

PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL

Lifelong Learning Committee – 16 January 2013

IMAGINATION LIBRARY PROGRESS UPDATE

Report by Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

ABSTRACT

This report provides an update to committee with regard to the implementation of the Imagination Library initiative to supply books to Looked After Children, which has been supported by the Scottish Government.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Committee:

- 1.1 Notes progress to date with the Imagination Library initiative since the approval of the report at Lifelong Learning Committee on 31 August 2011 (report no 11/431 refers); and
- 1.2 Requests the Executive Director (Education and Children's Services) to continue monitoring uptake of books by Looked after Children and report back as part of the Children and Families' Services Strategy.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2011, The Minister for Children and Early Years formally announced an initiative called the Imagination Library for Looked After Children in Scotland.
- 2.2 The initiative is a joint venture between Dolly Parton's Imagination Library, the Scottish Government and the Scottish Book Trust. Each of the country's Looked After Children under the age of 5 will receive 1 book per month up until the age of 5 years. The books have been chosen by a multi-agency panel of experts in the field of child development.
- 2.3 The Imagination Library is a fully funded five year programme, and is a key part of the Government's Corporate Parenting Strategy to improve the outcomes for children Looked After in Scotland. Consequently, the Scottish Government is covering all the costs associated with the books and their distribution.
- 2.4 The main aim of Imagination Library is to strengthen attachment and family connectedness between very young (and vulnerable) children and their parents and/or carers, improve literacy and fine motor skills by encouraging young children to turn book pages.
- 2.5 Perth and Kinross Council seek parental/guardian consent for Perth and Kinross Council to share the child's information with Information Library before the child is registered with the programme.

- 2.6 Dolly Parton's Imagination Library is responsible for delivering this initiative on behalf of the Scottish Government. The child's name, address and date of birth are simply registered on the Imagination Library database by Perth and Kinross Council. Imagination Library subsequently sends out the children the age appropriate books.
- 2.7 Following negotiations with the Dollywood Foundation the remit was extended to include children under 5 where social work has a voluntary involvement. The total number of children able to qualify in August 2011 was 161. The total now stands at 226 (October 2012). Of the 226, 141 children are currently receiving or have received books.
- 2.8 There are currently 141 Children and Young people involved and the breakdown is noted as follows:

AGE	No of Children
<1	10
1	20
2	29
3	36
4	19

- 2.9 226 Children have been identified as eligible from figures held in the SWIFT recording system. This is a 62% uptake and further work to raise awareness of the scheme will be undertaken in 2013. An overview of the uptake will also include feedback as to the reason why parents/carers were not partaking in the scheme.
- 2.10 There are a variety of reasons why children who are eligible have not accessed the Imagination Library. These range from parent/carer disinterest to social work awareness of the benefits of the initiative and their ability to encourage the parent to engage. Some families only have voluntary engagement with social work and may not wish to take part in a formal project that they view as linked with Social Work
- 2.11 There is no clear analysis of the reasons for declining to take part in the initiative but options to support the gathering of this information is being explored with a view to this being collated over the next 6 months of the initiative.
- 2.12 There is a planned awareness raising session at the next full Children and Families' Services training day, and this will be followed but emails to the team leaders and posters for both workers and parents/carers to highlight the initiative.

3 PROPOSALS

It is proposed that Children and Families' Services continue to engage with the Imagination Library to provide resources to children who are looked after under the age of 5, and raise awareness amongst staff groups to ensure maximum use of this beneficial resource.

This will be reported through the Children and Families' Services Strategy and the Early Years Strategy Project Team.

4 CONSULTATION

The Head of Democratic Services, Head of Finance, Head of Legal Services and Head of Human Resources have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 This programme brings no additional financial implications to Perth and Kinross Council. All costs are met by the Scottish Government for the entire length of the five year programme.

6 COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012

- 6.1 The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report relates to:

- (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
- (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

- 6.2 The report also links to the Education & Children's Services Policy Framework in respect of the following key policy area:

- Inclusion and Equality

7 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

- 7.1 An equality impact assessment needs to be carried out for functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant protected characteristics. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new and existing policies.

- 7.2 The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Impact Assessment process (Eq1A) with the following outcome:

- i) Assessed as **not relevant** for the purposes of Eq1A

8. STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).

No further action is required as this report does not qualify as a PPS as defined by the Act and is therefore exempt.

9 CONCLUSION

- 9.1 This resource continues to provide educational opportunities to Looked After Children and to promote parenting skills.
- 9.2 In addition to the Imagination Library, as part of a wider strategic approach to prepare children for school, there are a variety of activities for children in their early years which promote shared reading. These include:
- (i) Distribution of Bookbug packs to children at birth, aged 18 months, 3 years and 4 years – these have books for children and information for parents and are universally distributed through libraries, nurseries and health visitors.
 - (ii) Rhyme time sessions in all libraries on a weekly basis (or more frequently depending on library size). These sessions are for parent/carer and child together. There are also storytelling sessions in all libraries and schools, nurseries, playgroups etc. who are offered same.
 - (iii) Reader in Residence (funded until March 2013) whose role is to promote family literacies through shared creative reading.
 - (iv) Lapsacs – parenting resource packs free to borrow.
 - (v) Babysteps bags – resources to support creative storytelling and extend engagement in reading activity with very young children.

Training is given to library staff on book selection, reading and language development and how to encourage shared reading.

JOHN FYFFE

Executive Director (Education and Children's Services)

Note: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.

Contact Officer: Caroline Mackie, Service Manager, Children & Families' Services
01738 476319, CLMackie@pkc.gov.uk

Address of Service: 35 Kinnoull Street, Perth, PH1 5GD

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