement will help support them and their rural communities (Section 2.4).

2.3 ELC providers' perspectives

In commencing our research in June 2019, one of the first priorities and part of the process of contextualising our research was to undertake a survey of all Highland ELC providers (Appendix 1). We felt that this was important in terms of gathering baseline data on the progress providers were making in their transition planning, to identify any specific concerns that providers had and to get a feel for their views on the expansion agenda. It was also important to obtain some initial feedback and views on the four main research strands to check if they added value and meaning to the sector. The questionnaire asked providers to answer from their perspective and also in some questions, what they thought was most important from the parents' perspective. The survey was sent out via e-mail to 322 possible respondents. Thirty-eight responses were received, giving a 12% response rate. Although low, this could be seen as an indication of lack of engagement by providers in the expansion agenda at this point in time. Several key themes emerged from this survey, which are reviewed below, prior to considering the results of a further short survey carried out with rural parents in December 2019.

From the ELC providers' survey (full details are provided in Appendix 1), a general picture emerged that indicated there was concern over the expansion agenda and its timescales in relation to maintaining quality with 13% feeling they were unable to provide solutions. Workforce issues were also highlighted as an ongoing concern, with over 26% of providers feeling that they were not ready to meet the additional workforce requirements that extended hours will require, and at the time of the survey (June 2019), many had not planned for the workforce implications.

Reviewing the data provided from the survey in more detail and the summaries of the responses (Appendix 1), recurring themes are consistently evident or referred to throughout the responses. These are reviewed in more detail in order to see what conclusions can be drawn. These conclusions are discussed further below and are highlighted in the appendices.

First, the diversity of provision that exists within the region is highlighted within the responses, with respondents indicating they provide for between 6 and 249 (mean = 40.72, standard deviation = 47.61) children and have staff numbers ranging from 1 to 66 (mean =

7.34, standard deviation = 11.54). When taken into consideration alongside geographic and demographic disparities it is apparent that universal solutions for ELC provision are unlikely. The variation in challenges is reinforced when participants were asked to discuss their additional training in preparation for the transition to 1140 hours. The provider who has 66 staff has a training team to develop their workforce, whereas one childminder commented that it was 'hard to fit in any kind of additional training'.

Respondents were asked for their perceptions on the transition in terms of issues and challenges, alternative delivery methods and their main concerns about finding solutions. Issues relating to quality assurance and staff were the joint most common challenges identified. Quality was also the second most common issue perceived for families and their ability to access ELC provision. This result suggests that there is a strong focus from existing ELC providers on maintaining the quality of provision following the transition to 1140 hours and concerns about doing this. Moreover, they see the development of the

Culag Woods, Lochinver ELC

workforce as critical in their ability to deliver this. One local authority provider highlighted this with their determination to match keyworker groups with staff work shifts to 'ensure staff can be present to support 'their' children', recognising the importance of staff scheduling to achieve this goal. Whilst eight other respondents voiced their concern over attracting enough staff, and others raised concerns around rotas, pay and practitioner to child ratios for childminders. When asked what are the issues for parents in accessing high quality ELC, the answer with the highest response was 'lack of flexibility' which again can be linked back to workforce issues.
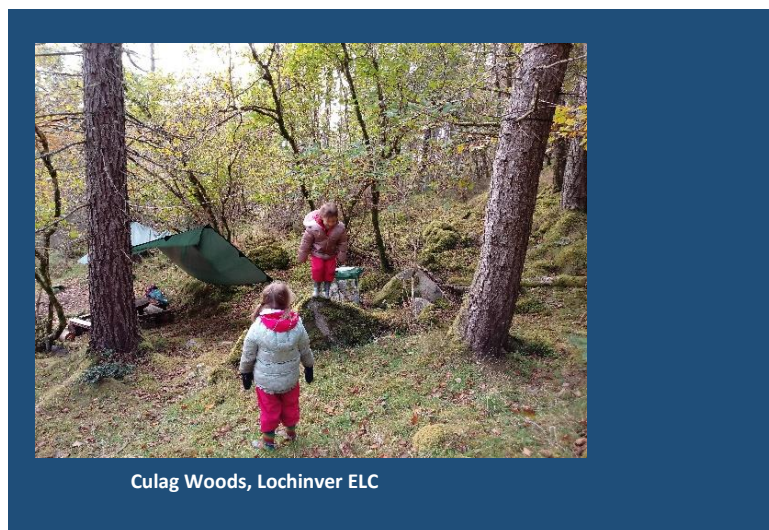
Surprisingly, the physical environment of the setting did not receive many mentions. While this may be as a result of the respondents' perceptions that there is little they can do to influence their physical environment, it is encouraging that so few have identified this as an obstacle. In Section 6 of this report we discuss different ways in which other providers have made use of their environment and outdoor space.

Part 2 of the survey related to the respondents' perceptions of the benefits that can be achieved from the project's four identified research strands. The first three strands of the project concern alternative methods of service delivery, and all participants were asked to indicate if they thought each were beneficial to them as providers and families as users. All three strands received positive responses in terms of the potential benefits that they could offer ELCs and directly to parents.

Early Learning and Childcare providers identified intergenerational partnerships as the method that was most interesting, with the forming of friendships/relationships given as the highest reason for this being beneficial. Intergenerational sessions are viewed as being of the most benefit for the children. Conversely, in terms of the ELC providers' perceptions of family or community benefit, mobile provision was identified as having the potential to provide greatest benefit. This may be due to the perceived benefit, that particularly in rural areas, the mobile nursery would be a good model to counter the general lack of public transport.

Finally, the participants were asked about their workforce development actions and plans. Given that respondent concerns around staffing issues was given significant attention in the first part of the survey, it was concerning to note that only 12 had begun any process designed to develop the workforce with only one full year before transition. A further 18 respondents had considered staffing issues and how to overcome barriers, but without putting anything into practice at this point in time.

The survey responses introduce a range of factors and groups that require consideration in preparation for the transition to 1140 hours. Moreover, children, staff, families and wider society all have stakes in the provision of ELC which are not always compatible. The complexity of addressing the disparate factors in communities that experience different geographical and demographical challenges which appeal to all groups mean there are no universal solutions in the quest for 'Getting It Right for Every Child' (Scottish Government 2006). As previously discussed in Section 1.4, it will be important that each ELC provider is mindful of their own geographic, demographic, social and economic context whilst considering innovative methods such as those highlighted later in this report (Sections 5-8).

As part of our research into what may work in different areas, as well as focusing on innovative models which could be adapted to different areas, we approached all other 31 local authorities in Scotland, using the contacts identified in the Care Inspectorate's Knowledge Hub (https://hub.careinspectorate.com). The idea was to get a broader idea and a comparison of how prepared other local authorities were and what areas they had prioritised to meet the expansion agenda. We did not approach Highland as we had already met with staff members directly.

Survey of Local Authority contacts

A survey in the form of an e-mail enquiry (Appendix 2) was sent to all leads in the 31 Local Authorities in Scotland out-with Highland (whom we met with separately) requesting examples of innovative models that had been put in place or were being planned in advance of August 2020. Of these, we received 3 positive responses, 2 responses saying that were doing 'nothing exceptional' or 'the landscape was different', 2 requested more information, but never came back and 24 local authorities did not respond. The responses we did get tended to be from the less rural areas, i.e. cities, where access to outdoor space for children was being prioritised in particular.

Care and Learning Alliance

Respondents included Aberdeen City Council who confirmed that are committed to creating new outdoor ELC settings, developing dispersed settings for shared use, assisting indoor settings to create quality outdoor areas for learning (Appendices 3, 4 & 5) and supporting the workforce with training specifically tailored to outdoor provision (Appendix 6). Similarly, Edinburgh City Council are planning to create six new 'forest schools', and Fife have been working closely with leisure centres and are planning the first intergenerational care village in Scotland. In the case of Highland, a meeting with the ELC expansion team was held in October 2019 and they were, therefore, not sent the same e-mail request. It was, however, noted that at this time, that there were a few proposals from CALA to develop a number of more innovative outdoor/dispersed settings, which were under consideration for support with funding.

2.4 Rural Parents' Perspectives

With the support of CALA's family support practitioners, a short survey was handed out at a range of toddler groups in rural areas of Highland in December 2019 (Appendix 7). The purpose of this survey was to obtain insights into the challenges faced by rural parents and whether this was consistent with the challenges identified and outlined in Governmental and regional policy in section 1. We wanted to know whether work opportunities or transport impacted their ELC choices and whether the extended hours provision would in their view make a difference to their ability to work. This could then be used to compare to the aspirations of *Funding follows the Child* (Scottish Government, 2018a) which argues that access to work is one of the major benefits of the expansion agenda. Parents were also asked whether they felt that local ELC provision could help sustain the economies of rural communities. The participants came from different rural areas with 51 parents completing the survey (See appendix 7).

Kinder croft, Highland

In terms of challenges identified, 49% of respondents identified ability to work/access to work, 41% transport, and 39% access to or provision of ELC as particular challenges they experienced in living in rural areas. This corresponds with the view of the challenges that face families in rural areas identified by COSLA/Scottish Government (2013).

In terms of the ability of parents in rural areas to work, the lack of wrap-around childcare, childcare for babies and toddlers, spaces in nurseries and lack of weekend childcare were all highlighted in survey responses as issues making access to work more difficult. These are all in-line with the wider feedback received to the consultation in relation to rural families (Scottish Government's 2016, p. 33).

The survey also aimed to assess whether the increased hour entitlement would be taken up by parents and whether in their view, this would help secure employment/extend their current hours of work. Fifty-nine percent of respondents said that they intended to use the full 30- hour entitlement when their child was eligible, with a further 6% considering it, with 35% not intending to take up the full entitlement. One parent commented as follows

> *… would like to have a balance of work/family. 30 hours away at 3 years seems too much. Good to have financial resilience.*

In contrast, however, of those who intended to take up the full 30-hour entitlement, 80% stated that they intended to either look for a job or increase their hours. Others stated that this was not possible for them as they already worked full-time or would not be able to do this due to having another younger child at home. Of those who intended to take up the full 30-hour entitlement, 13% did not intend to increase their working hours or take up work.

In relation to the impact that ELC can have on helping to sustain the economy of rural communities, a large majority of respondents reported that they would opt for a nursery nearer home rather than close to their or their partner's workplace, and almost as many felt that local ELC provision can help to sustain the economy of rural communities. The reasons given for this were predominantly due to the work opportunities it would create/enable, with comments also in relation to encouraging more people to move to the area if there was childcare available (see Section 1.3 for comparisons).

Summerlings Nursery

However, concerns were also raised with regards to the flexibility of ELC places available, particularly where populations are small and places in local ELCs are limited. Parents were concerned that limited flexibility in operating hours of ELCs would all impact on their ability to benefit in terms of take up the full 30 hours' entitlement and increased working hours. As outlined in Section 2.2, lack of flexibility was also the highest challenge that ELC providers in Highland identified as a concern on behalf of parents. Also noted, were concerns regarding access to outdoor space at the ELCs. This ties in with the snapshot survey to the other 31 Local Authorities in Scotland (Section 2.2) which appeared to demonstrate that more action is being taken at this point in urban areas in Scotland to increase access to outdoor space for ELCs than in the more rural authorities.

2.5 Conclusion

Whilst the primary driver for the ELC expansion agenda is enhanced experiences and outcomes for ELC aged children, it is widely perceived that it will create enhanced employment availability and opportunities for parents. This view is supported by the feedback received from rural parents as discussed in Section 2.3. The majority of these parents intended to use their full ELC entitlement to support enhanced work opportunities; whilst also recognising that the availability of flexible ELC in their local communities would support and sustain its economic future. Concerns were raised, however, both by ELC providers in Highland and by rural parents over the current and future availability and flexibility of ELC provision, both reliant on the workforce.

This report goes on to explore four strands: flexible, intergenerational, multi-venue or mobile childcare, and the implications for the workforce. Through these strands we consider how ELC can be provided in a more flexible and accessible way whilst enhancing local communities – needs which are clearly described in this Section. We discuss this and innovative models further in Sections 5-8 of this report. The following section takes a closer look at what we learned from the current literature both academic and non-specialist, providing the final part of the context for the research.

SECTION 3: LITERATURE CONTEXT

3.1 Overview

An extensive literature review was undertaken by the research team at the onset of the project to help inform their understanding and direct their research enquiries. It also aimed to look at the relationship between the strands that had been proposed for this research project and current academic discourse. With significant changes happening in the early learning and childcare (ELC) sector, an understanding of what was being proposed and the impact of this for ELC going forward was essential.

Key research focused on Scottish Government literature, from 2014 to 2018, with various publications as detailed in the References being crucial to the team's understanding. This included a review of the Care Inspectorate's and the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC's) expectations in relation to expansion. Equally, it was important to have a clear grasp of the Highland context for rural and sustainable communities and there were a number of key documents that helped inform this such as The Highland Council Delivery Plan (2017a) and The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013). The team also sourced a range of literature comparing rural communities internationally in relation to access to ELC, in order to review its relevance to the present study. Despite the four key strands being high on the political agenda, we found minimal UK research literature on any of the areas. This has in turn shown that this study is even more meaningful as a further step has been made towards addressing some of the current gaps that exist.

Care and Learning Alliance

Closely guided by the academic partners from University of Highland and Islands (UHI) and the University of Edinburgh, the parameters for the research were set. The definition of 'early years' varies in different countries; for this research the age range 0-8 years was chosen. Given our constraints, the literature sourced has been restricted to English speaking publications globally. Guidance was also sought from our academic partners on where particular research could be sourced. This was particularly important for the transport strand in relation to mobile nurseries, with no UK research being available on this issue, models were sourced from some of the Scandinavian countries and Australia and New Zealand. Support in obtaining some of the key research literature was also facilitated by academic colleagues.

3.2 Transport – Mobile Nurseries

As discussed in the section above and even with the support of the academic departments, it was not an easy task to source some of the key literature due to the different names used to describe pre-school education across countries. It was not until key papers were accessed, that a greater understanding of related work in some of the Scandinavian countries could be fully appreciated. Key sources here included Gustafson and van der Burgt (2015) who outline the background to the use of mobile nursery pre-schools in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. Additionally, Ladru and Gustafson (2018) describe the function of the mobile preschool used in 12 municipalities in Sweden. "T*he approach changes the spatiality of children's mobility, allowing the children to visit various 'learning environments' in public space,*" (ibid, p. 88). Here children are transported from their base to outdoor locations within a 30-mile distance, to promote the benefits of outdoor learning for younger children growing up in inner city suburbs.
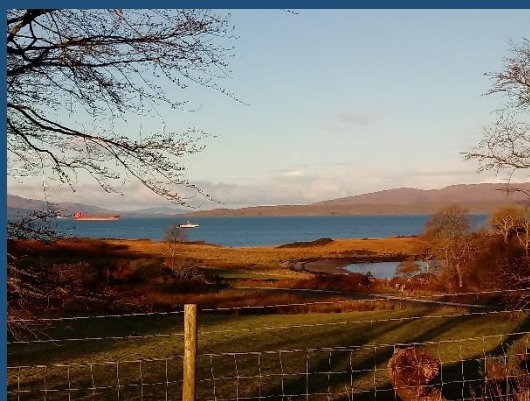
View from Stramash Nursery, Oban

Both authors also spoke of the benefits of this approach in terms of children's development. Gustafson and van der Burgt (2015) observed the improved independence of learners in terms of responsibility for their belongings and their ability to negotiate difficult terrain, traffic situations and crowded places, and be more flexible and creative with their use of space. These studies reinforce the individual benefits of mobile nurseries in respect of the enhanced cognitive development of young children who use them.

Similarly, an understanding of the history of mobile nursery provision was sourced for Australia through Nutton (2013), who considered the impact of mobile pre-school on health and childhood developments, and the prevalent use of mobile nursery provision for indigenous communities in the remote Northern Territories of Australia. Whilst in New Zealand, mobile nurseries were used to bring equipment and staff to rural communities

where sessions would take place in community or church halls with the idea of reaching isolated children and allowing them "to connect with each other and participate in quality early childhood education experiences" (Kindergarten Heritage of New Zealand, 2019).

Given the successful implementation of the methods used in different countries, particularly for rural communities, an analysis of how mobile nurseries may be appropriate to Highland, was undertaken. The purpose of this was to either recommend or discount this type of model from a practical, economical and deliverable perspective. This is discussed further in the Transport section (Section 8) of this report.

3.3 Intergenerational Partnerships

The team were similarly surprised in their literature search in relation to intergenerational working and partnerships. Whilst this is an area with a growing profile and is promoted by the Care Inspectorate extensively, there is less UK based academic research available than the team had anticipated. Much of the UK literature emanates from either the Care Inspectorate, Generations Working Together or via write ups of individual projects. Examples of these include, St Monica's Trust (2018) and Apples Honey Nightingale - an intergenerational centre in England, and news articles.

Highlighting and linking the joint benefits of intergenerational working and sustainable communities, authors such as Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako (2000) argue for the need for social policy to be firmly embodied in engaging whole communities. Maccallum *et al.* (2010) focus on the benefits to sustainable communities for intergenerational exchanges and as a vehicle for community building in Australia. United for all Ages (2018) similarly argued about the importance of generations coming together in joint interactions to reduce divisions, pointing to the changes in society that mean fewer natural opportunities for cross-generational interactions due to changing demography and geographical mobility.

More research is currently happening internationally. Most recently, Griffith University (2019a) reported on their two-year trials in Queensland, Australia. Whilst much has been written up on projects in the United States (Appendix 8) where intergenerational practice and the co-location of different generations in care homes and in purpose-built communities appears much more common place (e.g. Eisner Foundation and Generations United, 2018). However, there are developments in Fife, where progress is being made in building Scotland's first purpose designed and built intergenerational community.

3.4 Strong and sustainable workforce

In approaching the workforce section, key background information again came from a variety of publications from the Scottish Government in addition to the Scottish Qualifications Authority (2013a, b). In reviewing qualifications in the sector, Education Scotland (2012) considers the impact of staff qualifications on children's learning in early years and in particular the changing role and development of qualifications of pre-school staff and how

this impacts on children's learning experiences across the sector. It was concluded that in the settings reviewed where staff had achieved additional qualifications, such as the BA in Childhood Practice, there was evidence of this having a positive impact on children's learning.

This prompted further questions as part of this research about the validity and relevance of the existing baseline qualification of SVQ 3 (Social Services Children and Young People) for ELC staff currently delivering a service to pre-school children. Should they be required to hold a more advanced qualification? And would having access to such qualifications make ELC work a more positive career choice thus attracting more quality staff more easily and quickly when vacancies arise and to meet the demands of expansion in funded hours? Linking to rurality there are also questions over how accessible qualification courses and

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training in general are to rural or remote workers. These questions are discussed and analysed in more detail in Section 5 of this paper along with a key element of this research project which concerned the possibility of developing a joint qualification for practitioners to work across child and adult care sectors. Literature from NHS Education for Scotland (2014, 2016) in relation to the development of rural generic support worker roles that took place in Orkney were reviewed for this purpose.

In terms of childcare quality and children's outcomes, Scobie & Scott (2017) identify structural and process indicators which are viewed as important in contributing to high quality ELC and have potential to positively influence children's outcomes. These include factors such as workforce confidence, experience and competence, working conditions around pay, promotion and progression opportunities, and an ELC curriculum with a balance of play, self-regulation and pre-academic activities. The process indicators identified by the above authors also include the benefits for children of having highly trained staff who have the professional development opportunities that assist them in providing a quality service.

3.5 Alternative Places and Timings

There is no current research on 'alternative places and timings'. However, a key element of this is outdoor spaces and an increasing range and number of academic articles have been written with regards to the benefits of outdoor nurseries and learning both at home and abroad. Many of these articles can be found for example in the *Journal of Adventure Education and Outdoor Learning,* the *Australian Journal of Outdoor Education* and the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*. Outside of the academic sphere, there is an abundance of literature from Inspiring Scotland, which was reviewed by the team as well as literature regarding place-based learning approach (Sobel, 2004; Titman, 1994). The origins of outdoor learning are outlined in Appendix 9.

In terms of the ELC expansion agenda in preparing for the transition to 1140 hours, the Scottish Government (2016) commissioned a study, inviting stakeholders including parents and local councils to respond to a survey designed to assess the opportunities and challenges which the transition presents. The survey attracted 73 responses from across the sector and a recurring theme among the anticipated barriers was the lack of spaces capable of hosting sessions in light of the likelihood of increased demand and the additional provisions which are required by the new Heath and Social Care Standards (Scottish Government 2017a).

In response to the opportunities one respondent suggested every child should have outdoor access half of the time and while the Care Inspectorate stopped short of this standard, they have prioritised outdoor access for young children in Standard 1.32 of their Health and Social Care Standards (HSCS 1.32 - *As a child, I play outdoors every day and regularly explore a natural environment*). This standard is designed to facilitate a child's right to outdoor play; a right enshrined in law by the Scottish Government (Care Inspectorate, 2018a).

The Scottish Government, in association with Inspiring Scotland and the Care Inspectorate have developed a vision promoting outdoor play-based learning which optimises childhood experience; creating 'successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens' (Inspiring Scotland, 2018).

The individual benefits of outdoor play-based learning the Scottish Government seek to enhance through the promotion of outdoor early learning include enhanced physical health, mental health and wellbeing, and developmental benefits (Inspiring Scotland, 2018), summarised in Table 1

Table 1 Summary of benefits arising from outdoor play-based learning

Category of benefit	Benefit
Physical health	Healthier weight
	Improved bone density through improved strength and greater exposure to sunlight leading to increased Vitamin D
	Better fundamental movement skills
	Improved respiratory health
	Better immune system by experiencing a greater range of microbes
	Improved eyesight
Mental health and wellbeing	Resilience is developed through taking and managing risks outdoors in a safe environment
	Self-esteem and confidence are increased through free play outdoors, making own decisions, solving problems and managing boundaries
	Emotional health regulation and interpersonal skills are improved through negotiation and conflict resolution
	Wellbeing is improved by being outdoors in nature which has a calming effect
Developmental -	Creativity

enhanced skills	Interpersonal skills
	Empathy
	Negotiation
Environmental awareness	Improved learning for sustainability
	Developing a connection to nature
	Understanding of environment and place

In addition to the individual benefits listed in Table 1, the Scottish Government recognises that the expansion of outdoor play-based learning can be a more cost-effective method of developing high quality, flexible ELC in preparation for the transition to 1140 hours (Inspiring Scotland 2018) rather than expanding or building new premises.

Many of these benefits are also recognised by Inspiring Scotland (2019) in their Position Statement on Scotland's Outdoor Play and Learning. Their statement is based upon robust evidence arising from global research and is a commitment to "promote access to diverse greenspaces and natural landscapes ... and to empower children to enjoy these spaces for the purposes of playing and learning'" (Inspiring Scotland 2019, p. 1).

The statement boasts 87 signatories, ranging from the Scottish government to prominent individuals from academia and including national health, educational and environmental bodies and 12 regional councils who are all committed to advancing the statement's objectives.

Early Learning and Childcare provision occurs in the early stages of a child's progression through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE), and this educational framework also recognises the importance of outdoor play-based learning and its ability to nurture resilient, responsible and critical thinkers who value and can effectively contribute to our landscape and culture (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2010).

In preparation for the transition to 1140 hours, the Highland Council Delivery Plan (2017a) recognised the potential of outdoor nurseries, although they prioritised the use of existing council infrastructure and developing existing partnerships before identifying new solutions which include the outdoor environment. To support providers considering outdoor provision they intend to develop guidance including a set of indicators on outdoor learning and outdoor settings (ibid). Currently the Highland council area accommodates five outdoor nurseries; Stramash Nurseries at Tornagrain and Fort William, Summerlings at the Shieling Project, CALA Wild Willows and Kinder croft CIC. A list of all outdoor nurseries in Scotland is provided at Appendix 10.

Furthermore, in a recent update on ELC expansion, Highland Council confirm they are working with Inspiring Scotland to develop outdoor provision, with at least one more fully outdoor setting. Additionally, they are now focusing on training practitioners in outdoor tuition, with

a cohort of 16 practitioners on a 12-month programme, with a view to them cascading their learning throughout the Highland workforce (Highland Council, 2019a).

These recent developments in Highland appear to show an increased awareness of the importance of outdoor learning, its benefits in terms of learning, and the role this can play in delivering the expansion agenda.

In conclusion, it became apparent from the weight of stakeholder opinion from the 2016 Scottish Government Consultation and the wider literature review undertaken, that the expansion of outdoor provision can form a key role in overcoming the lack of space for ELC provision prior to the transition. We have also discussed the many benefits to children from a physical and developmental perspective. (Inspiring Scotland 2018). All of this literature supports the argument that alternative places will be required to meet the expansion agenda, whilst potentially also meeting the added requirements of flexibility and accessibility.

3.6 Rural ELC

In reflecting on the local context as outlined in Section 1, key documents that guided our learning and understanding of the situation included The Highland Council Delivery Plan (2017a) and The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013).

The Commission on the Delivery of Rural Education (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013) identify key barriers and challenges in rural settings for both parents and for effective childcare, whilst emphasising that without effective childcare locally, options for parents in terms of work are limited. Presenting a clear view that increased travel can have "a negative impact, reducing young people's time for other activities and their opportunities for physical activity" (ibid, p. 34) it strongly argues for collaboration between different partners within communities to draw on local skills and resources available to identify ways in which a difference to children's lives can be made. The arguments against increased travel time have influenced our research in relation to the Transport strand (Section 8) and are consistent with the views voiced by one of our key informants, Henry Mathias at the Care Inspectorate.

The challenges for working parents are highlighted in much of the international literature reviewed, reinforcing the importance of high-quality childcare that is conveniently located, flexible and affordable. Similarly, other studies have shown that the main barriers to work-family balance for rural mothers was the lack of access of affordable childcare and non-standard or inflexible working hours *(*Ontai *et. al.*, 2018).

The above literature reinforces the issues raised in Sections 1 and 2 with regards to the additional challenges that may be faced by families in rural communities, particularly in relation to transport challenges and the availability of work out with their immediate areas, whilst also pointing to the fact that if ELC is provided that is flexible, accessible and affordable it would help to sustain rural communities. This view was reinforced by respondents to the

2016 Scottish Government consultation on establishing delivery model trials to support expanding the early learning and childcare provision. In the responses, the most common issue identified by respondents was rurality and the challenges of this in terms of ELC in relation to "parental choice of setting; greater travel distances, cost of transport; time and reduced access to specialist services" (Scottish Government 2016, p. 10).

The literature review also points to partnership working as one of the solutions to support local communities, though what this would look like would very much depend on the local economy and community. The idea of partnership working ties closely into two of the main research strands, intergenerational partnerships (Section 7) and use of shared spaces, which is covered in the alternative places and timings strand (Section 6).

3.7 Pedagogy

Exploring the potential of rural flexible childcare leads on to questions regarding pedagogy – how would the childcare be structured, led, delivered to really make the most of the local community and landscape? Childcare is not simply letting children play – the places where the play happens matters, and the ways in which that play is structured matter.

The physical places where childcare happens are often structured, intentionally or not, to lead to certain types of experience. The term 'affordances' (Gibson, 1979) is often used to explain how certain environments offer more extensive opportunities for interaction than others. So, for example, many outdoor environments offer a wider range of such interactions than a classroom. For example, on a most basic level filling a room full of chairs encourages people to sit down and move around less. Similarly, choosing a place where there is running water leads to certain types of play (Sobel, 2004), choosing to go to a hard-surfaced place leads to other types of play (Titman, 1994). Children also read from the play spaces they are given the possible types of relationships they can have with the staff and the world around (ibid).

Acknowledging the power of physical space to structure and shape early years learning is implicit in choosing new and interesting venues for childcare or creating mobile services which can go to the beach, the woodland or the town centre. But how do we make the role of the place explicit? Furthermore, do we just arrive and let the children out to play, or are there particular themes, activities, questions that can guide and shape the learning to bring to light that particular place? How do we create continuity and develop learning over time, so that is it not simply a series of visits? These are the kind of issues that need to be considered as we develop provision, and continually reviewed as practice develops within the ELC community.

Equally the people that children meet during their early years' experiences shape what those children think learning can be, and how they think of themselves and their future. The questions or interactions with others – older people (through intergenerational work in care homes, day care centres etc.), staff, community members – also shape the perceptions of the child about how they can be in that place. Are the staff team diverse? Are they sitting apart

chatting, how are they engaging with the young people? While child-led learning is an important part of any early year's approach, in most future contexts, children will have to work together. In this way there might be times when the learning community is more important than the individual, and opportunities to learn about how to work in larger groups on joint tasks can be created for this purpose.

Looking at this from a place-based learning approach, Sobel (2004) observes the need for a few basic questions to be asked in terms of the kind of place in the community or nearby that would create the best opportunities for learning about a given subject or topic areas, and suggests that new opportunities for teaching and learning arise if the whole community is considered to be 'our physical classroom'.

When we look at the context of communities, it is important to remember that the Highland landscape is not fixed – it is continually changing both through land management practices and longer-term human impacts such as climate change. There is great potential in the early years for children to start to get a feel for their landscape – where things are, what things are, how they grow, when they grow and what plants of animals interact with each other. Developing a basic but profound understanding of the landscape would be a strong basis for them to mature into adults who have a real grasp of the history and potential of the landscape. There are, therefore, potentially significant benefits to be achieved if we are able to look at flexible quality childcare that gives children access to a wider learning journey that includes engagement with the environment.

The development of this discussion on pedagogy leads back to the issue of training and qualifications. How do we train our new and existing early years staff to develop clear pedagogy at their settings and an understanding of the deeper issues and role of childcare in making sustainable places? In our review of workforce issues (Section 5) we will look at some of the major challenges currently facing the workforce in terms of the expansion agenda and at the implications that this may have in terms of training practitioners in future.

3.8 Conclusion

In this section we have reviewed some of the key literature that has influenced the direction of our research and given context to our four key research strands, as well as rural ELC and pedagogy which form a crucial element of our literature review. As identified, it was not always easy to locate academic literature, particularly for the mobile nurseries transport strand. This may be an indication that mobile nurseries have not been implemented as a model in this country, despite the successful implementation of this method in other countries, particularly its prevalence in rural communities. The literature sourced identified the benefits of this type of model in relation to the enhanced cognitive development of children who use them. It also reinforced a focus in our research on the potential role that transport as a whole may have in the provision of ELC and in the sustainability of rural communities and this is explored further in Section 8.

In reviewing literature concerning intergenerational working and partnerships, again, there was limited academic literature available in this country and as outlined in Section 7 it is understood by organisations such as Generations Working Together that some of the good practice work going on in Scotland is not routinely being promoted/written up. Apart from reviewing literature from key bodies in the UK, we again looked to international research where there are many examples of long-established intergenerational projects in care homes, in purpose-built villages, co-located nurseries etc. The literature that was successfully sourced from the UK reporting work that has been carried out, or is ongoing, shows quite clearly the evidence concerning the benefits to both generations. Equally interesting for our research, however, were the links made by a number of authors to the wider benefits to the community as a whole and the importance of such work to sustaining communities.

Much has been written in relation to the benefits of outdoor learning in ELC in terms of child development; and in the context of the ELC expansion agenda its importance has been highlighted in terms of the added flexibility and accessibility that will be required, as well as additional capacity that an increase in outdoor learning can offer to all settings. Literature reviews have also highlighted key issues around the quality of provision in terms of how ELC is delivered, the impact that the workforce has on raising attainment and the challenges and opportunities ahead for ELC providers in meeting the expectations.

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In reviewing the ELC expansion agenda, its aims, the potentials that could be achieved through this and the challenges ahead, our attention was focused in particular on rural communities. For these the literature reinforces the argument that high-quality childcare which is conveniently located, flexible and affordable is crucial. At the same time however it is acknowledged as being more challenging to deliver a really progressive rural pedagogy, due to workforce pressures and challenges of delivering financially sustainable services in small communities. In Section 2, we reviewed current challenges that parents face in relation to transport and ELC infrastructure, availability and flexibility of childcare and the impact that the expansion may have on the rural workforce in particular. The literature also guided us to ask crucial questions around whether there is full access for remote rural workers to the training and qualifications that they need. This is explored further in Section 5.

In reviewing different types of pedagogy, we also reflected on the importance of the experiences that children receive in their early years. We looked at how these will help shape their thoughts and view of things in the future, including the experience of interactions they have as a child with others and the environments in which their learning takes place. This links

into the strands that we have focused on in this project, including intergenerational partnerships and the delivery of ELC sessions in alternative places and times, the role of transport in quality ELC, and the workforce implications running through all of these strands.

3.9 Cross cutting themes

The first three sections of this report are aimed at setting the context of our research through looking at the background policy context, both national and local, the ELC context, which included key surveys to ELC providers and rural parents and through this section, the literature context. All of these reviews have confirmed the value and meaning of the four main strands that we set out to research at the start of the project. However, through this review process, six key themes have also emerged that cut across the four strands and these inform the discussion in our main sections as we analyse all the data gathered.

We have outlined already the four main strands to our research project:

- strong and sustainable workforce
- alternative places and timings
- intergenerational partnerships
- transport

The six key themes that we have identified as cutting across each of our four strands are:

- Expansion
- Raising attainment
- Outdoor learning
- Rural context/sustainable communities
- Quality pedagogy
- Flexibility and Accessibility

 Through the research and the write up in this report, we link back to these key themes.

SECTION 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

In the previous three sections, we identified six main themes that came out of our background research and context setting. Taking these themes together with the four key strands of our research, strong and sustainable workforce, intergenerational partnerships, alternative places and timings and transport, we needed a robust methodology that would meet our research requirements. This section outlines the methodological approach taken.

4.2 Mixed Methodology

A qualitative sociological research method was adopted for this research project using mixed methodology (Bryman, 2004). This included desk-based literature reviews, surveys and questionnaires, interviews and visits to key informants, and taster session case studies as illustrated in Figure 1 below. Data and evidence generated from a mixed methods approach, created a rich picture of the potential for more effective rural childcare.

Figure 1. Diagram of the data flow involved in our research approach

(Key: Blue – Interview/visits. Green – Survey. Red – Taster sessions)
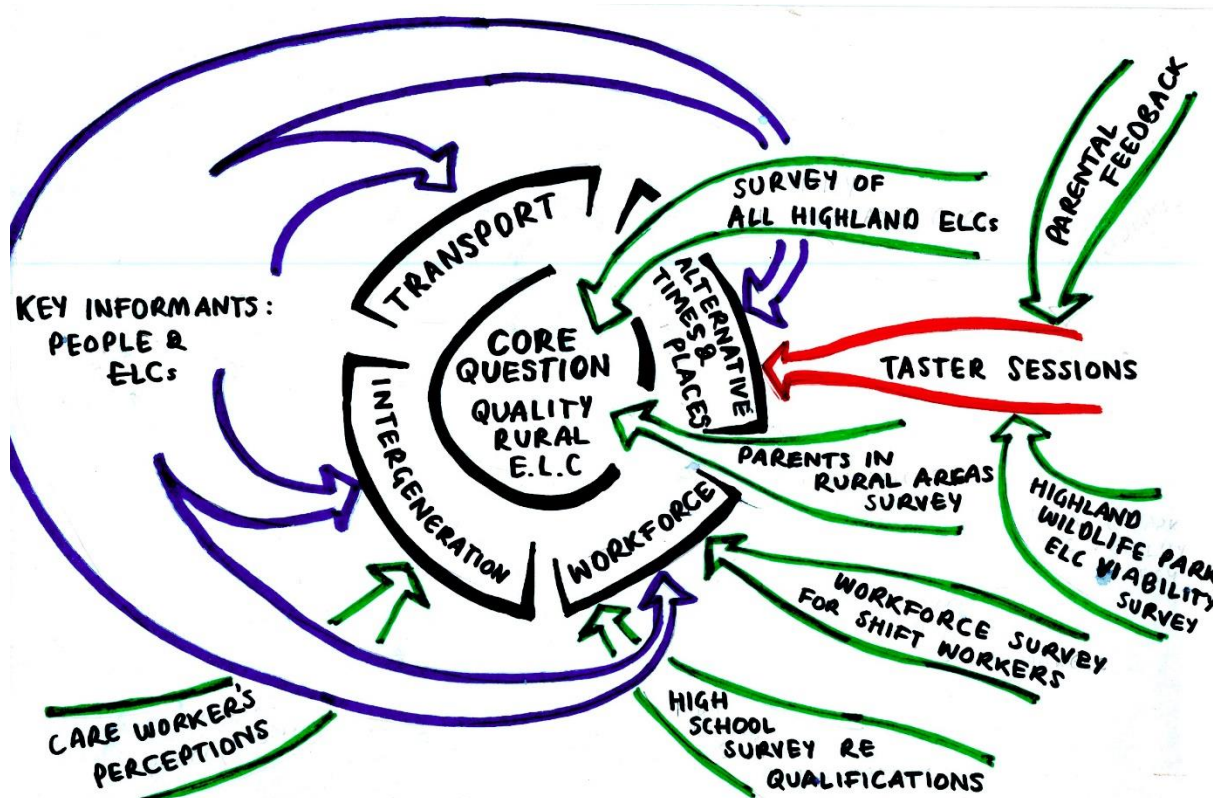
Surveys

Building on the initial literature review, prior to commencing the research project, all ELC providers in Highland Region were surveyed. The aim of the survey was to gather perspectives on the proposed ELC expansion and gather views on the four main strands informing the research project. For this survey there was no need to choose whom to survey as we put out the request to every provider. In total 322 providers were e-mailed the survey, with 38 responses received.

A variety of subsequent surveys were used to gather information, which we had identified as being required, from a defined set of respondents, after events or in situations where direct conversations were not possible. This is a 'stratified' survey approach (Bryman, 2004, p. 92). We used this approach as we had identified who it would be useful to ask follow-up questions,

based on their knowledge and their relevance to the area in question, rather than asking every potential respondent in the Highlands. See Appendix 11 for further details on the surveys we conducted.

Key Informants

The researchers also met with key people and visited a variety of different ELC settings. We felt that well-chosen interviews and visits, which involved informed discussions and professional dialogues, would allow us to gather more detailed responses to our research questions on the four strands with a smaller number of individuals or settings. This enabled us to gather greater detail than our survey approaches. These visits also enabled us to meet with and see who we viewed as leaders/innovators in the development of ELC in Scotland who might have useful insights into our research. These 'Key Informants' were within Highland and also further afield in Scotland and in the case of Apple, Honey and Nightingale, a co-located care home and nursery, in London. A total of 65 meetings took place. (Appendix 12). We used these meetings at different stages of the research, initially to enhance our understanding of the research areas and then as the research progressed, to back up or challenge our findings or to lead us to explore certain aspects further.

Our approach to finding key informants can be called 'snowballing' (Bryman, 2004, p. 100), as we started with a small number of chosen informants and then took recommendations of whom to speak to or visit, until we had created a larger list of potential informants. We judged that we had found a large enough group when successive meetings only served to reinforce the list of people we wanted to speak to – an idea called 'saturation,' (Bryman, 2004; Merriam, 2002). (See Appendix 12 for further information on Key Informants).

Taster sessions

A number of what we have called 'taster sessions' took place which enabled further exploration of the research strands. The 'taster sessions' enabled researchers to gather data on the practical application related to the strands. (See Appendix 13 for information on these sessions). This is in contrast with visits to ELC settings to simply observe what they normally do, which we have labelled as 'Key Informants.' The approach used here can be understood as a 'case-study' methodology (see for example the 2004 special edition on case studies in Environmental Education Research 10(1)).

The rationale for identifying alternative locations to test out through taster sessions was influenced by the clear direction and focus from both the Scottish Government and Care Inspectorate in relation to the need to consider outdoor space for learning and the need for flexibility in the delivery of services. The results from our initial ELC providers survey also reiterated the importance of this through identifying a level of concern from providers over physical space constraints within their existing buildings in general for the expansion. This included, lack of space, lack of availability of buildings and the buildings being unsuitable for longer hours. There were also very practical considerations which shaped how and what we

could consider for taster sessions – for example partners who were interested and willing to collaborate, usually because they either had had early years visits before, or because they wanted to start an ELC and that the appropriate insurance cover was in place. Additionally, the wider CALA organisation provided the staff to support these taster sessions as well as the drive to explore the viability of them for potential expansion of its own ELC provision.

We conducted taster sessions at the Highland Wildlife park on two separate weekend days. Our rationale here was to test parental and child interest in what would be on offer in the outdoor learning environment and to test the interest for ELC sessions at alternative times, including weekends. We also conducted taster sessions at Cantraybridge College near Croy. As well as testing out an alternative location, we were also interested in testing this model from an intergenerational perspective with the young adults with mild to moderate learning disabilities at the College to see if there would be mutual benefit to further sessions being held there. Table 2 below summarises the actions that followed from these taster sessions in terms of sourcing further data.

Table 2 Summary of taster sessions and subsequent actions

Venue	No. of sessions	Initial Follow up action	Further action	Further action by provider
Highland Wildlife Park	2	Surveys distributed at event	Further survey sent out within local area	Currently looking at formalising provision once registration is in place
Cantraybridge College	2	Survey questions asked on day and distributed post events	Analysis of feedback. Liaison between College and nurseries	Possibility of regular sessions being arranged in the future

During the taster sessions our researchers observed interactions, took notes, photos and in some cases filmed parts of the session to test out what worked in terms of location, timings, mix of people and the suitability and accessibility of the locations. Prior to these sessions, the appropriate paperwork was put in place to meet ethics and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requirements. This included consent forms, information sheets and a privacy notice, which was checked to ensure that it complied with the necessary ethics approval, copies of all forms can be found in Appendices 14, 15 & 16. For a further description of our taster sessions see Appendix 13. These sessions were then followed up with further surveys to obtain further feedback/information from participants.

Developing the data and insights gathered through 'wide but shallow' surveys, and 'in depth but only observation' key informants, the research team wanted to create some specific ELC experiences to be able to explore our research questions. This would allow us to build on the general picture shown by the surveys and the examples of inspiring experience from key

informants. Specifically, using a case study approach, the taster sessions would allow us to create ELC experiences of which we could ask specific questions about *new* practices. Our findings from the taster sessions are discussed further in the relevant main sections of this report.

4.3 Analysis

Data was analysed using our 'mixed' methodology approach to address the research questions which are complex and broad reaching. Mixed methods qualitative research involves the collection of a significant amount of information in the form of experiences, statements, observations and non-numerical information. The research data was collected from notes made in observations and taster sessions, and also from the survey questions that were asked as part of this research. This section describes in more detail the methods used to analyse, code and categorise the data that was collected to enable conclusions to be reached.

Intergenerational taster session at Cantraybridge College

As people researching with other people, we are inevitably involved in this research and the conclusions drawn. This social research contrasts with the often-unexamined assumptions we have about research which come from physical sciences, (Ladkin, 2005). These assumptions might involve ideas of 'objective' conclusions, or findings that are easily replicated in other situations or places. Kyburz-Graber argues that case-studies are inevitably context specific and cannot be 'controlled' against different variables, and yet they can be conducted rigorously and yield quality information (Kyburz-Graber, 2004).

The research team and supporting board bring a considerable amount of personal experience in a variety of relevant professions from ELC to educational research. This experience allows the team to determine what is relevant and significant in the research, but also gives a number of voices to reduce the individual bias one researcher may bring. The two academic partners in this research also help create rigour in the research. Alongside this, the gathering of a wide variety of types of research data helps to reinforce the importance of conclusions beyond personal experiences or opinions. Parts of this report have also been sent back to key informants to see if we have interpreted their ideas in a manner which fits with their intentions. Preliminary findings were also shared to gain feedback at a variety of events, including the October 2019 CALA Childcare Practitioner Conference, a Skills Development Scotland event aimed at encouraging career choices in ELC at Eden Court Theatre on 26th February 2020, and at an event we co-ordinated at the University of Highlands and Islands

(UHI) on 11th March 2020 where we discussed our findings and conclusions for feedback on these prior to a final review of our recommendations.

Two key areas where we as researchers are particularly involved is in sorting the research data – choosing what is important, and in drawing conclusions. The first of these – analysis – involved a considerable amount of reading and re-reading the information we gathered. The second – drawing conclusions – also involved using later meetings, surveys or visits to test tentative conclusions to see if they hold.

Sorting the data

In sorting the research data, our role was to filter out key information from all the data gathered to make sense of it, looking for the recurring themes in terms of consistencies and exceptions to this, in order to be able to group responses into specific categories or themes. Our approach in terms of the survey results when looking at our qualitative data was, therefore, to use a thematic coding analysis (TCA) approach (Clarke and Braun 2013). Qualitative data analysis (QDA) is the 'process of separating any material into constituent qualitative elements', with the challenge being demarcating the data into meaningful units to analyse (Chenail, 2012a, p.1). We then coded the results accordingly using 'Qualitative coding', a form of QDA, which is the process of abstracting and defining recurring categories, concepts or theories from the data (Chenail, 2012b, p.1), with the objective of creating 'credible and creative results' (Chenail, 2012c, p.1). Thematic coding analysis, a qualitative coding method designed to identify recurring themes present in the survey results (Clarke and Braun, 2013) was used to identify and group recurring themes coming up in our results from the surveys and our observations. It is important to use a coding method so that we could make sense of the data and as described by Basit "to allow the researcher to communicate and connect with the data to facilitate comprehension of the emerging phenomena and to generate theory grounded in the data" (Basit, 2003, p. 152). We then examined the themes that were emerging against our knowledge and observations already drawn from our prior literature search and from our initial meetings with key informants to contextualise our findings, ensure that we were retaining objectivity and to start forming initial conclusions in particular areas.

It was then important that we tested out these initial conclusions further by taking these initial themes and conclusions back to relevant people to confirm or disconfirm, and in some circumstances to ask additional questions. In some cases, this involved a further survey where we needed to look deeper into particular themes. In other cases, it meant referring to what we had learned in our literature review to date or sourcing new literature to test out our theories if we needed to dig deeper into particular themes, and in going back to our key informants or extending our range of key informants, including carrying out further observation sessions in already established ELCs. The final step of our analysis prior to testing our conclusions with others was to assess whether our interpretation of the results supported

our initial research questions. Where gaps remained, this was an indication that we needed to look further into specific areas of our research.

The final step of our process when we had drawn out the themes and conclusions from our data, was to take these back to relevant people to ask for their feedback to corroborate our findings. We did this with specific individuals and at three separate events held between October 2019 and March 2020. These were also another form of data gathering. The final step in the process was to consider the feedback we were given, taking this into account or discounting it, based on the significant amount of information we had sourced and analysed, and make final decisions in terms of our recommendations.

4.4 Ethical Considerations

In conducting our research, it was very important that we were mindful and respectful of the appropriate standards of behaviour and accountability expected of us as researchers, and required in terms of the protection and safeguarding of all research participants. We were therefore guided by the Scottish Educational Research Association's (SERA) ethical guidelines for educational research (2005). Adherence to these guidelines and ethical considerations in general "should not be seen as constraining or limiting research but rather as enhancing the quality of educational research in the widest sense" (ibid. p3). We recognised the rights of all participants in terms of their confidentiality and anonymity and in how their views were subsequently represented.   As such, openness and transparency in terms of what the project was about, why we were doing it and what we proposed to do with the different data collected were absolutely essential. This information had to be clearly and effectively documented in a format accessible to research participants. This was achieved through the use of consent forms, enabling participants to opt in or out of different aspects of the particular session. All participants were given an information sheet about the project and what would happen at the particular event they were attending, along with a detailed privacy agreement, which also ensured that the research complied with GDPR in terms of the use, storage and retention of any data collected.

Den building at the Highland Wildlife Park Taster Session

Furthermore, as we were requesting that parents made choices on behalf of their children in terms of their child being photographed, filmed, quoted etc., it was imperative that we informed parents exactly what we were proposing to do with any material we collected. This was in terms of photos, films and notes of any observations made and that we were explicit about where this information might be used, and would not be used, making the boundaries

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of use completely clear. For example, we restricted use of all data to the research project only, excluding any photos on social media or for any other promotional purpose out with the objectives of the research project. The only exception to this was at the Highland Wildlife Park, where it was made clear in the consent form that some of the information collected to support the use of the venue might also be used by the Wildlife Park for a bid they were making to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

As those who were being directly observed during taster sessions and practice projects already in existence (Section 7 - Intergenerational), were predominantly children under five years of age, we sought approval from their parents or guardians. This also conforms to SERA guidelines which allow this proxy approval to be used in relation to participants whose age, intellectual capacity or other vulnerable circumstances may "limit the extent to which they can be expected to understand or agree voluntarily" (ibid p6)

It was also important that parents were advised that they could opt out at any point and change their minds about their or their child's voices being represented in the research project. As such our approach was to ensure that parents could make an informed decision at any point in relation to granting or withholding their consent. We were aware that it is inappropriate to assume consent is given purely because any one participant has not taken up the "opportunity provided to opt-out" of taking part in any particular part of an observation or the research process in general (ibid p5).

We also ensured that the rights of parents (and responsible others) were considered and respected in both the compilation of the paperwork which they viewed and signed prior to engaging in the taster sessions, and in the way these sessions were conducted. If the sessions had differed from what had been outlined on the paperwork provided, then this would have led to trust being compromised in relation to the research being undertaken. Also, if care and consideration had not been taken by the research team during compilation of the paperwork then participants may have been subject to the "bureaucratic burden" (ibid p6) of completing unnecessary survey questions, intruding into their time and energy, consequently negatively impacting on their future engagement and interest in the research project itself. The paperwork used in the taster sessions to ensure that we met all ethical considerations are attached at Appendices 14 - 16.

4.5 Mess, Validity and Transferability

Inevitably when conducting a large research project such as this, into big complex questions that involve interconnected issues including pedagogy, infrastructure, funding, legislation, community, and more, the research can get messy. According to Cook (2009), mess should be seen as a healthy part of real-world research. Acknowledging and working with it can lead to greater rigour in the research findings (ibid p. 288). Mess occurs when a lot of information comes together and potentially dismantles pre-conceived ideas or ways of working. When things are complicated or uncertain, Cook argues that this is an important stage in

constructing *new* ideas. Equally, unless that messy uncomfortable stage is gone through, then most likely the research has stayed in the comfort of established ideas and has not really given the chance for the data to speak for itself.

We have certainly gone through this process. Coming out of this, to present our findings, we feel that our conclusions have a degree of validity and could be useful for practitioners in Scotland and beyond. Validity in social research involves you the reader being able to see how we did our research, reading descriptions and quotes from the people we worked with, and see how we drew our conclusions (Griffiths and Williamson, 2001). This section aims to do that.

Pond dipping at Highland Wildlife Park

The second dimension of validity involves the transferability of conclusions to other places. In other words, you might ask 'what does this research mean to me?' Some of our conclusions are necessarily quite broad and may not fit your situation, and others may need adaptation to fit with how you work. As with our research with people (not on people), the findings will only be useful if you work with them and mould them to your context – they are not a recipe to be simply followed!   This research has largely taken place in the Highlands where we have a variety of different communities and contexts. Some of our findings might be relevant to other places, but they may have to be adapted to the specifics of that place, as we have adapted some of our readings from other countries.

There are elements of the research which we feel that we have not had the time or opportunity to pursue, but that is the nature of social research. Particularly we feel that we haven't gathered enough of the children's' voices in this research. Despite our intentions to, developing high quality and beneficial research relationships with young learners takes a large amount of time and a much narrower focus on specific children or settings. However, through our variety of information collected, including the views of experienced practitioners who know their children better than we could, we hope to give a flavour of what the children's' experiences of high quality rural ELC can be.

4.6 Corroborating Findings

In an effort to corroborate our findings we conducted two further surveys at events following the writing of our report.

Make a Difference careers event at Eden Court Theatre, 26/2/20

The first feedback survey was conducted at an event held at Eden Court Theatre in Inverness to promote careers in the Early Learning and Childcare sector. Two boards were prepared for our survey, the first of which promoted our research and presented our findings, with the second board being reserved for the survey responses.

Attendees at the event were introduced to 4 key themes (working at intergenerational sessions, working in outdoor learning, studying towards a joint qualification and working at alternative times) which were identified in the research findings. Those who wished to participate were then categorised into four sections (adult females, adult males, school-aged females and school-aged males) and were asked to indicate which of these themes would appeal to them if they were to pursue a career in Early Learning and Childcare.

A summary of the survey and results are available in Appendix 17.

Research presentation evening at UHI Inverness College, 11/3/20

We presented the preliminary findings and recommendations of this report to an audience of key report informants and other ELC stakeholders in the Highland region at the lecture theatre at Inverness College, University of the Highlands and Islands on 11th March 2020.

Following the presentation, the attendees were invited to make comments on the recommendations which had been presented. This was achieved by presenting the recommendations again on boards and providing pens and sticky notes, upon which comments could be written and attached to the board. The intention was for the comments to corroborate the report findings and to identify any areas for further research. No comments were made with regards to the findings or recommendations, which we took to mean that the audience were in agreement with the conclusions and recommendations reached.

SECTION 5. STRONG AND SUSTAINABLE WORKFORCE

5.1 Introduction

As outlined in Section 1, from August 2020, The Scottish Government will make funding available for 1140 hours per year early learning and childcare (ELC) for every child aged 3 and 4 and for certain qualifying 2-year old children. Critical questions for providers will be around the availability and cost of the extra qualified and quality workers they will need to support this expansion. Estimates of the number of additional staff that will be required range from 8,000 (McCall 2019) to 11,000 (Skills Development Scotland 2019).

In terms of the future workforce these estimates pose many questions such as:

- What informs and supports the provision of high-quality childcare in Scotland?

- Who and where are these existing and potential workers and how can those considering a career in Early Learning and Childcare be encouraged to join the workforce?
- What are the challenges for ELC and training providers in recruiting new staff and ensuring existing staff are suitably qualified, developed and supported throughout their career?
- How do these providers manage the additional challenges of rurality?

In an attempt to answer some of these questions, this section of the report will examine the pedagogy and policies supporting and informing high quality ELC provision, and the qualifications and routes to qualification that are currently available to ELC workers in Scotland. The questions posed in this introduction will be addressed; as without enough qualified and quality workers it is difficult to see how the Government's vision of 1140 funded hours can come to fruition, without compromising the quality and accessibility of childcare. Once the rurality factor is added to this equation the desired flexibility that helped prompt the expansion agenda may potentially be lost.

5.2 Policies, guidance and pedagogy informing and supporting high quality ELC in Scotland

There are a number of policy and guidance documents supporting and informing ELC providers in providing high quality early learning and childcare services to Scotland's young children. Key amongst these are Building the Ambition (Scottish Government 2014) and Curriculum for Excellence (Scottish Government 2004). Building the Ambition focuses on the components of high quality ELC, including pedagogy: what young children need from the environments, experiences and interactions across three broad stages of child development, in addition to the drivers for learning. The Curriculum for Excellence (3-18) principles and practice, guide delivery of a broad general education, enabling children and young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors and creates the foundation for life-long learning.

Embedded within these documents and others is a pedagogical approach. Pedagogy here being understood as the environments, experiences and interactions which support the process of how children learn. Pedagogy relates to child development in that learning experiences need to not only be age and stage appropriate but tailored to individual children's needs and interests to be successful. This indicates the importance of pedagogy and child development as a core and essential component in childcare qualifications. Including practical applications and the continuous learning and development of ELC practitioners.

In simple terms,

> *The things that work with our youngest children haven't changed. They're the same things that have always worked and that's because they are carefully and closely linked to the age and stage of development of the children, their needs and their interests.*

The magic happens when you link this to children's passions and relevant interests, to what excites them now, to creativity, to joy, to unusual and special things, to the new or strange, different or challenging, to sensory and experiential learning that sparks things in our youngest children that sets off a chain of events that supports them and enables them to learn something new or develop understanding of something they already know or are familiar with (Holmes 2019, p. 1).

This holistic education founded on classic child development theories demonstrates the general context of pedagogy, when the learning opportunities presented to children are contextual, purposeful and take account of the different developmental stages of the children. A pedagogical approach is therefore vital to the provision of high- quality early learning and childcare services throughout the country, particularly in rural areas where children's interests and holistic prior learning of the natural, ever-changing environment and local community can be built on, developing their natural curiosity, enquiry and creativity (Section 6).

Staff and children at Cantraybridge College taster session

The delivery of consistently high-quality early learning and childcare therefore would seem to require staff who are appropriately qualified and who are insightful, reflexive and sensitive practitioners. These worker characteristics need to be consistent throughout all strata of the workforce and be combined with enthusiasm and commitment to meeting the best interests of children. This requires practitioners in outdoor ELC services, for example to be enthusiastic and committed to the learning and development of the children and families who access their service in exactly the same way and to the same degree as those delivering a service to children in more traditional settings, irrespective of the rural or urban setting of their workplace.

In a number of policy and guidance documents, for example the expansion-related Children's Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment (Scottish Government 2019), The Scottish Government has restated the rationale behind the expansion and legislation agenda. This includes the reduction in the poverty related attainment gap which they believe, in turn, will ultimately lead to positive longer-term outcomes for Scotland in general. Quality ELC is also considered to provide the most benefit to children from the poorest families, although its benefits are considered to apply across all social groups.

In the longer term, the increased investment in children's outcomes during the early years is anticipated to reduce interventionist public spending later in life, and have a positive impact on long term health, wellbeing and productivity (ibid, p. 7).

Most importantly ELC workers must believe in the importance and value of their work and feel adequately trained, supported and qualified to deliver experiences based on effective pedagogy, for all children, including those who are considered to be likely to experience disadvantage through poverty or parental attitudes or behaviour. This resonates with the Scottish Government's expressed aim of reducing inequality and the attainment gap across Scotland, to the future advantage of the Scottish people and their communities, including those in rural and remote locations.

> *We know that the socio-economic gap in cognitive development opens up well before children start primary school. Narrowing this gap in the years before school must be part of the strategy to promote equity. Our aim is therefore to see ELC fully integrated with wider policy on improving attainment and closing the gap (Scottish Government, 2017a, p. 25).*

In relation to this research project, equity in access to this quality and innovative ELC provision must also apply to those children and families who live and work in rural and remote rural areas of the country. If not, those children who fall within this poverty related attainment gap could be considered doubly disadvantaged.

5.3 Who are our ELC workers?

The context of this report is rural Highland Scotland. As stated in the introduction, rurality can have a big effect on retention and recruitment of 'suitable, high quality staff'. Measures that are in place to help ensure that all staff are of the required quality will now be explored.

For children to get a good start they need to be looked after and educated by people with the right blend of skills and personal qualities. The importance of having the right staff in place to work with our young children is supported by extensive research into brain and general child development in early years and the importance of this stage of life in setting the scene for future achievement, health and well-being, (Perry 2008, Hughes 2016). The benchmark for those 'personal qualities' can be found in the current Health and Social Care Standards 'My support, my life,' (Scottish Government 2017b) and include the ability and willingness to treat service users, children and parents in ELC, inclusively and responsively, with dignity, respect and compassion.

All workers in ELC are further bound by the Codes of Practice for Social Services Workers and Employers (Scottish Social Services Council 2016) which aims to ensure that Scotland's people are provided with services that employ a trusted, skilled and confident workforce.

Trustworthiness is checked by the limited method of membership of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme whereby a prospective worker's offence history is checked by Disclosure Scotland. Employers also use professional and personal references as an indication of trustworthiness. Whilst neither of these methods, either singly or together,

guarantees that a worker will be a 'trusted' employee they are the main benchmarks used nationally. They are supported by the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) Code of Conduct and each organisation or agency's own disciplinary, dismissal and child protection procedures.

Beyond these policy-based requirements, the skills a practitioner can bring to a post can be measured to a degree by professional references, and the nature and level of the prospective employee's qualifications. Beyond on the job experiences in ELC settings, training and qualifications are the clearest route to meet the potential and needs for excellent ELC services. The following section will examine the relevant qualifications and routes currently available to existing employees who wish to develop their career in ELC and those who are thinking about making ELC their career, with reference to the challenges of ensuring equitable access to all, regardless of their geographical location.

5.4 Routes into a career in Early Learning and Childcare

Provision of high-quality early learning and childcare as part of expansion would not only reduce inequalities in children's outcomes but would potentially contribute to reducing barriers in the existing labour market opportunities by enabling parents and carers who wish, to access training, education and employment, ideally within their own communities. This in turn could reduce the attainment gap and provide more children with the best start in life in reduced poverty (Skills Development Scotland 2019, foreword, p. 1).

There are a number of routes and qualifications that will enable individuals to achieve the aim of becoming an ELC worker or developing their existing career in the sector. This section will explore these qualifications and routes and refer to their flexibility for workers or prospective workers, including those who live and aspire to work in rural Scotland.

The current baseline qualification required for registration with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) as an ELC practitioner is Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA), Scottish Vocational Qualification (SVQ) 3 Social Services Children and Young People which sits at Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level 7, or Higher National Certificate (HNC) Childhood Practice which also sits at SCQF Level 7. Other qualifications are accepted, but must sit at the equivalent SCQF level or above. A variety of training and development organisations, local authority and partner providers, are accredited to deliver SVQs and some HNC awards along with colleges of further/higher education.

SVQ awards comprise 4 mandatory workplace assessed units. For ELC workers these units are: promoting effective communication, promoting health, safety and security in the work setting, developing practice through reflection and learning and promoting the safeguarding of children and young people. In addition, candidates have to select and complete 4 optional units from a range of subjects such as children's well-being and resilience, health promotion and physical development, use of information and communication technology to promote

children's early learning and promoting general development. These awards are often supported by in-house and e-learning programmes to further develop the breadth and depth of practitioners' knowledge and promote lifelong learning and professional development.

Although workers are permitted 5 years by SSSC to complete the relevant qualification and achieve full registration, they are obliged to seek provisional registration within 6 months of taking up employment in ELC (on condition that the required qualification is achieved within the 5 years).

The other aspect of SVQs and their suitability as the direct route of choice for prospective ELC workers, particularly those in rural areas, is their work-based nature. Those without an equivalent or higher-level relevant qualification would require to secure a job or at least a placement in an ELC setting to provide them with opportunities to gather the assessed evidence of practice that will make

Pond dipping at Highland Wildlife Park

up their completed award. Even then many ELC employers are not accredited to offer SVQs or do not have sufficient Workplace Assessor/Verifier capacity to do so, thus necessitating employing the services of a training agency or a further education college. Once the rurality factor is added to the equation, achieving SVQ3 can be problematic and time consuming, incurring costs and other resource expenditure for employers and potential workers.

Recent contact with an External Verifier (EV) from the Scottish Qualifications Authority (December 2019) indicated that there are no plans to review the current SVQ care awards, at least in the immediate future. The EV's view is that there is considerable flexibility within the units currently contained in the awards. He recommended judicious scrutiny of the National Occupational Standards (by using the NOS navigator found at http://workforcesolutions.sssc.uk.com/nos/ Scottish Social Services Council 2019a) as the logical starting point for anyone wishing to put together a suite of relevant units for a particular post. This resonates with what has been done in Orkney to create a suitable bespoke qualification for a generic rural support worker (see Section 5.6).

If an aspiring ELC worker is currently in S5 or S6 in a secondary school it is possible, in some parts of the country, to start the journey to full ELC worker qualification by undertaking a Foundation Apprenticeship (FA) in a chosen subject, like childcare for example, at the same time as working towards National 5s or Highers in other chosen subjects. FAs are generally accepted by colleges and universities as equivalent to an SQA Higher award. The benefits of this route for young adults are several: gaining valuable work experience, accessing practical

learning while still studying at school and learning and developing skills potential employers want in their workforce (Skills Development Scotland, 2019). Representatives of Skills Development Scotland (SDS), in discussion with the researcher (August 2019), reported that full take-up of FAs is not yet realised throughout the Highland area. There are however opportunities to access almost the full range of frameworks across Highland, and by building on the required collaborative and promotional activity with schools, training providers and employers, all young people would see the value of undertaking Foundation Apprenticeships as part of their intended pathways. SDS did however report some evidence of a number of successful FA students progressing into employment in ELC, the general caring professions or into further or higher education using the FAs as evidence of learning and experience.

A survey of Highland secondary schools was carried out for this research project (Appendix 18). Seventeen of the 29 schools responded within the allotted timescale. Although the majority of responses indicate confidence exists in schools in respect of their knowledge of Foundation Apprenticeships and promoting ELC apprenticeships as an option to senior pupils, those who felt they didn't know enough to promote these effectively believed they knew who to approach for support in meeting this knowledge or confidence deficiency. These support systems included colleagues and representatives from colleges and Skills Development Scotland. For Foundation Apprenticeships and ELC careers in general it may be therefore that interest might increase due to promotion of ELC as an exciting career. Furthermore, more young people might be encouraged if pathways to this career were talked about as a viable option, throughout secondary school years at least, if not earlier in a person's route through school-based education. This would clearly require earlier involvement by careers advisors or other knowledgeable professionals in providing basic education to teachers and pupils about career pathways into ELC work.

All the schools responding, with one exception, considered themselves to be in rural locations or supporting rural catchment areas. They stated clearly that this rurality negatively impacted on the range of opportunities available to pupils in accessing training and development opportunities, primarily attributable to poor transport links and geographical distance from colleges and further education and training facilities. This again indicates the negative impact rurality has on those wishing to access services, including ELC, and also on their access to training and further education providers. This in turn indicates the need for greater flexibility in delivery and means of access. Increased flexibility and access may require collaborative planning involving further education and training providers, school education authorities, transport providers and funders. Any improvements would doubtless come with financial implications that all involved would have to consider and Scottish Government may need to support with additional funding for rural transport initiatives.

Some ELC providers (for example the Care and Learning Alliance) have clear, well-articulated pathways to becoming an ELC worker and, as part of this, offer a Modern Apprenticeship that enables an employee to become qualified while continuing in paid employment. This may be a viable option for those who are no longer in school, but again in more rural areas, this is

dependent on the opportunities available within a manageable geographical area where excessive travel to the workplace is not required. In addition, should parent or carers returning to work wish to start a career in ELC, they also require high quality and flexible childcare for their own child or children. This might further mitigate against this as a viable option in these rural areas. This is where alternative models of childcare, (including funded hours ELC services), such as those that are 'mobile' in the sense they transport children from all parts of their area to the childcare or ELC base may come into their own (Section 8).

The University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) introduced another route into ELC practice in 2019. This is a Graduate Apprenticeship pilot programme developed by Skills Development Scotland, SSSC and employers, to encourage new entrants into the early learning and childcare sector. This route places particular focus on school leavers and adults looking to move into the sector from another work field. This pilot scheme will enable new sector entrants to achieve a relevant degree while in employment in ELC. These Graduate Apprentices would gain the status of ELC practitioner within three years. The degree is the BA in Early Learning and Childcare which sits at SCQF level 9. This qualification requires GA employers to provide apprentices with effective, quality, professional supervision and support and to employ them for sufficient hours per week to enable them to apply learning and development competency throughout the three years of employment and study (UHI 2019). This could prove to be a valuable addition in the range of routes of entry into ELC practice but depends on the willingness and availability of service providers to provide the necessary employment opportunities and infrastructure in both rural and urban areas. Opportunities for aspiring ELC practitioners are not restricted by cost or geographical location in this case as SDS fully fund this route into ELC practice. The only travel is during induction and with the course thereafter being delivered fully online the usual restrictions of cost and geographical location do not apply, making it an ideal route for those who live in rural areas.

This section indicates that accessing the right ELC qualification by the most appropriate personal choice of route, unless supported by employers or training providers, remains problematic and can seem even more so for potential or existing workers in Scotland's more rural areas. Availability of accessible, quality childcare provision, even before there is the nationwide general need to ensure enough provision to cope with expansion, is also an issue in many rural areas, not only for those seeking employment or training in the ELC sector but for those employers looking towards their ability to offer expanded provision from August 2020. In general, therefore, qualification and training are important factors for adequate growth in ELC provision throughout Scotland and particularly in rural areas of the country where communities are struggling to retain or achieve sustainability.

These conclusions are clearly summed up in an SSSC's recently published document exploring the career pathways available within the social services sector. This document states the importance of qualification routes:

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It is recognised we must create a better shared understanding of how qualifications influence entry to roles, how they influence people's perception of the sector as a career of choice and if they have an impact on the retention of social service workers (Scottish Social Services Council 2019a, p. 8).

The next section will look at what has been done in a similar employment sector in rural Scotland in relation to qualification to suit a particular job role and the potential to transfer the learning from this model into other rural settings and job roles, including that of the ELC worker.

5.5 Dual qualification in social care – joint training for those working with old or young people

ELC makes a significant contribution to Scotland's economy in its own right, and it's also vital for enabling parents and carers to participate in work and learning (Skills Development Scotland 2019, foreword, p1).

As stated in the previous section, there are a number of routes to achieving the qualifications that serve to create and support a qualified ELC workforce, and other workforces, throughout Scotland. The rurality factor in relation to workers and prospective workers accessing and achieving relevant qualifications adds even more complexity to the task of ensuring we have enough suitably qualified and knowledgeable workers in early learning and childcare. Workplaces and services in general need to be accessible to all families, regardless of where they are living, to support those who wish to use them. Wherever possible families who use and work in the ELC sector should have choice of a range of different kinds of provision such as those discussed elsewhere in this report, for example outdoor ELC groups (Section 6) and services that work in close connection to other generations within the community (Section 7). These all serve to make rural communities more sustainable and suitable for all socio-economic families to spend their working and leisure lives within.

That being the case it is vital, particularly in light of the expansion in funded hours, to provide the sector with an adequate pool of suitably qualified and skilled ELC workers throughout the country. This will bring specific challenges within the rural areas of Scotland.

This challenge has been acknowledged in other sectors of the general caring professions workforce. The Remote and Rural Healthcare Education Alliance (RRHEAL), on behalf of NHS Education for Scotland (NES), is leading work to support existing and potential new roles in remote, rural and island NHS Boards/Partnerships. RRHEAL developed a national programme for the development of a generic support worker role in remote and rural areas and identified that this role be expanded to become a generic support role across health and social care. For success and sustainability, this needs to happen with the assurance of long-term access to robust, affordable and contextually appropriate education and training programmes (NHS Education for Scotland 2014).

A mapping exercise took place to compare social care support worker competencies with the existing Island health and care worker role, particularly within the Orkney Health and Care Partnership. This was extended to include mapping to identify educational options and training congruent with preparation required for a new post of Rural Generic (Health and Social Care) Support Worker (RGSW). The educational mapping was carried out in partnership with Orkney College, University of the Highlands and Islands. Meetings with key stakeholders brought agreement on a number of factors around the Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) or NHS Career Framework in which this role would sit, and on whether non-formal education or additional learning and development could be added to a worker's qualification at a later date.

A stakeholder/professional involved in this programme in Orkney commented that the idea of this generic post took "a few years" to culminate into the eventual mapping which followed a series of consultations involving training providers and all relevant Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). This professional agreed the principle of dual or joint qualifications within the general health and social care sector as a potential, or at least partial, solution to recruitment and employment issues is sound and viable. This could be done by mapping the core competencies to the mandatory modules, for ELC and adult social care workers, for example, and then introducing optional units that best fit the particular setting in which the worker will be/is employed. This also makes movement from one work setting to another a matter of completing the selected modules relevant to the new setting. It was also stated that the potential barriers or challenges in this process in reality may be differences in terms and conditions, and "professional preciousness" by some workers about what they perceive to be their "own" discipline.

It appears imperative in relation to the sustainability of rural communities therefore that all services and agencies involved should work together, collaboratively and without the 'professional preciousness' highlighted above, in the spirit of truly integrated practice. There is potential for flexibility within the health and social care standards, and relevant

qualifications, for this work to take place for the benefit of these rural communities where there may be a restricted workforce pool available to employers, and fewer job opportunities for workers, across the health and social care sectors.

The SSSC registration process allows workers to be registered on more than one part of the social services workforce register at any one time, subject to the standard qualification criteria for each specific work role. It should therefore be possible to create pools of social care workers who are qualified and registered in more than one discipline, therefore providing employers with a larger workplace pool and employees a larger choice of employment. This model of dual or at least more generic qualification and registration could be one key to addressing the potential shortfall of ELC workers, particularly in rural communities when 1140 hours come into place in 2020.

A meeting with various representatives from SSSC, (July 2019) indicated that dual registration would not be problematic but the suggestion of a joint qualification (adult social care and ELC practitioner for example) may well be. On closer examination it was agreed that a top up using optional units from the appropriate Scottish Vocational Qualification 3 (SVQ3) award may be a viable option with the proviso that the safeguarding mandatory unit for the add-on qualification would need to be completed to preserve the specific context of practice. For example, a worker who is ELC qualified but is required to work across that sector and in adult social care within a rural community would need to complete, at minimum, the safeguarding unit in relation to protection of vulnerable adults.

An experienced SVQ Assessor and Verifier who also delivers Higher National Certificate (HNC) to students at a University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) satellite campus contributed to this research by meeting to discuss her experiences of delivering training/qualification courses to care sector students, some of whom are already in employment in the general care sector. For pragmatic rather than pedagogic reasons, primarily around numbers of students, this campus delivers HNC to childcare and adult care workers within the same 'class group'. The division in the groups comes when students begin working on projects relevant to their workplace role. SVQ3 is provided through worker assessment in workplaces across the sector. This experienced provider believes that there should be no insurmountable issues in joining the SVQ3 award for ELC workers for example, and those based in adult care. For some time, a number of providers in the area have been suggesting that the 'common knowledge' from each award be extracted and put into one 'new' mandatory unit. This would further facilitate the amalgamation of the qualifications for both worker groups.

In rural areas the model of a 'generic' or dual qualified worker may help to create a more sustainable workforce pool, more employment opportunities and give communities opportunities to become more self- sufficient thus mitigating against the need for families and potential employers to migrate from those communities to find suitable work or services, including early learning and childcare. Scarcity of services and employment opportunities are only part of a number of reasons why it proves difficult to create an ELC workforce, adequate

in number, qualifications and flexibility, in rural Scotland particularly in sight of 2020's expansion in funded hours.

At the national conference of Care and Learning Alliance on 3 October 2019 in Inverness, ELC practitioners and related professionals voted on two relevant questions using the Menti electronic voting system, (see Appendix 19). They were asked to vote on the opportunity to do some kind of joint qualification now (that is a qualification which would enable them to work across ELC and adult social care, for example), whether they would like to have had the option of doing so when they did their original qualification or to respond that a joint qualification would not be of any interest to them. Of the 61 responses 31 replied that they would like the opportunity now, 16 when they did their original qualification and 14 stated that neither option was of any interest to them.

The second question asked "what would be the advantage of such a joint qualification?" The options were: more choice of employment locally, improved future career choices, no advantage, or greater flexibility of workforce. The resounding leader in these responses was the greater flexibility of the workforce with 42 of the 71 votes cast. Only 1 response indicated no advantage, with choice of employment and improved future career choices attracting 13 and 15 votes respectively.

These results, coming primarily from ELC practitioners/managers indicate that workers consider a joint qualification a viable option to increase the flexibility of the workforce within Highland, a predominantly rural area. As such this relates directly to the focus of this research around quality of workforce and sustainability of communities. The expressed desire to have the opportunity to top up their existing qualification now also indicates willingness within the sector's workforce to extend their qualifications and secure their position as a crucial part of the valued general and local workforce. This may indicate willingness to continue living and working within the Highland area.

The next section will explore other factors that contribute to delivery of quality, flexible and well-staffed ELC services within Scotland with particular attention to rural areas.

5.6 What puts people off a career in ELC?

As we have seen there are issues of employment and lack of services within rural Scottish communities. In order to provide quality ELC, and other services, there has to be enough potential workers within each area of the country, including the more rural communities. The example from Orkney, discussed above, demonstrated that creative thinking in respect of merging existing qualifications to create a more generic post that can be filled from the community pool has led to service users receiving an effective service from a small number of workers rather than having to travel to many locations to access different forms of health and social care. This scheme therefore made effective use of people who were already living and prepared to work in their local, rural community.

This section will examine the barriers and challenges that are more specific to recruitment and provision of quality, flexible services in ELC settings and explore the impact of rurality on this recruitment and provision.

An independent review of Scotland's early learning and out of school care workforces (Scottish Government 2015) considered qualifications, status, pay and conditions and the public's view of the workforce and its role.

> *It is an anomaly that those who work with children at this critical and formative stage generally have the lowest level of qualification and the worst pay and conditions in the children and young people's workforce (ibid, p. 15).*

In respect of pay and conditions there are also inequalities across the sectors, with those in the private or third sector experiencing the largest inequalities. Similar inequalities are noted within the English Early Years workforce and there the majority of this workforce is female (Graham, 2018). This gender bias is mirrored in Scotland where the ELC workforce is overwhelmingly female (97% are woman) and relatively young (Skills Development Scotland 2019, p6).

The ELC sector is often perceived as offering limited career progression opportunities with low status and low value (Skills Development Scotland 2019). The variety of entry and career progression paths discussed above and the Scottish Government's recruitment campaign (www.childcarecareersscotland.scot) should go some way to improving public perception (Scottish Government 2020). When the expanded entitlement (1140 hours) is rolled out in August 2020 the Scottish Government wants to see all childcare workers delivering the funded entitlement, across all sectors, paid at least the Living Wage. Government funding is being made available to allow local authorities to agree rates with funded providers in the private and third sectors that will enable them to pay childcare workers this Living Wage (Skills Development Scotland 2019 p14). These slightly improved terms and conditions of employment should improve the attractiveness of the sector as a career choice and may go a small way to reduce the current lack of diversity, including the gender imbalance, within the ELC workforce. They are however reliant on local authorities and their commissioners passing this funding on to all funded providers and the Living Wage being realistic enough to be a deciding factor for potential ELC workers. It is important to emphasise that the increased rates only apply to staff working in ELC centres where the 'funded' hours are being delivered and not across the entire sector's workforce.

Twelve months before 1140 implementation however, the National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA), having surveyed 181 providers, found 71% of private nurseries having recruitment issues and 61% "*significant challenges*" in staff retention, reportedly losing workers to local authority nurseries and schools offering higher salaries (National Day Nurseries Association 2019). The differential in terms and conditions exacerbates childcare and employment challenges existing in some areas of rural Scotland. Why should aspiring ELC workers living and wishing to work in their own rural community where there may be a single

choice of ELC service that is not local authority, by default be required to work for a lower salary? Should this potential worker require childcare provision to enable them to work, why should they have to use a service which appears to value its staff less than others in the same profession?

The perceived and often felt low status of ELC workers may be further emphasised by the disparity between their registration qualification and pay levels and those of childcare workers in residential childcare services for example. These residential childcare workers, even at main-grade level, are generally paid at a higher rate, and qualified to a different level for SSSC registration (HNC with SVQ3) than both main-grade ELC workers and those working in adult social care roles. This potentially indicates that creating parity in qualification and pay levels would facilitate the creation of a larger workforce pool, potentially comprising workers (including ELC practitioners) who are qualified to a level perceived by the workers themselves and the public as 'professional' and therefore of higher status.

In general, childcare workers are perceived as relatively poorly paid and this therefore contributes to the job being considered low status. For ELC workers who live in a rural community the costs of travelling to a workplace in another community can put substantial pressure on this already relatively low income. If this worker also has to transport his/her own child or children to an ELC provision out-with their home community, this can increase the cost concerns even more. These workers, in addition to any other sector's workers may benefit from a service that transports children to the ELC site (Section 8).

> *Childcare professionals do one of the most valuable jobs out there-they care for and educate our future-but this overwhelmingly female workforce is chronically underpaid and undervalued (Broome, 2017).*

5.7 Why is childcare in general and ELC in particular, not an attractive prospect as a career for men?

The ELC workforce in Scotland does not appear to accurately reflect the diversity within the country's general adult population. Men in particular appear to be under-represented within the profession. Jackie Brock, Chief Executive of Children in Scotland attributes this to the "poor" financial reward attached to the job (Goodwin 2017). Marie Todd, Children's Minister told BBC Scotland that the Scottish culture "undoubtedly" sees ELC as "women's work" and also cited historical concerns about men who are interested in working with children. This is supported by comments by a man who has built his career in ELC. This man talks of coming into the job as a young single man and then getting married and being perceived as "safe" and then becoming absolutely acceptable and "safe" once he went on to be a father. This man continues to work in the sector and stated that, in his opinion, there is still a stigma around men who work in childcare, particularly those who work with younger children as he does (McCullins, 2018).

Clearly these comments are based on one man's own experience and perceptions, however given the relatively low number of males nationally in ELC work it is perhaps reasonable to extrapolate these comments into the general ELC workforce. This particular man is now a centre manager and in the ELC setting he manages more than 30% of staff are male. Often men who make the positive choice to work in ELC and who come from other work or different professions appear to accept a lower rate of pay due to the greater 'job satisfaction' they find in their ELC roles. Presumably these are men who have calculated they can afford to make this choice, so does this mean that there are significant numbers of men out in communities throughout Scotland who will not consider ELC work as it does not pay what they require to maintain a satisfactory and adequate life style?

"It's a career. It's not just coming in and doing some painting and going home - there are opportunities" (male ELC worker, 2018). This comment highlights the fact that the public perception of working in the ELC sector does not support the notion of it being a job for all, regardless of gender, or one that adds value to the community and potentially makes a difference to the education and care of pre-school children. As far back as 1992 the European Commission, in their recommendations on childcare, stated that member states should ensure that due

Lochinver ELC in Culag woods

recognition is given to persons engaged in childcare services as regards the way in which they work and the social value of their work (Children in Scotland, 2010).

The benefits for the children of having a diverse group of people caring for and educating them include the creation of balance and experiencing positive male role models. Diversity prepares the children for the real world in which they'll be living and working. It may also encourage boys to take up a career in ELC later, having grown up understanding that caring is not an exclusively female job of choice. The Scottish Government however seems not prepared to leave this to happen over years and has commissioned the Scottish Funding Council (2018) to administer grants to colleges and training providers to specifically attract more men into childcare qualification courses with a pilot of this scheme running in Edinburgh City. The new fund (£50,000 Men in Early Years Challenge Fund) funds pilots to address this issue.

This is a real opportunity for colleges to test out new ways of getting men into the early learning and childcare workforce, supporting our work to diversify the sector and recruit more people than ever to deliver quality early learning. Increasing the number of men in childcare means children will benefit from different perspectives and have more male role models to look up to (Scottish Government, 2018c).

Having this gender diversity of staff creates diversity of experience for children. In the view of one man, for example, men tend to be more "gung-ho" in helping kids take risks and learn their boundaries-something which is linked to greater resilience (Graham 2018 p. 3).

The University of Highlands and Islands (UHI) is currently offering a pilot around men into childcare. The academic year 2019-20 is the second year of starting a cohort of men onto HNC and other childcare related courses. To date this appears to be a successful pilot as the number of males currently undertaking the relevant HNC has tripled since the start of the pilot. A representative from UHI indicated (October 2019) that there is no common age range within the male student group, although all are over 17 years of age, and the male students come from other professions, other courses and some from a period of unemployment.

A seminar on men in early years took place in Stirling in September 2019. The contributors to this seminar came from academic institutions and direct practice. Diversity data produced by the Scottish Funding Council for this seminar showed that the proportion of men within the overall ELC student cohort represented a 42% increase between the academic years 2014/15 and 2017/18. This equates to 1 male enrolment for every 11 females compared to 1 in every 12 in the year 2014/15, undoubtedly a small step forward in the bid to address the existing gender imbalance within the ELC workforce (Scottish Funding Council 2019, p. 24).

A 1996 Childcare Network European Commission report stated (target 29) that 20% of staff who are employed in collective early years services should be men. Children in Scotland (2010) indicated that the UK along with all other EC countries was, however, falling short of this target figure and suggested this reflects deep seated misunderstandings about the nature of ELC work combined with the 'innate suitability' of women to undertake this work and failure by governments and relevant bodies to address the gender imbalance issue in a systemic and sustained way.

As a nation, Norway leads the way globally in employment of men in ELC roles, although only 9% of its workforce are men. They do this in part through positive discrimination that has allowed administrators to hire men even if they are less qualified than normally expected. In Norway, qualifying for kindergarten jobs routinely requires a degree in pedagogy and the culture places value in early years' education. However, there is still a reported absence of professional recognition in early childhood work which perhaps indicates that qualification alone is not enough to significantly reverse the gender imbalance.

5.8 Conclusion

The expansion of funded hours in early learning and childcare will put additional pressure on the sector to provide quality services staffed by suitably qualified workers. The rurality of a substantial part of Scotland adds another dimension to this pressure.

This research indicates the potential for changes in the nature and delivery of qualifications, training and workforce development that may alleviate some of this pressure. The model of

a 'generic' rural worker may be a viable method of increasing the pool of suitably qualified care workers available to the ELC sector. This model would require the full support of, and accreditation by, the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) and agreement from the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) around any registration issues. It would also need close collaborative working within and across the entire training provider sector. It is not likely to be a 'quick fix'.

This solution would also require there to be willingness on the part of the workforce, particularly in rural areas, to broaden and expand their qualifications to make them suitable candidates for employment by employers providing a variety of services, including ELC. Anecdotally and supported in a small way by the Menti questionnaire results from the CALA conference in 2019, employers and colleges consulted during this research indicate the existence of this willingness. A robust support package for staff choosing to do this would also be necessary.

The issues around diversity in the ELC workforce appear to be intertwined with pay and conditions, particularly in relation to recruitment of men to the sector. The traditional model of ELC provision has relied on workers being prepared to accept what is often part-time employment. In contrast the historical situation in Scotland indicates that men predominantly look for full-time employment as many continue to view themselves, and to be viewed as, the main 'breadwinner' in a family household. ELC work currently offers terms and conditions paying relatively low wages, particularly in the private provider sector, making it historically and currently unattractive.

It remains the case that some local authority workers who have remained on part-time, temporary contracts are also struggling to have these contracts secured as permanent. This leads to issues for them around providing evidence of security of employment to financial institutions for example, in turn making ELC sector work a financially unsustainable prospect for many prospective and existing workers who may have the desirable qualities and commitment to provide a quality service to young children.

The move by Scottish Government to provide additional funding to non-public sector ELC providers to provide the 'living wage' to all ELC staff providing the funded entitlement appears unlikely to raise the pay to the optimum level for attracting a more diverse workforce, including men. The profile of and public perceptions about employment in ELC therefore also need to be improved. This is a significant task, requiring the full support of government, training and employment providers, existing ELC workers, parents and all those who understand the importance of high-quality childcare provision in today's Scotland across all communities, rural and urban.

The variety in routes to qualification may over time increase the size and diversity of the workforce. As this research shows however, there are concerns around the variations existing throughout the country in the consistency of how these routes are offered and provided by

colleges and employers and the levels at which these sit within the qualifications framework and further education in general.

Workforce qualifications are not in themselves indicative of a high-quality workforce. There are many other factors that contribute to workforce quality. The perception of the work and its professionalism however may be improved by making the base-line registration qualification for ELC workers equivalent to that of childcare workers in the residential care sector thus demanding a higher rate of pay and placing the same perceived value on young children as is placed on older children in residential care placements.

This would necessitate substantial financial resources and general willingness by service providers and commissioners most of whom are already struggling to provide quality, flexible funded provision to enable families to utilise the 1140 hours from August 2020.

Expanded hours are unlikely in themselves to raise the quality and variety of ELC provision in rural communities. There are reportedly specific recruitment issues existing in services that provide alternatives to the commonly perceived traditional early years learning and childcare services. Outdoor ELC settings, for example can find it hard to recruit suitable staff who are prepared to work outdoors and who embrace the potential benefits of this setting for their community's children. On the other hand, this work setting may be an attraction to others. Expansion must be about more than current traditional providers merely trying to accommodate more children within their existing premises and with their existing workforce only. Without a well- qualified, flexible and professional workforce who perceive themselves and are perceived by others as such, children throughout Scotland may well be less likely to reap any benefit from their additional funded hours in ELC settings.

> *Workforce is central to early childhood education and care (ECEC) services. It is the major factor in children's experience and outcomes: "research from many countries supports the view that quality in the early childhood field requires adequate training and fair working conditions for staff (OECD in Children in Scotland, 2010, p. 3).*

SECTION 6. ALTERNATIVE PLACES AND TIMES

6.1 To what degree can the use of alternative places and times improve the quality of rural childcare?

One challenge arising from the transition to 1140 hours is maintaining the quality of ELC provision over a greater duration in terms of daily sessions and throughout the entire week. In the Scottish Government's research on potential barriers to the 1140 transition it was identified that the existing infrastructure would be insufficient to cope with the additional demand placed upon ELC providers (Scottish Government 2016). This opinion was corroborated by our own initial survey (Figure 2, Appendix 1) with several respondents

concerned about the capacity of their own buildings to maintain quality while meeting additional demand. The focus of this section is to assess if the use of alternative places and times can support providers in their attempt to maintain quality while expanding provision.

6.2 Literature supporting the use of alternative places and times.

The literature review demonstrates recognition by stakeholders that there is a lack of capacity to cope with the transition to 1140 hours and this can be overcome by extending provision into outdoor play-based learning. The new drive for outdoor ELC provision is promoted by the Scottish Government (2016), Care Inspectorate (2018b) and Inspiring Scotland (2018) and is supported by prominent academics, local authorities, national bodies and third sector organisations, for example Inspiring Scotland's drive to enhance childhood access to the natural environment (Inspiring Scotland 2019). Furthermore, Christie and Higgins (2020) advocate that outdoor learning, as part of a three-pronged approach to Learning for Sustainability (alongside education for sustainable development and global citizenship) can promote personal development and life skills while raising attainment.

The personal benefits to children are documented in Table 3.1 (Section 3). Some stakeholders however question the drivers behind the promotion of outdoor learning, suggesting it is being promoted because it is more cost-effective than enhancing capacity through building construction.

The stakeholder research conducted by the Scottish Government (2016) recognised that for the expansion to succeed three key features should be the foundations of the transition: flexible provision, a qualified workforce and quality of provision.

In addressing the lack of available places, the stakeholders suggested children should have "access to outdoor space in addition to an indoor learning environment.... with at least half of a children's time spent outdoors" (Ibid p 10). While the Care Inspectorate (2018b) recognises the benefit of outdoor learning, they stopped short of enforcing a specific proportion of time for outdoor learning in their subsequent Health and Social Care Standards (2018b). The focus on developing the outdoor learning environment was bolstered by the stakeholder opinion that 'hastily built or adapted premises' jeopardised the quality of future provision (Scottish Government 2016).

The current literature, based on stakeholder opinion, has a strong focus on developing outdoor play-based learning to support the transition to 1140 hours. Without addressing raised attainment specifically, it proposes that outdoor learning provides enhanced benefits in terms of physical health, mental health and wellbeing and personal development. The following section discusses the opinion of respondents to our surveys and seeks to identify if there is consensus with the stakeholder opinion from the Scottish Government's 2016 report.

6.3 Perceptions of the survey respondents

To understand the current position, it is worth reflecting on the responses to the practitioner survey (Appendix 1) to assess the perceptions around the use of alternative places and times.

Five respondents to our practitioner survey cited physical barriers as issues in preparing for 1140. However, their focus on overcoming these barriers appeared to be centred around building enhancement, with several respondents advising they have or were planning to expand or modify their existing building to prepare for extra demand. This is contrary to the promotion of outdoor places and while it would ensure building capacity is increased it is difficult to comprehend how it enhances flexibility or quality of provision.

When asked to consider the benefits of using alternative places and times only one respondent recognised that the use of alternative places was a credible option for dealing with the lack of space anticipated to arise from additional demand, commenting that

> *'we already go on forest school taking our learning into our outdoor environment'*

In respect of alternative times, 87% of respondents accepted that service provision out-with regular times could benefit families, however only 61% believed it would benefit them. Moreover, several barriers to alternative time provision were identified, foremost being staffing issues, particularly in rural areas where according to one respondent:

> *'most people already have second jobs'*

Other issues included logistical issues, lack of time for paperwork, impacts on the learning experience and the threat to childhood routine.

It is worth observing that respondents were asked to consider both alternative places and time in the same question. Alternative times attracted greater scrutiny, both in terms of opportunities and perceived barriers, while the use of alternative places was identified as a means of addressing lack of space. By extending the hours of provision, ELC settings are increasing opportunities while promoting flexibility and choice for children and their families in a manner which may contribute to sustaining the community within which they live.

The survey (Appendix 20) of 31 parents for the proposed setting at Highland Wildlife Park, where taster sessions were carried out (see Section 6.6), addressed both the use of outdoor settings (in an area of Scotland subjected to some of the most extreme weather conditions) and alternative times.

Most parents were enthusiastic about their children attending ELC sessions at HWP with outdoor learning (68%) and being in an outdoor setting (52%) the most common reasons for their interest, suggesting an alignment in the opinion of the benefits of outdoor provision between the regulatory bodies promoting it and parents.

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In terms of session times, normal school hours (84%) was the session most in demand, followed by wrap-around sessions - weekdays, out-with school hours - (74%) Saturdays (32%) and Sundays (29%). This gives some indication as to the level of demand for provision out-with traditional hours, and for settings considering this expansion it demonstrates the importance of parent engagement before decisions are made. Providing choice is an important theme of the expansion, but this must be in accordance with the demands of the children and families.

The survey of shift-workers in Inverness (Appendix 21) also addressed the demand for ELC provision at alternative times, with the results suggesting that the demand exists for service out-with normal hours. Of 32 respondents, 81% stated their childcare needs were not being currently met, with 59% of those having children aged between 0 and 5. The 19 respondents were asked to identify when the shortfall existed with early mornings being the period where there was greatest need (95%) and Sundays the least (79%).

Comparison of the two survey results illustrate a discrepancy in the demand for weekend provision which consolidates the point that any expansion should be tailored to the demands of the family.

The summary of survey responses demonstrates that some work is still required to persuade practitioners that the use of alternative places and times can contribute to facilitating the transition to 1140 hours while ensuring the key features of flexible and quality provision are maintained. However, the surveys for HWP and of shift-workers demonstrate that demand exists for alternative times and parents are both enthusiastic about and aware of the benefits of outdoor play-based learning.

The sections that follow discuss the results of the taster sessions we provided to promote the use of alternative places and times, before summarising the current use of alternative places and times and discussing how these delivery methods can be developed to support the transition to 1140 hours and beyond.

While the research aims to identify and promote quality service delivery in alternative places and times, it is important to recognise that these methods are not being proposed as alternatives to quality indoor provision. A feature of the research has been the anticipated lack of capacity when the transition to 1140 hours occurs. As such the focus of the research is on identifying delivery methods which can complement the existing quality provision which exists within traditional settings.

6.4 Taster sessions

Taster sessions offer the opportunity for people to temporarily access services, allowing them to make a more informed decision as to whether they would use the service on a more regular basis. They were identified as part of this research as a method of promoting the benefits of alternative places and times to parents and children, while assessing the viability of new sites.

Taster sessions were arranged with two enterprises who operate vastly different facilities. The Highland Wildlife Park (HWP) at Kincraig is a visitor attraction operated by the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS) which promotes wildlife conservation, while Cantraybridge College is a residential college which caters for young adults with learning difficulties aimed at facilitating their transition from education to becoming independent adults in employment.

Highland Wildlife Park

At the outset of our research a partnership arrangement was already in place between RZSS and CALA to host taster sessions at the HWP in Kincraig, with a view to establishing a provision at the HWP's newly opened educational garden.

The taster sessions at HWP were initiated as a result of the joint interest of the RZSS and the local ELC provider into using the Wildlife Garden, a newly developed space for educational engagement and available for ELC sessions. The sessions were designed to test the viability of the site and the local demand for outdoor ELC provision over the weekend.

Two taster sessions were held over separate weekends either side of the school holidays. It was felt that this may appeal to parents in the local area, given the high volume of jobs locally focused around the tourist trade and, therefore, the high possibility that many parents worked weekends.

The taster sessions were promoted widely in the local area over social media and in the local press. Five families with 9 children attended the Saturday session, while there were 8 families with 13 children at the Sunday session. A survey conducted with parents who attended and more widely within the area, dug deeper into parental preferences in terms of days of the week in which they would be interested.

The sessions were designed for the parents to attend, retain responsibility for their children and to participate with and observe their children engage in the activities, some of which were led by the RZSS education team and ELC practitioners. The range of activities included pond dipping, den building, nature trails to spot bird boxes and other items, and toast making on a small fire. The sessions provided parents with an opportunity to see directly how their child interacted with the environment, in what would be an outdoor setting, be aware of the facilities, including the limited shelter available and determine if this may be an option to meet their children's ELC needs in the future.

The research team observed the interactions of the children, took photos, short films and spoke with the parents to gather their views through a survey (Appendix 22). At the second taster session, representatives from both the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government also attended.

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The findings of the research team were reported back to both CALA and RZSS in feedback meetings and it was deemed there was enough demand to proceed. Both parties have collaborated in the process of applying for a registration for a dispersed setting from the Care Inspectorate and this is currently under consideration.

Assuming a positive response from the Care Inspectorate, this venture demonstrates how ELC providers can promote flexibility and accessibility through partnership arrangements allowing the children to benefit from outdoor learning. Furthermore, it demonstrates that national organisations are committed to engaging with and supporting local service providers, recognising the importance of these services to the sustainability of the communities within which they operate.

Teaching bus at Cradlehall Primary School

Cantraybridge College

Two taster sessions were also held at Cantraybridge College, a residential college for young adults with learning difficulties, situated between Nairn and Inverness. Both sessions were attended by children from Junior World in Nairn, with various learning activities organised and delivered by both members of staff and with the support of some of the college's students.

The taster sessions were observed by the research team, with surveys being completed by staff members and students during and after the sessions. The children's voice was captured in pictorial form (Appendix 23) and forwarded by the Junior World manager, Jayne McIntosh.

While the survey responses were all positive and recognised the benefits of the sessions to both the ELC children and the college's students, the management at Cantraybridge College decided against pursuing a more permanent arrangement, preferring to focus on inviting groups of children from all different age ranges to their setting, for the benefit of all, whilst confirming an interest in regular visits from the two ELCs.

A more detailed discussion on the benefits of the intergenerational taster sessions at Cantraybridge is available in Section 7 which addresses intergenerational partnerships. However, from the point of view of using alternative places, these sessions demonstrate that partnership working between different age groups has the potential to bring people together to use shared spaces to the benefit of both groups.

Establishing partnerships

In view of the success of the taster sessions and the benefits that were observed it was decided this was a research method worth developing. To maximise the scope of our appeal we took a national/regional approach to finding local enterprises who may be able to support the transition to alternative places and times. This was achieved by contacting national organisations and asking them to promote our research to their local amenities and by accessing national/regional websites to identify multiple services within the Highland region.

A complete list of every organisation who was approached can be found in Appendix 24. We received positive responses from community councils, community landowners, National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Forestry and Land. As a result, we explored the potential for taster sessions with each respondent with varying degrees of success.

Several partnerships were established, including Inverewe Gardens, Evanton Wood Community Company and Scottish Forestry and Land which, following initial discussions, were identified as worth developing. Unfortunately, due to insufficient insurance cover and time constraints we were unable to organise any further sessions, but our attempts to demonstrate what can be achieved when willing partners are identified are discussed in Appendix 25. Furthermore, there were local facilities who entered discussions but were unable to assist including Portree and Braes Community Trust, The Plock at Kyle of Lochalsh, Highland Titles Nature Reserve, several church halls and a bookstore.

Appendix 25 also details other national and regional organisations which were approached and who were unable to support our research by exploring the provision of taster sessions. However, it should be reiterated that these discussions took place with representatives at a national level and should not deter ELC providers making approaches to local facilities within these organisations.

To conclude this section, it is worth re-emphasising that significant support was offered from various organisations to ELC providers. Those who offered support appeared to recognise the importance of local services to sustaining their respective communities and offered support on this basis rather than for financial gain.

This support offers the opportunity to enhance variety and quality of provision in alternative settings, at times introducing the benefits of outdoor, play-based learning. For ELCs who may have insufficient capacity within their existing setting, making approaches to local organisations has the potential to overcome this shortfall. However, given the benefits that can be accrued from identifying and visiting alternative venues this should be a consideration for all settings.

While the taster sessions provided some useful insight into the benefits of using alternative places and alternative times, it remains a matter of regret that it was not possible to explore

these further in view of the insurance and time constraints that were encountered. To develop our understanding of the potential benefits we refocused our research on the existing use of alternative places and times and our findings are the features of the next two sections.

6.5 Alternative places

For the purposes of this section the report recognises and refers to the terminology presented by the Care Inspectorate (2018b) in their publication promoting the use of outdoor spaces in ELC provision. They identify four types of setting which include the traditional indoor, indoor/outdoor, outdoor and dispersed, all of which are summarised in Appendix 26.

Theoretically, outdoor settings should provide the greatest opportunity for facilitating outdoor learning followed by 'indoor/outdoor', then 'dispersed', and finally 'indoor', and the various types will be discussed in this order. However, it is important to recognise that while outdoor settings may be the optimal delivery method, they are also likely to require the greatest effort to create a place capable of providing quality outdoor sessions.

The focus of the transition agenda is to maximise quality outdoor learning opportunities to facilitate all the inherent benefits for children. For current providers considering how they can achieve this, the following sub-sections discuss the merits of each setting type but stop short of promoting any one type over another. Each provider should consider the merits of each provision type in line with their existing setting and decide how they can facilitate quality outdoor learning opportunities for their children.

Outdoor settings

Visits were made to 5 existing outdoor providers, a community trust who were in the process of establishing an outdoor provision and Aberdeen City Council who are preparing to open two settings in city parks, and all are summarised in Appendix 3. The settings visited included the two original outdoor providers in Scotland, Auchlone Nature Kindergarten, Crieff and Secret Garden, Letham, Stramash at Oban, Summerlings at the Shieling Project, Struy, Kinder Croft at Leckmelm and Abriachan Community Trust from which some consistent themes emerged in terms of provision, pedagogy and perceived benefits.

Provision

At all settings it was apparent that the welfare of the children was of the utmost concern to all the practitioners. Children were observed to have access to appropriate protective clothing during all sessions, although generally they were empowered into choosing whether they wore it or not. They also had access to appropriate shelter for eating, napping, changing, toileting and during periods of extreme weather, however, in terms of the new Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) some settings raised concerns over their ability to provide warm running water and meals.

Aside from the required standards, observations were made about the lack of inclusivity for children with reduced mobility, while exposure to ticks and the risks of Lymes disease increases but can be managed through appropriate site cultivation and ensuring parents have appropriate advice.

Pedagogy

Across all the practicing settings there was robust evidence that the learning was child-led and place based. Many of the settings used electronic tablets and online learner journey apps to record their observations of what the children are interested and use this to both inform their future session planning and as a virtual display board to allow parents to see what activities their children have been participating in.

The importance of place was observed as being central to the learning experience across all the settings, with activities and sessions designed to exploit the learning potential of the seasonal fluctuations, lifecycle (both floral and faunal), and land uses of the natural environment within which each operate.

By focusing on child-led and place-based learning, practitioners at outdoor settings provide experiential learning experiences which foster a greater understanding and appreciation by the children than could be attained in an indoor setting.

All the providers are aware of their responsibilities to oversee the progress of their children through the Curriculum for Excellence (CfE) framework. However, they recognise that by prioritising sessions centred around their children and environment they can achieve the required development while simultaneously providing outdoor learning experiences and their inherent benefits.

Potential benefits

Research on the personal benefits to children of outdoor play and learning suggest it fosters physical and mental health benefits, enhanced personal development and environmental awareness. This is affirmed by staff and parents throughout all the settings. Furthermore, it was observed that outdoor settings are more attuned to the requirements of children with additional support needs, with autistic children identified as some who are particularly suited to the outdoor environment.

In terms of the workforce, there is anecdotal evidence that while it is difficult to recruit for outdoor settings, the staff retention rate is higher and outdoor settings tend to attract more male practitioners.

Summary of outdoor settings

Increasing the use of outdoor spaces has been identified as a means of meeting the additional demand likely to arise from the expansion to 1140 hours. However, in smaller rural

communities there may be insufficient demand for a new setting, and it may be of greater benefit to develop the existing settings in a manner which facilitates outdoor learning from their existing setting than to consider a new outdoor setting.

As an individual setting, outdoor, like indoor settings can lack flexibility as they are confined to one place, so while they can provide enhanced quality of sessions, consideration should still be given to how variety of provision can be achieved. This was evidenced at one setting who took their children to the nearby farm to see the sheep prior to, during and after the lambing season. However, in larger communities that can sustain more than one ELCC, it may be worth considering if having an indoor and outdoor setting can enhance opportunity and quality of provision for families. This creates the potential for blended learning, where children spend their time between both settings, receiving varied learning experiences and the additional benefits of outdoor learning.

The pedagogical advantage to outdoor ELC learning is the ability to provide quality experiential learning opportunities based on the interests of the children and the surrounding environment. These sessions foster a high level of engagement and greater understanding which in turn facilitates the benefits discussed in Table 1 (Section 3) and can contribute to raising attainment.

For any practice manager considering outdoor provision it is imperative they consider how they achieve the balance of maximising outdoor play-based learning opportunity while ensuring children are protected from Scotland's worst climatic extremes. A primary function of any ELC provider is to listen to the children's voice and to foster inquisitive minds and enforcing outdoor learning in inclement conditions could be detrimental to both. To create the conditions for quality experiences any setting must abide by the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a), however most of the settings visited either met these standards or had devised strategies which when implemented should be satisfactory when inspected.

Indoor/Outdoor settings

Adapting an indoor setting to an indoor/outdoor setting is an opportunity for an ELC provider to increase capacity in line with the enhanced demand anticipated to arise as a result of the expanded entitlement. However, modification of the setting is more complex than merely ensuring the door between the indoor environment and playground is open throughout the session. Full-time access to both spaces, aligned with a pedagogical experience based on both indoor and outdoor learning are necessary for a setting to be designated as Indoor/Outdoor (Care Inspectorate 2018b). The transition to an indoor/outdoor setting requires consultation with parents and children. All the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) of an outdoor ELC setting require to be fulfilled before approval for the transition can be granted by Care Inspectorate (2018b).

In 2016, as part of a programme of nationwide trials, the local authority nursery at Inverarity Primary School developed their premises to an indoor/outdoor setting for their ELC provision (Angus Council 2019) and a summary of the trial is available in Appendix 27.

Summary of indoor/outdoor

An indoor ELCC can increase their capacity by 20% by adapting its setting to an indoor/outdoor provision, which, when considering the significant increase in demand anticipated when the expanded hours are introduced may not even be enough to provide for the same number of children as prior to the expansion. However, such an adaption can enhance the variety and quality of provision by empowering children to alternate between two learning environments and gaining all the benefits associated from both.

This requires significant, (physical, but not necessarily financial), renovation of the premises to ensure children are able to flow between the two learning areas and considered development of the pedagogical approach. The creation of disparate environments within the setting creates the opportunity for contrasting play-based learning experiences, which empowers children to choose their activities and gives them the opportunity to benefit from both types of provision.

As such an adaption enhances the variety of learning experiences for children, it follows that it can provide new opportunities for the workforce. Any such transition should be done in consultation with staff members, but there is significant potential for new skills development which arises from such a change and this may serve to consolidate or improve staff satisfaction at a time when they are likely to have some concerns about the direction their new roles will take under the transition to 1140.

Kinder croft, Leckmelm

Dispersed settings

Transportation of children to and from dispersed settings is the method which draws most comparisons with the mobile pre-school model in the Scandinavian countries, and while this could be discussed in Section 8 (mobile nurseries) it was felt it was more appropriate to discuss it within the alternative place and time section.

Transportation of children from base to setting should be carefully planned and done with consideration that this forms part of their ELC provision entitlement. In Sweden, the settings are no further than 30 minutes travelling time from the children's base (Gustafson and Burgt 2015, Ladru and Gustafson 2018). Depending upon the vehicle, there may be scope for

interaction (singing or games) in transit, but where this is not suitable transportation time should be kept to a minimum.

The Care Inspectorate (2018b) recognise the benefit of providers transporting children to and using dispersed settings. They would seek assurances that there is provision of personal care arrangements including toilets, shelter, basic hygiene facilities and napping areas at both settings. The more of these demands a vehicle can accommodate the less demands there are on the session setting, therefore creating the conditions for a greater choice. Moreover, the Care Inspectorate would expect strategies to be implemented which would ensure information sharing and continuity in respect of a child's experience and development of their personal plan.

Using transport to bring children to dispersed settings is beneficial in that it can provide variety and enhance the quality of the childhood experience. The purchase or leasing of a minibus may extend beyond the financial capabilities of an individual setting, but this can be overcome by using community transport services where available.

Two providers were identified who use dispersed settings. Evergreen nursery makes daily use of Dawsholm Park, while Lochinver ELCC visit Culag Woods on a weekly basis. Moreover, Aberdeen City Council have developed a network of "Wee Green Spaces" to provide outdoor settings for ELC providers to use either alone or at the same time as neighbouring providers. Visits were made to all three, summaries of which are available in Appendix 4.

Regular visits to dispersed settings provide the opportunity for alternative play-based learning activities and should enhance the pedagogical quality and variety. Identification and regular use of appropriate outdoor settings can foster the benefits of outdoor provision, and it follows that the greater the amount of time that a child spends at a dispersed outdoor setting the more they should benefit.

Furthermore, the "Wee Green Spaces" programme in Aberdeen and the proposed partnership at Inverewe Gardens demonstrates how dispersed setting can be used collaboratively, facilitating the opportunity for pooling of resources and allowing for site visits by more than one setting at a time. As well as the financial savings arising from the pooled resources this introduces children to larger groups and allows for practitioners to exchange ideas on service delivery.

Alternative indoor settings

Approaching the transition to 1140 hours, there is a significant focus on developing the use of outdoor spaces in the expansion agenda and it is crucial for providers at indoor settings to consider how they can adapt their outdoor spaces to enhance quality and flexibility of provision.

Two innovative examples were identified and are discussed at length in case studies in Appendix 5. Cradlehall Primary School in Inverness have a disused bus which was donated by

Stagecoach and renovated by the staff and community to create an outdoor learning space. At Westpark Primary School in Aberdeen they have developed a naturalistic outdoor space in a concrete playground which is designed to facilitate quality outdoor, play-based learning opportunities.

Summary of indoor

The innovative methods discussed in Appendix 5 demonstrate that the opportunity to provide quality outdoor learning opportunities do not necessarily involve off-site visits or a lot of money. External areas can be created which can enhance both the variety and quality of the learning environment, allowing children to take advantage of many of the benefits associated with outdoor learning. Such adaption of the premises negates the requirement for transport solutions and by developing the area over time and through community appeals for help and donations fosters a sense of belonging and achievement in the children and staff.

While the creation of outdoor areas does not allow for additional capacity (unless there is free-flow access, whereby the setting would be classified as indoor/outdoor), the expansion to 1140 will result in a greater number of children spending 30 hours/week at one setting. It is crucial that when the transition comes into force settings consider how they can provide variety of learning opportunities and having an external site which facilitates quality outdoor learning can achieve this.

Summary of alternative places

While the four setting types used by the Care Inspectorate are useful in guiding practice managers, it is apparent that the managers' focus should be on maximising the opportunities to bring children into quality outdoor learning environments which complements the settings' pedagogical ethos.

The visits that were conducted to the various outdoor learning environments corroborate the extensive literature which exists around the benefits of outdoor learning as summarised in Table 1 (Section 3). Consensus among the managers and practitioners we met was noted with some or all alluding to physical health benefits, mental health and well-being benefits, developmental benefits and enhanced environmental awareness.

While it is important to consider the Curriculum for Excellence and its experiences and outcomes, the greatest benefits are achieved where the play-based learning is focused on the natural environment within which the setting operates. The croft-based learning witnessed at Summerlings or the butterfly activities at Secret Garden, Auchlone could not be replicated as successfully at the beach where the children of Stramash Oban visit. This place offers other, more place responsive activities that could be delivered here better than at the first two. Designing sessions which incorporate and integrate place-based learning maximises the benefits of experiential learning and this should be the basis for any transition to outdoor learning.

Outdoor learning environments are governed by the same Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) as indoor settings and while achievable these may be slightly more challenging. Careful consideration is required for how a setting can provide toilet, hygiene, changing and napping facilities for children but most of the established settings are confident they already meet the Health and Social Care Standards (Ibid), demonstrating that all are achievable. It must also be stated that there was a strong sense of camaraderie and support among the various outdoor providers, with every provider alluding to having support from or having supported other settings at some point.

6.6 Alternative times

No literature was found which addresses an expansion into provision at alternative times, and according to some of the responses to our initial survey, there is little appetite for it amongst practitioners (Table 9, Appendix 1). Furthermore, in our survey of people hoping to start a career in Early Learning and Childcare, only 56% indicated that the prospect of working out-with traditional times appealed to them (Table 20, Appendix 17). However, some of the managers observed that there may be significant demand for such provision and are considering how this can be met. The challenge appears to be greater in rural communities with one rural provider observing

'Staffing may be a problem as most people have other jobs'

Not every respondent commented on both demand and supply aspects of expanding into alternative times but every respondent who looked at it from a parents' point of view recognised the merit in exploring such an expansion, while every respondent who referred to staff were concerned about being able to supply a service out-with normal operating hours.

This demonstrates that ELC providers are aware of the shifting patterns of family life and how this impacts demand for their services. While there is reluctance to change among some staff, in general the respondents recognised the importance of flexible provision to increase accessibility for local families and maintain their own viability.

To explore the levels of demand for alternative times a survey was conducted aimed at shift workers in some of Inverness' larger employers who operated out-with traditional nursery times (Appendix 21). In order to identify where the respondents were from, a post-code was requested, indicating that 9 respondents lived in rural communities out-with Inverness and 23 lived in the city.

60% of the respondents had nursery aged children, with a significant proportion confirming they currently had a shortfall in provision of childcare arrangements due to their work pattern. The participants were asked to identify when they required assistance out-with the traditional times with the responses summarised in Table 31, Appendix 21.

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The survey responses indicate there is a significant demand from shift-workers for ELC provision out-with normal times. While there may be demand for alternative provision in an urban area the size of Inverness, it is difficult to make an argument that this would be replicated in smaller remote and rural communities. However, by establishing an ELC setting which provides for alternative times it may serve to sustain rural communities by making it easier for shift-workers who commute to combine their existing employment and living arrangements, allowing them to remain living in their chosen community. Within smaller, rural communities it may be more viable for existing providers to expand their provision into Out of School Clubs and Breakfast Clubs which nursery aged children can also attend.

The initial stakeholder survey held by the Scottish Government (2016) identified that lack of spaces due to insufficient capacity was a considerable impediment to the sector being able to fulfill the transition to 1140 hours. Furthermore, they recognised that flexibility of provision would be a key feature in the sector's ability to provide 1140 hours for every child. While barriers are likely to exist within individual settings to such a transition, providers should consider expanding their operating hours to accommodate families who work out-with traditional hours.

The findings from our research have identified that there is both parental demand and staff reluctance to expand into alternative times. Therefore, studies would have to be completed on a community by community basis to ascertain viability, but it should be highlighted that even expansion in urban centres can serve to sustain rural communities.

Expanding provision out-with the traditional times, whether daily operating hours, weekend provision or throughout the year enhances the flexibility and accessibility of settings. This can benefit rural communities, often dependant on tourism trade which is traditionally busier out-with ELC operating times, by providing a service which is more cohesive with the needs of its community. Furthermore, at a time when demand is anticipated to increase significantly, expansion of operating hours may consolidate the settings' ability to meet the additional demand.

6.7 Conclusion

Lack of capacity has been identified as a significant obstacle for ELC providers as the transition to 1140 approaches. However, there appears to be a discrepancy in perceptions of how alternative places and times can contribute towards achieving flexible, quality provision. While, the Scottish Government, Care Inspectorate and Inspiring Scotland all strive to promote the benefits of outdoor provision the responses we received to our initial survey suggest ELC managers are more focused on provision out-with traditional daily hours and term time.

Creating opportunities that maximise quality outdoor learning should be the focus of every setting and this can be achieved whether the setting exists next door to an idyllic forest or in an urban area of multiple deprivation.

As part of the research a concerted effort was made to identify enterprises or agencies who would support ELC provision in alternative places and while logistical constraints meant that very few sessions were completed it was very encouraging that so many volunteered to help. Although only two sessions were arranged, a new dispersed setting has been created at Highland Wildlife Park from this approach and some useful lessons were learned.

A common theme among those who offered their support was their recognition of the importance of maintaining local services in order to sustain their community and their support was generally offered in this spirit. The variety of supporters in terms of size and service type was great and should give cause for consideration by all ELC settings, whether they are lacking in capacity or not. Establishing a partnership arrangement with an external setting can promote both the flexibility and quality of a provision and may serve to offer many of the benefits that can be achieved from outdoor, play-based learning.

Westpark Primary school, Aberdeen

A significant rise in the number of outdoor nurseries suggests that the promotional message of the enhanced benefits is making an impact, and the visits that were conducted to observe operations at outdoor settings served to affirm the potential physical, psychological, developmental and community benefits. The success of the established outdoor settings appears to be based upon a pedagogy which is inspired by the imagination of the children and how they choose to interact with the natural environment within which they operate. In addition to the physical, developmental and health-based benefits derived from outdoor, play-based learning, this form of experiential learning instills a sense of belonging and responsibility which promotes environmental awareness and stewardship among the children who attend.

While it is recognised that transitioning from an indoor to outdoor provision could prove extremely challenging, support is available to increase exposure to outdoor environments. Established indoor settings can enhance their outdoor provision by modifying their premises to include an accessible outdoor learning area or by identifying and visiting a dispersed outdoor setting on a regular basis. The ongoing work of Aberdeen City Council demonstrates

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that through a considered approach and community engagement, a little money combined with passion, drive and commitment can create exceptional naturalistic learning environments, which facilitate quality outdoor learning and all its inherent benefits.

While the drive for outdoor learning is very commendable, it is unfortunate that there is a lack of continuity between the expectations of the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a), whereby children are expected to have access to daily outdoor play and regular access to a natural environment, and the realities of primary school education where most children are confined to a classroom for the majority of the time. Understandably, primary school class ratios are more prohibitive and make outdoor learning more challenging, however this should be addressed if the benefits achieved from children attending outdoor ELC settings are to be consolidated or thwarted as a child transitions to and engages in primary school education.

Among practitioners and managers there appears to be a perception that offering ELC services at alternative times has greater merit as they strive to offer flexible, quality provision over 1140 hours. Loss of service is generally perceived as a key driver in the decline of our rural communities, so conversely an expansion of ELC services out-with the traditional times may help to reverse the problem.

Demand exists, especially among shift-workers, yet ensuring supply could be problematical due to staff reluctance and ability to commit to working more hours. Aberdeen City Council have recognised the importance of investing in and engaging with their workforce (Appendix 6) as they bid to expand their outdoor provision, and this level of staff engagement and support is crucial for any setting considering expanding their provision into alternative places or times.

There is no definitive solution to how capacity can be increased or flexible, quality provision can be ensured. There is merit in all the solutions discussed within this section, however each setting must consider these options in terms of their current setting and their social, demographic, economic and environmental confines to optimise their provision for their children, their community and their own sustainability.

Taking the learning outdoors and expanding the hours of provisions are two solutions which can make the transition to 1140 hours easier, while maintaining quality of provision. Both should be considered but neither should be forced. The key is identifying how to maximise these opportunities for the benefit of the setting, its staff and most importantly the children.

SECTION 7. INTERGENERATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

7.1 Background

It is our belief that the nations of the world need to address the nature and quality of the relationships between its youngest and older members if we truly aspire to be civilised

societies (Hatton-Yeo & Ohsako, 2000, p2).

This section of the report will focus on 'intergenerational' practice. 'Intergenerational' practice will be defined, the pedagogy within Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) that supports it will be explored, as will the benefits for children, adults and communities. Questions will be posed and addressed around the perceived and expressed relevance of 'intergenerational' practice internationally, nationally and locally. Examples of this type of practice from various countries will be described along with local practice, some of which has been observed to provide evidence for this report and links to section 6 on 'alternative places'. One important question to be addressed is whether the 'intergenerational' practice discussed helps, or could help, Scotland provide quality early learning and childcare services and sustain communities throughout rural Scotland.

What is 'intergenerational' practice, activity or work?

> *Intergenerational activities are social engagements and interactions, bringing together younger and older generations for a common purpose. Both parties have the opportunity to give as well as receive, and to feel a sense of ownership. And it aims to put a smile on everyone's face (St Monica Trust 2018, p5).*

Although a number of definitions of 'intergenerational' practice, activities, work or programmes can be found within the literature reviewed, the prevailing theme appears to be that common purpose or sense of purposefulness. Hatton-Yeo and Ohsako (2000) describe 'intergenerational' programmes as vehicles for the purposeful and ongoing exchange of resources and learning among older and younger generations. This exchange of learning may be particularly pertinent when 'intergenerational' practice or activities involve children from ELC settings and adults who are perceived as different from them in terms of age, experience, culture or ability, both physical and mental. The literature also indicates however, that transfer of learning and resources can take place within 'intergenerational' partnerships from all strata of age, culture and experiences.

The Eisner Foundation and Generations United (2019), advocate the use of spaces and places to connect rather than separate people of all ages as a prime area for development for every community that cares about the quality of life for its residents of all ages.

There appears to be the need for greater definition of intergenerational practice however (Statham, 2009). Springate, Atkinson & Martin (2008) suggest that the term requires this greater definition particularly in terms of the age of participants, but also to clarify whether activity is multi-generational as opposed to intergenerational and whether intergenerational activities encompass those involving members of the same family. While worth holding in mind, this distinction is not relevant in relation to any observed project or session described within this report as none involves members of the same family.

In terms of the age of participants and with particular reference to shared site programmes The Eisner Foundation and Generations United, state that participants in such programmes are usually 24 years and under, and older adults typically over 50 years of age. The programmes and sessions observed for this research and described later in this section all involve pre-school children joining with either older adults, usually in residential care homes, or young adults with learning disabilities who are students at a Highland rural skills college.

7.2 Examples of 'intergenerational' projects international, national and local

'Intergenerational' programmes or pockets of 'intergenerational' practice exists in a number of countries worldwide. It is therefore pertinent to describe briefly some of these programmes or projects and discuss the reasons or purposeful themes informing these. The question behind this discussion is as follows.

Where does 'intergenerational' practice take place internationally and why have these countries embraced it?

In Australia there have long been informal interactions between elders in nursing homes and children, through visits organised from local schools and playgroups, usually taking place within the older adults' care environment. Over the last 10 years a number of studies have taken place in Australia around the benefits of various models of 'intergenerational' practice e.g. shared sites and the visiting model. Both were found to bring positive outcomes for old and young. Shared or co-location sites were found to be more cost effective to establish and run although both models were considered to hold potential solutions to some of the social issues within Australia, many of which resonate with those in the UK (Griffith University 2019a).

As Japanese society has become more Western-like, communication between generations has now required to be enshrined in policy and legislation. This protects the traditional 'intergenerational' contact and shared learning (which formerly took place within cohabiting family members). This could provide a viable model for 'intergenerational' practice in the UK and other western societies, where there is an increasing need to integrate services for economic reasons and to provide services that serve the interests of old and young alike by addressing challenges around social isolation, cohesion and capital.

Intergenerational session with children from Junior World ELC

USA, and the Netherlands, alongside many other countries have developed projects where

old and young share spaces, often with financial incentives such as reduced rent being offered to those who actively participate in intergenerational shared site projects. In Singapore a playground has been designed and built that facilitates shared use by young children and less able adults alike.

All these projects (Appendix 8) have been informed by a core belief in the mutual benefits of 'intergenerational' interaction and with the aim of addressing the social and economic challenges existing in the modern world. As such they are relevant examples for consideration when Scotland's ELC service providers are looking to develop innovative and high-quality services through which to bring the expansion in funded hours to their communities' children and families.

The following part of the report will discuss some of the different intergenerational programmes and activities that happen in the UK and more locally in the Highlands. This will lead to discussion of the benefits these bring to participants and often to the communities in which they live and/or work, rural or urban. The benefits will go some way to explaining why programmes and activities have been established and how they might lead to effective, expanded ELC provision, particularly within rural communities.

The wider UK

Within the UK there are various levels and types of 'intergenerational' programmes in existence. Many involve young ELC children interacting and sharing activities with older adults, often within the adults' residential care home setting. An increasing number of ELC centres are going down the shared site, co-location route where ELC centres are located in the grounds of, or actually within, care homes for older adults. Others involve regular, frequent visits to undertake joint activities, usually with the children physically going to the care homes although there are a few examples where visits can be made by either group to the other.

The drivers for these various projects are many and various although there is commonality in the desire for them to use social and environmental interests to promote 'intergenerational' communication and purposeful interaction. Some groups work on environmental projects using trading of upcycling and recycling knowledge and skills, others include older generations transferring traditional skills such as baking, cooking, sewing and mending to younger participants. A number use music as a mutually enjoyable vehicle for their purposeful, shared activities. Some also address the societal challenges around physical activity and mobility, using the skills and knowledge of some to improve the health and well-being of many. Befriender schemes see the benefits for both parties from younger adults visiting and interacting with older or socially isolated adults, thus bringing the generations within a community into closer contact with each other. Closer contact and quality 'intergenerational' interaction could assist rural communities to become more stable and sustainable.

Look around your community. There are many people who could inspire an intergenerational project. Poets, musicians, local colleges, the library, your local allotment society. They all have something valuable to contribute (St Monica Trust 2018, p18).

Interest in 'intergenerational' practice was further piqued in the UK in 2017 when Channel 4 filmed and broadcast the 2 programme series 'Old folk's homes for 4 year olds'. During this 6-week experiment a Bristol ELC group moved into the St Monica Trust's Cote Lane Retirement Village. The children and residents were filmed taking part in regular activities together to see whether any of the changes experienced by the older adults could be measured. Nearly 3 million watched this series with many more viewing later through social and online media. The results of the experiment for the older adults proved 'remarkable and measurable'. Friendships developed across and between the generations with both groups seen laughing, learning and talking together.

The experiment has worked. We've shown that we can produce measurable change in the older adults in a relatively short period of time (Consultant Geriatrician in St Monica's Trust 2018, p11).

St Monica's Trust has now gone on to establish a co-located ELC service where the ELC group and care home share the same space.

This model was pioneered in the UK by Apples and Honey Nightingale, when a Jewish ELC group (Apples and Honey) became located in premises next door, on the same site as Nightingale House care home in London. The Apples and Honey Nightingale project has now become a well-known and respected example of 'intergenerational' work in practice and has provided sound, practice evidence of the benefits to be reaped from work of this kind for adults, children and their communities (Generations Working Together 2019).

Although the example established by Apples and Honey Nightingale is on a relatively large scale and located in a capital city there are a number of transferable messages making it relevant as an exemplar to some degree, for ELC and adult care providers in other parts of the UK, including Scotland. Many rural communities have a care home and an ELC group. Others may be struggling to find premises from which to run an ELC group, perhaps where their existing premises are not appropriate for the provision of innovative, additional funded hours provision. Care homes may have the answer in that there can be unused parts of their buildings that could economically be modified to become suitable ELC group premises with access for extended periods daily. The perceived and researched benefits of co-located or shared site provision for adults, children and communities, make this a viable option for inclusion in the range of ELC services necessary to promote sustainable, quality services within

rural communities throughout Scotland (Section 6.3 and Appendix 8).

What's happening in Scotland and particularly in the Scottish Highlands?

A number of 'intergenerational' programmes and initiatives have come into being to raise awareness of the contribution such programmes can make to the health and well-being of the general population. As already discussed, Scotland is changing due to greater geographical mobility, changing family composition and an increasingly ageing demographic. These all provide challenges for Scottish society, not least the health and well-being of its members, and 'intergenerational' approaches which value the skills and resources of all generations could be one way to address these challenges.

Some of the Scottish 'intergenerational' projects supporting population health and well-being are befriending schemes such as Strive Befriending Service Intergenerational Project in East Lothian. This particular project offers befriender training to young people who visit local care homes and hospitals to support and befriend older adults, including those with low to moderate dementia needs. The project attracts a high proportion of young people who are interested in careers in health and social care (NHS Health Scotland 2014).

A similar project exists locally in Caithness, Highland. Befrienders Caithness train all ages of volunteers to befriend and support older, more isolated adults in their local community, hospitals and care homes. Working with the local secondary schools, this scheme trains pupils in the final years of school, in exactly the same way as they train their adult volunteers. The respective schools factor in time within the school timetable to help prepare young people for the recruitment process required to achieve acceptance as a volunteer. Once accepted and trained however, the young volunteers carry out their befriending 'work' in their own time and perform exactly the same role as other befrienders. The Caithness scheme has also found that some of their young befrienders progress to careers and further education in health or social care subjects. That this project works for all participants in what is an essentially rural part of Scotland, again points to the viability of this kind of 'intergenerational' work in other parts of the country, including those where groups within these communities are currently isolated from each other and operating very much in their own silos of purpose.

Other Scottish 'intergenerational' projects centre on use of computers and digital technology to reduce social isolation and promote shared learning and companionship. Cool Computing for Couthie Customers in Aberdeenshire involves senior school pupils (aged 16-18 years) in assisting older learners to use digital technology. This provides mutual benefit in that social isolation is reduced in the older adults, both parties develop respectful relationships and the young people can use their participation in the project as evidence of commitment and social responsibility when applying for jobs and college courses. With social isolation becoming a recognised issue for many population groups it may be that greater, innovative use of modern

IT technology, such as shown in this example, could be an appropriate and potentially accessible antidote to this challenge in rural Scotland. In addition, involvement in IT communication and learning could be a valuable arena for purposeful 'intergenerational' communication across geographically disparate areas without the need for excessive financial outlay. Young children in this era quickly develop IT skills therefore in rural, remote communities the interactive link that is possible between ELC groups, schools and other community buildings, including care homes could provide some small taster of 'intergenerational' practice and its benefits to a number of socially isolated older adults who may attend a day centre, for example, that has access to the necessary technology.

In the Sutherland area of Highland there are a number of community hubs that are linked to others through interactive screens. Used creatively these can bring benefits to people of all ages within these communities.

Another place in Sutherland, Bonar Bridge, has developed a true community hub that is well used by local people of all ages and was visited by the researcher in the course of this project. The growth of this hub, Kyle of Sutherland, came from very humble beginnings when in a bid to find premises for an after-school club, community members acquired an old decommissioned bus and with volunteer labour turned it into a well- used and loved venue for this club. From there, largely due to the enthusiasm and determination of one community resident and a small team of other volunteers, the bus has been replaced by a modern community, purpose built facility housing a cafe (serving local produce cooked on site), a soft play area, gym, venue for a youth cafe/arts and craft groups, meeting rooms, shower and toilet facilities (which can be used for a small fee by wild campers etc.) and a small outdoor astro-turf football/basketball area. The facility also provides free internet access within a small private meeting room and in general the building is well used by all generations within the community and around. There are now employed staff in the cafe and front of house, supported by a team of volunteers and casual staff. The hub welcomes suggestions from community members and groups around the services that are desired in the area and whenever possible responds positively.

Currently there is informal 'intergenerational' practice taking place here daily when locals meet up at soft play, gym and the cafe, although other purposeful interaction has been held between local young children and older adults who attend a day centre or lunch club. Although a shining example of what can be achieved by individual and community passion, will and enthusiasm there are aspects of this organisation that could be replicated in many of Highland's village halls and community spaces on a much smaller scale and could create venues for regular and genuine 'intergenerational' practice between ELC children and adult groups of all ages. In this way a number of rural communities could reap the individual and community benefits this type of interaction brings without substantial outlay, funding and

grant assistance. Kyle and Sutherland hub employees and volunteers are more than willing to share their experiences of setting up and running the facility therefore other communities, with little effort, could benefit from contacting them to arrange discussion and/or to visit before embarking on their own projects.

In Perth the local college involved students on sports and fitness courses in an intergenerational project with 5 care homes. The students designed, planned and delivered strength and balance exercise and games sessions in the care homes, improving older adults' levels of physical activity and widening their own experiences and learning related to their chosen field of study (Care Inspectorate 2015).

In Edinburgh the Balerno Walking project was established to enable and encourage people to get more active and to feel they can walk outdoors in safety. Older adults often fear going out on their own and through this project they can walk with others of all ages and feel safe, while also benefiting from the companionship and community feeling that being part of the project brings (NHS Health Scotland 2014).

Increasing physical activity and time spent outdoors is an important element in ELC groups and other early years settings (Scottish Government 2014). In some 'intergenerational' projects where children visit care homes regularly, the children are taken on foot to the care home. This is the case in an 'intergenerational' project in Nairn, one of those observed for this report. The children from Junior World nursery walk to one of the local care homes on a weekly basis, accompanied by two or three nursery staff depending on the size of the group on any given day. The walk not only gives the children the opportunity for physical exercise outdoors but provides an almost limitless source of learning. Before leaving the nursery, the children and staff talk about road safety and the rules of walking in the group. On the way the children experience an 'echo' going under a railway bridge, talk about things they see using descriptive vocabulary involving size, shape and colour, and experience the sound of their feet crunching through the fallen leaves. On one occasion the walk was stopped for a while to allow everyone the opportunity to watch an ant that was sharing the pavement with them. During the walk the children met with various members of the public and politely made space for them to pass.

Another observed 'intergenerational' project involved children from Junior World, Nairn and Croileagan Inbhir Narainn, the Nairn Gaelic nursery, travelling to Cantraybridge rural skills college where they saw and learned about various small animals and multi coloured birds and did activities, such as making bug boxes from natural materials, all alongside young adult students with learning disabilities. Many of these activities took place outdoors, giving the children the opportunity to have physical activity and outdoor play in a rich learning environment while interacting with and learning from young adults in an atmosphere of mutual acceptance. Travel to the college was in the college mini-bus which provided yet

another dimension to the children's learning.

In the north of Scotland, Parklands Care Homes Group has begun to embrace the 'intergenerational' practice of co-locating ELC services in some of their new care homes. Their new home in Inverness, due for completion in 2020, will share the location with a local ELC group. Other Parklands care homes, such as Urray House in Muir of Ord have regular visits from local nursery children and have plans to extend the frequency and level of this practice, having seen the benefits for their residents.

Other care homes and day care centres in the Highland area have strong links with local schools and/or nurseries both in urban areas such as Inverness and more rural locations such as Wester Ross and Sutherland. One care home in Sutherland is looking into the possibility of adapting part of their existing residential home, making it into a suitable space for a local ELC service in the future. It is recognised that planning for locating an ELC provision within any care home will involve close collaboration and decisions around funding for physical alterations to the space, for example, being agreed by both the ELC provider and the local NHS trust or private care home owner as appropriate.

If one ELC group in Nairn can forge strong 'intergenerational' contact and engage in truly purposeful sessions within two separate local care homes over the course of more than 2 years then it should potentially be possible for occasional sessions at other care homes throughout Scotland to be extended and become truly purposeful, even where co-location is not viable. Having an ELC service visit the premises regularly, brings benefits for the children, the residents and for the profile of the care home within the community (Section 7.3).

On 23 October 2019 it was announced that progress is well underway towards building Scotland's first purpose designed and built intergenerational community in Methil, Fife. This community will comprise a care home with 36 beds, a nursery with 39 places and a number of independent or assisted living houses in a street formation. The nursery and care home will have separate entrances but will be joined through a shared space made up of a cafe, activity room and conference or meeting rooms. The complex will have a village green for shared use by all in the community (Warrender, 2019). This demonstrates possibilities for any community building a new facility to consider integrating other community services, such as an ELC provision within the build from the planning stage rather than it becoming an add-on, afterthought facility.

As already noted, there are numerous 'intergenerational' projects of varying size and frequency taking place in many countries. This indicates growing belief in the benefits this type of practice brings to participants. Some of these projects have been relatively large or small scale but all demonstrate the possibilities that 'intergenerational' practice has in respect to addressing various social issues such as isolation and lack of community cohesion, in

addition to the benefits for the individuals actively participating in these projects. What these benefits are and who reaps these benefits will be discussed in the following section.

7.3 Benefits of 'intergenerational' practice

Benefits for older adults:

As one of the leaders in co-location of nursery and care home it is relevant to start by noting the benefits Apples and Honey/ Nightingale House have attributed to 'intergenerational' practice for their older adults. These include feelings of happiness and of being valued, reduction in loneliness and social isolation, improvement in diet, physical activity, mobility and mental well-being, revival of old and sometimes the learning of new skills, and increasing topics for conversation with families and others (Generations Working Together 2019, p 20).

Apples and Honey Nightingale run workshops for those who are interested in 'intergenerational' practice and witnessing this first -hand. These workshops include a tour of the campus, nursery and care home, participatory observations of two 'intergenerational' activities and an informative Q&A session over an informal lunch. During attendance at one of these workshops (4 November 2019), the researcher observed a number of benefits for the older adults involved in the 'intergenerational' activities. During the well- established baby and toddler group, physical contact between two residents with two very young babies clearly brought great joy and direct interaction and incidentally seemed to produce a calming effect in the babies. One resident appeared totally unresponsive both in speech and movement until she was handed a musical rattle while the group were singing songs and then slight movement in her hand could be clearly seen from her shaking the rattle along with the song. Others showed little direct interaction with the children, babies and parents, however suddenly broke into song when the routine of singing familiar songs, old and modern, started. The musical activity takes place when the children go round the adults with a bag and the chosen adult removes a toy from this bag. Each toy is an obviously well-known cue for a particular song, some of which had actions attached, prompting many of the residents to lift arms in the air, clap, sing and point.

The adults who spoke with the workshop attendees talked of the joy, pleasure and happiness that attendance at this group brought them and some mentioned that it got them out of their room, allowed them the opportunity to socialise and to feel they were playing an equal part in the group's activities. At least 3 of the residents told the researcher that they attend as many of these sessions (and others involving the children) as possible, due to the positive effects, physical and emotional these bring them. Other 'intergenerational' sessions, including one observed for this report, embrace Jewish cultural or religious customs and practice. In the observed session the nursery children and staff joined together to celebrate the farewell to the Shabatt, the day of rest. This involved all attending in a sensory experience, using taste,

smell, listening, looking, speaking and singing. The children and adults welcomed each other and shared stories of how they had spent their weekend. This activity is clearly a well-known routine for the children and the adults who all appeared to involve themselves to some level, regardless of age, ability or faith, encouraging respect and acceptance of diversity while recognising the importance this tradition held for the older attenders.

These demonstrate the "observable" outcomes of 'intergenerational' practice for older adults echoed in a number of accounts, including those of National Forum on Ageing/Generations Working Together (2015). These also mention the feelings of being valued, achieving, and developing increased communication that comes from talking about and sharing life skills and experiences with the children.

Information from The Eisner Foundation and Generations United (2018) suggests that older adults in USA shared sites experience better physical and mental health and less isolation and

Intergenerational session

loneliness. For these older adults the regular interactions with children result in an atmosphere that is more "family/home like" and promotes social enrichment and renewed interest in others. This report also states that those older adults with dementia or other cognitive impairments experienced more positive effects during the interactions with the children than during 'non-intergenerational' activities. The majority of families of adults in shared sites indicated that their family member benefited from the 'intergenerational' programme and 97% of the older adult participants themselves agreed that they benefited and felt happy, interested, loved, younger and needed (2018, p2). Observation of the sessions described above support these assertions.

Bosack (n.d.) talked of the adults experiencing a 'sense of joyful freedom' through involvement in intergenerational practice and postulated that being with children may give the adults a second chance to have what they may not have had, for a variety of reasons, with their own children. Bosack also lists increased self -worth and feeling valued among the benefits of involvement with children through intergenerational projects.

The older adults from Whinnieknowe care home, Nairn, have been sharing sessions with the children from Junior World nursery, Nairn, for more than two years. These weekly sessions continue and some were observed for this research project. The quotes that follow come from some of these residents and indicate that, at very least the intergenerational sessions bring them enjoyment and something to look forward to.

Care and Learning Alliance

"I enjoy it when the wee ones come to visit, it's good fun".   (N)

"It is good for the children and for us too. It's the most tiring of the activities but it's my favourite. It's good to be helping, not just sitting like cabbages. It was lovely when we had the graduation". (M)

"I wasn't too keen to start with but it grew on me and one little boy used to come to me every time, he became a lovely little friend". (F)

"I like having them visit at least once per week, more would be wonderful". (P)

"I enjoy having the kids come, I'm looking forward to the next session". (Ma)

Other sources identify startling individual situations where adults have shown great improvement in functioning as a result of 'intergenerational' contact. In Australia for example, it was reported that a woman with dementia who appeared to have significant difficulties with speech consistently "rediscovered" her voice when she was visited by a six-month old baby (Turnbull 2017). It should be noted that these claims however were made by a news media outlet and are corroborated only by comments allegedly attributable to the child's mother and representatives of the care facility.

Benefits for students with learning disabilities:

Although the 'intergenerational' sessions at the rural skills college took place with a group of young adult students and ELC children, they too brought benefits for the adults (in this case the students and their tutors). These benefits were expressed by students and tutors through responses to a survey initiated by the research team (Appendix 28). Some of these were also observable by the project team during the observed sessions.

The students' responses (6) mentioned that their work with the children helped with their own confidence (3), would help if they wanted to work with children in the future (2), and allowed them to help children learn about what they do, the environment and being outdoors (1). The tutors' responses (3) all highlighted the confidence the interaction with the children brought the students. One respondent mentioned the enjoyment the students got from the children's "sense of fun" during the visits. All mentioned the sense of achievement the students experienced from helping the children with tasks such as building bug boxes from available natural materials and seeing the small animals and how the students care for them (Appendix 29).

It is fundamentally relevant to discuss the benefits for children involved in 'intergenerational' projects, including those observed for the purposes of this report.

Benefits for children:

Increasing the understanding of young people about the life experiences of older people, ageing and dementia are key in our ageing society (United for all Ages 2018, p 15).

Generations Working Together (2019) list the following amongst the benefits of intergenerational practice for children in early years' settings

- Increased communication and confidence
- Learning new skills
- Opportunity to learn in a different environment
- Change in perception of what older adults can do
- Opportunity to learn about the circle of life in a non-threatening environment
- Developing respect for a different generation
- Improvement in language development
- Increased self-esteem and empathy
- Learning about the past and experiencing history 'coming alive'

ELC staff at Junior World, Nairn, completed a questionnaire regarding the intergenerational practice they have been involved in for the last two years. The following responses mirrored those from GWT with all 8 respondents stating that the children who attended the intergenerational sessions at 2 local care homes had benefited from their attendance. Staff reported the biggest benefit is the children's increased confidence, with building friendships and making relationships out with the ELC group featuring as another important benefit for the children. ELC staff also believed involvement in the 'intergenerational' programme increased the children's sense of road safety as well as increasing their level of physical activity and time spent outdoors (Appendices 23, 30 and 31).

Martin, Springate & Atkinson (2010) researched five 'intergenerational' projects, all involving school pupils and older adults. The outcomes they describe for the young people included a number of those highlighted in respect of the children above. The young people in this study enjoyed the activities, developed friendships, gained increased understanding of the older age group, gained confidence, and where projects related to the curriculum, they showed positive benefits in improved academic work. In addition, some participant young people felt they had developed a better relationship with their own grandparents and as a result of enjoying the 'intergenerational' projects would go on to choose a future career that involves or could involve 'intergenerational' practice or at least work with older adults or young children. It may well be that the benefits experienced by ELC children who have participated in intergenerational programmes from an early age may be further reinforced if these activities were extended throughout their school career. In turn this may encourage young people to consider either a future career in social care (adults) or in ELC, potentially within their home

communities. At very least these young people will have gained valuable life experience, learned to value difference and develop their confidence going into adulthood, all valuable attributes within any community.

Apples and Honey nursery (Eisner Foundation/GWT, 2019) also describe the many benefits early years children derive from 'intergenerational' practice where they are closely involved in activities with older adults. These benefits exist too for the baby and toddler age group who are involved in the weekly group within Nightingale House. They describe increased communication (verbal and pre-verbal), forming new relationships, increased physical activity, increased health and well-being, improved language development, increased self-esteem and empathy plus the additional benefits to the children from being in a calm and different environment. Apples and Honey also believe that the nursery children involved in 'intergenerational' sessions learn respect for the different, older generation and begin to learn naturally about what they describe as the 'circle of life'. Workshop participants (November 2019) learned how Apples and Honey Nightingale manage the inevitable death of older participants by liaising closely with the child or children's parents and respecting their wishes and opinions about the level of discussion and communication nursery staff have with particular children who experience the death of an older person with whom they have formed a particular relationship or attachment.

'Intergenerational' practice has also been found to benefit communities in a variety of ways, all of which have relevance in rural as well as urban communities, including those in Highland that host an ELC provision.

Benefits for communities:

Martin, Springate & Atkinson (2010) refer to some of the outcomes for participants in the five projects they described in their paper as relating to what they call 'community cohesion'.

> *Young and older people who have met through intergenerational activities will stop and speak to each other. Some participants also say that they are more likely to speak to older or younger people they have not met before, as they understand the other generation better, and are more confident about interacting with them (Ibid, p 8).*

This resonates with the community outcomes described by Generations Working Together (2019). GWT list new friendships and creating and building strong, sustainable partnerships as benefits for communities, along with myth-busting about care homes and conditions such as dementia and building confidence between the generations. There also appears to be an element of mutuality of benefits in that community members experienced in 'intergenerational' projects and activities learn how to live better, longer lives together, with both taking advantage of the 'synergies between groups and services' (Ibid, p20).

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Staff at Junior World, Nairn, who are involved in the 'intergenerational' work with two local care homes feel that the increased presence of the children out walking in the community (to the care homes) creates pleasure in passers-by and reminds community members that children are an active part of their community. The manager of one of the Nairn care homes indicated that the children's visits increase awareness within the ELC staff, parents and the wider community of their existence and the work they do. The home now experiences more contact with members of the community as a result. This in turn reduces the social isolation that some older residents experience when only interacting with other residents and care home staff.

Murphy (2012) identified an interesting community benefit from her study of several 'intergenerational' projects in Ireland. These findings indicate that where educational institutions are involved in 'intergenerational' projects they become more involved in the community as they utilise the skills of the wider community and allow their facilities to be used by the community (Ibid, p 88). Many of Scotland's schools and further education facilities are located within, or serve rural communities and as such could play a central, focal part in the life of their communities of location, making them ideal venues for 'intergenerational', community-based projects resulting in the benefits stated above.

All of the above benefits for communities where 'intergenerational' activities or programmes take place potentially lead to less migration away from communities and greater community cohesion or spirit and thus potentially enable sustainable communities to exist and thrive. This indicates the benefit 'intergenerational' projects could bring to Scottish communities, whether rural or urban. ELC groups which have historically and creatively involved themselves with other generations in their communities through innovative, consistent 'intergenerational' practice are in many ways the key therefore to making these communities somewhere that all wish to be part of throughout the majority of their lives.

Literature reviewed for this paper appears to show that there has been an increase in the number of 'intergenerational' programmes and activities taking place throughout the UK over the last 25 years. That increase notwithstanding there apparently remains a limited and weak evidence base for the effectiveness of 'intergenerational' practice in this country, with very few projects being subject to external evaluation (Granville, 2002).

It is therefore necessary to explore why 'intergenerational' practice is increasing in the UK in the face of this apparent lack of evidence of its effectiveness. This will be done by examining the fit between 'intergenerational' practice and the prevailing pedagogy of early learning and childcare in the UK and Scotland in particular and the links between 'intergenerational' practice and national policies and initiatives. It should be remembered that the benefits described above for all parties also inform and support the growth of 'intergenerational' practice in Scotland along with viability of using alternative spaces as a vehicle for innovative

childcare services in rural Scotland (Section 6).

7.4 Pedagogy and current national policies and initiatives

> *Pedagogy is about learning, teaching and development, influenced by the cultural, social and political values and principles we have for children in Scotland, and by a strong theoretical and practical base (Learning and Teaching Scotland, 2005 p17).*

Pedagogy can be described as leading to learning. ELC practitioners have a crucial role in enabling learning and creating environments in which this learning can take place. By creating opportunities for interactions and relationships with others, ELC practitioners help the child to build on the assets he or she brings to these interactions thus encouraging further learning. 'Intergenerational' practice provides such opportunities to allow children to interact and build relationships with those who are different from themselves. In many cases these others are older adults, different in age and often physical abilities, or in several of the sessions observed for this research, young adults, different due to their learning disabilities. These social, purposeful interactions are at the heart of the definition of 'intergenerational' practice.

Pedagogical practice requires a clear vision and agenda for improvement alongside an understanding of the links between policy, procedure, theory and research. This vision and improvement agenda is supported in Scotland by a number of key documents and frameworks. For example, the Curriculum for Excellence aims to help prepare all young people in Scotland to take their place in a modern society and economy (Scottish Government 2004). Scotland aims to be a diverse and inclusive society therefore being involved in 'intergenerational' practice or projects from a young age can facilitate learning about diversity and differences between people and development of a culture of inclusivity. One of the 4 capacities Curriculum for Excellence promotes for Scotland's children is that they grow to be 'confident individuals'. As was described in section 7.3 of this report, increased confidence is one of the commonly reported and observed benefits of 'intergenerational' practice for both children and older adults (Appendix 8).

A further supporting document for ELC practitioners is Building the Ambition (Scottish Government 2014). This too supports the practice of enabling children to build positive relationships which in turn can improve the developmental journey of all children, particularly those who have experienced inconsistent caregiving and initially present at their ELC settings as showing behaviour indicative of insecure attachment (Ainsworth et al 2015).

Siraj-Blatchford (2002) talks of the benefit of 'sustained shared thinking' to achieve learning with the involvement of both child and effective practitioner. He considers learning as coming from a process of cognitive construction. In the case of sustained shared thinking involving a child and practitioner, the cognitive construction is mutual, where each party engages with the understanding of the other and learning is achieved through a process of reflexive co-

construction. A pedagogical practitioner will understand the need for reflection on and in practice and will routinely practice reflexively. In an 'intergenerational' activity the child can interact and enjoy shared thinking with older adults or others as well as with their usual practitioners. This further demonstrates the fit of 'intergenerational' work within the pedagogy of early learning.

> *I like to think of a pedagogical leader as someone who understands how children learn and develop and makes this happen, taking account of every element of the service from home to school including significant relationships at home, at school and within the wider community (Education Scotland, n.d. p 14)*

Although the quote above refers to the school setting it is equally relevant for ELC settings. Note the focus on relationships from various areas of the child's life in terms of enabling and encouraging learning in an inclusive, involved way. The prevalent pedagogy of early learning indicates that involvement in a child's learning by all the significant people in his or her life is both important and effective. 'Intergenerational' programmes and activities provide that involvement in a community- based setting, with adults who often become very significant in a child's life and learning.

Statistical projections (National Records of Scotland 2016) indicate that Scotland's population, based on 2016 figures, will rise from 5,438,100 to 5,693,200 by end of June 2041. The number of people aged 75 or over is projected to increase by 27% over the next 10 years and by 79% over the next 25 years i.e. by 2041.

> *Different generations are sometimes seen as living completely separate lives, which can result in tensions. In actual fact however, by bringing generations together, we have a powerful force that can contribute solutions to many of the challenges we face and this can strengthen our communities (McDonald in NFA/GWT, 2015, p3).*

NFA/GWT (2015) produced guidelines that contextualise 'intergenerational' practice in terms of Scotland's national priorities, particularly the relationship this practice has with the Scottish National Performance Framework (NPF) Strategic Objectives. Understanding these links allows projects and their local authorities to align their 'intergenerational' practice outcomes with these national priorities. There are 16 National Outcomes within the NPF, a number of which appear directly or indirectly relevant to 'intergenerational' practice and its benefits for participants and communities. These include the following

- *We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need*
- *We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others*
- *Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective*

contributors and responsible citizens

- *We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations*
- *Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed*
- *We take pride in a strong, fair and cohesive national identity*
- *We live longer, healthier lives*
- *Our people are able to maintain their independence as they get older and are able to access appropriate support when they need it*
- *We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society*
- *Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs*

(NFA/GWT 2015, p7)

Section 7.5 Further development of 'intergenerational' practice-principles and challenges

Having explored the benefits 'intergenerational' practice brings to all involved and their communities it would appear that further development of this 'intergenerational' practice, or learning, across modern societies may go some way towards reducing social isolation, decreasing ageism and creating solidarity across generations.

> *Societies are therefore urgently required to develop mechanisms, strategies and policies that will forge the cement for ageing to be a positive experience for most. That cement is, in one word, solidarity. Solidarity between the rich and the poor, the North and the South, the public and the private sectors-but above all, the young and the old (Kalache in Pinto et al 2009, preface).*

There are however some concerns regarding the potential barriers that are perceived to exist when communities, or countries, are considering implementing 'intergenerational' programmes or practice. These include lack of training for professionals, poor investment by communities, lack of funding, a lack of motivation or interest on the part of young and old, a similar lack of interest from professionals in direct public contact and a lack of physical spaces. None of these barriers is insurmountable however, as demonstrated by

Intergenerational session – children from Junior World ELC

the many 'intergenerational' programmes described in this report.

The Junior World ELC centre manager echoed a number of these initial concerns and fears expressed by ELC staff prior to the start of their 'intergenerational' programme. A number of staff expressed concerns that the children would be too boisterous or in some ways 'misbehave' when visiting the care home. They were also concerned about the risk aspect of walking a group of children between the centre and the care homes. In relation to their work place temporarily, for regular periods, becoming a care home rather than the familiar ELC centre, there was also some apprehension. Apprehension around the expectations placed on them while out in the community and in the care home were commonly voiced. The care home staff reportedly shared the concerns around what would be expected of them. This particular 'intergenerational' project shows that these common concerns are not insurmountable and can be overcome by will, drive and enthusiasm from project leaders such as the ELC manager and the care homes' activities co-ordinators and managers. Change, professional and personal, is difficult for many people but with strong leadership and sound understanding of change management, as this example demonstrates, it is possible to enable others to adapt to these changes and subsequently see the advantages that arise from the change. This ELC manager is enthusiastic about 'intergenerational' practice and its benefits and would be a valuable source of information and support for any other ELC groups in Highland who may be considering extending their provision in this innovative and beneficial way. Such champions of 'intergenerational' practice will undoubtedly exist throughout Scotland and any group considering this type of work should consider finding these people and employing their support and advice to benefit their children and communities.

Pinto et al (2009, p20) state that 'Intergenerational' Practice has 8 core principles that should be taken into account when adopting an 'intergenerational' approach.   These principles demonstrate that willingness in itself, is not sufficient to ensure successful implementation.

 These core principles are as follows.

1. *Any proposed programme must have mutual and reciprocal benefits for both generations.*

2. *They should be participatory in that all participants are involved and have ownership in shaping and designing the programme.*

3. *Programmes should be asset based in that they help each generation discover their strengths and use these to build success, understanding and mutual respect.*

4. *Programmes must be well planned and a conscious attempt to create positive change.*

5. *It is important that programmes are culturally grounded-one size does not fit all cultural diversities that exist, even across European countries.*

6. *Programmes must strengthen community bonds and promote active citizenship across participants within these communities.*

7. They should also challenge ageism-relevant to and respectful of both generations.

8. Successful programmes should facilitate, enable and encourage cross-disciplinary training.

7.6 Conclusion

What does this mean in relation to the potential for Scottish ELC providers and services to establish and develop 'intergenerational' practice throughout Scotland, particularly in this period of expansion?

Firstly, there has to be comprehensive acceptance and understanding of the benefits 'intergenerational' programmes can bring to Scottish communities and the people inhabiting these. It may well be that the apparent scarcity of academic research on 'intergenerational' practice within Scotland, including the Highlands, will deter some communities and organisations from driving forward with the development of 'intergenerational' work. The anecdotal and descriptive 'evidence' of the benefits for all parties are however reasonably well documented and may well prove more accessible to members of the public, parents, ELC staff and others who wish to progress 'intergenerational' practice within their communities.

'Intergenerational' programmes must be well planned (Pinto) and not merely half-hearted extensions of small pockets of contact between the generations who share a community. As already stated, one of the potential barriers to developing such programmes is a lack of motivation from all parties to do so. This lack of motivation may be reduced by greater coherent publicity and national policies that raise the profile of 'intergenerational' practice and the benefits it can bring on a personal, local, national and societal level. Some countries (e.g. USA) have introduced a financial or policy incentive to encourage projects and programmes that bring benefit to several generations within a community, demonstrating national support for 'intergenerational' practice.

> *What we need to do now is embed these intergenerational practices in our national and local policies and make them happen in our communities (McDonald in GWT/NFA 2015, foreword)*

A well planned 'intergenerational' project involving ELC children and older adults need not mean complete co-location such as the Apples and Honey Nightingale situation. The Griffiths University project (2017-2019) did establish that the co-location or shared site model can however be more cost effective as generally this involves more economic use of available space and a reduction in routine running costs. There is recognition that this model is not always possible in some communities, but this should not detract from the value of smaller projects where generations come together in each other's spaces. Smaller scale projects such as Junior World/Whinnieknowe and Hebron care homes can also bring mutual benefits, reduce social isolation, increasing confidence and social cohesion. When new care homes are

planned however it may be beneficial for both care home and local ELC service if co-location is considered from the planning stage, as embraced by Parklands Care in north east Scotland.

Effective planning for supporting 'intergenerational' practice within Scottish communities should include consideration of the training necessary to provide practitioners, parents and communities with some knowledge of what 'intergenerational' practice is and can achieve. This need not be costly enough to constitute a potential barrier to development of such practice. Various organisations such as Generations Working Together (GWT) provide and deliver low cost training on 'intergenerational' practice and encourage those who undertake their short courses and workshops to cascade this training and information through their respective organisations and communities. If every area in Scotland had a designated 'intergenerational' practice champion this would lead to more effective dissemination of information and advice around all aspects of this type of work, including set- up challenges and how to overcome these. In turn more individuals, groups and communities would benefit and communities may become more cohesive and sustainable.

For the expansion in funded hours to become a viable opportunity to improve ELC services and community life in general throughout Scotland it is crucial that providers across the public and private sectors work together towards new creative models of provision, such as those discussed in this report. There will be limited benefit to children, parents and communities if some providers view the expansion merely as a vehicle to provide more of the same service they already provide. If collaboration, knowledge of alternative models of provision, including 'intergenerational' practice, and cohesion of purpose exists across ELC providers the expansion could provide more of a catalyst for change that supports and creates cohesive, sustainable communities and encourages people of all generations to work more closely together for the common good.

This section of the report has described in some detail a number of 'intergenerational' programmes internationally, nationally and locally. It has expounded the benefits of 'intergenerational' practice for all involved, along with the challenges and barriers in establishing 'intergenerational' programmes and suggestions about how these challenges can be addressed. The overarching message to emerge, however, is that an increase in 'intergenerational' practice need not be a prohibitively costly or complex solution to some of the divisions and segregation that exist in Scotland and can also enable communities to maximise their current resources and with motivation and commitment, improve the quality of life and services offered to the different generations who share Scotland's communities. These improvements include provision of inclusive, quality, innovative ELC services that involve 'intergenerational' practice, offering Scotland's children a solid base as active, confident, inclusive and socially aware individuals.

Care and Learning Alliance

SECTION 8. TRANSPORT

8.1 To what degree can transport transform Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) provision in the rural Highlands?

For children, a mobile nursery has the potential to enhance quality and variety by transporting children to diverse settings which allow for explorative and adventurous sessions that promote learning through play. Quality ELC provision in fragile rural communities is seen as essential, enabling parents to return to work and to make valuable contributions to the local economy and society.

Survey responses from the practitioners (Appendix 1) demonstrate a recognition of the potential benefits to be gained from mobile nurseries. Out of 38 respondents, 12 believed there could be benefits for themselves and 23 for families from using transport to support provision. Summarising their qualifying comments, they perceived the greatest benefits to be the enhanced convenience for families, particularly in remote areas and areas of social deprivation.

> *"This would be advantageous for rural areas or areas of extreme social deprivation"* - Respondent 7

> *"We are aware that some families cannot access funded 2-year old places they should be entitled to because of lack of provision or transport"* - Respondent 10

Moreover, respondents believe it can enhance the childhood experience by improving inclusivity and interaction with larger groups, promoting outdoor learning and encouraging exploration.

The focus of this section is to assess the viability of mobile nurseries in rural settings and to ascertain how transport options can be deployed to benefit the young learner, their family and extended community. The sub-sections which follow address mobile service provision in Scotland's rural communities, international use of mobile nurseries, and lessons to be learned from mobile providers of educational and non-educational services followed by a discussion of the potential for mobile nursery provision in Scotland's rural communities.

8.2 Brought to you by horse and cart – mobile provision in Scotland's rural communities

Mobile service provision has been a way of life for rural communities since before the introduction of mass-produced motor cars, with milk being delivered using horse drawn carts around the time of World War 1 (Liddell 2017). Even in post-war Britain, car ownership was

low and mobile grocery vans visited communities to provide essential foods (Herts Memories 2009).

Within rural communities, mobile service provision is still commonplace, with mobile banking (Royal Bank of Scotland 2019), libraries (Highlife Highland 2019) and health service provisions (Blood Transfusion Service 2019, NHS Highland 2019a NHS Highland 2019b) all present in the Highlands today. Nationally, cinema is brought to remote communities by Screen Machine (2019), and Early Years Play sessions are brought to communities by the Play, Talk Read (PTR) bus.

Some local authorities have seen the introduction of mobile children's services with mobile crèche facilities provided in Grampian and Tayside by Flexible Childcare Services Scotland (FCSS 2019) and Strathclyde (Maryhill Mobile Children's Services (MMCS) 2019). Moreover, Shetland Island's Council (2019) provide mobile opportunities for group play with their Play Van which brings toys, games and play equipment to their remote communities.

The mobile service delivery discussed in this section suggests there is merit in exploring the potential for mobile ELC provision within rural communities. It is important to understand what makes them successful where they do operate in order to assess their viability for use within ELC provision in rural communities. The next section discusses the logistical arrangements of mobile services operating in the Highlands. Furthermore, the potential for mobile ELC services should be considered within the context of the 6 key themes identified in Section 1.1.

8.3 Mobile approaches around the world

This section expands the focus to the global arena, discussing how mobile nurseries are used internationally. Appendix 32 discusses the historic use of mobile nurseries in New Zealand, their widespread use in Scandinavia and the inducements the Australian government offer to encourage the development of mobile provision within Australia's rural communities. While the review was limited to English speaking countries and literature, there was still a disappointing return on the research into international mobile nurseries.

While the focus of this research is developing ELC provision to sustain rural communities, the drive for mobile nurseries in Scandinavia was borne out of a desire to take children from inner-city suburbs to natural environments for their early learning and development (Ladru and Gustafson 2018). These are more closely aligned to the type of outdoor model that Evergreen Nursery in Glasgow provide and which was discussed in Section 6.4 and facilitating the benefits that can be achieved from outdoor learning.

Kiitokori, a Finnish company have supplied 10 mobile pre-schools to customers in Norway and Sweden, and recently supplied their first mobile pre-school to a Finnish customer. These modified buses are equipped with kitchens, drying cabinets, napping areas, storage areas and

seats which can be arranged in a way which best facilitates group engagement. However, these custom-made vehicles cost around 450,000 Euros exc. VAT. (Kiitokori 2019).

While these modified buses offer excellent opportunities for outdoor exploration at dispersed settings, with exceptional facilities for essential provisions the cost is likely to be prohibitive for most providers in Scotland.

The Australian government offer grants to support mobile nursery provision. Furthermore, they recognise that mobile provision can contribute to sustaining rural communities and offer double the financial inducements to providers in remote or rural communities as they do to urban providers (NSW Government 2019). Nutton (2013) observed health and childhood development benefits within indigenous communities as a result of the prevalence of mobile pre-schools in Australia.

These international examples of mobile nurseries demonstrate that there is no universal method of using vehicles for mobile nursery provision. Solutions for rural Highland communities will need to be tailored to the financial, geographic, demographic and social parameters of each community.

8.4 Lessons from other mobile providers

Before exploring the potential for mobile nurseries, it is worthwhile summarising the existing mobile service provision that exists within the Highlands and other rural regions in Scotland, to comprehend the benefits and challenges of mobile provision in rural communities. The purpose of this analysis is to draw lessons from the various delivery methods to assess the potential for mobile ELC provision.

Mobile services, including some of those noted in Section 8.2 can be categorised as entertainment, health, therapeutic and children's services and are discussed in order of their relevance to mobile nurseries.

Entertainment

Mobile entertainment services are provided by Screen Machine and Highlife Highland. The Screen Machine is a mobile cinema which visits rural communities all over Scotland, while Highlife Highland provide library services to rural communities in 8 areas of the Highlands.

The Screen Machine (2019) is a 33ton extendable vehicle used for cinematic performance. It visits rural communities throughout Scotland, typically spending a couple of days in each village or town before moving on to the next. Highlife Highland operate 8 mobile libraries in vehicles supplied by Highland Council, designed to provide library services for a number of geographical areas and their communities.

While it is encouraging that remote and rural communities do not miss out on these entertainment services due to the mobile provision, it is important to recognise that their attendance in communities is periodic, and in the case of the Screen Machine sporadic.

Nevertheless, they ensure rural communities receive non-essential services and may contribute to the long-term sustainability of the communities they serve.

Logistically, these services are provided on a periodic basis and therefore it is difficult to observe any valuable lessons which can be transferred to ELC provision and the key themes.

Health

Kiitokori mobile nursery bus

Mobile health services which operate in the Highlands include NHS dental services, breast screening and blood donation.

The mobile dental service uses a modified truck to bring dental services to remote Highland communities including Kinlochbervie, Eigg and Colonsay. The dental director of NHS Highland, John Lyon expressed concerns about running costs and the service being reliant on one vehicle with no resilience if it should breakdown. These concerns have caused the dental team to re-evaluate their provision to rural communities and there is now an option being considered to utilise portable dental equipment situated in clinical rooms located in health facilities. The dental equipment would be transferred by an NHS van and set up within the surgery to overcome many of the obstacles presented by the modified truck.

The mobile breast screening unit is a resource which is used in 37 communities, ranging from small villages to large towns, throughout the Highlands and Western Isles. The unit has been custom designed to allow the safe usage of the screening machinery in terms of the radiation it emits. Like the mobile dental service, this leaves the breast screening service susceptible to a complete loss of provision should a situation arise where the unit is unavailable and as it is a three yearly screening programme, it is imperative they run to schedule as in previous years.

Discussing the operations with Pauline MacDonald, the clinical breast screening manager, the proposed transition of the mobile dental service from a mobile facility to a vehicle transferring equipment was introduced. Pauline indicated that unfortunately this would not be an option for the breast screening service due to the practicalities of installing specialist radiography equipment. For the purposes of this study, Pauline's preference for using a vehicle as a method of equipment transfer reinforces the perceived advantages of such vehicle deployment rather than modifying it for the purpose of providing the service.

Blood donation is crucial to the NHS and donations can be made at blood donor centres in all of Scotland's major cities. However, to maximise donations they provide a mobile service where trained staff visit rural communities, including 6 towns in the Highlands, to receive donations. The service has a fleet of vehicles and do not require specialist equipment, so

breakdowns are only ever likely to impact one session as replacement trucks are never far away.

In terms of mobile nurseries, it is worth considering that Give Blood are satisfied with their current provision, whereby they bring equipment and staff to host venues. This appears to be the optimal vehicle use as the dental service plan to transition to this method of service delivery and the breast screening department would like to but are prevented by the practicalities of safeguarding radiation emitting equipment. Therefore, it may be more practical to have pooled resources brought to remote settings rather than paying the significant costs required to modify a vehicle for the purposes of providing ELC sessions or transporting children to alternative settings.

Therapeutic

Venture Mor (2019) is a social enterprise company, owned by Venture Trust, designed to provide wilderness therapy programmes for young people struggling with difficult circumstances. The programme consists of a 14-day camping expedition in the Scottish Highlands with highly qualified and experienced staff who provide a 'progressive, developmental and therapeutic programme balancing activity and reflection'.

Participants are required to make their own way to Venture Trust's Stirling base, fully equipped for the 2-week adventure. From there the participants and two members of staff transfer to the starting point using a mini-bus and van. The minibus driver has undertaken the requisite Minibus Driver Awareness and Safety (MiDAS) training, a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers and the van is small enough that it can be driven using a standard driving license.

For those considering mobile nursery provision the Venture Mor therapy programme demonstrates how different vehicles can be used for different purposes in rural communities. Thus far, the discussion has been around bringing children to the setting or equipment to the children; Venture Mor demonstrates a method where people and equipment are both brought to an ideal setting, like the Scandinavian model using the Kittikori buses.

This method of service delivery has the potential to enhance quality of provision through increased variety and may facilitate outdoor learning opportunities and all the benefits which can arise from it.

Children's Services

Mobile services designed for children include the Play Talk Read (PTR) bus, a national service whereby play sessions are offered to rural communities, either on a rotational basis or at events, and the Play Van, a community facility for the Shetland Isles which provides play equipment for groups of children up to the age of 12.

PTR bus

The PTR bus operates nationally as a touring facility and is designed to host sessions where visiting children can use the van's resources to play or read, either individually or in groups.

The vehicle has been modified to include an expandable section which is deployed when parked to create additional indoor space. Its interior design maximises storage space to allow for a small group of children to play indoors, while the van contains numerous resources which encourages outdoor play.

To purchase and modify the PTR bus cost over £100,000 and is suitable for transferring play and learning equipment but not children and it is not capable of providing all the essential Health and Social Care Standards provisions to satisfy the Care Inspectorate (2018a).

The PTR bus is a powerful example of how a vehicle could be used to bring ELC equipment and staff to a rural community. The vehicle modification allows for storage of many materials for ELC sessions and can provide shelter and napping opportunities for children.

It is difficult to envisage how a vehicle like the PTR bus could provide an adequate ELC provision on its own, however such a facility has the potential to enhance variety, and thereby quality of provision, if it could be purchased and used as a pooled resource among several rural communities.

Play Van

Play Van is a scheme funded by the Shetland Council which aims to deliver play opportunities to children all over the Shetland archipelago. It is based in and administered by staff in Lerwick, with the central storage point accommodating the van and an inventory of toys suitable for various age groups. The van could not take all the toys to one location and it is essential they know the age group, so the most appropriate toys are brought.

The van can be requested by schools or playgroups throughout Shetland and is staffed by two practitioners. Responsibility for the safety of the children remains with the service user who books the provision, apart from in the case of the bouncy castle. The bouncy castle requires annual insurance and inspections and two members of trained staff must be present at all times to comply with legislation around the provision of such inflatable equipment.

Unlike the modified PTR bus, the Play Van is a vehicle which is not designed to be accessed by children, therefore it does not have the capacity to accommodate children during inclement weather and would not be suitable for napping. The Play Van would be more suitable where a building is available that does not have the required equipment for an ELC session.

The PTR bus and the Play Van are examples whereby ELC sessions could be facilitated by staff bringing play and learn equipment to a group of young children. While there is merit to this method in that resources can be pooled and shared within several communities, the new

enhanced hours regime may mean that demand exceeds supply as communities seek to ensure their children have access to 30 hours/week.

This method can help raise attainment by providing variety and enhancing quality of provision. Furthermore, it may improve the flexibility of service providers if they are unable to access their normal setting for 30 hours each week and a vehicle of this type can make up the shortfall.

This section demonstrates that the use of vehicles has the potential to support the expansion to 1140 hours in rural communities, but there are many ways in which this can be achieved. Section 8.5 provides analysis of the various options; the benefits that can be gained and the obstacles that would need to be overcome

8.5 Exploring the potential

Having discussed the existing mobile provision in Scotland's rural communities, the benefits and challenges of their operations and the methods in which mobile nurseries are deployed in Scandinavia and Australia, it is now worth considering how this can be applied to mobile nursery provision in Scotland's rural and remote communities.

What became apparent from the literature review and discussions with both ELC staff and other mobile providers is that there is no universal solution. Three separate propositions were identified for further investigation. These are identified below and the merits of each are discussed individually

- Mobile facility which hosts the ELC sessions
- Pop-up nurseries
- Transportation to bring children to and from home

Mobile facility

A mobile facility is a vehicle which has been modified and is capable of hosting ELC sessions. It has the potential to fill gaps in building availability for ELC provision thereby limiting the distance children need to travel and enabling parents to work. It has not been possible to identify any provider who uses vehicles in this fashion, with the closest example being the PTR bus, possibly because of economic or practical considerations.

In terms of the potential to use such a facility for ELC provision, there are both financial and practical constraints that would have to be overcome. Practically, the lack of running water makes achieving hygiene standards problematical, while the lack of a food preparation area makes meal provision challenging - both these obstacles are currently being addressed by Evergreen Nursery in Glasgow who are confident of finding solutions (Section 6.4). It is possible to have one section of the vehicle set aside for napping when required and camp beds and blankets could easily be stored. However, in times of inclement weather when all the children are in the vehicle it would be challenging to create the conditions for adequate

napping or quality ELC sessions. Financially, the vehicle cost is prohibitive and out-with the viability of most individual nurseries, for whom £100,000 could be better spent expanding or modifying existing premises with a greater return on investment likely than if a vehicle was purchased.

There could be scope for a vehicle being utilised as a pooled resource within a network of nurseries whether local authority or private. Where individual providers have a shortfall in their ability to provide 30 hours of sessions due to their location tenure the mobile nursery could provide the solution. This would also have the benefit of increasing resilience against fluctuating user numbers for smaller providers in remote communities. In this scenario, only a qualified driver would be required to take the vehicle to the location and trained staff would continue to deliver the sessions.

There is also potential for a mobile facility to be used to complement the existing community provision by hosting sessions out-with the operating hours of the existing ELC provider. As discussed in Section 6.5, hosting sessions during alternative times would require community engagement to assess demand prior to implementation but has the potential to provide variety and reinforce community sustainability.

Inside the Play Talk Read bus

The vehicle, like any other ELC setting would have to comply with the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) and be subject to the scrutiny of the Care Inspectorate (2018b), the custodians of the standard. Logistically, attaining some standards would be more challenging, especially around toileting, hygiene, personal care and meal provision. However, if these practical challenges can be overcome it could enhance the delivery of other standards, specifically those concerned with active lifestyles, skills development and personal growth.

To summarise mobile facilities, a vehicle modified to host ELC sessions is a viable, if financially prohibitive, proposition. It could serve several communities where building availability is a problem for one or two sessions per week or by enhancing accessibility and sustainability through providing sessions at alternative times during the day, through the week and out-with term time. While it is unlikely to enhance the quality of childhood experience as the facility would be stationery for the whole period of the session, this gives parents the options of blended provision and allows for children to undertake different ELC sessions with different staff and pedagogies.

Pop-up nurseries

A pop-up nursery would work along the same terms as the Play Van, mobile beast screening and the new proposed mobile dental service in that it would involve the provision of equipment and/or staff being brought from a central location to rural communities. It is worth highlighting that the dental service is moving from provision within a modified vehicle to this sort of provision due to financial and logistical considerations.

Such a scheme could be coordinated by either the local authority or a network of nurseries to pool resources and organise a schedule for them to be at different venues as and when required. The scheme could be expanded to include pop-up facilities such as a shelter (yurt or tent), toilet, changing facilities and would be run by staff who are qualified to deliver ELC sessions. It could be designed to use school buildings or community halls, especially at the weekends and out-with term times, to provide cover during the more problematical periods for parents, where these constraints can be overcome by the facilities within the school.

Moreover, if the provider has adequate equipment and facilities, outdoor sites could be identified and used. This would promote enhanced variety of provision for children who may normally be confined to indoor settings, thus facilitating all the personal benefits of outdoor provision.

Such a scheme has the potential to offer flexibility and variety to existing provision in rural communities, allowing families who struggle to arrange childcare out-with traditional operating hours the opportunity to use a service which is dedicated to a pedagogy which prioritises quality learning. For parents, this may facilitate enhanced working opportunities which contribute to the sustainability of their community.

An email correspondence with the Care Inspectorate registration team confirmed that scheme coordinators could use sites that have a term-time registration, but as the building was hosting a new provider out-with term-time a separate registration would be required.

In summary, a centrally controlled, pop-up nursery scheme provides greater financial viability than a mobile facility. The staff and equipment can be brought to satellite sites at a far reduced cost yet provide the same quality of provision as a mobile facility. This method has the potential to satisfy demand for ELC services out-with term time, thus enhancing the sustainability of the communities they could serve. Pedagogically, there are no disadvantages to such a delivery method, however careful consideration would be required to ensure continuity and avoid repetition between the term time and mobile providers.

Transportation to bring children to and home from their setting

Difficulties in accessing services was listed as one of the main contributors to rural poverty in Highland Council's Early Year Services plan (2017a). For rural providers, problems can be

exacerbated by parents who commute to work opting to take their children to a provider closer to their work rather than to their local provider (COSLA/Scottish Government 2013).

In Scotland, the local authorities are obliged to provide transport to schools for pupils with additional support needs which could be personal or related to their proximity to school and their ability to negotiate that journey (MyGov.Scot 2019). This arrangement is not replicated for ELC attendance to the detriment of some rural settings, who are disadvantaged when it is more convenient for parents to bring their children to a setting in an urban setting close to their work.

In our survey of rural parents (Appendix 7) 6 respondents indicated their children attended the ELC closest to a parents' workplace, with 4 confirming they would prefer to use their local setting if the logistical barriers could be overcome. Transport shortfalls jeopardise the viability of rural ELC settings and their place within the fabric of their community.

The Pairc Playgroup in Lewis find themselves in this precarious position and are attempting to procure a minibus to provide transport for children to and from their homes.

CASE STUDY - Pairc Playgroup, August 2019

> *The Pairc Playgroup on the west coast of Lewis overcomes transport difficulties for families by collecting children from their family home and dropping them off again when their session is complete. The playgroup had five members of staff (with only two working at any time) and for the 2018/9 session they collected 9 children using their own cars. The setting could accommodate 12 children to stay within their ratio and could host up to 14 with access to a minibus and by making the provision mobile. The playgroup manager is aware of several families in the area who would use the service if their children could be collected. These families currently bring their children into Stornoway for their ELC provision as it closer to their work.*

> *To this end, the playgroup manager has ambitions to lease a new minibus at a cost of around £4000 per year. She is currently trying to secure funds by applying for grants and is hopeful of securing at least £2000 from the Tesco 'Bags of Help' scheme which provides funds for community projects. The staff have the required categories on their driving licenses however they will undertake MiDAS training.*

> *By procuring a minibus the Pairc Playgroup can continue to visit community groups such as the senior social club and visit the various sites including the beach and the peat marshes which they use for outdoor learning activities.*

> *The potential benefits anticipated by the playgroup manager are two-fold. In the short term, it enables a greater number of children to use the setting and makes attending more affordable, while continuing to facilitate external visits. Furthermore, rural communities are subject to demographic fluctuations and by extending the geographic*

range from which families can attend the nursery it also enhances the viability of the nursery in the long term.

Update, February 2020.

The playgroup has managed to secure £6.700 in funding from Tesco Bags of Help, Pairc Community Council, the Western Isles Development Trust and a contribution from a social club. They now plan to purchase a minibus and all the staff have successfully completed the MIDAS training.

Concerns have been raised about this practice at a senior level within the Care Inspectorate around the amount of time some children may spend travelling as opposed to learning and this would have to be a prime consideration of anyone contemplating this type of provision and what learning could potentially take place during the course of the journey. It is possible for the transportation to take place out-with the session times, but this will increase the demand on staff hours. Alternatively, if the time spent on transport is excessive, designated pick up points could be arranged which achieves a balance of increasing the accessibility of the provision while minimising the impact on the schedule of parents.

Moreover, procuring a vehicle introduces the potential to add variety and quality to a settings' provision by facilitating external visits to outdoor and alternative indoor sites including care homes for intergenerational sessions. Vehicle procurement allows for children to visit a variety of places, introducing them to their community and cultural and environmental themes into their experiential learning.

Outside view of the Play Talk Read bus

By expanding the provision beyond the registered setting, the provider expands the curriculum and may make a role in ELC more desirable to the workforce. Moreover, it may contribute to the efforts to redress the gender gap that exists within the workforce, as anecdotal evidence suggests that there are a higher proportion of male workers in outdoor settings.

Transport was also identified as the greatest barrier to children using the proposed new ELC provision at Highland Wildlife Park in the survey to parents. To address this, contact was made with the local community transport scheme, Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company (BSCTC) who advised they would have the capacity to transport children to and from the HWP. The group, who will soon be rebranded as Badenoch and Strathspey Community ConnXions, use drivers who are PVG

approved and have vehicles with the capacity to transport nursery-aged children, although children under the age of three would require their own booster seat. They could provide a service where they collect children at a central point and return them after the session, using either a 12-seater minibus or wheelchair accessible car.

Another proposed community transport solution is the shared use of transport for bringing rural service users to their respective ELC and day care centre settings. Day care centres already provide transport for their service users and there could be an opportunity to share costs and piggy-back their provision. This solution would also have the benefit of introducing young children and elderly service users to each other and could provide the opportunity for passengers to participate in singing songs or nursery rhymes together in intergenerational sessions which could be extended into sessions at either setting.

While community transport options may be more cost-effective than long term leasing, the concerns raised by the Care Inspectorate around travel and engagement persist and would have to be addressed to make this a viable option for HWP.

Clearly the method of providing transport solutions has the potential to enhance the viability of rural ELC providers by enabling them to extend their numbers and expand their geographical range. However, in extremely remote locations it might be that the transportation of children may take an excessive amount of time which may adversely affect provision quality or staff expectations.

8.6 Conclusion

Transport solutions have the potential to enhance accessibility, promote flexibility and quality of provision and contribute to the sustainability of rural communities.

Mobile facilities, like the PTR bus which are designed to host ELC sessions and pop-up provisions like the Play Van, where staff and equipment are brought to community facilities have the potential to complement existing provisions. Whether this additional provision is required because a setting does not have 30 hours of access to their community building, or optional to enhance flexibility and accessibility these transport solutions have the potential to sustain rural communities.

Both these mobile solutions have the potential to expand provision into the weekends and holiday periods, creating flexibility of choice for families who require ELC services out-with the traditional operating hours. In doing so, children have access to blended provision which may incorporate disparate pedagogies and thus enhancing their ELC experience.

The procurement of vehicles should also be considered for transportation of children to a setting as well as for bringing children to external sites within their community for varied play and learning opportunities. The study of Pairc Playgroup demonstrates how an ELC settings'

viability can be determined by its ability to attract children to the setting and transport provision has been identified as a method for enhancing viability. Furthermore, a setting can add pedagogical variety and quality to their provision by identifying and visiting local sites whose environment and people can contribute to quality ELC sessions.

In the example of Pairc Playgroup, faced with the collapse of the local transport network, they favour the leasing of a minibus on a long-term tenure. However, alternative solutions for transporting children, including shared transport arrangements with community day-care centres or community transport schemes may be preferable where available. For local authorities and private networks of ELC providers, it might be that vehicles leased as pooled resources and shared among their settings is the most cost-effective option.

Central to any consideration in the transportation of children, should be the experience of the child. The Care Inspectorate suggest 30 minutes is the most a child should be in a vehicle, but this limit should be taken in the context that the travelling time is used productively, where there is active engagement between a practitioner and children, thus requiring two staff members in the vehicle at all times. Failure to ensure children participate in play and learning activities in transit will mean the benefits arising from increased flexibility and choice are negated by the reduction in quality that transportation would create. However, this should be considered an opportunity, and where quality learning can be provided during the journey, this can enhance variety of learning for the children and in shared arrangements introduce children to intergenerational engagement.

To summarise, there is no definitive answer as to whether mobile nurseries can contribute to facilitating quality childcare which enhances the sustainability of rural communities. Each community must assess the merits of these methods in cognisance of their financial, social and demographic parameters, however it is important that mobile solutions are considered as part of any strategy for ELC provision in rural communities.

SECTION 9. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Overview

In this project we have explored the background to the Scottish Government's early learning and childcare expansion agenda, its aims and its expectations for both individuals and communities. Our focus on four different strands of work, (workforce, alternative times and places, intergenerational partnerships and transport) has taken an in depth look at innovative models which may support providers in embracing the extended hours agenda, whilst enhancing and sustaining rural communities and encouraging partnership working. We have also identified some key workforce issues across care services which should be considered.

There are many opportunities for ELC providers highlighted, including a review of options for outdoor learning. We have also identified some of the challenges for ELC providers, communities and parents in terms of meeting expectations and needs, particularly in rural communities.

In reviewing the recommendations put forward in this report, providers should consider their own unique situation in relation to finance, environment and demographics. Our review of different models of ELC and of outdoor learning has shown that it is possible to make a good quality outdoor setting anywhere using anything. However, consideration is required on the environmental impact of permanent ELC activities and mitigation strategies against negative impacts, such as habitat destruction and biodiversity loss must be considered. Whilst there does not need to be ready access to woods or the countryside, using good outdoor learning spaces can support providers in the issue of space, enhanced hours and meeting the expectations of the health and social care standards.

In terms of finance, providers should be mindful of the assets available in their local communities, in terms of facilities and businesses and try to capitalise on these. Options for reviewing joint working and partnership arrangements should also be considered, from using shared space, creating opportunities for intergenerational partnerships, to approaching local landowners and businesses to support the enhancement of ELC services in their area. We have also learned that population, in terms of critical mass, is really important and for small communities, this may mean pooling resources with others, or again looking at partnership arrangements locally. Finally, our overall conclusions and recommendations summarised below in each of the sections encompass actions both for the opportunities presented for ELC providers and the challenges that currently exist.

9.2 Strong and sustainable workforce

A dedicated, fully-qualified, competent and confident workforce is vital to the provision of high-quality Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) services throughout Scotland. The expansion in funded hours' entitlement due to commence in August 2020 will require a considerable increase in the number of such workers available for employment in this sector. The availability of potential ELC workers is already limited in rural areas of the country due to issues of transport, general access to employment and training opportunities and the comparatively low population inhabiting these areas (The Scottish Government 2018).

The literature reviewed for this section of the research report encompassed documents on training and qualifications relevant to ELC, the nature and composition of the existing Scottish ELC workforce, the pedagogy supporting effective ELC provision and examples of what has been done in parts of the country to make more effective use of the available workforce in

rural communities across health and care, including childcare. All literature was considered through the lens of innovative, alternative models of ELC that would support and sustain rural communities throughout Scotland.

Through this review it became clear that the current ELC workforce lacks the diversity indicative of Scotland's population, particularly in respect of gender. Some measures have been taken to address this gender imbalance and promote ELC careers as suitable for men as well as women. However, at the heart of this imbalance are societal views about gender roles, with caring for young children being seen as 'mothering' and predominantly women's work therefore somehow diminished in value. Changing this will require promotion of ELC as a viable career choice to all pupils and students throughout all stages of the education system, and national promotion of ELC work, its value and influence on children's learning and development. The Scottish Government, ELC providers and existing ELC workers will require to play an active part in the promotion of ELC careers. Giving consideration to raising the level of qualification required for work in the ELC sector may also have a positive impact on professionalising the sector.

There have been extensions to the range of routes to qualifications in ELC. Currently the baseline qualification is SVQ3 (SQCF Level 7) or the HNC Childhood Practice. There is some flexibility within the SVQ3, primarily through judicious selection of optional units. The Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA) have no immediate plans to review the SVQ3 award. Modern and Graduate Apprenticeship schemes now exist in many areas. To support the expansion agenda and beyond, all of these must be embraced as viable qualification routes by all ELC providers, training and education services and be accessible to all prospective workers, regardless of geographical location. Foundation Apprenticeships are a potential option to attract those still in school to consider ELC as a positive career choice but this requires all school-based careers, teaching and support staff to have genuine knowledge of what ELC work is all about and its value in the continuum of learning for Scotland's children. There also requires to be consistency among Scotland's universities of the equivalent value of a Foundation Apprenticeship vis-a-vis Highers and other national qualifications.

In rural communities there are limited employment opportunities and a lack of potential workers to increase the general workforce, including ELC. Flexible use of the existing and future workforce is therefore necessary to maintain and increase services and enable sustainability of rural communities. A small- scale survey of existing ELC workers (Appendix 19) indicated a willingness to undertake additional qualifications to supplement their existing ones in order to create this workforce flexibility and increase their potential employability. To create maximum flexibility, various professional disciplines such as ELC services and health and social care agencies require to put aside notions around working within their own

professional silos and work together to meet the needs of these rural communities, their residents and the available workforce.

The expansion in funded hours is just one of the potential catalysts for planning and introducing alternative and innovative ELC services (Sections 6, 7, 8). Continuing to provide exactly the same type of service but over more hours every week will not necessarily offer parents and children the flexibility of choice that they need or want. Nor are these services always helpful to families in rural communities. The workforce requires accessible qualification, training and development opportunities, including wider access to advanced awards such as the BA Childhood Practice, to equip them to effectively deliver a quality service regardless of their setting or work pattern.

Recommendations for ELC providers:

Consider methods of consistently and systemically promoting the value and professionalism of ELC practitioners' work and of careers in the sector for all.

- Encourage colleagues to consider the expansion in funded hours as an opportunity to provide more innovative and creative services.
- Be prepared to facilitate or seek out a range of training and qualification opportunities.
- Work closely with other social care providers and their local communities to ensure provision of sustainable, financially viable, community- based services.

Recommendations for Scottish and local Government:

- Consider a review of the salaries and conditions for ELC staff to ensure alignment and parity with those in other similar professions.

Recommendations for registration bodies, training providers and academic institutions:

- Consider reviewing the qualifications relevant to ELC and Care services to embrace relevant, current models of ELC delivery and the needs of Scottish communities.
- Higher Education establishments to review and promote to students the options for a dual or more generic qualification across ELC and adult care.
- All schools and careers services to consistently, knowledgeably and at an early stage, promote ELC as one of a range of potential, worthwhile career options to all pupils.
- Scotland's universities and education bodies to agree the equivalent value of a Foundation Apprenticeship via-a-vis Highers and other national qualifications.
- The Care Inspectorate and SSSC to work with ELC and social care providers to explore innovative ways of joint working and registration.

9.3 Alternative places and times

A consistent theme among the staff during visits we made to all outdoor settings was the benefits of outdoor, play-based learning, which corroborated the extensive literature that

exists promoting this delivery method. On an individual level physical, psychological, health and well-being and developmental benefits were all observed, while communities benefitted from the enhanced focus on environmental stewardship evidenced among the children.

In order to promote these benefits, the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a), created and adjudicated by the Care Inspectorate, require all children to have daily access to outdoor spaces and regular access to natural environments. At a time when the ability of some ELC providers to meet the transition to 1140 is being questioned due to concerns around capacity and spaces it is recommended that providers consider how they can introduce regular, quality outdoor, play-based learning to their children.

The options include site development to allow children permanent access to both indoor and outdoor spaces, use of an outdoor setting dispersed from the ELC building or permanent relocation to an outdoor setting. Clearly, these options must be considered within the setting's social, demographic, environmental and financial parameters but by maximising a child's exposure to outdoor, play-based learning a provider enhances the opportunity to realise these benefits in their children.

Alongside the personal benefits for children, an expansion of outdoor learning opportunities can enhance the pedagogical variety and quality. In terms of the workforce, varied learning environments may make a career in ELC more appealing. This, according to some outdoor providers is especially relevant for males who are under-represented in the sector, are generally more attracted to outdoor provision and contribute towards enhanced ELC staff retention levels.

For providers considering a transition to develop greater opportunities for outdoor learning, it is worth highlighting the importance of ELC provision to fragile, rural communities to local landowners and exploring partnership arrangements which can enhance both the quality and flexibility of provision and the sustainability of their community.

Moreover, most national organisations have educational or engagement officers who seek to generate community interest within their sector and these should be part of any consideration. The National Trust for Scotland, Scottish Land and Forestry, various community

Making bug hotels at Cantraybridge College, Highland

land and forest owners, religious groups and small businesses all engaged with this project with a view to testing demand and suitability of their facility and these should be explored on a local level. However, the list is not exhaustive, and approaches should be made to any enterprise who can provide access to land which can facilitate quality outdoor opportunities.

An observation which was made and supported by several managers from outdoor settings was the lack of continuity for their children when they are introduced to primary school and found themselves "confined" to the classroom. It is clearly more challenging for a primary school teacher to bring 25 children to an outdoor environment. However, this is a challenge that must be overcome if the benefits that are gained by our younger children at outdoor ELC settings are to grow and derive further benefits throughout their school years.

While there was less promotion of expanding provision out-with the traditional ELC operating times, flexibility of provision was identified as an important theme for the expansion. Furthermore, practitioners recognised the positive impacts this could have for families within their community, although there was a reluctance among some staff to explore this further.

The demand for provision at alternative times exists, both in terms of daily operating hours and weekend and holiday provision, but this must be meticulously explored on a setting by setting basis. In addition to the anticipated increase in demand, consideration should be given to the impact on the quality of existing provision and whether this quality can be maintained during the new hours of provision. Also crucial is staff engagement in the process throughout, as such a transition is likely to require an amendment to staff terms and conditions.

Probability suggests that demand is more likely to exist in urban communities, however even an expansion by an urban provider has the potential to benefit neighbouring rural communities, especially where parents are working within the urban community. It is also important to note, that 'wrap around' care can be crucial for rural parents to enable them to commute into and back from work further afield. Where demand exists, such an expansion has the potential to offer the flexibility which ensures all children have access to quality ELC provision when it is required and can sustain rural communities by allowing families to continue using a local service.

Recommendations for ELC providers:

- Explore how you can facilitate permanent outdoor learning through development of your existing setting.
- Engage with local landowners to explore how you can facilitate outdoor learning by bringing children to dispersed settings.

- Engage with local landowners to explore how you can facilitate outdoor learning by establishing a new outdoor provision.
- When engaging in outdoor, play-based learning ensure the pedagogy is child-led and place-based to maximise benefits.
- Ensure that the comfort of the children is a primary consideration to optimise engagement, and that alternatives arrangements are in place should conditions be detrimental to fulfilling outdoor sessions.
- Explore the demand for providing sessions at alternative times to enhance accessibility and setting viability and implement where demand is identified.
- For any transition, consider the impact on your workforce and ensure they are engaged throughout from the initial planning and throughout the process.

Recommendations for the Scottish Government:

- Explore how the benefits gained from outdoor ELC attendance can be built upon by ensuring continued exposure to outdoor environments throughout the school years

9.4 Intergenerational Partnerships

There is a considerable body of written material on the topic of intergenerational practice involving school and college students, community interest groups, young children, babies and older adults. The literature review carried out for this report found that much of this literature is descriptive rather than what may be considered academic research. Internationally, intergenerational practice is embedded in the culture of many countries as demonstrated by literature from USA, the Netherlands, Japan, Australia, Singapore and others (Section 7 and Appendix 8). What all the reviewed literature had in common however, whether academic or descriptive, was an exhaustive list of the benefits for all participants. Although the UK, including Scotland, is not as well travelled on the intergenerational practice journey, this research has confirmed that the benefits for all involved in UK projects resonate with those for international participants.

The research team's observations of several local intergenerational projects involving ELC services and older residents in care homes, as well as young adults with learning disabilities, have shown benefits such as increased confidence for all parties, greater tolerance, acceptance and mutual understanding of each group by the other, growth in knowledge and acceptance of value of other participant groups and more community cohesion and spirit. For young children in ELC groups, interacting with older adults has been observed as natural, honest and non-judgemental, all of which contribute to achieving the Scottish Government's aims as expressed in Building the Ambition (2014) and Curriculum for Excellence (2008).
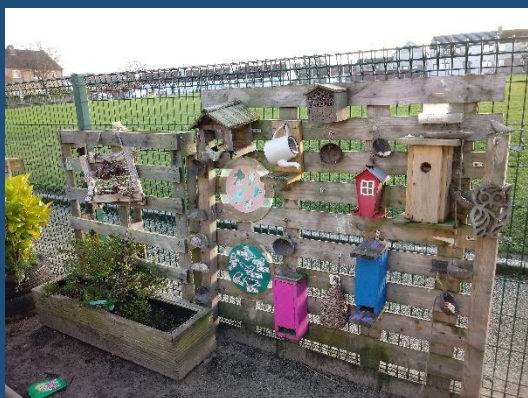
Outdoor space, Westpark Primary School

Some countries, including the UK are embracing the co-location model where ELC group and residential care home operate within the same premises with the groups having regular and frequent purposeful interaction. This model has been found to be cost-effective when established at the point of planning and construction of new facilities (Parklands Care Homes, Scotland and Griffith University research, Australia). Additionally, once established in existing premises it can also reduce running costs and make for a more creative and integrative service (Apples and Honey Nightingale, London). It should be noted however that successful intergenerational projects are well established and operating on a smaller scale with children from ELC settings regularly and frequently visiting care homes and running purposeful, interactive sessions (for example, Junior World ELC with Whinnieknowe and Hebron care homes in the small Highland town of Nairn). A number of Highland secondary schools continue similar projects with older children, having recognised the common benefits for pupils and the community in which they are based.

These examples demonstrate that intergenerational projects need not be large scale to bring benefits to many within a community, urban or rural, and can be an effective way of developing community assets and enabling communities to thrive and be sustainable as well as developing the potential of children and fostering a caring and well- integrated society, where all members are considered of value and worthy of respect.

Recommendations for ELC providers:

- Provide training on the meaning, purpose and benefits of intergenerational practice, to all ELC practitioners and students.
- Actively support and encourage all groups to plan and develop intergenerational practice within their local area.
- Consider August 2020 a single point in the continuum of delivery of ELC services that routinely have intergenerational practice as part of the curriculum.

Recommendations for Scottish Government and Local Authorities:

- Consider establishing a designated intergenerational practice champion in each local authority area.
- Actively promote intergenerational practice in ELC (and other sectors) and embed such practice within national policy and guidance.

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- Consider the opportunities for intergenerational practice at the initial planning stage of all new community building projects.

9.5 Transport

The challenge of rural service delivery is to achieve the same quality of provision for fewer people spread over greater distances. Historically, this geographical obstacle has been overcome by mobile provision across many sectors including health, education and entertainment with varying degrees of success. However, shortfalls in provision persist and these are widely perceived as being a crucial driver for the consistent decline in rural populations, particularly among younger age groups.

The development of transport solutions can contribute towards enhancing rural ELC provision during the transition to 1140 hours. However, considering the cost and capabilities of the Play Talk Read bus, modified vehicles which are designed to meet all the pedagogical and care requirements to host ELC sessions do not appear to be economically viable, especially for individual providers. These facilities may be a more attainable prospect for networks of ELC providers, such as local authorities but given the challenging budgetary conditions within which they operate the cost may still outweigh the benefit.

Existing mobile health providers are attempting to streamline their operations and recognise that it is more prudent to rely on a vehicle for transporting equipment to a host facility than for the actual service delivery. This method is also deployed by the Play Van in Shetland, who bring play equipment to community facilities, and has the potential for replication within ELC provision although this is only a solution for networks and not individual providers.

The greatest scope for mobile solutions appears to be the transportation of children, either as a collection service or to bring children to dispersed settings. The challenging environment within which Pairc Playgroup in Lewis, operates is being overcome with transport provision which enhances its accessibility within the community and consolidates the viability of the setting.

Moreover, transport solutions can enhance the variety of provision by introducing children to learning opportunities in alternative environments, as evidenced by Evergreen Nursery. This creates variety in learning opportunities and can provide access to natural environments and all the benefits associated with outdoor learning.

For individual settings, unable to consider some of the solutions around pooled resources which have been discussed, there are other areas for investigation including partnership

arrangements with other facilities including day care centres and the use of community transport schemes.

If considering the use of vehicles to secure or enhance provision, there are two key factors to consider; financial and pedagogical. In terms of finance, the transport solutions provided by Kiitikori in Finland are likely to be financially prohibitive for any provider, but consideration needs to be given to the terms on which the vehicle is procured. Evergreen Nursery were fortunate to receive their minibus through donations from National Lottery Funding, while Pairc Playgroup found vehicle hire to be more prudent than purchase.

Where transport is used to bring children to dispersed settings in Scandinavia, the authorities limit the travelling time to 30 minutes for each journey. While there is no defined restriction within the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) a senior figure at the Care Inspectorate suggested that this would be the maximum amount of time they would expect a child to be in a vehicle for. Moreover, they would expect to see practitioner engagement in transit, as was witnessed during the visit to Evergreen, as this time would form part of the child's entitlement. While this could be perceived as a constraint, it might also provide the stimulus to investigate opportunities for intergenerational partnerships, where ELC and day care centre service users share transport and engage in activities as they travel to and from their respective settings.

Recommendations for individual settings:

- Explore how the use of transport solutions can enhance the quality and variety of provision by taking your children to dispersed settings.
- Explore how the use of transport solutions can enhance the accessibility and viability of your provision.
- Explore partnership arrangements with other services which require transport solutions to operate and how these can benefit all travellers.

Recommendations for local authorities and private networks:

- Explore how the use of transport solutions can enhance the quality and variety of provision through the purchase of and pooled use of a vehicle to be used as either a mobile facility or to bring play and learning equipment to various settings.

9.6 General

While compartmentalising the research into four strands was valuable to focus attention, some conclusions have been drawn which pertain to several or all of the strands and these are discussed further here.

Introducing environmental stewardship to the curriculum

The transition to 1140 hours occurs in an era where there is a far greater awareness of the impacts of our consumption patterns and behaviours on the climate and environment. It was very encouraging to observe and learn of providers who prioritise the promotion of environmentally friendly learning activities and consideration should be given by all settings to identify how such learning can be incorporated in the curriculum.

Two very different scales of waste reduction were observed at Cradlehall Primary School, where they had renovated a disused bus for learning opportunities and at Westpark Primary School, where over a 6-year period the staff had received donations of scrap materials which were recycled and used in the design of their naturalistic outdoor learning area. Additionally, Lochinver ELC bring their children on beach litter picks and engaged with their local harbour authorities to implement a successful marine litter reduction scheme which they had found out about from a survey they had conducted.

These examples demonstrate how settings can introduce environmentally friendly concepts and practices to their pedagogical approach. As ELC settings begin to explore alternative learning opportunities in the natural environment it is essential that consideration is given to sustainable use of those environments and this creates the opportunity to incorporate these sustainable practices in the curriculum.

Mandatory training in outdoor learning and intergenerational partnership engagement

Universities and colleges who deliver courses in ELC-related subjects have recognised the trend of increased outdoor learning and reacted by designing and providing modules on outdoor training

Any diversification of service delivery into outdoor or intergenerational provision, and perhaps even transport solutions will require staff who are engaged in and fully trained to deliver sessions in a safe manner while ensuring quality is maintained.

All settings who are committed to continuous professional development should consider training their staff to a level where they are capable of and confident to deliver ELC sessions outdoor and in intergenerational partnership arrangements.

Clearly the scale of a setting determines their ability to deliver such training. However, this creates an opportunity for accredited training providers to support smaller settings by

designing courses specifically tailored for smaller settings who wish to develop their provision into either area.

Probationary periods for new settings in rural areas

In some areas a shortfall in provision is likely to require the establishment of a new ELC setting to overcome the additional demand. Settings beginning from afresh may be more capable of developing outdoor or intergenerational services than existing settings where current systems or staff make a transition more challenging.

For new settings waiting to be commissioned by a local authority, the initial operational period can prove extremely challenging, with regular income streams crucial to survival. Currently, a

Intergenerational session

setting can begin operating after receiving a satisfactory assessment from the Care Inspectorate, but cannot claim for funded hours until they receive a commission from their local authority.

It would be beneficial if the Care Inspectorate, upon satisfactory assessment of the setting, were able to provide a referral, upon which a new setting could be granted a probationary commission until a local authority assessment can be conducted. This might enable the new setting to attract children immediately, many of whom will have their ELC arrangements settled for a year at a time, thus enhancing the initial viability of the new setting.

Increased parental involvement

ELC settings should also be considering how to maximise parental engagement either during or out-with ELC sessions.

While the transition to 1140 hours is anticipated to enable many parents to return to work, there will still be parents with younger children or other commitments for whom this is not possible. This creates an opportunity for ELC providers to seek support from parents to help deliver their service and may prove critical to some settings whose adult: child ratios are challenging or inhibit their ability to leave the setting.

Moreover, settings should seek to engage with all parents and ask for help to reinforce learning around personal safety and environmental stewardship, whether through discussion or modification of family behaviours.

Recommendations:

- Consider how Learning for Sustainability can be integrated into the curriculum to promote environmental stewardship and responsible citizenship.
- Training for all ELC practitioners in outdoors and intergenerational training as part of their qualification and for qualified staff, mandatory.
- Local Authorities support newly developed ELC settings, particularly in rural areas by allowing funded hours on a probationary period whilst the new facility settles in, so long as has had initial Care Inspectorate visit/approval.
- ELC settings to see how they can increase parental involvement in ELC activities, particularly outdoor activities where ratios of children to adults are less.

9.7 Final Observations

Over the course of this research it has become apparent that there is not one solution for ELC providers in overcoming the challenges arising from the transition to 1140 hours. Vast disparities exist in terms of the scale of ELC settings and the social, financial and environmental fabric of the community within which each operate.

The research has discussed the importance of ensuring that settings each have a strong and sustainable workforce. From this foundation, and in cognisance of the community within which they operate, settings should consider developing intergenerational partnerships and the use of alternative places, times and transport solutions to optimise the flexibility, accessibility and quality of their provision.

It should also be stressed that, while the expansion to 1140 hours in August 2020 is a huge transition, all settings should consider how they can deploy the proposed innovative methods in a beneficial manner before, during and after the transition for the benefit of the young learners of today and every day going forward.

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SECTION 10. REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Section 11. APPENDICES

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Appendix 1 Highland ELC provider survey

Method: Typeform

Opened: Mon 24th June 2019

Closed: Fri 5th July 2019

Opening page

Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) in conjunction with key partners are carrying out some research to explore how best to provide high quality, child centred ELC.

We are looking at ELC that is responsive, accessible and beneficial to everyone, regardless of work patterns, background, location and economic status and meets the needs of the additional hours' commitments.

A key part of our research at this stage is to understand your position, your thoughts for the future and to identify innovative work that is already happening in Highland.

We would also like to invite you to our Feedback event, which will take place in February 2020 where we will present the findings of the research and pilots that we will be running during the timeframe of this project.

Page 2

About You – To be able to identify gaps in service provision and innovative practice in specific areas, we are asking for your specific details.

These details will be collated – no response will be attributed to any one individual or provided in our write up.

Questions

1 What is the name of your ELC?

2 In which city, town, or village are you based?

Highland Council directory lists 543 ELC providers across 8 areas in the region. The providers include local authority and private nurseries, childminders, out of school clubs, parent and toddler groups, breakfast clubs, holiday playschemes a child and family centre and mobile crèches.

In total 38 responses were received pertaining to 46 services as 3 respondents replied for several services. A breakdown of the responses by service type is presented in Table 3**.**

Table 3 Proportion of respondents by type and overall.

Service type	Number in Highland Council directory	Responses	Accounting for	%
Nursery (local authority)	150	14	16	11
Nursery (private)	101	17	23	23
Childminder	135	5	5	4
Out of school club	48	0	0	0
Parent and toddler group	71	2	2	3
Breakfast club	16	0	0	0
Holiday play scheme	18	0	0	0
Child and family centre	1	0	0	0
Mobile crèche	3	0	0	0
Total	543	38	46	12

3 Please provide the number of children that attend your ELC, as well as their age range.

Range 6 – 249, **mean** – 40.72, **standard deviation** – 47.61, **age range** 0 - 12

4 How many staff members work at your ELC?

Range 1 – 66, **mean** – 7.34, **standard deviation** – 11.54

5 What if any, issues/challenges are you currently facing in terms of providing flexible childcare?

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Pie chart displaying number of issues identified by category in response to Q5.
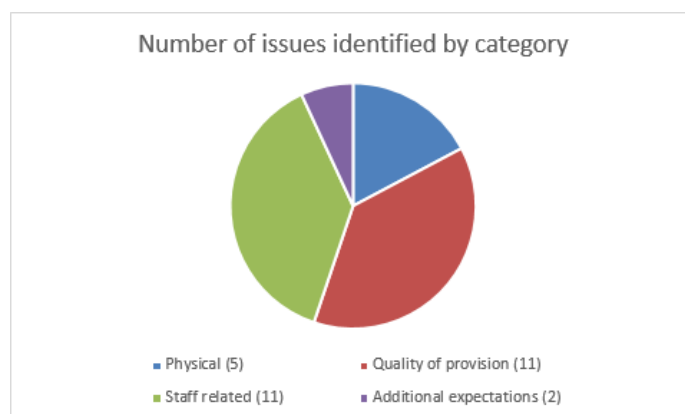
6 Do you think you will be able to offer solutions in relation to meeting the additional funded hours requirements and need for ELC?

5 of the 38 respondents felt they were unable to provide solutions.

7 What will you be doing or doing differently to meet this?

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Current preparations undertaken by respondents.

Category	Preparation	Number
Quality (4)	Ensuring even spread of children throughout the day	1
	Matching staff/keyworkers to children	1
	Timetabling to ensure enough staff at all times	1
	Considering children's interests when designing sessions	1
Assessing demand (3)	Discussing needs with parents	3
Staff (2)	New staff member	1
	Increased existing contracted hours	1
Physical expansion (2)	Expanded to double capacity	1
	New demountable unit provided	1
Additional expectations (1)	Out-sourced food provider	1

Table 5. Planned preparations for respondents.

Category	Planned preparation	Number
Staff (10)	Additional staff	5
	Nursery/P1 composite	1
	Involving staff in new schedules	1
	Keeping staff informed	1
	Extending staff hours	1
	Improve/provide accommodation	1
Quality assurance (8)	Encourage term-time only users to consider year-long booking	1
	Timetabling/staff schedules in advance	1
	More free flow play time	1
	More information gathering	1
	Greater flexibility throughout the day	1
	Explore places to go outdoors	1
	Progression in learning	1
	Increase under-5s	1
Physical expansion (5)	Extend outdoor play and provide sheltered area	2
	New ELC building in school grounds	2
	Adapting environment	1

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Service expansion (3)	Consider extended hours/weekend provision	2
	Liaising with local authority provider to maximise provision	1
Additional services (3)	Begin early years class next session	1
	More quiet space for resting	1
	Lunch provision	1

8 What are your main concerns and what is currently preventing you from finding solutions?

Responses have been categorised and are illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Bar chart demonstrating concerns raised by category in response to Q8.
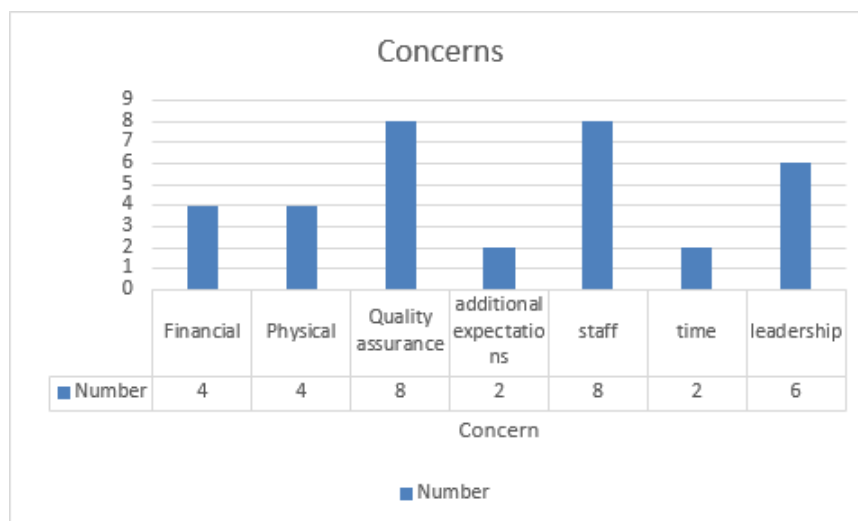
9 What do you think the issues in accessing high quality ELC might be for parents?

Table 6. Issues for parents in accessing high quality ELC.

Category	Issue	Number
Flexibility (10)	Lack of flexibility	4
	Shift patterns may limit choice	2
	Affordability	2
	Inability to use full provision	1
	Work patterns	1
Quality (9)	Sessions too long	2
	Lack of experienced staff	2
	Lack of continuity	2
	Reduced quality	2
	Lack of quality childcare	1
Travel (8)	Travel	8
Availability (7)	Less ELC places	4
	Availability	1
	Finding appropriate care	1
	Insufficient supply of childminders	1
Facilities (2)	Quality of existing facilities	2

10 What role do you feel your ELC currently plays within your wider community?

Figure 4. Pie chart detailing the role of ELC's in the wider community.

ELC provider role in the community as identified by ELC

- Service provider for children (18)
- Service which enables parents to work/enhance community (14)
- Service which supports childcare needs for families (4)
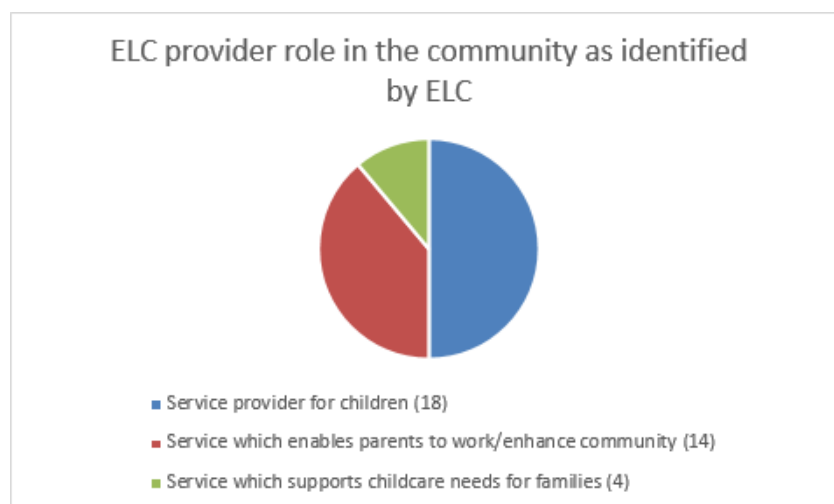
11 Are you aware of specific examples of innovative work or research into flexible options for ELC?

No – 19

Yes – 13

12 Where do you currently get your sources of inspiration from? (other than through policy), i.e. inspiring books, training, research, or other organisations.

Response have been categorised and are summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7. Sources of inspiration for ELC providers.

Category	Source	Number
Shared best practice/networks (32)	Shared best practice by other providers	15
	Social media	7
	Networking groups	5
	CALA	5
Staff (19)	Training	11
	Staff	7
	Early Years Education Support Officer	1
Research (18)	Online research	10
	Research	6
	University learning	1
	Reflection	1
Other organisations (15)	Care Inspectorate	5
	Education Scotland	3

	SSSC	2
	Highland Council blog	2
	Parenting Scotland	1
	Army Welfare	1
	Play Scotland	1
Children (2)	Children's requests	2

13 In terms of flexible options can you see the benefit of mobile nurseries...

A to you as a provider – 12 positive responses

B to parents/children - 23 positive responses

Please comment on the potential benefits of mobile nurseries...

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8. Potential benefits of mobile nurseries.

Category	Comment	Number
Convenience (13)	Increases flexibility	7
	Convenient for parents	3
	Eliminates travel barriers	2
	Could follow demand/fluctuations in rolls	1
Beneficial in rural/deprived areas (12)	Benefit in remote/rural areas	11
	Alleviate social depravation	1
Improve childhood experience (8)	Improves inclusivity	3
	Promotes outdoor learning	2
	Introduces children to larger groups	1
	Enhances viability of ELC provider	1
	Encourages exploration	1

14 In terms of flexible options, can you see the benefit of using different spaces and providing ELC at different hours, i.e. weekends, evenings, school holidays.

A to you as a provider – 23 positive responses

B to parents/children - 33 positive responses

Please comment on using different spaces and providing ELC at different hours.

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Table 9 over the page.

Table 9. Potential benefits of alternative places and times.

Category	Comment	Number
Flexibility (19)	Helps parents	9
	Helps parents out-with normal working hours	6
	Helps parents out-with term time	3
	Enable parents to return to work	1
Issues/barriers (11)	Staffing issues	5
	Logistical issues	1
	Limited time for paperwork	1
	May impact learning experience	1
	Threat to childhood experience around religious observance	1
	Bathing/preparing children for bed	1
	Threat to childhood routine	1
Quality improvement (4)	Opportunities for outdoor learning	2
	Forest/outdoor learning	1
	Helps with issues around lack of space	1

15 In terms of flexible options, can you see the benefit of Inter-generational partnerships...

A to you as a provider – 33 positive responses

B to parents/children - 35 positive responses

Please comment on the potential benefits of Inter-generational partnerships?

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Table 10 below.

Table 10. Potential benefits of inter-generational partnership.

Category	Benefit	Number
Children (21)	Forming friendships/relationships	10
	Learning opportunity for children	4
	Widens experiences of children	2
	Engenders community belonging in children	1
	Improvement in language development	1
	Improved social skills	1
	Promotes inclusion/equality	1
	Greater understanding	1
Mutual (11)	Both age groups benefit	10
	Shared experiences	1
Family/community benefits (6)	Community benefit	4
	Benefits families newly introduced to the community	2

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A summary of the positive response for each of the first three strands (mobile nurseries, alternative places and times and intergenerational partnerships) is provided in figure 5 below

Figure 5. Bar chart demonstrating the number of respondents who could see the benefit in each strand for an ELC and for families.
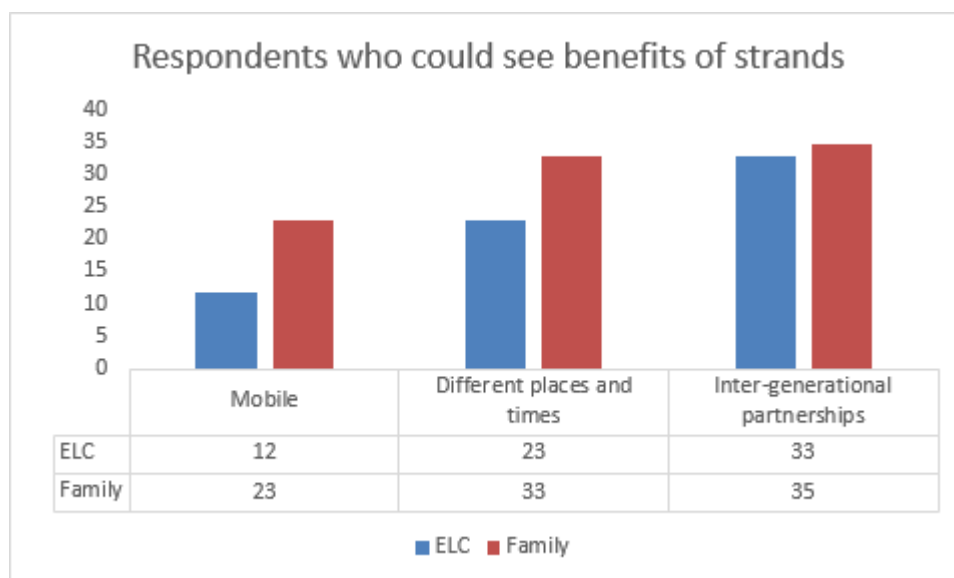
16 Workforce issues – have you looked at additional training or alternative uses of the workforce to find flexible options?

Of the 38 respondents only 12 indicated that they had already considered additional training or alternative uses of the workforce.

17 Please comment on your experiences of additional training or alternative uses of the workforce to find flexible options.

Responses have been categorised and are summarised in Table 11 below.

Table 11. Comments on workforce experiences and barriers.

Category	Comment	Number
Training (8)	Online training is difficult in areas of poor connectivity	2
	Difficult to get qualified due to lack of providers	2
	Own training team	1
	CPD	1
	Forest school practitioner qualification	1
	Difficult for childminders to find the time for CPD	1
Workforce inflexibility (5)	Few people want shifts that would vary weekly hours	1
	Inflexible workforce	1
	Lack of qualified staff in rural areas	1

	Challenging to find relief staff	1
	Staff have other commitments - 2nd jobs, family	1
Qualification requirements (2)	Reluctance to pay for SSSC/PVG or complete SVQ for an insecure post	1
	Challenging to hire an assistant through the Care Inspectorate	1
Apprentices (2)	Hire apprentices/untrained staff and train them	1
	Modern apprentice	1
Pay (1)	Financially prohibitive to employ staff	1

18 We are very grateful to you for completing this questionnaire. Could we contact you for more information if we would like to discuss any of your answers with you further?

26 positive responses

19 What is your email address?

20 What is your telephone number? (optional)

21 Finally, would you be interested in coming to our Feedback event, details to be confirmed, but likely to be in February 2020 in Inverness?

17 positive responses

Closing page

Thank you for taking part in our survey. You may now close this window.

This research project is being funded by the Scottish Government European Social Fund. The Key Partners in this project are: Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), Inverness College UHI, University of Edinburgh, The Shieling Project, Cantraybridge College, Highland Council, NHS Highland, Dementia Friendly Communities and Skills Development Scotland (SDS).

Summary of key findings

The data provided from the survey identifies recurring themes which are consistently evident or referred to throughout the responses.

Firstly, the diversity of provision that exists within the region is highlighted within the responses to the first couple of questions, with respondents indicating they provide for between 6 and 249 children and have staff numbers ranging from 1 to 66. When taken in consideration alongside geographic and demographic disparities it is apparent that universal solutions are unlikely. The variation in challenges is reinforced when participants were asked to discuss their additional training in preparation for the transition to 1140. The provider who has 66 staff has a training team to develop their workforce, whereas one childminder bemoaned that it was 'hard to fit in any kind of additional training'.

Throughout the first part of the survey respondents are asked for their perceptions on the transition in terms of issues and challenges (Q3), alternative delivery methods (Q5) and their main concerns about finding solutions (Q6). For Q3 and Q6, issues relating to quality assurance and staff were jointly most common of all the categories, while they were first and third respectively in Q5. Quality is also the second most common issues for families and their ability to access ELC provision (Q7).

The results suggest that there is a strong focus from existing ELC providers on maintaining the quality of provision following the transition to 1140 hours. Moreover, they see the development of the workforce as critical in their ability to deliver this. One local authority provider highlighted this with their determination to match keyworker groups with staff work shifts to 'ensure staff can be present to support 'their' children', recognising the importance of staff scheduling to achieve this goal.

Surprisingly, the physical environment of the setting was only mentioned by five respondents for Q3, two for Q5, five for Q6 and two for Q7. While this may be as a result of the respondents' perception that they have little influence on their physical environment, it is encouraging that so few have identified this as an obstacle.

Part 2 of the survey related to the respondents' perceptions of the benefits that can be achieved from the four research strands. The first three strands of the project concern alternative methods of service delivery and all participants were asked to indicate if they thought each were beneficial to them as providers and families as users. Their responses are categorised and summarised in Table 12 below.

Table 12 Summary of comments on each delivery method.

Method	Category of comment	Number	Type of comment
Intergenerational	Benefits to child	21	Child
	Mutual benefits	11	Child Family
	Family/community	6	Family Community
Alternative places and times	Enhances flexibility	19	Child Family
	Issues	11	Barriers
	Improves quality	4	Child
Mobile	Convenience for family	13	Family
	Impact on rural/deprived areas	12	Community
	Childhood experience	8	Child

Finally, the participants were asked about their workforce development actions and plans. Given that respondent concerns around staffing issues was given significant attention in the first part of the survey, it is concerning to note that only 12 have begun any process designed

to develop the workforce with only one full year before transition. A further 18 respondents have considered staffing issues and how to overcome barriers without putting anything into practice as yet.

The survey responses introduce a range of factors and groups that require consideration in preparation for the transition to 1140 hours. Moreover, children, staff, families and wider society all have stakes in the provision of ELC, which are not always compatible. The complexity of addressing the disparate factors in communities that experience different geographical and demographical challenges which appeal to all groups mean there are no universal solutions in the quest for 'Getting It Right for Every Child'.

Appendix 2 Request to local authorities

My name is Murray MacBean and I am currently employed as a project officer with Care and Learning Alliance in Inverness. Our project, funded by the European Social Fund and Scottish Government, is designed to research innovative methods of ELC delivery which can support the sustainability of rural communities in preparation for the transition to 1140 hours.

We have identified 4 strands for research; mobile nurseries, alternative spaces and times, intergenerational partnerships and workforce development. Thus far, we have carried out extensive research within the Highlands, identifying exemplary provision and working to create new settings at venues including the Highland Wildlife Park, Inverewe Gardens and within community and Scottish Land and Forestry woodlands.

In an attempt to expand our research to the national level, I am contacting all the local authorities with a view to identifying existing innovative provision or strategies for any of the four strands. I would be sincerely grateful if you were able able to consider our strands and advise me of any exceptional settings which operate within your area. Settings which we identify as exemplars, assuming their co-operation, would receive national exposure as our research will be presented in a report to the Scottish Government.

A positive feature of our research to date has been the collaborative approach of all parties. Your support in our endeavour is greatly appreciated and I look forward to learning about many more exceptional examples of ELC delivery.

Kind regards....

Appendix 3 Visits to outdoor settings

Auchlone Nature Kindergarten (ANK)

In 2006, Whistlebrae nursery was the first outdoor kindergarten to open in Scotland. Operated by Mindstretchers and adopting the underlying philosophy of Claire Warden, the nursery moved to its current site at Auchlone, by Crieff in 2009. ANK is internationally renowned, considered sector leading and regularly receives industry awards for its innovative delivery practices (Mindstretchers 2019).

ANK is based on the Abercairny Estate on the outskirts of Crieff. The grounds have a gatehouse, custom-made shelters and outdoor play and learning spaces. The nature kindergarten pedagogy is based on an ethos which is founded on promoting nature and the environment whether 'indoor, outdoor or beyond'.

The pedagogical philosophy recognises and promotes the benefits of outdoor learning, but accounts for adverse weather conditions by ensuring their pedagogy can be delivered in a warm internal environment when conditions dictate this is more amenable to the learning experience. It was highlighted that failure to design and implement contingency plans for adverse weather conditions may be detrimental to the learning experience and have health implications for children and staff in the short term, while negatively impacting a child's perceptions of and future relationship with the outdoor environment in the long term.

During the visit, it was evident that the younger children returned to the garden area (which accommodates the communal eating area and wood-burning stove) sooner than the older children who were better able to cope with the wintry conditions, highlighting the importance of adaptability to ensure play-based learning is undertaken in comfortable surroundings.

To promote the nature kindergarten pedagogy, ANK is situated on three adjoining but disparate areas with the Gatehouse providing the opportunity for the indoor learning, the garden area supporting outdoor learning and the forest being used for learning beyond. While each area has its own characteristics and is more suitable to some activities than others, there is a commitment to ensuring that the reduction in children's choices are minimised by careful design of each area.

Secret Garden

In 2008, the Secret Garden (SG) Outdoor Nursery began their outdoor operations in a 23-acre site in Letham Woods, Fife. Operating fully outdoors they have a pedagogical ethos based on the premise that for children to maximise the benefits of outdoor play and learning, practitioners must be fully immersed and engaged with the outdoor environment (Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery 2019).

The nursery developed from a child-minding business which was operated between the childminder's house, situated between Letham village and the woods. The childminder was

formerly an early years and primary teacher, who spent time in Norway when her children were young and practiced Buddhist mindfulness. She recognised the physical and well-being benefits of children learning through play outdoors, nurturing their curiosity and creativity during frequent day trips into the woods.

The ethos of the Secret Garden as an outdoor setting is still ingrained in the pedagogy today. The staff take ten minutes every morning to tune in mindfully prior to welcoming the children and strive to maintain a mindful presence with the children throughout the day. On the walk from the meeting point to the setting they pass a cherry tree and every day they stop and sing a song to the tree. The song they sing is the same song apart from one line which changes according to observations that children make about the tree. This practice encourages children to observe their natural environment and consider why changes are occurring with a view to engendering a spirit of environmental stewardship.

Another practice which the children contribute to on the walk to the setting is choosing where to play that day. The setting is based in a 23-acre hilly wood, with many sites all of which have varying degrees of protection from winds, rain and sun. The children stop at the Thinking Spot and are encouraged to consider the weather conditions and contribute to a discussion focused on which sites would be most suitable for that day's weather conditions. This practice develops a child's understanding of the weather and how best to counteract negative impacts arising from weather conditions, thus instilling a greater independence among the children.

Stramash Oban

Stramash was formed as a social enterprise company using legacy funding which the London 2012 Olympics committee had donated to Argyll and Bute Council. They opened their first outdoor nursery on the Dunollie estate in Oban (SO) in 2012, with Ft. William (2014), Elgin (2016) and Tornagrain (2018) all following on. Their vision is to inspire outdoor play and development in children which is connected to nature, their place and community (Stramash 2019).

Prior to visiting Stramash at Oban, a meeting took place with the CEO of Stramash Social Enterprise, to discuss the organisational vision. While there is a significant focus on outdoor nurseries situated in forests or woodlands, Stramash have sites on an estate with beach access (Oban) and on a riverbank (Fort William), alongside two forest nurseries (Tornagrain and Elgin) although all nurseries have close access to forested areas.

It is recognised that each setting has unique topographic characteristics which lend themselves to different types of learning. The key to an outdoor nursery is maximising the learning opportunities which can be derived from each disparate environment. This form of place-based learning (see Sections 1 and 3) harnesses the learning opportunities of the local environment, ensuring children learn through experience.

This place-based learning concept eliminates the potential for a universal structured learning programme for outdoor nurseries as some lessons are of limited relevance to different settings. For example, learning about the annual cycle of a tree is as relevant on a beach as in a classroom, but can be observed daily in a forest school where a greater understanding can be attained. Therefore, a learning programme which utilises the environmental features of individual settings is of greater benefit than a universal programme.

Stramash at Oban has the benefit of multiple land types from which to learn. It is situated on an estate with the site encompassing a large field and wooded area upon a hill, which is adjacent to a beach. This facilitates an abundance of varied learning opportunities, on which the staff at Stramash Oban capitalise with frequent visits to the beach encompassed in their curriculum.

The site is based just off the main road between Oban and the Dunollie Estate. Upon entering the site there is a sign in area, where the staff meet the children and family member, leading to a huge expanse of ground contained by a fence. This play area has many smaller areas dedicated to different part of play and learning. There is a fallen tree for climbing and swinging on, various structures made from drum reels, ladders and disused tyres, crates which are arranged for various role play situations, a pet area (with two guinea pigs), herb garden, areas for congregating for story-telling and songs and 'Fairyland, where the only boundary to the small space with one tree is the imagination of the children. This area has toilet and hand-cleaning areas, but the lack of warm running water means they are unable to accommodate 2-year olds.

Adjacent to this play area is another section which sits on a cliff, completely surrounded by a 6ft fence with a gate which is triple locked. Within this area, there are two cabins which host the children for snacks and lunches, arts and crafts and act as a shelter for exceptional weather. This section is a hilly section which also has play areas, mud kitchens, orchards, and a tepee. When everyone is in this section, it is locked and the children are allowed to explore individually or in groups. There is no point in this section that is fully visible to one practitioner, but they are happy to let the children explore knowing the section has been risk-assessed and has minimal risk. This gives the children a sense of independence while in a safe environment.

Stramash have an ethos which is based on empowering the children. Although they bring in snacks and there is a designated area where the children can have these, they choose when and if they do. Children, while supervised, are also entrusted with dressing themselves in an appropriate manner for the weather conditions.

Children are also given freedom to choose their activities as long as there is sufficient staff to facilitate their choices safely. During my visit the children were called to a gathering circle where the senior practitioner led a singing session. Although all the children came across, not all joined in in the singing and dancing initially, choosing to sit on the surrounding logs. While no pressure was applied for them to change their mind, when they saw the satisfaction of the others, they eventually joined in. Following this session, the children were given a choice, and

some remained at the first play area, while others went to explore the ice on the adjacent cliff area.

While Stramash Oban are aware of the experiences and outcomes within the Curriculum for Excellence, they try to avoid rigidly pursuing these aims in the interest of individually paced development. While this does not mean there is no structure to their sessions and terms, they encourage individual exploration of topics, so each child gets an experience relevant to their age and stage.

An example of this was witnessed during my visit which occurred on a frosty November morning. Some of the younger children recognised it was cold and the need for hats and gloves, while more mature children explored the properties of the ice, observing how slippery it was and the different formation patterns.

The most important part of ELC is the child experience. I asked how the child's voice is represented in an outdoor setting. Stramash use an electronic app to record learning development in respect of individual children.

All EYPs are encouraged to record any significant events, comments or questions for each child they are supervising on the Interactive Learning Diary. Once uploaded, these can be used to shape future sessions and site development and are used in the staff meetings for these purposes. Each individual child's profile is also accessible by their parent, who can use the app to monitor their development.

Summerlings, Shieling Project

The Shieling Project site is 2km from the main road in Struy, the land being part of a larger estate used predominantly as a hind forest at Glen Strathfarrar. Summerlings is the Shieling Project's Early Learning and Childcare department. Children attending Summerlings meet at 08.30 at "Bothan Failteach" (Welcome Bothy), just off the main road, where registration takes place and the children gather around their "Learning Landscape". Here they prepare for their day beside a stove which is lit for warmth on colder days. Thereafter, the children prepare for the trip to Summerlings by getting dressed in appropriate clothing for the trip.

Once all the children are suitably attired, they decide if they would like to walk to Summerlings or be transported in the cabin of an electric trike, cycled by one of the practitioners. During the trip to the Shieling Project, there are several stopping points to allow for the walkers to catch up with those being transported by bike. These intervals are opportunities for play and during the visit it was observed that often they extended beyond the length of time it took the walkers to catch up. On the day of the visit some children arrived at Am Bothan Bidhe (kitchen) for snacks at 11.30 having stopped for such long periods to play along the way.

In recognition of their setting in the Highlands, there is a commitment to bi-lingual learning with a focus on introducing basic Gaelic to all the children. At the bothy where the children get ready, there is a blackboard depicting illustrations of natural phenomena the children

could look out for on the croft during each season. The manager of the setting described this to us as a "Learning Landscape," a method of planning and mapping the manager has developed to show holistic learning unfolding across the year.

The children are also introduced to food provenance, participating in the cultivation of vegetables and being taught about the animals that are reared on the croft. In terms of arts and crafts, the children are encouraged to use materials that would be found naturally on a croft, with basket weaving from willow one of the activities.

Overall, there is a determination to design a year-round experience which demonstrates and incorporates how a croft is run and the impact of weather and seasonal fluctuations upon land use. The children were observed to be very comfortable in the setting and this was perfectly illustrated when we heard shotguns being fired during our visit and the nonchalant reaction of the children to the noise.

Operating for over 2 years now, it is apparent that Summerlings have developed a robust place-based pedagogy, focused on introducing children to the various land uses and opportunities which arise from crofting in Highland glens. The croft, its resources and seasonal fluctuations are all intertwined in all the activities to create a quality experience focused on childhood development and fostering a long-lasting relationship between the children and their environment.

Kinder Croft CIC, Leckmelm

Kinder Croft nursery opened in September 2019, providing sessions on a Wednesday afternoon and all day Thursdays and Fridays. It is situated within a family owned conifer plantation and adjacent to a newly created Croft, on the north shore of Loch Broom. The crofter, Merlin Planterose is Chair of the nursery and runs it along with 8 other directors. Merlin grew up on a tree nursery in Sutherland and was home educated in her early years, an upbringing which fostered a strong belief in the importance of nurturing the outdoor environment and the benefits of children being outdoors.

Extensive work was required to prepare a site capable of hosting safe and productive nursery sessions. A small (0.23 hectares) area of forest was thinned of rhododendron and dead trees, with two main structures, a shelterand toilet/changing block being built, using wood from the forest, processed on site and built by local joiners.

They have 2 members of staff, Stephanie, the nursery manager and John, the practitioner who is qualified in forest school education and outdoor first aid. The board rely upon relief staff from the village and a local staff-bank for times of staff shortages. This allows for 16 children (aged 3 – 5) at any given time, however they have chosen to self-impose a limit of 12 for 2 members of staff.

The nursery hopes to be commissioned by the Highland Council which would allow it to accept children who can use their funded hours rather than paying. They are yet to be visited by the

Care Inspectorate, but they are very satisfied by the support they received from them in setting up.

Merlin is aware that work is still required on both structures to achieve the minimum requirements to attaining a commission. Specifically, the shelter requires work to allow for meal preparation and a napping area, while the toilet block, which has two toilets and a changing area does not have warm running water.

Merlin has experienced an outdoor learning environment, observed the benefits she personally gained and committed herself to providing a similar environment for her own children and those children in her community. This, more than any study or opinion offered by current staff of outdoor settings, illustrates the benefits which can be gained from outdoor learning.

Her efforts to get the site operational demonstrate the work and commitment which may be required to begin operating outdoors. However, Merlin continually referred to the support of the Care Inspectorate and the Shieling Project in her endeavours, an encouraging sign that those who promote it are willing to help establish it.

Abriachan Forest Trust

Abriachan Forest Trust (AFT) was formed in 1998 to purchase and manage the Abriachan Forest. AFT are committed to sustainable forest management, supporting ecological conservation and diversity and to promoting public access to the forest for educational, mental and physical benefits. They work with educational institutions, from nursery to university level, to promote outdoor learning and host therapeutic group sessions for children who are finding school challenging and for adults who have been referred by the NHS, the job centre or the criminal justice social work system.

AFT have now established a forest school specifically for children 3 – 5-years old, operating three days a week, Mon – Wed, from 0830 – 1630. These days have been selected because they are aware of other part-time providers in the area who operate towards the end of the week and would rather spread the available provision for local families rather than compete with neighbouring providers. They hope to register 32 children, with 12 spaces available at any session, giving a staff: child ratio of 1:6, which they believe is more manageable than 1:8.

The forest has an easy access path network linking the 2 main sites which can be used for nursery provision. The first site (Figure 6) we visited had a fire pit, tarpaulin, wind breaks and seating area, with low tables adjacent to it for food preparation. This site has a tent tepee and a tarpaulin for shelter and a small enclosure to accommodate a porta-potty, changing area and an insulated water container providing warm running water.

Appendix 4 Visits to dispersed settings

Evergreen Nursery at Dawsholm Park

In 2015 Evergreen Nursery, part of the Maryhill Mobile Children's Services (MMCS 2019), began using a dispersed setting for their ELC sessions taking their children from the nursery base by minibus to nearby Dawsholm Park every day.

The park is situated a ten-minute drive from the MMCS base and parents can drop their children off at the park if they have an appointment which results in them being unable to bring their children to MMCS base by 1000.

During the drive to the park the children participate in singing songs and nursery rhymes and contribute to decisions about activity type and location within the park where they will base themselves. The children are encouraged to account for weather conditions when considering their ideas.

Currently, the staff are able to satisfy the requirements of the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a) in every aspect apart from the provision of warm running water and meal provision, both of which are under consideration for the August 2020 deadline. All other provisions, including temporary toilets, hand-washing facilities, shelter and hammocks are transported to and from the woods at the same time as the children.

This arrangement allows the ELC staff to provide quality outdoor learning experiences while maintaining the ability to host sessions at the MMCS base during periods of extreme weather. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the required Health and Social Care Standards are easily attainable with planning.

Lochinver ELC at Culag Woods

Lochinver ELC visit a dispersed setting at Culag Woods every Wednesday. The visits are done in partnership with the Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape Partnership and Culag Community Woodland Trust and are set to become a daily occurrence when the setting transitions to 1140 hours.

Lochinver ELC is situated in the grounds of Lochinver Primary School. The entrance to the woods is just across the road from the school gate so children can walk across to the woods with the practitioners accompanying them and carrying supplies and equipment.

Like the more established outdoor settings, the woods have 4 sites that the children can visit, with the closest site being the one which is used most. However, with little shelter, it is susceptible to easterly winds and on occasions when the winds get up, they will access more sheltered spots further in.

To comply with the Health and Social Care Standards (Care Inspectorate 2018a), they are aware some work is required, including the construction of a permanent toilet which has

already been approved by the Culag Community Woodland Trust who manage the woodland on behalf of the community. Furthermore, they will have to ensure warm running water is available as currently they use wipes for hand cleaning.

The main site is situated in a clearing in the woods which has undergone some development to create a wonderful space for the children. There was a cable reel in the den which was used as a worktop in the mud kitchen. There are three other den areas, one cordoned off by fishing net, one by sticks and branches and the main area which has a rope for a tarpaulin shelter, another cable reel which is used as a table with benches around it for sitting on.

The equipment that was brought up included scissors, pens and other implements for children to use, stored in a tarpaulin blanket which when unfurled was wrapped around a tree for everyone's convenience. This allowed for children to engage in any activity possible in an indoor environment, but children had the benefit of being outdoors with additional potential for play-based learning. The children used coloured water, sticks and leaves to create potions in a cauldron, but they also had charts which helped them to identify what type of leaves they were using.

We discussed the benefits to the children and while Jane observed that all areas of the curriculum can be easily covered in their outdoor setting, she recognised that children's health and wellbeing was better served in an outdoor setting. Jane also suggested that environmental awareness is greater among children from outdoor settings and referred to their 'leave it as you found it' policy and a beach clean-up project to make her point. Jane's perceptions on the benefit of bringing children to the Culag Woods corroborates both the considered opinion within the promotional literature and of those who operate in the long-established outdoor settings already discussed.

Several years ago, following a beach clean-up, the children decided to do a survey among local boat owners to find out their behaviours and views on marine litter. During the survey they identified that 2 neighbouring harbours, Kinlochbervie to the north and Ullapool to the south, were involved in the KIMO scheme. KIMO is a scheme whereby large waste recepticles are positioned at the harbour and when fisherman bring up rubbish with their catch, instead of returning it to the sea (which is the norm) they take it back to harbour and place it in the KIMO receptacles. Over a period of four years the nursery children pressured the harbour authorities to adopt their scheme. Following a senior manager making a public appeal through Twitter, the harbour and KIMO agreed to work together and the scheme is now in place in Lochinver. All the children (nursery age to Primary 3) who had been involved in the campaign to encourage the harbour to adopt the scheme, attended the press release to promote the campaign. This not only demonstrates how outdoor activities can promote environmental stewardship but that children can be empowered to become community leaders through civic engagement.

Aberdeen City Council

Aberdeen City Council aims to maximise the opportunities for outdoor learning and, in recognition of the available facilities are supporting their ELC providers to achieve this goal through both universal and targeted approaches: the development of a community of practice called WIGLS (Working in Green Local Spaces, 'Out to Play' and the Wee Green Spaces programme.

WIGLS, Aberdeen

Working in Green Local Spaces (WIGLS) is a community of practice developed to support practitioners in delivering outdoor ELC and is open to anyone working in the ELC sector across the city, both ACC and partners, at all level. It is a universal approach to building capacity in the city's workforce.

The programme involves hospitality meetings at a variety of ELC sites across the city where short training sessions and dialectic discourse can engage practitioners to consider their own setting and how they might improve it. Peer-support is a vital part of this endeavour.

Out to Play, Aberdeen

"Wee Green Spaces is an early-years pilot project aimed at embedding and sustaining frequent, regular off-site visits by children to local green spaces" (Aberdeen City Council 2014).

The Out to Play project builds upon and expands this approach. It provides targeted support to identified ELC settings within the Northfield area of Aberdeen to make frequent and regular use of local greenspace. Some sites are used by more than one setting, with the most popular one been used by five.

These spaces allow children in inner-city areas to engage in outdoor, play-based learning and all the benefits associated with it. Moreover, the shared use of space expands the peer group for young children and allows settings to pool resources and collaborate on events and ideas.

Currently 25% of settings have access to a local greenspace, with a view to achieving 35% by August 2020. To achieve this, a mapping project is ongoing to identify all the suitable green spaces within half a mile of any ELC setting in Aberdeen.

Appendix 5 Outdoor places at indoor settings

Learner Bus at Cradlehall Primary School

The most innovative example we identified was a disused bus (Figure 1) which had been donated by Stagecoach, stripped of all its mechanical components and transported by a vehicle recovery company to its new home in the Cradlehall Primary School playground.

Figure 1 Learner bus at Cradlehall PS, Inverness

The bus, once positioned, still required significant modification to make it a safe, accessible and comfortable space for learning and play, however it is a stunning example of what can be achieved with the support of the local community. Significant funds were raised through grants and community appeals and the work was undertaken by friends and families of the children, school staff and some council apprentices. The work cost around £6000 and took around 18 months to complete.

The bus is connected to the schools' electrical mains supply and has heating, a fridge and a food preparation area. Most of the seats have been stripped out of the bus to create space, which has been decorated in bright colours. Although the bus is situated in a primary school, there is a local authority nursery within the school and their children have access to the bus.

This example demonstrates how innovative thinking can result in inspirational learning spaces. Lawrence Sutherland, head teacher of Cradlehall PS, understands that a primary school on the Western Isles has now been donated a bus and are currently engaged in transporting it from the mainland. Care and Learning Alliance (CALA), a third sector organisation with a network of private nurseries in the Highlands have been commissioned by the local council to provide an outdoor setting in a publicly owned city park and have secured a single decker bus from Stagecoach which they intend to use as the shelter for this outdoor provision.

The renovation of disused buses contributes to the circular economy by reducing waste and the exploitation of natural resources which would otherwise be required to create a conventional shelter.

Westpark Primary School, Aberdeen

All local authority-run ELC settings in Aberdeen have a designated outdoor space. Since 2013 Westpark Primary School Nursery in Aberdeen have developed their asphalt space into a carefully designed naturalistic play and learning area (Figure 2) at minimal cost.

The acting Senior Early Years Practitioner, Sharon Seivewright, supported by Juliet Robertson, Head Teacher Gregor Watson and other nursery staff have made the development of the outdoor space an ongoing priority. It has evolved primarily through donations of materials, time and resources from staff, parents and local community and businesses. The result is a highly engaging outdoor area that has been co-created by children and staff with careful attention to detail to make the space interesting and relevant to each cohort of children.

Appendix 6 Supporting the workforce

Aberdeen City Council recognise that quality outdoor provision requires staff to learn and develop new and additional skills which are essential to capitalising on the opportunities outdoor learning provides for the children and the setting.

To facilitate this, and with the financial assistance of ERASMUS funding, a skills development programme has been developed which allows 'outdoor champions' to learn how outdoor learning is conducted in quality Early Years settings in Spain, Germany and Denmark.

Around 50 outdoor champions, covering around 25% of the ELC settings in Aberdeen, will visit these settings to develop their skills and understanding in facilitating quality outdoor learning. Upon their return, they will be expected to put their learning into action, but furthermore they will be responsible for cascading their learning to other practitioners both within their own setting and to the remaining settings at a conference they will design and host.

This visionary programme promotes outdoor learning in early years, but perhaps as importantly demonstrates a level of support and investment in the workforce which, at a time when practitioner pay levels are being questioned, may demonstrate the value Aberdeen City Council place upon their team and foster a spirit of commitment among their workforce.

Appendix 7 Rural parents survey and results

A research project currently run by CALA and funded by the Scottish Government and European Social Fund, is looking at early learning care and what role that can play in sustaining communities as well as looking at innovative models of ELC. We would be really grateful if you would help us understand more about living in rural areas and access to early learning care by answering these questions and returning this survey to your Family Support Practitioner or by posting back in the envelope provided.

Geographical breakdown of responses received in rural parents' survey.

A total of 51 responses were received from the following rural areas:

Kinlochleven, Lochaline, Mallaig, Strontian, Broadford, Skye, Shieldaig, Ullapool, Gairloch, Croy, Drumnadrochit, Kirkhill, Lochyside/Inverlochy, Invergarry, Fort Augustus.

1 Do you face any particular challenges living in a rural area, specifically in relation to?

(Please tick any that apply)

> *Ability to/Access to work opportunities* - 25
> *Transport* – 20
>
> One person commented on lack of transport links - 1
>
> *Early learning care* – 20

Other (please give more info)

- Weekend childcare is an issue
- Social
- Outsides experiential learning groups for under 5's, and toddlers, e.g. parent and carer forest school
- Lack of activities for babies/toddlers
- No childcare facilities/childminders for under 3's in the area
- Limited space in the nursery, small room for maximum of 10 children
- Lack of funded spaces for children age 2
- No wrap around nursery care (school nursery) to allow for parents to work longer hours
- Comment re ELC accessibility – difficult to find the information for options in the area. No time for internet research. The local provider did not have the days/hours I wanted, despite 8 months' notice.

2 When your child turns 3, do you think you will use the full 30-hour entitlement (from August 2020)?

Yes :   30   *Maybe/Trial*: 4   *No*: 18

1 comment – would like to have a balance of work/family. 30 hours away at 3 years seems too much. Good to have financial resilience.

3 If you intend to use the full 30-hour entitlement will you look to increase the hours you work in a week/be able to look for a job or one with additional hours?

Yes: 24   *No:*   4   N/A: *15*

Of the N/A answers this was because some parents already work full-time (4) and for (3) they have a second, younger child still at home.

1 stated if they were to use the full hours, which they don't currently intend to, they would look for a job.

4 When you choose a nursery for your child, will it be based on proximity to your home or your/your partner's workplace?

Home: 44   *Your/Partner's workplace*: 4   Both: 2

5 If your or your partner's workplace, would you consider the closer nursery if they provided transport which would fit around parental work commitments?

Yes : 4   *No:* 2

Change Nursery if able to fit around commitments: 2

6 Do you feel that local ELC provision can help sustain the economy of rural communities?

Yes: 39   *Unsure:* 1   *No:* 8

If Yes, please give us some reasons why you feel this.

- It would help those who could work and can't do so due to no access to ELC
- Helps offset the cost of nursery from income
- Encourage more people to move to area if there was childcare for support/would allow both parents to work
- More families would come and stay and not worry about childcare as ELC provided locally
- Families could still work and make a better economy. Condition and impact to more people living in the community as well.
- It can help sustain if we get more children moving to the village.
- Would give employment opportunities
- Have been unable to apply for work due to lack of available childcare and the combination of an under 3 and pre-school child
- Opportunity for people with children to work. However, the ELC places need to be more flexible with their hours as the job opportunities rarely fit into 9-5 Monday to Friday.
- As a childminder, regularly asked to work before 9 and after 5 to fit in with travel to and from the workplace and also on Saturdays.
- Increased opportunity to work
- Due to amenities
- They would be able to put on transport for parents and children
- Can help, but hours may be an issue
- Concerns about access to outdoor space in area
- People can work more flexibly
- Allows people the opportunity to work and supports local childcare providers (including childminders)
- It allows both parents to enter work, employs local people, creates a local investment/feedback loop and creates a good local community making it more appealing to families looking to move in and businesses looking to invest in local communities, i.e. supermarkets, banks, etc.
- Allowing parents to return to work. Also providing jobs in rural areas.
- Allows full-time working (with travel)
- Parents can return to work sooner
- Population too small for ELC to sustain the economy of rural communities

Other comments about access to work through funded hours:

- Toybox had really helped get part-time work and the 30 hours at nursery from August free of charge will help more
- Can start looking for a job when child goes to funded nursery
- No family close by to help with childcare, so a funded place will really help
- Toybox childcare centre, (which is paid childcare) had greatly helped with all 3 of her children and hopes will be sustainable after the nursery hours increase or will be stuck for childcare until her child turns 3.

Other comments about the expansion agenda:

- Feel that childminders are impacted and this may actually reduce availability/flexibility of childcare if offered 9-3, not 8-6 as childminders do.
- Fear of having to take up childcare at 30 hours per week. Is it compulsory? Will I be seen as a bad mother if I don't send my child for 30 hours?
- How will nursery provide for naps? My child may need one in the afternoon
- Concern about focus on curriculum. Meeting targets, rather than letting children "just play"
- There are not enough ELC's to cover the full hours of all children in the area. (X2)

Other comments:

- One stop shop, website/council page for childcare availability – or at intervals around parent and baby groups.

Appendix 8 Intergenerational partnerships – International examples and benefits

Table 13 identifies the countries where intergenerational partnerships are conducted and studies, demonstrating the basis upon which these partnerships are established and the reasons for intergenerational practice. The detail clearly shows the commonality in the factors or social issues motivating intergenerational partnerships throughout a number of countries studied.

Table 13. International intergenerational partnerships

Country	Co-location	Community-based	Addressing social/economic issues	Pedagogical reasons	Knowledge & Understanding
Australia	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Japan	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
USA	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
UK	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES

Table 14 summarises the benefits arising from intergenerational partnerships and for whom the benefits are many and various, but a number are common across the three subject groups, children, adults and their communities.

Table 14. Benefits of intergenerational partnerships

Benefits	Adults	Children	Communities
Happiness and joy	YES	YES	
Mutual value and respect	YES	YES	YES
Less isolation or more involvement	YES	YES	YES
Increased physical activity	YES	YES	
Improved well-being	YES	YES	
Increased communication skills	YES	YES	YES
Increased confidence	YES	YES	
Mutual learning and increased knowledge	YES	YES	YES
More experience of having fun	YES	YES	
Positive change in perception of others	YES	YES	YES

Appendix 9 Origins of outdoor learning – global and national picture

Global scale

The forest school concept originated in Scandinavia in the 1950s and is based on the sensory learning philosophies of Goesta Frohm in Sweden (Skogsmulle) and Ella Flatau in Denmark (Friluftsliv). Today, 1 in 10 pre-schools in Denmark are held outdoors, while Sweden has 190

based upon the Skogsmulle principle (Institute of European Studies (IES) 2019). In 2017, outdoor nurseries accounted for between 5 and 10% of all ELC settings in Sweden, Denmark and Norway (Lysklett 2017). The rise in forest schools has spread throughout the continent with Germany now boasting 2000 forest schools and there are 150 in England and Wales (IES 2019).

In Australia, there has been a determined focus to advance the use of natural environments in early learning settings to promote environmental stewardship, with over 100 settings now being used throughout Victoria and New South Wales (Elliot n.d.). In New Zealand, there are 9 different types of Early Childhood Education (ECE) services, however none of these give any reference to place and there does not appear to be any significant focus placed on outdoor learning (Education.Govt.NZ 2017).

In the USA, the rise of the forest kindergarten is a more modern phenomenon with a 6-year increase of 500% from 2012 reported by Williams (2018). The Natural Start Alliance (2019), part of the North American Association for Environmental Education, is a global network of individuals and organisations who seek to advance the ethos and benefits of outdoor education. They boast around 450 members in the USA and a further 30 in Canada, Mexico, Europe, Africa, Asia, Australia and New Zealand.

The global picture demonstrates that outdoor ELC is commonplace in some countries, with an upward trend in countries just beginning to provide outdoor settings. It is worthwhile to now consider the national picture in Scotland.

National picture

Inspiring Scotland (2019) have produced a directory of 32 outdoor nurseries, spread among 17 Scottish local authority areas, registered with the Care Inspectorate and operating in October 2019 (Appendix 10). The list demonstrates there are 12 outdoor nurseries in city/ urban council areas (Edinburgh 3, Falkirk 1, Glasgow 5 and Stirling 3), with 20 in council areas which would be categorised as predominantly rural.

The greatest number of outdoor nurseries in a local authority is 5 in both Glasgow and Highland, with 3 in Stirling and Edinburgh, 2 in Fife, Moray and Perth and Kinross, with the remaining local authorities on the list having one each. Geographically, the outdoor nurseries are most prevalent in the Central Belt (20), with 12 to the north and none in the local authority areas to the south of the central belt.

Considering that England and Wales have a population around ten times that of Scotland, yet using IES' figure of 150, only approximately 5 times the amount of forest nurseries it is apparent that Scotland already has an established network of outdoor nurseries.

Appendix 10 List of Outdoor ELC sites in Scotland

Table 15: List of Outdoor ELC sites in Scotland

1.	Mucky Boots Nature Kindergarten	Aberdeenshire	1
2.	Stramash Oban	Argyll & Bute	1
3.	Fenton Barns Nursery	East Lothian	1
4.	Outdoor Nursery Edinburgh (Chapter One) ONE	Edinburgh	
5.	Laurieston Castle Forest Kindergarten Clermiston PS	Edinburgh	2
6.	Laurieston Castle Forest Kindergarten Cramond PS	Edinburgh	3
7.	Tiptoes Nursery Outdoors ELC	Falkirk	1
8.	The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery	Fife	
9.	Methihill Nature Nursery	Fife	2
10.	Evergreen (MMCS) Dawsholm Park	Glasgow	
11.	Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens W/EDawsholm P	Glasgow	
12.	Woodland Outdoor Kindergartens Eastwood	Glasgow	
13.	Greenbank Woodland Play	Glasgow	
14.	Jeely Piece Outdoor Nursery	Glasgow	5
15.	Stramash Tornagrain	Highland	
16.	Stramash Fort William	Highland	
17.	Summerlings The Sheiling Project	Highland	
18.	CALA Wild Willows	HIghland	
19.	Kinder Croft CIC	Highland	5
20.	Vogrie Outdoor ELC	Mid Lothian	1
21.	Stramash Elgin	Moray	
22.	Earthtime Forest School Nursery	Moray	2
23.	Wild Sparks	Perth & Kinross	
24.	Auchlone Nature Kindergarten Mindstretchers	Perth & Kinross	2
25.	Wellington School Outdoor Nursery	South Ayrshire	1
26.	Craighead Country Nursery School	East Ayrshire	1
27.	Livingstone's Explorer's Outdoor Playgroup	South Lanarkshire	1
28.	Our Little Outdoor Classroom	Stirling	
29.	Wild Wellies Kindergarten Child minding	Stirling	
30.	Dunblane Nature Kindergarten	Stirling	3
31.	Riverside Cottage Nursery	West Lothian	1
32.	Sgoil Araich an Iochdair (Wild Things Uist)	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar	1
	Total		**32**

Appendix 11 Summary of surveys undertaken

This appendix summarises the different surveys we undertook as part of our research, the participants they were aimed at, distribution, type of survey and how we would, therefore analyse the results.

Surveying Methods

The research used electronic, written and personal surveying methods. Electronic surveying was conducted using the Typeform platform, written surveys were distributed by whilst personal surveys were conducted with parents and practitioners at several taster sessions. This section lists the surveys that were conducted and describes how they were undertaken.

Table 16. Surveys Undertaken

Survey	Appendix	Type	Participants targeted	Distribution
Highland ELC Providers	1,2	Electronic	All Highland ELC providers	Highland Council Directory
Highland Wildlife Park (P)	20	Personal	Parents/Guardians of children in attendance at taster sessions	Project team
Junior World/ Whinnieknowe	34	Written	Staff of Junior World and Whinnieknowe	Jayne McIntosh, manager Junior World
Cantraybridge	32	Written Personal	Staff of Junior World and Cantraybridge College	Jayne McIntosh, manager Junior World
				Project team
Highland Wildlife Park (E)	18	Electronic	Families in Strathspey area	Strathspey ELC providers.
				Social media
Shift-worker	19	Electronic	Shift Workers	Organisations who function on shift work
Highland secondary schools survey	16	Electronic	Highland Secondary Schools	Highland Council Directory
Rural parents	4	Written	Family Support Practitioners	CALA supported Toddler groups in Highland rural areas
SDS Event	14	Personal	Attendees hoping to pursue a career in ELC at SDS Event	SDS Event
UHI presentation event	15	Personal	Attendees at UHI presentation event	UHI presentation event

After the initial survey of all ELC providers in the Highland area, specific data was collected through targeted surveys. These were used to explore further questions that had arisen during the research, to reconfirm or discount initial assumptions made and to gather more information on a specific area following discussions with key informants or through observations made at the taster sessions.

Electronic surveys

Our electronic surveys were designed using the platform Typeform, as it collated the response data under question headings, simplifying the process for transferring the data onto a spreadsheet for coding purposes to enable further analysis and interpretation. We used this method due to the anticipated response rate of these surveys, with our first survey being circulated to 322 potential respondents.

Our decision was also influenced by the fact that we would primarily be working with qualitative data, focusing on words rather than numbers. The method employed was to e-mail a link to the survey out and set a timescale for this to run. The full questions for each of the surveys and the full responses can be found in the identified Appendices in the table above.

We also used a voting system, Menti, at the CALA Conference in October 2019 to ask three specific questions regarding the workforce to gather baseline data from the majority of attendees who were childcare practitioners/professionals at this conference. We asked some key workforce questions as an initial test of the interest childcare practitioners might have in being able to do a top up qualification, whereby they could do additional units to be able to work across child and adult services and also to see what they thought the main challenges for the workforce might be. The questions asked were formed from the views gathered to date by the research team, particularly as options were given for staff to choose from. The results of the Menti survey are attached at Appendix 17.

Personal and written surveys

The second method we deployed formed part of our taster sessions at the Highland Wildlife Park in June and August 2019 and at Cantraybridge College in August and September 2019. This involved a paper survey, which in the case of the Highland Wildlife Park was completed either with or by the parent and handed back at the end of the session. At the subsequent session at the Park, the majority of attendees opted to take the survey away with them as many of the attendees were the grandparents rather than the parents of the child(ren) present. These were to be posted back in the envelope provided. Unfortunately, none of the surveys taken away were returned, limiting the survey data collected at this event.

At our taster session at Cantraybridge College, we asked the young people for their feedback on the session after the first and following the second session in September. We sent a short survey to the students who had participated and a slightly different survey to the Cantraybridge staff. We also used a paper-based survey to gather the views of ELC staff based

at Junior World Nursery in Nairn. The purpose of this survey was to find out what their perceptions and experiences had been prior to and post the intergenerational work that they were doing with a local care home Whinnieknowe. We also used the same method to gather feedback from the staff and residents at Whinnieknowe.

Analysis of survey data

Upon completion of an electronic survey, the responses were uploaded to an Excel Spreadsheet for analysis. This method allows for categorisation of respondents and aggregation and ordering of data according to the response of any question.

To gather some basic quantitative data supporting our larger qualitative project, we assigned values for yes/no answers and the number of respondents who said yes to any question was calculated.

Coding was used to extract salient information from the variety of responses in the open questions. The process of coding is to categorise similar responses to identify which are the most prevalent category pertaining to each question. In some of the open questions where coding was conducted tables, graphs or pie charts were produced to present the numerical data.

Data gathering was achieved using electronic, written and personal surveying methods as detailed in Section 3.1. This section lists the survey types, discusses the analysis methods deployed and finally all the surveys are tabulated detailing their type and how they were analysed.

Electronic Surveys

Two types of electronic surveys were used during the research, with targeted surveys designed and distributed using the Typeform platform, and Menti mobile app used among attendees at an ELC conference in October 2019.

Upon completion of a Typeform survey, the responses were uploaded to an Excel Spreadsheet for analysis. Each survey is listed according to when the survey was completed and assigned a row. The questions are displayed along the tops of each columns and the survey response to each question populated in the relevant cell. This method allows for categorisation of respondents and aggregation and ordering of data according to the response of any question.

Once the responses are uploaded, additional pages, devoted to sub-sections within the survey are added to the Excel spreadsheet and whole question columns pertaining to those sub-sections are copied to the new pages. This allows for scrutiny of sets of questions devoted to one topic.

The Menti survey was conducted in real time at an ELC conference, with attendees asked to log on to the app using their mobile phones and respond to questions, with the results displayed immediately on the large screens.

Personal and Written Surveys

Personal surveys were conducted with participants with the questions listed on A4 paper allowing room for written responses. Participants were given the option to complete the form themselves or for the surveyor to record their responses.

Written surveys were distributed by email and took the same form as the personal surveys in that participants were asked to respond to questions on A4 paper and return them to CALA offices in self-addressed envelopes.

The questions for both personal and written surveys included open, closed and multiple-choice questions, they also provided respondents with more of an opportunity to include personal views/comments. The responses were collated using pen and paper and included making reference to quotes that came out of the responses.

Members of the research team attended the Highland Council ELC Expansion webinar in October 2019 and this followed on from a meeting with the Council's ELC expansion team. Both provided an opportunity to test out some of the questions that the team had to date and to learn more about progress within Highland and the challenges of transition to date.

Analysis Methods

Several analysis methods were used ranging from basic aggregation of respondents to yes/no questions to thematic coding analysis and are discussed below.

Basic analysis (BA)

For closed questions which required a yes/no answer the fields are populated with a 1 for yes and a 0 for no. By adding all the 1s in the column, the number of respondents who said yes to such a question is calculated. This allowed for aggregation, calculation of percentages, and the production of pie charts and graphs. For the purposes of this report this type of analysis will be referred to as basic analysis.

Basic statistical analysis (BSA)

For closed questions looking for a numerical value, the numbers appeared in the cell and were ordered numerically allowing for easy identification of the minimum and maximum and for the range to be calculated. Hereafter, this type of analysis will be referred to as statistical analysis.

Thematic coding analysis (TCA)

Qualitative data analysis (QDA) is the 'process of separating any material into constituent qualitative elements', with the challenge being demarcating the data into meaningful units to analyse (Chenail 2012a). Qualitative coding, a form of QDA, is the process of abstracting and defining recurring categories, concepts or theories from the data (Chenail 2012b), with the objective of creating 'credible and creative results' (Chenail 2012c).

TCA, a qualitative coding method designed to identify recurring themes present in the survey results (Clarke and Braun 2013), was used to extract salient information from the variety of responses in the open questions. This process allowed for identification of the most prevalent themes pertaining to each question.

In some of the open questions where coding was conducted tables, graphs or pie charts were produced to present the numerical data. Moreover, quotes which summarise and/or support the theme were identified and presented in the findings.

Table 17. Summary of survey methodologies

Survey	Appendix	Type	Questions	Analysis
Highland ELC Provider	1,2	Electronic	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA. BSA
			Multi-choice	BA
Highland Wildlife Park P	6.3	Personal	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
			Multi-choice	BA
Junior World/ Whinnieknowe	34	Written	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
Cantraybridge College	32	Written/ Personal	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
Highland Wildlife Park E	18	Electronic	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
			Multi-choice	BA
Shiftworker survey	19	Electronic	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
			Multi-choice	BA
Highland secondary schools survey	16	Electronic	Open	TCA
			Closed	BA
Rural parents	4	Written	Open and Closed	BA/TCA
SDS Event	14	Personal	Closed	BA
UHI presentation event	15	Personal	Open	TCA

Upon completion of the data processing and analysis, key findings were written up with the survey results presented as appendices and the findings written up in Sections 5- 8.

Appendix 12 Key informants

The research team designated a number of individuals and services 'key informants' as these contributed to and influenced this research project and its findings. This appendix summarises the role those key informants played in our research.

Our key informants were critical to our research and in the way our research findings evolved. We were clear from the start about the level of expertise and knowledge that we required people to have in relation to the different areas of our research project. This enabled us to identify a diverse and appropriate body of individuals who would be able to talk authoritatively on their respective subject areas, providing the researchers with information and advice relevant to the four identified strands.

Each researcher was responsible for identifying key informants to gather in depth information and challenge or reaffirm key assumptions made from our research activities. Key informants were not necessarily individuals or organisations encountered early in the project, although national bodies such as the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) were among the first to be designated as such.

A total of 65 separate meetings were arranged with individuals and ELCs as part of the research. We carried on meeting with individuals until we reached what has been referred to as 'saturation' (Bryman, 2004; Merriam, 2002). The key informants were pivotal in assisting the research team generate new data streams to follow up and in influencing the direction that the research took throughout the process (Section 3.1).

Observational visits

Part of our research involved observation sessions at existing ELC settings both in Highland and wider Scotland. These venues were chosen on the basis of being innovative examples, the learning from which could be shared with other providers. Observations included discussions with managers and staff, observation of sessions, site tours and photograph taking.

Table 18. Observation sessions

Setting	Date	Site tour	Discussion	Observation	Photos
Kindercroft, Leckmelm	10/10	Y	Y	Y	Y
Abriachan Forest Trust	21/10	Y	Y		
Evergreen, Maryhill	09/12	Y	Y	Y	
Stramash, Oban	14/11	Y	Y	Y	Y
Shieling Project, near Beauly	20/11	Y	Y	Y	Y
Secret Garden, Fife	04/12	Y	Y	Y	Y
Auchlone, Crieff	05/12	Y	Y	Y	Y
Culag Woods, Coigach & Assynt	6/11	Y	Y	Y	Y
Whinniknowe, Nairn	19/11 3/12	Y	Y	Y	Y
Hebron House, Nairn	9/10	Y	Y	Y	Y
Seaforth House, Golspie	12/11 14/01	Y	Y	Y	Y
Apples and Honey Nightingale	04/11	Y	Y	Y	
Aberdeen City Council – various settings	21/01	Y	Y	Y	Y

Further information on these ELC settings is contained within Sections 6 and 7 of this report.

Summary of individuals and key informants who helped to inform our research findings

Dr Sam Harrison, Executive Director, The Shieling Project: **Mary Ramsay, Jackie Stewart,** Direct Service Managers, CALA: **Kayleigh Mackillop,** Pairc Playgroup, Isle of Lewis: **Jayne Macintosh,** ELC Manager, Junior World, CALA: **Ann Pascoe, Karina Ross, Mary-Ann Ross,** Connecting Communities: **Jaci   Douglas,** Chief Executive, CALA : **Dr Alice Mongiello,** Programme Leader, UHI: **Prof Peter Higgins,** University of Edinburgh: **Henry Mathias**, Head of Inspections (Early Years – East), Care Inspectorate: **Cheryl Campbell**, Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC): **Shona Amos,** Forestry and Land Scotland: **Sandra Tucker,** Highland & Moray Accredited Training services: **Ruth Wilson, Andrew Copus,** Hutton Institute: **Andy Hardie,** Venture Trust: **Bill Anderson**, HighFlight, Dingwall: **Kevin Frediani,** Manager, Inverewe Gardens: **Fiona Mackenzie,** Laide and Aultbea Woods: **Stewart Borleland**, Highland Titles Nature Reserve: **Jenny Liddell,** Chief Executive, Cantraybridge College: **Dawn Metson,** Family Resource Co-ordinator, Highland Council: **John Lyon,** Clinical Director, NHS Highland: **John West,** Director, Highlife Highland: **Norma Cameron, Miriam Veales,** Cantraybridge College: **Kerry Webb,** Employee Development, Highland Council. **Kirsty Hunter**, Open doors, CALA: **Angie House,** Caithness Befrienders: **Tracey Taylor**, Residential Childcare Manager, Caithness, Highland Council: **Maggie Lawson,** Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company: **Lorraine Coe,** District Manager and **Tina Mitchell,** Manager, NHS Sutherland: **Jill Mackenzie,** Head Teacher, Merkinch Primary School: **Lynn Henni,** Inspiring Scotland: **Suzanne Scott, Daska MacKintosh,** Highland Wildlife Park: **Lorraine Askew,** Bradbury Centre: **Heather Keyes,** Lecturer, Inverness College, UHI: **Louise Gibson,** Toybox, CALA: **Gill Smith,** Poolewe and Balnaluib Primary School: **Elaine Mackintosh, Sarah Maccallum,** Urray House, Parklands: **Brendan Rawlinson,** Scottish Forestry: **Lawrence Sutherland,** Head Teacher, Cradlehall Primary School: **Maggie Tierney,** Chief Executive, Stramash: **Aisling MacQuarrie,** Aberdeen City Council: **Kati Hughes,** Scottish Canals: **Katey Boal, Catriona McIntosh,** Culloden Battlefield: **Annika Jannson,** Head Teacher, Inshes Primary School: **Dr Alix Powers-Jones,** Hugh Millers Cottage, Cromarty: **Tracey McIlvar,** Family Resource Co-ordinator, Highland Council: **Wilma Bichan,** UHI Orkney: **Helen MacKenzie,** UHI Alness: **Sarah Butters,** Activities Coordinator, Crossreach, Nairn: **Judith Ish-Horowicz,** Founder, Apples and Honey ELC, London: **John Currie,** SQA: **Roddy Bailey, Keith Green,** SDS, Inverness: **Kyle of Sutherland Hub,** Bonar Bridge.

Appendix 13 Taster sessions

Table 19. below summarises the Taster sessions that we held and the actions that we took as a follow up. The sections below describe in brief detail what happened within these taster sessions.

Table 19. Taster Sessions

Venue	No. of sessions	Initial follow up action	Further action	Further action by provider
Highland Wildlife Park	2	Surveys distributed at event	Further survey sent out within local area	Currently looking at formalising provision once registration is in place
Cantraybridge College	2	Survey questions asked on day and distributed post events	Analysis of feedback. Liaison between college and nurseries	Possibility of regular sessions being arranged in the future

Highland Wildlife Park

The taster sessions at the Highland Wildlife Park were held to test the viability and interest locally for developing an outdoor ELC there. They were held at separate weekend days to test out the interest of parents in ELC sessions out-with traditional hours. This was felt important given the high volume of jobs locally focussed around the tourist trade and therefore, the high possibility that many parents worked weekends. The taster sessions were promoted widely in the local area over social media and in the local press. A survey conducted with parents and wider within the area, dug deeper into preferences in terms of days of the week that parents would be interested in.

They were promoted as taster sessions where parents as much as the children would be sampling what was on offer. In addition to the presence of the research team, who were carrying out observations as well as actively engaging in conversations with the parents/adults, were CALA managers and a member of staff from the wildlife park, with an educationalist background who was able to speak to the children and adults about nature, both plant and animal and lead on activities such as pond dipping etc. A range of activities were available to sample, including pond dipping, den building, toast making on a small fire and nature trails to spot bird boxes and other items.

The sessions provided parents with an opportunity to see directly how their child interacted with the environment that was being proposed as an outdoor setting, become aware of the facilities, including the limited shelter available and determine if this would be an option they might consider as part of their children's ELC provision in the future.

The research team observed the interactions of the children, took photos and short films and spoke with the parents to gather their views directly as well as through a survey. At the second taster session, representatives from both the Care Inspectorate and Scottish Government also attended.

The findings of the research team were fed back to both CALA and the Wildlife Park in feedback meetings. Both were keen to progress with the idea following a high level of interest from parents and the resulting plan was to apply for registration from the Care Inspectorate for a satellite site of the existing local CALA nursery. At the time of writing this application for registration is currently under consideration by the Care Inspectorate.

Cantraybridge College

Cantraybridge College near Croy is a college for young adult students with mild to moderate learning disabilities. Joint sessions between students of the College and ELC children from Junior World and Croileagan Inbhir Narainn took place on two separate dates.

These sessions, therefore, differed from those at the Wildlife Park as although parents were invited, only one parent attended on one session and they were held during week days as the College would not be able to provide staff over the weekends. From CALA's perspective, they were keen to test the viability and interest from Cantraybridge College in relation to ELC provision being developed there. From Cantraybridge's point of view, they were keen to see what benefits there may be to the students from the children being on site and how the students and children were able to interact.

The researchers observed the interactions and activities, taking photographs and short films to evidence how both the children and students engaged in these. After the first session with Junior World children, the researchers asked the students who had directly participated, several questions about how they felt the session had gone and how they personally felt about the children being there. Following the second session, a questionnaire was sent out via staff members to each student and to the Cantraybridge practitioners who were involved with the students and children on that day. A summary of the outcomes the children from Junior World got from the first session was also forwarded from the ELC Manager to the research team.

The staff at the college could see the benefits to the students who actively engaged with the children. They are very supportive of ensuring that the students are not isolated from the wider community and wish to ensure that a range of groups visit the site, not just young children. This prompted their expressed preference for the option of monthly visits rather than having a permanent ELC base on site. The taster sessions, however, were well received and it is likely that regular visits will be facilitated in the future.

Appendix 14 Consent form for taster sessions

RESEARCH PROJECT AND PHOTOGRAPH/FILMING INFORMED CONSENT FORM

As outlined in the information sheet and privacy notice we have given you, all the feedback we take today and any observations we make during this taster session will be anonymised in our research report.

It is important, that we check at this point that you are happy to be involved in this research project and for your child(ren) to be photographed and filmed. If you do not consent to either, we will not include anything about your child(ren) in our research project. If you are happy to be involved in this project, but do not want your child(ren) to be photographed or filmed, we will not take any photos of your child(ren) and will not include them in any filming.

Please circle YES or NO as applicable

1) I confirm that I have read and understood the attached participant information sheet and privacy notice.
   Yes   No

2) I confirm that I am happy to give informed consent to observation of my child(ren) for the purpose of this research project.

   Yes   No

3) I confirm that I consent to my child(ren) being (I) photographed and (ii) filmed during the session, for the purpose of this research project.

   Yes   No

4) I confirm that I am happy to take part in the survey following this session

   Yes   No

5) I understand that I have the right to see the final research report at the end of the research project (April 2020).

   Yes   No

   Signed:
   Date:

If you are happy to be contacted as part of the follow-up session and/or wish to be sent a copy of the research project, please provide us with your contact details below.

Care and Learning Alliance

Appendix 15 Participant information sheet for taster sessions

At **Care and Learning Alliance** we believe Early Learning and Childcare is a vital element of building sustainable communities. A sustainable community would provide all its residents, regardless of age and stage of life, with the services to enable them to continue living in, or be attracted to live in, that particular community.

Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) has established a project team tasked, alongside key partners, with researching options for expanding the diversity and range of sustainable early years provision in preparation for the Scottish Government's expansion of funded hours for every child, due to be introduced in 2020.

The session you are attending today with your child/children is a taster session to enable us to measure the demand for, and benefits and challenges of, providing an early years' service in an alternative or different setting.

If you are happy for you and your child to take part, we would be extremely grateful if you would complete the attached consent form and hand it back to one of the staff members. Please note that participation is entirely voluntary and you have the right to withdraw from the research project at any time.

We will be observing the session and would very much like your feedback by means of a short survey at the end of the session. This feedback would be anonymised and may be included in the final research report and in the executive summary of the findings. A summary of the research findings may also be included as part of consultations for our National Lottery Heritage Fund bid. Any photographs taken at this session will only be used in the final research report and will be anonymous. You have the right to read the final research report.

If you wish to provide further feedback and would like to know more about this research project, please do not hesitate to get in touch with the Project team. Thank you for attending.

(Details provided of Project Team members and contact details).

Appendix 16 Privacy notice for research participants

This privacy notice provides information on how the Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) collects and uses your personal information when you take part in the research project. It is important that you read this privacy notice together with the Participant Information Sheet for the study in which you are taking part. The Participant Information Sheet will explain the purpose of the project and contain more specific details about what information will be collected about you and how it will be used to achieve the project's objectives. This privacy notice was prepared following the introduction of new data protection laws in May 2018: The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR); and the UK Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA).

1. Identity of the Data Controller

The Data Controller (the organisation responsible for how your data is processed) is Care and Learning Alliance (CALA). CALA is committed to protecting the rights of individuals in line with Data Protection legislation.

2. Contact details of the Data Protection Officer

The Data Protection Officer is responsible for advising CALA on compliance with Data Protection legislation and monitoring its performance against it. If you have any concerns regarding the way in which CALA is processing your personal data, please contact the Data Protection Officer at j.douglas@calachildcare.co.uk

3. What information does the researcher collect?

The researcher collects a range of information in order to carry out their research activities. This may include information on your views on specific research topics. The researcher collects this information in a variety of ways. For this research project, this will be through observations and a survey. For this research project you will be provided with a Participant Information Sheet, which explains in more detail the kind of information that will be collected, and how this will be done.

4. What is the purpose and lawful basis of collecting my data?

Undertaking research and publishing research are tasks that are in the public interest. Organisations undertake these activities so that they can fulfil their function of continuous improvement and innovative practice. CALA will only collect the information that is necessary to undertake each specific research project. Any personal data collected will be anonymised, and the researcher will endeavour to minimise the processing of personal data wherever possible. There is no statutory or contractual requirement to provide your personal data to us through participating in a research project. CALA will not use your personal data for automated decision making or profiling about you as an individual.

5. How and where your data is held

All research projects involving the collection of personal data are subject to an ethics review, to ensure that appropriate arrangements are made for the secure storage of your data. If you take part in the research project, your data will be held securely and only retained for the necessary time.

6. Who has access to your data?

Your data will be accessed by members of the research team (including supervisors of the research project), however, all personal information used in research will be anonymised before sharing more widely or publishing the research outcomes. Information shared will be on a need to know basis, not excessive and with all appropriate safeguards in place to ensure the security of your information. It may sometimes be necessary to share your personal information with other researchers for the purpose of achieving the research outcomes. If it is necessary for anyone else to have access to the data, or for the data to be shared more widely (including any transfers outside the European Economic Area), this will be made clear in the Participant Information Sheet that will be provided to you before you agree to participate in the research.

7. How does CALA and the researcher protect your data?

In order to protect your rights and freedoms when using your personal information for research and to process special category (sensitive) information, the researcher and CALA must have safeguards in place to help protect that data. CALA and the researcher take the security of your personal data very seriously and CALA has policies, procedures and training measures in place to ensure that your information is protected.

8. How long is my data kept?

If you take part in the research project, your data will be held until the research project is completed, which aims to be April 2020.

9. Data Subject's Rights

Under Data Protection legislation you have the following rights:

- to request access to, and copies of, the personal data that the researcher holds about you

- to request that the researcher cease processing your personal data

- to request corrections to the personal data the researcher holds about you if it is incorrect

- to request that the researcher erase your personal data

- to request that researcher restricts their data processing activities (and, where our processing is based on your consent, you may withdraw that consent, without affecting the lawfulness of our processing based on consent before its withdrawal)

- to object, on grounds relating to your particular situation, to any particular processing activities where you feel this has a disproportionate impact on your rights and freedoms.

It should be noted that your rights can only be implemented during the period upon which personal identifiable information about you is held. Once the information has been irreversibly anonymised and becomes part of the research data set, it will not be possible to access your personal information. If you would like to exercise any of these rights or have any questions regarding your rights, please contact CALA's Data Protection Officer at j.douglas@calachildcare.co.uk

10. How to raise a query, concern or complaint

If you have questions about the particular research study you are participating in, please use any contact details you have already been supplied with regarding the research project. If you have general queries, concerns or wish to raise a complaint about how your personal data is used by CALA, or if you wish to exercise any of your rights, you should contact the Data Protection Officer in the first instance at j.douglas@calachildcare.co.uk

Appendix 17 Results of SDS event survey

The survey was designed to assess the appetite for various aspects of Early Learning and Childcare among respondents who were hoping to work in Early Learning and Childcare in the future. The four aspects were intergenerational work (IG), outdoor learning (OL), joint qualification (JQ) and alternative times (AT) and are summarised below.

IG – Participating in sessions involving the children they are responsible for and other groups of adults, predominantly in care homes

OL – Participating in outdoor ELC sessions either on a permanent or temporary basis

JQ – Completing a qualification that would allow workers to work within Early Learning and Childcare and in adult care

AT – Working out-with traditional nursery times, including early mornings, evenings, weekends and school holidays

In respect of the four themes the respondents were asked "*Within your role as a practitioner, which of these areas of Early Learning & Childcare appeals to you?*". The respondents were categorised by gender and age to allow for a more detailed analysis. The results are summarised in Table 20.

Table 20. Results of SDS event survey.

Respondent category	Number of respondents	IG Number, (%)	OL Number, (%)	JQ Number, (%)	AT Number, (%)
Adult females	13	12 (92)	13 (100)	7 (54)	7 (54)
Adult males	2	2 (100)	1 (50)	2 (100)	0 (0)
Female school pupils	3	3 (100)	3 (100)	1 (33)	3 (100)
Male school pupils	0	-	-	-	-
Total	18	17 (94)	17 (94)	10 (56)	10 (56)

Appendix 18 Highland secondary schools survey and results

1. Is a Foundation Apprenticeship (FA), particularly in childcare, one of the options you discuss with pupils when they are considering future career/education choices during their final years at school?

Yes 14
No 3

2. Do you feel you know enough about FAs (eg equivalence to Highers, range of subject choices) to provide pupils with sufficient information to make an informed choice?

Yes 11

No 6

3. If you feel you lack knowledge and understanding of Foundation Apprenticeships who would you approach to help you gain the necessary information or to speak to the pupil with or instead of you?

Responses by themes are summarised in Table 21.

Table 21. Themed responses about information sources for Foundation Apprenticeships.

Responses by theme	No. of responses
School colleagues	5
College	5
SDS/Careers advisor	4
Internet	1
Non-committal response	2

4. Would you be confident in positively promoting a Foundation Apprenticeship in Children and Young People for example, to pupils whom you consider to be academically capable of achieving a more traditional qualification, for example Higher, in another subject? Please explain your response.

Yes 13, reasons summarised in table 22 below

Table 22. Summary of reasons for confidence in promoting Foundation Apprenticeships

Responses by themes	No. of responses
Pupil-centred response	6
School-centred response	2
Defence/Merits of Foundation Apprenticeships	2
Limited options	1
Opportunity for Gaelic speakers	1
Employer-centred response	1

Care and Learning Alliance

No 4, reasons summarised in table 23 below

Table 23. Summary of reasons for lack of confidence in promotion Foundation Apprenticeships

Responses by theme	No. of responses
Not aware of Foundation Apprenticeships	1
Unclear about responsibilities	1
Would promote Higher before FA	1
Doubt about universities' recognition of FAs	1

5. Do you think anything more needs to be done to promote ELC as a career to males?

Yes 14, reasons summarised in Table 24 below

No 3

Table 24. Themed suggestions for improving promotion of ELC as a career to males

Responses by theme	No. of responses
More information made available	3
Change in cultural/societal thinking	3
More visible male role models throughout	5
More promotion of males in ELC by ELC sector	1
Don't know	2

6. Would you describe your school as located in or serving a rural or remote rural community?

 Yes 16

 No 1

7. In your opinion does the location of your school influence the career/training opportunities made available to your pupils?

Yes 14, reasons summarised in Table 25 below

No 3

Table 25. Summary of influences school location has on career/training opportunities

Responses by themes	No. of responses
Difficult to access transport/travel distance required	10
Fewer viable opportunities available	4

Care and Learning Alliance

Appendix 19 Menti results

CALA conference – October 2019

Q1. CALA's project team is exploring the idea of a joint qualification to enable staff to work in both ELC and adult care. What are your thoughts?

61 responses were received and the proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement is summarised in Table 26.

Table 26. Responses to Q1 Menti survey.

Option	%
Like to have opportunity to do a joint qualification <u>now</u> as a top up to existing qualification	51
Like to have had the opportunity to have done this when did original qualification	26
Neither-a joint qualification is of no interest	23

Q2. In your view what would be the advantages of a joint qualification?

71 responses were received and the proportion of respondents who agreed with each statement is summarised in Table 27.

Table 27. Responses to Q2 Menti survey.

Option	%
None	1
More choice of employment locally	18
Flexibility of workforce	59
Improved future career choices	21

Appendix 20 Highland Wildlife Park electronic survey and results

Method: Typeform

Opened: Thurs 22nd Aug

Closed: Tues 2nd Sept

Cover page

Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) in association with Highland Wildlife Park, Kincraig are trying to determine possible interest from parents in nursery sessions for their children in an outdoor nursery in the Wildlife Garden at the Highland Wildlife Park.

Nursery provision may include weekends and out of school term time provision as well as weekdays. We would be very grateful for your views and feedback through this short survey to help us determine the possible level of interest. Please can you complete the survey by Tuesday 3rd September.

Questions

1. Would you be interested in your children using the Wildlife Garden venue at Highland Wildlife Park as part of your child/ren's early learning care?

2. If Yes, what age/s are your children?

3. When would you like sessions to be provided? (Please tick all that apply).

- Daytime (during weekdays)
- Saturday
- Sunday
- Out of school time

4. How often would you like your child/ren to come? (Choose as many as you like)

- Full hourly allocation
- Half their hourly allocation
- One day a week
- Other – If other, answer Q5

5. If you answered other to Q4, please state how often you would like to use it.

6. What do you think would be the value of having your child/ren at a nursery at this venue?

7. Would there be any challenges to you accessing this service if offered?

8. If you answered yes to Q7, please tell us about the challenges.

9. Would you have concerns about the weather during the winter months?

10. If you would like to be updated as the project develops please leave your email address or phone number here. (It will only be used for this purpose and will be safely deleted at the end of the research).

Final page - Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your feedback is extremely helpful.

Summary of findings

Responses 33, of which 31 (representing 48 children, 35 of whom are 5 or under) interested in ELC provision at Highland Wildlife Park.

To understand the likely demand, the respondents were asked to quantify how much of their child's funded hours they would like to use and when they would like to use it. The responses are summarised in Table 28.

Table 28. Summary of intended use of ELC at Highland Wildlife Park.

When	%	How often	%
Day time (weekdays)	84	Full allocation (30hrs)	48
Saturday	32	Half allocation (15hrs)	13
Sunday	29	One day a week	45
Out-with school time	74	Other	39

These results demonstrate the variety of need that exists within families living in the same geographic area and highlights the complexities for ELC in seeking to meet the demands.

Benefits

Respondents were then asked to summarise the perceived benefits of ELC sessions at HWP. Of the respondents, 21 suggested outdoor learning, 16 suggested just being in an outdoor setting and 2 suggested outdoor play would be benefits of these sessions.

Challenges

Respondents were asked to identify any challenges they would encounter to using the HWP, with 9 citing lack of transport, 4 citing poor accessibility and one each suggesting finances and many challenges. (Note: Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company have minibuses available which would require to be booked at a cost of 45p/mile).

Weather

It was interesting that no one specifically identified weather as being a challenge, but the final question asked the respondents if they had any concerns about the weather. Five responded yes and nine said no. The remainder qualified their responses with 3 saying road closures due to weather may be a problem and respondents 9 and 7 saying no, assuming appropriate clothing and shelter respectively.

Appendix 21 Shiftworker survey and results

Method Typeform

Opened Mon 23rd September

Closed Thurs 31st October

Page 1

The Scottish government have committed to investing significantly in funded provision for Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) and from August 2020 they will expand ELC provision for children aged 3 and 4 from 600 to 1140 hours and extend the provision to include eligible 2-year olds.

Page 2

Care and Learning Alliance (CALA) are the largest third sector ELC provider in the Highlands. We are aware that there are many shift workers, working in the East side of Inverness and we would like to better understand and explore the demand that might exist for ELC provision out-with as well as during traditional working hours.

Page 3

We would like to understand this for two reasons. First, although we cannot promise anything, we would like to see if there is any provision that we may be able to develop to meet an identified need for shift workers.

Page 4

Secondly, as part of a wider research project that we are currently undertaking, funded by the Scottish Government and the European Social Fund, to assess amongst other things, the workforce implications of meeting ELC needs for working parents.

Page 5

As such, we would be very grateful if you would complete this questionnaire by 31/10/19. The questionnaire is short and should only take around 5 minutes of your time.

Questions

1. Where do you work?

- *Police – go to Q3*
- *Lifescan – go to Q3*
- *Raigmore Hospital – go to Q3*
- *Ambulance Service – go to Q3*
- *Tesco (Inshes) - go to Q3 Tesco (Inverness Shopping Park) - go to Q3*

- *Other – go to Q2*

2. Please state where you work

32 responses were received of which 24 were from the police, 5 from the ambulance service, 2 from Tesco at Inverness Shopping Park and 1 from Lifescan.

3. To allow us to identify if you live in a rural setting can you enter your post code please?

Of the 32 respondents, 23 lived within Inverness and 9 lived out-with, 6 of whom lived in the Black Isle.

4. Are your children

- *Aged 0 – 5?*
- *Primary school age?*
- *Secondary school age?*

5. Is there childcare available for all your shift times?

- *Yes – go to Q6*
- *No – go to Q13*

Six respondents reported to their childcare needs being met and of the remaining 26, 19 required additional childcare provision for nursery aged children, 11 for primary school aged children and four for children in secondary school.

6. What times are difficult in getting childcare to suit your needs?

- *Early morning*
- *Teatime/Early evening*
- *Saturdays*
- *Sundays*
- *School holidays*

Responses are summarised in Table 29.

Table 29. Summary of care provision shortfall

Shortfall	%
Early morning	95
Teatime/evening	89
Saturdays	84
Sundays	79
School holidays	89

7. Can you be specific about when you would like your daily provision to begin and end and what days you would like this to cover please?

8. Who covers your current childcare out-with school hours?

- *Partner – go to Q10*
- *Other family member – go to Q10*
- *Friend – go to Q10*
- *Childminder – go to Q10*
- *Other – go to Q9*

9. If you selected 'Other' to Q8, please specify who covers your current childcare needs out-with school hours.

Responses are summarised in Table 30.

Table 30. Summary of care arrangements used where shortfall exists

Care arrangement	%
Partner	95
Family	84
Childminder	42
Friend	26
After-school club	16
Baby-sitter	5
Breakfast club	5
Time off	5
Ex-partner	5

10. Do you currently require childcare

- *Between 0630 and 0900 – go to Q12*
- *Between 1700 and 1930 – go to Q12*
- *All day – go to Q12*
- *Half day sessions – go to Q12*
- *During weekends – go to Q12*
- *All year-round including school holidays – go to Q12*
- *School term time only – go to Q12*
- *Other - go to Q11*

11. Please specify

Responses are summarised in Table 31 over the page.

Table 31. Shortfall in provision for shift-workers

Additional childcare requirements	%
Between 0630 and 0900	89
Between 1700 and 1930	63
All day	58
Half-day sessions	26
During weekends	63
All year around	89
School term only	16
Other	11

Of the two respondents who selected Other, one requested care on a 24/7 basis, while the second did not specify their requirements.

12. Considering your current requirement in the previous question, is there anything else you would like to add?

13. Are your children at the same childcare establishment all day?

- *Yes – go to Q14*
- *No – go to Q16*

14. Do you have to arrange for your child to move between settings?

- *Yes – go to Q15*
- *No – go to Q16*

15. What are the difficulties you encounter in arranging this?

16. Is there anything else you would like to say about the compatibility between childcare provision and your shifts?

Fifteen of the respondents reported that their children were at different care establishments on the same day, with 7 of these having to make the arrangements for children being transported between settings. The transportation between settings is either carried out by family, friends or by respondents who report having to take time off from their shift to do this.

17. If you would like to be kept informed of the progress of this potential new provision please leave your email address or phone number.

Page 6

Thank you very much for completing the survey

Summary

Concluding the survey by asking the respondents for their final thoughts on existing childcare provision, it appears that current level is insufficient. In some respects, this results in parents relying on others to fill the gaps, while other parents find the lack of flexible care provisions dictates when they can work. This results in some parents having to cut hours and some parents taking annual leave at different times to their partners to minimise their reliance on others out-with school time and restricting their ability to take family holidays.

Appendix 22 Highland Wildlife Park personal survey and results

Method: Personal

Dates: Sat 29th June, Sun 18th Aug

1. No of participants

Five families including 9 children (ELC age or below) and 8 parents.

2. Enjoyment of the activities on offer and venue

Unanimous positive feedback on both activities and location
Selection of quotes:

"Good Fun, liked set up with scattered benches"

"Promoting outdoor learning"

"Lovely garden, great environment for bugs, beasties and plants"

3. What were the children's favourite activities on the day?

Responses summarised in Table 32 below.

<div align="center">Table 32. Summary of children's favourite activities</div>

Favourite activities	Suggested activities
Pond dipping	Digging tools
Den building	Petting animals/Froggies
Freedom in natural environment	More animals as garden is established
Mud and stone pile	Planting allotments
Wildlife	Open grass area for games

4. Interest in using the wildlife park as part of their early learning care

All five families responded positively with their comments summarised in Table 33 below.

Table 33. Summary of interest in using an ELC setting at Highland Wildlife Park

Family	Weekdays	Saturday	Sunday	Out-with term
1	Too far to travel routinely but would like to use it occasionally			
2	Too far to travel routinely but would like to use it occasionally			
3	Yes			
4		Yes	Yes	Yes
5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

5. Parents were asked (if they were interested) how often they would like their child to come. Four positive responses summarised in Table 34 below.

Table 34. Summary of intended use of ELC setting at Highland Wildlife Park

Family	Full allocation	Half allocation	One day a week	Other
1				Yes
2			Yes	
3				Yes
4		Yes		

6. Parents were asked about the value they feel there would be in having their child/ren at a nursery in a wildlife park. Responses summarised in Table 35 below.

Table 35. Summary of perceived values arising from ELC setting at Highland Wildlife Park

Value	Number
Outdoor learning	3
Enhanced awareness of nature and the environment	3
Amazing staff	1
Great use of local assets	1
Beautiful setting	1

7. Where do parents currently take their child/ren for their early learning care

Ballachulish – 2 families

Wild Willows – 2 families

8. Challenges in accessing the service if it can be offered

Distance – 3 families
Transport – 1 family

9. Parents were asked if there was any other information they would like/would have been helpful to have today.

No – 5 families

Appendix 23 Junior World at Cantraybridge (provided by Junior World).

Outcomes:

Everyone involved to feel valued, feel part of the community, breaking down barriers

Opportunities for children & young adults to develop confidence, learning to improve communication & language skills.

Arts n crafts using natural materials

Children observed students feeding & caring for the animals. They were able to experience a variety of different

N.S: More regular attendance would allow students of all ages to become more familiar with one another and increase opportunities

Outcomes:

Children had access to nature and some animals in their natural environment and time to observe and extend interests and learning. Although there were boundaries in place, being outdoors reduces the children's feelings of being controlled and they confidently stayed within the boundaries but still had freedom to explore.

N.S: Being involved in the caring of the animals, learning risk, responsibility and about the cycle of life, seeing lambs/calves, etc.

At all times having opportunities to develop numeracy & literacy skills

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A leisurely lunch was had by all the children, with most taking responsibility for their environment by tidying up. Being outdoors provided a calm atmosphere with the sky & surroundings like a film being played in the background.

With more focus the children had a great opportunity to learn about a variety of plants/vegetable growing in the tunnels….ideally this would become a regular focus and extend the opportunities for children to become responsible citizens who understand a& care for their environment

N.S: Specific growing, composting projects and learning that involved practical experiences for learning and increasing Eco ethos of JW

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Appendix 24 Proposals for taster sessions

Table 36 summarises the organisations who were approached to host taster sessions, source information and level of responses that were received

Table 36. Summary of organisations approached for taster sessions

Organisation	Information source	Response
Community councils (Highlands)	https://www.highland.gov.uk/site/custom_scripts/ccemails.php	6/97
Community landowners	https://www.communitylandscotland.org.uk/	6
National Trust for Scotland	https://www.nts.org.uk/	2
Visit Scotland	https://www.visitscotland.com/	1
Federation of Small Businesses (Highlands)	https://www.fsb.org.uk/standing-up-for-you/national-offices/scotland/contacts	1
Historic Scotland	https://www.historicenvironment.scot/	None
Forestry and Land Scotland	https://forestryandland.gov.scot/	1
Scottish Canals	https://www.scottishcanals.co.uk/	1
1277	https://1277.org.uk	1
Outdoor Woodland Learning (OWL)	https://www.owlscotland.org/	1
Highlife Highland	https://www.highlifehighland.com/	1

Appendix 25 Organisational partners for taster sessions

National Trust for Scotland – Inverewe Gardens

An approach was made to Inverewe Gardens through their website and a response was received from their operations manager Kevin Frediani. Kevin extended an invite to visit the facility and to discuss the proposed taster sessions.

During the meeting, Kevin explained his vision for Inverewe Gardens and his drive to re-establish community ties through using local suppliers and tradesmen to support the area. The proposal to support local ELC providers contoured with this vision and Kevin was enthusiastic about supporting our work.

Four local ELCCs were approached, Toybox, Gairloch, Poolewe PS Nursery, Aultbea PS Nursery and Gairloch PS Nursery, and all were keen to explore the potential of using the facilities at Inverewe Gardens for their settings.

A second meeting was arranged involving the ELC managers to discuss the logistics of the session and with a view to preparing a risk assessment for the sessions. An area of the grounds was identified but significant cultivation and adaptation was required to ensure a safe and

secure environment for the sessions. Kevin was happy to commit the funds and staff to carrying out the work, having recently received a grant to renovate the grounds into a community garden area.

Unfortunately, around this time Kevin Frediani found new employment and moved on. He updated the acting operations manager about the project and the work continued to suitably renovate the grounds, but regrettably this was not completed in time for us to participate in the sessions.

While we had to withdraw from the partnership, it is understood that the management of Inverewe Gardens and ELC managers are both committed to completing the work and hosting the sessions, with a view to establishing a regular session which all settings can use following the transition to 1140 hours.

While it was regrettable that time constraints meant we were unable to pursue taster sessions at Inverewe Gardens prior to the conclusion of our research, our collaborative efforts demonstrate that there are enterprises who are willing to commit funds and time to support ELC providers within their local communities. The 4 ELCs within the area all have access to their own building and therefore have the capacity to provide 30 hours/week but they recognise the importance of variety and the benefits of outdoor provision for their children and are committed to establishing regular sessions with a view to securing these benefits for their children.

National Trust for Scotland – alternative venues

Another positive to come from the original partnership with Kevin Frediani was the introduction to other managers of National Trust for Scotland facilities. A meeting was arranged with Katey Boal, the Visitor Services Manager - Engagement for the North of Scotland at Culloden Battlefield.

At this meeting, Katey identified Culloden Battlefield, Hugh Miller's Cottage in Cromarty and Brodie Castle as NTS facilities which might be suitable for providing ELC sessions. Visits were made to Culloden Battlefield and Hugh Miller's Cottage, but time constraints inhibited our ability to explore any partnership work.

Our engagement with the National Trust for Scotland demonstrates a robust commitment to supporting local ELCs which should be explored further by ELC providers with NTS facilities within their area. The suitability of venues and logistical challenges of transporting children will vary but where regular sessions can be established the potential exists to enhance variety and quality for children who attend.

Community Landowners – Evanton Woods

Positive responses were received from Portree and Braes Community Trust, the Plock at Kyle of Lochalsh and the Evanton Wood Community Company. Adrian Clark, the honorary

secretary, co-ordinates the operations of the Evanton Woods and was aware of a now defunct nursery in Evanton who used to visit the woods and was willing to explore future partnership arrangements through taster sessions.

A visit was arranged for the woods with a view to assessing suitability and preparing a risk assessment. The woods had excellent facilities for play-based learning sessions and so dates for the taster sessions were verbally agreed upon completion of the risk assessment. Regrettably, during the risk assessment process it was discovered that the insurance cover for the research team was insufficient for outdoor provision and the taster sessions had to be cancelled.

While this was disappointing, two important learning outcomes arose from our engagement with Evanton Woods. Firstly, community landowners have the potential to support ELC providers by hosting regular sessions which enhance the variety and quality of experience for the children. Indeed, Evanton Woods had the potential to either host regular sessions or become a dispersed setting for an individual provider and the potential for this to be explored still exists. Secondly, the importance of completing robust risk assessments and ensuring adequate insurance cover is in place cannot be stressed highly enough and both should be done with due diligence before children are taken out-with their normal environment.

Forestry and Land Scotland - Camore/Skelbo Woods

Forestry and Land Scotland are responsible for Scotland's national forests and they actively encourage community engagement and learning. An approach was made to the organisation and a meeting arranged with their Recreation Ranger for Inverness, Shona Amos.

Shona was very enthusiastic about developing a partnership where we would attempt to develop taster sessions into regular sessions within Forestry and Land Scotland's venues. Shona presented paper fliers for all their facilities in the North of Scotland and after considering the location of our other proposed taster sessions, we agreed to try and arrange sessions at two sites, Camore and Skelbo, in close proximity to each other and several towns around the Dornoch Firth.

Like the visit to Evanton woods, visits to both sites were arranged to assess suitability and to prepare a risk assessment. Unfortunately, the insurance coverage problems which precluded the taster sessions at Evanton also affected the proposed taster sessions at Camore and Skelbo and both had to be shelved.

The learning from these visits and subsequent preparatory work for taster sessions are similar to that at Evanton Woods, in that we have identified more sites and another organisation who are willing to support their local ELC providers. However, another important aspect of partnership working with Forestry and Land Scotland became apparent, which is both comforting but worth noting for anyone wishing to make an approach.

Forestry and Land Scotland have a robust permissions policy for external agencies using their land which takes approximately 6 weeks to administer and requires detailed plans including maps of the activities that will take place on their land. Due to the previously discussed insurance issues, this process was not completed during our research, however the staff at Forestry and Land Scotland were very accommodating and would be available to assist with the process, but 6 weeks should be given for the process to be completed.

Our work with Forestry and Land Scotland demonstrates the willingness of the nation's largest land manager to engage and support ELC providers (where they have staff capacity) at a crucial time around the expansion. Establishing a partnership arrangement has the potential to support providers during the expansion and to introduce children to outdoor learning and all its benefits.

Approaches to other national/regional organisations

Additional approaches were made to other national and regional organisations, but were not progressed for varying reasons, as summarised in Table 37 below.

Table 37. Summary of organisations who were interested in supporting taster sessions and outcomes

Organisation	Outcome
Federation of Small Businesses	Email circulated among members in the Highlands and Islands. One response received but property was deemed insufficient
Community Councils	Email sent to 97 community councils in the Highlands and Islands with 6 responses received. Laide and Aultbea supported the partnership at Inverewe Gardens.
Visit Scotland	Offered to circulate support for the research among their members in the Highlands and Islands but time constraints prohibited this.
Scottish Canals	Approaches made to various canal-side companies and barge operators but no responses received

Appendix 26 Care Inspectorate setting types

Table 38. Summary of ELC provision types.

Setting	Description
Indoor	Traditional nursery model, whereby the indoor space determines the number of registered children permitted, but where access to outdoor space is available for daily learning and play.
Outdoor	Sometimes referred to as forest or kindergarten nurseries, these settings are based outdoors, with children only brought into sheltered areas during extreme weather conditions. These settings require contingency arrangements, agreed with parents for severe weather conditions.
Indoor/Outdoor	A setting where children have total access to both the indoor and outdoor environment; where both areas are designed to provide a comprehensive ELC provision with the outdoor area capable of providing the same quality experience as a dedicated outdoor setting.
Dispersed	An outdoor satellite space which is not adjacent to the registered premises. This involves children splitting their times between both locations with the dispersed setting complying with the same practical guidelines as an outdoor setting

Appendix 27 Trial of an indoor/outdoor setting at Inverarity Primary School nursery

In 2016, as part of a programme of nationwide trials, the local authority nursery at Inverarity Primary School developed their premises to an Indoor/Outdoor setting for their ELC provision (Angus Council 2019).

The internal site development included a kitchen expansion and the reconfiguration of the toilet area with a further toilet and changing area added, while outdoors the garden area was transformed with the addition of a geo-dome and the creation of spaces for play-based learning with loose parts and recycled materials. The design allows children to move between both areas and it is estimated that children spend around 70% of their time outdoors (Ibid).

The ELC setting is situated in a rural area, close to Forfar and attracts children from the local village as well as from urban areas further afield, reversing the trend of declining rolls. This demonstrates how enhancing the quality of provision through promoting choice can sustain rural services and attract children from larger communities.

In November 2019, Sheena Lock, acting early years manager for Angus Council was able to provide a progress update by email. Sheena confirmed that the setting had been adapted

further, including flooring laid in the geo-dome, in line with the developing needs of the children.

In terms of benefits, Sheena corroborates a lot of the perceived benefits which were an original driver for the development. Childhood experience, outdoor learning opportunities, enhanced gross motor development, communication and problem-solving skills, creativity, health and wellbeing were all identified by staff and parents.

Sheena also addressed the challenges they had to overcome. In terms of staffing, training in the provision of outdoor learning was both necessary and beneficial. Moreover, staff required time to find the clothing that was required for their specific context and needs, and some children who were already attending prior to the transition, gradually adapted to the increased opportunities for learning outdoors. This underlines the importance of preparation and staff engagement.

Appendix 28 Survey of students at Cantraybridge

4 young adults who are currently students at Cantraybridge College were involved in the taster day session directly working with the children. At least two other students engaged with the children by coming in and saying hello and telling them what they were currently doing, i.e. off to feed the animals etc.

1 Did you enjoy the session today?

All 4 responded yes positively to this question.

2 How did you feel about being involved with the children?

"Good experience, they enjoyed being here and it was good to see the children play in the play park."

"Really happy to help work with the children."

"Socialising, enjoying helping out."

"Used to it, nephew and nieces, really enjoy."

3 What do you feel are the benefits for young people working with children of nursery school age?

"Confidence, try to get more men working with children. All really enjoyed it."

"Good to see the children here learning."

"Really good fun, hope they come back."

"Working with younger children, encouraging creativity, which inspires me."

4 What do you think the children enjoyed doing best today?

"Birds, crafts, trampoline"

"They all seemed happy. Enjoyed the play park"

"Making bugs"

"Making the bugs, play park"

5 What did you enjoy doing best with the children?

"Spending time with them. Showing them things."

"Helping them."

"Helping them, getting paint for them."

6 Do you think Cantraybridge College would be a good location for a nursery?

"Yes, definitely"

"Think so, see different animals, crafts".

"Good for visitors, children, amazing to see them".

"Yes, get more experience and teaches them to look after themselves, they liked everything."

"Yes, definitely, 100%"

"Variety, lots of departments, nice place, outdoors".

Verbal feedback from Cantraybridge Practitioners on the day

"The students felt fine about getting involved with the kids, they felt like they were helping."

"Good place for a nursery, nice for the students to get involved with groups from the outside. Really important for them to interact with others in the community."

"Children at that age, don't have prejudices."

"Good to see them getting comfortable with each other, getting used to each other. Nice to see when they started knowing each other's names."

"Really good to bring groups together. Cantraybridge is isolated, good to be inclusive."

"Made a nice change working with kids. Good fun".

"Value? Being able to show something that they have done, they have helped to do that. "

"Confidence to show the skills they have."

Appendix 29 Summary of survey responses from taster session 2 at Cantraybridge

Table 39. Summary of survey responses from the second taster session at Cantraybridge.

Response Given	Tutor	Student	Total
Increased students' confidence	3	3	6
Would help if wanted future work with children		2	2
Allowed students to help children learn about what they do, environment and being outdoors		1	1
Students enjoyed children's 'sense of fun'	1		1
Gave students a sense of achievement	3		3

Appendix 30 Feedback from children at taster session 2 at Cantraybridge

The children were asked what they'd enjoyed most during the session.

3 children said they enjoyed "good fun on the trampoline", "had fun jumping on the trampoline" and "I can jump really high on the trampoline. Wish we had one at Junior World".

3 mentioned the sand box in their feedback. Comments included "liked putting water in the sand", "liked making a pond in the sand and filling it with water" and "good fun with water in sand".

1 child specifically mentioned "painting stones".

2 children spoke about the birds in small animals' enclosure, "chickens and parrots were good".

1 boy said he had enjoyed "everything".

 A group of 3 children were asked if they would like to come back and all 3 replied that they would.

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Appendix 31 Junior World staff surveys on intergenerational partnerships

Section 1: Prior to visiting the care home

1. Do you feel you had enough information about what the project would involve before going to the care home?

Yes 4

No 3

If No, what information would you like to have had beforehand that you didn't have?

Brief outline of the routine

Information on the residents' needs and capabilities (2 responses)

2. Prior to going how did you think the visits to the care home would benefit the children?

- Gain in confidence (5 responses)- in different surroundings and being around older generation
- Encourage communication
- Relationship skills
- Physical exercise (walking to and from care home)
- New and different experience
- Help them share tasks
- Behave in social situations
- Read in small groups

Was this the case?

Yes 6

Sometimes 1

3. Did you have any concerns or foresee any obstacles before going?

Yes: 5

- Residents' reactions/interactions
- Not knowing what to expect
- Unsure whether all children could walk that distance (3 responses)
- Non-verbal children's ability to sit at table
- Thought children might be a bit boisterous

No: 2

4. At this stage, prior to the work in the care home, what would you, with your knowledge, say to other ELC workers who were considering a similar project?

- Ensure adequate adult: child ratio
- Risk assess the route but yes to taking the children
- It's a good idea to mix generations, make friendships and build confidence
- Keep activities simple
- The benefit of the quieter environment is invaluable to quieter children and the sharing of stories is fascinating to watch
- I've always been positive about the idea so think it's great
- Keep an open mind
- Limit length of activities (30 minutes?)

5. Before you went to the care home what additional expectations, if any, did you feel would be expected of you?

- No response (2)
- Not applicable (2)
- Didn't know what to expect (2)
- No prior knowledge of the proce**s**s

Section 2: At the care home

1. What if any problems did you face at care home?

- Care home sometimes/often short-staffed, leaving ELC staff to help both groups (5 responses)
- Sometimes the residents weren't ready (in the group room)
- The room was a bit small, especially when children and wheelchair users around the table
- Lack of awareness of when the children would be visiting

2. How could these be overcome for other care home workers?

- Ensure good communication, prior discussion and sharing of activity ideas between the two groups
- Visit and assess the room first to ensure adequate space
- Ensure adequate staffing, ELC workers and care home
- Display notices about visits
- Know your children
- Keep ratios manageable

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3. Has this experience in your view, been beneficial/positive for-

A/ The children

Yes 7

In what ways?

- Confidence developed (4 responses)
- Relationships/friendships were made and developed (2 responses)
- Increased physical exercise and road safety (2 responses)
- Those with communication issues felt safe and engaged well
- Enjoyment
- Speaking to parents about it and they were impressed by level of understanding about residents' mobility issues

B/ The residents

Yes 7

In what ways?

- Company and socialisation (3 responses)
- Memory improvement and reminiscence
- Growth in confidence
- Increased mobility
- Kept coming back to the group
- Happiness
- Looking forward to children's visits
- Friendship and fun
- Involvement and inclusion

C/ You

Yes 7

In what ways?

- Improved confidence
- Enjoyment at seeing relationships developing and interactions happening between the different parties
- Greater appreciation of what all parties bring to the groups
- Experience of socialising with other generations
- Loved getting out with the children and singing Gaelic songs

4. From your experience what are the key things that need to be in place at the care home before a project starts?

- Suitable, spacious and well organised room
- Good communication between the two staff groups
- Set days/times for sessions
- A selection of suitable story books and resources
- Enthusiastic staff who are prepared to share tasks
- Awareness of and reminders about the planned visits
- Someone who knew them there as a bridge between groups

5. Can you give us a few words that summarise how you feel about being involved in the project?

- Proud to be involved and tell people about the work we do with care home
- Nice to see relationships developing, happy faces and residents being more willing to do things with the children
- It's a very good idea
- Great, very rewarding
- Seeing how happy visits make residents makes it worthwhile
- Respected
- Grateful
- Enjoyed the change and walking through the park to get there
- Glad to be involved

6. Having worked alongside different age groups would you consider if there was an opportunity, to work with different age groups again in the future?

Yes 5

No 2

No reason

If visiting a group home where activities were happening, I would join in

7. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience?

- I enjoy being involved
- Make sure activities are suitable and enjoyable for all
- It's been enjoyable
- I'm sad to see the residents deteriorate
- No response (2)

8. Finally, what message would you give to other ELC staff/managers considering a similar project?

- Go for it. Rewarding and worthwhile
- Go ahead and enjoy the experience
- If you do get the chance to do this kind of work give it a go-it's very good
- The project's invaluable to both groups-each benefits from the interactions
- I would definitely recommend. If all involved staff are not enthusiastic/positive, it won't work. Enthusiasm is key
- Plan activities for all ages and abilities
- Give it a go
- No response (1)

Appendix 32 International use of mobile nurseries

In attempting to research literature surrounding outdoor nurseries it became apparent another non-conventional method of delivering ELC has been deployed globally – mobile nurseries. This section discusses what we have learnt about mobile nurseries from international examples and how that learning might be applied in a local context particularly in relation to sustaining rural communities.

Mobile nurseries have been widely used for pre-school children in Denmark since 1970 and their use has spread throughout the Scandinavian peninsula since the turn of the century (Gustafson and van der Burgt 2015). The pioneers of mobile nurseries were the Danes, who first introduced 'mobile preschools' in 1970 followed by Norway and then Sweden in 2006 (Gustafson and van der Burgt 2015).

Currently used in 12 municipalities of Sweden, the function of the mobile preschool is to transport children from their base to outdoor locations within the distance of a 30-minute drive for their ELC sessions (Ladru and Gustafson 2018). They were designed to promote the benefits of outdoor learning for younger children growing up in inner-city suburbs (Ladru and Gustafson 2018).

> *"The approach changes the spatiality of children's mobility, allowing the children to visit various 'learning environments' in public space"* - Ladru and Gustafson 2018 p.88.

Two studies of the Swedish system have observed that children are more independent in terms of responsibility for their belongings (Gustafson and ven der Burgt 2015), more capable of negotiating 'difficult terrain, traffic situations and crowded places' and more flexible and creative with their use of space (Ladru and Gustafson 2018). These studies serve to confirm the individual benefit of mobile nurseries in respect of the enhanced cognitive development of young children who use them.

In New South Wales, Australia, mobile pre-schools are supported by the state, with grants of up to 35,000 Australian dollars available for providers operating on a full-time basis of 6-hour

days over 40 weeks of the year. Moreover, those providers operating in remote and rural areas can double their grant by applying for Preschools for Sustainable Communities Funding. The grant is paid out over the duration of a four-year contract, is designed for salary and wages, educational resources and other operating costs, and must be fully expended (NSW Government 2019).

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) summarise pre-school use on an annual basis, but they do not differentiate between mobile and traditional pre-schools (ABS 2018), making it difficult to assess how widespread their use is. However, a study on the impact of mobile pre-school on health and childhood development confirms the prevalent use of mobile nursery provision for indigenous communities in the remote Northern Territories of Australia (Nutton 2013)

In the late 1970s they were also used by several associations in New Zealand to maximise their reach in rural communities, though by 2014 new legislation had rendered the practice unviable (Kindergarten Heritage of New Zealand 2019). In New Zealand, mobile nurseries were used to bring equipment and staff to rural communities where sessions would take place in community or church halls. The deployment of vehicles was identified as a means of reaching isolated children and allowing them 'to connect with each other and participate in quality early childhood education experiences' (Kindergarten Heritage of New Zealand 2019). However, the 2018 statistical report of Early Childhood Experiences in New Zealand demonstrates that mobile kindergartens are no longer in use (New Zealand Ministry of Education 2018).