

Early Years Framework

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the analysis and key recommendations contained within the Government's newly published Early Years Framework.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the content of the new national Early Years Framework.
- 2.2 To note that local implementation of this should be taken forward by Community Planning Partners as part of the development of the local Integrated Children's Service Plan (ICSP) for 2009 – 2012.
- 2.3 To refer report to the Executive for further consideration, with any comments or recommendations the PPG may care to make.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Government, in partnership with COSLA, has developed a new national Early Years Framework for children from pre-birth to eight years of age. The framework is in two parts. The first establishes the case for change in Early Years provision and identifies elements of change and priorities for action. The second part examines the change elements in greater detail.
- 3.2 The introduction to the report describes the changes envisaged as radical and ambitious especially as it notes that these changes will have to be delivered without any new resources. Instead it is calling for a major reshaping of how services, particularly in the universal setting of Health and Education are delivered.
- 3.3 The Case for Action:
The report lays out the importance of Early Years services, and highlights the value of early intervention in promoting future well-being, physical and mental health and educational attainment.
- 3.4 Principles of early intervention have been identified, these are that:
- all have the same outcomes and the same opportunities;
 - those at risk of not achieving those outcomes are identified and steps are taken to prevent that risk materialising;
 - where the risk has materialised effective action is taken;

- parents, families and communities are helped to develop their own solutions, using accessible, high quality public services as required.

4 Putting the vision into action

4.1 The report identifies what it called **10 elements of transformational change** as being central to the success of the framework. It recognises that change of the scale envisaged will need a long term commitment and has set a 10 year timeframe for the elements to be delivered. The 10 elements are:

- a coherent approach;
- helping children, families and communities to secure outcomes for themselves;
- breaking cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes in and through Early Years;
- a focus on engagement and empowerment of children, families and communities;
- using the strength of universal services to deliver prevention and early intervention;
- putting quality at the heart of service delivery;
- services that meet the needs of children and families;
- improving outcomes and children's quality of life through play;
- simplifying and streamlining service delivery;
- more effective collaborations.

The report notes that the power of universal services in Health and Education are the key to the success of the framework. It emphasises that universal services need to build capacity to meet a wider range of needs of children and families within a mainstream setting.

4.2.1 Priorities for Action

The framework identifies a set of priorities for action in the short, medium and long term against each of the elements of transformational change. These priorities for action are not described as being prescriptive but as steps which are most likely to lead to successful outcomes.

The actions include:

- inclusion of the framework within the SOA for 2009/10;
- local agencies beginning the process of aligning resources to the actions;
- local agencies developing the capacity of Health and Education services to meet the wider needs of children and families;
- Community planning partners commissioning a local plan to ensure that a co-ordinated set of supports are in place

for children and families that build on integrated children's services planning.

4.3 **Moving Forward**

This section lays out how the framework will move forward and places it within the context of the SOA and continued partnership between local agencies and the Government. It outlines that progress in relation to the implementation of the framework should be monitored by a local set of indicators developed in line with the national outcomes contained within the Concordat.

4.4 **Resources**

The report concludes by returning to the issue of resources and reiterates that there is unlikely to be any significant new money to support the implementation of the framework. It gives an estimated figure of £1.5bn of current spend on Early Years services and calls for realignment of this resource along with a transfer of resources into prevention and early intervention. The report emphasises that this cannot be at the expense of families who currently receive crisis intervention and intensive support. It states that the key issue is a reorientation in the philosophy and design of services, and emphasises that the first priority is to use the expenditure within Health and in Argyll and Bute's case, Community Services more effectively in supporting early intervention.

5. **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 The new framework makes a strong case for the development of early intervention and support services for early years children and identifies a number of key areas for change to assist in achieving this goal. This report indicates that these should be achieved by the reshaping of existing provision with universal services. The report discusses in some detail how this might be approached without any additional resources.

The report sees the framework being taken forward by local partners under the framework of Community Planning and the SOA with an alignment to the local ICSP.

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

Policy:	Production of local implementation plan
Financial:	Reshape Health and Community Service budgets to support effective early intervention
Legal:	None

Personnel: None

Equal Opportunities: None

**Director of Community Services
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For further information contact:

Douglas Dunlop, Head of Service – Children and Families, Kilmory Castle,
Lochgilphead, Argyll PA31 8RT.
Telephone: 01546 604526

Carol Walker, Head of Service – Pre School and Primary Education, Oban
Education Office, Dalintart Drive, Oban, PA34 4EF.
Telephone: 01631 564 908