

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 7 NOVEMBER 2006

NATIONAL REVIEW OF THE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE WORKFORCE: INVESTING IN CHILDREN'S FUTURES

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 the Education Committee for the Council's response to the *National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Investing in Children's Futures*.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce was announced in June 2004. Its remit was to Improve employment opportunities for Early Years and Childcare staff and raise the status of the sector, including:
- examining and defining the role and responsibilities of staff in the Early Years, Childcare and Play Workforce;
 - determining an approach to national workforce planning;
 - rationalising and modernising early years/childcare qualifications, ensuring that they are appropriate for the different sectors of the workforce;
 - developing vertical and lateral career pathways which provide for progression within a chosen area and lateral movement between different sectors of the workforce;
 - consider the implications of these considerations for pay and conditions.
- 2.2 For the purpose of the review the workforce under consideration was those groups of workers registered with the Scottish Social Services Council who work in:
- Early Years care and learning;
 - Out of School Care and in play work;
 - As well as childminders who are registered with the Care Commission.
- 2.3 Teachers working in early years settings were not part of the review as the teaching workforce had recently been reviewed through the *Teaching Profession for the 21st Century*. There is recognition in the consultation document however that there is not a clear boundary around the workforce and that there is a continuing and valuable role which teachers must play within early education and childcare.

2.4 The Steering Group identified five distinct but related work streams:

- Roles and responsibilities
- Qualifications and training
- Career pathways
- Recruitment and retention
- Workforce planning.

2.5 The closing date for responses to the consultation document is the 22 December 2006.

3. EAST AYRSHIRE'S RESPONSE

3.1 The response from East Ayrshire Council was developed following consultation with staff and existing networks across the Council area. These included a focus group comprising representatives from across the local authority, voluntary and private sector. This included:

- managers, teachers, lead practitioners and early years workers
- Comments from the Childcare Partnership
- Representatives from the Early Years Forum and the Out of School Care Network.

3.2 The proposed response for Members consideration is attached as an Appendix to this report. The layout of the response reflects the set of questions posed in the consultation document.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. However, when the final review proposals are published, it is likely that there will be financial implications for the local authority.

5. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None at this stage.

6. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

6.1 The provision of high quality Early Education and Childcare Services is a key strand in both the *Improving Opportunities Theme of the Community Plan* and the *Integrated East Ayrshire Children and Young Persons Service Plan*.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Members of Education Committee are asked to:

- (i) approve the response to the *National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Investing in Children's Futures*;

- (ii) remit any minor textual amendments to officers;
- (iii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to return to Committee with implications arising from the final review report; and
- (iv) otherwise note the content of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/SR
11 October 2006

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce: Report and Consultation
2. National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce – Scottish Executive Response: Investing in Children’s Futures
3. National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce – Consultation for Individual Early Years and Childcare Workers and Childminders

Members seeking further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR

**EAST AYRSHIRE RESPONSE TO THE
NATIONAL REVIEW OF THE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE WORKFORCE**

Q1 What are the barriers to developing a coherent early years and childcare workforce with a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities? How can they be overcome?

Perceived barriers include:

- There is not enough networking and therefore a lack of awareness of other parts of sector and of other sectors
- There is a perceived hierarchy of services
- Diversity of services can be a barrier to cohesion
- Differences in salaries across sectors
- Physical infrastructure
- Gender imbalance in staffing

Potential actions to address this include;

- Raise the profile of the sector
- Mutual respect across sector
- Further develop schools as a community resource e.g. further development of out of school hours childcare
- Recognition that further development of the sector will require financial resources

Q2 To what extent does the Roles and Responsibilities Framework provide a useful basis for developing a shared professional identity across the early years and childcare workforce, and for driving forward the integrated working agenda?

The Framework proposals are overall very positive;

- It encourages unified thinking and ties the curriculum to the Care Standards
- It has the potential to ensure a consistent quality of provision and provide for continuity of care
- Gives a more coherent identity to the workforce while allowing for greater flexibility

Q3 Does the Roles and Responsibilities Framework reflect what workers in all sectors of the workforce are likely to be doing as services develop over the coming years?

- Yes, most definitely the framework reflects the Care Standards and the Curriculum

Q4 Is the Roles and Responsibilities Framework a useful basis for developing professional qualifications in the sector?

Agree the framework should be used as the basis for the qualification, it should however have a large practical element. It provides a good opportunity for career progression and should address the issue of leadership capacity.

QUALIFICATIONS, TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT AND CAREER PATHWAYS

Q5 How accurately does this (Section 3) reflect career pathways in the early years and childcare sector at the moment?

- It is a fair assessment of the current situation. It is not unusual for staff to move from private and voluntary sector to public sector but staff movement the other way is very unusual due to significant differences in recruitment and retention policies
- Misconceptions within the public sector about private and voluntary provision
- Recognition that there may be issues in the future regarding job evaluation
- There is a view that staff in private and voluntary services are not well supported by their employers
- Men into childcare is an issue due to wages, societal views of care work and concerns about paedophiles

Q6 How effective will these proposals be in promoting career pathways across the different parts of the early years and childcare sector, and more widely?

- Need to create posts for vertical progression, but also provide an opportunity for staff who do not wish a managerial position e.g. chartered status
- The qualification should have core strand applicable right across the sector then add specialist strands as required
- How will the additional resources needed to create and promote career pathways be put in place?

Q7 Are there other ways to promote career pathways?

- Encourage staff to take on additional responsibilities to reflect their own particular areas of interest and not necessarily for extra payment
- Address issue of wages and terms and conditions of employment for staff in the private and voluntary sectors
- Positively promote early years and childcare as a profession to young people still in school
- Provide work experience placements in establishments
- Encourage creative thinking “outside the box”

Q8 What are your views on a single qualifications framework with a shared base (or “common core”) for the whole early years and childcare sector? (This includes early years workers, out of school care workers, playworkers, childminders and others)

A “common core” addressing issues such as underpinning values, care standards, social and policy context, child protection and child development among other things would be welcome. The “common core” could also helpfully be reflected across other disciplines.

Q9 The Review proposes that services should be led by SCQF level 9 (ordinary degree or work based equivalent) qualified professionals. Should it be higher than SCQF level 9? Why?

Consensus of opinion is that SCQF level 9 is of a sufficient level to manage services. However, ongoing continuing professional development is critical.

Q10 Many workers will develop their skills and knowledge through continuing professional development. What are the important features of a CPD framework for the early years and childcare workforce?

- Good practice would suggest that a needs analysis should be undertaken for each staff member within services linked to improvement planning and professional and personal development
- Although a considerable amount of work has been undertaken in relation to children under 3 in recent years, this needs to continue

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION AND WORKFORCE PLANNING

Q11 How accurately does the report reflect the issues that affect the status of work in early years and childcare at the moment?

- The report accurately reflects the challenges in relation to improving the gender balance of the workforce. Professionalisation of the workforce needs to help overturn perceptions that the work is “babysitting”
- The move to integrated services with a greater emphasis on family/parenting support has created challenges for managers and staff who may not have the qualifications/skills/experience to manage such services. This remains a critical area of work in the drive to improve outcomes for children and young people
- Work in pre-school education is more attractive to staff who have children due to the hours. However, as more flexible services are developed this may raise recruitment issues
- Private and voluntary sector invest in staff training and CPD but often lose qualified staff to local authority services
- The status of sitter services staff could possibly be enhanced if registration with the Scottish Social Services Council were to be applied

across the whole childcare sector. This would also send a consistent message about the value of childcare work

Q12 Are there factors other than status that affect recruitment and retention?

- Wages and terms and conditions of employment in the private and voluntary sector are significantly less attractive than those in the public sector. The result is an ongoing migration of staff who have achieved qualifications in the private or voluntary sector moving at the earliest opportunity to local authority employment
- Out of school care services face particular challenges in recruiting and retaining staff due to the nature of the service. Staff are expected to work part time during term time and go up to full time working at school holidays. Such working hours are difficult for working parents

Q13 To what extent do you think the proposals in the Review improve the status of the early years and childcare workforce?

- The review overall seeks to address the issue of status and is very much welcomed. Low wages relative to other professions will remain however an issue
- Much work needs done to ensure other professionals understand the role of the early education and childcare workforce
- There remains a real issue about colleges being very reluctant to fail students when placement staff have concerns about a student. Colleges failure to uphold standards helps perpetuate the notion that “anyone can do the job”

Q14 How do we ensure the sharing of good practice on recruitment and retention?

- Good communication especially concerning students would support good practice in this area
- The issues are significantly different for the public sector and for the private and voluntary sector where there is a high turnover of staff voluntary management committees

Q15 How do you think we can attract men and other under represented groups into the sector?

- Improving wages and terms and conditions of employment would make work in the sector much more attractive to men
- Raising the profile and the status of the profession would help attract all under represented groups

Q16 How accurately does this analysis capture the key challenges that face the early years and childcare sector regarding workforce planning?

- The analysis recognises that early years and childcare needs to be able to compete for the workforce it needs but perhaps does not reflect the difficulties created within the sector by discrepancies in pay and conditions between the public and private and voluntary sector
- One of the current main issues around workforce planning is the need for small private and voluntary sector services to have a manager qualified to SVQ IV or equivalent

Q17 Considering the attributes of workforce planning described in this section, what activities are you aware of that currently take place to help achieve each of them? Do different activities occur at individual (business) level, local level and national level?

Private and voluntary sector services tend to react to staffing issues rather than plan. Childcare Partnerships have a key role in supporting the sector on these strategic issues.

Q18 What needs to happen at a local level for effective workforce planning to take place? What needs to happen at a national level? Why?

Childcare Partnerships could further develop their role in supporting the voluntary and private sector.

Q19 The Review sets proposals intended to create a single, coherent profession for all those working in early years and childcare. Are there other actions which would support the development of a single profession?

- More networking across professions
- CPD encouraging staff to swap roles with other workers from other establishments and sectors
- Emphasis on the professional element of the qualification ie tact, confidentiality, dress, attitude, conduct and respect for everyone
- Improved literacy skills

Q20 What are your views on the title “pedagogue” within a Scottish context?

While this title is used in both European and Scandinavian countries it is unfamiliar to parents and staff in Scotland. In Denmark, social pedagogues are the main workers in nurseries and other childcare settings and their training involves a 3 or 4 year degree.

Q21 How would you like to see the early years and childcare workforce named?

If our aim is to have a world class children’s workforce, the name needs to capture the valuable and professional role that staff have working with children under 5.