

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 27 APRIL 2000

EAST AYRSHIRE CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIP EARLY EDUCATION AND CHILDCARE PLAN

Report by the Director of Education

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to advise Members of the Education Committee of the proposed plan for Early Education and Childcare for children aged 0-14 years in East Ayrshire and to seek agreement to the plan prior to submission to the Scottish Executive.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Green Paper “ Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland, (May 1998)”, set out the Government’s wish to see good quality, accessible and affordable childcare for children aged 0-14 years in every neighbourhood. Furthermore, the programme for government, “Making it Work Together” set out the Scottish Executive’s commitments:

- to develop the childcare strategy for Scotland;
- to guarantee a free part-time pre-school education place for every child in their pre-school year whose parents want a place;and,
- by 2002, to extend that commitment to all three year olds.

- 2.2** East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership produced the first Pre-School Education and Childcare Plan in April 1999. The Education Committee approved this plan at its meeting on 22 April 1999. In summary, this plan outlined:

- The role and membership of the Childcare Partnership
- The audit of Pre-School Education and Childcare Services and demand
- Pre-School Education and Childcare 0–2 years, 3–5 years and 5–14 years
- Improving Quality
- Childcare Information Strategy
- Summary – priorities, timescales, monitoring and evaluating.

- 2.3** The Early Education and Childcare Plan affords the opportunity to plan pre-school education and childcare 0-14 years together. It is also important to recognise the links between Sure Start Scotland, which is specifically targeted at families with very young children and the wider Childcare Strategy.

- 2.4** Revised guidance for Childcare Partnerships was issued in December 1999. This guidance identified key tasks for the Partnership to undertake and include in the updated Early Education and Childcare Plan and summarised the distribution of funding to all Local Authorities.
- 2.5** East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership has approved the proposed Early Education and Childcare Plan.

3. DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDING TO MEET CHILDCARE OBJECTIVES

- 3.1** As part of the Comprehensive Spending Review in July 1998, Ministers announced that an additional **£91 million** was being allocated to childcare over the next three years to 2001/2002. This comprised **£49 million** for the childcare strategy and **£42 million** for broad-based support for families with very young children.
- 3.2** The following amounts were contained within the general local government settlement (AEF and the Education GAE) for 2000/2001 in respect of Ministers' objectives for childcare:
- **£13.75m** to support the ongoing implementation of the Scottish Executive's Childcare Strategy which aims to achieve a massive expansion of affordable, accessible, quality care for children aged 0–14 years.
 - **£14m** in respect of Sure Start Scotland to expand, on a targeted basis, integrated and broad based support for families with very young children.

4. SURE START – (0-3 YEARS) (FORMERLY SUPPORT TO FAMILIES WITH VERY YOUNG CHILDREN)

- 4.1** Ministers' aim is that support on the ground should be targeted to deprived communities and vulnerable families with young children. **£ 171,364** has been made available for 2000/2001 which will continue to fund the initiatives, established in 1999/2000.
- 4.2** The Family Day Care Service was established in November 1999. It is an innovative, flexible, community based service, which is targeted towards families with very young children throughout East Ayrshire. This service aims to offer support to vulnerable families and children referred as being "in need" under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, by providing care in a home based setting with Day Carers. To date, 43 children have been placed with 19-Day Carers.
- 4.3** Bellsbank Family Centre has expanded to provide an additional 16 FTE places for children aged 0- 3 years. Hillbank Nursery and Family Centre have expanded to provide an additional 5 FTE places for children aged 2-3years in the nursery

and an additional 10 FTE places in the outreach creches in Longpark and Altonhill in Kilmarnock.

- 4.4** Support has also been given to two voluntary sector creches in Shortlees and Riccarton in Kilmarnock to provide 20 sessional places for children aged 2 –3 years.

5. CHILDCARE STRATEGY/ PARTNERSHIP/INFORMATION SERVICE

- 5.1** The funding available to support the ongoing work of the Childcare Partnership, the development of the Early Education and Childcare Strategy and the Ayrshire Childcare Information Service is **£70, 554**.
- 5.2** The Childcare Partnership has undertaken further audits during August 1999 and March 2000 in relation to Out of School Hours Childcare, Wrap Around Care which were reported to the Education Committee on 14 October 1999. As a result of these findings, three pilot Wrap Around projects have been approved in Drongan Nursery, Shortlees Nursery and Muirkirk Nursery.
- 5.3** The Childcare Partnership are currently working closely with the Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) in the establishment of a long term strategy for the development of Out of School Hours Childcare in East Ayrshire. To date, the Partnership in conjunction with SOSCN has presented three seminars for local groups and parents who have expressed an interest in this area.
- 5.4** Currently, an audit is underway with Employers in Ayrshire to identify their views and support for childcare and family friendly policies and with children who use Out of School Childcare to gauge their views.
- 5.5** In addition, the needs of ethnic minority groups and parents who have children with special educational needs have been sought as part of the updated plan.
- 5.6** An audit of training and qualifications of the Early Education and Childcare workforce in the local authority, private and voluntary sector has been undertaken. This was identified as a key task for all Childcare Partnerships in the revised guidance.
- 5.7** The Ayrshire Childcare Information Service (ACIS) has been operational since November 1999. This service has been established to provide information on a wide variety of childcare provision across the whole of Ayrshire. Free, reliable, accurate information in an accessible form is vital to allow parents with childcare responsibilities to respond quickly to employment, training and education opportunities. This service is accessible through the ACIS Helpline and Internet.

6. PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION

- 6.1** The government has set a target of providing universal pre-school education for every three year old by 2002 and has emphasised that this must be done in partnership with parents and with providers in the voluntary and private sectors. Three year olds in the year before their pre-school year will become eligible for grant funding in the term after their third birthday. The grant arrangements reflect the staggered entry of these children into pre-school education.
- 6.2** Grant is available for the direct provision of free part-time pre-school education places to eligible children in the pre-school centres managed by the authority under The Education (Scotland) Act 1996 Section 23 and HMI accredited providers of pre-school education in the voluntary and private sector under Section 25 of the legislation.
- 6.3** Grant will be paid to the local authority at a rate of **£1200** per fully loaded place. A place is defined as 5 sessions a week (i.e. 5 x 2.5-hour sessions). Grant will also be paid on a pro-rata basis, i.e. children who attend 3 or 2 x 2.5-hour sessions. The rate at which pre-school grant is paid to voluntary and private HMI accredited providers of pre-school education is recommended at a minimum rate of **£900** per fully loaded place.
- 6.4** In addition to the grant per place, funding has been made available to the Council under the Education (Scotland) Act 1996 to assist in the development of new places for three-year-old children and for curricular development. The Development Fund for 2000/01 - **£352,956**, has been allocated under Section 23 of the legislation for this purpose. In addition **£117,652** has been allocated under Section 25 of the legislation for the development of provision in the private and voluntary sector.
- 6.5** At present, the Council have formal Service Level Agreements with 11 HMI accredited providers of pre-school education in the voluntary and private sector. This will increase to 15 providers for the summer term (April – June 2000). It is estimated that the local authority will educate 1365 pre-school children and 709 three-year-old children in the summer term. In addition, it is estimated that 46 pre-school children will be educated in the private sector and 271 three year old children will be educated in the voluntary and private sector in the summer term.
- 6.6** For the autumn and spring terms 2000/01, a further expansion of places for 3 and 4 year olds will be explored in local authority establishments and HMI accredited providers of pre-school education in the voluntary and private sectors. Areas identified where a shortfall of places exist and where more local provision would solve transport difficulties are Fenwick, Darvel, Hurlford, Newmilns, Cumnock, Mauchline and Ochiltree.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The distribution of funding to support the initiatives identified is contained in the report.

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The initiatives outlined in the report are part of Government and Council Policies.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** Service Level Agreements are in place with the Council's partner providers of pre-school education.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1** It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) agree the proposed plan for Early Education and Childcare 0-14 years;
- (ii) agree to commission pre-school education places in those voluntary and private sector providers which are HMI accredited at the recommended rate of £900 per fully loaded place.; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Education

JA/MB/SB
13 April 2000

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Planning Early Education and Childcare- Revised Guidance to Partnerships December 1999. Scottish Executive Education Department.
2. The Green Paper " Meeting the Childcare Challenge; A Childcare Strategy for Scotland" May 1998.

Members wishing further information should contact Margaret Burnell, Senior Depute Director of Education, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Janie Allen, Principal Officer, Pre-5 Services, Tel: (01563) 576185.

AGENDA