1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this report is to present an update for members on the progress made in taking forward the service proposals for early years and out of school care expansion and development.

2 SUMMARY

2.1 The report highlights the progress to date on:

- the expansion of nursery places
- early years partnership arrangements
- the development of information services
- out of school care

3 RECOMMENDATION(S)

3.1 Children’s Committee is asked to:

- note the progress that has been made in developing early childhood services and out of school care services in the Stirling area.

4 CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Background

In October 1998 the Scottish Executive issued guidance to all local authorities on the planning of early years education and childcare, including the establishment of childcare partnerships.
Stirling’s early childhood and out of school care plan was presented to Interim Executive Committee on 29 April. The plan set out proposals and strategies for service expansion and development in line with the Government’s funding strategy and targets for:

- providing a quality part-time nursery education place for every pre-school year child whose parents wish one and for every three year old child by 2002

- stimulating the expansion of affordable, accessible quality childcare for children aged 0-14

securing greater integration of services for young children needing access to care and education

4.2 Progress

Expansion of Services

*Nursery places for children in their pre-school year Session 1999/2000*

All children in their pre-school year whose parents wish a nursery place have been offered places and to date 1118 have been allocated (100%).

In line with the Council’s target of 50% (430) places for 3 year olds in Session 1999/2000, 430 children, have been offered nursery places.

This has been achieved by expanding services in the following Council operated nurseries:

Sauchie House nursery
Arnprior Nursery
East Plean Nursery
Cornton Nursery
Strathblane Nursery

and by maintaining and expanding partnership arrangements with:

Acrewood Nursery, Stirling
Arnhall Day Nursery, Dunblane
Beech Drive Nursery, Killearn
Beehive St Anne’s Nursery, Bridge of Allan
Bright Beginnings Nursery, Stirling
First Class Nurseries, Stirling
Mugdock Nursery, Milingavie
4.3 Parental Choice

In Stirling, parents have been given the option to apply to the nursery of their choice, this includes 26 Council managed nurseries or one of 21 partnership nurseries/groups. The service was able to provide 95% of parents with their first choice of nursery and 5% were offered their second choice of nursery.

The service has entered into commissioning arrangements with other local authorities to accommodate those parents in work or training who wish to access nursery provision outwith their local authority area. Similarly, children from other local authority areas, including Clackmannanshire, Falkirk, Perth and Kinross and East Dunbartonshire are accessing nursery places in Stirling.

4.4 Partnership Arrangements

The service has put into place an agreed set of partnership arrangements (Appendix 1) covering quality assurance, commissioning and support arrangements. These arrangements have been commended by Scottish Independent Nurseries Association and Scottish Pre-school Play Association and represent an agreement to ensure quality standards across all early years provision in Stirling.

Detailed guidance has been issued to local authorities on the setting up of a local childcare partnership. Stirling Children’s Partnership was formed in November 1998, building on the previously established early years forum. The partnership is currently developing a model framework and a development plan setting out key priorities and tasks (Appendix 2).

4.5 Children’s Information Services

The Children’s Information Service has now been established and will be ‘on line’ from 23 August. This will include the operation of an internet linked database system, a telephone helpline to provide up to date information to parents and
employers and the Directory of Services (copy enclosed) as well as a range of information leaflets and contacts.

Discussions are currently taking place with colleagues in Social Work to establish the possibilities of including the Social Work Service Information Data (SSID) as part of this service. This would mean the establishment of the first integrated data base system for children in Scotland.

4.6 Update on New Build Nursery Provision

4.6.1 Doune/Deanston

The building brief and planning permission for the nursery are in place. However, the discovery of Roman remains on the planned site has meant a delay of approx 2/3 months while excavation works take place. It is expected that the nursery will be operational from January 2000. The nursery will provide 40 FTE nursery places for children aged 3-5 years on an extended day and year basis.

4.6.2 Fallin

Consultation is currently taking place with the local community on the detailed development of the planned new nursery provision including the building brief. The nursery, which will offer a range of services to families as well as nursery provision for children aged 0-5 on an extended day and year is expected to be operational by August 2000.

4.6.3 Cornton

The proposal for the new West Haugh site has been brought forward, the building brief has been completed and works are due to start in October 1999. The new nursery will provide an extended day and year service for families and children aged 0-5 years integrating the nursery class provision in Cornton Primary School and the child and family drop in service currently operating in Lomand Crescent.

Detailed discussions are taking place with the local community and the two nursery establishments to ensure a smooth transition of provision. The nursery will be operational from August 2000.

4.7 Out of School Care Provision

Out of school care in Stirling is provided mainly by the voluntary and private early years sector. Voluntary groups can obtain funding from the new opportunities lottery fund. Successful bids for funding have been submitted by Alsorts Out of School Care and Riverside Out of School Care group. This has led to 32 new places.

The Out of School Care Development Officer is currently in negotiation with other providers to discuss the possibility of expanding places.

4.8 The commitment to the continued development and expansion of quality services for young children and their families, in partnership with others, has ensured that good progress has been made in the implementation of the expansion and development plan.
5 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 This report supports the Council’s strategic aims of developing quality services and social inclusion.

6 CONSULTATIONS

6.1 Consultation has taken place with Education and Social Work Services, parents, local communities, partnership groups and agencies and Trade Unions.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The capital investment needs of the expansion of early childhood and out of school care services is being financed from a number of sources. In addition to the sums agreed within the Council’s three year capital plan, further specific funding has been made available directly from the Scottish Office.

7.2 The Scottish Office has recognised the need for capital investment to develop services and meet targets. Each local authority has been allocated specific grant to support investment costs. In 1999/00 Stirling Council will receive £308,000 to progress nursery expansion plans and a further £123,000 to support services for very young children (0-3 years). In addition to the above, the Council will receive a grant of £240,000 to support the higher costs of providing rural early years services. In the first instance, this will support capital investment, substituting in later years for the higher operating costs of rural provision once it is up and running.

7.3 The revenue costs of the proposed expansion in provision will be funded through a combination of direct funding from the Scottish Office and charging, supplemented by the proposed Family Tax Credit arrangements.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

8.1 Appendix 1 - Early Years Partnership Arrangements paper
     Appendix 2 - Stirling Children’s Partnership paper
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<tr>
<td>Linda Kinney</td>
<td>Head of Children's Services</td>
<td>01786 442667</td>
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**Approved by**

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<td>Gordon Jeyes</td>
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Stirling Council is committed to working in partnership with others and recognises the many benefits that working in partnership can bring to service provision for children and families.

Children’s Services in Education already engages in a successful range of partnerships with parents, voluntary and private early years providers both in the planning and delivery of services. The service would wish to continue and improve these partnership arrangements where possible.

**Quality Assurance**

The benefits of quality early years provision have been shown to result in short and long term outcomes for both children and families. Establishing a framework for quality assurance is therefore an essential aspect of the partnership arrangements.

**Quality Framework**

Quality is a dynamic judgement that can change over time. Therefore, it is important to develop a quality framework that supports continuous improvement and self evaluation and enables establishments to set quality standards in negotiation with all stakeholders.

Stirling Council has an agreed quality assurance policy for all Stirling Council establishments that all partner nurseries will be required to subscribe to. This sets out the key aims principles and conditions for developing an effective quality assurance policy and approach.

All nurseries and early years establishments registered with the SOEID to deliver the curriculum framework for children in the pre-school year are subject to HMI inspection, this includes local authority, voluntary and private sector establishments. All voluntary and private sector early years provisions are also inspected by Education Service Registration and Development Officers.

Local authorities have been given a key role in supporting and monitoring quality assurance procedures and arrangements in partner nurseries by the SOEID. In Stirling, quality will therefore be assured through a combination of self evaluation, using early years performance indicator, inspection by HMI, quality assurance approaches and support from the Education Service.

**Key Elements of the Quality Assurance Framework**

**Self Evaluation**

♦ Quality Assurance Policy
♦ Development Plan
♦ SOEID Performance Indicators
♦ Staff Development and Review

**Inspection**

♦ Children Act Registration
♦ HMI Inspection
Support

♦ Quality Assurance Guidance
♦ Staff Development and Training
♦ Materials/Resources
♦ Personnel

Commissioning Arrangements 1999/2000

Children in their pre-school year

In recognition of the diverse needs of children and families the Service would wish to extend partnership arrangements with the voluntary and private sector providers for the commissioning of places for children in their pre-school year.

Following the success of the flexible places scheme, this will now be extended to all families. Parents will, therefore, have the choice of a Stirling Council nursery place or a place in one of the Stirling partnership nurseries.

To ensure continuity for parents and fairness in the allocation of places, all partner centres have agreed to follow Stirling’s nursery admissions policy for children in their pre-school year. A common application form has been agreed and all partner centres are included on the area admissions panels

Funding Arrangements

In order to support the Council’s key role in supporting and monitoring quality assurance in partner centres, an element of top slicing will be necessary.

The sum of £100 will be top sliced for administration and support arrangements from all commissioned places. A sliding scale will be introduced and implemented according to each partner centre’s quality arrangements.

Top Slicing Arrangements

The following set of criteria will be used to assess the level of top slicing funding for each partner centre.

♦ Quality Assurance Policy/System
♦ Development Planning
♦ Staff Development and Review
♦ Children’s Profile/Starting Points
♦ Teacher Support and Input
♦ All core/permanent staff qualified

♦ Quality Assurance Policy/System

A recognised quality assurance policy or system is in place. This could include the following:

SINA quality system
SPPA quality system
Stirling’s Education Service quality system
Evidence of the operation of the scheme demonstrating the links between policy strategy and procedures would be necessary.

♦ **Development Planning**

An establishment development plan outlining the key development priorities for the nursery over the next three years, including the key tasks, action plans identifying personnel and resources and the success criteria, would be required to be submitted.

♦ **Staff Development and Review**

A system of staff review is in operation setting out principles and procedures for the review of staff with the corresponding staff development and training programme.

Evidence of the operation of the scheme including the staff development programme would be necessary.

♦ **Children’s Profiling System**

A system of planning, recording and observation is in place and can be used in the transfer of information to primary schools. Partner centres would be required to introduce Stirling’s shared profile system, Staring Points.

♦ **Teacher Support and Input**

Evidence of teacher involvement and input to curriculum planning and development and with children, for at least 11 hours per week.

♦ **All core/permanent staff qualified**

All nursery staff who are core or permanent staff to hold a recognised early years qualification. Core or permanent staff are taken to mean all staff counted in the staff complement to meet the required adult : child ratio. *(Please see Appendix 1 for a list of recognised qualifications)*

**Allocation**

Those partner centres who meet all 6 criteria will receive the top rate of £1075 per commissioned place.

Those partner centres who meet 5 out of the 6 criteria will receive £975 per commissioned place.

Those partner centres who meet less than 5 of the criteria will receive £880 per commissioned place. *(Please see Appendix 2 for details of the financial arrangements)*

**Children younger than their pre-school year**

The Government has set a target for a nursery place for all three year olds whose parents wish a place by 2002. Stirling is aiming to provide 50% of three year olds, with a nursery place, from August 1999. Taking into consideration the phased introduction of places, the need to ensure strategic planning across the Council area and the likely increase in partnerships with playgroups, quotas will be agreed with voluntary and private sector providers for commissioned places for three year olds.
Top slicing arrangements for places for children in their pre-school year will apply for three year olds.

**Support Arrangements**

Top slicing funding will be used to support quality assurance arrangements and developments in the partnership centres.

Partner centres will have access to the following support from the service:

- Support for HMI follow-up
- Access to Education Service staff development programme
- Access to authority wide training events
- Advice and support on: curriculum planning and development
  - Quality development in learning and teaching
  - Observation assessment and recording
  - Development planning
  - Staff development and review
  - Materials and resources
  - Support for learning and special needs

An individual support and development package will be agreed with each partner centre that reflects the stage of development of the centre in relation to quality assurance arrangements, current and future staff development needs and the individual needs of children and families.
Recognised Qualifications

Teacher Qualifications

DCE     Diploma in Education
B.Ed    Bachelor of Education
PGCE   Post Graduate Certificate of Education

Whilst an early years/nursery qualification can be an advantage, Stirling Council do not consider it be an essential requirement to work in an early childhood setting.

Such additional qualifications currently are

SQN     Special Qualification Nursery
BAECS   - Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Studies

Recognised Nursery Nurse qualifications

SNNB
HNC    Child Care and Education
SVQ    Level III Child Care and Education
Financial Arrangements

This is a summary of the financial arrangements which will apply to partnership agreements.

The grant fee will be paid in termly instalments in advance, on condition of the submission of termly attendance records for the named children. If children leave mid way through a term, the Council would expect reimbursement of the portion of the fee not used.

Payment of the grant will be made on receipt of termly invoices. Details of dates and amounts will be given to individual providers. Invoices should be submitted 1 month in advance in order to ensure payment on the appropriate date. All payments will be made by BACS. Bank details should be submitted with the first invoice.

Copies of attendance records for named children should be sent with invoices to:

Eileen McKenzie, Room 204, Children’s Services, Education Services, Viewforth, Stirling FK8 2ET.

Michael Boyle, Service Manager, Education Finance Services, is available for assistance should any queries arise regarding payment. He can be contacted on (01786) 442801.
Private Nurseries Partnerships for 1999/2000

Acrewood Nursery, Stirling
Arnhall Day Nursery, Dunblane
Beech Drive Nursery, Killearn
Beehive St Anne’s Nursery, Bridge of Allan
Bright Beginnings Nursery, Stirling
Mugdock Nursery, Milngavie
Mulberry Bush Kindergarten, Killearn
The Meadows Nursery, West Plean
First Class Nurseries, Stirling

Self-governing Schools with Nursery Classes

St Mary’s Episcopal, Dunblane

Playgroups - partnerships already in place

Aberfoyle Playgroup
Doune Playgroup
Fintry Playgroup

Negotiations are currently taking place with the following playgroups:

Braehead Playgroup
Callander Playgroup
Gargunnock Playgroup
Gartmore Playgroup
Killearn Playgroup
Kippen Playgroup
Appendix 2

Stirling Children’s Partnership

Stirling Children’s Partnership was formed in 1998 and built on the previously established Early Years Forum in Stirling.

The aims of the partnership are to ensure that:

- we put children first
- we work in partnership
- we have good quality services
- everyone is included

by

- ensuring that early childhood education and care are seen as a whole
- sharing information and exchanging working practice with one another
- promoting and maintaining good policies, good practice and good standards in every sector
- improving and encouraging training and making it more accessible to those involved with childcare and early childhood education
- building bridges between providers and organisations
- making sure that we all know who to talk to when we need information
- tackling issues by sharing concerns and finding creative solutions

The partnership groups meets 6 times a year to discuss how to improve and develop childcare and early childhood education in Stirling.

Membership:

Enola Butler Scottish Pre-school Play Association
Aileen Edwards Forth Valley Enterprise
Maria Ferguson Forth Valley Health Board
Juliet Hancock Stirling FE Centre Nursery
Pat Hutchison Housing and Social Services
Fiona Johnston NCH Action for Children, Hillview Family Centre
Linda Kinney Chair - Head of Children’s Services, Education Services
Mairi MacIver-Clark Mulberry Bush Kindergarten, Killearn
Olive Mills Senior Registration & Development Officer, Education Services
Lynne Murray Scottish Childminding Association
Joyce Tai Chinese Community Representative
Muriel Young OSC Development Worker, Education Services