

ANGUS COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 3 MARCH 2011

SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH COMMITTEE – 7 APRIL 2011

‘EARLY YEARS FRAMEWORK – PROGRESS SO FAR’

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION AND THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH

ABSTRACT

This report seeks to inform elected members about a joint Scottish Government and CoSLA progress report in relation to the Early Years Framework.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Education Committee and Social Work and Health Committee:-
- (i) note the contents of this report
 - (ii) note that the key messages and direction provided within the national progress report and associated documents will guide and support the continuing implementation of the Early Years Framework locally
 - (iii) note the work underway to update the Angus Early Years Framework Position Statement
 - (iv) note that an electronic copy of the national progress report is available at:-
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/01/13114328/0>

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Reference is made to the meetings of the Education Committee of 21 January 2010 (Article 6 refers), Social Work and Health Committee of 18 February 2010 (Article 4 refers) and Angus Community Planning Partnership of 19 May 2010 when members were advised about the publication of the National Early Years Framework and approved a corresponding Angus position statement.
- 2.2 The Early Years Framework, which sets out the policy direction for the early years over the next ten years, highlights the importance of prevention and early intervention as well as emphasising the need for more coherent and more effective collaboration between children’s services partners.
- 2.3 As a follow up to the framework, a ‘Progress So Far’ report was published in January 2011. This document sets out the range of activity which is ongoing around the short and medium term national actions within the Framework.

3 KEY NATIONAL MESSAGES / DEVELOPMENTS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE ‘PROGRESS SO FAR’ REPORT

- 3.1 In addition to progress in relation to the Framework’s ten elements of ‘transformational change’, the new report also captures important messages about key components of work, namely:-
- financial benefits,
 - support for local partners
 - measuring progress
 - research into practice and
 - workforce development

- 3.2 The Early Years Framework called for an approach to realign existing resources to increase investment in prevention and early intervention. In this context, it is worth noting the key findings from a bespoke survey which was recently commissioned by the Scottish Government. That study quantifies potential savings from early year's investment in a Scottish context and suggests that investment in the early years can yield savings in the short, medium and long terms. Key findings from the study demonstrate that:
- the short term savings from investing in early years services and support from pre-birth to aged five could be up to £37,400 a year per child in the most severe cases involving children who have complex health and social care needs, and approximately £5,100 a year for a child with moderate health and social care needs
 - the potential medium term savings, if interventions from pre-birth to eight are wholly effective, could be up to £131 million a year across Scotland
- 3.3 It continues to be a major challenge for local partners to find effective ways of re-aligning resources to support prevention and early intervention approaches while at the same time continuing to provide existing services. The findings of the survey may prove helpful in informing this process.

The full survey can be viewed at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Research/by-topic/children-and-young-people/EarlyYears>

- 3.4 Against a background of unprecedented pressures on public expenditure, Professor Susan Deacon has recently led work to bring forward suggestions for practical actions to build consensus about the importance and value of investing early. The findings of that work will shortly be made available.
- 3.5 The Scottish Government and COSLA are offering a package of practical support to assist in progressing the Early Years Framework agenda. Related measures include:
- ongoing dialogue at all levels to support implementation, identify challenges, discuss progress and develop solutions
 - the provision of a summary of the evidence relating to the financial benefits of investment in the early years in order to inform decision-making, particularly, in relation to budget management
 - the development of a suite of refined indicators to enable local partners to measure progress towards achieving National Outcome 5, 'Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed'
 - facilitating discussions to encourage the sharing of good practice

4 LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION AND PROGRESS

- 4.1 Work in relation to the local implementation of the 'Early Years Framework' sits within the Angus Children's Services Structure and, specifically, within the remit of the 'Early Years and Childcare' Joint Action Group.
- 4.2 Following the publication of the 'Progress So Far' report, plans are now in place to revisit and refresh the Angus Position Statement. This exercise will capture local progress to date against the key elements of transformational change as well as planning next steps.
- 4.3 Since the launch in 2008 of the Early Years Framework, considerable work has taken place locally to raise staff awareness, and to encourage early years services and partners to utilise its key components in ways that inform, shape and strengthen practice. This work is progressing within the context of overall 'Getting It Right For Every Child' approaches.
- 4.4 Key workstreams and priority areas include:-
- supporting the development and implementation of the GIRFEC principles and approaches
 - workforce development in terms of continuing professional development opportunities and support for accredited studies to enhance quality and practice
 - developments relating to the play agenda including 'Just Play', an initiative supported by national 'Cashback for Communities' funding
 - the preparation of an Angus Play position statement and local inputs into the 'Play, Talk, Read' national campaign
 - targeted support to services to enhance practice for those services caring for children in the birth - three age range

- 4.5 The continuing implementation of the Early Years Framework in Angus will have a major focus on:
- a move away from crisis management to prevention and early intervention
 - the realignment of resources to maximise joint investment in the early years
 - a shift in focus from doing things for or to people towards enabling them to support themselves, their families and communities
 - maximising the capacity of universal services to improve outcomes for children and young people
 - delivering support and services in an integrated way, using a child-centred and multi-agency approach, in line with GIRFEC ambitions
 - support for workforce development to ensure that the people of Angus are served by a well trained and well supported early years workforce.
- 4.6 The above priorities are being used to guide and inform the review and redesign of Angus early years services currently underway. This review is aimed at ensuring that we have robust, effective and fit for purpose Early Years provision which is equipped to meet the needs of our youngest children.

The review will explore the following themes:-

- the development of a coherent multi-agency Early Years Strategy
- reducing duplication and increasing the effectiveness of early years services
- reviewing the roles and responsibilities of all staff working in early years (0-8)
- identifying opportunities for change which will bring greater cohesion and ensure a streamlined and more effective partnership structure to support early years services
- workforce development across services which ensure consistently high quality support for young children
- the development of support for 'Attachment/Nurture' across all services
- opportunities for shared/aligned budgets
- effective transition for children commencing pre-school and school
- assessment and recording of children's learning
- planning for learning and achievement
- the promotion of Health and Wellbeing
- the key role of play at home and school
- high quality development of literacy and numeracy skills across all learning areas
- the development of consistently high quality and stimulating learning environments

The review is scheduled to be completed by August 2011. Its outcomes will be reported to the Education Committee and the Social Work and Health Committee.

5 CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 The move towards an integrated early intervention approach is not straightforward and will take long-term sustained commitment from all stakeholders. Progress in relation to the national framework will enhance opportunities for all children in Angus to have the best start in life. We are confident that, through the joint efforts of local partners, this can be achieved.
- 5.2 Children and young people are valued members of our community. They are unique individuals who can make important contributions to family and community life. As the citizens of tomorrow, they should have the best start in life, no matter what their background or circumstances.
- 5.3 In order to become confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens, all Angus children need to be safe, healthy, active, nurtured, achieving, respected, responsible and included. The successful implementation of the Early Years Framework is crucial to the delivery of these unarguable goals for all our young people.

6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

7 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no Human Rights implications arising from the consideration of this report.

8 SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

8.1 This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Single Outcome Agreement:

- Children and young people in Angus will have access to positive learning environments and opportunities to develop their skills, confidence and self-esteem to the fullest potential (National Outcome 4)
- Children and young people in Angus will live within a supportive family setting with additional assistance if required, or where this is not possible, within another care setting ensuring a positive and rewarding childhood experience (National Outcome 5)
- children and young people in Angus enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health (National Outcome 6)
- children and their families have access to high quality services when required and are assisted to overcome the social, educational, physical, environmental and economic barriers that create inequality (National Outcome 7)

9 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 The issues dealt with in this Report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective. An [equalities impact assessment](#) is not required.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 In accordance with the Standing Orders of the Council, this report has been the subject of consultation with the Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Assistant Chief Executive, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law & Administration.

NEIL LOGUE
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Note: 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.