

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	16 January 2020
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	ERASMUS+ programme Travel Outwith UK – April 2020
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/20/005
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
REPORT AUTHOR	Louise Beaton and Elizabeth Henderson
TERMS OF REFERENCE	5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report seeks Committee approval, in line with Aberdeen City Council's Staff Travel Policy (April 2019), for travel outwith the UK to Early Learning and Childcare settings in North Germany.
- 1.2 This report highlights the purpose of travel to North Germany, part of an ERASMUS+ programme. The study visit will enable Early Learning and Childcare (ELC) professionals to experience outdoor settings based in North Germany and to receive high quality training from those responsible for initiating and developing these services.

2. RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:-

- 2.1 approve travel outwith the UK for the study visit for 20 participants to North Germany and instruct the Chief Operating Officer to sanction this travel with immediate effect.

3. BACKGROUND

The National Context

- 3.1 The Scottish Government and the Care Inspectorate have promoted outdoor provision in ELC settings through several recent documents such as: *A Blueprint for 2020: The Expansion of ELC in Scotland (2018)*; *My World Outdoors (2016)*; *Space to Grow (2017)*; *the Health and Social Care Standards (2017)*; *Out to Play (2018)*; *Space to Grow indoor/outdoor settings (2019)*. These documents uphold *Article 31 of the UNCRC* that states: children have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to their age and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.
- 3.2 Consequent to the recommendations in *A Blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland*, sub criteria 3.2 - Children should have daily access to outdoor play and regularly experience outdoor play in a natural environment as part of their funded ELC offer – this has implications for additional training to support our extended outdoor service.

The Local Context

- 3.3 The Aberdeen City: Early Learning and Childcare Delivery Plan was approved by Aberdeen City Council Education and Children's Services Committee on 16 November 2017. This set out the Council's plan to extend local, flexible ELC which is accessible, affordable and of high quality.
- 3.4 Previous experience at expanding our outdoor provision in Aberdeen has had limited impact, highlighting several systemic challenges, namely: practitioner insecurity about new practices; lack of knowledge; too few experienced staff to accompany and role-model new practices for others; lack of opportunity for immersion in outdoor settings to engage with enthusiastic, informed and motivated others; lack of understanding of outdoor child-centred pedagogies, lack of understanding of the importance of outdoor practices for children's development.
- 3.5 This ERASMUS+ project aims to close the gap on these known issues by engaging with groups of motivated practitioners in European settings to deepen our practitioners' understanding and experience of outdoor practices and philosophies, thereby enabling participants to feel confident enough to work outdoors and become engaged in new innovative projects in our city.
- 3.6 The ERASMUS+ project creates the possibility for a strong peer-group to emerge that go on to become our Champions of Practice, with enhanced skills, knowledge and understanding of outdoor nursery pedagogies. The study-visit in April 2020 will incorporate an outstanding and world-class outdoor kindergarten. Both training and shadowing opportunities are intended at the kindergarten in North Germany with full immersion in practice, by our course participants.

- 3.7 Enabling participants to become more familiar with new pedagogies affords them the possibility of developing their own capabilities, ideas and agency, together, which is ultimately more empowering and sustainable in the long run.
- 3.8 The proposed study-visit in April 2020 builds on the successful study-visit to Saltamontes Kindergarten, Madrid, Spain in October 2019. Also attended by 20 participants.
- 3.9 Dissemination of findings will take place locally, in Aberdeen, but there may also be the possibility of sharing nationally at conferences and in education publications.

Early Learning and Childcare Outdoor Development

- 3.10 Research clearly indicates the need for young children to be allowed to play outdoors. There is an increase in obesity rates in young children across Scotland, linked to a lack of physical activity. Coupled with a resurgence in rickets and an increase in myopia (short sightedness), both consequent to limited times outdoors in children's lives, the outdoor context has become critical to the wellbeing of our youngest children.
- 3.11 Outdoor play is essential to holistic child development as it affords young children the opportunity to develop physically through movement, emotionally by becoming more independent through learning to take considered risk, socially through engaging in problem-solving activities in real-time with friends and peers, cognitively by engaging with their environment and learning through it and spiritually through the opportunity to develop awe and wonder by being immersed in the seasonal changes and the beauty of their surroundings. Active learning can take place through play, exploration, real-life experiences and learning and teaching enhancing children's agency in their learning.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report as **all** costs for the study visit are covered by the ERASMUS+ Grant, secured in July 2019: travel, accommodation, subsistence and training.
- 4.2 An application was submitted to ERASMUS+ in February 2019. ERASMUS+ is a strategic arm of the European Union (EU) that provides finance for mobility projects that encourages practitioners to engage with their European counterparts.
- 4.3 Aberdeen City Council Early Years Team was successfully awarded a grant of 83,800 Euros in July 2019. This covers **all** costs for both study visits: to Madrid in October 2019; and to North Germany in April 2020.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The guidelines and recommendations outlined in current government documents necessitate engaging with children in outdoor practices. All new

settings must comply with 'A Blueprint for 2020: the expansion of early learning and childcare in Scotland' which stipulates that children must play outdoors every day and play in a natural outdoor context at least once a week.

5.2 Aberdeen City Council has the statutory responsibility for ensuring that funded ELC entitlement is available to all eligible children in the city and complies with national guidelines.

5.3 Aberdeen City Council will continue to be the primary guarantor of quality and key enabler of flexibility and choice, ensuring that there is a range of options for families in the city.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

6.1 This report is brought to the January meeting of the Education Operational Delivery Committee in order to have the travel out-with UK approved in time for the commencement of the study visit to North Germany in April 2020.

6.2 Any delay in this process could cause risks to the functioning of the study visit as it must be taken within the Easter holiday dates of all applicants. Without approval, applicants cannot take part in the study visit.

6.3 The following risks have been considered as part of the ERASMUS+ project and the need to travel outwith the UK:

Category	Risk	Low (L) Medium (M) High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	There are no financial risks to ACC, however, failure to sanction the travel out-with the UK results in loss of training opportunities for ELC professionals	Low	Care has been taken to create a study visit that enhances the skills and understanding of ELC professionals at no cost to ACC.
Legal	Risk of not meeting statutory obligations around the outdoor provision for ELC settings through failure to implement ERASMUS+ project.	Medium	Mitigated to a degree by on-going training but ultimately would incur further costs to ACC for trainers to deliver additional training that would otherwise have been met by the ERASMUS+ project.
Employee	Risk of not building capacity in the ELC	Medium	Mitigated by training offered in study visit

	workforce for the delivery of outdoor ELC provision		
Customer	Risk of not delivering outdoor ELC services	Medium	Mitigated by offer of in-depth training in ERASMUS+ study visit.
Environment	Risk of not utilising and benefitting from the high quality outdoor environments in Aberdeen for ELC services.	Medium	Mitigated by training on ERASMUS+ project.
Technology	N/A		
Reputational	Risk of not delivering on legal obligations with expansion of ELC services, complying with guidelines on outdoors.	Medium	Mitigated by the work of the ERASMUS+ project within the delivery of the wider ELC expansion programme.

7. OUTCOMES

- 7.1 Early Learning and Childcare can make a significant positive contribution to a child's development. Research indicates better health and wellbeing outcomes for children who have participated in outdoor ELC. Outdoor ELC can reduce the poverty-related attainment gap and improve long term outcomes for children and families. Research indicates that children who have been allowed to develop holistically in outdoor settings have better literacy and numeracy outcomes later and improved health and wellbeing.
- 7.2 The delivery of Early Learning and Childcare is one of the main drivers in ensuring that all children have the best start in life, delivering on the ambitions set out in the Local Outcome Improvement Plan (LOIP), the Children's Services Plan (CSP) and our National Improvement Framework (NIF). High quality outdoor ELC further enhances better outcomes for all children but especially those from poorer backgrounds, and those who have experienced adverse childhood experiences and trauma.
- 7.3 The ERASMUS+ study visit is of benefit to all ELC professionals and to the children and their parents and carers in our ELC settings.
- 7.4 The aims of the ERASMUS+ project are compatible with ACC's LOIP aims of ensuring our youngest children receive the best start in life; that they are safe, healthy, active, nurtured, responsible, respected and included. These aims also

embrace ACC's desire to be a UNCRC friendly city, through upholding and promoting UNCRC article 31 (1) the right to play, by supporting ELC professionals to develop their skills and understanding of innovative pedagogies that facilitate this.

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	<p>The Expansion of Early Learning and Childcare will have an extremely positive impact on this priority theme and will help to deliver the LOIP Improvement Project Aim 'to increase the number of people employed in growth sectors by 5% by 2021.</p> <p>The workforce needs to increase significantly in order to deliver the increase in ELC provision consequent to our expansion project, including those who have trained on delivering outdoor ELC services.</p>
Prosperous People	<p>The provision of high quality ELC will have an extremely positive impact on this priority theme. Equity of access to universal provision, including outdoor learning, will support families to provide the best care they can for their children.</p> <p>The provision of universally accessible and high quality ELC will play a vital role in helping to close the poverty-related attainment gap and outdoor provision aids this.</p>
Prosperous Place	<p>The provision of high quality ELC will have a positive impact on this priority theme.</p> <p>A healthier workforce will grow from a healthier population of children given access to outdoor ELC provision.</p>

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	<p>The proposed ERASMUS+ programme is designed around the needs of our ELC service, the needs of ELC professionals and the needs of our youngest customers.</p>
Governance	<p>Clear governance arrangements for Early Learning and Childcare Expansion are in place through the Programme Board.</p>

Workforce	Aberdeen City Council is investing in and empowering the current and future workforce in line with the Aberdeen City: Workforce Delivery Plan - Early Learning and Childcare approved by Education Operational Delivery Committee on 6 September 2018. This programme contributes to that aspiration.
Technology	Aberdeen City Council will implement a new national Management Information System for Early Learning and Childcare Admissions in August 2020.
Partnerships and Alliances	The model of delivery is founded on effective GIRFEC practice which requires close partnership working to improve outcomes for children and families.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required.
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required.
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Not applicable.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Aberdeen City Council Travel Policy (April 2019)

10. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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