

Early years work in Angus applauded

FOCUS: New approach is delivering improvement at grassroots level

GRAHAM BROWN

A world-leading Angus early years project has been hailed as an "inspiring example" of the work going on to deliver positive outcomes for young people.

The praise for the district's Early Years Collaborative (EYC) came from Children and Young People's Commissioner Tam Baillie on a visit to the Barnardo's Family Service Angus Grenfell House Centre in Arbroath.

Mr Baillie received an insight into a range of Angus projects, including EYC, which at its launch in 2012 was the world's first national multi-agency quality improvement programme.

It involves all 32 community planning partnerships across Scotland and a wide range of national partners, working towards improving outcomes and reducing inequalities for all children, parents and families to ensure the best start in life.

In Angus, the multi-agency approach is working to deliver improvement through change at grassroots level.

It focuses on what already works well and what needs to happen to develop more effective improvement.

Angus Council's vice-convenor of children and learning, Councillor Lynne Devine, said: "The early years of a child's life are so crucial to their development and life chances.

"For this reason we are trying hard to prioritise the services – health, social work and education – which work together to support families as early as possible.

"In the Early Years Collaborative, continual improvements through small tests of change are undertaken to make our services as good as they can be for both the children and their families."

Mr Baillie said: "We know that focusing on the early years will have lifelong benefits into adulthood.

"That's why the work that Angus Council is doing through the EYC is an inspiring example of making real the good intentions of the Children and Young People Act and by doing so,



From left: Councillor Sheena Welsh, early years collaborative programme manager Eileen Jackson, Mr Baillie, Angus Council's vice-convenor of children Councillor Lynne Devine and service manager early years Dawn Archibald. Picture: Paul Reid.

“
This is exactly what the EYC is about – making early year's services as effective as possible.

**AILEEN CAMPBELL,
MINISTER FOR
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE**

further improve the long-term outcomes for our children."

Aileen Campbell, Minister for Children and Young People, said: "There are almost 650 Early Years Collaborative (EYC) Improvement projects across Scotland and it's encouraging to see that, through their involvement with the EYC, Angus is strengthening their services to improve outcomes and life chances for children and families.

"They have increased support for expectant mums where there are issues relating to substance misuse, improved sharing of information between health and early learning and childcare so children's development needs can be identified and responded to as early as possible and they've increased children's library membership through Bookbug to build literacy skills.

"This is exactly what the EYC is about – making early year's services as effective as possible so all children gets the best start in life."

The Commissioner also learned about Hayshead playgroup, the development of nurture spaces and cosy corners for nursery children.

Mr Baillie also heard about the work of a group established to support vulnerable dads and their children where criminal activity has been or is a factor.

It uses sport and physical activity as a medium to help fathers to engage with their children at Just Play.

gbrown@thecourier.co.uk