

The Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN) held a policy seminar in the COSLA conference centre on 26th March 2009 which focused on the Early Years Framework. Presentations were given by Irene Audain (SOSCN), Anncris Roberts (Scottish Government), Robert Nicol (COSLA), Bryan Livingstone (Care Commission) and Ann Brady (CALA). Delegates and speakers also participated in facilitated group discussions.

This report provides a summary of both the presentations and points raised within the discussions.

1. Early Years Framework and Out of School Care

Irene Audain

Chief Executive, Scottish Out of School Care Network (SOSCN)

Early Years Framework

- The EYF is an ambitious strategy for long-term positive outcomes which will help a child develop to meet the challenges and changes of the future.

Role of community and services

- There is a strong emphasis on supporting children, parents and families through universal services providing holistic and joined-up care, which are embedded in the community. Models of all-service delivery will combine public, voluntary and private sector partners working jointly to common objectives. Universal services should also take responsibility for providing additional support rather than referring onwards, in line with the principles of *Getting it Right for Every Child*.

Play

- "Developing play spaces, and play opportunities for children and removing barriers to play is therefore a priority."

Quality

- The skills, knowledge, attitudes and qualifications of the workforce are a key focus in improving quality, and the mix of those skills is also critical; in real terms this includes developments such as the Standard in Childhood Practice and examining good practice from abroad.

More effective collaborations

- There is a need to develop more strategic partnerships and models of joint delivery involving public and private/third sector providers; and to establish long-term funding arrangements as well as funding that reflects the real cost of delivering high quality services.

Integrated Children's Services Plans and Community Planning

- Early years and childcare has a strategic role within community planning structures, building on the existing statutory obligation for

integrated children's services planning. There is a need to ensure the approach is centred on children's needs rather than processes.

Conceptualisation of childcare

- We need to move towards a conceptualisation of childcare as a service that delivers high quality experiences and early intervention for children rather than just focusing on its role in supporting the labour market.

Issues surrounding the implementation of the EYF

- Resources
- Accountability
- Workforce
- Single Outcome Agreements (SOA)
- Expansion of roles
- Partnerships with services, parents, communities and schools

2. Joint Presentation on the Early Years Framework

Anncris Roberts

Policy Manager- Early Years Framework Team, The Scottish Government

Robert Nicol

Team Leader- Children and Young People, COSLA

Transformational change

- The Early Years Framework necessitates a transformation in the way children, families and communities are supported to secure outcomes for themselves. It requires engagement and empowerment to break cycles of poverty, inequality and poor outcomes. The EYF is about strengthening universal services and improving quality to meet the needs of children and families through simplified and streamlined delivery.

Putting the framework into action

- The priorities of the document are the outcomes, and not the specifics of the actions taken to achieve them. The outcomes must be linked to single outcome agreements. Community planning partners have a role in developing the outcomes at a local level and it is about engaging with children, families and communities.

The Challenge Ahead

- Implementation can only happen at a local level, therefore all service providers have a key role to play. It is for all local partners to translate the vision and outcomes in the Framework into reality and this must include all forms of childcare (incl. out of school care). The national level can provide overall vision and leadership but the implementation must come from a local level, it is therefore up to service providers to show what they can do to help make the Framework a reality.

In response to a question, the Scottish Government and COSLA said they are not seeking the development of new services but looking to build on the ones

that are already in existence.

The Scottish Government and COSLA also said that they would like to learn more about initial thoughts on implementation; what is happening locally across Scotland; and the questions and issues that should be asked on providers' behalf at the national level.

3. Inspection Focus 2009- 2010 - Involving Parents in Early Intervention

Bryan Livingstone

Development Manager Children's Services, Care Commission

Many of the points highlighted were the same as those in previous presentations in terms of the focus and outcomes of the EYF. However, in relation to the Care Commission, the EYF states:

- "The Care Commission will develop early intervention as an inspection focus for daycare of children services in 2009-10."

This means, in 2009 – 10, the Care Commission will consider how services involve parents and carers in identifying and addressing children's needs at an early stage.

The Focus Area Questions for 2009/2010 are:

1. Does the service identify or assess the development and learning needs of children being cared for?
2. Are the identified needs of children recorded and addressed?
3. Where there is an identified need, what has the service done to address this?

In 2010 – 11, the Care Commission will consider how services support parents and help them develop parenting skills.

4. Childhood Integrated Services - Highland

Ann Brady

Chief Executive, Care And Learning Alliance (CALA)

CALA provided an example of a successful integrated approach towards supporting children, parents and families which makes use of the public, private and voluntary sectors to deliver high quality early years services across the Highland region.

CALA – who do we work with?

- CALA has a membership of 118 early years services, 41 out of school care services, 16 daycare services and 93 toddler groups. It also works to support families through Family First, Families in Focus and toddler facilitators. CALA has strong partnerships with communities; Highland and Moray councils; Connections, and various national agencies and Scottish Government working groups.

CALA's Vision

- CALA's vision is to create positive childhoods, empowered parents and creative communities.

Services CALA offers (In partnership with Direct Childcare)

- Staffbank
- Direct management support
- Peripatetic delivery
- Range of management models to suit community needs

Benefits of Integrated Working

- Shared roles and responsibilities
- Active Partnership – shared respect and awareness of partners needs and strengths
- Stronger team work – ability to merge ideas, re-shape thinking, turn challenges into opportunities – create strong vision

Challenges

- Training & Development – ongoing
- Quality Assurance services
- Workforce

Highland Approach to Early Years Framework

- Core Family Resource working group –
 - Health; Social Work; Education; Voluntary sector; partners with Early Years Framework
 - Built into 'For Highlands Children 3'
 - Meeting Scottish Government priorities
 - All bound in *Getting It Right For Every Child* principles and practice

Feedback from Facilitated Group Discussions

1. What links have you had in the past with community and integrated services planning, and how easy do you think it will be to be included in these processes now?

OSC is often well represented on planning groups and committees and the childcare partnership yet despite this often has little influence.

Problems

- OSC is not a statutory service and statutory services constantly take priority.
- OSC does not have equal professional status, perhaps because it is a non-statutory service.
- Childcare Partnerships might not always be recognised at higher levels within the local authority.
- Childcare Partnerships' strength perhaps weakened through the Single Outcome Agreements.
- Often OSC sits within the Education Department within councils, but is this the appropriate department?

2. Although the document focuses on pre-birth to 8, it states "many aspects of this framework are equally relevant to children beyond age 8". As OSC straddles both pre and over 8s, how do we ensure at local levels that this is acknowledged, and is this happening?

At a local level:

- It is essential that OSC feeds into Children's Services Planning and is specifically mentioned within SOAs; this is linked to a need to raise the profile of the OSC sector in general.
- OSC needs to make a case to show how it can help deliver the framework and show it is in fact an essential service in assisting local authorities meet the outcomes of the EYF.
- The OSC sector, and other service providers, need mechanisms to feed into the strategy- may be able to prove that they support the outcomes of the EYF but is anyone locally listening or acknowledging this? Can be very difficult and down to individuals rather than general policy.
- Childcare Partnership/strategy needs to be involved.

3. How do services previously/currently support families, and how could they improve, if not doing so? (Specifically looking for examples of good practice)

OSC services already provide:

- Family support
- Counselling
- Implementation of *Hungry for Success*
- Provide free OSC lunches during holidays to children accessing free

- school meals
- Support for single parents accessing work and training
- Provide extended hours to meet the needs of working parents
- Are recognised as a referral agency
- Provide placements for social work students
- Provide bi-lingual services
- Provide a pick-up service for children in morning referred by head teachers
- Connection with families is greater than in statutory services
- More effective informal relationship with children and parents (families)
- Safe environment for children
- Trust in the workforce
- Families have daily/more direct contact with staff
- Staff often pick up on social/emotional problems, more so than teachers
- OSC well placed to support initiatives
- Provide effective support in transition from EY to primary school and primary to high schools.
- Staff can work out individual strategies for children

Problems:

- OSC often have to fund additional services themselves
- Lack of professional recognition- where integration works it is because individuals recognise the professionalism of all involved.

SUMMARY

The Early Years Framework is an aspirational document which is focussed on improving outcomes for children, families and communities through universal and integrated services. Although there are no additional funding resources available to achieve the outcomes, Single Outcome Agreements should reflect that outcomes are being supported- financial resources are therefore allocated at a local level. Out of school care services have a responsibility to show how they are able to support and deliver the outcomes in the EYF at a local level, and should not be modest about the support that they already provide to children and families.

If you have comments or points to raise about the EYF and its implementation in your local authority, please send them to SOSCN at: policy@soscn.org and we shall collate and then send them to the Scottish Government and COSLA.

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