

Item 4.1 - Minutes

Education, Children and Families Committee Policy Development and Review Sub-Committee

2.00 pm, Thursday, 30 January 2014

Present

Councillors Fullerton (Convener), Aitken, Austin Hart, Brock, Child, Corbett, Godzik, Howat, Jackson, Lewis, Main, McVey (Substituting for Councillor Dixon), Redpath and Robson.

Also present for Education items

Marie Allan and Lindsay Law.

1. Minute

Decision

To approve the minute of the Education, Children and Families Committee Policy Development and Review Sub-Committee of 11 November 2013 as a correct record.

2. Sub-Committee Work Programme

On 10 December 2013, the Education, Children and Families Committee had agreed, amongst other things;

- 1) to approve a work programme for the Policy Development and Review Sub-Committee until May 2015;
- 2) that recommendations from the Policy Development and Review Sub-Committee be referred to the Education, Children and Families Committee for approval; and
- 3) to refer the work programme to the Policy Development and Review Sub-Committee for information.

Decision

To note the work programme to be taken forward by the Sub-Committee.

(References – Education, Children and Families Committee 10 December 2013 (minute item 20); report by the Head of Legal, Risk and Compliance, submitted.)

3. Delivering 600 Hours of Early Learning and Childcare

An update was provided on developments in early years including:

- delivering 600 hours of early years learning and childcare from August 2014;
- an extension of early learning and childcare to two year olds; and
- affordable childcare (including breakfast clubs).

To inform the discussion, the Sub-Committee received a presentation from officers including an update from the Head Teacher of Dalry Primary School which had carried out a 600 hours pilot.

In response to questions from members, the following points were made:

- Consultation had taken place with parents/carers on three possible options to deliver the increased entitlement to early years learning and childcare: Option 1 (3 hours, Monday to Friday and two weeks of the holidays); Option 2 (two 8 hour days); and Option 3 (3 hours 20 minutes, Monday to Friday only).
- The preferred option identified by parents/carers was 3 hours 20 minutes, Monday to Friday (Option 3). Whilst it was likely this would be the option delivered by the Council in the first year of operation, it was hoped that a range of other models could be developed in future years.
- The Council had been allocated an additional £3m of capital funding but this did not include provision for the extension of early learning to two year olds.

Following the presentation by officers, the Sub-Committee split into three groups and considered the following discussion points:

Discussion Point 1. There is a notion to employ more Modern Apprentices and Trainee Early Years Practitioners within Nursery Classes with an aim of improving training and sustaining the increased number of staff. What would be the challenges and drawbacks of this and how could they be overcome?

Discussion Point 2. The Government announced on 7 January their intention that two year old children in workless households will be offered 600 hours of early learning and childcare from August 2014. This goes beyond what was previously discussed in the Children and Young People's Bill. There is still a lack of definition of the eligibility criteria however there will be a need for flexible delivery.

Discussion Point 3. Breakfast Clubs, After School Clubs and Holiday Clubs are all operating across the city in a variety of models. How can we facilitate further use of the Council estate and promote flexibility and affordability?

Feedback from the discussion groups

Discussion Point 1

- It would be important to take account of Partner Provider views when identifying a need for places.
- There could be difficulties with providing two 8 hour days, especially for Partner Providers. Partner Providers might need to be creative in how they deliver the additional entitlement.
- Parents want what fits in with their working hours.
- Training Modern Apprentices may be a challenge in smaller teams.
- How do you find time to mentor trainees?
- Areas with a high proportion of English as an Additional Language (EAL) support may limit the flexibility of teaching and support staff.

Discussion Point 2

- Extending the nursery day by 40 minutes was not necessarily going to help most parents.
- There was a need to be flexible to encourage parents to return to work or seek employment.
- Using Partner Providers to commission places for two year olds could work well.
- The use of workplace nurseries should be explored further.
- What happens when the parent gets a job? Does the two year old no longer get a nursery place?
- Many workless families live in more than one household.
- There was a concern about the lack of provision for working parents living in poverty.
- Links with Health Visitors would be important in discussions about the eligibility criteria.
- It was important to raise parental awareness of this increased entitlement.
- Where can the Council provide additional places given many nurseries are already full?
- Was there scope for flexibility within other agencies e.g. Gingerbread or Childcare Connections?

- Many families were not in “workless” households but in low paid households not receiving benefits or free school meals.
- Families may be eligible to claim but may not wish to do so because of a perceived stigma attached.

Discussion Point 3

- There was a need to define what was meant by “affordable”.
- There needs to be greater community access to schools and Council facilities.
- Consideration should be given to private companies sponsoring breakfast clubs, although it was accepted that not everyone would be comfortable with this.
- It should be borne in mind that breakfast clubs are also used by parents for childcare.
- Could schools premises be used during school holidays for childcare or holiday clubs?

Next Steps

The Director of Children and Families welcomed the feedback from Committee members and thanked the officers for their contribution.

She advised that the next steps would be to:-

- ensure that suitable arrangements were in place for August 2014 and to then look more creatively at future years provision.
- ensure that all parties were working together for the benefit of children and parents.
- continue the process of opening up schools to the community and to make sure staff were on board.
- look at areas where things were already working well and to see where that best practice could be applied elsewhere.
- submit a report a report to the Education, Children and Families Committee in May 2014.

Decision

- 1) To thank the officers and members for their input into the discussion.
- 2) To note that the feedback received from today’s meeting would be incorporated into a report to be submitted to the Education, Children and Families Committee.

- 3) That a copy of the presentation slides be emailed to all members of the Sub-Committee.

(References – report by the Director of Children and Families, submitted.)