

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 19 AUGUST 2009**

### **REVISED MODEL FOR THE DELIVERY OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN EAST AYRSHIRE**

#### **Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek approval from Cabinet on a revised strategy for the delivery of Outdoor Education in East Ayrshire following the April 2009 Business Review

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Cabinet report of 11 February 2009 outlined a requirement to review the outdoor education service to increase operational efficiency and create opportunities for a more streamlined delivery of provision for young people in East Ayrshire.
- 2.2 In financial year 2008/09 funding for schools to access the outdoor education service was provided by allocating a portion of Learning Partnership funding to this provision. In previous years the contribution of each educational establishment had been based on roll number and a formula recognising social deprivation factors. In 2008-09 the contributions were standardised around total pupil numbers.
- 2.3 Access by Youth Strategy and More Choices More Chances projects was funded directly based on usage.
- 2.4 The decision on how to allocate Outdoor Days to schools was decided by the Children's Services Coordinator for each Learning Partnership. The allocation gave all primary schools a minimum of one day of outdoor education during the year. Where a school did not take up its allocation, the days were distributed amongst the remaining schools. A range of activities (subject to season) was offered to primary schools. The usual age range was P6/7, although younger pupils occasionally attended.
- 2.5 Provision to secondary pupils was based on school roll and catered for S1-S6. The booking arrangements for secondary schools were similar to primary. However, there was scope for more specialised requests regarding linked to the curriculum. Support for school initiatives such as the Duke of Edinburgh, school clubs or sponsored events was also available and the programme responded where possible to requests for specialist input for initiatives such as Youth Strategy, More Choices More Chances, and Additional Support Needs.

- 2.6 Income recovery from clients outwith the school sector was included as an integral part of the Outdoor Education Service budget since the service was first established. Income had been generated from a variety of sources ranging from work with private schools to first aid courses and gala day activities. To achieve full provision to schools and provide a 'commercial service' required consistent levels of staffing. Where this was not possible priority was given to the school sector and as a result additional income generated has not been significant and rarely reached targets set.
- 2.7 The Principal Officer, Outdoor Education, provided a risk assessment/health and safety service for all educational establishments involved in 'out of school' excursions. All programmes were vetted and signed off, if approved, by the Principal Officer as part of the monitoring process set out in Educational and Social Services Circular 48.

### **3. EXTERNAL INFLUENCING FACTORS CONSIDERED AS PART OF THE STRATEGIC REVIEW OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

- 3.1 The drivers for the outdoor education service are:
- To enable individuals to gain an alternative educational experience in a context that is outside conventional classrooms and establishments.
  - The provision of support to the school curriculum, for example outdoor pursuits as part of 5-14 Environmental Studies and the Curriculum for Excellence.
  - The provision of challenging experiences that raise self-confidence and self-esteem contributing to the personal and social development of individuals.
  - Enabling experiences which enhance access to leisure and recreation, including the support and promotion of outdoor clubs and organisations.
  - To provide in-service training covering a wide range of outdoor pursuits, first aid and outdoor related Health and Safety issues and also provide guidance and support to the department by monitoring all trips and excursions involving young people or individuals within the charge of the department and scrutinising all activity programmes that include outdoor pursuits .
  - Administering the Adventure Activities Licence on behalf of the authority.
- 3.2 The nature of Outdoor Activities with their associated risks requires close attention to be paid to safe practice. This is particularly important as a public body providing to school children where there is an obvious duty of care but also in a wider context relating to Health and Safety legislation. Building on earlier policy and practice inherited from Strathclyde Regional Council, an Outdoor Code of Practice, Guidance Manual (Standard Circular 33) covering all the activities authorised by East Ayrshire Council insurers was issued (revised 2005). This Code of Practice laid out the required level of expertise and the expected operational procedures for the safe provision of the Outdoor Activities. The Code of Practice articulates with Departmental policy on Educational Excursions and other relevant Corporate Health and Safety documentation.

- 3.3 The introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and the Scottish Government supported programmes promoted through Learning and Teaching Scotland have gone some way towards clarifying the need for outdoor learning providers to communicate their educational intentions. HMIE reports in primary and secondary schools note the contribution of outdoor learning and a review of a sample of published reports commented upon the delivery of 'life skills', 'teamwork', 'confidence', 'awareness of needs of others', 'development of confidence and self esteem', and 'development of personal and social skills'.
- 3.4 It was essential that an option appraisal of the outdoor education service was based on the premise that pupils on outdoor courses are there for educational rather than just recreational purposes and that the aims articulate with section 3.1 and 3.3. The educational purposes can be compartmentalised under the parameters of the Curriculum for Excellence.
- 3.5 An effective service delivery model should articulate the learning ambitions of the Curriculum for Excellence and after each event/course/activity the provider and school should have agreed criteria for reviewing the effectiveness of the event/course/activity/. Time on outdoor learning activities is time taken out of school. It is therefore incumbent on all responsible parties to demonstrate the quality of the learning experience.
- 3.6 The Outdoor Education Service is subject to two yearly inspections by the Adventure Activity Licensing Authority. These inspections include checks on safety procedure, staff qualifications and experience, equipment maintenance and venue choice. The Licence is issued to the Authority and therefore covers all establishments offering licensable activities. This includes the provision of the expedition section of the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme. The new delivery model must ensure that provision remains in place to effectively respond to these inspections.
- 3.7 The Health and Safety monitoring carried out by the Principal Officer; Outdoor Education ensures the Department of ESS complies with current Outdoor Education Safety Policy but also links to risk management at a corporate level, providing technical advice and support to the Council's Risk Manager. The revised model of delivery ensures this provision remains.

#### **4. PROPOSAL FOR REVISED OUTDOOR EDUCATION SERVICE.**

- 4.1 The revised model of delivery of outdoor education within the context of 3.1 and 3.3, transfers the focus from direct delivery to strategic support for schools and centres to become largely self sufficient in the delivery of outdoor education.
- 4.2 The revised model seeks to collaborate closely with other providers of outdoor education and develop partnerships and shared services where possible. Such potential partnerships and access to other services include:

- Neighbourhood Services: where appropriate, joint working, will be pursued to ensure the opportunities being developed by both departments reflect a holistic approach to the delivery of services to young people and the community in East Ayrshire.
- Community Learning and Development: joint working in outdoor education programmes will take place to ensure that shared expertise and resources between all services in Educational and Social Services are best utilised for the benefit of young people
- Inspiring Scotland funded partners such as Venture Trust: this organisation, for example, has received funding to work in partnership with East Ayrshire Council to deliver outdoor education to specific cohorts of young people over the next ten years.
- Formal liaison will take place with North and South Ayrshire Councils who have facilities and resources; for example the Outdoor Education facility at Arran that could potentially be accessed through a shared services agreement. This will allow the exchange of expertise as well as facilities across the three Ayrshires. Discussions with the Directors of Educational Services in North and South Ayrshire indicate that this is the limit to further integration of outdoor services at this stage.
- Dumfries House and Knockroon developments and projects: there is an opportunity to further develop partnership working and outdoor education opportunities for schools through the regeneration and community based projects evolving in these areas.
- Whitelee Access action plan: the 'Section 75 Agreement' linked to planning consent states that: 'community benefit contribution payments shall be used by each council for charitable, education, environmental or other purposes including the development implementation and administration of the Access action plan'. (Corporate Management Team Report 11 March 2009). Access to such funding has the potential to support staff or other resource programmes linked to outdoor education provision for young people in East Ayrshire.
- Strategic links with national organisations for example, the Army Cadets, Scout Movement and Boys Brigade who have the capacity to supplement outdoor education programmes in schools.
- Strategic links with the More Choices: More Chances partnership. This partnership coordinates work with agencies, including the Princes Trust, Duke of Edinburgh, ASDAN and the John Muir Trust, who commission outdoor learning as part of their programmes. The revised service should seek to utilise all of the opportunities afforded by these agencies.

## **5. HEALTH & SAFETY IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION**

- 5.1 The essential health and safety aspects of educational visits are presently evaluated by an Outdoor Education Adviser within each local authority and an Educational Visits Coordinator within each school (HASPEV 2006). The Outdoor Education Principal Officer (OEPO) currently fulfils the role of adviser for East Ayrshire Council Department of Educational and Social Services. The OEPO has an overview of visits undertaken and supports school coordinators on issues like training and health and safety. The revised model continues to incorporate this level of support, detail of which is bulleted below:

- Provide expert advice on safety and quality in visits generally and on visits involving adventure activities, demanding environments and overseas specifically.
- Ensure that adequate and appropriate outdoor education training is available and taken up by relevant employees.
- Ensure that visit planners, co-ordinators, administrators, other school/centre staff and other adults involved in educational visits are assessed as competent in their specific tasks.
- Approve East Ayrshire Council employees who wish to lead activities that require EAC approval and hold a register of these leaders.
- Monitor the educational visits carried out under the auspices of EAC including visiting schools/centres on a sample basis and practical observation of educational visits.
- Monitor and support the work of 'visit co-ordinators' to help identify training needs and appropriate levels of delegation.
- Approve (or otherwise) visits according to EAC procedures.
- Ensure that EAC policy is consistent with all Safety procedures.
- Provide establishments and employees with policy and guidance information as required
- Ensure arrangements are in place to adequately address issues of Criminal Disclosure related to all Educational Visits.
- Ensure that arrangements are in place for informed parent/carer consent.
- Review policies and procedures in the light of lessons learned and inform staff and establishments of any changes

5.2 To be able to adequately carry out the above tasks an Outdoor Education Advisor must be experienced in education, and youth work and have full understanding of the legal responsibilities and powers of the Local Authority and its educational establishments for all kinds of educational visits. The advisor also needs experience of the practical difficulties facing establishments wishing to undertake Educational trips and visits and should have the competence to assess the risks associated with Educational Visits undertaken by establishments and individual employees.

5.3 The revised outdoor education model of delivery will support school staff by providing direct support and actively seeking investment for schools to help them make physical improvements to their school grounds. The programme will demonstrate best practice in various aspects of school grounds use, design and management and create an evidence base that demonstrates the value of outdoor learning for whole child development. The 'Grounds for Learning 2009' Report will be used as the basis for such a programme.

## **6. PERSONNEL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 To manage the programme as described in Section 4 requires the following core personnel:

6.2 A Principal Officer with designated strategic and operational responsibility for the leadership and management of the service. These responsibilities include

seeking external commissions/funding, creating policy and leading on all aspects related to Health and Safety.

- 6.3 A Development Officer to support the Principal Officer with the responsibilities described above and to lead and manage initiatives, develop programmes, seek external funding and liaise with partners.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that over a three year period success in securing external funding/commissions would lead to these posts becoming, at least in part, (30%) self financing. This target would be reviewed annually.
- 6.5 A base to house these officers would be retained at the campus of St Josephs Academy, Kilmarnock
- 6.6 This proposal will deliver the savings of £125,000 full year costs required from the 2009/10 budget review process, giving the service a base budget of:

|                                       |          |
|---------------------------------------|----------|
| Salaries (including employment costs) | £99,372  |
| Supplies and services                 | £5,000   |
| TOTAL                                 | £104,372 |

## **7. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 Users of the outdoor education service will require full detail of the changes to service provision and must be fully briefed on the opportunities available within the newly designed service.

## **8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Outdoor education provision contributes towards targets in Promoting Lifelong Learning and Promoting Health and Well being

## **9. RISK IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Nil

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that members:

- i) approve the proposed model of delivery of outdoor education as outlined in this report; and
- ii) otherwise, note the contents of this report.

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services  
12 August 2009

## **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017 or Andrew Sutherland, Tel: (01563) 576126.

## **IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER**

Andrew Sutherland, Head of Service: Schools