

The Early Years Framework Part II

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CONTENTS

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE – AN EXPERT ANALYSIS	1
1. A COHERENT APPROACH	2
2. HELPING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TO SECURE OUTCOMES FOR THEMSELVES	5
3. BREAKING CYCLES OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND POOR OUTCOMES IN AND THROUGH EARLY YEARS	8
4. A FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES	13
5. USING THE STRENGTH OF UNIVERSAL SERVICES TO DELIVER PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION	16
6. PUTTING QUALITY AT THE HEART OF SERVICE DELIVERY	22
7. SERVICES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	25
8. IMPROVING OUTCOMES AND CHILDREN’S QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH PLAY	29
9. SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING DELIVERY	32
10. MORE EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIONS	33

PART II

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE – AN EXPERT ANALYSIS

A major part of the process of developing this framework has been to harness the expertise of a wide range of organisations, individuals and networks engaged in early years and related policy across Scotland to analyse options and priorities. Their work provided the basis for the case for action, vision and the 10 elements of transformational change.

This section is based on the key themes of this expert analysis, aligned to the 10 elements of transformational change. This is intended to support local partners to develop local implementation plans, in that it provides more detailed thinking. Other supporting documents, such as the reports of the individual task groups and the evidence paper and HMle case studies which fed into the task groups' deliberation are available on the website www.scotland.gov.uk/earlyyearsframework.

1. A COHERENT APPROACH

A coherent national agenda

There are many influences on children and parents, and many services that support them. It is essential that Government and its partners are working to a coherent agenda so that children and parents receive consistent rather than confusing messages and so that managers and staff can make sense of the policy environment to deliver a set of services which are aligned to a set of common priorities.

The joint policy statement set out 4 principles of early intervention which can be used to underpin a consistent approach across a range of strategies:

- our ambitions are universal – we want to reduce inequalities, to have the same outcomes for all and for all to have the same opportunities;
- we take action to identify those at risk of not achieving these outcomes and take action to prevent that risk materialising;
- we make sustained and effective interventions in cases where these risks have materialised; and
- we shift the focus from service provision as the vehicle for the delivery of outcomes to building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves, making use of high quality, accessible public services as required.

These principles have already been reflected in a range of government policies, for example *Equally Well*, the report of the Ministerial Task Force on Health Inequalities, the drugs strategy *Road to Recovery* and the youth justice framework.

Curriculum for Excellence is also central to the delivery of the early years framework as learning is the key to many of the national outcomes. It aims to achieve transformational change in Scottish education – enabling all our young people to become successful learners, confident individuals, responsible citizens and effective contributors. This aim is not the preserve of schools. If we are to achieve improved quality in learning and teaching and increased attainment and achievement for all children and young people in Scotland, including those who need additional support, the transformation in education must extend well beyond schools to include early years centres, colleges, universities, employers and the full range of professionals working with children and young people.

This new approach to Government has made a strong start but in many senses is still in its infancy. It will take a significant and ongoing effort to ensure alignment across Scottish Government policies and to ensure this flows through into our relationship with key partners.

Single Outcome Agreements, Community Planning and Integrated Children's Services Planning

At the heart of the model of transformational change is a whole system approach to giving children the best possible start in life. The vision and case for action articulate how early years and early intervention contribute to a range of medium to long-term outcomes across economic activity, employability, health, education, crime and communities. The process of change encompasses family, community, service and workforce elements.

Integrated Children's Services Plans (ICSP) are a statutory obligation for local authorities and should also be seen as an opportunity to take forward transformational change in their local area. ICSPs should be seen as the children and young people's component of Community Plans, but should become increasingly focused around the needs of children and families, rather than around systems and processes.

The next generation of Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs) will be drawn up with Community Planning Partners and local Community Plans will form the foundations. The case for better integration between Community Plans and ICSPs is further reinforced by this framework's approach on developing family and community capacity as a key support for children in their early years.

This is not about separate plans or processes from the mainstream community planning system. It is about recognising the opportunity that exists to improve a range of outcomes through a focus on early years within that process.

Getting it Right for Every Child

Getting it Right for Every Child is a key foundation for all action with children, young people and families. The approach has established a set of 14 principles and values and 10 core components (www.scotland.gov.uk/gettingitright) and puts the child firmly at the centre of planning and action. It promotes a shared approach that builds solutions with and around children, young people and families.

Getting it Right for Every Child applies to all children, whatever their level of need and to all agencies. At the heart of the approach are streamlined planning, assessment and decision making processes that lead to the right help being provided at the right time for children to address all their needs and risks. The emphasis is on improving outcomes, delivering a holistic approach to meeting the child's needs. Other elements of the *Getting it Right for Every Child* approach encompass, amongst other things, common values, information sharing, risk assessment models and the development of a lead professional role. All of this requires a shift in culture, systems and practice if the desired outcomes for children are to be achieved.

The *Getting it Right for Every Child* way of working, being implemented by the Highland Pathfinder, confirms and strengthens the responsibilities of the universal services within health and education and strengthens the links between community health services and education providers. It supports practitioners to plan for children in a unified way using common language and tools to identify concerns, assess children's wellbeing and to plan action to address their needs or risks. It enables practitioners to deliver timely and proportionate help to children who need extra support over and above that which all children receive from the universal services. It streamlines planning and decision-making for these children and for children with more serious or complex needs who require multi-agency help. It also ensures that every child who needs additional support has a plan in place to address their needs and that the plan is reviewed to ensure it is effective. This single streamlined process is used with all children, those who may need some additional support from within health or education services as well as those who need multi-agency support or more targeted services and children who are referred to the Reporter or a children's hearing, children who are looked after or children who are in need of protection.

All of these elements were identified by the task groups as being important in the way forward for early years. Delivery of the early years framework is therefore fundamentally dependent on how agencies, services and communities work to achieve *Getting it Right for Every Child* and its effective implementation at national and local levels.

Getting it Right for Every Child already encompasses action by adults to improve the support they give to their children, and the child's plan can include action by adult services. This is an element of the approach that is still relatively immature, although it is prominent within the *Getting it Right for Every Child* domestic abuse pathfinders.

2. HELPING CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES TO SECURE OUTCOMES FOR THEMSELVES

Partnership with families and communities

The largest influences on children in the early years are their parents, with the wider family and the community often also playing a significant role. Improvements in outcomes therefore depend crucially on developing a partnership with parents and communities so that all of the influences on the child are contributing towards positive outcomes.

Families and communities need to be given the opportunity to develop their own aspirations and be given the responsibility, with the support of public services, for taking these forward and assessing how they are progressing.

In particular, community planning needs to get right down to the local level to give local people a sense of ownership and give them some control over how they want early years support to be developed in their community.

Plans and services should be oriented around doing things with people rather than 'to' or 'for' them. This is critical in developing a capacity-building approach. Parents and other members of the communities should be encouraged to be active participants in early years services through community engagement, volunteering and other routes, and be given the support needed to do so.

Measurement of success should incorporate children's experiences and community perspectives as far as possible, possibly within a balanced scorecard approach.

Developing a culture of family and community learning

Parenting skills and community development are central to the capacity building model. We must therefore put these elements at the heart of our approach and of services for children and families. We should see parenting skills not just as something that are learned in the first few months of a child's life, but as part of the wider education and community development system.

We cannot impose aspirations on people, but we can challenge them to take responsibility for their own outcomes and create an environment within which they can determine their own aspirations. This means giving them a stake as active participants and valuing the role that mutual support networks such as parent and toddler groups can have in supporting positive outcomes for children.

We know that when the people around them are involved in learning this can have an important impact on children's positive development. This is perhaps most directly evident where learning for adults is focused on parenting skills or involvement in their child's education. However, we can also see that, more generally, if people are involved in learning – with the impacts that often has on skills and confidence – that will also benefit their children and other children in their community. Valuing the benefits of parenting education, family learning **and** wider involvement in learning is therefore a key part of our agenda for giving our children the best possible start in life.

Perth and Kinross Community Link Worker

The Community Link Worker Team is based in school clusters and support children and families. The team consists of 16 staff. Community Link Workers are a valuable link with parents and the wider community. The teams take a coherent approach to Community Learning activities in schools, drawing Youth Workers and Community Link Workers together in joint projects.

In one particular example, a child had been finding school difficult to cope with. The relationship between the family and the school had become strained and the family was referred to the team for assistance. The Community Link Worker helped to explain the family situation to the school. Through family activities and courses, they also helped the father involved understand the relationship with his son and worked on improving their communication skills, teaching them how to get their points across calmly to the school. Since being referred to the link worker, the family have noticed changes in the way they understand each other and are looking for further opportunities to bond through taking part in activities together. They have also noted an improvement in their confidence levels, allowing them to communicate more constructively with the school.

A huge amount of activity goes on 'under the radar' in communities across Scotland, providing support, opportunities and, sometimes, a voice for children and their families. Networks and community groups – whether formal or informal, and whether explicitly focused on issues for children or not – therefore have an important part to play in improving the wider, supportive environment in which children grow up. We want to see that contribution supported and expanded.

Support for that activity takes place across Scotland through specialist community development or community capacity building work. That support can be provided by a range of organisations in the statutory and third sectors (including, in some instances, organisations which focus on providing services to children and families). It can play a particularly important role in building capacity with communities who are disadvantaged by poverty or other factors.

This isn't about imposing external views of what issues should be important to communities. Rather it is about ensuring that support to build community networks and organisations – around the issues that matter to communities themselves – is co-ordinated and its contribution recognised.

Families within which English is not a first language may need additional support so that both parents and children are able to participate more effectively in community, education and working life. Family learning programmes, including appropriate English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) provision, based on an understanding, appreciation and respect for the values and beliefs of migrant families, can be a highly effective means of improving the involvement of migrant parents in their children's and their own education.

3. BREAKING CYCLES OF POVERTY, INEQUALITY AND POOR OUTCOMES IN AND THROUGH EARLY YEARS

Breaking the Cycle

Children's life chances are determined from the moment of conception. Motivations for pregnancy are complex and there is evidence that raising aspirations, reducing the number of people with low or no qualifications and enhancing life skills are more important than sex and relationships education in preventing vulnerable pregnancies.

Curriculum for Excellence provides a vehicle through which a greater focus can be developed on meeting the needs of young people to develop the qualities that will equip them to make positive choices about pregnancy and parenthood. Schools, youth work, social work and adult services all have an important role to play, and indeed the quality of the relationship between a key person and the young person or adult can have a critical bearing on their life choices. For young mothers who did not complete their education, we need to ensure that they are able to continue or re-enter education to improve their levels of educational attainment and opportunities to become socially and economically active in the future.

Sexual health and relationships remain a core issue, and in particular how people at greater risk of poor outcomes access good quality contraception and family planning advice to assist with the timing of pregnancies which will lead to the best outcome for them and their child. There are 3 critical areas that we need to focus on: more engaging sexual health education and services for young people through accessible drop-in services; integrating sexual health advice and treatment into services for high risk groups such as looked after children and substance misusers; and improving the way that contraception advice is offered at key points such as post-birth and in termination clinics. These services cannot do this alone, however, as aspirations depend to a large extent on family and community. This reinforces the importance of whole-system approaches to these challenges.

A renewed focus on 0-3 services

The period between pregnancy and 3 years is increasingly seen as a critical period in shaping children's life chances, based on evidence of brain formation, communication and language development, and the impact of relationships formed during this period on mental health. It is therefore also a critical opportunity to intervene to break cycles of poor outcomes.

A particular focus must therefore be on putting in place a strong and coherent set of 0-3 services that support children and families at this critical time. Antenatal, maternity and postnatal services will clearly be a strong focus here, working

alongside centre-based services such as family centres. A particular challenge will be achieving the right balance between a core universal programme and a much more targeted programme that provides a level and quality of support that is capable of improving outcomes.

NHS Fife – Supporting Families

NHS Fife is developing an integrated approach to supporting families from conception onwards, which aims to reduce health inequalities in the most vulnerable communities and families by means of a public health approach. A clear lead responsibility and reporting structure has been established to connect to the multi-agency Early Years Strategy Group which is to be established to lead planning across Fife.

The key projects involved include:

- **Family Health Project** – midwives and nursery nurses focused on supporting families affected by socioeconomic deprivation, teenage pregnancy and parents with learning disabilities.
- **Vulnerable in Pregnancy** – substance misuse midwives and nursery nurses focused on pregnant women and families with substance misuse behaviours aiming to improve birth outcomes and maintain the family unit. This project links with other services to provide ongoing care.
- **Smoking Cessation midwives.**
- **Acorn Project** – child psychology and public health nursing providing additional support by a nursery nurse mentored by child psychology for families where there is an assessed mother/child bonding issue.
- **Breastfeeding – Community Peer Support** – developed in pilot areas and now rolled out across Fife.
- **Breastfeeding in Schools** – the development of a resource pack to support the delivery of the *Curriculum for Excellence* in Primaries 3, 5 and 7.
- **Play@Home** – to develop family capacity and skills in relation to child development and physical activity from birth to school entry.
- **Sleep Fife** – offering a Fife-wide behavioural support service in relation to sleep difficulties.

Alongside this the **Specialist Public Health Nurse** for families with substance misuse and the **Interagency Consultant Nurse** for vulnerable families based in Fife Council Social Work Service provide support and guidance.

Sustaining the intervention

The aim is to set children off on a trajectory where they can achieve positive outcomes within the mainstream of universal services. Much can be achieved through early years and early intervention, but there will always be children and families who need continuing support.

It isn't enough for such families to support them effectively in the early years. Benefits from early intervention will fade quickly if family stresses increase, relationships with children come under pressure and peer relationships start to have a negative influence. It is important, therefore, that there is capacity to meet an ongoing level of need throughout childhood, and possibly throughout life. The aim must be, however, that early intervention will reduce the numbers of people requiring such ongoing support over time.

Tackling poverty

Social circumstances are closely linked to outcomes for children, particularly in terms of health and education. While being poor doesn't make someone a bad parent or a child a failure, it does expose children and families to additional stresses that are linked to a higher risk of poor outcomes. We believe that it is unacceptable that a child's life circumstances should determine their chances of enjoying a positive future, and that is why we have established ambitious targets to eradicate child poverty by 2020 and increase the proportion of income received by the poorest 30% of households by 2017.

The Scottish Government has worked closely with COSLA and other stakeholders to develop the anti-poverty strategy *Achieving our Potential* that aims to support these targets and deliver higher levels of social equity, combined with economic growth and a good quality of life. It proposes work to remove barriers to employment, support those who cannot work and make work pay. There are close links between some of this work and the section of this framework that deals with meeting the needs of children and families for flexible, accessible and affordable services.

As highlighted above, poverty should not condemn children and families to poor outcomes. Indeed, there is strong evidence that what parents do is more important than who they are and that parenting, home learning environment and high quality education are crucial factors for those children who overcome poverty to achieve positive outcomes. We must therefore combine our approach to tackling poverty with promoting those factors that will protect children and families from its effects.

Meeting the highest levels of need

There will continue to be a need for specialist services for those with the greatest levels of need, including a range of specialist services for children and families with specific conditions and disabilities. The *National Delivery Plan for Children and Young People's Specialist Services* in Scotland will be issued to NHS Boards as guidance setting out the way in which specialist health services should be provided to achieve the best outcomes for children and young people who require these services.

A particular area where there is unmet need at present is intensive, holistic support for families who face a range of interconnected social and medical challenges. For example, some families in greatest need have a complex combination of substance abuse, employability, housing, debt, mental health, parenting and other problems that would be difficult or impossible to address in isolation. Estimates suggest that between 2% and 4% of families face such complex challenges.

More consistent access to intensive family support services should be a priority, and families with young children should be a priority for these services. There are several models that could be considered at the local level, based on intensive, structured interventions such as Nurse Family Partnership, Functional Family Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy or the Dundee Families Project model. These may be costly and resource intensive, but in addition to their positive impact on outcomes, they are likely to cost less than a quarter of what institutional care of such children would. There is likely to be a strong role for partnership with the third sector in this area, and in some areas it may be that partnerships between local authorities will be required to bring projects to fruition.

East Ayrshire Council Parenting Support – The Solihull Approach

The Solihull Approach has been pursued within East Ayrshire focused around 2 Nursery and Family Centres with associated professionals from Health and Social Work. 24 cross-sectoral staff (Early Years staff, Educational Psychologists, Social Workers, Health Visitors, Health Visitors CAMHS) attended the 2 day Foundation Course. The material used has focused on work with parents who have children aged 0-5 years.

The Solihull Approach is described as a highly practical way of working with parents using an integrated psychodynamic and behavioural approach for staff working with children and families who are affected by behavioural and emotional difficulties. Teamwork and collaborative working between professionals using the principles of *containment*, *reciprocity* and *behaviour management* help to support parents in a creative and consistent way. Development of this 'shared' approach and language has been effective in a multitude of settings from individual practice through to group settings.

A strength of developing this approach locally, is that it is not an assessment process to be used in certain circumstances to decide upon an intervention. It is a way of working and thinking which helps families to process their own emotions and anxieties which in turn restores their abilities to think and enables them to help their child cope with their emotions or anxieties. This ultimately facilitates the relationship between parent and child and supports the parent to work with their child's behaviour.

The experience of staff using this approach has been very promising with different staff expressing positive views on the practicality and usefulness within their practice.

4. A FOCUS ON ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT OF CHILDREN, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Valuing children, parenting and families

Many elements of the vision are about the value that we as a society place on early years and a sense that a whole range of early years experiences contribute to outcomes. We therefore believe that recognition of the value of the early years is critical to achieving our overall vision.

At the heart of what needs to change is a new attitude to the importance of parents and parenting, particularly in the period before birth and in the very early years of life. Parents themselves must understand the importance of that role for their children's wellbeing and development. We want people to have the skills and the support needed to support positive outcomes for their children, and this will involve greater self-awareness from prospective parents about their readiness to provide a supportive environment for children. We also need to promote a culture where it is 'OK to ask for' and 'OK to get' parenting support.

Many people in the wider community already realise the central importance of parenting in children's attainment, behaviour and health throughout their lives. At the moment, this is too often focused on the teenage years and expressed in blame and recrimination when outcomes are poor. A vital part of this framework's success will lie in harnessing the community's desire to see improvements in parenting into valuing and supporting parents to play a positive role in the critical early years of their child's life.

Angus Council – Working in Nurseries/Schools and with Parents in the Family Home

The School and Family Support Service consists of 2 teams, an Early Years Team, and a team of Social Workers, Community Learning and Development Workers and a Mental Health Nurse. All staff in the Service work in schools, supporting school staff to deal with difficult situations, and in family homes working with parents to improve parenting and learning outcomes for children. The focus of the work of the Service is on early intervention and prevention.

Through the use of play, the Early Years Team have supported parents to engage with their children's learning and development and enhance a positive family environment. By working closely with parents and children in family homes, parenting skills have improved as well as children's behaviour in school. Parents indicate they are better placed to support their children's learning as a result of input from the Service.

The Service uses a solution-focused approach which recognises parents' skills and strengths and builds on them. Thereby parents and school staff do not feel judged or blamed when things become difficult.

The Early Years Workers have supported the protection of vulnerable children by early identification of problems and agreed plans of intervention and joint work with a wide range of partners, including police, health, social work and the voluntary sector. This has included group work approaches, e.g. circle time, used in pre-school and Primary 1, to support the development of companionship and social inclusion for such children.

Angus is presently piloting an approach whereby a member of staff in each sector of a local area – the secondary school, the primary schools and the nurseries and lower primary – work as a team. This allows for more in-depth work with parents in the home; a faster response which has stopped situations becoming child protection issues; more regular contact with vulnerable younger children and their families; anti-social behaviour being resolved early; and follow through of continuous support from ages 3-18.

Common values across the workforce

The values that we bring to our relationship with children in the early years are important at a societal level but they are particularly important for those who work with children and those whose work has a major impact on children, including some adult services such as housing and community learning and development.

There are many parts to the early years workforce and there is no agreed definition or boundary as to what constitutes a children's worker or an early years worker. There are many different roles and sectors within the workforce, each with its own focus, culture and, in some cases, regulatory system.

Some of these differences are necessary and legitimate, but in order to emphasise the importance of a holistic approach, and to make services more engaging for children and families, we need all of those working with children and families to be working to common values.

As noted above, a set of core values and principles have been developed as part of *Getting it Right for Every Child*. Work is also underway to ensure that the workforce understands the values and principles that underpin the UNCRC. We do not want to create a separate set of values for early years, and our approach will therefore be to take the *Getting it Right for Every Child* and UNCRC values as a starting point for our Common Values Statement.

As well as highlighting the importance of common values across the early years workforce, it is important to increase the status of the workforce and the value we place on it. In order to provide the quality of services we want for children and families we must invest in the workforce delivering those services. A career in early years must be attractive to every potential recruit, dispelling the myth that it is 'low skilled, low paid, women's work'.

5. USING THE STRENGTH OF UNIVERSAL SERVICES TO DELIVER PREVENTION AND EARLY INTERVENTION

The model for transformational change puts the onus firmly on universal services as key agents in delivering improved outcomes. A lot of people doing at least a little to effect change will achieve much more than a few people doing a lot within an early years context.

Antenatal and postnatal support

All families come into contact with health services during pregnancy, birth and in the first few years of life. This contact provides opportunities for prevention, early detection and early intervention and opportunities to connect children and families to supports within their own communities. For those with higher needs, access through the universal service provides an opportunity to work with families in a non-stigmatising way.

A key priority is enhancing the capacity of antenatal and postnatal services to combine excellent medical care with development of parenting skills and wider social supports. *Equally Well* highlights the importance of enhancing the capability of antenatal services to reach and support vulnerable families. Antenatal booking is the first universal contact and should be the start of a process of dynamic risk management throughout pregnancy. A primary focus of antenatal services will continue to be providing care and monitoring wellbeing of mother and baby.

Evidence on the health benefits of breastfeeding for both mother and infant is compelling and all women should receive enough information and skilled support to let them make an informed decision on how they will feed their baby. Support should be available for all women in initiating and maintaining successful breastfeeding. Additionally, establishing good nutrition and developing healthy weaning practices is essential and will influence children's immediate and long-term health.

Health for all Children 4 advocates access to a set of core evidence-based interventions throughout childhood while identifying and targeting those who need additional support. The purpose of the universal health service is well defined and includes monitoring the physical, social and mental health needs of each child, screening, immunisation, parenting support and advice tailored to the individual needs of each family. The first 3 years of a child's life should set the blueprint for their social, physical and emotional wellbeing throughout childhood and into adulthood. All contact should promote engagement between parent/carer and child and identify those families who need additional structured parenting support.

Pre-school into primary

The concordat already sets out a number of areas where universal services will be strengthened during the pre-school and early primary phase:

- reducing class sizes to a maximum of 18 in Primaries 1 to 3;
- expanding pre-school provision and making substantial progress towards a 50% increase in pre-school entitlement for 3 and 4 year olds;
- improving early years provision with access to a teacher for every pre-school child; and
- developing and delivering the *Curriculum for Excellence*.

These developments will benefit all children, but they have a particular value in providing additional capacity to allow universal services to play a greater role in early intervention. For example, smaller class sizes mean that teachers will have more time to spend with individual pupils and scope to provide more targeted support to build confidence in communication, literacy and numeracy at this critical early stage.

Councils will have responsibility for bringing these policies together into a coherent package at local authority, cluster and school/centre level that is focused on improving outcomes for children during pre-school and the early years of primary.

West Dunbartonshire Council's Early Intervention Initiative has 2 key aims:

- transform the achievement of all children in the 4 to 7 age range (pre-school, P1 and P2) through a comprehensive early intervention programme; and
- eradicate illiteracy for the entire school population.

The West Dunbartonshire Council model has clearly made a difference over the course of the project. It had 10 strands of intervention, including 'changing attitudes, values and expectations' and 'identification and support for children who are failing'.

Other key features of the model included:

- extra classroom assistance in the early years;
- substantial training and CPD for all staff involved;
- increased time within the timetable spent on key aspects of reading;
- the need for a strategic vision and leadership throughout the education authority including a real political will to focus on this aspect of education;
- a structured and systematic approach based on evidence;
- long-term commitment by all those involved in the programme; and
- additional funding to support the programme. Investment in resources was important, but without the other elements it is questionable whether this initiative would have seen the same levels of success.

Another important element of the initiative was the introduction of an individual support package for any pupils in primary or secondary school who continue to have problems with reading.

A continuum of support

Another area that came through in the work of the task groups was the importance of continuity and a coherent approach across all those services which impact on children's lives. Local authorities already have a statutory duty to develop an integrated children's services plan. Building on this, ensuring that it is fully integrated into the community planning process and that it is increasingly centred and focused on the needs of children and families will be key to developing that continuum of support at local level.

Childcare

Childcare services have grown substantially over the past decade and are now a key part of the early years service landscape. Like statutory services, childcare provides a non-stigmatising environment where there are opportunities to develop a prevention and early intervention approach. This role can be particularly valuable during the 0-3 age range when some children will not be in regular contact with statutory services.

Given the need to target community nursing resources on those families needing additional or intensive support, it is important that childcare services are able to detect development delays and other risks and know how to bring support to the child to address these.

This implies a need to ensure the childcare workforce has the necessary understanding of child development to detect risks and problems and to be able to address these either directly or drawing on support from other services. More than this, we need to move towards a conceptualisation of childcare as a service that delivers high quality experiences and early intervention for children rather than just focusing on its role in supporting the labour market.

Delivering early intervention through universal services

Each local area should have a universal set of supports for every child and family at a level and a quality that meets a set of core needs (family planning, parenting capacity/skills, mental health of both infant and parents, good oral health, nutrition, childcare, education, family learning, employability, play and leisure) and which is based on building self-efficacy at every stage.

Within universal services, there needs to be the capacity to provide additional support and early intervention for families facing greater challenges, whether on a temporary or more long-term basis. Wherever possible, universal services should take responsibility for providing that additional support rather than referring onwards, in line with the principles of *Getting it Right for Every Child*. This has implications for both capacity and workforce skills/roles, as a higher dose of the same type of service will not meet all types of additional need.

It may also be possible to work towards the co-location of services, which, while not in itself a panacea, can provide non-stigmatising initial access to services, with the potential for more specialist support as a next step.

In some cases, additional needs of vulnerable children and families can be met through an enhanced level of access or entitlement to universal services, for example subsidised childcare or earlier entry to pre-school. These additional entitlements need to be framed within a consistent framework and based on an assessment of local needs and the contribution they can make to outcomes.

Meeting individual needs

Individuals can have different or higher needs for a variety of reasons, including language, ethnicity and disability, as well as social circumstances. Universal access and universal uptake are not the same. If we are to reduce inequalities and embed early intervention within universal services, then services must pay attention to whether they are reaching minority communities and those with higher needs and then meeting those needs. Ideally, this should be reflected in local performance management and accountability arrangements.

We need to ensure that any information for parents and carers is available in a variety of formats to meet these needs. Any written materials should be presented with an awareness of principles of readability and plain English.

Transitions

Transitions were highlighted as an important issue in the research with parents and children. The major transition points for children highlighted in the research with parents and children were the transfer from midwifery support to community health team support in the days after the birth, the transition into pre-school and the transition from pre-school into primary.

Curriculum for Excellence provides an important opportunity to improve transitions between pre-school and primary. The early level will span pre-school to the end of Primary 1 and the increasing use of active learning in early primary means that there should be a smooth transition in learning style. There are still several challenges to overcome, however, not least creating an effective dialogue between primaries and nurseries (including private and third sector centres) about respective contributions to early level outcomes. Establishing such a dialogue is crucial to delivering continuity of learning, which is a key principle of *Curriculum for Excellence*.

Transitions in the life of adults can also have a major impact on young children. For example, bereavement or family breakdown can have a profound impact on young children in particular. Mediation and counselling services generally already have a strong focus on the needs of children. It is important that staff in such services have the skills needed to understand children's response to loss and the duration of distress.

Additional Support for Learning (ASL)

Under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004 education authorities are required to identify, meet and review the additional support needs of each child or young person for whose school education they are responsible. The term additional support for learning applies to children and young people who, for whatever reason, require additional support, long or short-term, in order to help them to make the most of their school education.

While most children will have their learning needs met by day-to-day classroom practice, wider planning arrangements may be needed when additional support is required from other services and agencies. This is part of our drive to improve and unify the support systems for all children, to ensure they are supported into adulthood and have every opportunity to achieve the best they can.

6. PUTTING QUALITY AT THE HEART OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Services based on what works in supporting children and families

There is a wide range of services in place for children and families and a huge number of very skilled and committed people in the children's services workforce. In order to get the best from services and the workforce, they need to operate with a strong understanding of what works in supporting positive outcomes for children.

We have excellent practice in many sectors and in many locations across Scotland. However, we need to be more systematic in identifying and disseminating best practice.

We need to capture what the evidence tells us about the nature of effective practice, learn from innovative approaches in Scotland and elsewhere and develop a culture of learning within the workforce so that they can apply the evolving knowledge base for the benefit of children and families.

A particular focus will be developing the evidence base on information, advice and programmes to develop parenting capacity. A further priority will be on building the evidence base around what works in community learning and development to support positive outcomes in early years.

Understanding the evidence is not enough. Some of the biggest mistakes are made in attempting to adapt proven programmes to local needs and unwittingly diluting those elements that are most effective. A strong emphasis on adhering to the programme, training and compliance needs to be maintained throughout the delivery chain.

Developing a highly-skilled workforce

A theme that came through in the work of all 4 task groups was the importance of the skills base of the workforce. There is a significant evidence base that supports the link between qualifications and outcomes, but equally our research with parents and children highlighted the central importance of engagement and the attitude of those they deal with in terms of their perception of the quality of services.

There are many excellent examples of cross-sector working within initial education, of joint working across higher and further education, and of partnership between educational institutions and employers. However, it remains the case that there are different silos of training for professional groups.

The importance of partnership in cross-sector working has been identified in the workforce response to *Better Health, Better Care* which has been developed to identify the challenges to be faced over the next 10-20 years in delivering a Healthier Scotland. The 5 core challenges are:

- tackling health inequalities;
- shifting the balance of care;
- ensuring a quality workforce;
- delivering best value across the workforce; and
- moving towards an integrated workforce.

These challenges interlink with this framework strengthening the key messages in the new, cross-sectoral focus and vision for early years.

We know there are a plethora of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities available across the workforce, but that some people receive more opportunities to develop their skills than others. There are sectors where access to training can be very limited, such as childminders, playworkers, parent committees and voluntary groups.

There is an opportunity to create a much more coherent approach to developing the skills of the workforce, spanning initial education and CPD. This would flow, in part, from the Common Values Statement and the actions above to develop a much more systematic approach to capturing evidence of what works in children's services, and be based around a conceptualisation of the children's services workforce of the future.

Some specific and crucial skills highlighted by the task groups as a priority for inclusion in initial training and CPD across the workforce included: skills for developing and assessing early communication; literacy and numeracy; strategies for building the capacity of children and parents; and skills in community capacity building.

As we move forward in implementing *Getting it Right for Every Child*, there will be an increasing emphasis on skills which equip people to act as lead professionals and to provide or arrange additional support where a need is identified. These are important skills which should be a priority in CPD going forward.

There will be a need for innovation in roles and skills at a local as well as national level. Local partners should create an environment that supports and encourages innovation, and which gives backing to staff who find new ways to give greater emphasis to engaging families, developing prevention and early intervention and building community and family capacity. Most of all, staff must be clear that delivering for children and families across a range of outcomes is the day job for everyone.

There is a clear role for local early years and family support partnerships in rationalising and prioritising CPD opportunities to focus on those areas that make the greatest contribution to national and local priorities in early years.

East Ayrshire Council

The majority of children aged 0-3 years who attend the 5 nursery and family centres in East Ayrshire have been referred from Social Work Services, Health or Psychological Services.

Addiction, parenting, mental health and child protection are issues that affect the children and families who are supported through these services.

Family Care Workers will support families with children up to 8 years of age. Referrals primarily come from Social Work Services and the Health Service and focus mainly on parenting and behavioural issues and mental health issues for parents/carers. Family Care Workers will work with both children and their parents/carers often within their own home. They will also support parents/carers in group situations in the centres. They provide one aspect of an integrated approach to supporting families with a focus on prompt and early intervention.

7. SERVICES THAT MEET THE NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The availability, accessibility and flexibility of services are key components in meeting the needs of children and families. The feedback from parents and children involved in qualitative research that was carried out in support of the framework was very clear in highlighting several areas where service design needs to evolve to better meet their needs.

We also recognise the importance for the Gaelic speaking community of the availability of Gaelic early years education and childcare. This is a legitimate expectation and is a key part of our aim of creating a secure future for Gaelic in Scotland. The Scottish Government is commissioning a review of Gaelic early years provision.

Flexibility and integration

A particular concern for parents is the way that childcare integrates with pre-school education and school. Improving the accessibility and affordability of high-quality, flexible, integrated education and childcare services is therefore a priority.

There is a need to balance the needs of children with the needs of parents. High quality care can help to ease this balance by conferring benefits on children whilst providing the opportunity for parents to work. There is some conflicting evidence about the time it is healthy for children to spend in group childcare, particularly under the age of 2. These arguments are not clear cut, because the ability to work can lift a family out of poverty and this is strongly correlated with improved outcomes for the child. The presence of a child in childcare services can also provide a non-stigmatising context for a range of other supports to be provided. The balance will be different for every child and family, depending on their circumstances. What is important is that parents are supported to find the right balance for them and that availability of flexible, high-quality, integrated services is improved to meet those needs.

The need for greater integration between pre-school and childcare is only part of a wider demand from parents for more joined-up services. Other areas they identified included better integration between midwifery and community nursing services.

A more flexible and integrated workforce can play an important role in meeting these needs, alongside streamlined processes being delivered through *Getting it Right for Every Child*. While there will continue to be a strong role for specialists in health, education and social work, there will also be a increasing emphasis on roles that span disciplines and which can support a range of needs. This is particularly important for families who have a greater range and intensity of need.

Affordability

Some services are clearly defined as free entitlement whereas others have traditionally had a cost associated with them, e.g. parents generally pay for childcare and a number of culture and leisure services. Reducing such costs across the board by subsidising them for all would mean applying large amounts of resource to families which are already doing relatively well. Such costs clearly weigh heavily, however, on those on lower incomes. The real challenge is how to construct a progressive and non-stigmatising way of supporting these costs that is simple and more accessible for parents.

By far the largest cost tends to be associated with childcare, and the UK Government has established 2 separate schemes to support parents with these costs – the childcare element of working tax credit and childcare vouchers. It is clear that uptake of both schemes is lower than it could be and this is, in part, linked to the complexity of tax credits and the lack of awareness amongst employers of the benefits of childcare vouchers. In the short term, the Scottish Government will work to influence the UK Government to simplify the tax credits system and will promote greater availability of childcare vouchers in the public and private sectors.

There are particular problems for some families within the current system. The limits on the amount of childcare costs which can be supported work against larger families and those with disabled children, who face higher costs and, in many cases, a higher risk of poverty. We will use our influence with the UK Government to improve support for these groups.

The Scottish Government has argued for, and will continue to promote, the benefits of a single, progressive and accessible system for supporting parents with the costs of childcare.

Supply-side subsidies also have an important role to play in supporting affordability of childcare. Local authorities already provide structural support to a large number of childcare providers to help them with sustainability. It will be important to reflect within future plans how the approach to such funding is contributing to accessibility, affordability and outcomes more generally.

Accessibility

Early years services already play a very strong role at the heart of communities. Pre-school, school, playgroups, parent and toddler groups and health services are highly valued and, for most people, are readily accessible. However, the availability of transport to allow them to access key services is an issue for a number of parents.

Even where facilities are accessible, some people find it hard to get the greatest benefit from these. This can be because they are afraid to ask for additional help that they need or because of other barriers such as language, disability, social circumstances or the attitudes of staff in services. In other cases, vulnerable people fear the consequences of engaging with certain services such as sexual health services or social work. There is a real risk in these circumstances that those who would benefit most from support are least able to access it.

Advice and information services

Families need access to a range of advice and information services in order to help them understand their own role and to make informed choices about parenting and services. As well as advice available from professionals such as midwives and community health care teams, there are also a wide range of advice services and helplines that support families. These include childcare information services, tax credits helplines, parenting advice lines, mediation and counselling services, and a whole variety of wider advice services in areas such as debt.

At present these services are very fragmented. We believe the way forward is for Childcare Information Services to become family information services and act as a gateway for a range of advice that parents may need. The third sector, in the shape of Parenting Across Scotland have already started to deliver a more joined-up approach to parenting advice services and local authorities will need to consider how best to work with the third sector in developing a more integrated advice service.

Parents' awareness of the advice that is available is often low. There is a role for better marketing of advice services through universal services. This needs to be creative and go beyond written materials to more proactive work in health, education and community services and centres.

Grandparents

The Growing up in Scotland survey highlights the huge contribution that grandparents make to children's lives both generally and specifically in terms of informal childcare. Many children spend a lot of time with grandparents and other relatives and it is important that such informal carers have access to support to help them fulfil this role well.

8. IMPROVING OUTCOMES AND CHILDREN'S QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGH PLAY

The case for change highlights children's rights and children's quality of life. Alongside high quality services, this broader experience of childhood will have an important role to play in helping them to be successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. There is evidence that these areas contribute to good health and a lower incidence of violent and risk-taking behaviour in later life.

We need to ensure that parents, communities and professionals recognise the value and long-term benefits of play and to promote how critical play and the arts are for children's development. This is true not just in terms of physical health but also in terms of developing resilience and mental wellbeing.

We need to recognise children's own aspirations for play, not what adults think they should be doing and to recognise that play takes many forms, not just play parks.

But we also have to recognise that play and developing the right attitudes to play are not the sole responsibility of national or local government. Parents have a key role here, particularly with regard to the issue of concerns about their children's safety and exposure to risk.

While we must act to limit young children's exposure to risks they cannot control, giving children responsibility and allowing them to explore the world in a way that is appropriate to their age and development in a way that they can control is a key part of developing confidence. There is a feeling that, in recent times, there has been too much focus on eliminating all risk to children rather than understanding risk. We must reverse this trend and equip children with the skills to manage risk and make positive choices based on assessing the situation facing them.

Broxburn Family Centre – the benefits of play for individual children

Play is essential for our children if they are to have the best start in life and be ready to succeed as adults. Through play children thrive as they develop self-confidence, social skills and an awareness of their impact on others and the world around them.

An excellent example of achieving these outcomes is the case of B, a child who suffered a brain injury at birth, resulting in mild cerebral palsy, ADHD and behavioural difficulties and who started attending Broxburn Family Centre aged 2.

B was often unable to cope with the structured environment of nursery and school and teachers often found B's behaviour difficult to cope with. In a play setting, however, B thrived. Through playing with his peers B was given the freedom, space and support, to explore his relationships, discover empathy and explore social boundaries. B has demonstrated more confidence, improved his social skills and developed a better awareness of the world around him.

Now in his later primary years, B still has some key challenges ahead of him but it is through engaging in sustained play opportunities that B has thrived and been given the best start in life.

Play – the Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery, Fife

The Secret Garden Outdoor Nursery is a community-led project, registered by the Care Commission that offers a full-time outdoor pre-school care service. Their vision is to provide a spacious play environment in local woodland and countryside that offers the child an opportunity to develop curiosity and learning through engagement with nature, the seasons and the elements.

With child- and adult-made structures that offer shelter and warmth, the Secret Garden believes that each child will be made to feel comfortable within the natural environment regardless of the weather. Their staff facilitate a unique opportunity for local children to grow from and with nature.

Priority of places is given to children from within the catchment area of Letham Primary School and existing clients. The minimum session offered to families is one full day which allows for the social, emotional, intellectual, creative and physical needs of the children to be met.

- **Structure for children**

The structure of the day is organised so that the children have a varied amount of play and rest time.

At the start of the day when the children have just arrived there is time and space for each child to find their own way into play and socialising.

As the children warm to the environment and each other, play is more dynamic and physical; a walk is taken up the hill and then their 'base camp' is established for the day, where play is free and spacious.

An early lunch leads into a quieter phase of play and interaction. Rests can be taken in hammocks and stories told before the afternoon's energetic play begins.

A snack break is taken in the afternoon. As the day winds to an end, the staff and children make their way back to the park to play and be met by parents and carers.

- **Pre-school curriculum (Nature as Teacher)**

The staff at the Secret Garden have worked closely with the 4 capacities of the *Curriculum for Excellence* to devise a unique outdoor curriculum: the Nature as Teacher Curriculum.

This curriculum aims to nurture and support the development of the inspired, creative child and the confident, happy child within the natural environment.

The curriculum will be piloted in 2008-09, with opportunities for parents, staff and children to offer feedback and ideas as to how it should be developed further.

By playing in the outdoors and identifying wildlife, experiencing different weather conditions and developing their senses, children gain emotional, personal and social development, communication and language skills, knowledge and understanding of the world, an expressive and aesthetic experience and physical development and movement.

9. SIMPLIFYING AND STREAMLINING DELIVERY

Integrating delivery

While many areas have made significant progress in community planning in recent years, many people feel that evidence of integrated delivery is more limited. If we are to improve outcomes as we all aspire to, then community planning partners will need to place a particular focus on joining up delivery around children and families to provide the continuum of support that is needed.

Some stakeholders have argued for a rapid move towards a single early years budget across various agencies and eventually bringing all early years services into a single management structure. However, others argued that this could be time-consuming and distracting and that it was more important in the short-term to create the conditions for better joint working through an organisational development approach. Our conclusion is that there is no single solution to joining up delivery on the ground and that the needs of different parts of Scotland are so diverse as to make any single approach impractical. Equally, there is a strong sense that the status quo is not an option because the complexity of existing delivery structures is a barrier to some of our objectives around engaging parents and delivering a holistic service. Local partners should therefore set a medium-term plan for simplifying the delivery of early years services and consider whether there is scope for simplification of budgets and organisational structures to support that.

A streamlined and coherent 0-3 service

At the moment, there is a clear lead from health in antenatal services and from 3 upwards through education. The situation for 0-3 services is less clear, with overlapping education, health, social work and community services all playing distinctive roles. A key priority must therefore be to develop a coherent 0-3 service which has clear strategic leadership.

Delivery models

The task groups examined a range of delivery models including family centres and multi-agency approaches. The conclusion was that there is no single model that can be applied to meet the needs of children, families and communities across Scotland due to the diversity of geography and social circumstances that exist.

There may well be a role for a greater number of family centres, but the majority of the improvement in outcomes is likely to come from enhancing family and community capacity alongside building the capability of mainstream services to meet additional needs.

10. MORE EFFECTIVE COLLABORATIONS

The private and third sectors are major providers of early years services, accounting for nearly 30% of pre-school provision, an even larger share of childcare provision and a wide variety of supports and services for parents and children with higher needs. Some of the most flexible, engaging, innovative and holistic services are provided through these sectors.

The existing partnership model has brought diversity of provision and made use of many of the particular skills and qualities that the private and third sectors bring to early years. There is a widespread feeling, however, that in many areas we have been left with a patchwork of services that reflects organic growth rather than a strategic approach, and that the nature of partnership will need to evolve if we are to collectively meet the challenges set by this framework.

There are several difficult issues to resolve in moving this forward, but the key areas are around developing more strategic partnerships, including partnership at strategic planning levels, developing models of joint delivery involving public and private/third sector providers, establishing long-term funding arrangements and funding that reflects the real cost of delivering high-quality services.

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