

**REPORT TO: DUNDEE CITY COUNCIL
EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 19 June 2000
PERSONNEL & MANAGEMENT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 19 June 2000**

**REPORT ON: IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DUNDEE EARLY YEARS AND CHILDCARE
PLAN- ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY INTERVENTION INITIATIVE AND
SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS.**

**REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION
DIRECTOR OF PERSONNEL & MANAGEMENT SERVICES**

REPORT NO: 437-2000

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This Report seeks approval for the establishment of a pilot initiative to support the establishment of an early intervention strategy for children aged 2-4 (Sure Start Dundee) and also for provision of funding to support the Dundee Sitter Service and Home Start Dundee.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended:

- 2.1 that the Education Committee notes and approves the proposals contained within this Report
- 2.2 that the Education Committee notes the deployment of three teachers to support the initiative
- 2.3 that approval is given to provision of funding to Home Start Dundee (£15,000) and Dundee Sitter Service (£50,000).
- 2.4 that the Personnel & Management Services Committee approve the establishment of three Nursery Nurse posts from August 2000 to April 2002.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 The cost of the early intervention strategy implementation will be £71,500 in 2000/01 and £107,500 in a full financial year. The provision of external funding will cost £65,000 in 2000/01. This will be reviewed in 2001/02. These proposals are a key element of implementation of the Scottish Executive Education Department initiative, Sure Start Scotland, and will be funded fully from funding made available to Local Authorities. Appendix 1 outlines the financial implications of these proposals.

4.0 LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 These proposals will enrich and enhance the learning and development of young children in Dundee and therefore will contribute to enabling everyone to play a full part in society.

5.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** These proposals will ensure that all children are effectively supported through the early years of childhood and will further support partnership and collaboration with voluntary sector providers.

6.0 BACKGROUND

- 6.1** The Scottish Executive Education Department in December 1998 issued guidance on the Expansion of Support for Families with Very Young Children to Local Authorities. This Guidance outlined a key aim of the initiative as: "...the benefit of direct support to families with very young children to help children fulfil their potential and be in a position to get the most from subsequent opportunities including, most immediately, pre school education."
- 6.2** The Scottish Executive has made funding available to Local Authorities to support the development of services for children aged 0-3 and their families. This national initiative is now known as Sure Start Scotland. A range of strategies to make use of this funding are outlined within the Early Years and Childcare Plan which was published in May 2000 and approved by Committee on 17 April 2000 (refer to Report No. 264/2000)
- 6.3** The READ (Raising Early Achievement in Dundee) Project is now well established within 22 primary schools and is working effectively with staff and pupils in Primary One and Two to support early literacy and numeracy learning.
- 6.4** There is now a need to consider the needs of pre school children who have been identified as requiring additional support and intervention. Research has shown that intervening as early as possible to address difficulties, is likely to result in improved outcomes. Maximising the potential of early childhood experiences will have lasting and important impact on children's future outcomes. Making early assessments of children who may be at risk of poor educational attainment and developing a range of strategies to enhance support can mean that children will get more out of their pre school experience and will then be ready to participate fully in their primary and secondary school education.
- 6.5** We now have in Dundee three joint education and social work facilities at Beechwood/Foggyley, Kirkton and Ardler. These services cater for children from the age of two. The deployment of additional teachers and nursery nurses within these centres will mean that vulnerable children will be identified earlier than has been possible before and a range of support mechanisms put in place.
- 6.6** Currently, children are continuously assessed during their pre school experience. Some children are identified as requiring additional support and intervention. Ensuring access to individually planned programmes creates challenges within the normal busy pre- school setting. Also the new joint facilities will mean that educational input can start earlier, from when children are two and in some circumstances even sooner. The need for additional support arises for a range of reasons; a child may have a chronic medical condition or have a disability. Such children are referred to the Pre School Placements Panel who make recommendations about potential placements.
- 6.7** However in recent years increasing numbers of children are presenting within pre school settings with a range of problems. Although the reasons for these problems are complex and often difficult to pinpoint, there is growing recognition for children who may be at risk of not achieving their full developmental potential because of poor early childhood experiences. Such children may experience the effects of parenting which is stressed, often because of poverty, parental ill health, lack of support and lack of knowledge and skill. In addition children may not have had the benefits of effective early nurturing and stimulation. This may result in problems such as delayed speech and language, poor attention,

under developed social and behaviour skills and the inability to develop peer relationships. All of these problems will increase as children get older and move through the education service. However there is evidence that effective and targeted early support can reverse this trend.

6.8 Pre school education is now a universal entitlement. This Report highlights the need to ensure that the pre school experience is fully exploited to meet the needs of all children. Some children will inevitably require a higher level of support than others and it is through this proposal that this support will be provided.

6.9 The Guidance on expansion referred to in Paragraph 6.1 above also emphasised the need for Local Authorities to work in partnership with voluntary sector organisations in developing their services. We have in Dundee two voluntary sector organisations who play an important role in delivering services to families within the local communities. Home Start is recognised within the Guidance as a key organisation: "... help provided to families by the voluntary organisation Home Start is relevant here. Local Authorities will want to discuss co- ordination and co-operation where appropriate...." In addition the Dundee Sitter Service has gone from strength to strength in providing flexible, affordable, home based childcare for families who may not have any alternative service. These proposals therefore include the provision of funding to support these two voluntary organisations.

7.0 PROPOSAL

7.1 Dundee will have from August 2000, three new early years services which combine education and social work practice. These are in Beechwood/ Foggyley, Kirkton where the Child and Family Centre is now co- located within Kirkton Nursery School and Ardler Primary School, where both Ardler Nursery and Blackshade Child and Family Centre are to be co- located.

7.2 Each of these three facilities serves populations of families who are at risk of exclusion because of the relatively high levels of socio- economic disadvantage. This can create some of the difficulties experienced by children and which Sure Start Dundee aims to address.

7.3 In the Report to the Education, Social Work and Personnel and Management Services Committees on May 22, (refer to Committee Report No.211/2000) approval was given to the establishment of a joint early years, childcare and family support facility at Beechwood/ Foggyley. The staffing structure included the addition of a teaching post and a nursery nurse for early intervention. It is now proposed to develop parallel initiatives within Kirkton and Ardler. These initiatives will be a key element of Dundee's Sure Start programme. By centring additional support within the three joint facilities initially it is possible to enhance best practice of the two departments to provide a comprehensive and integrated service. Sure Start Dundee will establish a focus for joint work to ensure that vulnerable children are identified, assessed and supported at the earliest opportunity, in many cases from the age of two years.

7.4 In addition, the most effective early intervention programmes seek to provide whole family support. If parenting is under pressure, providing effective support for parents can create a positive impact for children. The Sure Start Dundee initiative will therefore draw on all available support to ensure that identified young children and their families have the best possible opportunity to flourish. The high level of family support available within the three joint facilities will extend the potential of the early intervention initiative to meet the all round needs of children and their families. There is currently a successful parenting programme available in Dundee, PALS, which will be available to parents as part of this initiative. In this way it is possible to develop a multi layered approach to delivering services to those children at greatest risk of poor school achievement outcomes.

7.5 A key part of the initiative is to place additional staffing resources within facilities. An additional teacher and nursery nurse within each of the three joint facilities will mean

that small groups of children can be identified and supported intensively in order to promote their development and learning.

These posts will be temporary for the duration of the funding until April 2002. The enhanced staffing levels will reduce adult child ratios, allowing some flexibility to support identified needs.

Children will be assessed across a full range of competencies and individual programmes will be developed and evaluated. This work will be undertaken in collaboration with Dundee Educational Psychology Service.

- 7.6** Alongside the additional staffing to support children, a range of initiatives will promote the involvement of parents. Three Outreach Worker Posts are proposed within Child and Family Centres. These posts will also support the development of Sure Start Dundee, particularly in relation to family support work, and will complement the work of this initiative.
- 7.7** An additional Pre School Home Visiting Teacher will also be deployed to support improved links with parents and to provide enhanced home based support. The Pre School Home Visiting Service currently has a rapidly expanding case-load. In addition the expertise of the Pre School Home Visiting Teacher has brought considerable support to early years services in relation to supporting children with special educational needs. An additional teacher within this service will strengthen the capacity to support children under three in their own homes and create links between early years services and parents and children.
- 7.8** Sure Start Dundee will be developed in consultation with staff involved in the READ Project to ensure that vulnerable children are identified before they begin Primary School and that a range of support mechanisms are in place throughout the child's early educational journey. In this way Sure Start and READ can together provide a very effective scaffold of support for young children within Dundee. In addition Sure Start will provide an ideal springboard for improved collaboration with other agencies, including health, who play an important role in promoting children's health and well being. Children who are not adequately nourished and cared for will not thrive. Combining the impact of health with social work and education services will create a comprehensive package of support to meet the all round needs of children.
- 7.9** Sure Start Dundee will be evaluated fully to assess its impact on the following key areas:
- Support for staff and impact on practice
 - Improved and sustained involvement of parents and family functioning
 - Positive feedback from parents about their involvement in Sure Start Dundee
 - Improved speech and language, behaviour and social skills for children
 - Smoother pre school to primary transitions
 - Fewer referrals to Dundee Educational Psychology Service in the early stages of primary school
- 7.10** A comprehensive staff development and training programme will be developed and the new Sure Start staff will undertake an induction programme.
- 7.11** In addition the services provided by Home Start Dundee and the Dundee Sitter Service will enhance the provision for children and families within local communities.

7.12 Home Start Dundee

Home Start is a UK wide voluntary organisation which provides home based support and befriending to families with children under five. Referrals to Home Start can be made by families themselves, health visitors, GPs, social workers and others. Services such as help with practical tasks associated with young children, a listening ear, providing some respite, giving reassurance and support, helping with budgeting, playing with children etc are provided by trained volunteers. Volunteers are usually parents themselves and indeed many parents who have been supported by Home Start go on to become volunteers themselves. Volunteers are matched with families and provide support to families who may be isolated, have child protection issues, low income, alcohol or drug related problems or post natal depression.

7.13 In a recent evaluation report, Home Start were able to report that this service has benefited families in a number of ways, including

- 40% of families reporting an improvement in their health
- 38% of families reporting a lifting of depression
- 21% of families ceasing anti depressant medication
- a large increase in families uptake of community facilities
- a decreased usage of health services

7.14 The additional funding of £15,000 will enable Home Start Dundee to increase their volunteers from 25 to 30 and to therefore increase the number of families offered support. Home Start Dundee, currently supports 32 families and has more families on their waiting list. In the coming year Home Start Dundee would aim to support 40 families.

7.15 Dundee Sitter Service

Dundee Sitter Service was started in February 1999 to provide registered childcare in a family's own home between the hours of 7am to 10.30pm, seven days a week. Families pay on a sliding scale according to household income, with charges ranging from 50p an hour to £6 an hour. The average income generated is currently 97p per hour, an indication that the majority of families require subsidised services. The Sitter Service is considering alternative funding routes to support their long- term economic sustainability. Families using the service are from all over Dundee and to date over 100 families have registered to use the service. In 1999- 2000 a total of 13,860 hours of care were provided as follows

- 72% for work
- 7% for respite
- 2% for community work
- 2% for appointments (including court appearances and medical)
- 17% for training and education

7.16 This service has a unique potential to provide childcare for families who would not be able to access an alternative. The flexibility of hours means that people working shifts can access childcare in the early mornings or evenings and can have a pattern of childcare provision which may vary from week to week. The majority of children are under five but the service can meet the needs of families with a varied age range of children. The care offered at home means a more settled routine for children and is convenient for parents. The additional funding will enable the Service to continue to be affordable for families in low- income groups.

7.17 Following Committee approval, both organisations will be provided with detailed agreements about the levels of service to be provided. Ongoing evaluation to assess the impact of the funding will be conducted by the Early Years and Childcare Team.

8.0 CONSULTATION

8.1 This Report has been the subject of Consultation with the Directors of Social Work, Finance and Support Services.

9.0 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.

10.0 SIGNATURE

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Director of Education

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Date

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Director of Personnel & Management Services

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Date

Appendix 1- Financial Information

	2000/01	2001/02
Early Intervention Initiative		
3 Teachers	44,000	66,000
3 Nursery Nurses	23,500	37,500
Training and Resources	4,000	4,000
	71,500	107,500
Support for Home Start and Dundee Sitter Service	65,000	
	136,500	