

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 19 SEPTEMBER 2000

PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION – COMMISSIONING OF PLACES

Report by the Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** The purpose of the report is to seek agreement from the Members of the Education Committee to remove the criteria applied to the commissioning of Pre-School Education Places in the private and voluntary sector partner providers of Pre-School Education.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** The Government initially set a target of providing a nursery place for every child in their Pre-School year by the winter of 1998. A further target of universal Pre-School Education for three-year-olds must be met by 2002. A strong emphasis has been placed on partnership with parents and with providers in the private and voluntary sector.
- 2.2** Members will recall that the Education Committee agreed at its meeting on 22 April 1999 to enter into partnership arrangements with HMI registered providers of Pre-School Education in the private and voluntary sector. Furthermore, places would be commissioned for 3 year olds and in addition 4 year olds whose parents required full daycare/pre-school education due to employment, training or further education.

3. PRESENT POSITION

- 3.1** East Ayrshire has achieved the target of universal provision for Pre-School children and 70% of places for three-year-olds in partnership with the private and voluntary sector.
- 3.2** The Council has formal Service Level Agreements with 14 partner providers of Pre-School Education and cross boundary arrangements with North and South Ayrshire and Glasgow City Councils.
- 3.3** In 1999/2000, 1361 places for Pre-School children and 702 places for three-year-old children were provided in East Ayrshire Council pre-5 establishments. Partner providers of Pre-School Education provided 38 places for Pre-School children and 269 places for three-year olds.

4. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

- 4.1** The Scottish Executive issued a letter on 21 July 2000 regarding the cross-boundary commissioning of nursery places and detailing the new administrative arrangements to be implemented covering all local authority areas from the beginning of the autumn term in August 2000.
- 4.2** In practice, this means that it will no longer be the responsibility of East Ayrshire to claim Pre-School Education Grant for children who reside in East Ayrshire but who attend Pre-School Education in another authority e.g. North and South Ayrshire and Glasgow City and vice versa.
- 4.3** The importing authority will now agree the place with the parent and will negotiate the rate, provide the support and quality assurance and ensure the child is not attending Pre-School Education in another centre or area for which grant is being claimed. It will be the responsibility of the importing authority to claim the associated grant from the Scottish Executive.
- 4.4** The implications of this are as follows:
- parents will not require to meet the criteria of being in employment, training or further education in order to access a nursery place for their Pre-School Child in another local authority as no other authority in Scotland applies this criteria
 - parents who wish a place commissioned for their Pre-School child with a partner provider in East Ayrshire and who currently have to meet the criteria of employment, training or further education, may choose to place their child in nursery provision outwith East Ayrshire.

The continued application of the criteria regarding the commissioning of Pre-School Education places with Partner providers in East Ayrshire will not provide equality of opportunity for parents when seeking a place for their Pre-School child.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Service Level Agreements will be amended in light of the change to the Pre-School Education Grant claim process.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** East Ayrshire Council will no longer have the responsibility to claim Pre-School Education Grant from the Scottish Executive for Cross Boundary commissioned places.

7. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Removal of the criteria applied to the commissioning of Pre-School Education places with Partner providers for children in their Pre-School year, will provide equality of opportunity for parents seeking a commissioned place in East Ayrshire or in another local authority.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 It is recommended that Members of the Education Committee:

- (i) agree to remove the criteria applied to the commissioning of places for Pre-School children with Partner providers of Pre-School Education; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational and Social Services

15 August 2000
JA/SB

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Education Committee 22 April 1999 – East Ayrshire Childcare Partnership Pre-School Education and Childcare Plan

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104 or Janie Allen, Principal Pre-5 Officer, Tel: (01563) 576185.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR, HEAD OF COMMUNITY SUPPORT

AGENDA