

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 18 JUNE 2008

POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval for the Council's Policy and Procedures for Looked After Children.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Council has responsibilities for looked after children. Children may be looked after for a variety of reasons. In all cases, however, it will be because they do not have the full, or effective support of their family in the way that is wanted by a caring community. Usually, too, they will be the subject of a formal supervision order of the Children's Hearing system. It is these children for whom the Council has responsibility as a Corporate Parent much work is going on to ensure we fulfil this serious responsibility and it is therefore a key local priority.
- 2.2 Although numbers vary on a monthly basis there are currently over 400 looked after children in East Ayrshire. Of these, some 130 or more are "looked after and accommodated" by the Council. In other words they are living under specific arrangements made by the Council, for example with foster carers or in one of the Council's Children's homes.

3. POLICY AND PROCEDURES FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN

- 3.1 The Council operates a policy of staged intervention (sometimes described as tiered intervention). In accordance with the requirements of the Children(Scotland) Act 1995 and good practice, the aim is to ensure that all interventions are minimal and as near to the family and community as possible. This requirement does however present a significant challenge to the staff who work with children as there are clear risks associated with any failure to intervene either appropriately or quickly enough. This is why a clear, structured and comprehensive set of policies and procedures are needed.
- 3.2 An extensive piece of work has been completed involving staff from social work, education and partner agencies to develop a range of policies and procedures for looked after children. This document complements other

key procedures such as Standard Circular 76 which covers the assessment procedures to be used by staff for young people who are having problems either in school or in the community. This approach also complements that taken under the Integrated Assessment Framework which has been developed on an all Ayrshire basis and is currently being rolled out in East Ayrshire based on the experience in the Cumnock and Kilmarnock learning partnerships. The document will be reviewed and updated regularly in the light of developments.

- 3.3 The full document is available in the members' information point. It will be circulated widely to staff and partner agencies subject to Cabinet approval

4. POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The formal adoption of this document will allow the Council to better fulfil its obligations as a Corporate Parent, and its wider policy objectives relating to tackling disadvantage

5. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 These policy and procedures will facilitate joint working across community planning partners. In particular it will contribute to the Improving opportunities, improving health, eliminating poverty and improving community safety strands of the community plan.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The staged intervention approach will minimise the risks both for individual young people and the staff who work with them.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 Nil

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members :

- (i) approve the policy and procedures for looked after children; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
GRS/GRS
13 June 2008

Members requiring further information should contact Graham Short,
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Policy and Procedures for Looked after Children, available in Members' information Point

Implementation Officer: Jackie Donnelly, Andrew Sutherland, Kay Gilmour