Item 2

25th April 2024

Glasgow City Council

Education, Skills and Early Years City Policy Committee

Report by Executive Director of Education Services

Contact: Barry Syme, Principal Educational Psychologist

SUPPORTING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN BORN PRE-TERM

Purpose of Report:

To update the Committee on the work being undertaken in early learning centres and schools to support children and young people who are born pre-term.

Recommendations:

The Committee is asked to consider the range of approaches being used and ask the Executive Director to present further update reports, as appropriate.

Ward No(s):	Citywide: ✓
Local member(s) advised: Yes ☐ No ☐	consulted: Yes ☐ No ☐

***PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING**:*

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1 Background:

Why should education professionals be aware of preterm birth?

1.1 Each year around fifteen million babies are born preterm worldwide; that is 1 in 10 babies. Pre-term refers to any baby that is born below 37 weeks gestation. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) prematurity is the single biggest cause of newborn deaths, and the second leading cause of child deaths worldwide. All newborns are vulnerable, but preterm babies are acutely so. Many require special care simply to remain alive, particularly those that are born below 30 weeks. Some preterm babies who survive face a lifetime of disability. It is now recognised that an increased awareness of the long-term consequences of preterm birth is required to develop policies to support these survivors and their families as part of a more generalized improvement in quality of care.

1.2 In the UK, approximately 8% of babies are born preterm (below 37 weeks) and most attend mainstream education provision. There will be 2 to 3 children in an average size primary class who are born preterm. The number of children born preterm is likely to increase in the coming years as there are continuing improvements in post-natal care. It is therefore essential that all educators understand the implications of preterm birth on a child's development but also how families are supported . It is the responsibility of all of us to support children born preterm.

2 What is pre-term birth?

2.1 The table below shows the prevalence rates of preterm birth:



Source: MBRRACE-UK Perinatal Mortality Surveillance Report 2018

2.2 Children who are born just a few weeks early (32-36 weeks gestation) are more likely than term-born babies to:

- Be transferred to a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU)
- Have breathing difficulties
- Have feeding difficulties
- Develop infections
- Have poor growth
- Need extra care after birth

But severe illnesses are rare.

2.3 Extremely preterm babies (born 28 weeks or less gestation) may

- Spend weeks or months in a Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU)
- Have respiratory disease
- Experience severe infections
- Have feeding problems
- Have poor growth
- Retinopathy of Prematurity
- Brain injuries
- Mortality

2.4 In addition, they may experience further difficulties as they are being cared for in a highly abnormal environment for early development. This can have a major impact on the family.

2.5 Preterm birth may affect multiple areas of a child's development. Most research has focused on very or extremely preterm born children, but effects may be seen after birth at all preterm gestations. The prevalence and severity of problems is related to a baby's gestational age at birth. The earlier a baby is born, the greater the risk they will develop long term difficulties. Developmental problems may be evident in infancy and may persist throughout the lifespan.

3 Implications for a Child's Learning

3.1 There are consistent findings from studies throughout the world that a child born significantly preterm may have a lower Non-verbal IQ than their verbal IQ. Preterm children will often have difficulty with simultaneous information processing compared to sequential processing.

3.2 This can often be seen in deficits in a range of general cognitive skills such as

- Working memory
- Visuospatial skills
- Processing speed
- Executive functions
- Attention

3.3 In addition to specific learning difficulties, a preterm child may also experience behavioural, social and emotional issues compared with term-born children. Preterm babies are at increased risk for problems and disorders in three areas:

- Anxiety and worries / Emotional Disorders
- Inattention / ADHD
- Social and communication problems / ASD

3.4 They are not any more likely to have externalising behaviour problems than term-born children. The special constellation of problems means that preterm born children with difficulties may present differently to other children with Additional Support Needs. For this reason, we need to ensure that Early Learning Centres and Schools are aware if a child has been born preterm.

3.5 The illustration below highlights some of the possible areas that a child born preterm may experience difficulty in.

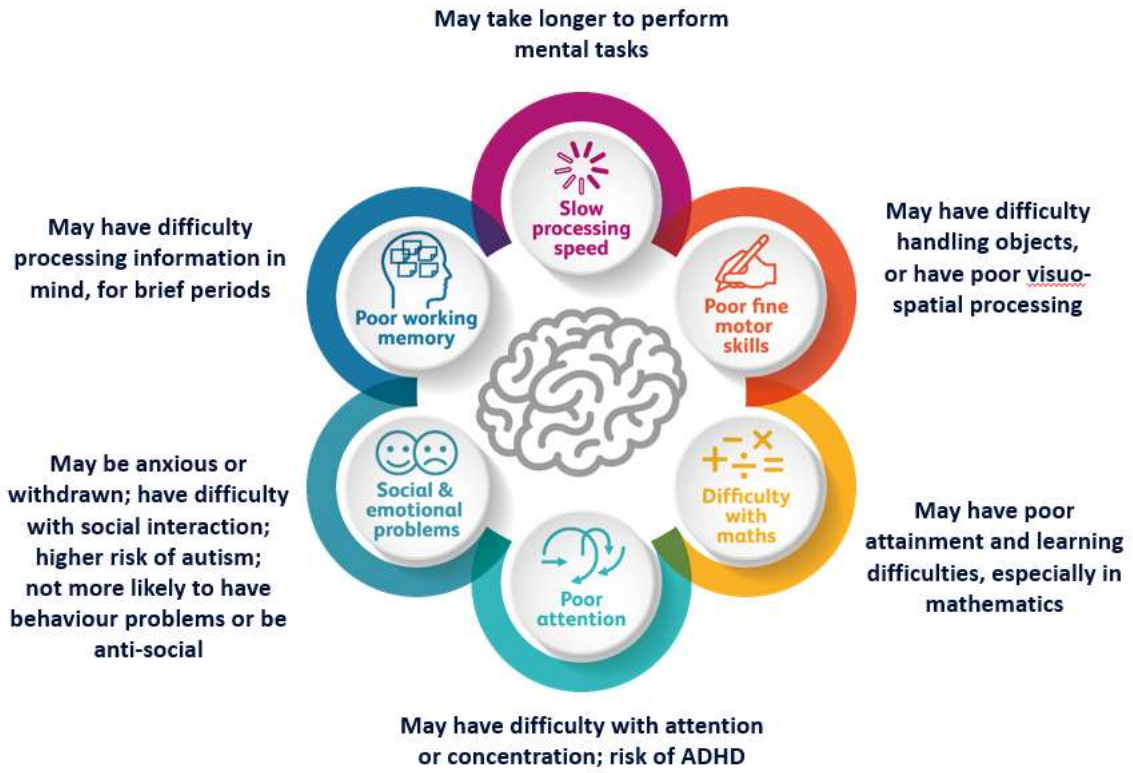


Figure 1.

4 Glasgow's Education Service's response to raising awareness of the need of children born preterm.

4.1 For several years there has been collaboration between Glasgow Educational Psychology Services and the Royal Hospital for Children around the needs of preterm children. This began in 2019 when a number of educational psychologists attended the "When Sense Makes Sense" conference at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital in Glasgow. Following this conference is was agreed to hold a conference for education professionals in March 2020. Unfortunately, due to COVID this was cancelled at the end of February 2020.

4.2 The conference was then re-arranged for June 2022 and 2 sessions were held in the Banqueting hall, Glasgow City Chambers. A total of 112 participants attended the conference (51 in the morning session and 61 in the afternoon session). Participants ranged from educational psychologists, Early Years practitioners, Primary Teachers and Paediatricians.

4.3 The seminar was organised in partnership with The Smallest Things Charity and, in addition to an input from Catriona Ogilvy, their founder and chair, there were inputs from NHS GGC specialists in neonatology and neuro-disability and academic researchers in the fields of child development and mathematical cognition, along with lived experience presentations on the school experience from a parent and her daughter and also from Lady Sarra Hoy, parent to a premature son and ambassador for the Bliss charity.

4.4 The Smallest Things is a registered charity supporting the needs of premature babies and their families following neonatal intensive care. Run largely by volunteers who have had premature babies themselves, the charity is dedicated to making the world a better place for premature babies and their families. The charity introduced the Prem Aware School Award 2020 believing all children born premature must have the opportunity to achieve their best possible long-term outcomes and that the needs of premature children must be met when they start their school journey. This seminar was an opportunity to inform education colleagues about the award and how to register for this.

4.5 Professor Camilla Gilmore from Loughborough University's Centre for Mathematical Cognition presented on the PRISM (Premature Infant's Skills in Mathematics) E-Learning resources for teachers. This is for education professionals based on effective design principles. It involves approximately 1 hour of learning in 5 short 10-minute sections with engaging interactive multi-media content, quizzes to test learning objectives and strategies to support children in the classroom. The PRISM E-learning resource is available to all Glasgow schools.

4.6 Dr. Nashwa Matta, Associate Specialist Neonatology & Neurodisability from the Royal Hospital for Children spoke about how the NHS had changed the way that extremely preterm babies are cared for and ways of supporting families through this often-traumatic time.

4.7 There were also presentations from parents with lived experience as well as the personal account from a young person who was born significantly preterm.

5 Learning outcomes from the seminar

5.1 As part of the overall evaluation of the impact of the seminar all attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire at the start of the session and then again at the end, this was also followed up 6 months later by Samantha Johnstone, Professor of Child Development, Department of Health Sciences at the University of Leicester.

5.2 The full report is available upon request however the results of the pre and post training evaluations clearly indicated a change in the level of staff confidence and understanding of this topic.

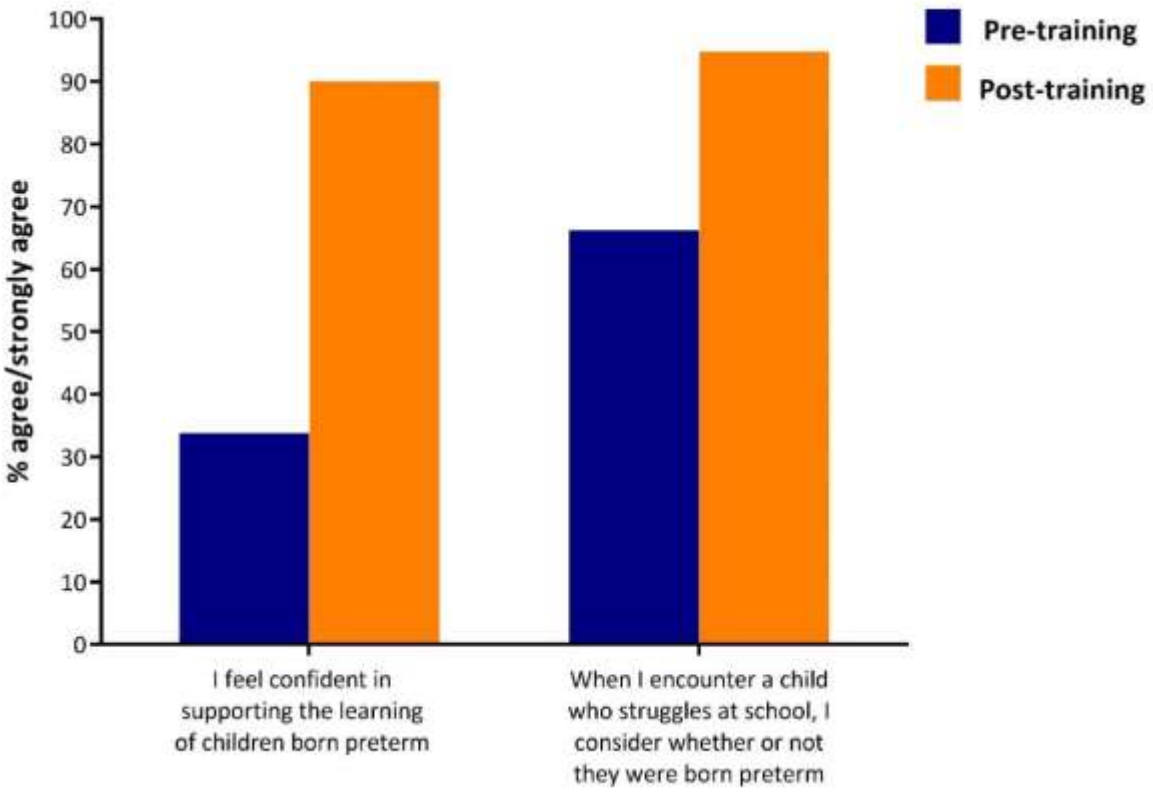


Figure 2. Proportion of participants who agreed to statements pre- and post-training.

5.3 For comparison, pre- and post-training data from the evaluation of the PRISM e-learning resource2 for 61 participants were as follows: 93% of participants felt confident in supporting preterm-born learners after using the PRISM e-learning resource compared with 23% before (70% difference; $p<0.0001$); and 82% of participants reported that they would consider prematurity when encountering a child who struggles at school after using the PRISM e-learning resource compared with 23% prior to using the resource (59% difference; $p<0.0001$).

5.4 Participants' were asked how their practice has changed as a result of using the e-learning resource or attending the training session. Below are some examples of responses:-

- We have updated our referral paperwork for partnership nurseries and for general referrals to record if a child was born prematurely
- Changes in Consultation processes and questions asked to parents/carers. Changes in Local Authority paperwork.
- Since attending the conference, I have now started thinking about pre-term birth and potential impact on YP from birth, right through their entire school journey. As an Educational Psychologist, I work with YP from birth to 25 and therefore this has meant during casework with YP at all stages, I am now asking and considering whether pre-term birth could be impacting development. Prior to the conference, I would most likely only have considered the impact of being pre-term for YP I support within Early Years.
- I now ask the question as it was something I hadn't considered before.
- More reflective about children's development.
- In relation to assessment and expectations around milestones.
- Similar to my answer above, having a better awareness of the research around pre-term birth has influenced my consultation with schools and parents. I have realised there is limited awareness of this in schools and have experienced one situation where the needs of a child could have been attributed to their birth. Discussing this with parents also appeared to give them a great deal of clarity and reassurance around some of the difficulties their child was experiencing.
- Within casework, supporting schools to consider the impact that being born prematurely may have on children's development and appropriate strategies to support. Worked with senior management in the service to have birth details added onto our casework 'direct work' form so we can gather this data at a service level across the school session.
- I ask information in relation to pre-term birth within consultations. Where this has been identified I include this as key information in children's file with a link to the resource so that educational needs and supports can be considered at all stages in the future. I use the information shared to support my questioning and assessment processes as well as to consider supports and planning for any children.
- Incorporating identification of pre term birth in all consultations no matter age or stage of the child and explain rationale to others.
- I now take into consideration due dates of children and actual birth dates (marked on their care plans) and when monitoring and tracking progress and learning then this is now a factor we look at. We work closely with the parents and discuss their experience and possible impact it could have, and celebrate all achievements.
- Staff now consider preterm births when discussing developmental milestones and considering targets.

- I now ask parents/ carers if their child was born full term as part of my pen portrait when building up a full picture of a pupil I will be working with.

6 Changes made following this seminar

6.1 In response to points raised at this seminar there have been several operational changes to ensure that information about a child's development and the possibility of premature birth are noted.

6.2 The admission's form to all Glasgow Early Years provision now asks the parent/carer for details of the child's birth and at what stage of gestation they child was born at.

6.3 If a young person is referred to Glasgow Educational Psychology Service then as part of the initial consultation the educational psychologist now asks the parent/carers about the gestation period and whether there were any complications at birth.

6.4 We also now have online child development training modules for all Early Years practitioners which make reference to premature birth as well as links to the PRISM e-learning resource and The Smallest Things award.

7 Policy and Resource Implications

Resource Implications:

Financial:	Within existing resources with additional funding from Scottish Government Mental Health Community Funding, School Counselling Funding and Scottish Attainment Fund, as appropriate.
Legal:	N/A
Personnel:	Within existing resources.
Council Strategic Plan:	Specify which Grand Challenge (s) and Mission (s) the proposal supports. Where appropriate the relevant Commitment can also be listed. Grand Challenge 1, Mission 2 Meet the learning and care needs of children and their families before and through school.

Equality and Socio-Economic Impacts:

Does the proposal support the Council's Equality Outcomes 2021-25? Please specify.	Yes Equality Outcome 7. Glasgow's Improvement Challenge (Literacy and Numeracy) has resulted in improved attainment.
What are the potential equality impacts as a result of this report?	Young people should have improved health and wellbeing.
Please highlight if the policy/proposal will help address socio-economic disadvantage.	While the approaches will not help to address socio-economic disadvantage there is clear evidence that providing support this group of young people will have long term benefits.

Climate Impacts:

Does the proposal support any Climate Plan actions? Please specify:	No
What are the potential climate impacts as a result of this proposal?	None
Will the proposal contribute to Glasgow's net zero carbon target?	No

Privacy and Data Protection Impacts:

Are there any potential data protection impacts as a result of this report Y/N	
If yes, please confirm that a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) has been carried out	

8 Recommendations

8.1 The Committee is asked to consider the range of approaches being used and ask the Executive Director to present further update reports, as appropriate.