Education Committee

2nd Meeting, 2006

Wednesday 18 January 2006

The Committee will meet at 10.30 am in Committee Room 5

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

   **Panel 1**

   - Eileen Carmichael, Development Officer Early Years, Learning and Teaching Scotland
   - Margaret Clarke, Director of ICT and Learning, Learning and Teaching Scotland
   - Kenneth Muir, Chief Inspector, HM Inspectorate of Education
   - Kate Cherry, Assistant Chief Inspector, HM Inspectorate of Education

   **Panel 2**

   - Norma Watson, Vice Convener of Education Committee, Educational Institute of Scotland
   - Sheena Wardhaugh, Past President, Educational Institute of Scotland
   - Carole Wilkinson, Chief Executive, Scottish Social Services Council

2. **Early years inquiry:** The Committee will consider a proposal to invite Glasgow City Council to give oral evidence

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

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The following papers are enclosed for the meeting:

- Agenda item 1  
  Clerk’s note on early years inquiry  
  Learning and Teaching Scotland submission
HM Inspectorate of Education submission
Educational Institute of Scotland submission
Scottish Social Services Council submission
Agenda item 2
Clerks note and copy of letter from Fiona Hyslop
Introduction

1. This paper gives a brief overview of the inquiry to date and updates the Committee on some recently published research.

Evidence to date

2. The Committee has taken oral evidence from eight organisations (Scottish Educational Research Association, Children in Scotland, Barnardos, UNISON, Stirling Council, City of Edinburgh Council, Argyll and Bute Council and Shetland Islands Council) during September and October 2005. The Committee also visited provision in Sweden and Finland, the Jeely Piece Club in Glasgow and Whitburn nursery and family centre in West Lothian. In addition, the Committee commissioned four focus groups and a reanalysis of survey data from DTZ Pieda on the views of parents. Future plans include a discussion meeting with private sector providers on 31 January and two further oral evidence sessions on 18 January and 1 February 2006.

3. Some of the key issues raised to date have been:
   i. the complexity of funding and monitoring requirements;
   ii. the value of an integrated approach;
   iii. the balance between targeted and universal provision;
   iv. the mix of staff skills and qualifications required in early years provision;
   v. links with reserved issues such as parental leave and working tax credit;
   vi. whether there should be an overarching approach equivalent to the UK 10 year childcare strategy;
   vii. whether childcare can be self sustaining in very rural areas and deprived areas; and
   viii. Sweden and Finland provide useful examples but the specific Scottish context needs to be considered.

Recent research

4. Since the Committee began its inquiry, some relevant research has been published.

“Children Starting School in Scotland”

5. In July 2005, Tymms et al published “Children Starting School in Scotland”¹ which was commissioned by the Education Department.

¹ Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/02/20634/51600
6. This research looked at the range of cognitive development in children when they start school, comparing Scotland with New Zealand, Western Australia and England. The research compared data from each country from an existing study, the Performance Indicators in Primary Schools (PIPS), focusing on a comparison of cognitive ability – maths and literacy - rather than social or emotional development. The study found little connection between the amount of pre-school experience and children’s starting points at school. This is in contrast with England, where the number of pre-school terms was strongly related to cognitive ability on entry to primary school (Tymms et. al, p.19). The study found similarities between countries in the range of ability in early mathematics but differences for literacy.

Scottish Surestart

7. This evaluation of Scottish Surestart was published on 22 December 20052. The study concluded that Scottish Surestart has been developed in a variety of different ways but all projects support integrated working towards the core objective of supporting vulnerable families in flexible and non-stigmatising ways. Key achievements were considered to be the expansion of services to meet the needs of the most vulnerable and joint working

8. Areas for improvement included: involvement of men, evaluation and monitoring, development of preventative services, development of services for the most marginalised children and families, greater flexibility of surestart criteria in order to support transitions, greater involvement of health, continued mainstreaming, the need to reach rural areas and the need for more integration.

Eugene Windsor
Clerk
Education Committee

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2 Available at http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2005/12/21153916/39170
Learning and Teaching Scotland revised remit (November 2005)

- to support the implementation of national developments in education including reviewing and refreshing the curriculum
- to provide guidance, leadership and support to education authorities and schools
- to provide sound, coherent advice to Ministers on support for continuous improvement in Scottish education
- to evaluate the impact of all aspects of its work across the education system

The first national guidance for early years was published in 1997. The current guidance, *A Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5* was published in June 1999 in response to the Government initiative to extend pre-school education to children from the age of three. Following extensive consultation the 1999 publication received universal approval in Scotland and has been influential internationally.

Published in January 2005, again following extensive consultation, *Birth to Three: supporting our youngest children* provides national guidance for those working with very young children. The support materials, *Birth to Three: supporting relationships, responsive care and respect* were published in September 2005. Having developed *Early Learning, Forward Thinking: the Policy Framework for ICT in Early Years*, Learning and Teaching Scotland is currently providing the staff support necessary for the implementation of this national guidance.

Learning and Teaching Scotland, through the Early Education Support Series and Early Years Online (http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyears/), has published a wide range of staff development materials and organised a series of national seminars, as part of a Perspectives series, aimed at engaging the education community in professional reflection, debate and discussion on key topics. The Early Years’ Matters newsletter is published twice per year in print and online (http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/earlyyearsmatters/).

National Guidance

The Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5 is seen to have considerable strengths but now needs review following developments in

- national guidance *Birth to Three*
- our understandings of learning, teaching and development (how young children learn)
Scottish Parliament Education Committee
Early Years Inquiry

- the composition of the workforce since the Curriculum Framework for Children 3-5 was published
- key national initiatives eg nutritional guidance, integrated strategy for early years etc
- the publication of Ambitious Excellent Schools and related publications such as *A Curriculum for Excellence 3-18*

**Support for staff in Early Years**
To be effective any review of curriculum guidance will need to be accompanied by support for all staff working with children in pre-school settings.
This support will need to take account of:
- evidence from a growing body of research in early education
- diversity of provision
- range of qualifications of staff
- integrated services agenda
CALL FOR EVIDENCE RE EARLY YEARS

RESPONSE FROM HM INSPECTORATE OF EDUCATION

Evidence about pre-school education in Scotland

Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Education inspect all pre-school education provision for children aged 3 to 5. Our previous published report on Standards and Quality in Scottish Pre-school Education was based on inspections carried out by HMIE between 1997 and 2001. That report summarised the findings of 1400 inspections of local authority, independent, voluntary and private pre-school education provision. The messages were overall very positive, showing that a large proportion of children were experiencing a high quality of pre-school education in Scotland.

Strengths included

- A high proportion of nursery schools and classes achieved high or very high standards in most aspects inspected.

- Good relationships with parents and a strong supportive ethos.

- Broad and well balanced programmes and children engaged well in their activities.

- Almost all centres were providing good or very good programmes to support children’s emotional, personal and social development.

- In almost all nursery schools and classes and most private and voluntary centres, staff interacted well with the children to encourage and support their learning and development.

- Staff teamwork was good or very good in all but a few centres

Further identified improvements to develop a consistently high quality of provision across centres and sectors are listed below.

- More effective links between some centres and support agencies, such as social work, health and educational psychology to ensure that the needs of all children are met.

- Staff should be clearer about what children are expected to learn through their activities and provide appropriate and challenging opportunities which match the children’s needs.

- Information from assessment of children’s progress should be used more fully to support the next steps in learning and shared more effectively with parents and primary schools.

- Better programmes and facilities for supporting children’s physical development and movement are needed in all sectors.
• In the private and voluntary sectors there is a need to improve the overall quality of programmes in communication and language, knowledge and understanding of the world and expressive and aesthetic development.

• Staff should receive high-quality development and training to help them to meet the learning and development needs of children more fully.

• Some headteachers and voluntary and private centre managers need to improve their management and monitoring of the work of their nursery class or centre.

• All staff should be involved in rigorous self-evaluation to identify strengths and aspects for improvement, and in bringing about improvements.

2. Evidence from Inspections since April 2003

From April 2003, HMIE have been working in partnership with the Care Commission to inspect the quality of care and education across the sectors. Nationally collated results from these more recent inspections have not yet been published, but evidence suggests the findings remain broadly similar. The data shows that educational quality has been maintained since the benchmark was established in *Standards and Quality in Scottish Pre-school Education 1997-2001* with slight improvements in some aspects such as programmes for physical development and movement and support for children with additional needs. The evidence confirms the findings of that report that, although there are examples of very good provision in all sectors, there remain clear differences in quality between sectors. Local authority nursery schools offer the highest quality experiences across the aspects inspected. Local authority and independent school nursery classes also perform consistently well. Voluntary and private provision show more evaluations of fair overall.

3. Aspects of particular interest to the Scottish Parliament’s Education Committee

HMIE’s responsibility is to evaluate the quality of educational provision. The aspects identified as of particular interest to the Education Committee focus more broadly on childcare than on education, so that HMIE evidence in these areas is not specific to the aspects mentioned. A few comments are included below:

(1) Methodologies of delivery

The pre-school sector in Scotland reflects a consistent approach to early years education. Through the national curriculum guidance for 3 to 5, all centres follow a broadly similar method of providing a broad and varied learning experience for children. Learning is firmly placed in the context of play where children can explore materials and find out about the world around them in a safe and usually stimulating environment. Key features of pre-school education show children making choices, being active and gaining confidence as independent and responsible learners.

In best practice, staff are very knowledgeable about children’s development and learning and ensure the experiences offered are interesting and challenging and will engage children fully. Children are active participants in the process and, increasingly, are involved in making decisions about their play. They are happy and have fun participating in their chosen activities. The organisation of play experiences allows children to be physically active.
Steady progress in children’s development and learning is supported and individual needs met in an inclusive manner.

Where practice does not meet the needs of children well, staff have insufficient expertise and depth of understanding of young children’s physical and mental development. Staff interaction with children lacks sensitivity and does not develop or extend understanding. Inappropriate activities are offered, often introducing formal, school-like materials like worksheets. Children’s needs are not identified and planned for to ensure individual progress is appropriate.

(2) the variety of approaches to child development

A very small number of services have distinctive philosophies of child development, and there are some differences in the approaches to learning through play. Some examples are Montessori, Rudolph Steiner, Reggio Emilia and High Scope philosophies. Nevertheless, there is a high level of consistency across the pre-school education sector in an appropriate emphasis on learning through play with experiences chosen to match the developmental needs of the children.

(3) support for parenting and flexibility of childcare provision

HMIE evidence shows that almost all services have positive relationships with parents and 90% of all centres provide support for children which is good or very good. Staff are responsive to the particular circumstances of children and their families overall, for example in offering extended care facilities.

Provision for sessions of pre-school education is often preceded or followed by childcare sessions, particularly in local authority day nurseries and private nurseries which make provision for extended and flexible childcare. Some local authority schools offer breakfast club facilities. The additional care can mean, however, that some children attend provision outwith their homes for extensive hours each day, in some instances eight or nine hours.

Parents usually choose the centre for their child’s pre-school education, though this is subject to geography and to the availability of places in some centres. We do not have evidence on choice in childcare.

I hope that this is helpful.

GRAHAM H C DONALDSON
HM Senior Chief Inspector
HM Inspectorate of Education

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SUBMISSION FROM THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTE OF SCOTLAND

1. The EIS welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Education Committee of the Parliament on the provision of pre-school education and care across Scotland. We agree that this is an important issue for pupils, teachers, parents and for the whole of society. “If we get it right we are well on the way to bringing up young children who will fulfil their potential and contribute to the world.”

2. The guarantee of a free part-time pre-school education place for every 3 and 4 year old, whose parents wish it, has been welcomed by both parents and teachers. It has proved to be extremely beneficial for our youngsters and the partnership that has evolved between school and parents has impacted on other education sectors.

3. Other variations of pre-school provision have evolved with wraparound care available in many of our nursery schools/classes/centres.

4. The EIS would agree with a statement made by Cathy Jamieson in January 2002 i.e. “Teachers play a vital role in the pre-school education of our children. They always have and will continue to do so”.

5. There is important evidence from HMIE inspections which indicate that “while very good practice is found in all types of provision, a higher proportion of local authority nursery schools and classes perform consistently well or very well across all the criteria used by HMIE than do private day nurseries or voluntary playgroups”.

6. From research carried out south of the border “The Effective Provision of Pre-school Education (EPPE) Project” it was concluded that “pre-school experience compared to none enhanced all round development in children and that an earlier start is related to better intellectual development”. Also “Managers/Directors of early childhood settings who had teacher qualifications were leading centres where children made greater developmental progress and where objective observations of quality show the provision to be better than in centres led by staff with lower qualifications”. Limited research in Scotland points to similar conclusions.

7. Finally, the EIS would welcome the opportunity to give oral evidence to the Education Committee of the Scottish Parliament.
SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH SOCIAL SERVICES COUNCIL

CALL FOR EVIDENCE - EARLY YEARS

The Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Education Committee as part of its inquiry into the provision of pre-school education and care across Scotland.

The Scottish Social Services Council was established by the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. It is responsible for the regulation of the social services workforce and their education and training. Our objectives are:

- to protect those who use services
- to raise standards of practice
- to strengthen and support the professionalism of the workforce.

We have five key tasks:

- to set up registers of key groups of social service workers
- to publish Codes of Practice for all social service workers and their employers
- to regulate the training and education of the workforce
- to promote education and training
- undertake the functions of the Sector Skills Council Skills for Care and Development.

Included in the workforce which the SSSC regulates are around 30,000 early education and childcare workers who perform a variety of roles in a range of children’s settings in Scotland.

The SSSC will register early education and childcare workers in phase two of registration. This will commence in December 2006. The SSSC will require workers to hold a relevant qualification or be working towards gaining a relevant qualification to be registered. Registration requires workers to demonstrate that they are competent and of good conduct.

It is our belief that the process of registration will contribute to the development of a confident and competent workforce capable of delivering services consistent with the “vision” described by Scottish Ministers of children who are safe, active, nurtured, respected and responsible, healthy achieving and included.

The SSSC believes the targets set for childcare partnerships to have 80% of the workforce qualified for registration with the Council by 2008 – 2009 will be a significant achievement. It is also our belief that the work of the partnerships has raised quality and standards in all pre-fives education and care settings and provides a model of good practice for other parts of the social services sector.

The process of raising quality through education, training and the insistence on qualifications as part of registration, will lead to positive outcomes for children.
Parents will have the flexibility to choose the type of childcare provision that best suits their needs whilst being assured of the professional standards of the workers in these settings.

The SSSC is also aware of the range of the research conducted into early years and childcare but in particular of the recently published EPPE research which identified:

“the quality of pre-school centres is directly related to better intellectual/cognitive and social/behavioural development in children... and a positive relationship between the qualifications levels of staff and ratings of centre quality” and that “Disadvantaged children particularly, can benefit significantly from good quality pre-school experiences”.

It is our belief that the role of the well trained, well qualified pre-fives worker in supporting children’s development cannot be overestimated. Communicating the positive messages from research is important for parents and for service providers. These messages also acknowledge the good work done by staff, work that is valued and can make a difference.

The SSSC is contributing to the current review of early years and childcare and anticipates the positive outcomes that will emanate from the review, some of which the SSSC expects to be charged with implementing in partnership with others.
EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Letter from Fiona Hyslop MSP

Action

1. The Committee is invited to CONSIDER the letter from Fiona Hyslop MSP and AGREE what action to take.

Eugene Windsor
Clerk
Education Committee
Mr Iain Smith MSP
Convener,
Education Committee
Room M3.13
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Tuesday, 10 January 2006

Dear Mr Smith,

**Early Years Inquiry**

As you will know, we return to the Early Years Inquiry on the 18th January with an evidence session. I would strongly urge you to consider whether it would be appropriate to call Glasgow City Council to give evidence on that day, given the proposals recently announced which would remove nursery teachers from nursery schools in Glasgow.

I am aware that we already have some organisations scheduled to give evidence, and I would submit that those witnesses would be complemented by representatives of Glasgow City Council.

We have already received academic research and evidence regarding the importance of early years education and it would seem that it would be appropriate to ask Glasgow Council to attend the committee in order to explain their thinking about the educational value of removing nursery teachers from the education of 3 and 4 year olds to Parliament in advance of the council taking the final decision, which I understand is in two weeks time.

Since other councils are considering emulating this move we have an immediate obligation to address this issue now on behalf of the children and parents of Scotland.

I would be obliged, therefore, if you would lay this proposal before the committee tomorrow in order to allow us to consider calling Glasgow City Council to give evidence next week.

Yours sincerely

**Fiona Hyslop MSP**