

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET – 9 JANUARY 2008

LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE : WE CAN AND MUST DO BETTER : AWARD OF ADDITIONAL FUNDING

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek approval for the use of additional funding in support of looked after children and young people.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In October 2007, the Minister for Children and Early Years made an announcement that additional funding would be allocated to local authorities to support better outcomes for looked after children and young people. The Ministerial statement was in line with previous announcements based on the report “We Can and Must Do Better” which was launched in East Ayrshire in January 2007.
- 2.2 Elected Members will be aware that East Ayrshire has been one of the leading authorities in Scotland in terms of developing provision for looked after children. It was one of the first to apply for, and be granted, funding to support obtaining better educational outcomes. This work has been progressing and all agencies that are involved in supporting this vulnerable group of young people remain committed to attaining better outcomes. There are however significant challenges within this area and there is reason to believe that young people who are looked after by the Authority are still more at risk than their peers of being homeless, involved in offending, or drug misuse are ultimately becoming part of the “More Choices, More Chances” group.

3. THE MINISTERIAL POSITION

- 3.1 The letter of announcement by the Minister for Children and Early Years highlighted the specific objectives of the “We Can and Must Do Better” programme:
- educational attainment
 - post education pathways into further or higher education, training and/or employment
 - health and dental outcomes including better access to health services
 - sustained appropriate accommodation

It is highlighted in the report, that as corporate parent, local authorities and their partners have a key role to play in ensuring that looked after children and

care leavers achieve the same wellbeing and success that any parent wishes for their child.

3.2 The Minister highlights a number of different activities for which the funding could be used. These include:

- Elected Member development and training or events
- Multi-agency development sessions at management and operational level
- Multi-disciplinary training events bringing together education, social work, housing partners, NHS and other partners
- Awareness raising through events or written materials
- Publication of local strategies or commitment statements based on self evaluation
- Consultation events with looked after children
- Events to celebrate the success of looked after children or care leavers

4. THE EAST AYRSHIRE POSITION

4.1 In East Ayrshire, there has been a considerable amount of emphasis on the outcomes for looked after children. In keeping with that objective, presently there is both a lot of work continuing on the development of general approaches to parenting, and secondly in the development of a formal statement on the policy and procedures to be used for looked after children.

4.2 The availability of additional funding will allow this work to be progressed further. It is therefore proposed that the money should be used in the following ways:

- the establishment of enhanced educational provision at the Montgomery Place, Bellsford and Kilmaurs facilities
- work on the development of the corporate parenting strategy and the procedures for looked after children should be finalised
- a seminar should be organised for Elected Members and officers to gain shared understanding of issues surrounding looked after children. This seminar being opened to all interested agencies including the private and voluntary sector.
- specific support for looked after children in relation to attendance, exclusion and educational attainment
- specific support for looked after children in terms of housing transitions.

Taken together, this package of support will be co-ordinated by the children and families service of social services and will be aimed at improving outcomes for young people. The emphasis will be to reduce barriers and divisions between the various services to support young people in order that there can be a much better focus on the individual planning for young people who are looked after. In particular, the issue of transitions and throughcare arrangements will be emphasised.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The distribution of funding will be as follows:

Support for educational outcomes at Montgomery Place, Bellsford, Kilmaurs and within care settings	£30,000
Finalisation of corporate parenting strategy	£2,000
Finalisation of the looked after children policies and procedures	£3,000
Support for attendance, exclusions and tutorial provision	£18,000
Diversions and other activity (Neighbourhood Services)	£11,000
Total	£64,000

It is envisaged that the support for educational outcomes in the residential care settings will be allocated evenly between Montgomery Place, Bellsford and Kilmaurs and general care settings. Support for attendance, exclusion and tutorial support will be divided evenly between the 9 Learning Partnership.

6. POLICY IMPLICATIONS / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Nil.

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

7.1 This will contribute to the community planning theme of improving opportunities, promoting community learning and eliminating poverty. It is envisaged that community planning partners in particular the Police and the National Health Service will have access to funding at learning partnership level and through those aspects which are to do with the implementation of the parenting strategy and policy and procedures for looked after children. It follows also that community planning partners will be invited to the Elected Member officer seminar.

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

8.1 In terms of corporate risk, there are no implications flowing from this report.

9. RECOMMENDATION

9.1 It is recommended that Elected Members:

- (i) approve this approach to corporate parenting within East Ayrshire; and
- (ii) otherwise note the contents of this report.

GRS/JP
20 November 2007

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. “Looked after Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better” – Education Committee – 20 March 2007

Members wishing further information should contact Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services, Tel: (01563) 576017.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

Graham Short, Executive Director of Educational and Social Services