

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Educational Services

Education and Lifelong Learning Committee: 14 September 2011

Subject: West Dunbartonshire Council Parenting Strategy

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To advise members of the West Dunbartonshire Council Parenting Strategy and its place within the wider national and local policy context.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Early Years Framework, published in 2008 highlights the importance of all national and local agencies working together to deliver improved outcomes for our children. The key messages within the framework are around effective prevention and early intervention, the importance of the early years determining a child's future life chances, the need to shift the emphasis to enable families to support themselves within their communities, and the vital role of universal services in delivering improved outcomes for children and young people.
- 2.2** One of the key elements of the Early Years Framework is support to parents. The aim is to provide support to all parents at the ante natal and post natal stages, and on an ongoing basis through universal health and education services, and where appropriate third sector organisations. There is a recognition that some parents may require more intensive support and again there is a commitment to providing a tiered approach which provides support in a timely and easily accessible way.
- 2.3** The Scottish Government is committed to developing a national Parenting Strategy that encourages agencies to work together to support new parents and allows them to develop their parenting skills. The aim is to support local authorities to ensure parents have access to a guaranteed level of support across all areas of the country.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The West Dunbartonshire Parenting Strategy has been developed within the national context, supported through the Integrated Children's Services planning framework locally.
- 3.2** The strategy lays out the philosophical underpinnings and the policy context and outlines the approach which will be taken within West Dunbartonshire to meet the need for universal support and more specialist targeted support. The aim is to provide support suitable to all ages and stages. The strategy is attached as Appendix 1.

- 3.3** There has been a significant consultation process undertaken involving all key stakeholders and the strategy has now been endorsed by the Joint Strategy Group for children's services and the Education and Lifelong Learning Thematic group.
- 3.4** The strategy makes an important statement about the commitment to supporting parents and provides a framework within which the work with parents will be delivered. Most strands of the strategy are already in place, and there are some excellent examples of support to parents being undertaken at a single agency and integrated agency level. The implementation and further development of the strategy will be monitored by the Joint Strategy Group and supported through the Parenting Strategy Group.
- 3.6** When the anticipated national Parenting Strategy is launched, there will be an opportunity to review the West Dunbartonshire Parenting Strategy and to ensure alignment.

4. People Implications

- 4.1** The Parenting Strategy will be delivered through existing services and provision. There are no people implications related to this report.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1** The Parenting Strategy itself has no financial implications as it simply provides a strategic framework in which parenting support work will be delivered. Much of the parenting support is delivered through the work of mainstream services. There is some additional resource provided through Community Planning to allow some dedicated time from a colleague in health to support development of the practitioner work and practitioner training. This amounts to £50,000 per annum. Removal of this support would have an impact on the capacity of the service to continue the level of parenting work, and on our ability to deliver key training across children's services.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1** As noted earlier, effective prevention and early intervention is vital in ensuring that children and young people have positive outcomes. Failure to support parents to give their children the best start in life, and to continue to nurture and support them into adulthood, would risk poorer outcomes for children and young people, and a significant financial burden on society.

7. Equalities, Health & Human Rights Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 7.1** Screening for equalities impact indicates no significant issues.

8. Strategic Assessment

- 8.1** The strategy contributes to the Council's strategic priority Social and Economic Regeneration by supporting families to give their children the best start in life.

By providing a strategic framework it helps to co-ordinate the work of staff across services and set priorities which help to maximise the impact of the service.

9. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 9.1** West Dunbartonshire has now developed a Parenting Strategy in line with national policy, specifically the Early Years Framework. The strategy pulls together various strands of work already underway within single agencies and as part of Integrated Children's Services. The strategy framework will allow the Joint Strategy Group for children's services to monitor and ensure the further development of good quality universal and targeted parenting support in West Dunbartonshire.
- 9.2** When the national parenting strategy is developed, the West Dunbartonshire strategy will be reviewed to ensure compliance and alignment.
- 9.3** It is therefore recommended that members
- a) endorse the West Dunbartonshire Parenting Strategy; and
 - b) agree to its launch and subsequent review in line with the national parenting strategy.

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Appendix 1: West Dunbartonshire Parenting Strategy

Background Papers: None

Wards Affected: All