

6. COMMUNITY PLAYGROUPS UPDATE

The Education Executive considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Education (Development) which provided an update on the progress of the implementation of the new model of management for playgroups through Community Playgroups.

The report recalled that Community Playgroups was formed in April 2013 as a registered charity regulated by the Office of the Charity Regulator (OSCR) and managed by an Executive Board. The Community Playgroups organisation has strengthened the relationship between the local authority, parents/carers and the third sector to deliver playgroup services within local communities.

The report outlined the progress made in transferring playgroups to the Community Playgroups organisation. Over the last three years six playgroups successfully transferred into the organisation. Community Playgroups were also in discussion with two other playgroups with the aim for the groups to join the organisation within the next twelve to eighteen months.

In August 2015 the eligibility criteria for two year olds was extended to those children from low income families. Local playgroups were therefore essential in the provision of places for eligible two year olds along with childminders and family centres in areas where no council provision was available. The Education Executive was advised that up to December 2015, of the 206 applications for an eligible two year old place which were granted, 112 places were provided by playgroups.

Playgroups across West Lothian received grant support on a proportionate basis of £54,000 per annum. Although the Executive Board of Community Playgroups were all volunteers, the Board employed a part time Group Manager and a part time Business Support Officer to manage the daily operations, with twenty staff employed across the six settings. The organisation has been able to fund these posts until 31 March 2016 using a portion of the monies provided through the Early Years Change Fund but requires an additional £25K per annum to sustain these positions. Sustainability remains a challenge for all playgroups and to ensure the continuation of Community Playgroups further grant support of £25,000 per annum was required.

The Education Executive was asked to :

1. Note the progress made in relation to the implementation of the new model of management for playgroups through Community Playgroups;
2. Note the progress made in relation to the provision of places for eligible two year olds within a playgroup setting; and
3. Agree to provide funding to support the management model of £25K per annum.

Decision

Approved the terms of the report.