

**Comann Nam Pàrant Response to Full Assessment
Education (Scotland) Act 2016
Requested by Glasgow City Council**

Introduction

We were informed by Glasgow City Council on 8th April 2022 that following an initial assessment of a request from parents for GMPE that they had determined that there was a potential need for GMPE in the assessment area and were proceeding to full assessment.

Additional information was given on other demand within the assessment area that the council are aware of, and plans that the council have to increase capacity from 140 to 180 places by August 2027.

The potential need for GMPE in Glasgow

The information from the council following initial assessment confirms the need for GMPE in Glasgow with 5 children named on the request due to commence primary school in August 2022.

GMPE assessment area

We agree that the GMPE assessment area should be the entire council area.

Additional information provided by the council

The council has acknowledged that for the past two years the number of families wishing to enrol for GME has exceeded the number of places available. We understand that the number of places available has been capped by the council at 140. Contrary to the information given that last year the demand for places in GMPE was eventually met, our information is that 7 families did not get a place in GMPE in 2021.

The council have given some detail on their plans to increase provision from 140 P1 places to 180 by August 2027. We understand that there has been a cap imposed on numbers due to concerns around capacity at secondary and the desire to provide continuity in provision for the current P1 cohort. Our information is that all children named on the current request have been attending Gaelic early learning and childcare provision. There was an expectation from their families that they would be continuing their Gaelic medium journey 3-18 in August 2022 in GMPE. The current concern for these families is continuity in provision from early learning to P1.

The extent to which children resident in the area of an education authority adjacent to the area of the education authority in question could access GMPE in the GMPE assessment area

There are a number of families in education authority areas adjacent to Glasgow, who without access to GMPE in their own local authority, would make a placing request to Glasgow should additional places be available.

The extent to which children resident in the GMPE assessment area could access GMPE in the area of an adjacent education authority

This may be a possibility for some of the families if support with transport were to be made available. However, not all families are prepared to have their child travel outwith their own local authority area for provision given that there is provision for GMPE within their local authority area. Families have expressed the view that they believe that it is fundamentally unfair that some families in the area are provided with GMPE, but others refused this option. Parents especially object to the suggestion that they access GMPE in an adjacent authority area as their understanding of the current situation is that there is capacity to accommodate all children who are on the waiting list for GME, but that they have been refused because of the cap introduced by council last year.

Summary and conclusion

All local authorities have a statutory duty to ensure that there is adequate provision for education in their area. Education is delivered through Curriculum for Excellence which is Scotland's curriculum for children and young people aged 3-18, for both EME and GME. All parents should be able to choose between EME or GME. Council would not consider refusing families access to EME and neither should families be refused access to GME. EME and GME have equal status in Scottish education.

Parents and carers in Glasgow have been advocating a more strategic approach to ensure that demand for GME would be met. Parents demonstrated the projected demand to the GME Short-Life Working Group in 2018 with demand data for the ten-year period since the early 2000s showing a linear increase in demand each year. Parents asked the council to plan to meet the demand that this projection showed would materialise. Failure to adopt a more strategic approach to meeting this demand for GME has resulted in families being refused entry, which is unacceptable.

Costs should not be a barrier. There is a per capita spend for all children entitled to education in Glasgow and support available from Scottish Government with any additional costs incurred in increasing provision.

Teacher supply is challenging but Glasgow has been successful in the past in attracting teachers.

Continuity of provision 3-18 is important but at this time council need to provide continuity from early learning to P1. There is a number of years to deal with any issues that may arise with secondary provision.

Glasgow City Council's Gaelic Language Plan includes a commitment to 'adhere to the Education Scotland Act (2016) and the Statutory Guidance on Gaelic Education'. It is our view that the assessment process following Statutory Guidance clearly demonstrates that there is demand for GMPE in Glasgow which is currently unmet and that additional provision is required. In his introduction to the plan Councillor Feargal Dalton states "But whatever the challenges, we must not temper our ambitions for the language and GME." The demand for GME continues to grow in Glasgow and with 176 children seeking entry to P1 this year it is highly unlikely that 180 places will be sufficient in 2027. Currently Glasgow City Council provides GME to just under 2% of the council's primary pupils. The demand and interest in GME within the city provides an opportunity for growth which the council should embrace rather than attempt to stifle with the introduction of a cap on numbers.

Families requesting GMPE have invested time and energy ensuring that their children have been able to learn Gaelic in their pre-school years. This demonstrates a strong commitment to GME, and they should not be denied the opportunity to continue on this pathway as a family. Children who do not gain entry to GME at P1 are denied access to GME for the entirety of their education.

There is strong evidence of demand, and that current provision is insufficient. It is our view that, in line with Statutory Guidance section 1.58 detailing an effective entitlement to GMPE where there is evidence of reasonable demand and no fundamental obstacle to securing provision, that the outcome to this full assessment should be provision of GMPE for all families requesting such provision.

M Wentworth
Comann nam Pàrant (Nàiseanta)
4 Cèitean 2022