

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 13 SEPTEMBER 2005

QUALITY IMPROVEMENT IN 2005 - 06

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To describe the results of a review of the quality improvement service and seek agreement to its direction in session 2005 -06.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At its meeting of 19 September 2000 the Education Committee approved a review of the service. It was at this time that service was redesignated as the Quality Improvement Team staffed by quality improvement officers (QIOs). This development saw a strengthening of links between individual team members and local delivery of services through the learning partnerships. A research and statistical function was created as part of this review.
- 2.2 At its meeting of 14 September 2004 the Education Committee approved a programme of best value service reviews. A review of the Quality Improvement Service was included within that programme.

3. SERVICES PROVIDED

- 3.1 The new job description for QIOs was published by the Scottish Negotiating Committee for Teachers as SNCT 32. This job description has been adopted by East Ayrshire. It reflects a move away from traditional educational development functions and towards a support and challenge role. This, in its own right reflects a shift nationally to an increasing weight being attached to self evaluation at both education authority level and within establishments and services. The new suite of quality indicators and its associated process developed as the inspection of education authorities, 2nd edition (INEA2) specifically probes the strength of quality improvement services.
- 3.2 At the same time, HMIE processes themselves are throwing more weight onto local authorities. Provision of a rigorous report by the authority is now a pre-requisite of establishment and service inspections. The follow through processes also require involvement from authority staff, culminating in the provision of a publishable report by quality improvement officers. Experience has proved that establishments themselves are requiring increasing levels of support before, during and after inspections.

- 3.3** Statutory requirements, mainly through the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act, 2000, but also through the Education (Additional Support for Learning)(Scotland) Act 2004 have imposed new duties on authorities. These relate to duties to secure service improvement, to intervene in establishments as necessary and to monitor the implementation of specified policy areas. The main instrument of delivering these requirements is perceived as the quality improvement service. This new emphasis is further highlighted by the introduction of the Education (Ministerial Powers of Intervention) Act, 2004. This latter allows Scottish Ministers to directly intervene in the affairs of schools or education authorities if they are dissatisfied with the rates of progress following an inspection.
- 3.4** While, the levels of external accountability have been present in schools and with the authority for some time now, there are also significant new developments. This is in the extension of inspection and regulatory regimes in the childcare and pre-school sectors through the advent of the Care Commission. Further, a new rigour has been brought to evaluation in Community Learning and Development services, particularly with the publication of quality indicators specifically for that service. Child Protection and Integrated Inspections all add to this general accountability.
- 3.5** Community planning together with its associated target setting exercises with allied monitoring is prominent in the life of the Department. This will also give rise to increasing complexities in capturing and analysing data since the services in the Community Plan are cross-cutting and involve a range of delivery agencies. Best value itself also requires the development of expertise, evidence gathering and analysis, for example through the European Foundation for Quality Management (EFQM) exercises that are required.
- 3.6** Finally, the introduction of "A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century" (TP21) has brought a new dimension to the management of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. Every member of staff on teachers' conditions is now required to undertake 35 hours per year CPD as a contractual requirement. The authority invests considerable resources in this provision, and a new rigour is required to secure best value from this investment. The management of CPD is a traditional role of Quality Improvement within its educational development function.

4. THE REVIEW PROCESS

- 4.1** As a normal part of its routine, the Quality Improvement Team carries out an annual programme of self evaluation. Additionally, a special-to-purpose self evaluation is carried out in relation to the CPD programme.

- 4.2** As a separate part of monitoring activity, the directorate consults with headteachers and other groups on central service provision. This complements the external evaluations which have taken place by HMIE.
- 4.3** In all of these cases, high levels of satisfaction have been recorded for quality improvement services. No-one, either as an individual or group has indicated that they wish to see a radical change in the way this activity is delivered.
- 4.4** To conclude the review, a 2-day seminar was held which included representative headteachers, members of the directorate, and officers from services such as CLDS and social work. This seminar focused on identifying the service pressures summarised above and the various options available to respond to these pressures.
- 4.5** A number of delivery options were considered, of these options, the preferred model included:
- Core quality improvement functions exercised by the current establishment of officers under SNCT Circular 32.
 - Continued commitment to a specific research and intelligence function.
 - Transfer of CPD management to specific staff funded through Scottish Executive grants for that purpose.
 - Educational development to be located with a learning and teaching team.
 - External purchase of specific services where necessary.

Quality improvement officers, for purposes of their own CPD and to ensure that all initiatives have a quality dimension might be assigned to assist with educational development work. Critical to this new model is the ability of QIOs to work in service areas where there is a need. The particular areas identified are CLDS, and closer collaboration with the Performance and Development team in social work and onsite services. This will be co-ordinated by an officer group known as the Quality Forum.

5. DELIVERY PLAN FOR 2005 – 06

- 5.1** In practical terms the impact of this development on service improvement can be seen in the Quality Improvement Team's Service Plan for 2005-06, a copy of which is available in the Members' Information Point.

6. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** This solution will allow the Department of Educational and Social Services to fulfil its legal and policy commitments.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The monitoring and evaluation requirements introduced through the Community Plan have been given due emphasis in the development of this solution.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Nil

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members :

- (i) endorse the arrangements described in this report for the delivery of quality improvement services and related activity;
- (ii) agree the quality improvement service plan 2005-06; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
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GRS/GRS
08 September 2005

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Service: Quality Improvement, (01563-576089).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 1.** Restructuring Quality Development Services, Education Committee, 19 September 2000
- 2.** Best Value: Three Year Programme, Education Committee, 14 September 2004

Implementation Officer: Graham Short