Background Note on the Early Years Collaborative

What is the Early Years Collaborative?

1. The Early Years Collaborative (EYC) is the world's first national multi-agency quality improvement programme. It is a coalition of Community Planning Partners (CPPs) including social services, health, education, police and third sector professionals that are committed to ensuring that every baby, child, mother, father and family in Scotland has access to the best support available.

What are the objectives of the EYC?

2. The objective of the EYC is to accelerate the conversion of the high level principles set out in Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) and the Early Years Framework into practical action. This must:

   - Deliver tangible improvement in outcomes for all of our children.
   - Raise public awareness of the significance of the early years to children’s healthy development, and build the capacity of families and communities to secure better outcomes for themselves.
   - Put Scotland squarely on course to shifting the balance of public services towards early intervention and prevention by 2016.
   - Sustain this change to 2018 and beyond.

How does the Early Years Collaborative work in practice?

3. The EYC is premised on the fact that we have a shared commitment to deliver changes in the early years and a strong evidence base on what works. However, as practice does not always reliably recreate what the evidence tells us there is a gap between what we know works and what we do. The EYC helps organisations close that gap by:

   - Creating a structure in which partners can easily learn from each other and from recognised experts in areas where they want to make improvements.
   - Supporting the application of improvement methodology to bridge the gap between what we know works and what we do.

4. All that we do in early years is geared towards making Scotland the best place to grow up. In the EYC, frontline practitioners, using their professional expertise, identify where they consider changes could be made that could lead to improved outcomes for children and families. Using the Model for Improvement and starting by making small tests of change, they are able to measure whether their theory is correct before scaling it up. A case study is enclosed on page 4.

What are the specific aims of the Early Years Collaborative?

5. The work of the EYC is being delivered across four workstreams that relate to ages and stages in the early years. It has four Workstreams and a leadership strand. The age-related Workstreams are:
1. Pre-birth to 1 year;
2. 1 year to 30 months;
3. 30 months to the start of school; and,
4. Start of school to Primary 4

6. We have taken time to develop our aims and consulted widely on their construction. We believe that they will provide the best way to draw people together, while supporting specific and measurable goals. Each Workstream has a clear and timed stretch aim as follows:

Workstream 1:

To ensure that women experience positive pregnancies which result in the birth of more healthy babies as evidenced by a reduction of 15% in the rates of stillbirths (from 4.9 per 1,000 births in 2010 to 4.3 per 1,000 births in 2015) and infant mortality (from 3.7 per 1,000 live births in 2010 to 3.1 per 1,000 live births in 2015).

Workstream 2:

The aim of this workstream is to ensure 85% of all children within each CPP have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time of the child’s 27-30 month child health review by end-2016.

Workstream 3:

The aim of this workstream is to ensure 90% of all children within each CPP have reached all of the expected developmental milestones at the time the child starts primary school, by end-2017.

Workstream 4:

The aim of this workstream is to ensure that 90% of all children in each Community Planning Partnership area have reached all of the expected developmental milestones and learning outcomes by the end of Primary 4, by end-2021.

Key Changes

7. Through the work done by CPPs over the past year and using the research available we have now identified some Key Changes that, if implemented for every child, every time, will bring about transformational change. These are:

- Early intervention in pregnancy
- Attachment and child development
- Continuity of care in transitions
- 27-30 month review
- Developing parents’ skills
- Family engagement to support learning
- Income maximisation/addressing child poverty
Going forward with the Early Years Collaborative

8. Over the next year, we will continue to develop our thinking and share the learning around the Key Changes. We will also continue to build on the improvement science capacity of CPPs so they are able to take the EYC work forward locally.

Pioneer Sites

9. In taking forward the Key Changes, we invited CPPs to come forward with examples of improvement work aligned to a Key Change that could be used as a ‘Pioneer Site’. A Pioneer Sites will focus on improvement activity in a particular geographic location with a view of scaling up this activity that can then be spread across the Community Planning Partnership and the rest of the country. At present, 16 CPPs (and one Pan-Ayrshire collaboration) have come forward with 39 Pioneer Sites, offering a good spread across the Key Change areas.

Evaluation of the Early Years Collaborative

10. In order to understand how progress is being made at a national level, we are evaluating the EYC using a three pronged approach as follows:

- A National Action Learning Network, which brings together key interests at national level to reflect on evidence generated and to ensure emerging evidence can contribute to policy and practice learning as the EYC develops.

- Overviewing progress: Build an understanding about progress to date, how local action contributes to EYC aims, and what/how evidence has been generated to inform progress (including shift in spend/resources). This work will explore evidence available which demonstrates how local actions contribute to the EYC aims; enable an understanding of which actions are having the most positive impact and the kinds of evidence available. The aim of the work is to build a narrative on progress towards EYC stretch aims.

- In-depth case studies (possibly with EYC Pioneer Sites) to explore actions undertaken by sites relevant to the key change areas identified by the EYC, which are expected to enable stretch aims to be achieved. This work will include considering what interventions or package of interventions are being implemented, what actions are being scaled up and why and how these actions contribute to the stretch aims. The work will explore key themes such as prevention, early intervention, service redesign, resource allocation and quality improvement and sustainability.
A Case Study - Note on Our Literacy Journeys: Early Learning and Childcare National Guidance

11. In 2014, two South Lanarkshire nurseries agreed to run a literacy project that encouraged their children to learn about literacy, their areas and meeting people from different areas for the second year. They knew that the approach had helped the children’s literacy skills – but they wanted to see if their hunch that it also had wider benefits for the children was correct. To do this they used the improvement approach promoted by the Early Years Collaborative to test how they might measure how being involved in the ‘our literacy journeys’ programme benefited the children.

12. The programme had a bear as its central character and involved the children thinking about journeys - the bear went on a journey between the two nurseries, and the children also visited each other. Facetime was used for the first time to great effect in helping the children to feel at ease with each other before they actually met. The programme ended with a trip to the Build a Bear Workshop in Glasgow where the children choose a new outfit for their bear.

13. The aim of this test of change was: to track improvements in the overall wellbeing for the 32 children who were involved in the eight week Our Literacy Journeys programme. The SHANARRI (Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible, Included) wellbeing web was used, and a scale of 0 (low) - 6 (high) was used to place the children on the wheel – with existing resources from the GIRFEC programme, being used to guide staff use of the tool.

14. There was a lot of valuable learning from this test:

- The programme leads were able to track impact on the children who took part in the programme. The way the information on each child’s progress was presented on a web was very visual and gave staff an instant overview of each child. This was very valuable in initiating conversations about the children.
- Different staff used the tool in the two establishments. In one nursery all early years workers used the tool and tended to rate the children quite high on the scale; in the other one person used the tool and scores tended to be lower. Peer review will now take place to explore this further.
- Facetime was a great way of making contact across the different establishments and would definitely be used again.
- This was the first time the staff had used the EYC improvement method and the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators in this way. Staff set out to test whether the programme had an impact on the children beyond that around improved literacy. Both used the GIRFEC Wellbeing web and looked at the data that came back. Using the data and graphs will enable staff down to further test this tool to enhance their understanding and ability to support the children in the nursery more generally.