

Report to:	Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum
Date of Meeting:	25 October 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Education Resources)

Subject:	Best Value Review of the Early Years Service
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- Provide an update for the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum on progress with implementation of service improvements agreed by the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum on 31 May 2011.
- Advise the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum of further recommendations arising from the review.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Forum is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (1) that Education Resources take forward the proposals set out within section five of this report, namely that:-
- ◆ early years establishments align to the learning community structure
 - ◆ the potential for extended hours and full year provision be assessed within learning communities
 - ◆ further work be undertaken to identify opportunities for the school estate to be used for out of school hours care provision
 - ◆ the assessment of management posts be concluded in partnership with the Trades Unions
 - ◆ quality assurance arrangements continue to be developed as set out within paragraph 5.14 of this report
 - ◆ consultation takes place with partner providers on proposed changes to their contract with the Council to deliver early years services
 - ◆ work continues to assess the ICT requirements of early years establishments as outlined within paragraph 5.17 of this report

3. Background

3.1 The Education Resources structure comprises three area groups of learning communities (Cambuslang, Rutherglen and East Kilbride; Hamilton; and Clydesdale) and 4 groups of central services (Curriculum and Quality Improvement; Finance and Personnel; Inclusion; and Resources). A programme of service reviews was commenced within Education Resources in 2009 to support implementation of the national diagnostics initiative. Each review has focused on supporting the new area, learning community and central services arrangements. The review of early years will complete this programme.

- 3.2 In May 2011, an interim report on the review of early years was considered by the Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum and the following improvement actions were agreed:-
- The recording of agreed non-contact time for local government employees should be updated and linked to the Performance Development and Review process
 - Transfer support staff within early years stand alone establishments to Support Services from June 2011
 - Update staffing processes to enable the effective deployment of staff to meet the needs of children
 - Enhance outcomes for children and support employees to gain qualifications in line with legislation through the delivery of targeted training
 - Further develop the communications strategy across the early years service for implementation by September 2011
- 3.3 The interim report also recommended that the review should continue to consider the following issues:-
- Further assess local service delivery options to support improved integration of early years with learning communities and ensure that quality improvement support for establishments reflects changes in external scrutiny arrangements
 - Develop ICT strategy for early years linked to the wider Education Resources ICT contract renewal in 2013
 - Revise and update the current contract with partner providers for implementation by August 2012
- 3.4 The review group was reconvened in June 2011 to undertake the further work recommended within the interim report. Membership of the group included:-
- Early Years Manager (Chair)
 - Head of Education (Resources)
 - 1 Head Teacher of a Primary School with a Nursery Class
 - 3 Heads of Stand Alone nurseries
 - 2 representatives from Education Personnel Services
 - Trade Union Representation
 - 1 representative from Education Finance Services
 - 1 member of the Early Years team

4.0 Progress Report

- 4.1 Good progress has been achieved with implementation of the improvement actions agreed in May 2011. In summary:-
- Appropriate arrangements have been established to record non contact time for local government employees as part of the Performance Development and Review process. This will help ensure that best use is made of non contact time across establishments
 - Support staff within stand alone early years establishments were transferred to Support Services by the target date of June 2011
 - An agreement was reached with Trade Union partners through the Joint Consultative Committee for Early Years on the flexible deployment of employees to meet demand at a local level. The new arrangements were implemented in August 2011
 - The audit of professional and personal development training needs is underway and the revised training and professional development training strategy will be in place by December 2011

- Targeted training programmes are currently being delivered including appropriate vocational qualifications and the Bachelor of Arts Degree in Childhood Studies to ensure that national standards are met
- The annual programme of training and support opportunities commenced in August 2011. In addition, all employees including those in partner providers can access the Council's Learn on Line system
- Membership of the communications group for Early Years and Childcare has been agreed and will meet in October. The first newsletter will be issued in December 2011 with information on the newly established inspection agencies Education Scotland (HMIE) and Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (SCSWIS). Information will also be included on inspection outcomes, training opportunities and best practice.

5.0 **Proposals Arising from Further Review**

5.1 Service Delivery Arrangements

The national childcare strategy has had the aim of enhancing the provision of affordable and accessible high quality childcare at its core for many years. The social and economic benefits of childcare are well understood, enabling parents and carers to participate in work and training opportunities.

- 5.2 Very significant progress has been achieved within South Lanarkshire to deliver an integrated early education and childcare service for all families at the same time as providing targeted support for vulnerable children and their families. The numbers of children attending early years provision at June 2011 is detailed below:-

June 2011	3 – 4 year olds
Local Authority	4,989
Partner providers	2,073

- 5.3 Learning communities are very well established as the key mechanism for providing high quality, integrated services across establishments and areas. In July 2011, Education Resources completed a Validated Self Evaluation exercise in partnership with HMIE. This highlighted the impact of learning communities in delivering effective integrated provision for children and young people as a high level strength within Education Resources. Within this context, the review proposes aligning early years establishments, including stand alone nurseries, to learning communities. This will build on strengths within the service and further support delivery of a coherent continuum of educational provision for children and young people from birth until 18 years of age. It will strengthen the focus on attainment, achievement and support for all children, especially during the key transition from pre five to primary school.
- 5.4 It is also proposed to further strengthen the focus on early years within learning communities through an Early Years Champion. The Early Years Champion would take lead responsibility within the learning community for a range of areas of development agreed locally.
- 5.5 Maximise use of the school estate to extend provision for children 0 to 12 years
Most of the South Lanarkshire early years provision is offered on a term time basis for half day sessions during the school day. Extended hours provision (for a longer day and over the full year), is available in stand alone nurseries and within three nursery classes (Crawforddyke Primary, St Leonard's Primary and Spittal Primary).

- 5.6 The model has proven to be very successful in delivering extended opening hours. The review concluded that there is a case for assessing the feasibility of extending this aspect of provision. It is therefore proposed that an assessment is undertaken within learning communities to establish the viability of offering additional hours in nurseries where there is a demand not currently being met by the private and voluntary sectors.
- 5.7 Out of School Care
Recent analysis of local enquiries has shown there is a demand for holiday and out of school care provision including breakfast provision. Currently, there are 47 providers of Out of School Care and Holiday Club provision catering for 1,596 children aged 5-12 years. These developments were established within the context of the national School's Out Framework for Out of School Care.
- 5.8 It is proposed that Education Resources undertake further work to identify where the school estate could be further used to establish and extend breakfast clubs, out of school care provision, holiday club provision as well as other services to meet the needs of children and families. As demand currently exceeds provision, this would supplement the current services provided by the private and voluntary sectors.
- 5.9 Currently, local forums for existing out of school care and holiday club services meet quarterly. These meetings are facilitated by the Out of School Care Quality Development Officer. It was agreed that this officer in partnership with the existing service providers undertake a feasibility study to establish a strategy for future developments based on evaluation of current service delivery and unmet demand.
- 5.10 Assess management posts across early years in partnership with Trades Unions
In April 2004, the Early Years Agreement provided the structure for allocation of staff in accordance with capacity. As a result, the number of management posts will vary according to the number of children attending a nursery. In addition, the roles and responsibilities associated with specific posts can vary. It is therefore proposed that Education Resources undertake an assessment of management posts in partnership with the Joint Consultative Committee for Early Years.
- 5.11 Continuous Improvement
The review affirms the long standing commitment within South Lanarkshire that children must be at the centre of service delivery to ensure they are able to achieve the best possible outcomes irrespective of their background. This reflects the requirements of The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.
- 5.12 Children no matter their age come to nursery as eager, active learners with the goal of making sense of their world enabling them to take part in it and enjoy it. They are learning all of the time from the experiences planned within the context of Curriculum for Excellence. Each child has an entitlement to high quality, flexible and engaging services delivered by a valued and appropriately qualified workforce to ensure the delivery of the ambitions of the *Early Years Framework, Getting it Right for Every Child, Curriculum for Excellence and Professor Susan Deacon's report 'Joining the Dots'*.
- 5.13 Parents and Carers are central to ensuring that children gain maximum benefit from their time in nursery and therefore Education Resources will continue to prioritise partnership working with parents, carers and families. This aspect of improvement will be addressed as part of the Validated Self Evaluation focus on stakeholder engagement.

5.14 External scrutiny arrangements have recently undergone significant changes through the establishment of Education Scotland and SCSWIS. These changes require new approaches and guidance to meet legislative requirements to ensure continuous improvement. Moving forward, it is proposed that Education Resources continues to:-

- Support establishments with implementation of Curriculum for Excellence, Together We Can (the South Lanarkshire guidance for employees working with very young children), Pre-Birth to Three, Assessment and Transition
- Promote and deliver high quality professional development for all staff with a focus on leadership
- Identify best practice, stimulating innovation and sharing successful approaches across learning communities and establishments
- Ensure that early years establishments are supported through the team of Quality Link Officers

5.15 Contract with Partner Providers

Good progress has been made with the review of the contract the Council agrees with partner providers of early education. It is proposed that the new contract takes account of a range of issues including:-

- Quality assurance support provided for partners through the team of Quality Link Officers
- Curriculum development support linked to implementation of Curriculum for Excellence
- Support related to delivery of the Council's commitment to '*Getting it Right for Every Child*' and the *Early Years Framework*
- The legislative and regulatory responsibilities of partner providers

5.16 Education Resources will continue the review process with December as a target date for consulting with partner providers on a proposed new contract.

5.17 Development of an ICT Strategy

A number of actions have been taken to ensure that early years establishments have appropriate access to information and communications technology support. In summary:-

- Revised ICT guidance was distributed to all nurseries in the early summer of 2011
- The advisory role of the early years development team was revised to include a focus on the effective use of ICT and on the delivery of training and support
- All nurseries gained access to GLOW, the Scottish education intranet from August 2011. All early years establishments are now actively engaged in developing the use of Glow
- A working group has been established to develop recommendations for possible inclusion in the specification for early years within the Education Resources ICT contract due for renewal in 2013
- Pilots started in July 2011 on the use of wireless technology and a range of ICT equipment

6. Employee Implications

6.1. There are no specific employee implications arising from this report though future implications will be fully discussed with Trades Unions partners within the Joint Consultative Committee for Early Years.

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1. The assessments related to offering extended early years provision and making increased use of the school estate for out of school care will include a specific focus on the financial viability of any proposals.

8. Other Implications

- 8.1. There are no direct risks associated with this report.
- 8.2. There are no significant sustainability issues in connection with the recommendations within this report.

9. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

- 9.1. Arrangements will be put in place to undertake an equality impact assessment if required.
- 9.2. The Best Value review group included a wide range of stakeholder representation. Further consultation will take place with key stakeholders as the proposals within this report are implemented.

Larry Forde
Executive Director (Education Resources)

20 October 2011

Link(s) to Council Objectives/Improvement Themes/Values

- ◆ Raise education attainment for all
- ◆ Efficient and Effective use of resources

Previous References

Performance and Review Scrutiny Forum - 31 May 2011

List of Background Papers

None

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

Morag McDonald, Early Years Manager

Ext: 4474 (Tel: 01698 454474)

E-mail: Morag.McDonald@southlanarkshire.gov.uk