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| <i>item:</i> | 7 |
| <i>report:</i> | CYP20/08 |

ICAN EARLY TALK SCHEME

By Jane Baines

Summary

This report informs members of the progress made on the ICAN Early Talk Scheme, which is a national model of best practice.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 In 2002, the Highland Joint Committee for Children and Young People gave its approval to a bid from the Education, Culture, and Sport Service and NHS Highland to open one of the first Specialist Early Years Centres for children with communication difficulties, in partnership with the ICAN charity. The ICAN organisation had UK Government funding to set up 50 centres over the UK and Northern Ireland. Scotland was to be grant-aided for two centres. The successful bidders were the Highland and Midlothian proposals.
- 1.2 In 2003, the ICAN at Obsdale Centre opened in Alness as part of the nursery provision in Obsdale Primary School. For the first three years, the centre was funded by a three-way funding stream – a grant from the ICAN organisation, and equal funding from NHS Highland and The Highland Council. Since the end of the grant period the ICAN organisation have continued to offer training support and accreditation to our centre.
- 1.3 Over the past four years, 40 children have benefited from attending the ICAN at Obsdale Centre and a further 14 children have received outreach support in their local nursery setting.
- 1.4 Part of the role of the ICAN at Obsdale Centre is to provide training for Primary and Nursery staff on speech, language, and communication development issues. They continue to develop staff skills in both Early Years settings and schools.

2 Early Talk Accreditation Scheme

- 2.1 In 2006, The Highland Council and NHS Highland signed up to the Early Talk programme run by ICAN. Highland was the second authority in Scotland to sign up to this programme of accreditation and the first Scottish Authority to have a level 3 Communication Specialist Award achieved by the ICAN at Obsdale Centre. Undertaking the Early Talk accreditation scheme is a natural progression by the partnership to support and develop speech, language, and communication skills in staff supporting pre-school children in the Highlands.

- 2.2 The Early Talk Programme fits well with the aims of the Scottish Government Literacy Strategy. Early Talk can be used as a tool to support learning within the strategy.
- 2.3 For NHS Highland, the Early Talk Programme fits well with the implementation of the Care Aims approach to supporting children with speech and language difficulties as well as with the long established aim to further integrate joint working at all levels to meet the needs of children with speech, language, and communication needs.
- 2.4 The Early Talk Programme also complements the national NHS objectives outlined in Delivering for Health, including focussing service resources on early intervention; service redesign to better meet needs; preventative work; and enabling others to support care. This programme also provides an excellent basis for taking forward the Speech and Language Therapy service objectives of increasing structured training for health and partnership colleagues as recommended within the Hall 4 documentation. Now that NHS Highland also provides health services to the Argyll & Bute Council, a contract has now been signed to expand the Early Talk programme into Argyll and Bute.

3 Progress to Date

- 3.1 Since April 2007, representatives of 36 Early Years centres have received Communication Supportive training, prior to these centres gathering evidence for an accreditation visit to be considered for the Communication Supportive Award. In September 2008, staff from 6 centres will begin their training to work towards the higher Communication Enhanced level of accreditation.
- 3.2 June 18th 2008 will see our first celebration of success, when the 10 Early Years Centres who have attained Communication Supportive accreditation award – as well as one award for Communication Specialist accreditation – will be given their certificates at a presentation ceremony by Councillor Bill Fernie. This event will also be attended by representatives of the ICAN national charity – Clare Geldard (Director of Operations) and Lesley Culling (Head of Early Years) – as well as representatives of The Highland Council and NHS Highland.
- 3.3 The project is set to run until 2011 by which time we are aiming to ensure that a high proportion of Early Years centres have achieved accreditation and that there is a structured programme of continuing professional development for both centres and professionals in partnership that builds on our current successful partnership with ICAN.

Recommendation

The Joint Committee is invited to commend those nurseries that have achieved accreditation on the scheme.

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