

## **EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 9<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2005**

### **EAST AYRSHIRE'S ACTIVITY MOTIVATION INITIATIVE EXTERNAL ACADEMIC EVALUATION**

#### **Report by Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

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

- 1.1 To update Members of the Committee on progress made by the innovative Activity Motivation Initiative (AMI) including the outcome of a recent external academic evaluation by Glasgow Caledonian University.

#### **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 East Ayrshire Council took a new and innovative approach to the delivery of Physical Activity to primary school aged children when it launched the Activity Motivation Initiative (AMI) in July 2003. The sports, play and dance elements of the initiative are funded via the Big Lottery PE & Sport Programme until June 2006. The AMI is delivered in conjunction with two externally funded Leisure Development projects viz. the Recreation Partnership Project, which delivers the health element, and Leisure United, which focuses upon learning disabilities/special schools element. The AMI is jointly managed by the council's Creative Minds and Leisure Development Sections.
- 2.2 The Initiative is delivered by 10 full-time, specialist "Motivators" who are experts in the fields of Dance, Health, Play, Learning Disabilities and Sport and act as positive role models for local young people. Pupils participate in a wide range of specialist activities within primary and special schools as part of a flexible curriculum and in the wider community after school hours, at weekends and during school holidays. In order to ensure sustainability, teachers have been involved in experiential learning during motivation sessions, have received innovative themed resources and lesson plans, and received in-service training.
- 2.3 Since its launch in 2003 the Activity Motivation Initiative has recorded over 20,000 pupil attendances per annum at school and community based activities. Participating class teachers have benefited through access to a wide range of sports, play, dance and health resources and lesson plans, experiential learning and training. A wide range of new leisure opportunities have been developed for children in their local communities and physical activity levels have correspondingly increased.

- 2.4 The Activity Motivation Initiative is unique within Scotland and is attracting interest from other authorities and organisations. Indeed the project has raised the national profile of East Ayrshire Council through features in publications such as Holyrood Magazine, the Times Educational Supplement and the Sunday Herald and has featured in presentations to national conferences and universities. The AMI was also included in the recent HMle INEA 2 inspection and provided input at Royal and Ministerial visits to Hurlford Primary School.
- 2.5 Whilst internal qualitative and quantitative monitoring/evaluations have been extremely positive the project team commissioned an objective academic evaluation of the AMI in order to assess the impact of this unique approach within East Ayrshire.

### **3. THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

- 3.1 The Division of Cultural Business, Glasgow Caledonian University, was commissioned to undertake an objective evaluation and analysis of the AMI. This division and research team have an international reputation in academic research, vocational education and consultancy.
- 3.2 In terms of methodology, the size and diverse geography of East Ayrshire was taken into account, and, following an initial pilot, three distinct, yet inter-related, research phases were initiated. This involved the profiling of, and sampling within, East Ayrshire Schools; interviews regarding the work of the AMI Motivators; and a summative phase with a Teachers' Forum.
- 3.3 Key findings from the research are summarised as follows:
- With an average 14.7 hours per week of physical activity the activity ratings of AMI participating children were over twice the national targets highlighted by the Chief Medical Officer (Donaldson 2004). This would indicate that the AMI is a strong contributory factor in transferring/assimilating the active, physical lifestyle message into the lives of East Ayrshire primary school children.
  - There was a positive twofold gender impact of the AMI in relation to music, dance and movement. By innovatively integrating street dance/music/fashion, this activity produced enthusiastic participation among girls. This counters the traditional trend and present concerns over the evidence of high passivity levels by young girls. Participation among boys was also enhanced in dance due to the focus upon popular culture.
  - Nutritional lifestyle habits of children contrasted greatly depending upon the area. More prosperous areas achieved significantly higher scores than those situated within less prosperous localities.
  - All evidence indicates that the AMI represents an exemplary partnership initiative that directly responds to national policy priorities. Evidence highlights real strides in the positive promotion and change in the health of East Ayrshire children.

### 3.4 The report concludes as follows-

- From the research undertaken summative evidence indicates that the AMI is the clearest expression of an inter-departmental partnership project that integrates and grounds the aims of national policy agendas within local communities. At a time when health concerns are a top political priority the AMI is an initiative that energetically tackles such problems and actively makes a difference in the daily lifestyles of the primary school children of East Ayrshire.

### 3.5 Key recommendations arising from the research report include-

- The transformations in the healthy lifestyles of East Ayrshire's primary school children necessitate the sustained development and extension of the AMI.
- AMI Champions, who are able to holistically integrate AMI aims within the curriculum, need to be identified and promoted. A regular supplement to the teachers resource pack would be one possible option for disseminating such good practice and ensures knowledge transfer throughout all schools.
- Actual delivery by the Motivation Team needs to be increased, targeted and tailored to the needs of local communities, primary schools and children. This delivery will provide the essential support that teachers need, in order to embed AMI aims within the curriculum.
- A resource mapping exercise is required within individual communities to ensure children can pursue a programme of progressive development. It is essential that communities have provision and club network opportunities to capitalise upon the activities, enthusiasm and imagination stimulated through the AMI.
- Future work is required to investigate the nutritional lifestyle habits of children within the diverse communities of East Ayrshire. Transformations in physical activity need to be matched with that of nutrition.

## 4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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- Whilst external funding has impacted greatly on the lives and well being of East Ayrshire's young people through the AMI, the short term nature of such funding is an issue. The funding for the play, sport and dance element which employs five full time motivators is due to terminate in June 2006 and for the health and learning disabilities elements in 2007- 2008. Future funding will be determined following further discussions between the two Departments.

- 4.2 The phased profile of funding required in order to ensure the long term sustainability of each of the elements of the AMI is as follows;

Element	Funding Required			
	06/07	07/08	08/09	09/10 (onwards)
Sport, Play and Dance (Big Lottery)	£106,500	£145,000	£150,000	£155,000
Health	£0	£0	£100,000	£105,000
Learning Disabilities	£0	£50,000	£55,000	£60,000

## 5. LEGAL AUTHORITY/ IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Nil

## 6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Activity Motivation Initiative delivers directly on action number 3.2 of the Improving Health section of East Ayrshire's Community Plan, contributes to the achievement of key high level outputs in relation to children's health in East Ayrshire's Regeneration Outcome Agreement and links directly to the Children's Service Plan, Hungry for Success Initiative and emerging Culture and Leisure Strategy.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 As evidenced by internal monitoring and external evaluation the Activity Motivation Initiative is making a major impact upon the health and physical activity levels of East Ayrshire's primary school aged children, with average participation rates of 14.7 hours per week.
- 7.2 The unique and dynamic approach adopted by the AMI has been highlighted through the research as an exemplary partnership initiative which is responding directly to national policy priorities. In a local sense the AMI demonstrates the real added value of a meaningful strategic and operational partnership between two Council Departments and the corresponding ability to deliver on the Improving Health element of the Community Plan. In addition the AMI has become embedded in primary schools through East Ayrshire's nine Learning Partnerships contributing to work around Health Promoting Schools, HMI inspections and the Hungry for Success Initiative.

- 7.3 The research suggests that the AMI is ripe for development and extension and should respond further to localised health issues such as nutrition and community based opportunities. In addition the evaluation has strongly recommended the need for long term funding in order to bring about the required generational change. In order for the AMI to continue and extend its work, make a major long term and lasting impact on the health and wellbeing of East Ayrshire's children and retain the highly motivated and experienced staff, real consideration needs to be given to the allocation of long term funding.
- 7.4 The AMI has reinforced East Ayrshire's position as a national leader in the field of health improvement and in turn has raised the profile of East Ayrshire Council and its community planning partners in terms of innovative and integrated partnership working.

## **8. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 8.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee and Community Services Committee:
- (i) welcome the work of the AMI in relation to improving the health and well being of local children and raising the national profile of East Ayrshire;
  - (ii) request that options for funding the continuation of this initiative are explored and Social Services to explore options to secure the long term funding of the AMI and;
  - (iii) otherwise note the content of this report.

William Stafford  
**Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services**

WS/JAG/KK/JW  
1<sup>st</sup> November 2005

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. New Opportunities for PE and Sport Initiative – Education Committee 17 September 2002.
2. New Opportunities for PE and Sport Initiative - Community Services Committee -18 September 2002.
3. Big lottery fund PE and Sport activities update- Education Committee, 9 November 2004
4. Big lottery fund PE and Sport activities update- Community Services Committee 15 November 2004
5. Activity Motivation Initiative; Evaluating a Healthy Lifestyle Scheme- Glasgow Caledonian University, September 2005

Members requiring further information should contact John Wilson, Links Officer in the Arts and Education on (01563) 555634 or Katie Kelly, Leisure Development Manager on (01563) 576722

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