

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILEDUCATION COMMITTEE1 FEBRUARY 2018Report by Director of EducationEARLY YEARS PUPIL EQUITY FUND REVIEW**PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

1. To update members on the progress of the implementation of the Early Years Pupil Equity Fund. The report outlines approaches taken to ensure excellence and equity for all East Renfrewshire's young children and their families.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the contents as outlined in the paper.

BACKGROUND

3. The Scottish Government in 2017/18 allocated 'Pupil Equity Funding' directly to primary, secondary and special schools. The funding comes with an expectation that it will be used to close the poverty related attainment gap.

4. The Early Years sector does not benefit directly from the national Pupil Equity Funding.

5. Whilst the Council accepts and acknowledges that early intervention and prevention can occur at any point in the life of a child or young person, our focus and commitment continues to be on the earliest years.

6. Early learning and childcare establishments have benefitted for many years from the backing of elected members to provide additional funding to support our lowest performing 20% of pupils, with £155,000 being made available for the past few years.

7. In February 2017, Council approved to provide further one off additional funds to the sum of £107,000 for August 2017 – March 2018.

8. By combining the monies available for the lowest performing 20% and the additional one off funding for financial year 2017 – 2018, a total sum of £262,000 was available to support our prevention and early intervention agenda.

REPORT

9. This report gives a summary of the steps taken to implement East Renfrewshire's Early Years Pupil Equity Fund and its impact on children, families and staff.

Early Years Literacy Team

10. Research shows that there can be as much as 18 months of a gap between the most and least affluent children in the language skills of children starting primary school. Working to prevent this gap occurring has been a focus of the Early Years Literacy Team.

11. The Education Department has had a Baseline Assessment in place since 2005-2006 to assess children's attainment in literacy and numeracy on entry to primary one. Performance in literacy has increased from 53% in 2005-6 to 60% in 2017 meeting the target set in the Outcome Delivery Plan (2014-17). However despite the gap in the achievement of those from the most affluent (SIMD10) and least affluent (SIMD1) residencies in literacy decreasing, there is still a significant difference in literacy results between our most and least affluent children.

12. Through consultation with a range of staff across the authority it was suggested and agreed that an Early Year's Literacy Team would be formed to work alongside all staff modelling high quality approaches to developing early literacy.

13. Seven Child Development Officers from across the authority were seconded to work in every early learning and childcare establishment as Literacy Champions.

14. The Literacy Champions undertook extensive training, provided in partnership with Strathclyde University and an East Renfrewshire Early Learning and Childcare Head Teacher. The training focused on early reading and writing skills.

15. In an effort to ensure this investment has a sustainable impact, each Literacy Champion was deployed to work alongside existing staff, providing intensive training and support on how to enhance the literacy experiences on offer to children. Since April 2017, 160 staff across all our early years establishments have benefitted from this approach.

16. Staff and their managers have reported that this has led to increased knowledge, skills and confidence when leading literacy experiences for our children.

17. There has also been a marked increase in motivation and engagement levels of children during play activities in literacy, in particular boys' engagement levels have been reported as increased in almost all establishments.

18. The Literacy Champions have also provided workshops and resources for parents to encourage engagement with their children through literacy. Evaluations from these workshops indicate that parents feel more confident in supporting their children's language skills.

19. The impact of the Literacy Champions was highlighted by the Care Inspectorate during two of our most recent local authority nursery inspections. Inspectors noted the high quality literacy play experiences on offer and the skilled interaction of our staff whilst engaging with children.

Early Years Physical Education Development Officer

20. Since 2013-14 data has been gathered on the percentage of children achieving the expected levels of development on entry to primary 1. The following components are assessed: Attention, Speech, Expressive Language, Receptive Language, Communication, Gross Motor Skills, Fine Motor Skills and Behaviour. Over the past three years the percentage of children achieving the developmental milestones across all components has

increased from 69% to 78% in 2017-18. Overall 93% of children were recorded as having no concerns in relation to their developmental milestones.

21. The component areas where children's scores were lowest continue to be Fine Motor, Gross Motor and Attention.

22. A Physical Education Teacher from one of our secondary schools was seconded and tasked with creating a Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) resource on physical literacy to support children, through outdoor play. 98 staff have been trained to use the 'Muddy Movers' programme in their local authority and partnership early learning and childcare settings and Primary 1 classes. The PE Lead Officer provided support to ensure these approaches are now embedded in practice and contribute significantly to the development of children's gross and fine motor skills.

23. Our most recent Care Inspectorate Inspection of a local authority nursery class highlighted the positive impact of the Muddy Movers programme on children's physical development.

24. Furthermore, additional funding from the Council has allowed us to invest in Learning Landscapes for all early years and primary 1 settings, thus continuing to invest in children's physical literacy and development.

Parental Engagement Officer

25. East Renfrewshire Council has been fulfilling the duty placed upon it by the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to provide 600 hours of free early learning and childcare to all eligible 2 year old children, with Arthurlie, Cart Mill, Glen, Madras and McCready Family Centres providing places.

26. The Early Years Pupil Equity Funding was used to second a Child Development Officer to the role of Parental Engagement Officer at Arthurlie Family Centre. This role was designed to support the introduction of child and parent places for those 2 year old children who needed the most support.

27. As well as being offered 600 hours of early learning and childcare, each eligible 2 year old and their families were invited to work alongside the parental engagement officer in a range of ways, including:

- A bespoke weekly home visiting programme;
- Advice and support to parents on how they could enhance their child's learning and development through play at home;
- Opportunities to have additional time in the family centre to play alongside their child and the parental engagement officer; and,
- Information on children's expected developmental progress as they move from baby to toddler to young child.

28. Prior to support being provided, an assessment of children's involvement and wellbeing was carried out to create a baseline.

29. Parents involved in the programme have reported that they are more relaxed and confident when engaging with staff in the centre whilst staff have indicated that parents are more receptive to support and advice from the family centre and other services.

30. Attendance of parents at family centre events and workshops has increased significantly, with most parents engaging in further learning to support their child, including the Psychology of Parenting Programme.

31. Parents and staff report a positive difference in the relationship between the parents and their children.

32. All children are more settled and content within the playroom and assessments carried out on their involvement and wellbeing indicated significant progress from the initial baseline scores.

Reaching Out Project

33. East Renfrewshire Education Department is fully inclusive and strives to ensure the needs of our children and young people are met in their mainstream settings. In recent years a significant number of early years establishments have reported an increase of children presenting with language and communication difficulties.

34. The department believes it is essential to build the capacity of our early years staff and settings to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to meet the needs of all our children.

35. Additional funding was provided to Carlibar Communication Centre (CCC) to release a member of staff from their Pre School Assessment Development Unit (PSADU) to facilitate the 'Reaching Out Project' which aimed to build capacity and skills of staff in our mainstream nurseries and family centres to support children who require additional support to develop social and interaction skills.

36. The aim of the project was to support staff in their ability to explicitly teach children the skills of being able to interact, play and navigate throughout their day. The areas of focus were:

- Understanding and making full use of the environment;
- Structuring the environment and day;
- The amount of context of language used; and,
- Taking part in planned social skills and play groups

37. Before the project started, early learning and childcare staff were asked to complete a self-evaluation which gave starting position data in terms of staff understanding and confidence in meeting the needs of children with language and communication difficulties.

38. The project was completed initially in Mearns Nursery Class, Eaglesham Nursery Class and Madras Family Centre.

39. At the end of the support period, the self-evaluation process was repeated. All staff involved reported an increase in their confidence and ability to support children's expressive and receptive language skills. They also reported that they believed they could support other staff and parents with these areas following participation in the project.

40. In January 2018 this project was extended to Carlibar and Glenwood Family Centres.

41. It is too early to report on the long term impact of this project, however, in the short term the Prefive Resource Group (PRG) has suggested that referrals from those involved for additional support and places to the PSADU has decreased.

FINANCIAL AND EFFICIENCY IMPLICATIONS

42. The Early Years Pupil Equity Fund will continue to support the projects described above until 31 March 2018.

RECOMMENDATION

43. Elected members are asked to note and comment on the contents as outlined in the paper.

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Director of Education
1 February 2018

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