

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 5 FEBRUARY 2002

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN WHOSE ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL HAS BEEN DEFERRED

Report by Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** To ask members of the Education Committee to approve the guidance for agreeing a further year of pre-school education and deferring entry to primary school.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** Education Committee of 13 November 2001 received a report setting out the implications of the reintegration of pre-school education funding and the implications for policy and practice in East Ayrshire.
- 2.2** One aspect of the above paper was the announcement of an extra year of free part time pre-school education for children with January and February birthdays whose parents chose to defer their child's entry to primary school. The role of the local authority in these circumstances is to provide advice and guidance to parents in order to support informed and effective decision making. The best interests of the child are paramount.
- 2.3** Local authorities have discretion for children with birthdays falling between 1 September and 31 December each year as to whether he/she can have a deferral.
- 2.4** ADES in consultation with COSLA have developed guidance on criteria for determining deferrals where the local authority will retain discretion. This guidance is to ensure that decisions locally are made against a nationally developed criteria.

3. THE GUIDANCE

- 3.1** Appendix 1 sets out the guidance which supports an approach based on:
- Best interests of individual children
 - Criteria where discretion is appropriate
 - Takes account of the views of parents/carers
 - Ensures a decision making process which is clear, consistent and transparent.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Costs associated with this policy can be met from existing resources. Scottish Executive Education Department has however indicated that the rate of deferrals will be monitored and affordability within existing resources reconsidered if there is growth within local authorities beyond current projections.

5. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The decision making process referred to at Paragraph 3.1 will require a formal appeals mechanism to allow parents dissatisfied with the decision reached at first instance by an appropriate officer of the Council to seek a review of that decision.
- 5.2 An appropriate appeals process is presently being developed in conjunction with Legal Services and where possible will build on existing arrangements. This will require to comply with all relevant legislation, including the Human Rights Act 1998.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Members of Education Committee are asked to:
- (i) endorse the guidance prepared by ADES and COSLA for use within East Ayrshire; and
 - (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

KG/JA/SB
15 January 2002

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Reintegration of Pre-School Education Funding – Implications for Policy & Practice – Education Committee 13 November 2001

Members wishing further information, should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Janie Allen, Principal Officer (Early Years), Tel: (01563) 576185.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER – KAY GILMOUR

AGENDA