

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 31 JANUARY 2006

REVISED EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE ADMISSIONS POLICY

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to seek agreement from the Members of the Education Committee to implement the proposed revisions to the Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy and to ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to remit the report for approval to Council.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy has been in existence since 1996 and was last reviewed in 2001. The Policy has been reviewed and refined to take account of new legislation, best practice and the experience of implementing the current Policy.
- 2.2** A multi-agency group was established to undertake this review and included representatives from Head Teachers, Heads of Centre, Early Years, Social Work and Health.
- 2.3** The two primary pieces of legislation which impact on the banding for children's admissions are the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 2.4** Previous reports have been presented to Education Committee regarding the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004. At the Education Committee of 8 November 2005 Members were informed about the right which parents have in relation to placing requests for children attending a nursery provision.

3. PLACES FOR CHILDREN AGED 0-3 YEARS

- 3.1** There are a total of 83 full time equivalent places for children aged 0-3 years in the four community nurseries in East Ayrshire. In addition, children under 3 years are placed with approved Day Carers.
- 3.2** Places for children aged 0-3 years are not universal and therefore the allocation of places to children in this age group is undertaken according to an assessment of need, in terms of the criteria laid down in the Admissions Policy. This ensures that vulnerable children and families have the highest priority.

- 3.3 The proposed revisions and refinements to the criteria for 0-3 places are detailed as follows:

PLACES IN COMMUNITY NURSERIES AND WITH DAYCARERS FOR CHILDREN AGED 0- 3 YEARS WHO RESIDE IN EAST AYRSHIRE.

Band 1 **Child Protection** – Referral of a child by Social Services who is on the Child Protection Register or where a child is the subject of a current Child Protection investigation or where a child is subject to a statutory home supervision order.

BAND 2 **Children in Need/Children with Additional Support for Learning Needs**

- (i) Children referred by Social Services, Psychological Services, health professionals as being “in need” in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- (ii) Children with additional support needs as defined by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

Band 3 **Parents in Education/Training** – Priority will be given to lone adult households.

Band 4 **Parents in Employment** – Priority will be given to lone adult households in receipt of Working Families Tax Credit Childcare Allowance and lone adults working less than 16 hours per week and in receipt of income support.

Band 5 **General** – All other children in the age range resident in East Ayrshire.

- 3.4 It is recognised that circumstances for some parents can change after the place has been allocated. In some cases, a place has been allocated for a young child who remains with the nursery until he/she goes to school. However, the reason why the place was allocated in the first instance has been overtaken and the need is no longer there. This has resulted in places being full with no scope to allocate to more urgent applications.

- 3.5 Therefore, the proposal is that all places for children aged 0-3 years should be allocated for a specified period of time according to need and based on the agreed criteria. Regular reviews should take place for all allocated places and placements adjusted accordingly.

- 3.6 This should facilitate the allocation of places to new applications in Band 1 and Band 2 throughout the course of the year.

4. PRE SCHOOL EDUCATION PLACES

- 4.1** Since August 2002, East Ayrshire has been in the position to offer funded part time pre school education places to all children aged 3 and 4 years living in East Ayrshire, in either a local authority nursery or a partner provider in the voluntary or private sector. In the academic year 2005/06 there are a total of 2111 sessional places in local authority nurseries and 421 places commissioned with partner providers.
- 4.2** All children in their pre school year (4 year olds) whose parents wish a place for their child are offered 5 x 2 ½ hour sessions of pre school education per week over 3 terms of the school year. Children in their ante pre school year (3 year olds) become eligible for a funded place in the term after their third birthday and may be offered a split place either 2 or 3 sessions per week.
- 4.3** The proposed revisions and refinements to the criteria for pre school education places are detailed below:

PRE SCHOOL EDUCATION PLACES IN COMMUNITY NURSERIES, NURSERY SCHOOLS AND PRIMARY SCHOOLS WITH NURSERY CLASSES

BAND 1 **Child Protection** – Referral of a child by Social Services who is on the Child Protection Register or where a child is the subject of a current child protection investigation or where a child is subject to a statutory home supervision order.

BAND 2 **Children in Need/Children with Additional Support for Learning Needs**

- (i) Children referred by Social Services, Psychological Services, health professionals as being “in need” in terms of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.
- (ii) Children with additional support needs as defined by the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

BAND 3 **Pre School Year**

- (i) All children in their Pre School year living within the boundary of East Ayrshire and those children with January/February birthdays whose parents choose to defer their child’s entry to Primary School.
- (ii) Children in their Pre School Year who live outwith the boundary of East Ayrshire but within the catchment area of an East Ayrshire Primary School.

BAND 4 Ante Pre School Year

- (i) All children in their Ante Pre school year living within the boundary of East Ayrshire
- (ii) Children in their Ante Pre School Year who live outwith the boundary of East Ayrshire but within the catchment area of an East Ayrshire Primary School.

BAND 5 General

- (i) All other children in their Pre School year living outwith the boundary of East Ayrshire
- (ii) All other children in their Ante Pre School year living outwith the boundary of East Ayrshire.

4.4 The allocation of morning and afternoon places has continued to be complex. Morning places are very popular with parents, however it is impossible to allocate a morning session to all applicants. Therefore there needs to be a fair and transparent process in the allocation of morning and afternoon places.

4.5 It is recognised as good practice to have a mix of ante pre and pre school children at each session, where this is possible.

4.6 When allocating morning or afternoon sessions, Heads of Establishment need to consider if parents/carers require a particular session due to childcare arrangements, employment or training commitments. In addition, some children whose needs have been identified through recognized referral processes may require a particular session.

4.7 It is therefore proposed, all other things being equal, that if the applications for a particular session are oversubscribed, then a ballot should take place. The Local Elected member should be invited to attend the ballot. The ballot would also include all children in their second year of nursery.

4.8 Parents who require a particular session due to employment, training or childcare arrangements should be offered that where this is available, and therefore will not be included in the ballot. This is also the case for children with particular needs who have been assessed through recognized referral processes.

5. PLACING REQUESTS

5.1 The Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 allows parents of a child with additional support needs to make a request *“for their child to attend any school under the management of an education authority, which includes a nursery school and a partnership provider”*. This is the first time that placing requests have been introduced for pre-school provision, but can only be made if a child has been assessed as having additional support needs. If a placing request is refused, the parent will have the right to formally appeal to the Appeals Committee or other arrangements as set out in the

Code of Practice associated with the new duties as defined by the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004.

6. CHARGING

- 6.1** It is proposed that the current charge of £2.50 per hour of childcare is increased on 1 April 2006 to £2.60 per hour of childcare.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** None

8. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The revisions and refinements to the policy take account of the Council's statutory duties under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000 and the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.

- 8.2** The revised Policy also reflects the vision, values and objectives set out in East Ayrshire Children and Young People's Service Plan 2005-08 and the 7 outcomes for children and young people set by the Scottish Executive: safe, nurtured, healthy, achieving, active, respected and responsible, included.

9. COMMUNITY PLANNING RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1** The Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy reflect the priorities set out in the Community Plan under the themes of Improving health, Eliminating Poverty, Improving Opportunities and Promoting Community Learning

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1** It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) recommend to Council approval of the revised Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy.
- (ii) agree to the recommendations to increase the childcare charge from £2.50 per hour to £2.60 per hour from 1 April 2006; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

5 January 2006
JA/KG/SR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Education Committee – 13 November 2001: Early Years Education and Childcare Admissions Policy

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

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR