

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 4 FEBRUARY 2004

#### EAST AYRSHIRE CHILDCARE PARTNERSHIP: ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT

##### Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the Education Committee of progress made by East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership in taking forward the aims of the Childcare Strategy.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The 1998 Green Paper “Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A childcare Strategy for Scotland” set out the Government’s vision of “good quality, affordable, accessible care for 0-14 year olds in every neighbourhood” This outlined the need for local authorities to:

- Provide good quality affordable childcare to meet the needs of children.
- Provide opportunities for educational and social development of all children.
- Enhance economic and educational opportunities for parents.

- 2.2 To implement the Strategy, local authorities were issued with guidance on:

- Establishing a Childcare Partnership to develop quality, affordable, flexible childcare services.
- Auditing childcare provision to provide accurate data to inform the planning of future developments.
- Establishing a childcare information service to provide parents with impartial and accurate information on available services.
- Submitting Early Education and Childcare Plans to the Scottish Executive

- 2.3 Since 1999 the Council has received annual funding to:

- Support the Childcare Partnership and fund the Childcare Information Service
- Support the development and sustainability of childcare services
- Upskill the current childcare workforce – (Workforce Training and Development with additional funding through a successful Childcare Partnership bid to the European Social Fund).

### **3. CURRENT POSITION**

#### **3.1 East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership**

The Childcare Partnership was formed in 1999 and comprises representation from Health, Educational and Social Services, Quality and Planning, Scottish Enterprise Ayrshire, SIP, JobcentrePlus, the Further Education Sector and voluntary sector childcare services.

**3.2** The current Chair is Head of Faculty, Care and Supported Learning at Kilmarnock College and the vice chair is the Childcare Partnership Manager from Jobcentre Plus. The full Partnership meets every two months, sub group meetings take place more regularly as required.

**3.3** Two sub groups have undertaken specific tasks on behalf of the Partnership;

- Finance – responsible for allocating and reporting on Project Support funding.
- Workforce Training and Development – responsible for planning and co-ordination of SVQs and other training to meet the needs of the workforce.

**3.4** This structure allows for other interested parties or those with specific expertise to make a contribution to the Childcare Strategy. Following the annual development day in June 2003, two additional groups have been established:

- Communications and Consultation – responsible for collating minutes from all sub groups and reporting these to the full Partnership. Collating data for the Community Plan and Children’s Services Plan.
- “School’s Out” – responsible for progressing tasks as detailed in the Scottish Executive Framework for the Development of Out of School Care.

**3.5** The work of the Partnership has been informed by the undernoted audits:

- Workforce qualification
- Out of school Care
- Wraparound Care

### **4. SUPPORT TO ORGANISATIONS**

**4.1** Based on an assessment of need, nineteen early education or childcare providers have been allocated £114,600 to support the ongoing delivery of childcare services.

**4.2** The sustainability of childcare services in the voluntary sector continues to be a challenge as does the sustained parental demand for childcare and in particular, for Out of School Care clubs

**4.3** The recent study undertaken by the Scottish Executive on Out of School Care, entitled School Out, has acknowledged that some Out of School Care clubs still have to work very hard to deliver high quality care and affordable

prices and remain viable. Therefore, the funding allocated through the Childcare Strategy remains a critical support to childcare organisations.

## **5. AYRSHIRE CHILDCARE INFORMATION SERVICE (ACIS)**

**5.1** ACIS, established in 1999, is a pan Ayrshire facility based in and managed by North Ayrshire but funded by all three Ayrshire Councils through Childcare Strategy Funds. It is the only jointly funded service in Scotland, and has been highlighted as good practice.

**5.2** The service aims to:

- Provide impartial, accurate, reliable information on childcare provision in Ayrshire.
- Support parents to make an informed choice of childcare.
- Maintain and develop information regarding provision.
- Monitor and evaluate user satisfaction.

**5.3** Over the period November 2002 - October 2003 East Ayrshire residents made 240 calls to the service. The web site is averaging 312 hits per month although it is not yet possible to break this figure down into local authority area. Callers requested information on Pre-school education, full daycare, playgroups, parent toddlers groups, childminders and holiday playschemes.

**5.4** A pan Ayrshire working group has recently been established to further develop the service to meet the needs of parents, carers, professionals and the childcare workforce. The improved and re-branded service will be launched in June 2004.

## **6. SCHOOL'S OUT**

**6.1** The Scottish Executive views out of school hours childcare as a key plank in eliminating poverty as work is the best route out of poverty. "School's Out" requires the Council and Partnership to map and review out of school care and report these findings and development plans to the Scottish Executive by spring 2004. This will be the subject of a future committee paper.

**6.2** A review of the school estate is to be included and particular emphasis is to be placed on developments for vulnerable children and those who have additional support needs. There are currently 19 out of school care services in East Ayrshire where recent audits have identified gap areas.

**6.3** A temporary post of Out of School Hours Childcare Business Support Worker was established in October 2002 which supports services in addressing sustainability and development issues.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

**7.1** Childcare Strategy Funding is available from the Scottish Executive until 2006 to progress the development of childcare in East Ayrshire.

## **8. LEGAL/POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

**8.1** Planning for the continued expansion of childcare is a commitment in both the Children and Young Person's Plan and the Community Plan.

## **9. RECOMMENDATIONS**

**9.1** It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) continue to support the work of East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership;  
and
- (ii) note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew  
Director of Educational & Social Services

DMc/JA/KG/JW  
12 January 2004

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Government Green Paper 1998
2. Inspiring Children and Young People: East Ayrshire Children and Young Person's Service Plan
3. "School's Out "Scottish Executive Framework for the Development of Out School Care.

Members wishing further information should contact Dorothy McAvoy Childcare Partnership and Development Officer Tel: 01563 554956 or Janie Allen, Principal Officer Early Years Tel: 01563 576185

**IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR**