

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 11 January 2012

Subject: West Dunbartonshire Council and Save the Children –Families and Schools Together Programme (FAST)

1. Purpose

- 1.1** The purpose of this report is to present to Members of the Education and Lifelong Learning Committee information on the development and impact of the FAST programme which has been delivered in three of the Council's educational establishments in partnership with Save the Children

2. Background

- 2.1** Save the Children approached the Council in 2009 with a proposal to enter a partnership which included the University of Strathclyde, to deliver a series of interventions to improve the life chances of children and families living in areas affected by high levels of deprivation.
- 2.2** At the end of 2009 Save the Children made a strategic decision to import the FAST Programme from the United States of America and to phase its implementation into the United Kingdom.
- 2.3** In April 2010, following discussions between Save the Children and the Council, Linnvale Primary School was selected as the first Scottish school to run a FAST Programme. Since that date there have been two other FAST Programmes: in St Joseph's Primary School; and St Eunan's Primary in conjunction with its Early Education and Childcare Centre.
- 2.4** In September 2011 the Council working in conjunction with Edinburgh City Council, assisted Save the Children in making a successful bid for investment from the Inspiring Scotland's: *Early Years Early Action fund*. The application which is named Born to Blossom has allowed Save the Children to allocate £154,594 to the Council for 2011 – 2012 to help deliver three key programmes: FAST; In My Backyard; and, Eat, Sleep, Learn and Play.
- 2.5** There are plans for two more educational establishments to run FAST before the end of the academic year.
- 2.6** The cost of running a FAST Programme is in the region of £26,000 per educational establishment mainly due to the cost of using external trainers and for the University of Middlesex to complete a separate evaluation on each Programme. However, except for a small number of incidental payments, Save the Children provides the full funding. Plans are in place for the Council

to train their own trainers which will mean that FAST Programmes will be sustainable once the funding has ended, the only remaining costs being relatively small sums for food and play items.

3. Main Issues

How does FAST operate?

3.1 The programme involves up to 40 children aged from 3 to 8 years and their families attending a weekly eight week programme after school. Each session has key activities which include:

- One to one play with the parent and child;
- Self-help parental group;
- Building a community support network for families;
- Families preparing meals together in the school kitchens and eating together at family tables;
- Charades game about Feelings;
- A weekly lottery where a family wins toys, and food which is used for the group's next meal.

3.2 One of the most popular activities is the shared meal. Families enjoyed working with a catering supervisor to cook simple meals and to share them with new friends. The meal is served, where appropriate, to the adults by the children. The overall aim was to resume the traditional custom of sitting down and eating together as a family.

3.3 The children enjoy "special play" which is a dedicated time for parents to play with their child.

3.4 After the 8 weekly sessions, parents who attended at least 6 sessions "graduate" from the programme. The families are then supported to set up their own agenda for future monthly meetings which take place for a further 2 years. This is known as FASTWORKS and is an integral part of the programme as it builds relationships with the community.

What has been the impact of FAST?

3.5 The Council has now received two of the three evaluations of the Programme. The summary of outcomes has demonstrated significant improvements in the following areas;

- quality of family relationships especially between parent and child;
- children's behaviour at home and in school;
- parents' relationship with school staff;
- friendships between families;
- parents seeking advice on further education or employment;
- children's eating habits.

- 3.6** Save the Children have used a pupil from St. Joseph's Primary School, as a case study to demonstrate to its financial backers the impact of FAST on the life of a seven year old boy and his mother.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** Apart from the professional trainers and a catering supervisor, FAST is run by volunteers including community and parental helpers. Therefore, there are no personnel issues.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The cost to the Council of running a FAST Programme is currently low and is largely stated as "in kind" such as providing the use of the school or crèche facility.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** There are no identifiable risks to the Council in the partnership relationship with Save the Children.

7. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 7.1** The FAST Programme is a universal programme and is available to any family within the specified age range and school regardless of protected category. Therefore, no issues were identified in a screening for potential equality impact of this report.

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** The information from this report demonstrates that families are benefiting from participating in FAST, and are therefore better equipped to benefit from employment, training or education opportunities thereby contributing to the social and economic regeneration priority.
- 8.2** The information from this report demonstrates that the judicious application of funding within an early intervention preventative model may prevent the need for high levels of public resources to be spent at a later date to alleviate social problems and tackling "failure demand." This accords with the Council's Financial Strategy.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** The partnership with Save the Children has improved the well being of a number of the Council's families.
- 9.2** The success of the Born to Blossom application has attracted additional funding to the Council and has supported the Council to meet the requirements of its Integrated Children's Service Plan, Educational Service Plan and the Single Outcome Agreement.

9.3 Members are asked:

- 1) to note the contents of this report;
- 2) to acknowledge the success of the FAST Programme; and,
- 3) to acknowledge the support of Save the Children.

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Date: 11 January 2011

Person to Contact: Mary Berrill, Quality Improvement Manager, Educational Services

Appendices: None

Background Papers: Born to Blossom: Inspiring Scotland, Business Plan 2011-14

Wards Affected: All wards