

Early Years Update**Report by Mary Smith, Director, Education, Communities and Economy****1 Purpose of Report**

To provide a short update on work undertaken on the early learning and childcare provision and to set out the vision for young children and families in Midlothian.

2 Background

Previous papers to Council (in June and September 2014) have outlined Midlothian Council's obligations under the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (the Act), particularly in relation to providing 600 hours early learning and childcare to certain 2 year old and to all 3 and 4 year old children.

Quality experiences in the early years of a child's life are key to their learning and development and set the foundations for future positive outcomes. This is recognised by the Community Planning Partnership (CPP), which has made early years one of its three key priorities. The Scottish Government endorses early learning and childcare, awarding it high importance through the key drivers of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Early Years Collaborative, Child Poverty Strategy and national practice guidance: Building the Ambition. It is therefore of vital importance that Midlothian Council has a well developed vision for the future of early learning and childcare in Midlothian, providing strategic direction and a cohesive and interconnected range of services.

3 Report Implications**3.1 600 hours early learning and childcare for 3 and 4 year olds**

All three and four year old children have access to 600 hours of early learning and childcare. We have taken a flexible approach to implementing this in response to local need. An enhanced staffing structure is now in place to support the implementation in local authority nurseries.

3.2 600 hours early learning and childcare for 2 year olds

The Scottish Government delayed the legal duty to provide places for eligible two year olds from August to October 2014. Midlothian Sure Start (MSS) Centres and partnership providers offer a flexible service responsive to need. Forty families have taken up places to date. This initial low uptake is consistent with the national picture and take up is being closely monitored. Working in partnership with MSS, Partnership Centres and Health colleagues, work is ongoing to publicise these opportunities to access Early Learning and Childcare. This is to ensure that any barriers are removed so that all parents with an eligible child are supported to make an application for a place. A Midlothian Council leaflet will be distributed to coincide with the Scottish

Government second wave of advertising for the National Childcare Marketing Campaign. The eligibility criteria for 2 year olds changes from August 2015 and a scoping exercise is currently taking place to support succession planning in order to ensure we are able to meet the projected need.

The Scottish Government has increased the capital funding for the additional 2 year olds in 2015/16 and distribution details have now been received, allocating an additional £318,000 to Midlothian. This now revises the table previously presented in the September paper to Council to the following:

Capital funding	2014/15	2015/16
Other eligible 2 year olds	£ 685,604.00	£ 652,160.00
3 and 4 and Looked After 2 year olds	£ 471,000.00	£ 505,681.00
Total	£ 1,156,604.00	£ 1,157,841.00

3.3 Former Bonnyrigg Leisure Centre

Agreement in principle has been reached between Midlothian Council and Bright Sparks Playgroup on the layout of the former Bonnyrigg Leisure Centre. The remodelled building will incorporate facilities used by Bright Sparks along with provision for an additional 20 morning/20 afternoon early learning and childcare which could be run by the Council or another provider. Bright Sparks will work with parents and carers to build a centre of excellence for children with disabilities in the new facilities. In addition, we are exploring options for further facilities for use by the local community these include a soft play area and cafe. Detailed design work is now taking place and final costings will be prepared before service level agreements are signed.

3.4 Early Learning and Childcare Vision

Our Midlothian early learning and childcare ambition is to establish integrated Family Learning Centres in the key priority CPP areas of Dalkeith Central/Woodburn, Mayfield/Easthouses and Gorebridge. The drivers which support this ambition are both national and local:

Nationally, these include the Scottish Government and Children and Young People Act and early learning and childcare within it; the Early Years Collaborative; and the Play Strategy for Scotland.

Locally, key drivers include the Single Midlothian Plan (SMP) priorities of early years and child poverty, positive destinations and the SMP approaches of preventative intervention and capacity building/co-production. Children from deprived areas in Midlothian have lower scores than the national average for maths and reading when they start Primary school. Children from deprived areas are twice as likely to have negative post-school destinations as those from less deprived areas. In 2013 twice as many school leavers from the 20% most deprived areas went into negative destinations as the other 80% of children.

Our vision is to deliver integrated Family Learning Centres in the targeted areas, building on and enhancing existing capacity. We will learn from best practice examples from within and outwith Midlothian and adapt them to the needs of the communities in which they sit. Projects such as Pen Green in

Corby have shown improvements in outcomes using centres which co-locate key workers in order to integrate services at the point of delivery. We plan to have a multi disciplinary approach, bringing together Early Learning and Childcare staff, Allied Health Professionals, Lifelong Learning and Employability, Family Support and Third Sector partners to work together with communities. This would enable families to access a team which could support their child, under one roof and firmly rooted in their local community.

A driver diagram showing the development of the action plan and its outcomes is included in **Appendix 1**.

3.5 Resource

These developments will be funded by the monies allocated to Midlothian Council for the provision of early learning and childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds previously notified to Council on 23rd September 2014. The intention is to maximise the existing estate with the potential to build capacity where required.

3.6 Risk

An extensive body of research on the outcomes of the work undertaken by Growing Up in Scotland (GUS) and Pen Green Corby, including implementation of the Parents Involved in their Child's Learning model in Midlothian, has shown it to be a highly effective model that delivers significantly improved outcomes for children. GUS research highlights that support is delivered in a manner that would engage the families who would benefit most from receiving it.

It will be essential that communities are engaged in the design and delivery of the Family Learning Centres to ensure that they are integrated elements of the communities in which they sit and accessible to, and accessed by, all those who will benefit from its services. This would promote a strengths based community assets model to engage parents in family learning which has a strong evidence-base to deliver long term outcomes and positive destinations.

We plan to develop a Training Academy in a Family Learning Centre which would support the Modern Apprenticeship model linked to positive destinations and economic growth. This would allow us to develop an internal workforce within Midlothian to support the expanding Early Learning and Childcare job market, offering our young people a flexible career path.

3.7 Single Midlothian Plan and Business Transformation

Themes addressed in this report:

- ☐ Community safety
- ☐ Adult health, care and housing
- ☒ Getting it right for every Midlothian child
- ☒ Improving opportunities in Midlothian
- ☒ Sustainable growth
- ☐ Business transformation and Best Value
- ☐ None of the above

3.8 Key Priorities within the Single Midlothian Plan

This work is a part of the Single Midlothian Plan's key priority of Early Years. It will utilise the approaches of preventative intervention and capacity building and co-production. The vision is to deliver three integrated Family Learning Centres in Midlothian, one each in the three geographical areas targeted.

3.9 Impact on Performance and Outcomes

Midlothian has established a knowledge exchange relationship with Pen Green and we would look to build on that relationship to support the implementation of the Family Learning Centres.

One of the Early Years Collaborative tests of change in Midlothian has been using the Pen Green model to involve parents in their child's learning and has shown some significant early gains. See **Appendix 2** for further information.

Successful implementation of this model will help address inequalities in the three geographical areas, ensuring children are ready to learn when they reach primary school.

In the longer term, this will lead to improved performance at school and positive destinations for school leavers (another of the Single Midlothian Plan's key priorities).

The links below give detail on research which supports the shaping of this early years vision.

Being Two overview from Pen Green

<http://childrenscentre.pengreen.org/research/being-two-overview/>

Pen Green Evidenced Based Practice: Making Children's Learning Visible

<http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/vlpdetails.aspx?lpeid=451>

The Parents Involved in their Children's Learning (PICL) approach

<http://archive.c4eo.org.uk/themes/families/vlpdetails.aspx?lpeid=414>

Growing Up in Scotland: Changes in child cognitive ability in the pre-school years

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/publications/2011/05/31085122/0>

Joseph Rowntree Foundation: Closing the attainment gap in Scottish education

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/closing-attainment-gap-scottish-education>

3.10 Adopting a Preventative Approach

This early years work is, by its very nature, preventative.

3.11 Involving Communities and Other Stakeholders

Communities and other stakeholders will be involved in the scoping, options appraisal and ultimately running of the Family Learning Centres.

3.12 Ensuring Equalities

Underpinning the Family Learning Centre model would be an ethos of equality, inclusion, social justice and the building of family resilience embedded shared values and respect.

In each locality we will involve the community in carrying out an Equalities Impact Assessment around the proposed Family Learning Centre model.

3.13 Supporting Sustainable Development

The proposals will be scaled to fit the available capital and revenue funding provided by the Scottish Government for early learning and childcare for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. Ongoing sustainability will require community involvement – see Risk section above.

The Council's Planning Policy & Environment team has been shown an advanced draft of this report. It is confident that the above vision does not constitute a 'plan' or 'programme' under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act, and as such is not subject to any Strategic Environmental Assessment-related requirements of the Act.

3.14 IT Issues

IT involvement will be required in the design and implementation of the Family Learning Centres and an advanced draft of this report has been passed to IT and an initial meeting has been arranged.

4 Summary

This paper provides an update on the delivery, and sets out the vision for, early learning and childcare in Midlothian.

5 Recommendations

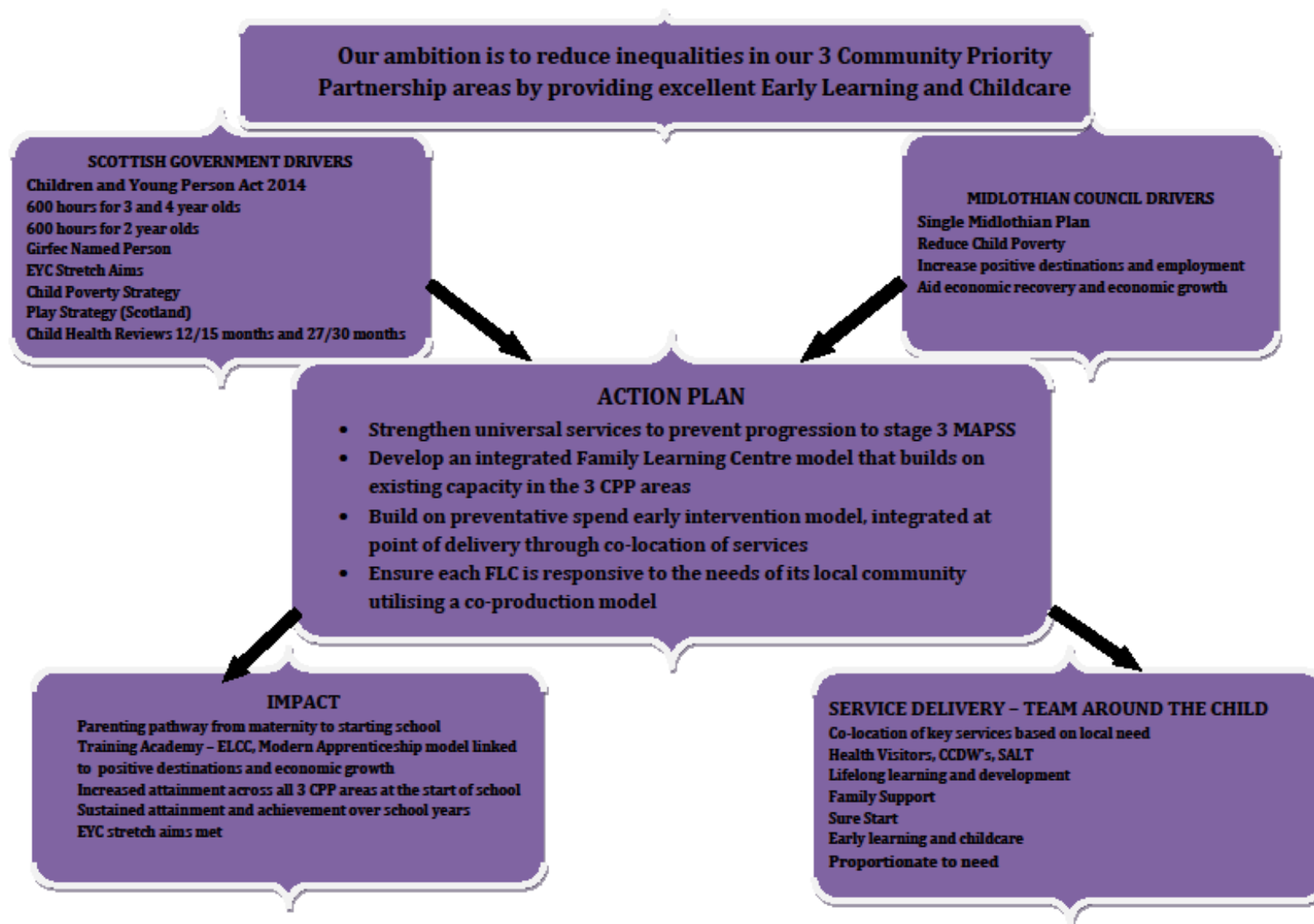
Council is asked to:

- Note the work undertaken in the implementation of early learning and childcare in Midlothian.
- Agree the vision for early years services in Midlothian
- Request a follow-up paper giving an update on progress implementing the integrated Family Learning Centres

16 December 2014

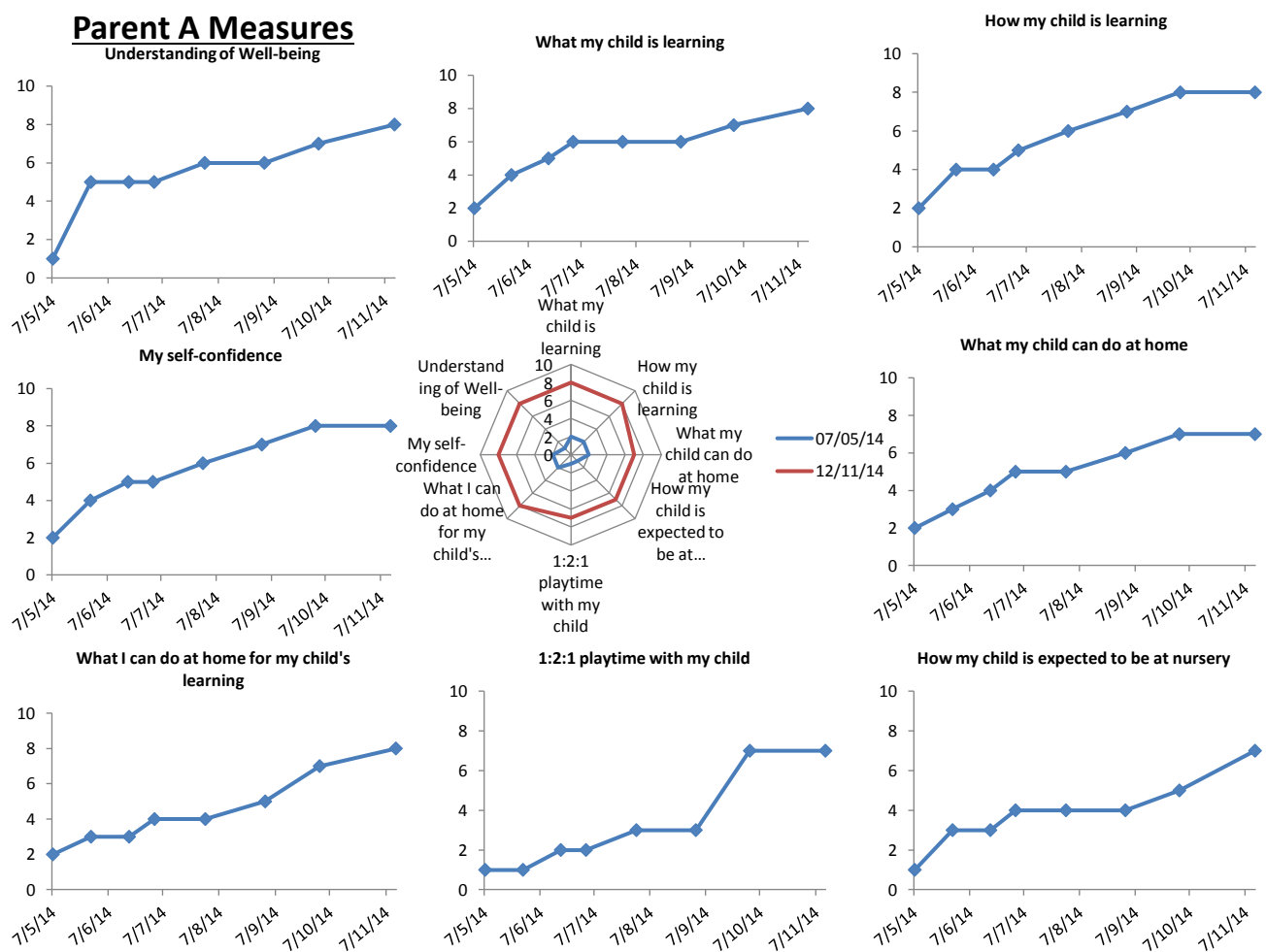
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Appendix 1



Appendix 2

Using the Model for Improvement promoted by the Early Years Collaborative a project to involve parents in their children's learning was introduced at Midlothian Sure Start's centre in Loanhead. The project involved a small number of families and throughout the period of the project parents were actively engaged in how their children learn and to create a learning environment both at home and in the nursery. We acknowledged that parents were experts in their own right and created an environment where the practitioner and parent were equal partners. During the project we regularly asked parents about their child's learning and their own awareness and the results show that the parents became more aware of how their children learned and what they could do to increase this learning. The results for one parent are shown below.



Declaration Box

Instructions: *This box must be completed by the author of the report. The box will be copied and saved by the Council Secretariat who will delete it from the report prior to photocopying the agenda.*

Title of Report: **Early Years Update**

Meeting Presented to: **Council, 16th December 2014**

Author of Report: **Julie Fox**

I confirm that I have undertaken the following actions before submitting this report to the Council Secretariat (Check boxes to confirm):-

- ☒ *All resource implications have been addressed. Any financial and HR implications have been approved by the Head of Finance and Integrated Service Support.*
- ☒ *All risk implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *All other report implications have been addressed.*
- ☒ *My Director has endorsed the report for submission to the Council Secretariat.*

For Cabinet reports, please advise the Council Secretariat if the report has an education interest. This will allow the report to be located on the Cabinet agenda among the items in which the Religious Representatives are entitled to participate.

Likewise, please advise the Council Secretariat if any report for Midlothian Council has an education interest. The Religious Representatives are currently entitled to attend meetings of the Council in a non-voting observer capacity, but with the right to speak (but not vote) on any education matter under consideration, subject always to observing the authority of the Chair.