

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

FULL COUNCIL: 24 JUNE 2010

CORPORATE PARENTING : NATIONAL ANTI STIGMA CAMPAIGN AND TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS IN RESPECT OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKED AFTER

Report by the Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 To advise of the launch of the national anti stigma campaign and the national training programme for elected members in respect of children and young people who are looked after in East Ayrshire, to receive a presentation from young people as a key element of the training programme and to seek support for the campaign via the East Ayrshire Promise – Give me a Chance and Be Fair to a Child in Care.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Scottish Government set out the national policy agenda for looked after children and young people in *These Are Our Bairns* (Scottish Government, 2008) and *We Can and Must Do Better* (Scottish Executive, 2007). The guidance emphasises the key role that local authorities have as corporate parents, and the vital contribution of community planning partners as members of the wider corporate family. It demonstrates the importance partnership working has in making a difference to the lives of children who are looked after, in care, and care leavers, so that they have the appropriate levels of support that enables them to prepare for a successful future.
- 2.2 East Ayrshire Council takes its Corporate Parenting role very seriously and the Looked After Children national agenda is firmly embedded in the priorities set within the Single Outcome Agreement, the Corporate Parenting Action Plan (monitored via the Member/Officer Working Group) and the Children and Young People's Service Planning arrangements.
- 2.3 A range of events have already taken place throughout 2009 and 2010 to raise awareness of our corporate parenting roles and responsibilities, which has involved elected members, community planning partners, chief officers / senior staff and front line practitioners/managers from across the service.
- 2.4 At a national level, Who Cares? Scotland has led on the development of a national training programme for elected members and also on the implementation of a national anti stigma campaign, both supported by the Scottish Government. Who Cares? Scotland is a national voluntary organisation which works with and for children and young people in care. It works in most local authority areas in Scotland and provides a range of services to children and young people with experience of being looked after including advocacy, advice, information and support. The organisation also:

- consults with and listens to young people's views
- campaigns for children and young people
- helps policy-makers consider the views of young people
- brings together young people with experience of care
- provides a network of support through their office and the work they do throughout Scotland.

East Ayrshire Council funds a dedicated Who Cares? Scotland member of staff who works directly with children and young people from this local authority area and the staff members who care for them. This includes advocacy, supporting them in having their views heard and helping to ensure they are fully involved in their care planning arrangements.

3. CORPORATE PARENTING: NATIONAL TRAINING PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS

3.1 Corporate Parenting is the responsibility that councils and their partners have for children and young people who are looked after under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995. Most young people become looked after as a result of a decision of a children's hearing or a court. Those children are often referred to as "in care". Corporate parenting is defined as:

"The formal and local partnerships needed between all local authority departments and services, and associated agencies, who are responsible for working together to meet the needs of looked after children and young people and care leavers." *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better (Scottish Executive, 2007)*

3.2 A good corporate parent should:

- accept responsibility for the council's looked after children and young people and care leavers;
- make their needs a priority;
- seek for them the same outcomes any good parent would want for their own children.

These Are Our Bairns, (Scottish Government, 2008).

3.3 There are 5 key elements to being a good corporate parent:

- the specific statutory duty under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to safeguard and promote the welfare of the children in your care.
- strong governance – having the right information, planning strategically, driving improvement, challenging services, focusing on outcomes.
- strong leadership within the council, within the Community Planning Partnership and in the community.

- listening to children and young people.
 - being able to say yes to the question *“is this good enough for my child?”*
- 3.4 While the primary responsibility lies with the council, our community planning partners have a duty to co-operate with us to promote and safeguard the wellbeing of looked after children and young people and care leavers.
- 3.5 All Elected Members have a responsibility for the care and support provided to looked after children and young people. A briefing note issued by the Improvement Service has also recently been circulated to elected members highlighting their responsibilities as a corporate parent.
- 3.7 The National Training Programme for Elected Members was launched by the Minister for Children and Young People on 25 May 2010. The programme seeks to develop awareness of elected members in respect of their roles and responsibilities as corporate parents. As outlined, a considerable amount of work has already taken place in East Ayrshire in raising awareness about our corporate parenting responsibilities, which has involved elected members, staff and community planning partners. For this reason, the national programme is starting in East Ayrshire, recognising that there is much to build upon.
- 3.8 The presentation to Council on 24 June 2010 will focus on young care leavers. It has been designed and delivered by young care leavers, some of whom live in the East Ayrshire area. This presentation was first made at the Care Leavers Event held on 23 April 2010 in Kilmarnock, which was an initiative developed through the Member / Officer Working Group, which aimed to engage all partner agencies in the consideration of the key issues and challenges affecting young care leavers. The central purpose of the day was to inform the development of a specific action plan for care leavers. This work is being collated for reporting to the next Member / Officer Working Group.
- 3.9 It is suggested that a further seminar on corporate parenting is planned for elected members as part of the 2010 development programme for members, with a particular focus on hearing the key messages from children and young people in East Ayrshire.

4. THE NATIONAL ANTI-STIGMA CAMPAIGN

- 4.1 The National Anti Stigma Campaign was launched in January 2010, also by the Minister for Children and Young People and aims to tackle the stigma and prejudice associated with being a child in care. The campaign has a key message “Be Fair to a Child in Care” – this message is being widely disseminated via press, publicity and events. The presentation being made by young people on the campaign to council on 24 June 2010, requests that a commitment is made to supporting the campaign by agreeing to commit to a promise about being fair to children in care.

- 4.2 The “Give me a Chance” campaign is the product of two years work with young people living in care. It started in 2008 when Who Cares? Scotland marked its 30th anniversary with a year of activities on the theme of Celebrating Success and Challenging Stigma.
- 4.3 The anniversary publication, Caring about Success – Young People’s Stories, captured what success means to children and young people in care, both their own and other people’s, and what they aspire to in the future. It showed that stigma and other people’s low expectations have an adverse impact on children and young people in care. One of the key recommendations was that the:

“Scottish Government and its strategic partners should come together to launch a national campaign aimed at dispelling the myths associated with being in care and promote positive images of children and young people looked after away from home, including the message that they are children and young people first and foremost, with the same rights to respect and freedom from discrimination, and the chance to achieve their potential just like any other children and young people: this should be designed by and led by children and young people, supported by key partners”. *Recommendation 1 of Caring about Success (Who Cares? Scotland 2008)*.

5. DEVELOPMENTS IN EAST AYRSHIRE

- 5.1 The East Ayrshire Corporate Parenting Action Plan was developed in 2009 and implementation of the plan has been monitored by the Member / Officer Working Group. Regular progress reports have been presented to Cabinet and to the Community Planning Board.
- 5.2 The action plan addresses the key areas which have been identified as central to improving the life opportunities of the children and young people in our care:
- Individual Care Planning
 - Operational Planning and Service Delivery
 - Learning and Development
 - Creating Opportunities.
- 5.3 A multi-agency planning event is arranged for 25 June 2010 to develop our future action plan, taking account of the key messages from children and young people.
- 5.4 Progress reports will continue to be made to Cabinet and to the community Planning Board on a six monthly basis.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report.

7. POLICY / LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The contents of this report comply with our statutory duties towards children and young people who are looked after.

8. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 As highlighted in the report, partnership arrangements with all community planning partners are central to effectively supporting children and young people who are looked after, including young people leaving our care. Community planning partners have participated in awareness raising and training events. Regular progress reports on our corporate parenting action plans have been presented to the Community Planning Board. In addition, the presentation being made to full council by young care leavers on 24 June 2010 is also being presented to the Community Planning Board, seeking support to also commit to the East Ayrshire Promise.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 The implementation of these national initiatives ensure that risk is being effectively managed in supporting children and young people. This particularly relates to the commitment made to the National Anti-Stigma Campaign, as with the right support and encouragement, children and young people should not have to experience prejudice and discrimination.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 It is recommended that Council:
- i) notes the launch of the national corporate parenting training programme for elected members and the launch of the national anti-stigma campaign;
 - ii) notes the range of work which has already taken place in East Ayrshire to raise awareness of our corporate parenting responsibilities, and to improve our services;
 - iii) notes the key messages from young care leavers as provided in the drama presentation of "One Big Family" ;
 - iv) agrees that a further seminar for elected members will be arranged as part of the 2010 development programme for members, with a focus on hearing key messages from children and young people in East Ayrshire;
 - v) agrees to commit to the East Ayrshire Promise (see Appendix 1) in support of the National Anti-Stigma Campaign to promote and celebrate the success of children and young people in care and to tackle the negative stigma often associated with being in care;

vi) note that progress reports on the corporate parenting action plan will continue to be presented to Cabinet on a six monthly basis; and otherwise

vii) notes the content of this report.

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services
10 June 2010

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

These Are Our Bairns (Scottish Government, 2008)

We Can and Must Do Better (Scottish Executive, 2007).

Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must Do Better (Scottish Executive, 2007)

Caring About Success (Who Cares? Scotland 2008)

The Improvement Service Elected Member Briefing Note No. 2 Corporate Parenting (February 2010)

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER

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EAST AYRSHIRE'S PROMISE GIVE ME A CHANCE: BE FAIR TO A CHILD IN OUR CARE

In East Ayrshire Council we are committed to the aims of the Who Cares? Scotland Anti-Stigma Campaign to give looked after children and young people a fair chance in life.

We will:-

- Listen to children and young people and work in partnership with them to increase opportunities for them to thrive.
- Combat the myths associated with children and young people in care.
- Promote a positive message of the achievements of children in care.
- Help to educate communities and workforces on the reasons for children being accommodated.
- Advocate for looked after and accommodated children and young people as children first.
- Find creative ways to include and support children and young people in their communities, including young people leaving our care;
- Support children and young people in fulfilling their potential.
- Continue to provide high quality services.
- Support the campaign through practical and material activities.