

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE – 18 MARCH 2004

LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS – PROGRESS REPORT

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To provide the Social Work Committee with information regarding an evaluation of the first year of Learning Partnerships.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Nine Learning Partnerships were established in East Ayrshire in 2002. They bring together the main partners who deliver services to children and young people in each of the nine secondary school catchment areas. Their overall aims are to raise attainment and achievement and to better integrate service delivery, for children and young people.
- 2.2** Learning Partnerships are also the main vehicle adopted by East Ayrshire to roll out the New Community School approach, now commonly known as Integrated Community Schools.
- 2.3** The National Priorities for Education and the associated local improvement objectives “Priority to Improvement” provides a clear context and direction for the work of Learning Partnerships.
- 2.4** There are four guiding principles for Learning Partnerships, namely:
- Putting children first
 - Working together
 - Intervening early
 - Devolved management
- 2.5** The main partners involved in Learning Partnerships include Education Services (Schools, Quality Improvement, Psychological Services, Network Support and Community Learning and Development), Social Work Services, Community Services and NHS Ayrshire and Arran.
- 2.6** Additional resources allocated to Learning Partnerships have to date been met from the Integrated Community School monies and the Changing Children’s Service Fund. However, Learning Partnerships also have access to a wide range of support, and, for example eighty percent of the Learning Support team is directly allocated for Learning Partnership management.

3. LEARNING PARTNERSHIP EVALUATION

3.1 An external evaluation of Learning Partnerships took place following their first year of operation and identified the key strengths to be:

- the innovative development of Learning Partnerships
- the leadership of both senior management level and Partnership level which is identified both at policy level and in the delivery of services.
- the willingness of all partners to work to the four guiding principles
- the significant efforts to achieve partnership working in a focussed and purposeful way
- examples of redirection of services following assessment of children's needs
- the agreement of shared outcomes

3.2 The first year has been successful in allowing the guiding principles to be developed in practice.

Putting Children First:

In the evaluation all partners expressed their professional commitment, based on the four guiding principles, in their role of improving the life chances of children and young people raising educational achievement as an outcome has been accepted by all partners as a priority, recognising the additional support required to raise educational attainment of the most vulnerable. In this context, the activity of Learning Partnerships also embraces social inclusion and community engagement.

Working Together

The evaluation highlighted the positive influence of having all partners together to plan how to meet the needs of children and their families. The Partnership particularly provided a forum within which cultural and organisational barriers to delivering services could be eradicated.

Intervening Early:

Intervening early is being developed on two fronts. Firstly, there is the importance of ensuring a good start in life through early education, childcare and health.

Secondly, however, is the recognition that intervening early in a child's life to prevent further educational or social difficulties is critical. The evaluation highlighted good examples of this in relation to behaviour management, health promotion and activities through Community Services.

Devolved Management:

The evidence in the first year shows a strong commitment to devolved management and recognition across agencies that representatives of services require to be clear about their decision making powers. Outcome Agreements have been developed in each Learning Partnership and reflect the stage of development in each Partnership.

4. VALUE ADDED TO THE LEARNING EXPERIENCE OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 4.1** The evaluation has highlighted that “different sectors and services working together can offer added value through the Partnership providing a forum for a holistic appraisal of the needs of children and their families”.
- 4.2** Learning Partnerships have brought a focus to the concept of the Health Promoting School and through the Nursing in Schools Framework, there is clarity about how to maximise the services of school nurses, health improvement officers and health advisers.
- 4.3** Community Learning Plans are seen as one of the main vehicles in bridging the work in schools with the community, ensuring that schools continue to be at the heart of local communities.
- 4.4** The support of Community Learning and Development staff has also enabled further collaborative work in relation to literacy and numeracy; young parenting skills and active citizenship.
- 4.5** Social Work Services are seen as key partners in supporting the most vulnerable children and young people to enable them to maximise their learning opportunities. Communication has been strengthened and there is a growing focus on intervening early as well as meeting statutory requirements. In order to further develop this, it is recognised that further resources will require to be made available.
- 4.6** The Community Services Department has been particularly beneficial in supporting schools, in partnership with others, to make “more children, more active, more often”. The Activity Motivation Initiative has led the way in this.
- 4.7** It is recognised by all partners that Learning Partnerships are a long term development with the focus primarily on raised attainment/achievement, and better integrated services. The role of both the Quality Improvement Team and the Integration Manager in supporting Learning Partnerships remains crucial.
- 4.8** A quality assurance model has been introduced for Learning Partnerships which focuses on outcomes in three areas:
- Raised attainment
 - Child Protection
 - Looked after and Accommodated Children and Young People
- 4.9** A copy of the Evaluation Report is in the Members Information Point.

5.0 ISSUES RAISED

- 5.1** The evaluation posed a number of key issues for partners to address to ensure that Learning Partnerships continue to meet the twin aims of improved attainment/achievement and the better integration of children's services.
- 5.2** Some of these issues include the enhancing of current support available to the most vulnerable children and young people and their families through the further development of the concept of support teams available over a 52 week period which focuses on multi – disciplinary working.
- 5.3** The evaluation also raised issues about the continued need for multi-disciplinary training and development and to continue with the challenge of reconfiguring services. All partners are committed to self evaluation and the sharing of good practice to ensure continuous improvement. The authority will continue to develop its approach to support Learning Partnerships through self evaluation.
- 5.4** Consultation is currently taking place with Learning Partnerships following the publication of the evaluation about how best to further support Learning Partnerships meet their aims.

6. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The proposals contained in this report are entirely consistent with the objectives set out in the Children and Young Persons Service Plan, Priority to Improvement 2004/5 and Community Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1** It is recommended that the Social Work Committee:
- (i) note the considerable progress of multi-disciplinary working within Learning Partnerships
 - (ii) ask the Director of Educational and Social Services to return to Committee with a progress reports on an annual basis

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

23 February 2004
KG/JW

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members Wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: - (01563) 576104 or Hugh Carswell, Integration Manager, Tel: - (01563) 549280

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