

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE –12th NOVEMBER 2003

LEISURE UNITED PROGRESS REPORT

Report by Director of Community Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide members with a progress report associated with the “Leisure United Project” which aims to develop leisure provision for children with learning disabilities, and to highlight the need for additional funding to ensure project sustainability.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 A consultation exercise was carried out in East Ayrshire with a selection of children attending the four special schools to identify their existing leisure experiences and opportunities and identify gaps in service provision. The consultation identified that the children’s main leisure experiences were provided by the schools and this prompted a need to investigate funding in order to launch a dynamic initiative that would offer these children an extended range of leisure provision within their school setting and new experiences within the community.
- 2.2 Following a successful bid to East Ayrshire’s Changing Children’s Service Fund allocation, £62,889 was secured initially for a period of two years commencing in March 2002 through to March 2004. The funding was used to employ a Health and Activity Motivator and an assistant who would deliver and develop leisure provision for children with learning disabilities in response to the previous consultation exercise. To date various initiatives have been implemented which offer a choice of specialist clubs together with inclusive and integrated activities.

3. THE PROJECT

- 3.1 The Project has been designed specifically to improve the health and fitness levels of the population of young people with learning disabilities in East Ayrshire via the provision of play, sport and leisure opportunities within the school and community.
- 3.2 Each of the four schools received a total of three visits per month. These visits provided a variety of fun and innovative physical recreation and activities that incorporated a healthy eating theme. To date 57 visits have taken place and a total of 577 children have participated in the school visits. A resource booklet was devised for each school based on the activities that they enjoyed during the visits. The contents of the themed health pack varied from school to school depending on the individual abilities of each child.

- 3.3 Each school was offered the opportunity to participate in the Playground Design element of the project. This dynamic initiative has been implemented successfully in several mainstream schools via the Recreation Partnership Project. Teachers and pupils were fully consulted on the playground element and presented with examples of design ideas which have been used effectively in other East Ayrshire schools. This was followed with a consultation exercise with the purpose of producing their own design briefs to implement onto their own school grounds. After consultation with staff and children at Witchhill School a wheelchair swing was chosen in order to cater specifically for children with visual impairments
- 3.4 Within the community setting the Leisure United Project recognised the need for specialist clubs for children as well as clubs focusing on inclusion. As a result a network of clubs were set up:
- CHAMPS club network (multi activity) - run weekly in 7 East Ayrshire venues
 - SOFA club (sports coaching) – run weekly in the Centre for Sporting Excellence in Kilmarnock
 - Drama club –Two weekly clubs promoting inclusion, communication and confidence
 - Lunchtime clubs- Twice per week at Hillside School
 - Kids club- Integration with the mainstream Kids Club Network
- 3.5 In total 1654 children have participated in leisure activities within the community, offered by the Leisure United Project.
- 3.6 The Leisure United Project has also implemented an extensive school holiday programme during the Easter, Summer and October periods whilst working in partnership with Educational and Social Services Department. A comprehensive summer programme was introduced at four venues, three of which were existing summer schools and one being at a local respite unit for children with learning disabilities. In total 636 children participated in Play, Arts and Sports activities. A week long drama workshop also offered children the opportunity to take part in an end of workshop performance.
- 3.7 As a result of the services provided by the Leisure United Project a number of children have benefited from being provided with the opportunity of attending leisure provision in the school environment and in the community. Some of the benefits include: increased confidence, increased health awareness and physical activity and increased social interaction.
- 3.8 Since the beginning of the Leisure United Project over 2876 children have accessed the service. The long-term aim of the project is to continue and expand its service to include the special units within mainstream schools and to provide a sporting infrastructure in line with the Ayrshire Special Games development plan.

- 3.9 In terms of good practice a sessional staff member from the project was recently nominated for a National Autistic Society Award by one of the parents. In addition South Ayrshire Council are using the Leisure United Project as a template for similar services with their authority
- 3.10 Feedback from teacher, parent and children's evaluations has been extremely positive and has demonstrated very strong support for the project activities. In addition there have been consistent levels of participation in the wide range of sessions available. In general terms the ongoing evaluation process has demonstrated a real need for these project services to be continued beyond the funding period.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The funding profile for the project is as follows:

Total Project Cost (2 year period)	£62,889
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- 4.2 The first real funding issue for the project will be the withdrawal of Changing Children's Service funding in March 2004. This would result in the loss of the Health and Activity Motivator and assistant and would have a major impact on project activities.

5. LEGAL AUTHORITY / IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Not applicable

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The project is informed by key national and local policies / strategies relating to learning disabilities, health promotion, sport, play and physical activity. The project also intersects with the health improvement chapter of East Ayrshire's Community Plan and emerging Cultural Strategy. The project responds to the general philosophy of the Disability Discrimination Act.

7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 This report gives an overview of the current services and achievements of the Leisure United project.
- 7.2 This unique project has had a major impact on the health and well being of East Ayrshire children with learning disabilities. Working in a dynamic manner the project has prioritised both social and health issues in dealing with children who have mild to complex learning disabilities. The project currently employs a Health and Activity Motivator and one assistant. In addition a number of sessional staff are also used on an ad hoc basis for specialist sessions.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) remit to the Director of Community Services to consider the future sustainability and funding options beyond the initial funding periods as stated within 2.2 of this report;
- ii) otherwise note the progress of the Leisure United Project to date.

William Stafford
Director of Community Services

WS/JAG/LD

21st October 2003

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Quarterly monitoring reports to the Changing Children's Service Fund.
2. Annual reports to the Changing Children's Service Fund.
3. Consultation Document – Play and Leisure Provision

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone (01563) 576722 and ask for Katie Kelly, Leisure Development Manager.

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