

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

4 June 1996

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

Report No 454/96

SCHOOL HEALTH SERVICE REVIEW

ABSTRACT

This Report gives an update on the work of the Tayside School Health Service Review Group and its work with regard to Health Services for school-aged children, including proposals for a pilot scheme based on health assessment for children by school nurse interview and referral of selected children for medical examination.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education Committee:

- (i) notes the contents of this report;
- (ii) approves in principle the main proposals subject to further clarification and detail as identified;
- (iii) instructs me to report back to the Committee on the final detailed proposals of the proposed pilot scheme.

BACKGROUND

Proposals were advanced in 1994 for a fundamental review of the health services for school-aged children across Tayside. As a result of concerns raised by Tayside Regional Council's Education Committee, a working group was established to examine school health service review proposals, and this group now comprises health professionals and a representative from each of the Education Departments of Angus, Dundee and Perth & Kinross.

The working group has been considering the case for changing current arrangements in health services for school-aged children by identifying major developments which have taken place since the original scheme was introduced and by considering a more focused agenda which would be more effective and responsive to key health issues.

For some years now, school health services have involved all pupils being the subject of a medical examination at P1 and S1 stages. Other services have included immunisation services, emergency services as required, and a more general involvement in overarching health issues at a school level.

Four key factors which support the case for change have been identified:

- The development of effective pre five surveillance may result in the current P1 assessment for all by the school doctor being of less importance
- Early identification of medical needs can allow for a more focused approach to the management of ill health in schools and in particular for those children with special needs
- Within a supportive and preventative strategy there is an increasing need for the promotion of good health within the school community
- There is a growing demand for expertise in the identification and management of child protection issues

PROPOSALS

The proposals for change offer a general framework for a revised set of procedures which will not reduce the time and commitment of the health services but which should provide a more appropriate focus having regard to the key issues identified above.

The proposed procedures are as follows:

- (i) A review of all P1 children by the school nurse. This review will be informed by a questionnaire completed by all parents and discussions with the Head Teacher and school doctor. It will take the form of an interview to which parents will be invited. The review will include consideration of comprehensive medical information provided by the Health Service on each pupil.
- (ii) The process will identify children with special needs who would then be the subject of a more detailed assessment by the school doctor.
- (iii) Immunisation programmes will remain unchanged.
- (iv) The format for dental examinations will remain unchanged.
- (v) For 14/15 year olds there will be a questionnaire which would again be the subject of assessment by the school nurse in consultation with the Head Teacher and the provision of a medical examination by the school doctor if required.
- (vi) A service will be provided which allows selective referral and further assessment in the course of a pupil's school career based on identified need and/or school based referral of particular pupils.

The proposals also commit health professionals to interviews with parents for those pupils who have been identified as requiring further assessment or who are referred for further assessment.

It is proposed that there should be a pilot scheme commencing in session 1996/97 with a selected number of schools to ascertain the value of the above proposals.

CONCLUSIONS

It is recommended that the principles of the case for change be accepted and that Angus Council agrees to participate in a pilot scheme subject to the following issues being addressed in detail.

- a) There should be confirmation of the continuance of an acceptable level of provision in terms of time and expertise.
- b) Further details should be provided with regard to the partnerships involving Tayside Health Board, local NHS Trusts, schools and parents and clarification of the inter-relationship of roles and tasks.
- c) Participation by schools in the pilot scheme should be on a voluntary basis.
- d) Prior to the launch of the pilot scheme there should be effective consultation with all interested parties at school level.
- e) An awareness raising exercise should be undertaken to ensure that all involved understand the principles and purpose of the pilot scheme.
- f) Further work should be undertaken to ensure that the questionnaire is the subject of further discussion so that it can be accurately completed without difficulty by all parents.
- g) The pilot scheme should be the subject of a process of evaluation and monitoring agreed with the Education Authority.
- h) Clear and explicit detail should be agreed for the principles of promotion of good health and the provision of expertise in the identification and management of child protection.
- i) The development of the pilot scheme will have potential implications for the general issue of workload with particular reference to smaller schools and there should be assurances that any new procedures do not increase demands on school staff.
- j) New procedures should be developed without additional cost to the Council.

CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this Report.

JIM ANDERSON

DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

JAA/RB