

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 20 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**CORPORATE PARENTING**

**1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 In April 2014, elected members approved three recommendations relating to the Council’s legal responsibilities as Corporate Parents. These were:

- (i) The introduction of an Angus Corporate Parenting Pledge;
- (ii) The establishment of a Corporate Parenting Board to oversee the implementation and operation of the Pledge; and
- (iii) The establishment of a Consultation Group for Looked After Children (LAC) and care leavers.

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the progress that has been made in implementing these three recommendations and the impact they are making in improving outcomes for LAC and care leavers.

1.2 The chart below details the numbers of looked after children and young people in Angus over the past three years. Table below with four columns and three headings:-

	<b>31 Mar 14</b>	<b>31 Mar 15</b>	<b>31 Mar 16</b>
Total No of Looked After Children	257	255	244
Looked after at Home	73	82	78
Placed with Friends/Relatives	33	32	43
Placed in Foster Care	122	115	94
Placed with Adoptive Carers	9	13	9
Placed in a Residential Establishment	20	13	20

1.2 The legal requirements on Corporate Parents are set out in Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. In the Statutory Guidance which accompanies the Act, the term “corporate parenting” is defined as:

***“An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the well-being of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted.”***

1.3 There are 24 agencies to which corporate parenting responsibilities apply. All these bodies have a duty to prepare, publish and keep under review a plan of how they intend to exercise their corporate parenting responsibilities and report to the Scottish Government on how this has been achieved. These agencies are required to consult and collaborate on the exercise of these responsibilities and the production of the plan. The first plan is required to be submitted to the Scottish Government by March 2017.

## 2. PROGRESS UPDATE

2.1 The Angus Corporate Parenting Board was established in late 2014. The composition of the Board reflects evidence from elsewhere in Scotland that active leadership provided by elected members and senior officers is a key factor in improving outcomes for looked after children.

2.2 In parallel with the establishment of the Board, Who Cares? Scotland was commissioned to ensure that the views of LAC and care leavers are at the centre of our plans to improve our services. Who Cares? Scotland has facilitated small groups of children and young people to meet regularly with the Corporate Parenting Board. The feedback from these sessions has led to some changes being made by the partner agencies represented on the Board. These are some examples:

**Experiences in care:-** Whilst majority of children and young people in the groups expressed satisfaction that they felt safe and well looked after, a small number felt that they had too many movements in care. Since receiving this feedback in 2015, all movements of children and young people in care are now authorised at Area Manager level to avoid any unnecessary moves.

**Experiences in Learning:-** Some children expressed satisfaction at getting good grades, having fun and receiving good support from their guidance teachers whilst others felt that they sometimes got treated differently at school and that their teachers spoke more to their social workers than to them or their parents. These issues were raised at a Head Teachers meeting in October 2015. In addition a LAC Group was established in Arbroath Academy and awareness-raising with school staff has taken place. Our Educational Psychology Service has taken a leadership role in overseeing and coordinating the supports available for LAC in learning settings.

**Experiences of Health Services:-** Some children and young people have expressed satisfaction about being taught to eat healthily and exercise, whilst others have stated that they had not been taken to appointments by foster carers. This issue is being addressed on a case by case basis by the fostering team who are now notified by the relevant health professional if a child in foster care has not been brought to an appointment.

**Experiences of social workers:-** Some children and young people have said that they feel that their social worker listens to their problems whilst some have said that they don't see them often enough and/or they have had too many changes of social worker. These issues were the subject of discussion at a Staff Development event and, in response, Area Manager overview of changes in social workers was introduced.

**Experiences of Looked After Children Review Meetings:-** Following feedback from children and young people, it was agreed that they will be offered juice, biscuits and some paper and pens when they attend their review meetings.

**Experiences of police officers:-** Some young people reported that police officers can helpfully "sort out stuff for you" whilst others offered more negative feedback. As a result of the variability of our children's experiences, a joint Council / Police initiative is being piloted with the appointment of a Link Police Officer for Looked after Children.

2.3 The impact of these changes will be reported within the Board's evaluation framework based on the 10-point Corporate Parenting Pledge.

2.4 In order to give a wider range of LAC and care leavers the opportunity to express their views about the services that they receive, we will continue to explore different methods of engagement with them.

2.5 The Corporate Parenting Pledge has been widely promoted across Angus and provides a strong focal point for our commitment to improve outcomes for looked after children and young people. The Pledge includes 10 promises which cover the key elements in the lives of our children and young people. The first report on the progress being made in fulfilling our promises was presented to the Corporate Parenting Board in May 2016. The report provides an overview of the range of services available for looked after children and care leavers and an evaluation of how effective these are in improving outcomes for them.

2.6 Key service developments in relation to Looked After Children include:

- The establishment in 2014 of a Supported Lodgings Scheme for care leavers.
- A cross departmental collaboration to open supported accommodation for care leavers at Millgate Loan, Arbroath in 2015.
- The opening of Brambles Cottages residential unit for young people.
- Enhancing the Service Level Agreement with Who Cares? Scotland to ensure that all looked after children and young people have access to an advocacy service if they need or wish.
- The appointment of a Link Police Officer for Looked after Children.

**2.7** The impact of our service improvements on looked after children (LAC) and young people has included the following;

- 92% of LAC are living in family-based placements which provides them with a better chance of achieving good outcomes.
- 85% of LAC are living in the Angus Council area ensuring the best possible links with their families, schools, the communities that they come from and the staff supporting them (It is appropriate that some children are placed out with Angus where this is assessed as being in their best interests).
- 100% of LAC are offered health assessments within 4 weeks of receipt of notification that they are living away from home with a take-up rate of 93%
- Consistently very good ratings from the Care Inspectorate's for our residential, fostering, adoption, supported accommodation and supported lodgings services.

### **3 ANGUS CORPORATE PARENTING PLEDGE**

We promise:

1. We will involve you in decisions that affect you and to listen to your views.
2. We will always try to find the best possible place for you to live that suits your needs.
3. We will make sure that you have every opportunity to achieve your best at school
4. We will encourage you to take part in the available activities that the area has to offer, to ensure that your talents, hobbies and interests are met and to support you to do the things you enjoy.
5. We will take care of your health and encourage you to be healthy.
6. We will provide you with a good and clear assessment of your needs and an up to date care plan.
7. We will ensure you have your own social worker who visits you regularly and gives you details about how to contact them or someone else if they are away when you need them.
8. We will help you stay in touch with your family, friends and other people who are important to you.
9. We will listen to what you have to say.
10. We will work with you and give you all the help and support you need to successfully move from care to adult life.

### **4. MEMBERS OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD**

Councillors Welsh; Devine; Middleton; Thomson; Smith

Angus Council - Margo Williamson; Alan McKeown; Archie Bathgate; Tim Armstrong;

Police Scotland – Gordon Milne

NHS Tayside - Helen Grady

REPORT AUTHOR: Tim Armstrong, Head of Children and Young People's Service  
 EMAIL: childrenandlearning@angus.gov.uk.