

<i>item:</i>	6
<i>report:</i>	CYP04/09

WRAPAROUND CHILDCARE

by Sam Brogan

Summary

This report provides an update on progress towards wraparound care, including the growing role of the local authority and the need to address and formalise key issues for the authority. The report also seeks support for plans of Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis to establish a Gaelic wraparound service in Inverness.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Joint Committee meeting on 22nd August 2008 agreed that “a report be submitted to a future meeting on progress made towards achieving a sustainable network of wraparound childcare in Highland.”
- 1.2 Pre-school provision is the core service for wraparound care. A major achievement over the past two years has been progress of almost all local authority and partner centre pre-school providers to offer combined sessions for three and four year olds. This ensures that pre-school provision better meets the needs of parents; provides a more flexible service; has a more sustainable future - and can be the foundation for wraparound care.
- 1.3 The Joint Committee will be aware that the ongoing review of pre-school provision has identified a level of over-provision, and that some vulnerable centres have low and declining attendance.
- 1.4 A few such centres have amalgamated in recent years, and others have closed. A number of centres continue to be closely monitored with regard to their future viability.
- 1.5 It is not envisaged though, that there will be further proposals for changes to provision, prior to enrolment in March 2009, as this could prejudice planning for likely changes to services as part of the CoSLA Concordat with the Scottish Government in 2010 and 2011. However, depending on the outcome of this year’s enrolment, it remains possible that provision will not be required in some current centres.

2. Current and planned development of service

- 2.1 The new Scottish Government & COSLA Early Years Framework was published in December 2008. It states that services that meet the

needs of children and families must provide “a strategic view of childcare accessibility and how to start addressing the gaps” with the longer-term objective to provide “access to integrated pre-school and childcare services in every community matched to an assessment of local demand.”

- 2.2 Highland Council has already established such a commitment, by pledging to “deliver and support a sustainable network of quality wraparound childcare and educational services for young children and their families by 2011”, with an earlier target of “at least one wrap around child care provider within 24 of the 29 Associated School Groups.”
- 2.3 The most recent audit indicates that we now have 17 Associated School Group areas with at least one wraparound provision. However the interpretation of this reflects both the definition of wraparound care that is used, and the fluctuation of occasionally fragile and unsustainable provision, particularly in rural areas.
- 2.4 The current Highland definition of wraparound childcare is: “the provision of a system of co-ordinated childcare for pre-school age (3 year olds) to 14 year olds between 9am and 6pm on weekdays within school terms.”
- 2.5 This is a minimum standard which can be adjusted by agreement on a local basis according to demand. The childcare can be delivered via either group care or by childminders or a combination. Where provision in a single setting is not possible, the management and coordination of movement between locations must be part of the service.
- 2.6 In some settings these standards will be readily exceeded, by for example: longer hours; wider age ranges and holiday provision. Also, in some settings the minimum standard may not be required, for example by local preference for a four day a week provision.
- 2.7 The development and adoption of Highland’s wraparound care target and the associated definition was designed to ensure that, in the first instance, we work towards providing a significant level of sustainable service across Highland on an equitable basis.
- 2.8 Over time, refinements should be promoted to improve both the level and accessibility of services. Parallel planning has begun to assess the accessibility of each established and planned wraparound provision within the geography of every Associated School Group.
- 2.9 The proposals in *For Highland’s Children 3* will include a commitment to consult at Associated School Group level about the level of demand for additional wraparound provision and how best to meet gaps in

service. This will include how the obligations within the Concordat can be met in each community.

3. Local Authority provision of childcare

- 3.1 As part of the development of more wraparound care, a recent innovation has been the delivery of childcare by the local authority. This is now happening at a small number of locations: at Inshes, Drakies, St Joseph's, Inverlochy and Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhirnis Primary Schools. The nature and level of service provided in each setting differs, depending on local parental demand.
- 3.2 There have been many positive elements to this, including of the childcare provision being managed by the Head Teacher in Primary Schools, such as:
- provision is on the one campus;
 - a perceived level of guaranteed professionalism and quality;
 - access to a pool of staff to cover absence/emergencies;
 - good standard of accommodation and access to maintenance;
 - access to financial support at arms length to the provision, from creditors and sundry debtors;
 - management support on a daily basis.
- 3.3 In order to support these developments, many systems and processes had to be established locally on a pragmatic basis. There is now a pressing need to formalise these. As part of this, a childcare pilot in academic session 2007/08 enabled work to be carried out on various standard processes, including fee structures and non-payment of fees, administration and invoicing, staffing structures and management arrangements. This activity helpfully informed the consideration of the necessary systems and processes.
- 3.4 With regard to fees, these have been set locally at:
- £8 per session for out of school care;
 - £3 per hour for wrap around for 3-5 year olds out with nursery provision
- 3.5 It is proposed that this rate is endorsed by Committee for the standard 2009/10 session, and increased by the rate of inflation thereafter. It should be noted that the Committee has already also agreed a fee of £6 per session for those 3 years olds not yet entitled to a funded pre-school education place within a local authority nursery (accessible the week after the child's 3rd birthday within the eligible birth dates). This should also be increased annually at the rate of inflation.
- 3.6 Historically, schools have charged parents a small fee as a contribution towards the cost of daily snack. This is common practice across all authorities. The charge has varied across schools, as has the arrangement for payment. It is proposed that a maximum fee of 40 pence per child per day should be charged, and that this should be collected on a daily or weekly basis.

- 3.7 With regard to the other systems and processes that are identified in paragraph 4.3, which largely relate to operational matters, it is proposed that a report on standard systems and processes is presented to the Highland Council Education, Culture & Sport Committee.
- 3.8 The Joint Committee is asked to agree that this report should be predicated on the basis that childcare generates an income, and this income should be used to provide the means and infrastructure that is required to deliver that service. Any surplus income, in addition to what is required to deliver the local service, should then be available to support childcare services across the authority.
- 3.9 For example, although good procedures have been established in relation to various administrative matters, there is a need to use childcare income to ensure adequate support to undertake administration and invoicing functions.
- 3.10 There are also additional demands on Headteachers with responsibility for childcare services, whether or not they act as the designated responsible officer out with the normal school working day (i.e. covering 8.00a.m. until 6.00p.m and holidays). There are further demands on Business Support Officers, in relation to budgets, transport, and staffing matters.

4. Gaelic Development in Inverness

- 4.1 Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis is a voluntary organisation that has been working for some time to prepare a business case to establish a wraparound early year's facility, on land adjacent to Bun-sgoil Ghaidhlig Inbhirnis. They intend that this will provide early education, thereby helping provide necessary capacity for the school, as well as day care for 0-5 year olds, and out of school care for primary aged children.
- 4.2 Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis has commissioned a study that indicates there is potential for this to be a viable model in the long term, and officers have been working with the group to take the proposal forward. The provision would be operated as a Social Enterprise operated by Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis, and they would seek to raise funding for the capital costs, which are expected to be in the region of £2m, with a substantial contribution envisaged from Scottish Government. Some revenue support might be necessary from childcare partnership funding, and also possibly in the first few years from Scottish Government and Bord na Gaidhlig.
- 4.3 The immediate challenge faced by Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis is for the funding of work by architects, as part of the ongoing feasibility study,

and to support their bids for capital funding. The Joint Committee on Children & Young People is recommended to support grant funding of £5k for this purpose, and the views of the Highland Council Gaelic Committee regarding this will be made known to that Committee.

Recommendations

Members are asked to note the progress of wraparound childcare services in Highland, and to agree:

- i. fees as set out in section 3, and that these should be increased annually on the basis of the rate of inflation;
- ii. that local authority childcare income should be used to provide the means and infrastructure that is required to deliver that service, and that any surplus income should be available to support childcare services across the authority;
- iii. that operational matters relating to the organisation of local authority provision should be considered by the Highland Council Education, Culture & Sport Committee;
- iv. grant funding of £5k should be provided to Cùram Chloinne Inbhir Nis for architectural drawings.

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