



Internal Audit Report

Community Services Department

Review of Pre-school Education

April 2009

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1 INTRODUCTION

This report has been prepared as a result of the Internal Audit review of Community Services, Pre-school Education as part of the 2008-2009 Internal Audit programme and at the request of Community Services – Education, Head of Pre-school and Primary Education.

As required by the Standing Orders, Argyll & Bute Council operates a list of Approved Providers (APL) of Social Care Services of which the Pre-school Education is part. The purpose of the APL is to ensure that there are a range of Service Providers available who can be engaged by the Council for the provision of Pre-school Education.

Pre-school Education is managed by Community Services, with the management of the Pre-school Education being split between Education: Pre-school and Primary and Planning & Performance: Quality Assurance. In the Financial Year 2007-2008 over £3m was spent on the provision of the service. Both services have responsibility for the quality and inspection of Pre-school Education. Performance & Planning are responsible for the quality monitoring and maintenance of the Approved Providers List (APL). The Principal Officer Early Years has responsibility for the management of Pre-school Education.

Regular meetings have taken place between both services in order to take forward an Agenda of inspection and improvement within both internal and external Pre-school Education providers. Internal Audit has attended a number of these meetings, with good communications observed between both services.

Pre-school Education providers who are on the APL undergo a series of checks before being accepted onto the list. In addition the Pre-school Education providers are required to be registered with the Care Commission. Pre-school Education providers are inspected by the Care Commission and by Her Majesties Inspectorate of Education (HMIE). They are also inspected internally by Argyll & Bute Council staff. If action plans arise as a result of an Inspection by the Care Commission or HMIE these are sent to the Quality Improvement Officer, Pre-school Education.

Within Education there is a Quality Improvement Service headed by a Quality Standards Manager and 13 Quality Improvement Officers. Their primary role is to support and challenge schools within Argyll & Bute Council to ensure the quality of provision throughout the Education Service.

A restructure is currently taking place within Quality Assurance (Performance & Planning). Supporting People will be amalgamated into Quality Assurance, increasing staff numbers within the Section. The new structure will consist of 1 Commissioning Manager, 4 Performance Improvement Officers (one for each Area) and 4 Monitoring Officers. They will be supported by administration workers who will carry out desk top monitoring. The new structure will provide greater flexibility for the monitoring of services and increase the capacity to monitor and support the Pre-school Education service.

2 AUDIT SCOPE AND OBJECTIVES

The broad objectives of the review were to ensure:

- There are appropriate procedures in place for application and acceptance of providers onto the Approved Providers List and that these procedures are being followed.
- Service Level Agreements exist in respect of Pre-school Education providers accepted onto the Approved Providers List (APL).
- Reviews are being carried out for Pre-school Education providers to ensure that they are complying with the requirements set out by the APL, The Care Commission and HMle.
- Pre-school Education providers are registered with the Care Commission.
- The monitoring and inspection of internal Pre-School providers is comparable with standards and monitoring arrangements set for external providers.

3 RISK ASSESSMENT

As part of the audit process and in conjunction with our Systems Based Auditing (SBA), Internal Control Questionnaire (ICQ) approach, the risk register was reviewed to identify any areas that needed to be included within the audit.

4 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

There are no Corporate Governance issues to be reported as a result of this audit.

5 MAIN FINDINGS

- 5.1 Robust procedures exist for the application process and acceptance onto the Approved Providers List (APL).
- 5.2 The APL is reviewed on a regular basis.
- 5.3 Internal Audit reviewed a sample of Pre-school Education provider files across the private sector and internal providers. Twenty one Files were reviewed. The review of files found that there was inconsistency between the private provider and internal provider files in terms of the information held on file. External provider files contain information with regards to their policies and procedures, internal providers are subject

to Argyll & Bute policies and procedures and this information would be held by the relevant departments.

- 5.4 In order to assist with the sharing of information and reduce the need to duplicate information held with regards to internal providers consideration should be given to setting up a 'shared drive' on the network that can be accessed by Pre-school Education and Quality Assurance.
- 5.5 Service Level Agreements exist between Argyll & Bute Council and the private provider.

6 RECOMMENDATIONS

Five recommendations were identified as a result of the audit, 1 has a high priority and 4 have a medium priority. The recommendations are shown in the action plan below.

7 AUDIT OPINION

Based on the findings we can conclude that the Council has processes in place for the acceptance, approval and monitoring of the Pre-school Education providers.

Recommendations arising from the audit work should be implemented by the nominated responsible officer within the agreed timescale. Recommendations not implemented will require explanation to the Audit Committee. This could lead to findings being reported in the Internal Control Statement produced by the Council in support of the Annual Accounts.

8 ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks are due to the Principal Officer Early Years and her staff, the Quality Assurance Manager and her staff, Finance Staff within Argyll House and the Health & Safety Manager for their co-operation and assistance during the Audit and the preparation of the Report and Action Plan.

Argyll & Bute Council's Internal Audit section has prepared this Report. Our work was limited to the objectives in Section 2. We cannot be held responsible or liable if information material to our task was withheld or concealed from us, or misrepresented to us.

This Report is private and confidential for the Council's information only and is solely for use in the provision of an internal audit service to the Council. The Report is not to be copied, quoted or referred to, in whole or in part, without prior written consent.

APPENDIX 2 ACTION PLAN

No.	FINDINGS	PRIORITY	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	IMPLEMENTATION DATE
1	There was a lack of clarity with regards to who was responsible for the recording and storage of information with regards to information being held for internal Pre-school Education Providers.	<i>High</i>	Written procedures should be drawn up clearly stating the responsibilities across Education and Planning & Performance.	Quality Assurance Manager/Principal Officer Early Years	1st September 2009
2	Duplication of information is held by Education and Planning & Performance.	<i>Medium</i>	Consideration should be given to setting up a 'shared drive' on the network that can be accessed by Pre-school Education and Quality Assurance for the storing and sharing of provider information. Consideration should be given as to who will manage and monitor the information stored on this 'shared drive'.	Quality Assurance Manager/Principal Officer Early Years/IT	30th June 2009
3	Providers remained on the Approved Providers List when not being registered with the Care Commission	<i>Medium</i>	A procedure should be drawn up for updating the Approved Providers List on a planned regular basis with any amendments regarding providers being made immediately.	Quality Assurance Manager	30th June 2009

No.	FINDINGS	PRIORITY	RECOMMENDATION	RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	IMPLEMENTATION DATE
4	There is inconsistency between the inspections carried out on the external providers and internal providers.	<i>Medium</i>	Written procedures should be drawn up clearly stating the responsibilities across Education and Planning & Performance for the inspection and review of Pre-School Services. A programme of planned inspections, announced and unannounced should be drawn up for the internal providers, aligning it with the procedures currently in place for the external providers.	Quality Assurance Manager/Principal Officer Early Years	17th November 2009
5	Self Evaluation Questionnaires for providers (internal and external) are currently being drawn	<i>Medium</i>	A Self Evaluation Questionnaire Form should continue to be developed and introduced. This should reflect the needs of both internal and external providers. The providers should complete this on an annual basis.	Quality Assurance Manager/Principal Officer Early Years	30th September 2009