

REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION COMMITTEE- 22 MAY 2000

REPORT ON: ADMISSION TO NURSERY EDUCATION IN DUNDEE

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

REPORT NO: 344-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 The purpose of this Report is to seek approval to review the Admissions Policy for Nursery Education and to introduce a pilot scheme to charge parents in employment for additional nursery provision.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The Education Committee is recommended to:

- 1 approve the proposals contained within this Report to amend the Policy on Admissions to Nursery Schools and Classes
- 2 remit the Director of Education to establish a one year pilot and evaluation scheme to charge parents in employment for additional nursery provision
- 3 approve the continued provision of free full time places to children in need
- 4 approve the proposal to increase the clerical support hours for Nursery Schools from 12 to 16 hours per week for the duration of the pilot scheme in order to meet the administration requirements of the pilot scheme
- 5 approve the proposal to review and amend current charging for extended hours services

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 It is anticipated that savings of **£65,700** will be generated in the financial year 2000/2001 as a result of charging parents in employment for additional nursery provision. The cost attached to the proposal to increase clerical support for nursery schools is £11,500. The net saving in the financial year 2000/2001 is **£54,200**. The Education Revenue Budget, 2000\2001, already reflects an anticipated saving of £50,000. Further details on the financial implications are attached to this report, set out in Appendix 4.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The proposal will increase access to the skills, knowledge and information needed to enable everyone to play a full part in society and will help to ensure that local needs are met locally

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

5.1 These proposals will promote improved equity of access to Nursery School and Class provision within Dundee.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1 Dundee has a high level of Nursery School and Class provision. The Government has pledged to provide part time places for all four year olds as of now, and for all three year olds by 2002. The Education Department is committed to meeting the targets for three year olds in the year 2000- 2001. Children will be able to take up a part time nursery place in the term following their third birthday.
- 6.2 In addition significant numbers of pre school children in Dundee have enjoyed a full time nursery place. These places play an important role in providing additional support and intervention for children in need and also in meeting the care and educational requirements of children whose parents are in employment, education or training.
- 6.3 The demand for full time places is always high and in recent years the Department has sought to rationalise the way places are allocated to ensure that those children and families with the greatest need are given priority. Parents of children who are not in need often feel discriminated against because they are unable to access full time places. The demand for places from parents who are in employment is particularly high and where parents are in low-income employment affordable childcare can be a problem. **This Report aims to create a more flexible system where children in need will always take priority and where other children can access full time places to meet their family circumstances.**
- 6.4 Research has identified a clear correlation between economic disadvantage and poor educational achievement. Full time nursery provision can provide a more intensive educational experience, providing opportunities to promote language, emotional and social development within a settled environment. This reduces the need for later intervention and support, which can be resource intensive and expensive.
- 6.5 Children whose parents are in employment also require effective, high quality care within a familiar and secure environment. Providing that care in combination with high quality educational experiences is convenient for parents and provides a continuity and stability of experience for children.

7.0 CURRENT SITUATION

- 7.1 The introduction of the Working Families Tax Credit means that families in low or middle income groups can claim tax benefits to offset their childcare costs. Information about the Working Families Tax Credit is included in Appendix 1 of this Report.
- 7.2 The Nursery Admissions Policy was last reviewed in 1997 (Education Committee, 15 September 1997, Report Number 594/ 1997). The new context of universal provision and the need to target services more effectively requires a review and updating of the current policy.
- 7.3 In addition Head Teachers and parents require clear guidance which sets out the Council's position and which can be used to support decision making about place allocation.
- 7.4 The provision of funded pre school education places in private and voluntary sector provision means that parents have a range of choices available to them and can choose all day provision which offers care and education within a single facility.

8.0 PROPOSAL

8.1 This Report proposes to review the current Nursery Admissions Policy to take account of the universal provision of pre school education places and the need to rationalise the allocation of full time places to children in need. In addition, a pilot charging scheme is proposed for working families who wish to take up a full time place.

8.2 Nursery Admission Policy

8.3 Recently, Nursery Schools and Classes have been issued with 'Locality Area Guidance' to support prioritising of place allocations. This means that all eligible children in Dundee have priority access to at least one Nursery School or Class in their local area. In parts of Dundee, demand for places is high and at times may outstrip supply. The 'Locality Area Guidance' means that Head Teachers can prioritise children from their local area. However, there is no intention to publish Catchment Areas for nurseries. The 'Locality Area Guidance' is only used when demand for places is likely to be higher than supply. **It is important that the majority of parents can choose the nursery provision which best meets their needs.** Many children are cared for by grandparents or relatives, who live in another local area and some parents prefer to place their child near their workplace.

8.4 The provision of a part time place in nursery education is ideal for the majority of children and families. Children can benefit from the social and educational experience, which is tailored to their stage of development, and is a solid foundation from which to embark on their educational careers. Spending time at home provides a range of important opportunities for young children. **Provision of a part time place in pre school education is seen as the most effective way to meet the needs of young children.**

8.5 However for some children and their parents, services are required for a greater part of the day. Increasing numbers of women are active in the employment market, parents may be students and most importantly there may be social, health or economic circumstances, which mean that full time provision, will better meet the needs of the child.

8.6 The demand for full time places is always high and the revised Admissions Policy will clarify the Council's position in relation to full time place allocation. More detailed guidance is included within the new Policy to support Head Teachers in identifying children in need. An outline of this is included in Appendix 2 of this Report. A fundamental principle must be that children in need are prioritised in free full time allocations before any other children are offered places.

8.7 **The underpinning principle is that children who are allocated a full time place are acknowledged to be receiving an *additional* service which is not a universal entitlement.**

8.8 The revised Admissions Policy will also provide advice on the pilot charging scheme for full time places for children whose parents wish to take up a place because of their employment circumstances. The proposed revised Admissions Policy is included in Appendix 3 of this Report. The revisions clarify the definitions of part and full time places and offer more specific information on extended hours, times of sessions, charges and deferred entry to primary school. Following Committee Approval, widespread dissemination of the revised Policy will be undertaken by the Early Years and Childcare Team.

8.9 Pilot Charging Scheme for Fulltime Places

- 8.10** **The Education Department's primary function in relation to the provision of pre school services is to make universal provision of a part time pre school education place for children who are three and four.** Where childcare services can be linked to pre school education, services are fully exploited and become more beneficial for children and convenient for parents. However Government Guidance is quite clear that responsibility for childcare provision does not lie solely with local authorities but must be developed through a mixed economy of provision and where possible parents should contribute to its cost.
- 8.11** There are three key reasons for introducing a pilot charging scheme:
- 1 Such a policy will be more compatible with services provided by other sectors. For example in the private sector, only the part time pre school education component is funded and parents make up any outstanding costs
 - 2 The Council receives funding from the Government for part time places for three and four year olds, but there is no funding for full time places. Parents may, however, require full time places where there is socioeconomic need or where they are in work or in training. There are also groups of children whose developmental needs would be better met by a full time place. The Council is in a position to offer some full time places to fulfil the needs described above, but will have to charge for this service, as appropriate.
 - 3 The Department already charges for extended hours services. Making a charge for full time places will create a fairer and more consistent framework and will highlight the additional value of the provision.
- 8.12** The charging costs for the duration of the pilot will be estimated on the current Scottish Executive Education Department Grant for Pre School Education and will take account of childcare costs in other sectors. The current level of funding for a part time pre school education place is £1,200 per annum, based on the child receiving a fully loaded part time place of 2.5 hours five days a week during school terms. This amounts to a total of 412.5 hours per annum.
- 8.13** The cost of an hour's pre school education provision is therefore just under £3.00. Local childcare rates tend to be lower than this and it is important that the Council does not charge more than the local economy indicates. A charge of £2.00 an hour is therefore more in line with other facilities. The charge of £25.00 per week would therefore be made for the additional 5 x 2.5 hour placement and a nominal £5.00 for the lunchtime session (school meal charges would also apply). This would result in a cost to parents of £30.00 per week. Parents would also be liable for the cost of the child's school meal.
- 8.14** The extended hours service offers parents the opportunity to further extend provision for the child. This service is currently provided free to children in need and is charged for to others. There is a need to review and amend the current charging rates to bring them into line with the proposals to charge £2.00 for additional services during the day. This would mean that parents who wish to take up a morning extended hours place (three quarters of a hour) will be charged £8.00 per week and for an evening place (two hours a day) would be charged £20.00 per week.
- 9.0** **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**
- 9.1** Administration of the pilot charging scheme will create an additional work load for Clerical Assistants and Nursery Head Teachers. It is therefore proposed to increase the Clerical Assistant hours within each Nursery School from 12 - 16 hours a week for the duration of the pilot. This will cost a total of £15,500 and will be off set by income generated by the pilot scheme.
- 9.2** The estimated demand for part time places in the year 2000- 2001 is for 1600 four year olds and 1400 three year olds, creating a demand for 3,000 places. 450 of these

places will be provided within the private and voluntary sector and 100 places will be provided within Child and Family Centres. Nursery Schools and Classes will provide the remaining 2,450 part time. Current staffing within Nursery Schools and Classes will accommodate a total of 3,050 part time places. This means that an estimated 600 part time places can be converted to accommodate full time places.

9.3 Current estimates suggest that 200- 250 of the available full time places will be required for children in need. It would therefore be possible to charge for 350- 400 full time places. However, as this is a new development it would be prudent to anticipate income from 115 places in the first instance. This is a relatively small number, which would give the Department some flexibility. If the scheme is successful and positive feedback is returned from parents and staff, then the number of charged for places could be increased in subsequent years while safeguarding the revised policy.

9.4 Details of potential savings generated from these places is included in Appendix 4 of this Report.

10.0 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Directors of Corporate Planning, Social Work, Personnel and Management Services, Support Services and Finance have been consulted on the proposals contained within this Report.

11.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

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

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Director of Education

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Date

Appendix 1**Working Families Tax Credit**

The Working Families Tax Credit support families with childcare costs. The WFTC is available to

- lone parents and couples with one or more children
- people working more than 16 hours a week or more (for couples one partner must meet this criteria)
- residents of the UK
- families with savings of less than £8,000 or less.

Childcare service must be registered with the local authority and includes, childminders, nursery or playgroups and out of school care clubs.

The amount families receive depends on

- How much they spend on registered childcare
- The number of children under 15 using childcare
- How much is earned

WFTC is administrated by the Inland Revenue who take account up to £100 a week spent on childcare and up to £150 a week where there are two or more children. The maximum families receive is 70% of the amount spent on childcare.

Families earning up to about £14,000 per year could receive the maximum amount of childcare tax credit. Amounts are reduced for families with higher earnings but families earning up to £22,000 could still receive a contribution.

Families with more than one child who earn up to £17,000 per year could receive the maximum credit and such families earning up to £30,000 could still receive a contribution.

From April 2000, most people will be paid the childcare credit directly by their employers.

Criteria against which children in need should be identified are outlined within the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. The Dundee Children's Service Plan includes a useful working interpretation which provides a basis for determining eligibility to relevant services. Using the same interpretation will enhance consistency and shared understanding about how to identify a child in need. The identification of children in need is a complex process which requires agencies to look at the needs of the family as a whole, rather than simply at the needs of individuals.

Children who are unlikely to achieve or maintain a reasonable standard of health or development.

This group includes children who are disadvantaged by their social, economic or environmental situation, and therefore, focuses on child welfare rather than child protection. It may include those children in need of preventative services such as children of vulnerable young parents, children of refugees, children whose parents are on low income, children who live in unsuitable housing or are homeless. Not all such children will require services, however, as they may have access to appropriate support from extended family members or within their local community.

This group also includes children who have developmental delay and those who are failing to thrive.

Children Whose Health Or Development Is Likely To Be Significantly Impaired Or Further Impaired.

This group includes children who require more intensive services, which may be supportive or protective rather than preventative. They are:

- Children who have been or are at risk of being abused (including physical, sexual and emotional abuse) or who have been, or are at risk of being neglected;
- Children who have been, or who are being, or who may require to be looked after by the local authority;
- Children at risk of becoming involved, or who are involved in offending behaviour;
- Children who may be adversely affected by family difficulties, including domestic violence;
- Children whose moral development may be adversely affected;
- Children who have been adopted or are in the process of being adopted;
- Children who misuse drugs/alcohol or substances;
- Children whose educational development is suffering and who may be excluded from schools;
- Children who have significant emotional, social or behavioural problems.

Children With A Disability

The Act requires that services provided by the local authority shall be designed to minimise the effect of disability on any disabled child, and to give him or her the opportunity to lead a life which is as normal as possible. Guidance defines disabled as mental or physical impairment which has a substantial and adverse long term effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

This group includes:

- Children with physical disabilities;
- Children with sensory impairment;
- Children with learning difficulties;
- Children who have mental health problems;

- Children with HIV or AIDS;
- Children with health related problems.

Children Affected Adversely By the Disability of Any Other Person In Their Family

The child population referred to in this group is difficult to identify. To do so accurately requires agencies to look at the needs of the family as a whole and not just those of the person with a disability. This will be an area of focus over the next three years of the plan.

This population may include:

- Children adversely affected by living in the same household as someone (parents or siblings) with physical disabilities or illness, sensory impairment, learning difficulties, or mental health problems;
- Children who are carers for relatives;
- Children whose parents misuse drugs, alcohol or other substances;
- Children who are affected by HIV or AIDS.

Source – Dundee Children’s Services Plan

Appendix 3 Revised Nursery Admissions Policy

1 PART TIME ADMISSIONS

All children who are in their pre-school year are entitled to a part time place in a pre school education facility. In addition children who have had their third birthday can also apply for a part time place. This leaflet provides information about admissions to Education Department Nursery Schools and Classes.

Part time places are available in the mornings or afternoons. All daily sessions last for 2½ hours.

Part time places are allocated on the basis of the following:

Category 1: Children living in the local area*¹ who are in their pre-school year.

Category 2: Children living in another local area*¹ of Dundee who are in their pre-school year.

Category 3: Children living in the local area*¹ who are three.

Category 4: Children living in another local area*¹ of Dundee who are three.

Category 5: Children living outwith Dundee.

*¹ Guidance which defines the local area is available in Nursery Schools and Classes

2 EXTENDED HOURS SERVICES (only available in Nursery Schools)

Additional services are available to parents whose child requires childcare at the beginning, middle or end of the day. These services are charged for at the following rates*²:

**8.15am - 9 00 am £8 per week
+ snack cost**

**11.30am - 12.45pm £5 per week
+ school lunch cost**

**3.15 pm - 4.15 pm £10 per week
+ snack cost**

**3.15pm - 5.15 pm £20 per week
+ snack cost**

These services are limited and priority will go to children of parents in employment or training.

3 FULL TIME PROVISION (only available in Nursery Schools and some Nursery Classes)

The places available in this category are available, in the first instance, to two different groups - children in need and children with parents in employment or training. However these services are limited and priority will go to children in need.

These services will be charged for as follows*²:

**11.30am - 12.45 pm £5 per week
+ school lunch cost**

9.00 am - 11.30 pm or

**12.45am - 3.15 pm £25 per week
+ snack cost**

*² It may be possible for these charges to be waived or reduced for families in particular circumstances. See overleaf for information about services for children in need or ask the Head Teacher of your local Nursery about this.

4 DEFERRED ENTRY TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

Children who will be 4½ - 5 in August should be enrolled for Primary School. In exceptional circumstances, some children may be able to have another Nursery year. Please discuss this with the Head Teacher of your local Nursery School.

5 ENROLMENTS

If you wish to enrol your child for Nursery School or Class, please go along to your nearest Nursery. Children can only attend one Education Department Nursery School or Class. If you would like a list of Nursery Schools and Classes in Dundee please telephone the Early Years and Childcare Helpline (01382 433900).

DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

REVISED POLICY ON ADMISSION TO NURSERY SCHOOLS AND CLASSES

JUNE 2000



Appendix 4 Potential Savings from Pilot Charging Scheme

Estimated numbers of children seeking places 2000- 2001

four year olds	1600
three year olds	1400
total population	3000

Available part time places 2000- 2001

Nursery Schools and Classes	3,050
Child and Family Centres	100
Private/ Voluntary Sector	450
Total part time places	3,600

Therefore a total of 600 part time places available in Nursery Schools and Classes can be converted to accommodate full time places. It is estimated that 200- 250 of these places will be required for children in need. It would therefore be possible to charge for 350- 400 full time places. However for the purposes of the pilot and the need to assess levels of demand from parents, the Department is anticipating charging for 115 places in the year 2000- 2001.

Savings generated from charging

	Weeks (Wks)	Additional Children (Pupils)	Children (Pupils)	Income £
August to September	7	30	30	6,300
October to December	10	30	60	18,000
January 2001 to March 2001	12	55	115	41,400
Total 2000/2001	29	115		65,700
Increased clerical hours			-	11,500
Total savings				54, 200

Increase in Clerical Assistant hours in all 13 Nursery Schools will cost £15,500. These costs will be offset by the generated income.