



Early Years Strategy

2017 to 2020



June 2017

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Angus Council is committed to making Angus the best place in Scotland in which children grow, learn and thrive. We work with our partners across our communities, and across Tayside, to offer the best services we can to children and families.
- 1.2 Providing high quality early learning and childcare has a significant impact on improving outcomes for children, both at home and in the wider world. We will work with our partners across communities and with parents to ensure our children grow up to be inquisitive, articulate, numerate and confident individuals who can secure their role within their community and beyond.
- 1.3 We are committed to an approach based on early intervention and prevention. We recognise the key role parents and the community play in supporting our youngest citizens and will work with parents to ensure our children have the very best start in life.
- 1.4 We will work with parents, children, partners and communities in the development and evaluation of the service.
- 1.5 This strategy outlines our key priorities for the next three years and established principles that we will use to assess the impact of our work.
- 1.6 In preparing this strategy we have taken account of the Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2017-2020.
- 1.7 There will also be implications from the Council's School Investment Strategy. This will be addressed as the implementation plans for both strategies are developed.
- 1.8 This strategy will be reviewed by December 2018, to ensure that we are delivering on the key objectives.

Early Years Strategy on a Page

Provide a high-quality early learning and childcare experience for all children

Support families to ensure the wellbeing needs of children and families are met

Create the capacity in the early years workforce to support high quality childcare

Our Ambition:

To make Angus the best place in Scotland to grow, learn and thrive

Our children will grow up to be inquisitive, articulate, numerate and confident individuals who can secure their role within their community and beyond.

Our Pledge

We will work with communities to provide an Early Years experience that is:

- Supporting
- Nurturing
- Enabling

We will achieve this by delivering:

High quality Learning environments both indoors and outside

Highly trained staff to support children's progress

Early intervention for families with access to a range of support with parenting

The best possible early years experiences to our children

Investment in our workforce

A clear pathway for from apprenticeships through to degree qualifications

Quality Assurance procedures that are used to inform improvement.

A comprehensive training programme to staff across all nurseries and playgroups

2 CONTEXT FOR THIS STRATEGY

- 2.1 This strategy is written in a context where there has been, and will be, significant investment in early years services across Scotland.
- 2.2 Young children have a natural curiosity in all that surrounds them. Children are unique individuals who build their learning and understanding from their earliest encounters and experiences. As such, all children in our care have access to a broad range opportunities that support language development and allow children to become active participants in their own learning. As such, they will have access to both outdoor and indoor learning experiences.
- 2.3 Children need nurtured. They need warmth and positive interactions with the adults around them in a happy, supportive environment. Where children feel safe to take risks and make mistakes.
- 2.4 We will strive to ensure that every child in Angus has a positive start in life; a positive start to learning; and feels safe and secure within their environment. Through this approach, children will grow to become confident citizens who recognise the role they will play in developing Angus' future.
- 2.5 This approach to early learning and childcare is informed by key national documents, including Getting it Right for Every Child and influenced by the theories of Vygotsky, Bruner and Dewey. It compliments the national best practice guidance, *Building the Ambition* and meets the demands of *Curriculum for Excellence*.
- 2.6 Angus Council currently offers a minimum of 600 hours of Early Learning and Childcare (ELC). Parents can choose to take these funded sessions at their local council nursery or at one of our 34 partner providers. We currently fund the provision of early learning and childcare to approximately 2000 children across Angus. This means that 96% of children accessing their funding.

Early Learning and Childcare Provision

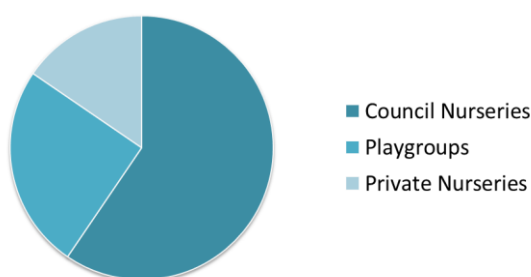


Figure 1

- 2.7 The Scottish Government is committed to increasing early learning and childcare provision from 600 hours per year per child to 1140 hours. The expectation is that this increase will be in place by 2020.

- 2.8 We are developing implementation plans for the increased provision based on the principles contained in this strategy.
- 2.9 Partnership working across Health, Social Work and within the private and voluntary sector is pivotal if we are to improve outcomes for our youngest citizens. Therefore, we will work with these partners and with our communities to provide an Early Years experience that is: Supporting, Nurturing and Enabling.

3 GUIDING PRINCIPLES

3.1 Provide a high-quality early learning and childcare experience for all children

- 3.1.1 Further Curriculum development:
- 3.1.2 Through the provision of high quality learning environments for children both indoors and outside, Angus Council will support our children to explore their environment and challenge their perceptions of their abilities.
- 3.1.3 Highly trained staff will continue to support children's progress through effective learning experiences that will enhance their use of language and early numeracy skills.
- 3.1.4 Angus Council Early Years staff will work with all partners to ensure Quality Assurance procedures continue to be used to inform improvement.

3.2 Support families to ensure the wellbeing needs of children and families are met

- 3.2.1 We will deliver evidence-based parenting programmes see **Appendix 1**.
- 3.2.2 These will offer early intervention for families across Angus that will allow families access to a range of support for parenting. This support may be offered group support sessions, or within the family home. Any parent who feels they need support will be able to access this service. As families gain a deeper understanding of the issues they are facing and strategies to deal with these issues, their confidence in parenting will increase. We expect that as families develop skills they will develop both the confidence and skill to support not only their own children but also to support others within their communities.

3.3 Create the capacity in the early years workforce to support high quality childcare

- 3.3.1 We are committed to ensuring that we can offer children the best possible early years experiences. To achieve this we will continue to invest in our workforce.
- 3.3.2 Firstly, we are creating a clear pathway for professional development from apprenticeships through to degree qualifications. Secondly, we are investing in our workforce, over 87% of our current Early Years staff have permanent contracts.
- 3.3.3 The Early Years Service offers a comprehensive training programme to staff across all nurseries and playgroups to ensure high quality learning experiences for children.

3.3.4 We have a central team who offer support across all 84 settings. This team ensures a consistency of approach across all settings. This means that for any child moving from one setting to another e.g. playgroup to nursery, there should be similar learning opportunities, similar resources and a clear ethos focussing on the child at the centre of his/her learning. This consistency of approach, along with our commitment to continued partnership means parents can be confident in the quality of ELC at their choice of provider.

4 HOW WE WILL APPLY THESE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

4.1 We will assess the quality of early learning and childcare in each setting to ensure that there is equity across Angus.

4.2 We will develop a range of flexible models across each locality in Angus. This will be based on consultation and engagement with parents, relevant professionals and service providers.

4.3 We will pilot and evaluate alternative models of service delivery. These will be evaluated, with best practice being disseminated widely.

4.4 We will monitor progress by assessing early years and childcare activity against the following indicators.

- At least 95% of children attending ELC provision can share their learning through talking about what they are learning, how they are learning and how it makes them feel.
- At least 85% of our children explore and experiment within their environment and show increasing levels of independence in line with their age and stage of development.
- At least 96% of children, eligible for ELC, within SIMD 1-3 will have access to 1140hours funded provision by 2020.
- At least 85% of children are meeting all of their developmental milestones by the time they start school.
- A 10% reduction in referrals to Children & Families Service for families with nursery-aged children seeking parenting support by 2020.
- Evidence-based parenting programmes will be available across the eight localities.
- There is a learning pathway for practitioners that ensures at least 10% of our early years workforce will be degree qualified by 2020.

1 Evidenced based Programs

- 1.1 **Incredible Years® BASIC pre-school parenting programme** (University of Washington, Seattle, USA) was developed to target disruptive behaviour problems and promote healthy social emotional development.
- 1.2 It targets improved parent-child interactions, less harsh and more nurturing parenting and increased parental social support and problem-solving. For children it focusses on strong social and emotional development and equips them for the challenges they will face as they grow up.
- 1.3 Research trials have repeatedly demonstrated that this programme is capable of improving the outcomes for up to two-thirds of children affected by social and emotional issues. This evidence is strongest for young children between the ages of approximately 3 - 6, and, as such is our target group.
- 1.4 This programme has been successfully implemented in real-life settings in the UK, including rural and urban communities such as Perth & Kinross.
- 1.5 **Outcomes achieved in the first 3-year phase** - Between 2013 and 2016, 14 Community Planning Partnerships joined forces with the PoPP team to adopt the PoPP implementation model in their local areas. The practitioners who ran groups for parents during this time, routinely gathered parent-reported data on the level of behavioural challenge exhibited by their children at the beginning (T1), and at the end of their groups (T2). They used a standardised assessment tool called the Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) for this purpose.
- 1.6 Activity and outcome data in the UK as at 20/10/16

Number of groups delivered	410
Number of families enrolled in groups	2493
% of children whose parents recorded an improvement in their behavioural SDQ scores between T1 and T2	80%
Number and % of children (with T1 and T2 data) who had moved out of this high risk range by T2	N = 492 (approx. 60%)

2 Five to Thrive (FTT)

- 2.1 This Kate Cairns Associates (KCA) approach puts attachment relationships at the center of all work with children and families. It describes a sequence of relational activities that build healthy brains in young children and supports ongoing healthy brain function throughout life. It offers a bridge between professional understanding of neuroscience and everyday experience.

2.2 Barnardo's Children's Services workers in Scotland are trained in the Five to Thrive approach. This project will bring together the expertise of Barnardo's, Angus Council and Kate Cairns Associates (KCA), to deliver the key messages of neuroscience in relation to the brain development of young children, on a universal basis across the early year's provision in Angus.

2.3 Five to Thrive will:

- Increase understanding and confidence of early years practitioners in delivering the key messages from neuroscience in relation to children's brain development
- Improve parent-child attachment via a range of activities within Angus Council's early year's establishments.

2.4 Both approaches compliment the ongoing Nurture and Cosy Corner initiatives operating in most Early Learning and Childcare settings across Angus.