

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 3 DECEMBER 2008**

### **EXTENSION OF THE SCHOOL NURSING SERVICE IN EAST AYRSHIRE SECONDARY SCHOOLS**

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

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

To advise and seek Cabinet support for an initiative proposed by NHS Ayrshire and Arran involving secondary schools in East Ayrshire.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

**2.1** The school nursing service provided by NHS Ayrshire and Arran currently provides health drop-in sessions within the secondary schools in East Ayrshire. NHS colleagues have invited the three Ayrshire Councils to consider supporting further development of this service, in order that secondary aged pupils can access professional support and advice on a range of services including physical, sexual and emotional health.

**2.2** The proposed development of the service would be delivered by school nurses for NHS Ayrshire and Arran, and would encompass the following:

- healthy eating and exercise advice
- low confidence and self esteem
- support with mental health issues including bullying, stress, self harm
- support with substance misuse, in particular alcohol consumption and smoking
- sexual health services

**2.3** Health colleagues are concerned about the number of young people affected by these issues and the national media regularly highlights the pressures that face young people. Concern about poor diet and lack of exercise has been well rehearsed, as have the dangers associated with substance abuse. Less attention has been directed towards supporting young people who face mental health and lifestyle issues, including sexual health.

The Community Plan identifies the importance of raising awareness of positive sexual health and relationships and of providing a range of sexual health information and services to meet the needs of all population groups. Part of this action requires additional provision for teenage drop-in services, similar to the successful model operating in the Doon Valley.

### **3. PROPOSAL**

**3.1** The proposed enhancement of the existing school nursing service would enable young people to access appropriate support. It will overcome the lack of provision in a number of areas and would help to avoid the embarrassment that some young people might experience in seeking advice on sensitive issues within their local community. By building stronger links with health services secondary schools can improve young people's access to professional advice and support on a range of health and emotional issues.

**3.2** While the development builds on a 'whole person' or holistic view of health issues, the area of provision that would most likely to be perceived as sensitive by some parents relates to sexual health. Consultation with parents, together with consultation with young people's groups are consequently important as part of this development.

It is envisaged that discussions with Parent Councils will focus on the possible range of services that would be offered by the school nurse in response to an approach by an individual student; this may include family planning advice, lifestyle advice and support on sexual health matters.

**3.3** Cabinet should note that the initiative would operate within the framework of existing protocols and that the following key characteristics would define the operation of the initiative:

- Young people would either self refer, or be referred by school guidance staff.
- School staff will not be privy to the confidential discussion that the young person might have with the school nurse.
- The service would be confined to the existing school population.
- The service will only be established in each of the schools after full consultation with all stakeholders. This discussion will be coordinated through Parent Councils.

### **4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**4.1** None.

### **5. LEGAL AND FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1** There are no financial implications for the council. The Department of Educational and Social Services' contribution would be confined to coordinating the consultation with individual schools, facilitating the initiative and identifying space in each school which allows young people to access a confidential service.

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**6.1** It is recommended that Cabinet:-

- (i) approve the partnership with NHS Ayrshire and Arran in developing the role of school nurses in the secondary schools in East Ayrshire;
- (ii) invite the Executive Director to report on progress in due course; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

Graham Short  
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

31 October 2008  
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### **List of Background Papers**

Respect and Responsibility (Scottish Executive 2005)  
Improving the Sexual Health of Young People in Ayrshire & Arran (Currie 2008).

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER:** Carole McConville, Quality Improvement Officer