

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 13 JUNE 2017**

**EARLY YEARS STRATEGY 2017– 2020**

**REPORT BY MARK ARMSTRONG, STRATEGIC DIRECTOR –PEOPLE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report seeks committee's approval of the Early Years Strategy, which sets out the vision for our youngest children and their families. The purpose of this strategy is to improve opportunities for our youngest citizens. In so doing, Angus Council is committed to making Angus the best place in Scotland in which children grow, learn and thrive. We will do this by continuing to work with our partners across our communities to offer the best service we can to children and families.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Children and Learning Committee:

- (i) Approves the proposed Early Years Strategy

**2. ALIGNMENT TO ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN/SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT/CORPORATE PLAN**

- 2.1 This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2013-2016:

Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens

Individuals and families are involved in decisions which affect them

We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced

Individuals are supported in their own communities with good quality services

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 The Children and Young People's Act (Scotland) 2014 highlights the importance of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) in child development. Angus Council is committed to providing high quality early learning and childcare experiences for all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds. We achieve this through partnership working with a range of private nurseries and playgroups as well as providing early learning and childcare within our schools. The Scottish Government published, The Blueprint for 2020: The expansion of Early Learning and Childcare in Scotland, in March 2017. Through this, it has made a commitment to deliver 1140 hours early learning and childcare (ELC) to all three and four year olds and eligible two year olds by 2020.

- 3.2 The Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2017 – 2020 highlights the importance of targeting support towards the early years and addressing the key issues that can act as barriers to children and young people achieving their full potential. By delivering individualised, family based support at the earliest appropriate time, we will ensure we reduce inequalities and disadvantage improving outcomes in health, wellbeing and education attainment for children and improving the lives and long-term life chances of children and young people in Angus.

## 4. CURRENT POSITION

4.1 Angus Council aims to make Angus the best place in Scotland in which to grow, learn and thrive. We are committed to responding to the Key Development Areas identified within the Dartington Wellbeing Research:

- **Poor Engagement with School (aged 9 – 16)**
- **Early Initiation of Substance Use (aged 12 – 16)**
- **Poor Early Social & Emotional Development (Parents of children aged 0 – 5)**

4.2 Partnership working across Angus Council Services and across Tayside allows us to engage in multi-agency, multi-disciplinary working to ensure we are Getting it Right for Angus' children.

4.3 Attachment and Nurture

4.3.1 The Early Years Service recognises the importance of attachment to child development. The Service provides learning pathways to ensure that all professionals who work with Angus children have sound and current knowledge of child development and attachment theory.

4.3.2 The Early Years Service is committed to the development of Nurture Spaces which support child development by giving children opportunities to revisit early missed nurturing experiences in a discreet and dedicated room. These facilities are a key feature of all Early Years estate developments.

4.3.3 In Angus, we currently provide early learning and childcare places in fifty council nurseries attached to school buildings and thirty-four partner settings. These partner settings are private nurseries and voluntary playgroups who have a contract to provide funded childcare places on behalf of Angus Council. The total capacity across Angus as of April 2017 is 2818 funded places. These places are offered on the current 600 hours of funded provision. The council currently employs over 200 Early Years Practitioners working in our 50 council nurseries.

4.4 A centrally based team of two Principal Teachers, two Development Officers and six Early Years Practitioners offers support to all eighty-four settings focussing on:

- Improvements to the quality of learning experiences
- Policy development
- Developing the Curriculum to meet children's needs
- Nurture principles
- English as an Additional Language

In addition, this team delivers a significant number of professional learning courses for staff across all settings.

4.5 In order to support families, we have a team of Early Years Workers and the Just Play team. These also currently support children under five with Additional Support Needs and families where a parent is or has been in prison. This work is complimented by two Maternal and Infant Nutrition workers, part-funded by NHS Tayside, who deliver workshops on nutrition and offer advice to parents on the challenges of bringing up young children.

## 5. PROPOSALS

5.1 The Angus Early Years Strategy (**Appendix 1**) sets out our vision for Angus for the next five years.

5.2 Principles

5.2.1 Angus Council recognises the benefit of high quality early learning and childcare on improving outcomes for children. We recognise the long-lasting impact of a high quality early years experience, both at home and in the wider world.

5.2.2 Communities are changing, and with that, the needs of those communities change. We need to be ready to meet these needs.

5.2.3 Partnership working across Health, Social Work and within the private and voluntary sector is pivotal if we are to meet community needs and improve outcomes for our youngest citizens. Therefore, we will work with these partners and within communities to provide an Early Years experience that is Supporting, Nurturing and Enabling.

5.3 Our Priorities for the next five years are to:

- Secure a high-quality early learning and childcare experience for all children.
- Create the capacity and supporting structures for 1140 hours early learning and Childcare ELC.
- Support families to ensure the wellbeing needs of children and families are met.

5.4 Our Outcomes for children and families:

- Our children will play, learn and in so doing, achieve their full potential with the support of a highly trained workforce.
- Our children will thrive in safe, nurturing environments that encourage learning through play.
- Children improve their language skill through an increased focus on language development.
- Parents are confident in supporting their child's growth and development.

5.5 In order to achieve this we will work with communities to provide an early years experience that is:

Supporting

- Offering a range of childcare options across a locality
- Working in partnership to address the needs of children and families

Nurturing

- Creating nurturing environments which support children's learning
- Offering parenting support to all families

Enabling

- Creating learning experiences that will allow children to fulfil their potential
- Helping families to find the right childcare to allow parents to work or study

5.6 Early learning and childcare options will change.

- 1140 hours will be gradually introduced through pilot projects starting August 2017.
- Childminders who meet the criteria for partnership working with Angus Council and accept a contract will be able to offer funded places.
- Council nurseries, private nurseries and playgroups, where possible, will develop to meet the needs of the locality and offer more flexibility in how they offer funded sessions.
- A Family Nurture Team will be established to support parents within their locality delivering the nationally and internationally recognised parenting programmes, 5 To Thrive and Incredible Years intervention programmes.

5.7 Early Learning and Childcare increase to 1140 hours

We plan to increase our provision in line with the government's ambition. In order to ensure all eligible children can access 1140 hours of childcare provision, we will need to significantly increase our capacity by 2020.

We will deliver 1140 hours through a planned programme of improvement, linked to the Angus Schools Investment Strategy. Plans for this expansion will be presented to committee in the autumn of 2017.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial implications arising directly from this report. The plan for expansion to 1140 hours will include indicative costings.

**NOTE:** No background papers, as detailed by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to a material extent in preparing the above report.

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