
Report To:	Education & Lifelong Learning Committee	Date:	12 May 2009
Report By:	Corporate Director Education and Social Care	Report No:	EDUC/50/09/AH
Contact Officer:	Albert Henderson	Contact No:	01475 712824
Subject:	Early Years Framework		

1.0 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to:

- a) Provide information on the Early Years Framework.
- b) Propose that a new strategic group is established to drive forward the recommendations of the Early Years Framework.

2.0 SUMMARY

2.1 The Early Years Framework was published jointly by the Scottish Government and COSLA on 10 December 2008.

2.2 The Framework acknowledges that at the early years and even pre-birth there is a large part of the pattern for future lives and adult lives being set. The early years are therefore a key opportunity to shape a positive future for Scotland. The framework maximises the opportunities for children to get the best start in life, no matter their background or circumstances. The framework is built on the principles of early intervention – a shift from intervening only when a crisis happens to prevention and early intervention.

2.3 There is a firm foundation in Inverclyde on which to develop the framework. Many of the priorities for action identified in the framework are already evident in Inverclyde.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 It is recommended that Members approve the policy imperatives in the Early Years Framework and support the development of a strategic group to drive forward the imperatives.

Albert Henderson
Head of Schools

4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Early Years Services have, since 1998, been guided by 'Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland', which aimed to support families and in particular raising children out of poverty by making high quality, accessible and affordable childcare available in every neighbourhood.
- 4.2 Education Services has been successful in delivering services to address the issues identified in the Childcare Strategy.
- 4.3 The Childcare Partnership, had a key responsibility in relation to implementing the Child Care Strategy, however its function and membership is not relevant to the Early Years Framework.

5.0 PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The Childcare Partnership would be disbanded and a new strategic group established to drive forward the recommendation of the Early Years Framework.
- 5.2 This group would be chaired by the Head of Schools. Membership of the group will develop over time but will include appropriate Officers from Education Services, Social Work Services, NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde, Inverclyde Alliance and C.V.S Inverclyde.

6.0 THE FRAMEWORK

- 6.1 The Early Years Framework is published in two parts. The first part sets out the case for action in the early years, along with our vision for giving children the best start in life; ten elements of transformational change; priorities for action; how we will move forward with this in the context of the National Performance Framework and Single Outcome Agreements; and a section on realignment of resources.
- 6.2 The elements of transformational change referred to above are:
 - A coherent approach
 - Helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves
 - Breaking cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through early years
 - A focus on engagement and empowerment of children, families and communities
 - Using the strength of universal services to deliver prevention and early intervention
 - Putting quality at the heart of service delivery
 - Services that meet the needs of children and families
 - Improving outcomes and children's quality of life through play
 - Simplifying and streamlining delivery
 - More effective partnerships.
- 6.3 For each of these key elements, there is a suggested set of short, medium and long term priorities for action, some for national government to take forward, some for local government and some joint actions. This action plan is fundamentally different from previous Government initiatives. In keeping with the commitment to increasing local flexibility set out in the Concordat, the action plan is not presented as a prescriptive device, but rather as national and local government's analysis of key elements in improving outcomes in and through early years. There is much less emphasis on national government setting out a list of prescribed tasks and actions for local government and their partners to fulfil across the country. The document is about setting the policy direction as a whole and creating a common framework within which local partners can make decisions that meet local needs and the Single Outcome Agreement process will be critical in putting the framework into action.

This framework has been developed with the input of a large number of stakeholders from a variety of sectors and this is reflected in the second part of the document, which expands on the themes set out in part one. The full reports from each of the four task groups along with the supporting documentation, such as research and good practice examples, are available at www.scotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsframework

7.0 PUTTING THE VISION INTO ACTION

- 7.1 There is a firm foundation in Inverclyde on which to develop the framework. Many of the priorities for action identified in the framework are already evident in Inverclyde.
- 7.2 A range of family support services and parenting programmes have been developed over the last few years. The services include the Family Support Workers attached to a number of our early year's establishments, Integrated Community Schools teams, Health Visiting Support Workers, and the Family Support Team in Social Work Services.
- 7.3 Examples of specific family support and parenting programmes that have been developed and delivered are:
- *Mellow Parenting* – an intensive programme for parents of pre-school children which is targeted at highly vulnerable families. We are now providing three types of programme: Mellow Babies (for mothers with infants), Mellow Mothers and Mellow Fathers.
 - *Handling Children's Behaviour* – this is an 8 week programme for parents on improving their strategies for managing children's behaviour that is delivered by a range of staff in various settings across Inverclyde.
- 7.4 There is a well-established joint service between the Special Needs in Pregnancy Service (SNIPS) and the Social Work Services Family Support Team which has been recognised for excellence by receiving 2 national awards.
- 7.5 Admission to Early Years Establishments is prioritised for children identified through Child Protection procedures and for 'children in need' (as in Children's (Scotland) Act 1995).
- 7.6 There are 5 Children / Family Centres across the authority that offer nursery placements to children under 3 years of age. Additional places for vulnerable children are funded in Ladybird Pre 5 Centre and Tree Tops Community Nursery. Daycarers provide a home based care service which complements the establishment based services.
- 7.7 All establishments provide a range of pastoral care and help to children that ensures a nurturing environment is integral to the whole school approach. In addition to this specific initiatives and programmes have been introduced by Psychological Services in partnership with schools and others. These include:
- *Nurture Groups* – small supportive classes within mainstream primary schools with dedicated staff which provides a secure, predictable environment for vulnerable children in Primary 1/2. The groups focus on the emotional and social development of children as well as academic progress and aim to integrate children fully into their mainstream class within 2-4 terms.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no overt financial implications, at this stage, and no additional Scottish Government funding to develop the Early Years Framework.

9.0 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 None

10.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 10.1 It is recommended that Members approve the policy imperatives in the Early Years Framework and support the development of a strategic group to drive forward the imperatives.