

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 18 MARCH 2009

THE EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To bring to the attention of Members of Cabinet, the Early Years Framework.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For many years, practitioners, managers and policy makers have been discussing the importance of early support in the lives of vulnerable children and families with a view, based on experience, that it is often too late to change outcomes for the good once children reach their late primary and teenage years. This view is now supported by a wide range of research evidence from education, health, justice and economic experts and the Early Years Framework is about giving all our children the best start in life.
- 2.2 For the purposes of the Framework early years is defined as pre-birth to 8 years old.
- 2.3 It recognises the right of all young children to high quality relationships, environments and services which offer a holistic approach to meeting their needs. Such needs are interpreted broadly and encompass play, learning, social relationship and emotional and physical wellbeing.
- 2.4 While the Framework is aimed at all children it is considered to be particularly relevant to those families who require higher levels of support.

3. THE VISION

- 3.1 The vision is based on relevant articles from the United Nations Charter of Children's Rights which are more detailed but cover all the elements of the Scottish Government's Vision for Children's Services and for all Children and Young People as outlined in Getting It Right For Every Child:
- The needs of children with disabilities are recognised and responded to
 - Children grow up free of poverty in early years with their outcomes defined by their potential not their family backgrounds
 - Children have good nutrition and healthy diets
 - Children are not harmed by alcohol, tobacco or drugs during pregnancy
 - Children have safe and warm places to live
 - Children are confident learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

- Every child has access to world class learning and health services
- Children have safe, stable, stimulating and nurturing relationships with their parents
- Where birth parents are unable to fulfil their responsibilities, alternative care will be considered to safeguard and meet the needs of children
- Children and families are given the support they need from services to provide adequately for their children
- Young children are protected from harm and have their rights respected
- Children have the right to physical activities, play, outdoor activities and opportunities to experience, judge and manage risk

4. IMPLEMENTING THE FRAMEWORK

4.1 The Single Outcome Agreement reflects some of the key aspects of the Framework, along with the 2008-11 Children and Young Person's Service Plan. In doing so, the focus will remain on outcomes rather than inputs. The Scottish Government and local partners will continue to work closely in partnership in taking forward action, some key elements of which are likely to include:

- More help to develop parenting skills within antenatal and postnatal care and developing the capacity needed to deliver this
- A renewed focus on 0-3 as the period of a child's development that shapes future outcomes;
- Breaking down barriers between education and childcare through a move towards more integrated, flexible services
- Improving play opportunities and addressing barriers to play
- More consistent access to intensive family support services in the early years
- More help for informal support networks
- Nurseries, schools and childcare centres developing their role in family and community learning
- Adult services such as housing, transport and development planning putting a greater focus on the needs of young children and families
- Developing common values in the workforce, enhancing workforce skills and developing broader workforce roles
- Building on work already in progress through *Getting it Right for Every Child* and *Curriculum for Excellence* to provide child-centred, outcome-focused services

4.2 Actions to be Considered by Agencies

In taking forward the framework, there are significant challenges. Some of these are set out below:

- i. Universal services will have to review their arrangements for supporting pregnancy and primary school transition in light of the Framework with a view to ensuring they have robust procedures which will help deliver the desired outcomes.

- ii. All children's services and agencies will have to consider what will be involved in shifting resources to pre 8 children from the range of services which currently exist to cover all children and young people. Shifting resources, of course, does not mean that services to all other children and young people will cease to exist – a balance will have to be found which shifts the required resources to pre 8 children and those with the highest support needs but still provides adequate provision for all other children and families services.

Generally, this is considered to be the biggest challenge in implementing the Framework and it presents a particular challenge for universal services which, by definition, are required to provide universal services on the one hand while the Framework requires them to better support children and families in most need.

- iii. All community planning partners will have to review their services to ensure they provide an effective early years service which is able to meet the expectations of the Framework. This review will require a clear understanding of the terms and conditions of the Single Outcome Agreement with regard to the shape of children and families services
- iv. The Framework seeks to have a "simpler, integrated structure of services". It doesn't underestimate the challenge of reallocating resources while continuing to help those who need our support now. Community planning partners must evaluate individually and collectively, how they intend to shift these resources, and identify and manage the changes within their systems.
- v. Universal services are expected to provide world class health and learning services and there is a need, therefore, to consider what bench-marking and other quality provisions exist or are required to help progress this expectation.
- vi. For partner agencies concerned with employment, adult education and training, parents are to be supported to access these opportunities aimed at helping them support their children's learning and development. Parents with young children and social needs would, therefore, become a priority and consideration will have to be given to how this should be managed and facilitated, taking into account the ongoing need to streamline and dove-tail systems with other agencies working with these particular families.
- vii. Communities and community groups, including voluntary organisations, have an important role in helping to ensure that children are safe and can enjoy play and outdoor activities in their neighbourhoods. Communities through their groups and representative bodies are to be supported and challenged to deliver their own outcomes. This will involve clear dialogue and participation as well as support from all the planning partners to ensure the Framework is being accessed and acted upon by communities. There is a need to establish how this can be best achieved.
- viii. The Framework expects that children and families are supported by a workforce which is highly skilled, well trained appropriately rewarded, well supported, highly valued by all with attractive career paths. All those working

with children and families in the early years, whether in the statutory, voluntary or private sectors are committed to delivering the highest quality provision and they should be:

- Outwards looking
 - Confident about joint working across organisational boundaries
 - Able to share information and resources confidently
 - Strong in interpersonal skills and in their understanding of relationships
 - Committed to their own continuous personal and professional development
 - Supported with resources, advice, and direction by their employers
- ix. A long-term objective of the Framework is to create a simplified and streamlined early years service landscape. It is essential that partners start to shape their thoughts and vision now on what this might look like. It should involve a seamless integration between public sector and partnership services and requires a recognised process of engagement and planning to take it forward as it will not happen itself.
- x. Consideration should be given to the role of fathers in ensuring children are properly raised and supported. This is addressed in the National Domestic Abuse Delivery Plan from a child protection perspective but the Framework looks at it from a family support angle. The model of care and support for families has to address the significant and positive role fathers can play in raising children.
- xi. As has already been highlighted by Strathclyde University research commissioned in the development of the East Ayrshire Parent Support Strategy the nature of our working relationships with parents in particular is extremely important in striking a meaningful and effective partnership with families. The Framework believes there is a need for service redesign if agencies are to seriously redress the balance of working relationships with parents so that they feel supported, listened to, respected, able and confident to ask for help in ways that do not make them feel inadequate or blamed.

6. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

6.1 Within the 10 elements of the model for transformational change, there are a number of actions and objectives which local and Scottish Government consider to be important factors for success. These actions and objectives are not ends in themselves, but are our analysis of the steps which in time are most likely to lead to improved outcomes.

6.2 In order to provide a sense of direction and to build momentum, the priorities are broken down into short, medium and long-term steps. Progress can be made on short-term actions within the spending review period 2008-11, although some will need continuing work over the longer term to ensure they are fully embedded within service culture and practice. The medium-term priorities may require work to be started now, but are likely to involve effort

over a number of years to put into practice. Long-term objectives are those that will take the most time to achieve. These objectives are appended.

Ultimately, improving outcomes will be the test of success.

8. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

10. COMMUNITY PLAN IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The issues contained in this report impact on all theme of the Community Plan.

11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None specifically arising from this report, however, there are implications in respect of implementation.

12. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None specifically arising from this report, however, there are implications in respect of implementation.

13. RECOMMENDATIONS

13.1 The Cabinet are asked to:

- (i) consider the issues set out in this paper and remit to the Director of Educational and Social Services to return to Cabinet with proposals in respect of implementation as appropriate; and
- (ii) otherwise, note the contents of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

KG/JW
2 March 2009

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Service:
Community Support, Tel: 01563 576104