

Consultation proposal by East Renfrewshire Council

Report by Education Scotland, addressing educational aspects of the proposal to relocate Arthurlie Family Centre to a new facility on the site of the former Auchenback Primary School.

Context

This report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act. The purpose of this report is to provide an independent and impartial consideration of the council's consultation proposal. Section 2 of this report sets out the views expressed by consultees during the initial consultation process. Section 3 sets out HM Inspectors' consideration of the educational aspects of the proposal and the views expressed by consultees. Section 4 summarises HM Inspectors' overall view of the proposal. Upon receipt of this report, the Act requires the council to consider it and then prepare its final consultation report. The council's final consultation report should include a copy of this report and must contain an explanation of how it has reviewed the initial proposal, including a summary of points raised during the consultation and the council's response to them. The council has to publish its final consultation report three weeks before it takes its final decision.

1. Introduction

1.1 East Renfrewshire Council proposes to relocate Arthurlie Family Centre to a new facility on the site of the former Auchenback Primary School.

1.2 The report from Education Scotland is required under the terms of the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*. It has been prepared by HM Inspectors in accordance with the terms of the Act.

1.3 HM Inspectors undertook the following activities in considering the educational aspects of the proposal:

- consideration of all relevant documentation provided by the council in relation to the proposal, specifically the educational benefits statement and related consultation documents, written and oral submissions from parents and others; and
- visits to the sites of Arthurlie Family Centre and the former Auchenback Primary School, including discussion with relevant consultees.

1.4 HM Inspectors considered:

- the likely effects of the proposal for children of the centre; any other users; children likely to become pupils within two years of the date of publication of the proposal paper; and other children and young people in the council area;

- any other likely effects of the proposal;
- how the council intends to minimise or avoid any adverse effects that may arise from the proposal; and
- benefits which the council believes will result from implementation of the proposal, and the council's reasons for coming to these beliefs.

2. Consultation process

2.1 East Renfrewshire Council undertook the initial consultation on its proposals with reference to the *Schools (Consultation) (Scotland) Act 2010*.

2.2 All staff who expressed their views wholeheartedly support the proposal. They believe it will bring enormous benefits to children, families and the wider Auchenback community. They feel appropriately consulted. They are very excited at the prospect of providing education and care in a modern purpose-built early years centre. They correctly report that their existing building lacks appropriate space and is not fit for purpose. They welcome the opportunity to extend their capacity to include provision for children aged birth to three years in the Auchenback area. Currently, Arthurlie Family Centre has no provision for birth to three-year-olds. Staff believe that this new provision will support them in fostering even closer relationships with parents. They also believe that they would be able to support transitions more effectively. Furthermore, staff believe that they will benefit from working closely with staff who are working with the birth to three age group. They welcome the opportunities for professional development and sharing good practice. All staff feel that the additional space in the new centre will allow them to build on their very effective family learning programme. Staff also welcome the opportunity to have a more accessible outdoor area for children to use. They hope this will promote a more 'free flow' approach to outdoor learning. Staff welcome the opportunity to work alongside other professionals who may use the centre. Staff identified that in the new centre having toilets situated within the playrooms would be of great benefit to the children.

2.3 Parents of children currently attending Arthurlie Family Centre are very supportive of the proposal. They appreciate greatly the work that staff do to meet their children's learning needs but believe that the new building with increased space would be much more suitable for younger children. They consider that the current building is no longer fit for purpose. A few parents would welcome the opportunity to have access to birth to three provision for their younger children. A few parents were very enthusiastic that the centre would benefit the whole community, providing easier access to other professional agencies such as health. They believe that a café would provide opportunities for parents to get to know and support each other. However, a few parents shared their concerns about the prospect of a community café in the new building and the implications that this may have for security on the new site.

3. Educational aspects of the proposal

3.1 Arthurlie Family Centre is a well-established early education and care provision in the Auchenback and Springhill areas of Barrhead. The council sets out a number of educational benefits in its statement. The new facility would enhance the current provision in the area for working parents and those children who may benefit from early intervention. There is currently no provision for birth to three-year-old children in the Auchenback area. Currently, a significant number of children aged birth to three years attend McCready Family Centre. It would also enable the council to provide 600 free hours of early learning and childcare places to two-year-olds who are, or have been at any time since turning two, looked after or subject to a kinship care order.

3.2 The relocation would provide increased opportunities for partner agencies to provide integrated services to support early intervention, subsequently reducing inequalities and improving outcomes. Greater flexibility in space and the community focus of the new centre would support this very well.

3.3 The relocation of Arthurlie Family Centre would strengthen the partnership working of education and external agencies to deliver on the Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) outcomes. This is supported by the increase in space and closer working with external agencies within the new centre the implementation of the proposal would bring. In taking forward the proposal, the council will need to take account of parents' concerns about potential security risks posed with different members of the community using the facility.

3.4 If the proposal is implemented there would be an improvement in transitions of children from birth to five years and from nursery to primary. Providing continuous education and care for children aged birth to five within the same centre would allow a seamless learning experience for them. It would also provide staff with very good opportunities to build up positive relationships with parents over a number of years. Transitions of children within the catchment of Arthurlie Family Centre would be unaffected by the relocation of the centre. This is already a strong feature of practice and would continue to be a high priority for staff at Arthurlie Family Centre.

4. Summary

The council's proposal to relocate Arthurlie Family Centre to the site of the former Auchenback Primary School offers significant educational benefits to the children of the Auchenback area of Barrhead. East Renfrewshire Council has set out a positive well-reasoned case for its proposal. The proposal would lead to the construction of a modern, purpose-built early years facility. Children will benefit from more modern facilities including easier access to the outdoors and better information and communications technology. In a new facility, the centre would be able to provide education and care for birth to three aged children. With the increase of space and the opportunity for closer links with external agencies, the centre would be better placed to meet the needs of children and their families in this community. This would support the centre's current early intervention approaches and their strong commitment to family learning very well. It would also allow the council to meet the demand for places for birth to three aged children in the Barrhead area, particularly

for the vulnerable two's in this area. In taking forward the proposal, the council needs to continue to engage and consult with staff, parents and the wider community to ensure that the educational benefits of this proposal are realised in full.

**HM Inspectors
Education Scotland
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