Education Committee  
17th Meeting, 2005  
Wednesday 5 October 2005

The Committee will meet at 10.30 am in Committee Room 6

1. **Item in private:** The Committee will consider whether to take item 3 in private.

2. **Early years inquiry:** The Committee will take evidence from—

   Panel 1
   Carol Ball, Depute Service and Conditions Officer, UNISON

   Panel 2
   Margaret Lauder, Principal Officer, Early Years, Argyll and Bute Council
   Carolyn Martin, Early Years and Childcare Services Manager, The City of Edinburgh Council
   Sandra Gray, Chair of Shetland Childcare Partnership and Bruce Family Centre Services, Shetland Islands Council
   Linda Kinney, Head of Service, Children’s Services, Stirling Council

3. **Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill:** The Committee will consider its approach to Stage 1.

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Eugene Windsor  
Clerk to the Committee  
Room T3.40, Committee Office  
Ext. 0131 348 5204

The following papers are enclosed for the meeting

*Agenda item 2*  
Clerk’s covering note  
ED/S2/05/17/1
Submission from Unison  ED/S2/05/17/1a
Submission from Argyll & Bute Council ED/S2/05/17/1b
Submission from The City of Edinburgh Council ED/S2/05/17/1c
Submission from Shetland Islands Council ED/S2/05/17/1d
Submission from Stirling Council ED/S2/05/17/1e

Agenda item 3
Clerk’s paper ED/S2/05/17/2

The following papers are enclosed for information:

Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill and accompanying documents
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Early years inquiry

1. This is the second meeting where the Committee will be taking oral evidence as part of its early years inquiry.

2. UNISON is Panel 1. Panel 2 is made up of representatives from four local authorities: Argyll and Bute, City of Edinburgh, Shetland Islands and Stirling.

3. UNISON’s original submission to the inquiry is attached at paper ED/S2/05/17/1a. City of Edinburgh Council and Shetland Islands Council have provided new submissions to support their oral evidence and these are included as ED/S2/05/17/1c and ED/S2/05/17/1d respectively. Argyll and Bute and Stirling Councils’ original submissions to the inquiry are also included as ED/S2/05/17/1b and ED/S2/05/17/1e.

Eugene Windsor
Clerk
Education Committee
SUBMISSION FROM UNISON SCOTLAND

Introduction

UNISON Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for written evidence from the Scottish Parliament’s Education Committee regarding Early Years. UNISON Scotland strongly supports the Early Years Review, as we believe that it will enhance the extent and quality of life for the young children of Scotland and their parents.

We support wholeheartedly the Convenor of the Education Committee, Robert Brown’s statement that accompanies the Call for Evidence, particularly his assertion that “The earliest years of children’s lives are vitally important for their future development.”

UNISON Scotland is pleased to make the following responses on the particular areas mentioned to assist the Scottish Parliament in assessing progress made by the Scottish Executive in addressing these issues:

Support for Parenting

There are three areas we believe should be looked at under this heading: Maternity and paternity pay and allowances; work-life balance and the economic and social benefits of childcare.

As the UK Government and most other political parties have realised, provision of maternity and paternity pay and allowances in the UK falls far short of that experienced in many other developed countries. The Prime Minister’s recent announcement of plans to extend paid maternity leave from six to nine months, as a first step towards extending it to 12 months is a very welcome step, nevertheless, there is still some catching up to do. Two examples of parental leave in other countries are those of Sweden and Norway. In Sweden, parents are entitled to 13 month’s leave at 80% of their earnings. The fathers must take Thirty days of the parental leave and take-up rates are 64%. In Norway, every family is entitled to 52 weeks of parental leave at 80% of their salary, or 42 weeks at 100% of their earnings. There is also provision for a proportion of the leave to be taken as reduced hours where the length of the leave is increased accordingly. Again, one month must be taken by the father and here the take-up rate is 80%.

Whilst we appreciate that, at present, the right to legislate is reserved to Westminster, we believe the Scottish Parliament can play a role in persuading the United Kingdom parliament to improve and expand on the current provision. In addition, parliament can encourage the Scottish Executive to ensure public authorities in Scotland are a shining example of best practice.

UNISON Scotland believes that increases to maternity and paternity pay and allowances are essential to enable working parents to have a genuine choice about whether to stay at home or work when their children are very young and to enable fathers to play a greater part in caring.

We believe that the provision of an improved work-life balance for families would be greatly assisted by the introduction of more flexible working practices in the workplace.
The current, well-documented flexible options include job sharing, part-time working in a variety of ways, flexitime, shift working and home working (on an occasional basis). However, research is now being carried out on other flexible innovations, such as staggered working hours; annual hours, where fewer hours can be worked at certain time and more at others to suit individual circumstances; personalised annual leave, where up to 10 days annual leave can be “bought” in return for a lower salary, or leave reduced in return for more income and career breaks. Whilst the Government has introduced legislation to allow working parents to request flexible working, with employers having a duty to consider these requests, we believe more could be done to ensure that all working parents are entitled to such provision. We believe that the Scottish Executive should consider launching a campaign on Work-Life Balance similar to that of “Close the Gap” in order to persuade Scottish employers of the economic benefits of new and different ways of working.

The economic and social benefits of childcare are extensive and research is now highlighting these in detail.

The main benefits to the parents are that it allows them to work and provides the opportunity to raise many out of poverty. They are also able to access education and training; gain increased or stable earnings, leading to a decrease in the dependency on benefits; can increase their working hours perhaps moving from part-time to full time; they have greater ability to do a satisfying job from which they will need to take few absences.

This can in turn lead to benefits to employers, with better retention rates for staff; better rates of return from training and staff development; reduced absences and a wider base for recruitment.

Social benefits can include advantages to the children themselves, by increased security, confidence, learning abilities, etc. Support and advice can be given to parents and a reduction in stress can be felt through inclusion in the community.

The variety of approaches in child development work and their implications for future policy.

UNISON Scotland believes strongly in integrated childcare and early years learning. Early years education is often seen as preparing young children for school, where learning is perceived to begin. However, as is widely acknowledged, a child learns more in the first five years of its life than in any other five-year period. We believe lifelong learning is a continuum which, in the early years, encompasses the balance between education and care.

We also believe that the provision of early years education must be integrated with social and health services for children, to provide a holistic approach, and removes the stigma from children from low income families. We therefore, welcome the Sure Start and the Starting Well initiatives which support this approach.

We acknowledge that nowadays most childcare is delivered via Childcare Partnerships, made up of local authority, voluntary and private sector bodies and we believe that the Trade Unions should be involved in these.

Flexibility of Childcare Provision
UNISON Scotland believes that there is not sufficient flexibility of childcare provision. We believe that the government should provide affordable universal full-time childcare for all ages. The existing Executive provision of part-time, free pre-school education for all 3 and 4 year olds is helpful, but inadequate. The current split between early education (in nursery schools) and care (mainly by the private and voluntary sector) means that multiple arrangements are necessary every day. The availability of part-time places in nursery classes means that working parents must still rely on childminders in addition to nursery school. This is disruptive for children and the combination of childcare arrangements can be volatile and difficult. Many European countries have more extensive public provision for the early years sector, spending three or four times more than the UK. In Sweden and France the early years system is an almost universal public service and in Finland every child has the right to a childcare place from birth, with highly qualified educators.

Most working parents, particularly those who work part-time, face particular difficulties in organising childcare arrangements. Nursery classes rarely coincide with the working time of part-time workers, particularly if they work irregular hours. Day nurseries charge the full price, even when only a part-time place is needed. All of the above problems would be solved if there were sufficient publicly funded centres for children from birth to compulsory school age, staffed by qualified early education and care workers.

The 10 year strategy for childcare in England and Wales focuses on choice and flexibility, availability, quality and affordability. In addition, in his 2004 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Chancellor declared the 21st century as the era of universal childcare and early years services which goes much further than seeing childcare as merely a welfare-to-work policy.

**Availability of Childcare**

UNISON Scotland at present believes that parents have little choice in the childcare they require. We want affordable, universal childcare, funded by the local authority, to be available to all.

We support integrated childcare based in communities, e.g. based around secondary schools, primary schools, special needs provision, nursery schools, all in the one community. There is obviously not one model that will suit all provision, but this should be the basic principle. At present, there is sufficient space in secondary schools which could be adapted for greater community use, and we feel strongly that this would be the best setting for nursery schools and other childcare provision.

Children and parents who access all day provision prior to starting school find that as the first few months of school is part-time only there is a gap in their childcare needs with very few public sector providers offering the services that are needed. Our example of community schools providing early years education and childcare would address this situation. Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire are already bridging this gap.

**Provision for Low Income Families**

As highlighted above in the Support for Parenting section, provision of childcare gives access to employment, education and training, leading to increased earnings and reducing dependency on benefits. This will all have the effect of taking children out of poverty who will benefit because of their parents’ access to earnings. It can also result
in employment of parents in the local community, thus raising the standards in the community as a whole.

The provision of funding for the introduction of the Sure Start Programme for under-3 care, targeted low-income families in the main, and has increased the social inclusion of whole families from disadvantaged areas.

Greater flexibility and choice for parents, e.g. extended day care, to cover parents who work unsocial hours, e.g. night shift, would also help lower income families.

Affordable, universal, childcare would again assist lower income families as it would take the stigma away from those who are granted provision because of their lack of means.

Greater childcare provision can assist social services attempting to keep children out of care. If children from disadvantaged families were given full-time childcare, this can take the pressure off their parents, who may be better able to cope, thus avoiding the necessity for the child to be placed in care.

It is worth noting that childcare provision for most low-income families and those parents whose children have special needs, is provided by the public sector.

Conclusion

UNISON Scotland believes that a comprehensive and integrated package of universal, affordable, early education, care and parental leave could have significant economic and social benefits for children and parents in Scotland.

As we have already stated we are very much aware that a number of crucial factors relevant to an integrated strategy are reserved to Westminster. Nevertheless, UNISON Scotland believes that there is challenge for the Scottish Parliament to address by working with the UK Government and other organisations to remove unnecessary bureaucratic and legislative barriers in order to make early years education and childcare provision in Scotland amongst the best in Europe.

For further information please contact:

Matt Smith, Scottish Secretary
UNISON Scotland
SUBMISSION FROM ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

COMMUNITY SERVICES

Preschool Education

- Preschool Education is defined in the Standards in Scotland Schools etc Act 2000 which requires local authorities to provide preschool education (PSEP), as follows, for all eligible 3 and 4 year olds whose parents wish it.

  A free part-time education place is held to offer at least 462½ hours of pre school education over the school session. This may be most conveniently configured as 5 sessions of at least 2½ hours per week for a minimum of 37 weeks over three school terms.

- Procedures are in place to advertise annual registration and continuation of preschool education provision in order to maximise the uptake of the service by parents.

- The GRO (General Register Office) figure provides Community Services with the projected number of eligible 3 and 4 year olds within the council area for planning purposes.

- Currently within Argyll and Bute all parents who register their child for preschool education are provided with a place, the majority receiving their first choice of provider.

- Preschool Education is provided within a mixed economy of local authority, voluntary, private and independent childcare services comprising 46 local authority establishments and 36 commissioned providers in 2004/05 school year.

- Capacity and demand are monitored to enable all eligible children to be allocated a preschool education place. Generally Argyll & Bute capacity is greater than demand for places but new localised demand is highlighted through the Planning to Meet Community Needs procedure and helpline enquiries.

- Community Services: Education is not obliged to provide transport, however, it recognises the unique rural nature of Argyll and Bute and transport may be available in exceptional circumstances.

Quality of children’s pre-school education in Argyll and Bute.

Over recent years there have been significant developments in the quality of pre-school education in Argyll and Bute. A focus on the quality of planning and assessment has culminated in the development of an electronic tool for tracking individual children’s progress and allowing for the production of detailed child profiles. The main impact of this system has been to ensure the development of:

- consistent access to a balanced range of appropriate learning opportunities, based on guidance from the Curriculum Framework 3 to 5
- targeted and effective staff interaction to provide both support and challenge in children’s skills progression
• planning and assessment frameworks that focus on progression in development and learning and respond to children’s individual needs and interests
• the promotion of partnership with parents through a variety of reporting layouts
• effective transition procedures at entrance to Primary facilitating progression in development and learning

A comprehensive programme of staff development courses has ensured the continual improvement in the quality of planned programmes of work and also in ensuring the capability of individual settings to develop their self-evaluation and improvement planning process.

Evidence from the Integrated Inspection Cycle for Argyll and Bute has shown that the quality of pre-school education is good overall.

**Data for Preschool Education Provision (PSEP) 2002-2005**

**Uptake of PSEP Places**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3 year old</td>
<td>4 year old</td>
<td>3 year old</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRO</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Children Registered</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>824</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Children Accessing</td>
<td>849</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>824</td>
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**Providers of PSEP**

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<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>LA</td>
<td>Com</td>
<td>LA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Units</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>45</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of Places Provided</td>
<td>915</td>
<td>861</td>
<td>841</td>
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**Transport Assistance Being Offered**

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<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Units</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>28</td>
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**Childcare**

The following areas of work have been developed and expanded through the Childcare Strategy funding strands.

**Community Childminding Scheme**

The service is proving to be a success in that 43 Community Childminders have now been recruited, to date there have been 272 referrals made and at any one time care is given to between 50 and 80 children within Argyll and Bute. The criteria of the Scheme are to have early intervention to prevent families being referred to the statutory services. The health and quality of life of vulnerable children and families living within Argyll and Bute has been enhanced by the provision of care, which is appropriate and practical.
### Parent Support Groups
Parent Support Groups have taken place throughout Argyll and Bute, usually following the N.C.H. model of supporting parents. To date there have been 4 groups in 2003 and 5 in 2004. Some have a rolling programme lasting a year such as New Bumps and Babies in Lochgilphead. Parents enjoy the group support.

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<tr>
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<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Groups</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Parents</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
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### Supplementation Budget
Historically early years has worked with health and social work personnel to provide support to vulnerable families and children in line with the Council’s Admissions Policy.

With the introduction of pre-school education children aged 3 and 4 years have an entitlement to a stated level of service.

For Younger children and a number of 3 and 4 year olds this stated level of provision does not meet their needs resulting in a referral application, by the relevant officer, to request a supplementary service.

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002/03</th>
<th>2003/04</th>
<th>2004/05</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
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### Area Network Support Teams
The funding enables the identified Area Network Support Teacher to visit pre-school groups and units within there area and offer support and guidance on identifying young children with additional support needs and on working with these young children and their families.

### Social Inclusion Partnerships
The funding received from Surestart was divided evenly across the 5 SIP areas and was used in a variety of ways to provide support to vulnerable families with young children to improve their health and well-being and to promote learning through play activities.

The following received financial support from the Surestart Budget to enable them to provide services for young children and vulnerable families:

• Library Services – Bookstart (2003/2004)
• Minard After School Care Club (2003/2004)
• Mull and Iona Community Trust (2003/2004)
• Rothesay Playgroup (2003/2004)
• Surestart funding has directly assisted in a number of packages for individual vulnerable children and families (2004/2005)

Partnership with Scottish Childminding Association
• 2 Development Workers are now in post who have responsibility for recruitment, pre-registration training and policy development
• Ongoing support is provided to existing childminders

Partnership with the Out of School Care Federation
• All groups who wished have accessed the PIRATE Project
The PIRATE Project is based upon the 6 key principles as set down in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
  o Dignity
  o Privacy
  o Choice
  o Safety
  o Realising potential
  o Equality and diversity

The project aims to ensure that children attending clubs in our area are treated with dignity, have their privacy, can make well informed choices, be safe (without being over protected), can realise their potential (without being cosseted) and are treated equally and fairly regardless of individual factors. The primary aim of the PIRATE project is to improve the skills and networking opportunities of the voluntary/community run out of school care sector in the Highlands and Islands and Argyll and Bute, through the provision of, and access to information technology equipment and specialised training in child development.

Summary of Childcare Services Recorded on the Childcare Information System

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. of Establishments</td>
<td>No. of Establishments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Childminders</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crèche</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Centres</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nurseries</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of School Clubs</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playgroups</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Playschemes</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent &amp; Toddler Group</td>
<td></td>
<td>53</td>
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Parliamentary Enquiry – Early Years and Childcare Services

City of Edinburgh Council – Children and Families – Written Statement

For Oral Evidence Session – 5th October 2005

City of Edinburgh welcomes the opportunity to give oral evidence to the enquiry and presents its statement for committee members in advance of the meeting on 5th October.

City of Edinburgh Council provision recognises that there are a number of key influences on children’s attainment and achievement. These link directly to family circumstances and the experience of the child in the home, from the earliest point in the child's life.

Research indicates that there is an identifiable attainment gap at 22 months which continues to widen throughout childhood.¹

It has suggested it can be lessened by -

1. Early intervention even before children are 2 years old.

2. Considering all of the circumstances of the child and his/her family.

3. Providing integrated responses.

The City of Edinburgh Council has responded to this evidence with the establishment of a single Children and Families Department designed to develop integrated services. The Department is building stronger working relationships with both Health and other key agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors in response to identified need. The key drivers behind Edinburgh's response and those of the enquiry are the same.

The national policy context for early years and childcare development, and, particularly, the provision of funds, through the Childcare Strategy, Sure Start, Workforce Development, pre-school education and Changing Children’s Services Fund have all served to place a new emphasis on early years and childcare services which has been entirely welcome.

This has allowed the development of these services on an unprecedented scale with some considerable achievements as a result. However, there have been major challenges to meet as a consequence of the level and speed of expansion of the sector and some of these remain unresolved.

Service development successes relate to –

- The development of buildings sensitive to community requirements to support expansion of the service through major initiatives such as the PPP programme and the Pre-school Education Development Funds.

- Appropriate and well-qualified staff.

- The development of joint training offering opportunities for shared practice.

- The development of stronger and more meaningful partnerships with parents. The effectiveness of Family Learning type approaches is particularly valued as a way of engaging parents in their children’s learning.

- The use of national policy to develop new, more inclusive approaches such as the development of outreach services, anti discriminatory practice and multi-agency working

- Improved referral systems as a result of multi-disciplinary service innovation.

However there remain some significant challenges to be resolved. These include –

- The tension inherent in people’s perceptions about what we mean by the terms ‘education’ and ‘care’, the different ways in which we understand this and the consequences for the way in which we structure and fund the work.

- Sustaining long term developments in the context of short term and mainstream funding.

- Providing a national policy framework to develop integrated early years and childcare services that is consistent, non-fragmented and coherent.

- Developing strong working relationships around a common agenda with bodies such as Health.

- Sensitive service development to take account of diverse community need.

- Acknowledging and developing the influence of the home and family life.

- Ensuring vulnerable children have appropriate support in mainstream settings.

- The development of staff roles to reflect new ways of integrated working.

- Resourcing of meetings etc for effective interagency working
• Ensuring there is adequate support available from professional support services e.g. Therapists / Psychologists.

• Achieving full engagement of all parents.

• Consulting with young children.

• Maintaining a consistent service.

Edinburgh welcomes the opportunity presented by the enquiry to celebrate the successes and explore the remaining challenges with the Executive.

The Council hopes that future legislation and policy from the Executive will enable local authorities to resolve the identified challenges and build on the phenomenal successes that have been achieved so far in developing effective early years and childcare services.
Shetland Childcare 2012, a Childcare Strategy for Shetland addresses the key issues facing childcare provision and considers the 3 main themes of Quality, Sustainability and Affordability, and Accessibility.

**SUPPORT FOR PARENTING**

- Local Support Networks are being established to help and support children and young people from pre-school to 20, who are experiencing difficulties in their lives. There are 6 local support networks throughout Shetland.

- The Pre-School Home Visiting Service is a Shetland wide service for parents with pre-school children with special needs. A Play and Activities Session is offered to parents and children with special needs who are supported by the Pre-School Home Visiting Service. Transport is provided to enable children and parents from rural areas to attend this session. 50% funding from Sure Start and 50% from Education Service.

- The Pre-School Transport Scheme is a Shetland wide scheme to support families experiencing social and/or financial hardship in accessing pre-school provision and is funded by the Childcare Strategy.

- The Bruce Family Centre, supported by Health Visitors, Community Development, Shetland Youth Information Service, offers 3 Parents Groups for parents and children referred by a variety of agencies. These groups are funded through Sure Start.

- The Sure Start Childcare Support Scheme enables parents in crisis who are also attending the 3 Parents Groups to access respite for their pre-school child. Funded from Sure Start budget.

- Family Support Workers (Social Work) support and advise families identified by Social Work as requiring assistance.

- A local authority nursery is involved in the Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) Project. This is an early learning intervention that aims to improve the life chances of children by involving parents in their children’s learning.

- Firth and Mossbank Family Centre is located in an area of high deprivation. Services include a community daycare nursery, breakfast club and an out of school club. A package of funding includes Childcare Strategy and Sure Start.

- Resources are available to parents from Shetland Pre-School Play Limited. These resources include a bank for children with special needs. Shetland Pre-School Play Limited receives funding through Sure Start and a Service Level Agreement with Shetland Childcare Partnership (SCP).

- Bruce Family Centre staff use the playvan supplied by the SCP to take resources and model play activities in rural groups. Funding for the playworkers is through Childcare Strategy, Sure Start and Social Inclusion.

- A variety of training is available to parents. This has included training in specific conditions, Contact A Family and Family Fund. This training has been funded by Education Service and Childcare Strategy.

- All registered providers work closely with parents on a whole range of issues and help raise awareness of current health promotion priorities and initiatives relating to child development.
ED/S2/05/17/1d

- The local library has introduced book Start, Book Start Plus and Treasure Boxes. Treasure Chests have been funded through Sure Start.
- Multi-agency funding enabled NHS Shetland to purchase Play At Home booklets that were distributed to families throughout Shetland.

Many of the above initiatives have benefited from short term funding (Sure Start, Childcare Strategy, National Priorities). This has an impact on long term strategic planning and sustainability. Some of these initiatives are struggling and will never be sustainable unless long term realistic funding is secured.

THE VARIETY OF APPROACHES IN CHILD DEVELOPMENT WORK AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE POLICY

- Promoting healthy eating and active play. A multi agency group led by the Active Schools Coordinators organises events for staff, parents and children to encourage a healthy lifestyle.
- An oral health promotion scheme has been established across all pre-school centres and private providers, led by NHS Shetland in partnership with Education Service and the Bruce Family Centre.
- Education Service provided funding through Hungry for Success project to pre-school settings (voluntary, private and public sector) to encourage a healthy snack and raise awareness with parents.
- SCP has facilitated training in the use of "Adventures in Foodland" pack to a range of providers including Parent and Toddler Groups through to Out of School Clubs. Funded by Health Scotland.
- A team of Early Years Masterclass Coordinators are implementing a programme of training to develop IT skills throughout early years provision. Funded by Learning and Teaching Scotland.
- SCP administers the Workforce Development Fund, which is being used to enable staff from all sectors to acquire accredited training in line with requirements by the Scottish Social Services Council.
- Education Service funds partner provider staff so that they can participate in In-Service training. This provides them with opportunities for personal and professional development and also encourages closer working relationships with nursery staff.
- Education Service has funded training of additional support needs staff in identification and understanding of Dyspraxia.
- Education Service is undertaking a project to encourage improved identification of Dyslexia in the early years, which will feed into the local Managing Inclusion Guidelines.
- Childcare Strategy funds a variety of unaccredited training on a multi agency basis (e.g.) Child Protection Awareness and First Aid.
- Education Service is supporting Pre-School centres in piloting TEDEY (Tracking Education Development in Early Years) and will be evaluating the package with a view to implementing it.

We appreciate the Workforce Development Funding allocated to Shetland and that this is guaranteed for the next 3 years. Our baseline of qualified staff is 43% (lower than the National Average of 65%) with only a further 3 years to achieve 100%. We would ask that consideration be given to revisiting the criteria for allocation of funding.

The acquisition of accredited qualifications by staff in the private and voluntary sector inevitably leads to the expectation of appropriate terms and conditions. In these sectors this will impact on sustainability.

Access to training by staff from remote rural areas poses additional issues for example:
- Travel costs
A number of staff working in early years are mature and have a wealth of experience. Many of these are unwilling to participate in accredited training. There is a need to consider accredited prior learning or some alternative assessment so that we do not lose these experienced and valued staff.

FLEXIBILITY OF CHILDCARE PROVISION

• An Inter-agency group is redeveloping the programme of summer activities for children with additional support needs in the hope of establishing this as a core service.

• A local authority nursery class in Lerwick is continuing to offer an extended session to parents. Parents are required to pay for additional hours beyond the 2.5 hours funded session.

• Islesburgh One Stop Childcare offers a wrap around service to parents. All elements (breakfast club, pre-school group, out of school club, and activities club) are based in one centre. This service benefits from the Scottish Rural Community Transport Initiative, funding from the local community and New Opportunities Fund. Childcare Strategy funding supports sustainability and additional staff to address the needs of children with difficulties.

• Firth and Mossbank Family Centre is located in an area of high deprivation. Services include a community daycare nursery, breakfast club and an out of school club. A package of funding includes Childcare Strategy and Sure Start.

• Firth and Mossbank Family Centre has been successful in securing funding from NOF Quality Childcare Programme to employ additional staff to support children with additional needs.

• In two rural areas of Shetland the local partner provider caters for three years olds and the local authority nursery takes the four year olds. This was established at the request of parents.

• Scottish Rural Community Transport Initiative and the Pre-School Transport Scheme enable children to attend remote settings.

• Pre-School provision is offered on every inhabited island where and when the need arises.

• Two private providers work closely with the local schools and pre-school centres in transporting children between settings.

The rurality of Shetland means that there is a transient population and minor changes can have a significant impact on the needs of a small community for example:

• Sources of employment can generate an increase in local population but similarly can fold and result in a decline in population

• Demographic changes result in the need to reconsider provision

• One family moving to or moving from a remote area impacts on provision

A more pedagogical approach to training would enable staff to be utilised more effectively across provision.
AVAILABILITY OF CHOICE

We acknowledge that choice of childcare provision is limited due to rurality. We try to address this issue by actively promoting and funding training opportunities across the sectors (private, voluntary and statutory). Training is delivered in a variety of ways e.g. video conferencing.

SCP includes representatives from all of the sectors who work closely together to support and develop diverse services across Shetland to meet the needs of children and families.

- Shetland Islands Council (SIC), through Personnel Services, is introducing a pilot Childcare Voucher Scheme to staff. SIC is the biggest employer in Shetland and is the first local authority (as far as we are aware) in Scotland to implement this.

- SCP has actively promoted the registration of new childminders through a variety of marketing methods. The partnership also provides a start up grant, access to training at no or very little cost and support through the Childcare Development Officer.

- Education Service and SCP provide additional funds to fragile groups. Education Service through the Service Level Agreement with Partner Providers, funds a minimum of 8 fully loaded places. The partnership considers applications from these groups to address any shortfall.

- The local authority encourages parents to defer their child’s entry to school by ensuring a funded pre-school place in an authority nursery class or partner provider.

- Multi-agency funds 80% of the cost of employing additional staff to work in a partner provider or out of school club to support children with additional needs.

- A nursery class has recently been opened in a rural area to meet the developing needs of the community.

- A community day care nursery has recently been established in the most northerly island (Unst). This has been set up in partnership with RAF Saxavord, SCP and local community. Fees from parents, Childcare Strategy, RAF Benevolent Fund and local community support this service. This nursery is keen to extend provision to cater for children from 2 neighbouring islands.

- A partner provider has recently secured funding through NOF Quality Childcare Programme to replace the roof of their building.

The Big Lottery does not support core costs, funding is limited to additionality or new projects. This is a sustainability issue for voluntary groups especially in rural areas.

The acquisition of accredited qualifications by staff will lead to increased expectation of pay and conditions. Private and voluntary sector are at risk of being undermined, as they cannot compete with the public sector.

An economic study is required focussing on the impact of SSSC minimum qualifications on the financial sustainability of the voluntary and private sector. What will the resulting knock-on effect be to the economy of communities, should voluntary and private sector providers close and working parents be unable to access provision?
PROVISION FOR LOW INCOME FAMILIES

- All providers are encouraged to promote Child Tax Credit and Working Families Tax Credit. SCP distributes information on a regular basis.

- A representative from Job Centre Plus is a member of SCP.

- The Pre-School Transport Scheme is a Shetland wide scheme to support families experiencing social and/or financial hardship in accessing pre-school provision and is funded by the Childcare Strategy.

- A Sure Start Childcare Support Scheme offers finance to enable parents in crisis to access respite for their pre-school child. The Sure Start Childcare Support Scheme enables parents in crisis who are also attending the 3 Parents Groups to access respite for their pre-school child. Funded from Sure Start budget.

- As part of the programme for 3 Parents Groups run by Bruce Family Centre staff, advice and practical help in budgeting and meal planning is offered.

- Social Work fund places for vulnerable children (following a needs assessment) in private and voluntary childcare settings.

- A partner provider linked to the local College offers subsidised places to children of students accessing training.

In encouraging Out of School Care a more efficient approach would have been to replicate the system of commissioned places already successfully implemented in the pre-school sector. This would have gone some way in ensuring sustainability and guaranteed support for families on low income.

CONCLUSIONS

Pre-School education and childcare including out of school care should continue to be a priority for the Scottish Executive.

- Steps need to be taken to ensure that families have access to quality childcare that is sustainable and affordable.

- Local authorities should be given some flexibility in meeting the requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council while working towards a fully qualified workforce.

- The integrated agenda is welcomed but we would strongly encourage the streamlining and mainstreaming of funds at a national and local level to address the needs of children and families.
SUBMISSION FROM STIRLING COUNCIL

The importance of good quality early year’s services and the potential benefits to children, families and their communities is well documented and supported in Scotland. It is important that we continue to discuss, research and develop our thinking around the definition and meaning of what constitutes good quality early years policy and practice. One of the most powerful ways in which we can assess the potential benefits of early years services and its impact is to document and share our understanding and experiences gained locally from children, their families and communities, and to use this to inform future policy and practice.

This written evidence covers 3 key areas of early year’s policy and practice in Stirling Council, covering **Access**, including parental choice and range of provision. **Integration**, including models and funding. **Early learning**, including participation

- **Access**

We have a great deal to be proud of in Scotland. The introduction of universal part time nursery education for three and four year olds is a major achievement and demonstrates the success of the partnership between local and national government. This is an approach that we should continue to build on.

The model of the mixed economy has worked well in Stirling to make available 100% places for 4 year olds and for all 3 year olds whose parents wish a place. Strong and effective partnerships between local authority, for profit private nurseries and voluntary playgroups have been established through our locally agreed partnership framework.

Parents in Stirling can choose the nursery they wish to attend, including all partner nurseries and groups. The admissions policy ensures that children living within a catchment area of a nursery have priority in that setting and vulnerable children and families are given priority places.

The range of provision in Stirling that parents can choose from includes

- nursery class provision, usually based in primary schools offering part time sessions
- Playgroups based in a range of community or education settings, offering part time sessions.
- For profit private nurseries offering extended day and year services, covering care and education
- Local authority integrated early year’s nurseries offering extended day and year services covering early education, care, family and health support.

Services in Stirling have been planned in such a way to ensure that settings are not in competition with each other, are meeting identified local needs, and offer parents choice.
In this way we are able to determine general trends and this includes changes in local needs and demands.

- **Integration**

It is widely accepted that the way in which young children learn and develop means that early learning and care is inseparable. Yet in Scotland we continue to separate out policy, practice, funding and now regulation of early education and care.

The current policy and funding position whereby part time early education for three and four year olds is state funded and an entitlement for all, with care remaining a parental responsibility except where children and families are deemed vulnerable or in need, is causing unnecessary fragmentation of services at the point of delivery. This is happening because some services have grown up to meet the separate demands of policy and funding regimes. In addition, the emerging Child Health Partnerships have the potential to contribute to this lack of coherence of services at the point of delivery.

In Stirling this policy approach is now presenting significant difficulties for children and parents in term of accessing services. Some children have their education entitlement in one setting and their care needs in another; some children and their families may then meet Surestart objectives and be part of a family project that involves yet another setting or different set of adult supporters.

The separation of policy, funding and practice related to early education and care is also time consuming for parents and providers as a wide range of systems have had to be put in place to meet the different targets and priorities set out within the different policy agendas.

One of the ways in which we have tried to overcome the fragmentation and the demands from parents is to develop a new model of integrated early year’s settings. This is a setting that can offer integrated early education, care, family and health support and advice for children aged 0-5 and in some case 0-12 and their families. There is now a year on year increase in demand from parents for this integrated provision, with a corresponding and significant reduction and demand for part time nursery class or playgroup provision. The demand for places in the for profit private nurseries has remained stable.

We understand from discussion with parents that they view the new integrated models of provision as non stigmatised, accessible and good quality, able to meet the range of needs of the whole family. From our experience of developing a range of provision we remain convinced of the importance of universal services. The model of the integrated early years setting can offer this by providing a core entitlement to all 3 and 4 years olds and enhanced provision according to need. Around 10% of families accessing our integrated services say that they would take up more sessions if they were available.

- **Early Learning**

‘A physicist was once asked, what is the use of pure science, to which he replied what is the use of a baby’ E Goldsmeid
In other words, they both have the most amazing potential!

It is important that we do not restrict our thinking, practice and policy by basing it solely on child development theories, and that we share thinking and understandings about how children learn and their potential from the wider body of research and empirical evidence.

In Stirling we are working in our early year’s settings on the premise that children come first, that they are rich and full of potential. This approach has meant that our youngest children have the opportunity to move beyond their expected role as recipients of services to become social actors entitled to impact on decisions affecting them. This means that we have made the process of listening to children and their participation more visible. The ways in which children learn are made more visible and adults are gaining valuable insights into early learning as well as their own learning. Changes are taking place in the planning and organisation of early learning and a range of techniques to elicit views and encourage participation has become embedded in practice.

Listening to young children has become a way of thinking as well as working and we are currently engaged in researching and exploring approaches to support this and to document the outcomes and impact on our early years policy and practice.

Sam and Craig are two four year olds. Sam’s mother is Brazilian and he had just returned from his first family holiday in Brazil where he had visited a safari park. When Sam came back to the nursery they provided opportunities for him to play and work with safari animals. This episode and conversation was recorded between Sam and Craig as they played together in the nursery.

Sam  This is a herd. They are moving all the way from Alaska to Brazil. They have their heads down so they can hear the big boss.

Craig  The big boss is that cow in front

Sam  This bit is Brazil. Brazil is a very important place. There’s lots of grass there And a very important person, another queen. The queen is the mummy Jaguar

Craig  They need a lot more grass and there isn’t much food here

Sam  Alaska is very dry. Brazil is very hot and wet.

Craig  Lot’s of sweet grass

Sam  yes, ‘cos of all the rain

Craig  it fills the Amazon up

Sam  The amazon is a great big river.

Craig  Where alligators live
Sam and crocodiles called Caymans

Craig I’ve got an alligator book at home

Sam. The Amazon is very long and very deep. It’s got lots of piranhas and eels, Electric eels. It will take the animals one and another day to get to Brazil

Craig That’s two days

Sam Brazil is this big.

Craig They need their heads down to punch some little animals.

Sam No Craig, that’s not it, they are listening to the big boss. These animals have to Swim across the river to get to the good grass. Brazil is at the bottom of America, Alaska is at the top. The Amazon is the longest river in America Water Buffaloes live in it.

Craig Brazil is special place

Sam Brazil are going to win the world cup. My mummy says so.

What this episode, and many others that we have recorded, tells us is the power of children’s voices and their active participation to change perspectives, to change adults’ understanding about how and what children learn and to change our image of children. We can see more clearly their amazing potential, their richness, their understandings of the world, their feelings about themselves and other children and the adults who engage with them.

This knowledge brings with it the responsibility to act. In Stirling it has meant a commitment to providing the best possible environments for our children both inside and outside. It means ensuring that early year’s settings have in place a range of opportunities that support the many ways in which children learn, including opportunities and experiences that act as provocation’s for learning. It means supporting a ‘new professionalism’ by promoting the importance and need for adults working with young children to have a deeper understanding about children’s learning, who are researchers and learners themselves, are respectful and able to develop meaningful and trusting relationships. This is being achieved by the creation of new career structure and development opportunities for early educators.

In Conclusion

Significant progress has been made to ensure access to early year’s services for all three and four year olds. However, there is now a need to revisit existing policy and to consider how a more integrated policy framework and practice can ensure more coherent and integrated service delivery that meets the needs of children and families from 0-5. From our understandings of early learning, we must also invest in and take much more seriously the considerable potential of very young children and the crucial
role of quality early year’s services in assisting children, their families and communities, to realise this.