



Highland Council

Highland Family Resource Alliance ~ Core Group



**Draft
Pre-School Education and Childcare Framework**

March 2007

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This framework document builds on previous Early Years Review Papers and has been prepared to inform the way forward in pre-school and wraparound childcare care across Highland. It will ensure that services are fit for purpose and meet the needs of Highland families.
- 1.2 It will be a tool for Area Service Managers, Head Teachers, Childcare and Family Resource Officers and external agencies to review the services each Associated School Grouping should have available to children and families and how this can be achieved.

2. Background

- 2.1 In May 1998 the Government published ***Meeting the Childcare Challenge: A Childcare Strategy for Scotland***, one of a number of measures aimed at supporting families and in particular raising children out of poverty. The Strategy recognised that good quality childcare has benefits for children by promoting their development and learning, and benefits for parents, by enabling them to work. Although there was already a diverse range of childcare provision in Scotland, action was needed to fill gaps in the formal childcare sector which enables parents to take up employment or training. The overall aim of the Childcare Strategy was therefore to make high quality, accessible and affordable childcare available in every neighbourhood.
- 2.2 The Government was already committed to an expansion of early education promising a free pre-school education place to every 4 year old whose parents wished it by winter 1998. This was to be extended to 3 year olds by 2002. Significant additional resources were provided to local authorities to achieve this. However, they were expected to consider commissioning places in the private and voluntary sector when looking to expand local provision as well as providing places at their own hand. The Highland Council has now met its target of a free, part-time pre-school education place for every 3 and 4 year old whose parents want it.
- 2.3 The rapid development of Pre-school Education and Childcare Services across Highland has been a significant success story. However, pragmatic and rapid decisions were made to get services established quickly. The provision that evolved, does not always meet the needs expressed by families now, and there are major issues about ensuring that these services are sustainable into the future. A legacy of this rapid expansion is that there are now 248 pre-school centres (64 more centres than there are primary schools at the present time). Some existing childcare providers received funding from external sources by way of start up and this on occasion has caused an issue in terms of financial sustainability and geographical location.
- 2.4 Areas have mapped current Pre-school Education and Childcare provision by Associated School Group. Although this has identified gaps it has not identified whether existing provision meets demand, whether the provision is cost effective or is situated in the most appropriate location.

3. Key Areas

3.1 Definitions

3.1.1 Wraparound Childcare

This is where childcare is delivered either via group care or a childminder as a package of provision that enables children and parents to access pre-school education and childcare, or education and childcare that is co-ordinated and without the need for parents to leave work or training to take children to different provisions. This kind of provision can be part funded by the Local Authority and part funded by parents. For definition purposes Out of School Care Clubs and Breakfast Clubs also sit within the term Wraparound Childcare.

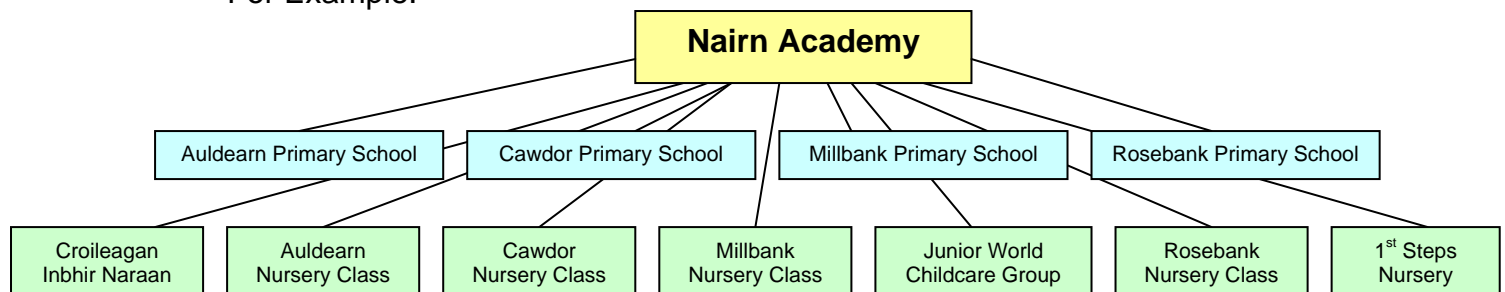
3.1.2 Pre-school Education

This is where children of eligible age can receive a funded pre-school place within a Local Authority Nursery or a Private or Voluntary Sector provision that has been commissioned by the Local Authority to deliver pre-school education on our behalf. The entitlement is 12 ½ hours per week, usually taken as 5 sessions of 2 ½ hours for 38 weeks of the year. At present Highland Council are funded by the Scottish Executive for 33 weeks of pre-school education per year.

3.1.3 Associated School Group

This is a geographical grouping of an Area Secondary School and its associated Primary Schools and Pre-school Education Centres.

For Example:



3.1.4 Childcare and Family Resource Officer

Employed through Social Work Services to develop and support quality, affordable and accessible pre-school education, childcare and family support provision. These officers work in an integrated way within the L.A, Enterprise Companies, communities, and the voluntary sector and private sectors. They are also responsible for servicing the local Childcare and Family Resource Partnerships which are made up from key Childcare and Early Education agencies.

3.1.5 Early Education Development Officer

Early Education Officers support Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers and other pre school staff, work in partnership with the voluntary and private sector and work with all providers on quality assurance and quality improvement in pre-school education.

3.1.6 Nursery Co-ordinator Teacher

Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers (NCTs) provide support to pre-school staff in the Local authority, voluntary & private sectors to deliver the early education curriculum as detailed in the appropriate national and Highland Council policy and guidance documents. Although the NCT has an overall responsibility for the above tasks and others identified and agreed with the Head Teacher and Early Education Team, day to day aspects of tasks will be delegated to the staff within the pre-school education setting.

3.1.7 Active School Co-ordinator

These officers are employed through the Education, Culture and Sport Service to provide active play, active travel, active curriculum and active club opportunities within an Integrated Learning Community. They create and promote opportunities for children to be active towards the target of at least one hour a day. Central to their role is the recruitment and training of volunteers and staff who, will assist with the delivery of activities.

3.1.8 CALA (Care and Learning Alliance)

CALA, itself a registered charity, with company limited by guarantee status, is the lead umbrella organisation for voluntary run early years groups and out of school care clubs in Highland. With a membership of over 300, CALA delivers a range of models of support from general guidance and good practice advice to voluntary committees and staff, to direct management services. A range of training courses and Quality Assurance support is also available to members. In addition to its core management, support and guidance staff, CALA employs over 150 play staff working in 48 centres throughout Highland.

3.1.9 SCMA (Scottish Childminding Association)

The Scottish Childminding Association is the only dedicated support organisation in Scotland for registered childminding. The Association is committed to the development needs of registered childminders and actively promotes childminding as a quality childcare choice. Our vision is for childminding to be recognised as a unique, family-based childcare service and for childminders to receive the support and advice that they need to continue to meet the National Childcare Standards. Our vision statement communicates our purpose to those outside of the organisation, and guides the work of the Association teams both within Head Office and out in the field. However our key priorities allow this vision to be put into practice.

3.1.10 SureStart Scotland

Sure Start Scotland was introduced in 1999 to target support at vulnerable families with very young children (0-3 years). A diverse range of provision is provided through Sure Start Scotland funding including centre-based support, outreach services, nursery and day care services, as well as various forms of support to parents. This is a key programme that seeks to develop strategies to support vulnerable families, to prevent them falling into crisis. It focuses on trying to deliver integrated services to meet the range of needs of families and their children, and builds on existing provision.

3.2 Management Models

There are currently four forms of management model within Highland for the delivery of both pre school education & childcare

3.2.1 Local Authority

Where either pre-school education and/or wrap around care is delivered by the Local Authority, they are usually managed by the Head Teacher but in relation to out of school care also by Community Learning & Leisure colleagues (e.g. TRACC in Tain)

3.2.2 Voluntary Sector Umbrella Organisation

Where provision is managed under the direction of an umbrella organisation e.g. CALA, Women's Aid, etc, where the organisation is responsible for the employment of staff, employment advice, and payroll support. These provisions are not for profit organisations and usually hold charitable status. The advantage of the umbrella voluntary organisation model is that the organisations can look to provide peripatetic management to a number of groups.

A staff managed centre is a partner centre that has a committee with overall responsibility for provision of the early years education service. The committee holds the pre school agreement with the Highland Council for the provision of early years education. Committees are constituted groups with charitable status. CALA and the committee have a signed internal agreement to provide staff management.

Lead practitioners/managers within early years will be expected to hold or be working towards a degree/degree equivalent by 2011. As increased pressure is placed on the voluntary sector by the SSSC/Care Commission to meet this requirement it is anticipated that the overall numbers of committee run centres will reduce. The need for a model of peripatetic management support in order to sustain essential services is expected to increase

As CALA's capacity is increasingly focused on the development of peripatetic management services in line with increased pressure on the sector's workforce to attain degree/degree equivalent qualifications, there is a need to ensure that committee run voluntary and private centres have an equitable access to quality practice support.

3.2.3 Committee / Board Lead

Where provision is run by a committee usually made up from users i.e. parents, who have the responsibility for the employment of staff and their support and supervision. As with the umbrella organisations they are not for profit providers usually with charitable status. The committees run autonomously from any umbrella organisation they are a member of although may receive some support and guidance from them.

3.2.4 Private Provider

Private providers are sole traders (including childminders) or providers within larger childcare chains, who provide a range of childcare and pre-school education services. Most are commissioned by the Local Authority to deliver pre-school education enabling wraparound care.

3.3 Associated School Groups

Each Associated School Group should have the following services available to children and families:

- ✓ **Statutory Primary and Secondary Education**
- ✓ **Sufficient Pre-school Education Places to meet the needs of the population**
- ✓ **Access to at least one 8.00am - 6.00pm wraparound provision, via group care or childminding provision (for 0-11 year olds, taking into account centres of population and travel to work routes).**
- ✓ **Access to Holiday Activities for all 5-11 year olds**
- ✓ **Access to Supervised Youth Provision for 12-14 year olds**
- ✓ **Access to Family Support Services**

To facilitate this, the Area Service Managers and Childcare and Family Resource Officers will identify need and gaps in provision by building on existing mapping exercises and will:

- Undertake market research in relation to parental demand
- Undertake options appraisals to establish preferred providers, when need has been identified
- Invite expressions of interest from prospective providers recognising that families should be able to access services on one campus from no more than two providers
- Make available school premises

Although local mapping exercises have taken place these need to be reviewed, changes in model of delivery, location of provision, and continuation of financial subsidy will take a number of years to address, and will need to be achieved on a planned incremental basis, taking into account the pre-school education and childcare needs of each Associated School Group Area. Over and above we are committed to making Childcare and Wraparound Services as accessible as is feasible depending on level of demand, business viability and ongoing sustainability.

3.3.1 Market research

The local Childcare and Family Resource Officer will provide assistance in identifying parental demand. Questionnaires will be issued and analysed by the Childcare and Family Resource Officer. Only when sufficient demand has been evidenced will provision be progressed.

3.3.2 Options Appraisal

Highland Council will work with Partners to identify viable provision and will seek to form partnerships where appropriate. Where there is evidence of demand the Area Service Manager and Childcare and Family Resource Officer will use the template to ascertain the preferred management model.

3.3.3 Expressions of interest

If the options appraisal identifies the need to commission the services of the Voluntary or Private sector an advert should be used to seek expressions of interest.

3.3.4 Funding

Service Level Agreements/Contracts will be issued outlining the Services required, Payments to be issued, Responsibilities of the Organisation, method for Monitoring, Evaluating and Terminating the agreement, along with a statement of purpose and aims. The Childcare and Family Resource Officer and Business Support Team will assist with this document. There is an expectation that the Childcare and Family Resource Officer will have access to business plans, financial accounts, numbers of children in attendance etc from the organisation so that they can inform/advise budget holders of the groups financial position if providers require financial subsidy.

3.3.5 School premises

School premises for both pre school education and childcare should be made available unless there are exceptional circumstances which would make this difficult. The local authority letting policy should be followed.

The Head Teacher has management responsibility for the running of the school and the use of the premises and can ensure that objectives can be carried through for example, that premises can be accessed by service providers as per their agreement, this would include situations where the school is closed to pupils in adverse weather conditions but is should still be open for childcare if appropriate.

Where there is a partner provider within school premises, the Head Teacher should:

- Work alongside the Childcare and Family Resource Officer during initial consultation with parents
- Have responsibility for ensuring that school facilities and resources are used appropriately.
- Consult closely with the provider, when a new pre school or extended care provision is first set up in the school, to agree on key points and reach a shared understanding of what is being provided.
- Establish staff responsibilities and operational policies and agree use of shared space and resources.
- Ensure staff access to facilities outwith school times as agreed.
- Be a member of the management committee where the provider puts one in place or work directly with management if there is no committee.
- Arrange regular, minuted meetings and clear lines of communication with senior staff to discuss any issues or changes as this is key to successful multi-use of the school within the community. This will ensure ongoing, shared decision making.

It will **not** be the responsibility of the Head Teacher to organise the day to day provision or to manage the staff including support, supervision and arranging cover for absence.

If extended provision is within a school this should take account of different finishing times for children. If transport is needed to take children from one school to another for extended provision, transport arrangements should be aligned to avoid the necessity of two collections and it will be the responsibility of the Head Teacher to supervise children until they are collected.

If any issues about the use of the premises cannot be resolved between the Head Teacher and partner provider, the Childcare and Family Resource Officer or the Area Manager should be consulted.

Overall responsibility for the quality of the pre school education provision is the duty of the local authority. Childcare and Out of School Care are regulated by the Care Commission.

If the Local Authority is the agreed provider of extended childcare, the Head Teacher should assume overall management responsibility and the authority should provide quality assurance. Advice and guidance on the set up and running of provision should be sought from the Local Childcare and Family Resource Officer.

3.4 Pre-school Education Provision

3.4.1 Pre-school Education Centre Provision

Pre-school education should be made available to children aged 3 and 4, in the same setting and where possible to a minimum of 20 children. Staff to child ratios in Pre-School education sessions is 1:10, however two members of staff are usually required as a minimum so careful consideration needs to be given as to whether smaller centres are viable.

As per the Joint Committee on Children and Young People paper of November 2004 pre-school provision should be accessible within 15 minutes travel-time. In a rural area this should be measured as drive-time, and is equivalent to around 10 miles. In an urban area it should be measured in walking-time, and is equivalent to around one mile.

In August 2008, based on the completion of successful pilots at Inshes Nursery and Bunsgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhir Nis the Local Authority will enable children to attend pre-school education from the Monday after their 3rd birthday rather than the next intake following their birthday, a charge based on the pilot findings will be passed on to parents.

3.4.2 Commissioned Childminders / Enhanced Childminder Scheme

In areas where there are very small numbers of children and travel time to other centres is prohibitive, consideration should be given to commissioning the services of a registered childminder to deliver pre-school education.

In such cases the Area Education Manager should direct the Childcare and Family Resource Officer for the Area to contact Scottish Childminding Association's Local Development Officer about the potential for existing childminders to take on this role. It is likely that in very rural areas there will be no existing registered childminder, in which case the Childcare and Family Resource Officer and Scottish Childminding Association's Local Development Officer will advertise the service in the local press. Applicants need first to meet the registration requirements of the Care Commission and will be supported to achieve this by both the Childcare and Family Resource Officer and Scottish Childminding Association.

Average timescales for the registration process is around 3 to 4 months; therefore the planning for such provision needs to take this into account.

- ✓ Childminders taking part in this scheme need to be qualified to SVQIII or equivalent or be willing to work towards formal qualifications
- ✓ Funding of up to £30.00 per two and a half hour session will be made available.
- ✓ Planning documents and materials will be made available via the Early Education Development Officer .
- ✓ A copy of the 3-5 Curriculum Framework will be provided by the Early Education Development Officer.
- ✓ The Childminder will be supported through the commissioning process.
- ✓ The childminder will be supported through HMIE/Care Commission inspections.
- ✓ A Partner Centre Agreement will be issued
- ✓ A copy of the Child at the Centre will be provided.

- ✓ A copy of the National Care Standards will be provided
- ✓ A copy of the SSSC Codes of Practice will be provided

The Scottish Childminding Association's Local Development Officer will assist, with support from the Early Education Development Officer, the childminder to complete the Profile of Education Provision (PEP), Application for Pre-school Education Commissioning Status. This will then be sent to the Senior Early Education Development Officer at Clachnaharry.

The Local Authority commissioning procedures will be adhered to and Quality Assurance Commissioning Visits will be made as per the procedures.

Ongoing support would be accessed from both Scottish Childminding Association's Local Development Officer on Childminding issues and the local NCT or Early Education Officer in relation to the curriculum.

3.5 Pre-school Education Support

3.5.1 Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers

Background

The first Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers were established in Highland in 2002 and were introduced across the region in three phases with ongoing reviews each year to look at any changes and re-arrangements needed. Each NCT has a cluster which includes local authority and partner centre provision. These vary in size and composition according to local need. There are currently 55 clusters, approximately 44 FTE Nursery Co-ordinator Teachers and a variety of support for nurseries where it has not been possible to allocate an NCT

Clusters were introduced to:

- ✓ Develop a stable staffing model
- ✓ Co-ordinate provision in an area
- ✓ Incorporate support for partner centres
- ✓ Establish local networks
- ✓ Consolidate/improve quality of provision
- ✓ Co-ordinate and support transition to Primary 1

The role of the NCTs has changed and developed since they were first introduced. This has been in response to a range of national priorities and initiatives together with the joint HMIE/Care Commission inspection programme. Therefore, it is now appropriate to review and revise their roles and responsibilities to make best use of their knowledge, skills and experience.

Proposals for Revised Role

At present, NCTs allocate time within their cluster according to the size of the school nurseries within it and also to visit partner centres at least once each term with a monthly visit recommended. This is the basic structure of their timetable although there is flexibility within it to allow for specific needs at different times. Their role is different within local authority nursery classes as compared to that in partner centres where it is more advisory.

These are the proposals for allocating roles and responsibilities from next session. No changes are needed to job specifications or contracts.

Nursery Co-ordinators will:

- ✓ Be allocated to clusters within their Associated School Group where possible and will timetable their support proportionate to the needs of each centre whether local authority nursery or partner centre provision. Where provision is evaluated to be of high quality, this will mean a significantly smaller allocation of NCT time.
- ✓ Have a base school where the Head Teacher is responsible for their Annual Development and Review

- ✓ Support staff within centres to improve the quality of the curriculum provision
- ✓ Follow revised guidelines on aspects of the support role which will be prepared and disseminated by the Early Education Team
- ✓ Work with Head Teachers, Early Education Team and centre managers to agree where they can help, advise and support staff. Area ECS managers will ensure appropriate redeployment of NCTs
- ✓ Complete pre-prepared forms on support within partner centres with a copy shared with the manager. Any concerns about centres should be discussed with the local EEDO
- ✓ Work with the Head Teacher and early years staff on continuity of learning and teaching approaches to ensure progression and depth of learning
- ✓ Liaise with the Early Education Team, CALA Quality Manager and other agencies within the ASG cluster as appropriate

The support role of NCTs in partner centres will be written into the Service Level Agreement

3.5.2 Centre Practice Managers

In the voluntary sector CALA will focus its resources on management support. CALA will retain support for committee matters including employment advice services and payroll support to voluntary committees.

Tailored training delivery, informed through feedback from HMIE, internal QA (LA and CALA) and associated school group summaries will be targeted at individual centres, local associated school groupings, and Local Authority Areas as well as within the revised in-service Highland wide training programme. A range of models of training delivery will be used. An overarching programme of Quality Assurance will be jointly developed and delivered through the Local Authority and CALA, as an integral part of the Highland Council's Quality Assurance Programme.

3.6 Wraparound Childcare

3.6.1 Wraparound childcare

Should be available for families with children from pre-school age and can be delivered via either group care or through childminders. The options appraisal will identify the favoured model of management. Where demand shows need for term time only provision, current pre-school education providers should be encouraged to extend their hours of operation.

3.6.2 Out of School Care

New providers of out of school care will be identified via market research and options appraisal processes. Childcare and Family Resource Officers will work with existing providers and CALA to identify where provisions can be consolidated to provide holiday cover.

Schools Out, a framework for the development of out of school care was published in 2003; Highland Councils target was to increase by 20 the number of out of school clubs and 100 the number of childminders across the Council Area by April 2006. Although this target has been met, the number of anticipated clubs in the rural areas did not, through lack of demand come to fruition, the number of clubs in the more populated areas however exceeded targets.

Positive links to informal out of school hours activities need to be made with paid for childcare provision and an initial link has been made between Active Schools and CALA (Care and Learning Association).

Detailed below are some of the roles which would develop closer working relationships with care staff.

- The ASC are trained to deliver community TOPS training to volunteers and staff this could include care staff. There may also be opportunities for active schools staff to attend training provided by CALA.
- The ASC can provide access to National Governing Body activity specific training to care staff through a funded coach education programme.
- The ASC plan and run summer programmes through a community development model at an ILC level, provision of places could be opened out to children being cared for during this time.
- The ASC may be able to provide easier access to school premises for activities run in conjunction with care providers.
- Communication can and will be developed at a strategic level and more importantly at a local level through better sharing of information between care staff and active school co-ordinators.
- ASC would like to train HC staff and volunteers to deliver activity to infants (P1-3) in the time between the end of their school day and the end of the school day generally (2.15-3.00pm).

There will be issues of charging for activities and ratios that will need to be explored in order that the two services can better integrate but there is a willingness to join up the care and physical activity opportunities.

3.6.3 Breakfast Club Provision

It remains the policy in areas of deprivation or rurality for local primary schools to run breakfast club provision. Breakfast clubs can attract a level of financial subsidy but this will not cover 100% of the costs. The Childcare and Family Resource Officer can assist with funding applications which can be made to the local Childcare and Family Resource Partnerships or external funding bodies.

The use of childminders should also be encouraged to provide breakfast time childcare.

3.7 Transport

As there is not a statutory requirement to provide transport to enable children to access Pre-school Provision or Childcare, innovative ways of transporting children need to be explored. The Childcare and Family Resource Officer and Area Service Managers will consider the possibilities of children accessing school transport to childcare provisions in neighbouring schools if space allows.

In some communities there are rural transport schemes and these initiatives should be taken advantage of. The local Childcare and Family Resource Officer will negotiate contracts with such providers. There are currently examples of this in Highland that the Childcare and Family Resource Officer can provide information on.

Providers could with the assistance of the Childcare and Family Resource Officer look at purchasing/leasing their own transport, paying additional hours and mileage to childcare staff to do collections or contract with local taxi companies. Transport costs should be inclusive of the childcare fee so that eligible parents receive financial assistance via tax credits.

In areas where there are after school clubs running from two or more schools within an ASG, and where financial subsidy is required due to low uptake of places, the cost of providing transport needs to be considered as this may be more cost effective than sustaining a number of after school provisions.

3.8 Gaelic Medium

The Gaelic Quality Development Officer and Gaelic Childcare and Early Education Development Officer will take the lead in the development of Gaelic Pre-school and Childcare provision.

This will include consolidating existing provision, reacting positively to demand for new provision and the promotion of Gaelic medium education in new areas.

The local authority will provide Gaelic pre-school education, through nursery classes or commissioned playgroups, in areas in which Gaelic medium primary classes exist now or where a decision in principle has been taken to set up such a class.

The same curriculum as for English medium groups will be provided through the medium of Gaelic with Gaelic language being developed as detailed in the Council Gaelic Medium Education guidelines.

A Gaelic enrichment provision (some Gaelic language experience through songs, activities etc) should be available where parents wish this and Gaelic medium pre school provision is not viable because of small pupil numbers or rurality.

All Gaelic medium centre staff will be competent in spoken and written Gaelic, at least to the level of being able to converse fluently with 3-5 year old children.

Staff will be supported in curriculum delivery and Gaelic language issues by NCTs, Head teachers and /or other appropriately trained staff. Further language training will be available to staff if required.

The development of 0-3 Gaelic medium groups to provide childcare will be encouraged, through childcare services and other agencies, as a means both of supporting parents and of increasing the number of pupils entering the Gaelic medium nursery and primary school provision.

Support for Gaelic pre-school and childcare provision will be co-ordinated by the Gaelic Childcare and Early Education Development Officer, working with other agencies.

3.9 Additional Support Needs

This section needs further clarification in relation to GIRFEC, and likely policy decision in relation to additional support in childcare settings