

COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR



MOVING FORWARD

DRAFT

**Integrated Early Years
Provision –
Draft for Consultation**

Contents:

1. Introduction
2. Integrating Services
3. Proposal
4. Consultation Strategy
5. Conclusion

1 Introduction

Scottish Councils have for some time now been encouraged to work with providers in the private and voluntary sectors to expand provision for all 3 and 4 year olds. The Government's objective is that free pre-school education should be available to all 3 and 4 year old children. It also wants to improve the integration of pre-school education with childcare, to ease parents return to work and training. In addition, the SureStart initiative targets children and families at risk of social exclusion.

Undoubtedly, the expansion and quality of provision has been a success. However, current provision may not be offering parents and young people:

- the range of services they require;
- the flexibility that they and their children need;

A number of factors have contributed to this situation:

- financial availability of centres;
- constraints due to amount of staff and accommodation arrangements;
- reducing numbers;
- the Scottish Executive's recommendation, and funding, for a pre-school place to be delivered over 33 weeks rather than fitting in with school term times;
- the incremental nature of the expansion and funding due to the Scottish Executive policies and funding.

Now that a universal quality provision is available within the Western Isles, it is necessary that the Council reviews:

- how many places to provide;
- what range of services is required;
- where to provide services;
- how best to integrate them with childcare provision;
- which hours to provide;
- how to make provision for the most vulnerable.

The Western Isles Childcare Partnership has recently commissioned an audit of needs by consulting with parents, service providers and young people.

The audit achieved a 50% return rate and we are currently analysing the data and preparing a report to bring to Committee. However, it is clear that our current services will have to change in response to these needs and the Department of Education would like to initiate a consultation process to investigate the potential for developing an integrated early year's service and thereby provide a service within the resources available that meets the needs of parents and children.

2 **Integrating Services**

“Our vision is for a Scotland which is built on fairness, equality and opportunity. This means giving every child the best possible start in the early years This strategy seeks to bring together the range of services for young children and their outcomes for the next generation. This requires better joined up working between professionals in the NHS, local authority, voluntary and private sector.”

Integrated Strategy report - Early Year, January 2004

The Western Isles Children Services Plan underpins this approach and similar consultations are being prepared in relation to the Departments of Education and Social Work Integrated Children’s Services Strategy and the Department of Education’s Inclusion Policy.

Integrated services are designed to:

- reduce the fragmentation of service provision;
- improve the co-ordination of inputs;
- develop greater efficiency and thereby expand the range and nature of provision available;
- provide a more effective high quality universal service available to all with targeted input for those most at risk of exclusion.

3 **Proposal And Consultation Strategy**

Appendix 1 details the range of services we believe should be available and is required by parents and children in local community areas.

To do this the Department of Education would like to consult providers in order to design the most viable structure within which we can develop services and reduce inefficiency.

The Department will consult the following providers between February and March 2004 and report to Committee in May 2004:

- CNSA
- Pre-school providers
- NCH
- Social Work Department
- Health
- SPPA
- SCMA
- VAL – Open Sesame.

4 **Conclusion**

The Department of Education wishes to develop and provide an excellent early years service.

Currently, of the 11,275 households in the Western Isles 2,772 include children. The response rate to the current audit is in excess of 1,000 and providers have the unique opportunity to review, and if necessary, re-design our provision in light of future demand and needs.

The Executive is providing increased budget provision for 2004/05 and 2005/06 and we would like to use this funding to develop services that are viable in the long term.

1. Family Centres

Multi-purpose centres available in community areas providing the following range of services:

- Pre-school education and childcare inclusive of homework, sport and childcare to develop an after school and holiday service.
- Mother and toddlers and parent support groups providing access and education in relation to health, diet, education, child management, child development.
- Toy Library and Resource Centre.
- Support to Youth Clubs Associations.
- Co-ordinate child minding services in rural areas.
- Provide and develop a sitter service.
- Provide and develop a home start service.

2. Development of Day Care Services.

3. Develop Pre-school provision.