

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee – 21 May 2014

Agenda Item	18.
Report No	ECA/15/14

Early Years Collaborative in Highland - Update

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report provides an update on the work progressing as part of the Early Years Collaborative

1. Background

- 1.1 The earliest years of life are the single greatest opportunity to make a lasting impact on a child's futureⁱ. By getting it right in the early years through, for example, prevention or early intervention, problems can be prevented. As well as improving life chances and opportunities this eases future demand on services thereby representing value for money.
- 1.2 The Early Years Collaborative (EYC) is a national multi-agency initiative, being delivered locally, which is driving forward real and lasting improvements to improve children's outcomes and life chances. It is helping to deliver national strategies and local commitments around early years on the ground. This is being achieved by use of a structured improvement approach to introduce and embed new or improved ways of working which delivers successful results. Sharing and learning from others is a key feature. It helps close the gap between knowledge of what works and practice.
- 1.3 The vision of the Early Years Collaborative in Highland mirrors the national ambition - 'To make Highland the best place in the world to grow up in by improving outcomes, and reducing inequalities, for all babies, children, mothers, fathers and families across Highland to ensure that all children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.' Activities are focused on achieving these ambitions (referred to as the EYC 'stretch aims'):
 1. An increase in positive pregnancies resulting in the birth of more healthy babies through a 15% reduction in stillbirths and infant mortality by 2015
 2. 85% of children reaching all their expected developmental milestones at their 27-30 month child health review by 2016
 3. 90% of children reaching all their expected developmental milestones when starting primary school by 2017
 4. 90% children reaching all their expected developmental milestones and learning outcomes at age 8 / end of primary 4.
- 1.4 A further aim is to provide the leadership system to support quality improvement resulting in timely delivery of the above "stretch aims".

- 1.5 The improvement approach provides a framework for developing, testing and implementing changes to the way that things are done that will lead to improvement. Frontline practitioners, using their professional expertise, are identifying where they consider changes could be made that could lead to improved outcomes for children and families. Using the approach, by making 'small tests of change' through Plan-Do-Study-Act cycles, they are able to test, measure what happens, and refine the change in the 'real world'. This provides the evidence to give us confidence that the new way of working results in improvement and therefore, can be rolled out and embedded in a way which ensures that the activity is delivered consistently and reliably. The approach builds on the self-evaluative approach which informs "For Highland's Children 4" and will help to deliver the actions identified through self-evaluation.
- 1.6 This report provides an update on activity in Highland. The term "early years" in this context, covers the period from conception to age 8.

2. Delivering Change and Improvement

- 2.1 As there are such a wide and varied range of issues which could impact on the 'stretch aims' at present, we are focusing our activity around these key themes:
- Ensuring that babies and young children get the right help at the right time through universal services and early intervention.
 - Ensuring that children have positive relationships with their parents and care givers by building and promoting positive relationships.
- 2.2 Identifying our priority areas sits within the *For Highlands Children 4* Improvement Group work in Highland Council and also NHS Highland strategic groups that focus on the early years. Early Years Collaborative activity has included identifying how our range of improvement developments and ideas fit with priorities at a strategic level. 'Driver diagrams' illustrate how these high level improvement goals translate into our key improvement actions.
- 2.3 Examples of current Early Years Collaborative improvement activity are shown below. These all support the embedding of practices which the evidence tells us can make a difference to children's lives if they occur during that critical time in their earliest years. These include:
- Improving children's nutrition and tackling poverty through new ways of encouraging and supporting parents to get the Healthy Start vouchers and vitamins which they are entitled to.
 - Tackling poverty by supporting parents-to-be to access income maximisation services.
 - Enabling Health Visitors and other staff to provide consistent evidence based advice and effective support to parents on weaning and nutrition so that they wean their child appropriately. A weaning pack has been developed to support this.
 - Making sure that every child gets their needs reviewed, and assessed in a consistent way at key contact times, and that these reviews are robust and of a high quality. And, in addition that the information is passed onto those who need it and leads to the delivery of help and support if this is needed. This should ensure that each child gets the right help at the right time - with the ultimate aim that they have the skills and abilities which they are expected to have. Improvement activity around 'reviews' is currently focusing on the 27-30 month child health check and the Nursery Development Overview process for every 4 year old.

- Being confident that parents-to-be who may be vulnerable and require additional support have their needs planned for and access the help and support that they will need through improving the processes that support midwives and health visitors to do this and to work together.
- Improving dental health by developing new processes and undertaking activities so that all parents register their child with a dentist before the age of 3.
- Improving the way that pregnant smokers are encouraged and supported to stop smoking.
- Helping parents who are bottle-feeding to build positive relationships (often referred to as attachment) right from the start with their child through promotion of 'skin to skin' contact at their first feed as is the case with breastfed babies.

2.4 The Early Years Collaborative is a multi-agency approach with Highland Council and NHS Highland staff working closely together as part of the Community Planning Partnership. Other partners are also involved. For example: CALA workers are helping to develop positive relationships between children and their parents/ carers and improve early literacy skills, through encouraging regular enjoyment of bedtime stories. Improvements involving the Police include: making sure that the child concern process leads to early intervention; improving domestic abuse referral processes so that those affected can access the help and support they need. Activities will continue with a wide range of partnership groups, and within teams to ensure that identifying and taking forward actions which will improve early years outcomes (directly or indirectly) is a regular topic on agendas.

2.5 We anticipate that the range of improvements being taken forward through this approach will continue to increase. Highland's Improvement Groups are considering how this approach can be used to implement the priorities set out within their improvements plans. As part of the recent local events, front-line practitioners across Highland have been identifying improvements which they can take forward within their teams.

2.6 Involving communities and building on their assets is a developing activity. The recently appointed Community Food and Health Practitioners are considering how this approach can support their work with communities to improve children's nutrition. Activities are also planned with the intention of getting people within communities talking and engaged about early childhood development with the result that: parents are confident with the message that it is okay to ask for help or advice and know how to easily access it; people and communities build mutual support networks and, also help to plan services. A good example of this is illustrated through the activity below.

3. Creating the Conditions

3.1 As well as taking forward improvements, activity is focusing on establishing the conditions to support continuous improvement so that it becomes part of every practitioner's 'day job'. This capacity and capability building activity has included:

- Raising awareness and encouraging participation including through e-newsletters (available via: www.highland.gov.uk).
- Supporting practitioners to develop their improvement skills and put these into action. Practitioner Forum have been held across Highland with more planned.
- Developing 'local' leadership around, and a focus on, improvement within Family Teams supported by the new Practice Lead role.

- Firmly embedding the Early Years Collaborative into the For Highland's Children Improvement Groups to help direct activity, share learning, support the spread of new practices and ensure 'early years' is on all agendas.
- Making the joins with partners (for example via the Child-Care & Family Resource Partnerships) to provide a local focus for early years improvement activity which involves the third sector and can be built upon to develop community links.
- Increasing access to improvement advice and guidance so that improvement activities are locally supported and nurtured.
- Establishing ways to share information and learning and celebrate success. For example, a Register of Improvement Activity is available and also accessible to Council and NHS Highland via the intranet.

3.2 Improving how we deliver services is central to improvement activity and an example of how we work collaboratively to make improvements is described below.

4. Highland Information Trail Magazine Bag

4.1 Much of the key work of midwives and health visitors is based around health improvement, health promotion, screening and surveillance and involves conveying a vast amount of information to parents that cannot always be achieved in the allotted clinic or contact time. Therefore parents are given information to take away with them.

4.2 The *Highland Information Trail* was developed to provide practitioners who work with women and their partners through pregnancy and the early years of a child's life, with a guide to ensure that the materials that are available to parents are given at the right time and are of the right quality. *Highland Information Trail* promotes the use of materials that support national and local recommendations around health and wellbeing and includes the main resources of *Ready, Steady, Baby!* and *Ready, Steady, Toddler!* Other information about screening tests, infant feeding, healthy start, smoking, oral health, bookbug and many others are included. The *Highland Information Trail* has been so successful that it has been adopted by NHS Health Scotland as a national resource however; we maintain ours as we update it annually and it is locally focussed.

4.3 In order for families to keep all those materials together in one place, we have developed the *Highland Information Trail Magazine Bag* in collaboration with NHS Highland, Everything Baby and the Real Nappy Network. We will be gifting the 'Mag Bag' to all pregnant women across Highland to be given at their booking appointment with their midwife. We have designed it using the key messages of *Before Words* which is a pictorial resource which aims to promote the importance of early positive relationships with babies and children even before birth. *From the beginning* is the pregnancy element of *Before Words* which is currently being piloted in the Highland Council area and women are having the key messages discussed with them at their booking scan. The Early Years Collaborative improvement method is being used to develop this work and attachment and early intervention are a focus for improvement work taking place in the early years across Highland.

5. Summary and Conclusion

5.1 At its core this is about making things which evidence tells us work, work across

Highland. And making those things happen reliably and consistently.

- 5.2 Many practitioners across Highland have started on their improvement journey. Their knowledge and capacity to undertake improvement as part of their daily practice is increasing. Activities are underway which will contribute to improving outcomes from the start and ensure that Highland is the best place to grow up in. The Early Years Collaborative is providing the stimulus to promote change and improvement around early years, putting it on everyone's agenda; providing an approach which is speeding up the delivery of improved practice and providing a context and structure to share stories of success and learning from others so that success is embedded. Future Committee reports will provide more information on successful improvement activity.

6. Implications

- 6.1 The Highland Council has provided the additional resources required to progress the Early Years Collaborative. The Council has also committed a third year of preventative spend for children in the early years.
- 6.2 There are no legal, equality, climate change/carbon clever, risk or Gaelic implications.

7. Recommendation

- 7.1 Committee is asked to consider and comment on this report.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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Background Papers & Information:

Adult and Children's Services Committee Report -
www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/committees/strategiccommittees/acs-comm/2013-03-20-acs-min.htm

Presentation to Adult and Children's Services Committee -
www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/committees/strategiccommittees/acs-comm/2013-11-13-acs-min.htm

EYC webpage and newsletters - www.highland.gov.uk
(www.highland.gov.uk/healthandsocialcare/servicestochildrenandfamilies/highland-early-years-collaborative.htm)

Scottish Government Information including videos from the learning sessions:
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/People/Young-People/Early-Years-and-Family/early-years-collaborative

ⁱ For example, see Growing up in Scotland Publications – www.growingupinScotland.org.uk/publications