

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

EDUCATION COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2007

“LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: WE CAN AND MUST DO BETTER”

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1** To inform Members of the contents of the national report “Looked After Children and Young People: we can and must do better” and to seek approval for an action plan to address the main issues identified in this document.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** On 15 January 2007 the Minister for Education and Young People, Hugh Henry, launched the national report “Looked After Children and Young People: we can and must do better” in St Joseph’s Academy, Kilmarnock. This report deals with the educational attainment of looked after children which has been a focus of Ministerial interest over recent years, and which is a personal priority of the First Minister. In 2001 a national initiative, “Learning with Care”, was launched to specifically address this matter.
- 2.2** Throughout the UK looked after children have significantly lower levels of attainment than their peers. Since Councils have direct responsibilities for this group, then this situation is of concern. Some of the significant issues were described in a further document published in 2006 “Extra-ordinary Lives” which reinforced the role of the corporate parent. Further work is continuing through the “Getting It Right for Every Child” (GIRFEC) agenda which is presently subject to developing legislation dealing with integrated services.
- 2.3** For East Ayrshire, the principal vehicle for developing services for disadvantaged children is the Integrated Children’s and Young Person’s Service Plan. Development and review of the plan is led by the Department of Educational and Social Services on behalf of the Council in recognition of its responsibilities as a corporate parent. This has been complemented by a Corporate Parenting Strategy which has been approved by both the Education and Social Work Committees.
- 2.4** The situation of these young people is also considered within the Authority’s NEET strategy, reported to Education Committee on 07 November 2006 and subsequently on 30 January 2007.

3. THE PRESENT POSITION

- 3.1** East Ayrshire has always recognised this issue. As a result the Council was one of only 7 to apply for funding in 2007 to run a pilot initiative to support this

group of young people's learning. An imaginative approach was taken involving:

- The development of an IT based learning package in English and mathematics;
- Additional tutorial support for children;
- Support for carers; and
- Improved tracking of attainment

Every school has a looked after children's co-ordinator who is generally at depute headteacher level. There are regular meetings of these staff, senior social work officers, psychological services and a quality improvement officer to monitor and drive forward this project. Officers from the corporate IT service are also closely involved with the project.

- 3.2** Despite this work, the attainment of the looked after group, as defined by those possessing SCQF Level 3 in English and mathematics upon leaving care, remains below that of their peer group in East Ayrshire. Although this figure is calculated from a very small statistical population, it must remain a matter of continuing concern.

4. THE REPORT'S PROPOSALS

- 4.1** The national report published in January identified 19 separate actions. These covered the headings:
- Working together
 - Becoming effective learners
 - Developing into successful and responsible adults
 - Being emotionally, mentally and physically healthy
 - Feeling safe and nurtured in a home setting

The full list of actions is presented at Appendix 1 as part of the local action plan. Each action is expanded in the report into a comprehensive series of "next steps" The whole report therefore presents a formidable agenda for service alignment.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1** The report has received initial consideration by the Directorate Team of the Department of Educational and Social Service and the Corporate Management Team. As a result of that consideration an action plan has been prepared that identifies actions in single services and in the areas of multi-disciplinary and inter-agency work
- 5.2** Appropriate consultation will take place with colleagues in other departments, children and carers as well as field staff on how best to overtake the issues contained in the action plan. Such consultation will extend to partner agencies such as the NHS and the further education colleges.

6. FINANCIAL/POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Nil at this stage, although the Scottish Executive plans could have later significant financial implications..

7. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 This matter is relevant to the following strands of the Community Plan:

- Promoting Community Learning
- Improving Opportunities
- Improving Health
- Eliminating Poverty
- Improving Community Safety

8. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 This is a matter of significant public and national interest as well as being one of central importance for individual young people. It therefore demands a clear response. It will be the subject of public reporting by HMle and the Care Commission.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 It is recommended that Members:

- (i) approve the action plan appended to this report;
- (ii) note this report will also be considered by the Social Work Committee; and
- (iii) otherwise note the importance of this issue at this stage

Graham Short
Executive Director of Educational and Social Services

GRS/GRS
7 March 2007

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Learning with Care, Scottish Executive, 2001
2. Extraordinary Lives, SWIA 2006
3. Getting it Right for Every Child Implementation Plan, Scottish Executive June 2006
4. Getting it Right for Every Child: Guidance on the Child's or Young Person's Plan, Scottish Executive, January 2007
5. Integrated Children and Young Person's Service Plan, East Ayrshire Council
6. Draft Children's Services (Scotland) Bill Consultation, Scottish Executive, January 2007
7. A Parenting Strategy, Social Work Committee, October 2005
8. NEET Strategy, Education Committee, 07 November 2006

9. NEET Strategy, Education Committee, 30 January 2007

Members requiring 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

Appendix 1:

ACTION PLAN ARISING FROM “LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: WE CAN AND MUST DO BETTER”

ACTION 1

We will fund the appointment of a Senior Executive who will work closely with Chief Executives and Senior Officials within each local authority. He/she will discuss what is being done to improve educational outcomes for looked after children and young people and care leavers with the relevant corporate parents and will provide reports twice a year to Cabinet.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **No direct impact on the local authority. However, this does highlight the increased accountability in this area.**

ACTION 2

We will work together with local authorities to identify measures which could be put in place to improve the effectiveness of their corporate parent role, and we will write to them in the first instance to alert them to this work.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **No direct impact on the local authority. However, this does highlight the increased accountability in this area.**

ACTION 3

We will work together with COSLA and the Improvement Service to include corporate parenting in the induction programme for new elected members.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **No direct impact on the local authority at this stage. It does however have implications for elected member induction at a later stage.**

Action owned by: **Head of Democratic Services in consultation with the Department of Educational and Social Services.**

ACTION 4

We will ensure that progress on improving the educational outcomes of looked after children and young people is one of the key components of the outcome agreements for children's services to be tested with pathfinder local children's services partnerships.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive and local authority

Impact: **The educational outcomes for this group of young people will require to be monitored and specific actions taken to raise the attainment and achievements of this group**

Action owned by: **Principal Quality Improvement (monitoring)**

Head of Service: Schools Support (specific actions to raise attainment)

ACTION 5

We will inform all local authorities, relevant educational establishments and care providers that they must be able to demonstrate in the course of their inspection cycles, that they actively meet the educational needs of all looked after children and young people for whom they have responsibility.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive, Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, Care Commission, local authority, heads of establishments

Impact: **All relevant establishments in Education and Social Services to have clear plans and arrangements to raise the attainment and meet the educational needs of looked after children.**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work (in relation to place of child's residence)**

Head of Service: Schools Support (in relation to educational establishments)

ACTION 6

We will improve training for parents, foster carers, residential workers, teachers – including teachers in training – social workers, health workers and appointed lead professionals.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive (in relation to professional groups) and local authority (in relation to parents and foster carers)

Impact: **A clear and focused support programme for carers and parents is required. In-service training programmes require to give attention to this matter, with specific courses being provided**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work (in relation to parents and carers and social work training)**
Principal Quality Improvement (in relation to teachers and other educational staff)

ACTION 7

We will continue to work in partnership with local authorities to deliver a more robust and comprehensive data collection and reporting framework in relation to the educational outcomes of Scotland's looked after children and young people.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive and local authority

Impact: **The educational outcomes for this group of young people will require to be monitored.**

Action owned by: **Principal Quality Improvement**

ACTION 8

We will fund the development of a national network and information website for professionals, foster carers, residential workers, parents and looked after children and young people.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **Access to web-based resources will be required.**

Action owned by: **Head of Information Technology**

ACTION 9

In partnership with COSLA, local authorities and Learning and Teaching Scotland, we will produce a list of core tasks which clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the designated person within each school or residential establishment who undertakes this important role. The list of core tasks will be published as part of a practical resource developed to provide support for the designated person.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **This will require to be included in staff development opportunities.**

Action owned by: **Scottish Executive**

ACTION 10

We will commission the development of guidance and a practical resource which will focus on those looked after children and young people who have experienced or who are likely to experience a challenging transition.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive

Impact: **This will require to be built in to the authority's arrangements for planning transition under the Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004.**

Action owned by: **Head of Service: Community Support**

ACTION 11

We will highlight the particular issues faced by looked after children in relation to school attendance and exclusion.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive and local authority

Impact: **Arrangements for attendance monitoring will require to be built in to establishment arrangements.**

Action owned by: **Head of Service: Schools Support**

ACTION 12

We will encourage local authorities to use existing powers under Section 30 of the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 to provide appropriate financial support for care leavers who are in full-time education, training or a modern apprenticeship.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Local authority

Impact: **Review aftercare provision**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work**

ACTION 13

We will work with colleges and universities to raise awareness and responsiveness to the issues faced by care leavers who enter further or higher education.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive, colleges and universities

Impact: **Improve success in tertiary education**

Action owned by: **Colleges and universities (this matter relates to activities being led by Kilmarnock College under the NEET Strategy.**

ACTION 14

We will commission the development of a resource pack for looked after young people and care leavers which will provide them with information relevant to their transition into adulthood.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: Scottish Executive and local authority

Impact: **To ensure that young people have access to the information**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work**

ACTION 15

Each NHS Board will assess the physical, mental and emotional health needs of all looked after children and young people for whom they have responsibility and put in place appropriate measures which take account of these assessments. They will ensure that all health service providers will work to make their services more accessible to looked after and accommodated children and young people, and to those in the transition from care to independence.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: **NHS Ayrshire and Arran**Impact: **Improved access to health support.**Action owned by: **NHS Ayrshire and Arran*****ACTION 16***

We have agreed with the Care Commission that they will review the health of looked after children and young people.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: **Care Commission**Impact: **Improved access to health support.**Action owned by: **Care Commission*****ACTION 17***

We will provide £5 million of additional funding in the current financial year to local authority and voluntary providers of children's homes and units in residential schools to improve their physical environment and to create an educationally rich environment for the children and young people who live there.

LOCAL ACTION PLAN IMPLICATIONS

Action for: **Scottish Executive and local authority**Impact: **Improved educational environment in place of residence.**Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work**

ACTION 18

We will clarify the duty on local authorities to ensure that they provide safe, secure and appropriate accommodation to looked after young people until at least 18. The accommodation must appropriately support their longer-term outcomes in terms of education, employment and training.

Action for: **Scottish Executive and local authority**

Impact: **Improved care and transition planning together with associated processes.**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work**

ACTION 19

We will clarify the duty on local authorities to provide appropriate support to their care leavers up to the age of 21.

Action for: **Scottish Executive and local authority**

Impact: **Improved care and transition planning together with associated processes.**

Action owned by: **Executive Head of Social Work**