Education Committee
3rd Meeting, 2006

Wednesday 25 January 2006

The Committee will meet at 10.00 am in Committee Room 2

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

   **Panel 1**

   Ian McLaughlan, Chief Executive, Scottish Preschool Play Association

   Mandy Mayo, Scottish Preschool Play Association

   Maggie Simpson, Director of Childminding Development, Scottish Childminding Association

   **Panel 2**

   Gavin Fergie, Professional Officer, Community Practitioners and Health Visitors’ Association

   Heather Gunn, Service Manager, Dundee City Council, Association of Directors of Social Work

2. **Scottish Schools (Parental Involvement) Bill (in private):** The Committee will consider a draft report

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The following papers are enclosed for the meeting:

**Agenda item 1**
Submission from Scottish Preschool Play Association ED/S2/06/3/1
Submission from Scottish Childminding Association ED/S2/06/3/2
Submission from Community Practitioners and Health Visitors’ Association ED/S2/06/3/3

**Agenda item 2**
Draft Stage 1 report (private paper) ED/S2/06/3/4(P)
SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH PRE-SCHOOL PLAY ASSOCIATION

Scottish Pre-school Play Association (SPPA), a registered charity, is Scotland’s largest voluntary sector provider of direct support services to community led childcare organisations. It delivers essential support and guidance services to providers of pre-school education and childcare services, including all-day care groups, playgroups, parent and toddler groups and under-fives groups. It has a forty year track record of working with children and families, encompassing many of the most disadvantaged groups in the country, including families on low income, ethnic minority families, lone parent families and families affected by social or rural isolation. It works closely with parents, early years providers, the Scottish Executive, regulators, local authorities and Childcare Partnerships, as well as training providers and other umbrella organisations to support early education and childcare settings. It represents the interests of voluntary sector community based settings, provides input to national and local policy consultations and working groups. Scottish Pre-school Play Association welcomes the opportunity to provide evidence to the Education Committee and offers the following submission:

1 The Impact of the Scottish Executive’s Childcare Strategy on the Voluntary Sector

The Executive’s commitment to provide universal free pre-school education to all three to five year olds has been a substantial achievement and to a large extent has been fulfilled. SPPA has been instrumental in helping to achieve provision by supporting groups to enter into partnership with local authorities. In the main there have been many excellent partnerships formed and SPPA and member groups have risen to the challenge of delivering quality pre-school experiences and have become an integral component of an authority’s ability to deliver the Executive’s policy. However, although there are areas which have a higher number of voluntary sector partner providers than local authority nurseries, there are others where the delivery of pre-school education has been contained within the statutory, and to some extent the private sector. The voluntary sector provides ten percent of pre-school education provision for three and four year olds. Some local authorities engaged briefly with SPPA member groups until they were able to deliver the service themselves. The majority have therefore absorbed and centralised services, especially for four year olds, by incorporating them into their own infrastructure and by opening up new or extending existing nursery provision. Although substantial funds have been injected into the voluntary sector this covers thirty three weeks of two and a half hours per day five days per week. Most voluntary sector groups operate for at least thirty eight weeks a year and staff are on the premises more than two and a half hours per day as they have to prepare, plan, and carry out child assessments. The dilemma for the groups has been how they fund the missing five weeks. If a group charges fees they face the possibility of losing business to the neighbouring local authority nursery where this unfunded period can be funded from a council budget.

As a consequence:

- A number of voluntary sector pre-school playgroup providers have closed down or opted out of the regulatory framework, decreasing the number of pre-school places available in the sector from 45,883 in 1997 to 20,061 in 2003, giving parents less choice about the type and frequency of provision.

Scottish Pre-school Play Association

Evidence to the Scottish Parliament Education Committee April 2005
• **Sustainability for some voluntary sector groups that continue to operate is problematic; increasing bureaucracy and lack of security of partnership funding is impeding voluntary sector providers’ capacity to plan effectively.**

• **There is a trend towards more formal, statutory centre-based provision.**

### 2 Service Developments

The Executive’s Childcare Strategy and its associated funding initiatives has promoted and funded the development of a range of new services for parents; for example out of school clubs, play schemes, breakfast clubs, wrap around services, day care, increased special needs provision in all categories, respite services and crèches. There are also a number of initiatives being provided in partnership with local authorities which promote parental involvement and build their skills. SPPA has welcomed the development of new provision and been involved in new local childcare services through SPPA members or through participation in Childcare Partnerships. This range of service has provided more flexibility of childcare provision for parents. The range that is offered in a local authority area varies according to investment from the childcare partnerships, new businesses and services planning as a direct result of childcare audits. There will still be gaps particularly for a family that has unusual work hours and also for whom the cost of childcare is still a barrier. SPPA is aware that respite care for children with additional support needs, is a much needed developing service that requires substantial investment.

### 3 Parenting and Community Involvement

SPPA has a long history of engaging parents in the care, learning and development of children. SPPA’s view is that parents have a vital role to play in their child’s early education, enabling children to become ambitious, confident and successful individuals, with a disposition to learn and to be able to realise their potential. SPPA is concerned that the opportunities for parental collaboration and participation in early years services are being eroded and that perceptions and expectations of what parental involvement means, may limit the potential contributions that parents can make. SPPA groups give parents a significant role in deciding and providing the service they want for their children, as they are owned and managed by the parents of the children who attend the group. This involvement makes them different from local authority provision. Through voluntary management committees, in accordance with their constitution, parents; manage the provision, employ and manage staff, comply with legislation and regulatory frameworks, develop business planning, ensure quality in service provision and implement local and national guidelines to support children’s care, learning and development. This type of involvement engenders a whole range of skill development opportunities which parents take to other spheres of interest and work environments to the benefit of the community.

While childcare services should be led by professional and qualified staff, parents – as the prime educators of their children - have also benefited from participating in the setting; encouraging and interacting with children and other adults, sharing information and learning more about their child and child development. This direct involvement with their child’s learning and development outside the home environment has motivated many parents to greater involvement, not only as their child moves through the educational system, but also in the wider community. Many women use their total
experience gained in a group as a platform to return to work or study/training and this should not be lost.

In many groups SPPA is working with parents in their voluntary role of managers of the group and also through training; there are in addition groups where SPPA is working with parent and child together. SPPA has projects in parent and toddler groups where parents stay with their under-threes and share play activity workshops with the children. These workshops stimulate the children to try new activities and inspire their parents with their level of skill. These workshops are evaluated and evidence is collected that shows clearly how adult/child relationships are being reinforced and how parents are actively making time to play with their children and take an informed interest specifically in healthy eating and exercise. SPPA’s view is that parents benefit from developing an understanding of their child’s development and of how they can support the child as s/he develops and passes through different stages. These projects have mainly been funded through Sure Start which is a positive example of joined up working for improving children’s health, well-being, learning and care needs while supporting parents in their own personal, social and learning needs/development. SPPA endorses this model which works effectively in demonstrating that the family is fundamental to a child’s development. The better equipped the parent is, the greater the benefits to a child’s all round development. The closure of voluntary managed groups has meant that:

- Volunteering and parental involvement has suffered.
- Community infrastructures have been eroded and community development opportunities weakened, particularly for women, many of whom used community pre-school groups as a springboard; to community involvement, to return to formal study, to seek employment and return to work.
- The centralisation and formalisation of services has the potential to diminish these types of opportunities, which inevitably will have consequences, long term, for parental involvement and active community participation and citizenship.

4 Flexibility of Childcare Provision

Flexibility, affordability and accessibility are words used to describe some of the key commitments of pre-school education and childcare provision, yet currently there is little flexibility in terms of hours and attendance, including coverage for working hours and a working year, if parents want it. Developments in wrap around care and the growth in private sector providers are addressing some of this, but still many parents have to use a combination of formal and informal arrangements for their children. Consequently a very young child can be exposed to several transitions from one provider to another which has implications for achieving continuity in their care, learning and development. The cost of pre-school education and childcare that meets the needs of parents and young children is variable. The variability and the ability of parents to pay, particularly low income families, limit parents’ choice and restrict accessibility to the service that best meets their needs. The additional cost for children and families is exacerbated in rural areas.

5 The Regulatory Framework, Local Authority and the Choice of Provision
With the introduction of a standardised regulatory framework for childcare there are greater expectations. The work attached to being a partnership provider of early education has been developed by local authorities and is quite substantial. It has therefore been a considerable burden for voluntary led groups. A number now engage administrators to facilitate this responsibility at a cost. SPPA endorses the improvement of the quality of the provision and the introduction of a qualification framework for staff. The Training Challenge Fund has provided many voluntary sector staff with the opportunity to achieve a qualification with the majority on target to meet the requirements of the Scottish Social Services Council. Regulation has also meant that groups have had to develop a considerable number of policies and procedures. SPPA has developed a range of policies that has helped to meet the requirements of the Care Commission. Although the increase in work has proved a deterrent to becoming a volunteer, many parents are still prepared to take on such a role. In seventeen out of the thirty two local authority areas, SPPA has been funded to provide direct support to groups, and assist them to be sustainable and to develop thorough business planning.

SPPA recognises that there are many local authorities which provide excellent partnership working between all sectors. However, there is concern that partnership with some local authorities and the role of the Care Commission can be viewed by groups as two forms of inspection. The recent development of the memorandum of understandings between individual local authorities and the Care Commission could avoid the perception of a second layer of inspection.

Choice of provision is the clear aim of the Executive, yet sometimes there has been confusion regarding parents being allocated places in the centre of their choice. SPPA can provide evidence of parents who have expressed a preference for the local voluntary sector provider (for example a morning playgroup place) and then, having requested this, have been offered a local authority nursery place in the afternoon instead. There is also some evidence of pressure on parents to take up places when their child is three, in case they will not have the choice of morning/afternoon places at age four.

6 The Child’s Needs

SPPA argues strongly that pre-school education and childcare services must be predicated on what is in the best interests of an individual child’s care, learning and development and not be driven primarily by economic objectives and increasing the number of women in the labour market. Policy initiatives focus on the needs of working families for child care and education services. SPPA fully endorses these policies. It expects also that the preference of those parents who wish to stay at home with their young child in order to participate more actively in their care learning and development, (rather than stay in or enter the workforce), is respected and is not overlooked. The UK Government’s Childcare Strategy, Choice for parents; the best start for children refers to an eventual increase of free pre-school education to twenty hours. SPPA welcomes the increase in hours but is concerned that the nature of provision must be of high quality. There is concern that providing longer formal pre-school education may be detrimental to a child’s all round welfare. The quantitative concept of learning that is the longer and younger a child is exposed to it, the better will be the outcome, is a fallacy, if it fails to take into account the quality of the care and learning provision. “The evidence for the early stages of a child’s life suggests that consistent one to one care is very important, and that long hours of group childcare for very young children can have mixed impacts on a child’s development, depending on the quality
of the care”2. Market and economic forces should not solely dictate the expansion of services. A child’s individual care, learning and development needs have to be at the centre of service provision.

In early years work it is a widely and strongly held belief that a child’s care, learning and development are interdependent, yet the divide between early education and childcare persists. There are providers that come under education; for example, nursery classes in schools (these also are inspected by the Care Commission and HMIE) and nursery schools, and other providers in the voluntary and private sector, that are under the auspices of the Care Commission, and others which straddle both and come within the remit of the Care Commission and HMIE. For some providers there is an arbitrary distinction made between offering pre-school education for part of the day and care services at other times, for example, wrap around services, a child attending nursery in the morning and playgroup/child minder in the afternoon. Early education and childcare policy crosses many institutional boundaries, at both national and local levels. The implementation of the policy continues to appear disjointed. The sector remains fragmented and lacks a coherent operational framework. SPPA welcomes recent endeavours by the Executive to address this. It particularly welcomes the work of Sure Start Partnership Initiatives and new community school initiatives. In the latter case however, SPPA is not aware of voluntary sector involvement, nor of the initiative having a catalytic effect on more joined up working to provide early years/family services. The draft Integrated Strategy for the Early Years, in the earlier consultation stage, proposed greater integration based on the ‘family centre’ model of provision. In the absence of the published strategy it is not evident yet how this model fits in with the UK Government’s Childcare Strategy and the development of neighbourhood nurseries or children’s centres. SPPA is keen to know what the correlation will be between the UK Government’s Childcare Strategy and the Scottish Executive Strategy and what benefits there will be. The Scottish Childcare Strategy (1998) led to an expectation, not yet fully realised, that services would be integrated and provided in local neighbourhoods and communities. SPPA welcomes the UK Government’s Childcare Strategy with its ten year aim to establish three and a half thousand children’s centres in England offering an integrated approach, and would like to know if the Executive has similar plans as part of the Integrated Strategy for the Early Years.

7 Workforce Issues

SPPA is noting an increased willingness across the sector to work innovatively and creatively in partnership to provide flexible, adaptable services that promote and provide for young children’s care, learning and development needs, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Yet, there are still major challenges facing the sector. Professional status should be enhanced. There are issues regarding staff recruitment and retention due to increased competition from other providers. There are low pay and poor terms and conditions in all sectors but especially in the voluntary sector. Professional tensions among different parts of the workforce arise from professional, philosophical and cultural differences in approaches, different values and objectives, different working practices and patterns, as well as differing perceptions of status, roles and responsibilities, both within and between the education and childcare and social welfare split.

- All these hinder the development of broader perspectives for collaborative working, interagency training and shared understandings. They limit the ability of the sector to
offer flexibility of hours and attendance, if parents want it. They contribute to the disjointed approach to children’s care, learning and development.

8 Training and Qualifications

Huge improvements have been made in training and qualifications for staff working in services that fall within the remit of the Care Commission, yet workforce issues between early years education and care service providers remain unresolved, particularly in relation to teacher and non-teacher status. The work of the Scottish Social Services Council, including the current review of the early years workforce, and the Scottish Qualification Credit Framework bodes well for the future. The registration of the early years workforce with the requirement for continual professional development, contributes to raising the profile and professionalism of the workforce. Perhaps, the emerging discourse in Scotland on the concept of pedagogy will broaden perspectives and challenge the education and childcare split in training the early years’ workforce. There must be a more holistic approach to both.

- Working with pre-school children is a highly complex and skilled task. There are many highly trained and competent individuals working with pre-school children. They should have enhanced professional status.

9 Curriculum

Based on good practice, SPPA has always placed the individual child’s need at the centre of any curriculum. Groups work with curriculum information and guidelines from the Scottish Executive Curriculum Framework, Child at the Centre and the Care Standards. SPPA requires reassurance that an individual child’s needs are the only starting point for curriculum.

10 Conclusions

The Executive should continue to invest in the childcare sector, ensuring that affordable places are available for all parents including working parents and disadvantaged families, whilst supporting “parents’ desire to spend more time with their families”\(^2\). Steps need to be taken to ensure that voluntary sector education and childcare is on an equal footing with local authority provision. Further investment should be in place in partnership funding for pre-school places that compensates for the service actually being provided over thirty eight weeks not thirty three. This should take into consideration enhanced salaries for qualified staff. Recognition should be given to the fact that the voluntary childcare sector is well supported by SPPA and other umbrella organisations. Competent levels of core funding for proactive support services delivered by umbrella bodies should be stabilised, developed and maintained as part of the continuing Childcare Strategy, building on the established philosophy of partnership and good practice.

\(^1\) A New Deal for Children: Cohen, Moss, Petrie and Wallace 2004
\(^2\) Choice for parents, the best start for children: a ten year strategy for childcare 2004
SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH CHILDMINDING ASSOCIATION

Scottish Childminding Association vision statement:

Quality Childminding...building confident children within a family childcare experience.

The Scottish Childminding Association is the only dedicated support organisation in Scotland for childminding and over 80% of Scotland’s childminders are members of the Association. The Association has regular contact with parents, public, private and voluntary childcare organisations and runs childminding projects in most areas of Scotland. The Association is committed to the development needs of registered childminders and actively promotes childminding as a quality childcare choice. Our vision is for childminding to be recognised as a unique, family-based childcare service. Our key priorities, developed by our Elected Members, allow this vision to be put into practice:

1. Raise the profile of Childminding and the work of the Association
2. Improve the quality of Childminding
3. Recruit and retaining quality Childminders

Support for Parenting

The introduction of Sure Start funding has meant that Childminding is increasingly being used by Local Authorities as a non stigmatised day care service for children where a family is in need of support. This can take a variety of forms from projects assisting teenage parents to a short term need of a family in crisis. As a locally based service it means the child can stay within their community while other agencies eg social services staff can work with the parents.

This type of provision needs to be developed. At the moment some projects are well set up with additional support and training for childminders. However some areas use childminders in an ad hoc way and will not be achieving the best outcome for children or parents.

Different Approaches to Child Development Work.

Increasingly research is showing how important a quality Pre School experience is to a child’s development. In particular the EPPE study has already come up with compelling evidence that should give clear indicators to the way services for children are set up in the future.
Staff training and qualifications are highlighted in particular to effect the outcome for the child. The requirement for staff in Scotland to register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC) will ensure that all staff that register will be appropriately qualified for the job.

However, childminders will not be registered with the SSSC as they are individually registered with the Care Commission. With over 6,000 childminders caring for around 27,000 children (SE Pre School and Childcare stats 2004), this leave a big gap in the qualification's target. Childminders work unsupervised and provide care and learning for all ages of children. In particular they provide full day care for children 0 – 3 years, a critical time for the child’s development. Yet they are not even required to attend basic training prior to registration.

Without a requirement to be qualified, we are already seeing a reduction in the workforce funding being allocated by some Local Authorities to fund qualifications for childminders.

SCMA have developed our Scheme of Excellence which we are in the process of having entered on the Scottish Credit and Qualification’s framework. We have been working closely with Learning and Teaching Scotland in the development of “birth to three “ and with other agencies to ensure the availability of information and training for childminders. We are working with the Scottish Executive in the Early Years Workforce Review and are hopeful that through this we will help resolve the issue of qualifications and training for childminders.

**Flexibility of Childcare Provision**

Childminders can be registered to provide services that would give the flexibility that working parents need. However research shows that with their own family commitments, they rarely provide services in the evening or weekends. It is often more suitable for young children to be cared for in their own homes in the evening.

SCMA have been working with the Scottish Executive to help the development of “sitter services” which provide a carer in the child’s own home. The service must be registered by the Commission as a childcare agency. This should help provide a flexible service. However there is an increasing problem as both services are in competition for the provision of services during the day. With many childminders on the edge of viability, there is a danger of one service displacing another particularly as sitter services are able to offer a subsidised service.

One of the most obvious area for development is the extension to the Pre School Education place. This is currently part time, term time only and free at the point of delivery. However, SCMA are not convinced that additional
educational services are what Pre School children need and research shows that children do not benefit from additional hours. Where extended services rather than education is expanded, it needs to meet the needs of the child. The space and staff ratios at a Local Authority nursery are only suitable for short term places and major changes would need to made if places were to be extended. Wrap around care is successfully provided by childminders who take and collect children from nursery and with much reduced child:staff ratios provide care and learning in a home setting.

The same is the case with out of school provision where for some the use of a club is appropriate for the child. However, other children are better placed with a childminder who will also operate across the school holidays.

**Availability of Choice.**

SCMA would support the need for a variety of choice in the provision of early year's services. This should not be done on the narrow considerations of increasing access to paid employment but should be on the broader aspects of the needs of the child and their family.

This requires a strategy that co-ordinates across the priorities in Education, Social Services and Health and includes the development of regulated services such as childminding and unregulated services such as scouts and guiding.

Parents have access to a Childcare Information Service in each Local Authority, but they provide very different levels of service with some only staffed very part time.

Choice is closely linked to affordability and accessibility and in our many rural areas choice is not always possible. Childminding is often the only viable option and we have good examples in Highland of childminding networks providing an invaluable service.

**Provision for Low Income Families.**

All are agreed that the services offered must be of the same quality as for those on higher or more reliable incomes. It is often the variability of income for many families rather than the level they are paid that is the problem. This means that for continuity of care for the child it is the service that needs as much financial support as the family. This way places can be kept available and flexible without effecting the viability of the service. This financial support should be offered to all services.
In Conclusion: SCMA would welcome the development of a new Scottish Early Years Strategy that address the unique needs of children and families in Scotland.

While much work has been done to integrate planning of children’s services, there is still confusion over the different funding streams. This leaves many services without a long term future and makes planning more difficult.

A future strategy should emphasise the need for an integrated approach but that has to start with a greater understanding of each other’s roles. A move to integrated training which covers the core skills required by all staff working in early years and other care services would begin to move people closer together and give more transferability throughout the sector.

Childminding is an important part of the portfolio of services on offer. The change in legislation though has seen the service overburdened by regulation and it may be time to review the way childminding is viewed. As managers of their service, the Act views them the same as the provider of a large nursery. Childminders report spending as much time carrying out administration tasks as they do with working with children. Though there are many successful quality childminding services, increasingly new people are not completing the application process and as a result the sector is still reducing in size.

We would finally suggest that while we should always be seeking ways to improve, we should also be celebrating success. There have been many examples of excellent practice and innovation across the early years sector and we hope that these will be highlighted by the gathering of evidence.
Submission on behalf of
Amicus-CPHVA (Community Practitioners and Health Visitors Association)

Introduction

The CPHVA is a professional organisation within the Amicus trade union and represents the views and interests of Health Visitors, School Nurses, District Nurses, Practice Nurses and Nursery Nurses who work in Community Health Care.

Our organisation is pleased to be given the opportunity to offer evidence to the Education Committees Early Years Education and Child Care Inquiry. We support the aim of the Education Committee to influence the Executive to deliver effective early year’s education and childcare for the benefit of Scotland’s children and their families.

The recognition of the need to be fully committed to partnership working remembering to include families as equal partners within a more integrated service will be vital components for success in this area of society.

Support for Parenting

Amicus-CPHVA supports the legislative measures that have been put in place to promote the equal rights and treatment of parents by employers. However legislators should not rest on their laurels as much more can be achieved.

In the early years children learn most from their parents. Children require a positive environment, loving physical and emotional care, consistency and stability to promote their physical and psychological development.

Often due to the financial constraints that are placed on family budgets when children arrive many parents have no choice but to return to work. Dependant on the work constraints and demands this has the potential to place a burden on the development of strong parent-infant bonds and can have a detrimental effect on other aspects of the child’s upbringing.

For example the promotion of breast feeding and the use of breast milk in infant nutrition is an area in which Scotland are seen to have taken a proactive and leading role within the United Kingdom. A positive start may suffer if a mother is forced due to financial demands to return to work earlier than she would prefer. In time she may stop providing breast milk due to the burden placed upon her as she attempts to juggle the needs of her child with work.

Several of our European neighbours e.g. Sweden, France have tackled this problem by extending the support provided through extended parental paid leave and this has resulted in higher breast feeding rates and provides a boost to the infant parent bonding process and the psychological and physical well being of both.
It appears too many that to stay at home and care for the next generation is a luxury only available to a few rather than the right to care for your child without a career or financial penalty.

Relative Impact of collective and individual caring on children’s development

The provision of good quality care by the child’s parents or state funded nursery/pre-school environment should be an option for all and not dependant on income.

The care provided by a nursery facility should be delivered by a highly trained motivated workforce to the benefit of the child at the centre of their attention.

The model of care employed by Children and Family Centres is a prime example of a service meeting a child and families needs. Again due to limited resource these local authority run centres only provide a service to those in greatest need of support. This can be due to a variety of pressures that may affect a child and their family.

The children who use this service can range from infant to pre-school depending on the centre resource.

The staff are all highly trained and motivated working in partnership with health and education colleagues providing a web of centre and community based support.

If this mode of delivery were to be extended it would provide a level of support that could be enjoyed by all at an earlier age rather than the conventional place at nursery from the age of 3.

Availability of choice

An awareness of the service choices should be made available to all parents this could either be in the provision of a pack ante-natally or in the early post-natal period and could be facilitated by their Health Visitor or Public Health Nurse. This professional is usually well versed in local partnership working with other agencies and is aware of local resources.

These professional are also able to offer advice on positive parenting approaches. There is a wide range of parenting programmes available for dissemination to parents and these are usually facilitated by Health Visitors/Public Health Nurses.

The co-ordinated research and assessment of these programmes would influence the decision to concentrate on a narrower range of programmes. This would result in the uniform service provision throughout the country that
would be beneficial to parents especially if they were to move from locality to locality.

Any decision to recommend a limited choice of programmes should recognise the resources already invested in training and skills.

In the provision of parenting programmes, partnership and inter-professional working works best when the traditional barriers are removed allowing the expertise of health/education professionals as an example to work together. Examples of this exist where local professionals have liaised proactively in the nursery environment with staff delivering parenting programmes or advising on the diet and exercise needs of the child.

Once the parent has decided that it would be best for their child to attend nursery or another pre-school setting the availability and choice of a place is a factor that can impinge on their desire to return to work or education.

Few full time places exist within the education nursery system, due to a lack of resource there is therefore little flexibility within the education nursery system. Greater choice may exist within the private sector but the costs involved make this option financial unsuitable for many.

The transitional period between pre-school and primary is also an area where more partnership working between professional could be more fully utilised. Several well run school transition projects run throughout the country however these are not open to all and are dependant on local management, individual practitioners and their agencies willingness to participate.

The particular difficulties experience by those families living in remote and rural areas of the country should also be examined in greater detail.

All parents should have access to the services that are available irrespective of income or locality.

**Provision in low income areas**

“Delivering for Health” is the latest in a line of publications highlighting the link between low income and poor health outcomes. The need to address diet and activity within the younger generation should not be disengaged from the need for parenting support and education to sections of the community that traditionally have not engaged with the services offered.

Local practitioners working in partnership are those most likely to have a relationship with the community in which they work and they should be supported to use the skills and knowledge that they have to benefit their clients.

From our members perspective a great deal of our work has results that cannot be quantified until months or indeed years later with parenting support
and programmes it may be a generation before positive results are experienced by society.

Conclusion

The concept of an integrated service delivery should be more than just terminology and should encompass the best of professional practice to the benefit of the client i.e. the child and their family.

The issues of joint systems, inter-disciplinary training and managerial awareness (where multi-disciplinary team working exists) of the unique aspects and input each professional contributes, all have a bearing on the success of integrated service delivery.

Sure Start projects with which the Committee are familiar on the whole work effectively to the benefit of their clients due to the recognition and utilisation of the many skills and professionals within their teams.

On behalf of the organisation I will be happy to elaborate on any point that the committee feels requires clarification when I attend to offer oral evidence.

Gavin Fergie
Professional Officer (Scotland)
Amicus-CPHVA