

REPORT TO: Education Committee

MEETING DATE: 18 September 2012

BY: Executive Director (Services for People_

SUBJECT: Early Development Instrument: Assessing children's 'readiness to learn'.

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of the results from the Early Development Instrument (EDI), a tool for assessing children's readiness to learn on entry to Primary one.
- 1.2 To inform the Committee of the value of Early Development Instrument for integrated children's services planning.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to:
 - i Note the results from the Early Development Instrument (EDI) will be a significant asset in engaging communities in preparing pre-school children for learning, and for services to better plan a more integrated approach to children's early development;
 - ii Note the results for East Lothian are comparable with other international surveys of children's readiness to learn using EDI;
 - iii Note that although the majority of children entering Primary one have the skills needed for successful learning there is significant variation in children's 'readiness to learn' across the county; and
 - iv. Approve bi-annual implementation of the EDI survey and to instruct officers to prepare for re-surveying P1 children using the Early Development Instrument in 2014/15.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In 2011, as part of Support from the Start, a partnership was established between East Lothian Council and the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research & Policy based at Edinburgh University to pilot a population based measure of children's readiness to learn called the Early Development Instrument (EDI).

- 3.2 This instrument provides a measurement of children's pre-school development. It is not a diagnostic assessment of individual children. It measures children's readiness to learn in the school environment in relation to child development domains as described above rather than curriculum-based ones. It is administered by P1 Teachers. The teacher uses her/his professional observations after several months of classroom/school interaction with the child to complete the questionnaire.
- 3.3 This measure has been used extensively internationally i.e. in Canada, Australia etc., but not in a Scottish or UK setting. The aim of the partnership was to establish whether the EDI was appropriate to a Scottish context and if it would generate information useful for services and communities in planning improvement to children's wellbeing.

Currently there are few means in Scotland by which inequalities in child development, by geographic area or socioeconomic status, are universally measured. Neither is the impact on child development of early year's policies and programmes assessed at local, regional or national level.

The results from the EDI survey are the first measurement of children's readiness to learn in Scotland. The instrument provides **measurable** information for groups of children in order to:

- Tell us what % of children are "vulnerable for early learning" in our communities *and* in which development areas
- Provide a picture of what early learning looks like at the community level
- Report on populations of children in different communities over time
- Identify strengths and where the needs are greatest
- Assist in predicting how children will do in primary school
- Identify gaps in programmes and services.

3.4 **What is 'readiness to learn'?**

We know that children are born ready to learn; it means that their neurosystem is pre-programmed to develop various skills and neuropathways, depending on the experience it receives. The EDI measures children's readiness to learn at school (or school readiness to learn). This term refers to the child's ability to meet the task demands of school, such as being cooperative and sitting quietly and listening to the teacher, and to benefit from the educational activities that are provided by the school. There are five domains of readiness to learn as described in Appendix 1.

3.5 **Rationale for measuring children's readiness to learn in East Lothian**

We know that the life chances of children are often determined by the start they have in the early years of life.

We know that poor educational outcomes walk hand in hand with poor social and health outcomes in later life.

Many of the influences in children's early life are out with the control of agencies and need the active involvement of parents and communities to create change.

A key challenge faced by services for education and children's well being is to improve outcomes for those children who are in the bottom 20%.

The data from EDI can be used strategically to support planning for education and children's well being to address the complex problems that drive poor outcomes for some children. The data will be a key means of engaging parents and communities in children's early learning. It has been used successfully in Australia and Canada to increase parental and community involvement in children's learning as well as to better plan and integrate services supporting parents and children's wellbeing. It is hoped that the Support from the Start area champions groups will use this data to engage parents and communities to develop more integrated and effective services for children's early development.

The champions group will work with council and local community planning groups and the Support from the Start strategic planning board to ensure both a local and strategic response to the data.

3.6 Preliminary Conclusions from the EDI results

The following are preliminary conclusions from the data:

- Overall developmental vulnerability in East Lothian (27.3%) is similar to other populations e.g. British Columbia 29%; Canada 27.9% Australia 23.5%.
- Developmental vulnerability is not just concentrated in the poorest 2/5 of the population:
 - Across all Socio Economic Status groups, East Lothian 5 year olds: do quite well in physical health and well-being and cognitive/language development domains
 - score 'average' in social competency
 - score less well in emotional maturity and communications and general knowledge domains
- 4% of children are *already* identified as having additional needs.
- A further 9.5% are recognised as having *problems needing further assessment* by teachers, parents or other professionals.
- Girls are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable than boys (consistent with other research).
- Older children are less likely to be developmentally vulnerable than younger children.

- Few children in East Lothian fall in the lowest socioeconomic category (4%).
- Greatest '**gaps**' between the most and least affluent groups are in the Communication and General Knowledge, and the Language and Cognitive Development domains.
- Even at a **cluster level**, large geographic differences exist in the level of child development at school entry.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The data from EDI will assist in planning for Education and Children's Wellbeing services. They will assist the cluster based Support from the Start champions groups with engaging local parents to improve children's readiness to learn.
- 4.2 It will contribute significantly to the single outcome agreement (SOA) – 'East Lothian's children have best start in life and are ready to succeed' by helping communities and services to target and develop community resources for early child development.
- 4.3 The data will support schools and nurseries to plan for supporting children's learning within the Curriculum for Excellence.
- 4.4 The data will support schools and community well being services, as well as primary health care services to engage early year's parents and the broader community in children's early development and readiness to learn.

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 This report is not applicable to the well being of equalities groups and an Equalities Impact Assessment is not required.

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Financial - There are no current financial implications of this report. However, there would be cost associated with a repeat survey, and at this point it is not clear if there will be financial support from Scottish Government for further surveys using the Early Development Instrument. The principal costs would be for supplying cover for P1 teachers, and for analysis of the data.
- 6.2 Personnel -. There is no current personnel implication from this report. However, future surveys would require teaching and support staff time to conduct.
- 6.3 Others - None

7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 EDI Factsheet (Appendix 1)

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EARLY DEVELOPMENT INSTRUMENT (EDI): A Population-based Measure for Communities

FACTSHEET

This instrument is an outcome measure of children's early development.

It measures children's readiness to learn in school environment in **five general domains identified in the literature: physical health and well-being; social competence; emotional maturity; language and cognitive development; and communication skills and general knowledge** in relation to developmental benchmarks rather than curriculum-based ones.

The *Early Development Instrument* can be applied at either junior or senior kindergarten level, i.e. for either 4 or 5-year olds. A teacher uses her/his observations after several months of classroom/school interaction with the child to complete the questionnaire.

The instrument provides information for groups of children in order to:

- 1) report on areas of strength and deficit for populations of children,
- 2) monitor populations of children over time,
- 3) predict how children will do in elementary school.

The EDI was developed by Drs. Magdalena Janus and Dan Offord at the Offord Centre for Child Studies, McMaster University, with support of a national advisory committee. It is largely based on the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY) and other existing developmental tests. Between 1998/99 and 2004/04 it has been implemented with over 290,000 students nation-wide.

The purpose of the instrument is to report on populations of children in different communities. It is intended to help communities assess how well they are doing in supporting young children and their families and assist in monitoring changes.

READINESS TO LEARN CONCEPT

The EDI is based on the **readiness to learn** concept.

We know that children are born ready to learn; it means that their neurosystem is pre-programmed to develop various skills and neuropathways, depending on the experience it receives.

The EDI measures children's **readiness to learn at school** (or school readiness to learn). This term refers to the child's ability to meet the task demands of school, such as being cooperative and sitting quietly and listening to the teacher, and to benefit from the educational activities that are provided by the school.

FIVE DOMAINS OF SCHOOL READINESS TO LEARN

There are five domains of school readiness to learn included in the Early Development Instrument.

1. *Physical health and well-being*

Includes: gross and fine motor skills:

- holding a pencil,
- running on the playground,
- motor coordination
- adequate energy levels for classroom activities
- independence in looking after own needs
- daily living skills

2. *Social knowledge and competence*

Includes:

- curiosity about the world,
- eagerness to try new experiences,
- knowledge of standards of acceptable behaviour in a public place,
- ability to control own behaviour,
- appropriate respect for adult authority,
- cooperation with others,
- following rules
- ability to play and work with other children

3. *Emotional health/maturity*

Includes:

- ability to reflect before acting,
- a balance between too fearful and too impulsive
- ability to deal with feelings at the age-appropriate level
- empathic response to other people's feelings

4. *Language and cognitive development*

Includes:

- reading awareness,
- age-appropriate reading and writing skills
- age-appropriate numeracy skills
- board games,
- ability to understand similarities and differences,
- ability to recite back specific pieces of information from memory

5. *Communication skills and general knowledge*

Includes:

- skills to communicate needs and wants in socially appropriate ways
- symbolic use of language,
- story telling,
- age-appropriate knowledge about the life and world around;

TWO ADDITIONAL INDICATORS:

Special skills

Includes: literacy, numeracy, dance, music, etc.

Special problems

Includes: health problems, learning problems, behaviour problems