

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 12 SEPTEMBER 2006

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF EARLY YEARS SERVICES

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to inform Members of the Education Committee of the findings of the Early Years Best Value Review and to make recommendations accordingly.

2. PROCESS

- 2.1** Early Years Services were reviewed as part of the Council's Best Value Review Programme. In order to undertake the review a number of sub groups were established, namely:

- Consultation
- Continuous Improvement and Key Processes
- Working with Partners
- Family Services

- 2.2** Early Years Services covers a wide range of services to children and young people across the East Ayrshire Council area. This includes pre-school education, childcare (0-14 years) and targeted services through the Daycarer Service and Family Care Services. It also has responsibility for Breakfast Clubs.

- 2.3** The Service has a very flat authority wide structure with 94% of staff and budgets located in establishments or directly delivering services to users. Services are delivered through a mixed economy of local authority, voluntary and private sector providers.

- 2.4** The vast majority of its services are regulated through the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 and pre-school educational services are externally inspected both through Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education and the Care Commission. Childcare Services are inspected solely through the Care Commission.

- 2.5** East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership is the multi-agency planning forum which operates on behalf of the Children's Service Plan Steering Group to plan for and develop educational and childcare services in East Ayrshire. In terms of Community Planning there is a key interest across four out of the six themes of the Community Plan.

- 2.6** In determining the main aspects of the service to be reviewed cognisance was given to the quality of inspection reports in relation to pre-school education and the recognition of the very high baseline in terms of the quality of these services.
- 2.7** Some aspects of the review have already been implemented, namely the revised Early Education and Childcare Admissions Policy and consideration of payments to Partner Providers. These two aspects of the review have been previously considered by Education Committee, recommendations approved and implemented accordingly.
- 2.8** Consultation arrangements focussed largely on the quality of service provided by Authority wide staff. The key findings are summarised below:

Key Strengths:

- Communicating with, and engaging with, service providers
- Responsiveness, support and accessibility of Authority wide staff
- Staff in local authority establishments felt motivated and enjoyed their work
- Good access to ongoing professional review and development
- Very high baseline of quality services evaluated through HMIE and Care Commission Integrated Inspections

What Do We Need to Look At Further?

- A small number of Partner Provider nurseries felt they required more support in relation to curriculum support
- 50% of Day Carers who responded felt the level payment didn't reflect their responsibilities

Focus groups were held with Management Committees of Partner Providers, Out of School Care Services and the Childcare Partnership. The Focus Groups enabled more in depth discussion regarding *Information, Support, Advice and Accessibility*.

- 2.9** The Review benchmarked with the Education Authority's family of authorities in relation to payment to Partner Providers and payment to Day Carers. The outcome of this informed some of the key recommendations in the review.

3. KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1** A copy of the full Best Value Review is available at the Members Information Point. The undernoted sets out the key recommendations arising from the Best Value Review. Recommendations which have resource implications will only be taken forward as and when resources become available. Where appropriate, these will be subject to separate Committee reports.

3.11 STAFFING

1. In order to reflect the full range of Early Education and Childcare services, the service should now be named Early Education and Childcare. The post of Principal Officer should be renamed accordingly.
2. Due to the flat structure in early years there is a need to support the management arrangements in the service. The post of Childcare Partnership Officer should be redesignated to Assistant Principal Officer (Early Years Education and Childcare).
3. The temporary post of Out of School Hours Business Development Officer was established in 2001. It should be made permanent and the job specification reviewed.
4. Subject to available resources, there should be no change to the current arrangements for teaching posts in early year's establishments. If resources become available, peripatetic teaching input should be provided for community nurseries. This position should be reviewed following the outcome of the National Review of the Early Years and Childcare Workforce.
5. In the longer term, the central Early Years team should be located together, accommodation allowing, to make the best use of the administrative resources available. Once this is in place an administrative review should be completed.
6. An assessment of the need for planned support to families in the evening and at weekends should be carried out.
7. When resources become available, two additional peripatetic Early Years Workers should be appointed to support the demand placed upon the Authority as a result of the Education (Additional Support for Learning) Act 2004.
8. Establish clearer pathways for access to continuous professional development for Family Care Workers.
9. A review of the current temporary SVQ posts will require to be undertaken in 2007.
10. Dependent on resources, the current Early Years Workers posts delivering wraparound care services should be made permanent. An appropriate promoted post structure should be put in place as part of this.

3.1.2 SERVICE DELIVERY

11. Population trends need to continue to be monitored to ensure that pre-school education places are matching demand in local communities. This may require a disinvestment in some areas and investment on others. This includes Partner Providers.
12. If the service expanded to enable all children of three years of age to access five sessions per week, it is anticipated at a minimum that it would cost £422,300 for staff. This excludes any physical infrastructure requirements. The capacity for individual establishments to meet this demand should be reviewed as and when the opportunity arises.
13. The recent decision by Education Committee to support Partner Providers to enable them to deliver pre-school education for 39 weeks should be monitored.
14. Flowerbank Nursery and Bellsbank Family Centre should be formally redesignated as Nursery and Family Centre establishments. A detailed option appraisal should be carried out to assess the physical infrastructure issues with regard to Flowerbank Nursery.
15. Communities Scotland report "People and Place" identifies childcare as a key factor in supporting the regeneration of communities. Within this context wraparound care should continue to be developed, subject to available resources, and dependent on audits of parental requirements.
16. The Childcare Partnership should be asked to carry out a detailed analysis of the unmet need for 0-3 year old places and sitter services. This should be linked to labour market intelligence and jointly commissioned by the Improving Opportunities Theme Group of the Community Plan.
17. A full needs assessment to be undertaken to determine whether full day care and family care services are required in the Irvine Valley area.
18. Long term sustainability of Breakfast Clubs in East Ayrshire should be considered once the evaluation of current Breakfast Club activity is completed.
19. The funding formula for out of school care services and childcare providers should continue based on an annual review to reflect any changes operationally.
20. The hourly rate paid to Day Carers should be increased to £4.00 per hour per child with an enhanced rate of £4.50 per hour per child for those Day Carers who have undertaken the Scottish Childminding Association Quality Assurance Scheme, *The Scheme of Excellence* and £4.75 per hour per child for those Day Carers who have completed

a qualification recognised through the Scottish Qualifications Framework.

21. In addition, Day Carers who provide care for children who have additional support needs who require a 1:1 ratio, should receive an hourly rate based on a rate for two children to take account of the intensive support required and to recompense them for limiting their service to one child.
22. Depending on the outcome of the pilot for a centralised database for children accessing a 0-3 year old place in local authority nurseries, this should be permanently established.
23. The ICT Infrastructure to enable nursery establishments to deliver modern pre-school education and care should be rolled out.

4. POLICY AND LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The Best Value Review has been carried out in accordance with the Council's guidance on best value.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Financial information is set out against each of the recommendations as appropriate. Recommendations which have resource implications will only be taken forward as and when resources become available. Where appropriate, these will be subject to separate Committee reports.

6. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The proposals contained in this report, if approved, will have staffing implications for the Department. Accordingly, the report should be submitted to the Corporate Governance Committee for consideration of the staffing matters. The staffing implications will be subject to consultations with the Trade Unions.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The range of services provided by Early Years supports all the themes of the Community Plan.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 Members of the Education Committee are asked to:
 - (i) approve the recommendations set out in Section 3 of the report;
 - (ii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to consult with the Trade Unions on the outcome of the Best Value Review;

- (iii) ask the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services to remit the staffing implications to the Corporate Governance Committee; and
- (iv) otherwise note the contents of the report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

30 August 2006
KG/SR

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

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

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