

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 11 APRIL 2002

DEVELOPING LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS IN EAST AYRSHIRE

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise Members of a proposal for a strengthened and enhanced role for the present cluster groups in the life of the education authority through the concept of "Learning Partnerships".

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The proposal contained in this report is fundamentally concerned with National Priority 3:

"To promote equality and help every pupil benefit from education, with particular regard paid to pupils with disabilities and special educational needs, and to Gaelic and other lesser used languages."

Therefore, it also has direct relevance to the objectives outlined under that heading and as stated in "Priority to Improvement" which is the Authority statement on improvement.

- 2.2 Presently, management structures in the school sector exist at two levels:

The school : services are managed by the headteacher. This is done principally through the promoted post structure of the school, but with attention to supplementary arrangements such as those related to Delegated Management of Resources. Schools deliver a range of services directly to children, young people and learners. They develop policies to guide staff in service delivery at local level which are based on national and local authority documents and statements. Schools do not however exist in isolation, and a number of recent developments have strengthened this wider set of associations. These include:

- New Community Schools and the roll-out programme
- Children's Service Planning
- Child Protection procedures
- Community Assessment Teams
- Out-of-Hours facilities

These types of development force a consideration of the implications of the local management of education with the Child at the Centre. Here, access to a wide range of partners and agencies is important. Opportunities exist to modernise and update support models.

The Department of Educational and Social Services : services are managed by the Director of Educational and Social Services. There are two significant dimensions to work at authority level. The first is the development of strategies, operational guidelines and other support to assist the work of schools under the guidance of the Education Committee. Secondly, there is the provision and co-ordination of a wide range of services. These services range from those which are administrative in nature, including personnel services, but also include a number of front-line services many of which are in the area of special educational needs.

As a Department of Educational and Social Services the view on service delivery has changed from the time of distinct and separate departments. There is a wide and clearly evidenced recognition amongst all colleagues that there are real benefits from better co-ordination of multi-disciplinary working and positive partnerships.

- 2.3** Since 1996, when East Ayrshire came into existence, schools have been encouraged to work on a cluster group basis. Cluster groups vary in composition but typically are made up of a secondary school, its associated primary schools, and a special school. To assist schools, comprehensive operational guidelines were produced in 1996 to assist cluster group working, and these were revised in 1998. Revised guidance on the learning partnership concept will be issued in due course as a result of the proposals in this paper.

3. REASONS FOR THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1** The collective work of schools and associated services has strengthened considerably over the past 6 years. This strengthening has been mainly driven by a focus on the 5-14 curriculum and the need to provide pupils with a continuous and well co-ordinated learning experience. Equally, schools have realised the need to make the time of transition to secondary education as smooth as possible. In turn, these developments have given rise to co-operation in a number of areas such as:
- shared staff development and in-service days
 - sharing of staff expertise
 - joint purchase of resources
 - co-operation in consultation exercises
 - joint planning of pupil activities, such as outdoor learning
 - development of shared documentation
 - shared development planning priorities
 - co-operation on placement of children with special educational needs
 - links with social work
 - New Community Schools
 - Children's Service Plan and related issues.

- 3.2** Recent developments have also favoured collective working. These include the national report on Devolved School Management. In order to obtain Best Value from Scottish Executive funding such as that available for Better Behaviour – Better Learning, resources were devolved to cluster groups. This allowed decisions to be taken to meet local needs but also allowed some economies of scale.
- 3.3** These developments based on partnerships between schools, but involving other services, have therefore resulted in real benefits for pupils. Simultaneously, the ability to take local decisions that are related to local need has proved to be motivating to headteachers and other staff. Consultations have revealed a general enthusiasm for this type of approach and therefore for its potential in the life of the authority.
- 3.4** The ability to focus on local or community-based issues will also allow schools to link better with other Council services and those of other agencies, particularly health professionals. This approach is entirely consistent with, and complementary to, the concept of the New Community School which has been the subject of other reports to committee. It will allow strong teams to develop that are fully aware of local circumstances and who can build up detailed knowledge of families, young people and communities in order that they can be better supported. Such a mechanism will also be an ideal vehicle for the delivery of the outcomes from Children's Service Planning.

4. THE PROPOSAL

- 4.1** This proposal would formalise and extend present arrangements under the title "Learning Partnerships". In this way structures across the authority will be standardised ensuring a sound basis for equality of provision and standards of service delivery. The aims of the proposal are to :
- ensure better co-ordination of services at local level for the benefit of children and young people
 - ensure that times of transition are well managed
 - enhance the sense of teamwork and empowered decision making at local level
 - secure best value for the use and deployment of resources
- 4.2** The core of the proposal is to formalise the association between establishments at learning partnership level bringing the secondary school, primary schools, special schools and early years establishments in an area together. There would therefore be 9 learning partnerships based on the secondary school, and for ease of reference alone each group would be known by the name of the secondary school.
- 4.3** The management of each individual establishment within the learning partnerships will remain unchanged. This recognises the key role of the head of

establishment who will remain accountable in management terms for the provision in their school, centre or service.

- 4.4** It will be expected that heads of establishment will meet on a formal and regular basis. These meetings will focus on the types of issues highlighted in paragraphs 3.1 and 4.1 of this report. It is anticipated that discussions will focus on:
- initiatives to raise attainment, particularly in literacy and numeracy
 - projects designed to improve attendance, positive behaviour and pupil responsibility
 - matters related to inclusion, particularly for children with special educational needs
 - roll-out of New Community Schools
 - issues related to “A Teaching Profession for the 21st Century”
 - better links with social services focusing on bringing maximum support to children and families
 - any other relevant educational issue.
- 4.5** A head of establishment will chair the learning partnership meetings. The chairing should rotate between heads of establishment. Discussions will be facilitated by the attendance of the link Quality Development Officer who will also assist the chair in setting the agenda for meetings, providing wider advice and highlighting good practice from other cluster groups or individual schools.
- 4.6** It is expected that the cluster group administration and finance assistant (AFA) will attend all learning partnership meetings. This officer will be able to advise on current budgetary issues and matters related to their remit.
- 4.7** It will be appropriate for other professionals to attend all learning partnership meetings, such as :
- community learning officer
 - associated social worker/team leader
 - educational psychologist
- and as the need arises:
- school sports co-ordinator
 - network learning support co-ordinator
 - area On-Site Services officer
 - Youth Strategy manager
 - community paediatrician or school nurse
 - early intervention co-ordinator
 - representative of local Colleges
- 4.8** In order to facilitate this work it will be necessary to provide learning partnership with information on the resources that are available to support their work. This management information will include:
- statistics on attainment, attendance, exclusions and leavers’ destinations

- staffing levels, including support for learning, SEN auxiliaries, classroom assistants, behaviour support staff
- budgetary areas which have the potential for shared resourcing and initiatives

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1** As indicated in the early paragraphs of this report, this proposal is a development of existing provision. It will be necessary, however, to ensure that learning partnerships have a clear and shared view of their enhanced role. It will also be necessary to clarify for colleagues the nature of likely developments of that role.
- 5.2** Once consultations have been concluded with the appropriate groups of staff, more detailed reports will be submitted for consideration by Committee on devolving further resources for management at learning partnership level.

6. POLICY/LEGAL/ FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Nil

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members :

- (i) agree this report as the basis for strengthening service delivery at local level;
- (ii) request the Director of Educational and Social Services to provide future reports on the phased devolution of resources for management at cluster group level; and
- (iii) otherwise note the contents of this report

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/GRS
25 March 2002

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short, Head of Schools, (01563-576089).

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Delegated Management of Resources, Education Committee 5 February 2002

Implementation Officer: Graham Short

AGENDA