

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 29 NOVEMBER 2001

EAST AYRSHIRE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION

Report by Director of Educational & Social Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1** (i) ask the Policy & Resources Committee to approve the establishment of an Elected Member as a Children and Young Person's Champion to promote children's rights and responsibilities and (ii) approve in principle the establishment of a multi-agency Children and Young Person's Forum.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1** East Ayrshire's Children's Service Plan "Inspiring Children and Young People" identified as one of its targets the establishment of an Elected Member as a children's champion.
- 2.2.** This proposal is set within the context of legislation, the main one being the Children (Scotland) Act 1995 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Kingdom.
- 2.3** A number of countries including Wales have a Children's Commissioner and there is a current debate in Scotland regarding the establishment of such a post.
- 2.4** The Council approved an East Ayrshire Charter of Rights for Children and Young People. Within the Charter the Council has pledged to ensure that children and young people are consulted when planning services and to work in partnership with young citizens. Article 12 of the UN Convention sets out the right of each child to 'express an opinion on matters that affect them and have their opinion listened to and taken into account'.
- 2.5** The Council carries a responsibility as a corporate parent to support those vulnerable and excluded children and young people.

3. WHY AN EAST AYRSHIRE CHILDREN'S CHAMPION?

- 3.1** Within East Ayrshire, the political structure allows young people to access their Elected Member and be represented at Local Committees.

- 3.2** Service planning is currently based on young peoples views and one of the key messages from young people is their desire to be more involved in influencing the planning and delivery of services.
- 3.3** Each year there is a Youth Conference organised by Support to Communities staff regarding topics relevant to young people and their future. More recently the Education Committee of 18 September 2001 approved the establishment of Student Councils linked to Youth Forums. The same Committee agreed a bi-annual meeting between representatives of Student Councils and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Education Committee.
- 3.4** A Children's Champion would positively support the work of the Council by 'championing' the cause of children and young people; would link with existing mechanisms and make services, structures and processes more relevant to the young. This is especially true as the Council seeks to further promote children and young people as active citizens.
- 3.5** The Children's Champion would:
- promote the Children's Service Plan and East Ayrshire's Charter of Rights for Children and Young People
 - promote the rights of, and give a voice to the most excluded children and young people
 - promote local Youth Forums; listen to and respond to their views
 - support the examination of existing mechanisms in East Ayrshire which protect children's rights and promote their interests
 - ensure best practice is shared and implemented
 - support the establishment of an East Ayrshire Children and Young People's website
 - support and promote the development of routine feedback mechanisms for young people
 - promote the structures and processes of East Ayrshire and how young people can effect change (Citizenship)
 - secure publicity on the range of initiatives to support young people
 - inform young people of advocacy services which are available
 - promote young peoples rights across other agencies
 - represent the Council at national and local events

3.6 MULTI-AGENCY CHILDREN AND YOUNG PERSON'S FORUM

It is proposed that a multi-agency children and young person's forum is established to take forward the range of issues set out in the Children's Service Plan, and to consider multi-agency responses to views expressed by young people. This will be supported by the Children's Service Plan Steering Group. The Forum will meet with representatives of young people on a bi-annual basis. Young people will be nominated through the Youth Forums which are being

progressively established throughout the area. Young people participating in this process will be assisted by Support to Communities staff.

The composition of the Forum is likely to include:

- Elected Member representation (Chair of the Forum)
- Health Board member representation
- Officer representation across the Council, Health Service and Police
- Voluntary Organisation representation

4.0 SUMMARY

Both the establishment of a named Elected Member as a Children and Young Person's Champion and a Multi-Agency Children and Young Person's Forum will further promote children and young people as active citizens and ensure that children and young people increasingly influence the planning and delivery of a range of services.

5. LEGAL /POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The proposals set out in this paper are consistent with the objectives of the Children's Service Plan.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** There are no immediate financial implications, although the Children's Service Plan has set out as one of its targets the establishment of a budget for young people.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Policy & Resources Committee are asked:

- (i) to recommend to Council that the Chair of the Education Committee be identified as East Ayrshire's Children's Champion;
- (ii) to approve the establishment of a Multi-agency Children and Young Person's Forum;
- (iii) to remit the involvement of other agencies through the Community Planning process;
- (iv) to request that a progress report be submitted to this Committee in due course; and
- (v) otherwise note the content of the report.

John Mulgrew
Director of Educational & Social Services

KG/SB
25 September 2001

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information should contact Kay Gilmour, Head of Community Support, Tel: (01563) 576104.

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: KAY GILMOUR

AGENDA