

<i>item:</i>	5
<i>report:</i>	CYP10/09

DEVELOPMENTS IN EARLY EDUCATION

by Sam Brogan

Summary

This report sets out the implications of the Concordat intention for 15 hour early education.

The Joint Committee is asked to consider and comment on the policy implications of extended hours and to agree the proposals for consultation with: staff and unions on the staffing implications; and communities and service providers about the organisation of provision.

1. Background

- 1.1 Highland Council has committed to the Concordat commitment of 15 hours/week early education from 2010.
- 1.2 In order to achieve this expansion of service, consideration needs to be given to a number of policy issues that relate to the organisation of provision, including the management of staff across the extended nursery day.
- 1.3 Early resolution of these matters will enable consultations to take place with staff and in communities, which will identify whether existing services can efficiently and effectively achieve the necessary expansion, or whether changes to provision need to be made in any particular locations.

2. Implications for the nursery day

- 2.1 In August 2010, pre school education entitlement rises from 475 hours to 570 hours per year. Current provision is usually taken as five daily sessions of 2½ hours or 12½ hours per week. This will increase to provision usually taken as five daily sessions of 3 hours, or 15 hours per week.
- 2.2 The current arrangements for five daily 2½ sessions enables early education to be delivered within the morning or afternoon timetable, and also allows for a reasonable mid-day break. This provides choice for many parents, provides local capacity to be met in a cost effective way, and enables staff to be used flexibly across both morning and afternoon provision, in the same or different locations. Indeed, 66 of the 161 local authority centres, presently offer both a morning and afternoon session.

- 2.3 It is necessary therefore to retain both morning and afternoon provision. However, even with a short break of 45 minutes for lunch, the 6¾ hour nursery day becomes longer than the equivalent primary school day.
- 2.4 Most primary school pupils' days begin between 9.00a.m. and 9.15 a.m. and finish between 2.30p.m. and 3.00p.m. Accordingly, nurseries will require to have either an earlier start, or later finish, or both.
- 2.5 It would be possible to allow all centres to set their own start and finish times, taking account of their particular needs. However, this lack of standardisation could cause difficulties for some families, and also for those staff who work both mornings and afternoons, but in different locations.
- 2.6 It is proposed that a standard 8.45a.m. - 11.45a.m. morning session and a 12.30p.m. - 3.30p.m. afternoon session provides the optimum means of organising provision across the nursery day. It is therefore also proposed that Headteachers and nursery staff are consulted about this model, albeit recognising that there may be some locations that will require a different approach – perhaps because of the availability of accommodation. The Childcare and Early Education team would then use this feedback to further consult with parents and staff.

3 Registration of the workforce

- 3.1 There are 3 levels of local authority nursery staff:
- Nursery Auxiliary (graded at HC3);
 - Nursery Assistant - unqualified (graded at HC4)
 - Nursery Assistant – qualified (graded at HC5).
- As in schools, there are also learning support auxiliaries in some nurseries.
- 3.2 The Scottish Government is currently consulting on the introduction of final dates for these staff to achieve registration under the Day Care of Children category with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). The proposed end dates for registration are ;
1. Managers, 30th November 2010
 2. Practitioners, 30th September 2011
 3. Support Workers 30th June 2014
- 3.3 All nursery staff, with the exception of learning support auxiliaries, are regarded by the SSSC as fulfilling the function of Practitioner and need to be qualified to HNC/SVQIII or equivalent. Accordingly, as the Committee is aware, they are all being encouraged and supported to take on the necessary qualification.
- 3.4 It is therefore proposed that it is necessary to move to a staffing model that involves only two grades of post: Nursery Assistant – unqualified; and Nursery Assistant – qualified (along with the continuing learning support function, which is referred to in a separate report to this Committee). The unqualified post remains relevant, as new staff are expected to be allowed up to three years to work towards achievement of their qualification.

4 Working Hours of Staff

- 4.1 Nursery Assistants who work on a part time basis, presently have contracted hours that vary from 17.5 hours to 19 hours per week, depending on historical local arrangements. Full time Nursery Staff work for 35 hours per week.
- 4.2 Nursery Assistants who are employed on a full time basis currently have 10 hours per week non pupil contact time to enable them to prepare, plan and record children's progress.
- 4.3 Sessions of 3 hours per day will reduce this non pupil contact time by half, leaving Nursery Assistants with only 5 hours.
- 4.4 Nursery Auxiliaries are employed for 15 hours on a part time basis, or 30 hours on a full time basis. In order to meet the increase in pre school entitlement their hours of employment would need to be increased, and they should assume the job description of the Nursery Assistant.
- 4.5 Indeed, if staffing arrangements are changed as proposed above in section 3, this could address the challenge of reduced non pupil contact time – meaning that the two staff each had 5 hours, equating to the existing 10 hours.
- 4.6 This would require a standardisation of working hours, involving all staff working to a template of either 20 hours or 35 hours a week.
- 4.7 It is proposed that consultations now commence with the trade unions about the changes that are recommended in this and the preceding section of this report.
- 4.8 It is recognised that any changes would have to be achieved incrementally over 2 / 3 years, and that there could be a redeployment challenge for some staff in some locations.

5 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Council has agreed additional investment of £850,000 to achieve these changes in 2010/11.
- 5.2 The estimated cost of the proposals recommended in section 3 of this report, across the local authority sector is £647,543 in 2010/11, and £971,315 in a full year.
- 5.3 The Joint Committee has previously expressed concern about differential funding arrangements across the local authority and independent pre school sectors, and the consequent gap in the terms and conditions of staff. It has been recognised that this leads to instability and vulnerability in the independent sector, which will always provide a significant proportion of services in Highland.
- 5.4 It is important that this gap does not grow as a consequence of any changes within local authority provision. Accordingly, it is proposed that partner centre rates are increased proportionately by the same amount as local authority rates,

to enable them to make the same changes as part of agreed contractual arrangements with the authority. This would cost a further £198,112 in 2010/11, and £297,168 in a full year.

- 5.5 It should be noted that these various changes will be incorporated into the ongoing review of all early years provision. This will ensure that we do not further institutionalise existing over capacity. It will also help ensure the most cost effective organisation of services across the authority.

Recommendations

The Joint Committee is asked to consider this report, and to agree:

- i. a consultation with Headteachers and nursery staff about the proposed organisation of the nursery day, and a subsequent consultation with families;
- ii. a consultation with the trade unions about the changes that are recommended to the working patterns and remuneration of staff;
- iii. that partner centre rates are increased proportionately by the same amount as local authority rates;
- iv. that any subsequent changes to local provision will be incorporated into the ongoing review of all early years services.



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