

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 23 APRIL 2008

EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE FUNDING TO EXTERNAL AGENCIES 2008/09

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval from Members of Cabinet for allocation of funds to external organisations in respect of Early Education and Childcare funding.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reports have been presented on an annual basis to Members for consideration in respect of Childcare Strategy funding.

3. CHILDCARE STRATEGY FUNDING

- 3.1 The aim of the Childcare Strategy is to make affordable, accessible, high quality childcare available in local authority areas across Scotland. In co-operation with East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership, the Council is responsible for identifying local childcare needs and facilitating the development of services to meet these needs.

- 3.2 To date, Childcare Strategy funding in respect of external organisations has supported:

- Funding for Out of School Care Services
- Project and childcare support to voluntary early years groups and organisations
- Breakfast club provision in Out of School Care Services
- Pooled budget to support vulnerable children or children with additional support needs access childcare services
- Outdoor play areas for voluntary partner providers
- The provision of ICT for voluntary sector Out of School Care groups

- 3.3 The funding formula for Out of School Care groups and voluntary groups that provide services for children under 5 has strengthened the childcare infrastructure and the sector is now reasonably stable. In light of this it is proposed to adjust the formula. The adjustment will introduce a percentage reduction in points awarded under the four criteria which relate to numbers of places. Criteria relating to fixed costs such as the Premises Subsidy and Small Settlement Subsidy would be unaffected. Application of the adjustment will allow funding to more accurately reflect levels of uptake and provide an incentive for providers to continue to address sustainability.

- 3.4 There has been an increasing emphasis on support for children who are vulnerable or who have additional support needs who access childcare

services. The budget allocated from Childcare Strategy is supplemented by the Changing Children's Service Fund. A total of 54 children and young people have been supported in 2007-08, often through 1 : 1 support in respect of their individual needs.

4. ORGANISATIONS WITH THREE YEAR SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENTS

4.1 Homestart East Ayrshire is a voluntary organisation providing support to families with children under three years of age. In 2007/08 they supported 44 families, which represents 105 children. This service complements existing provision and primarily supports families who are experiencing stress, isolation or difficulties in managing family life. A review of the services has been completed and is available on the Members Portal. Homestart was funded £72,000 in financial year 2007/8. It is recommended that this is reduced to £55,620 in 2008/9. This reflects a change in the need for a service in the Shortlees area, due to the opening of Shortlees Nursery and Family Centre.

4.2 Pending consideration of the national Early Years Strategy and the implications arising from this, it is intended at this stage to fund Homestart for a further year and review thereafter.

4.3 The Avenue Project is located in North West Kilmarnock and provides a day care service for children and a sitter service. There is a balance of provision between families referred through either social work services or health and those families requiring day care or sitter services to support work or training. In 2007/08 the sitter service supported 23 children of whom 13 were referred and the daycare service has been accessed by 66 children of whom 29 were referred. Services provided by the Avenue Project are subject to regulation and inspection by the Care Commission.

4.4 It is recommended that a further three year Service Level Agreement is developed, based on an annual recurring sum of £89,228, plus inflationary uplift. A review of the service is available on the members Portal.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Funding is available to support the recommendation(s) contained in this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Nil.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING

8.1 The development of childcare services are reflected in the themes of Improving Opportunities and Promoting Community Learning in the Community Plan.

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

9.1 All services funded adhere to Following The Public Pound.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 It is recommended that Members of Cabinet:

- (i) approve the funding proposals contained in this report; and
- (ii) otherwise note the content of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

19 February 2008
KG/SR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Service: Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Janie Allen, Principal Officer (Early Education and Childcare Services), Tel : (01563) 578125.

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