

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 18 FEBRUARY 2020**

**REPORT ON THE INDEPENDENT CARE REVIEW FOR SCOTLAND**

**REPORT BY KATHRYN LINDSAY, CHIEF SOCIAL WORK OFFICER**

**ABSTRACT**

The [Independent Care Review](#) for Scotland (here in known as ‘the Review’) aims to identify and deliver lasting change in the care system in Scotland and transform the wellbeing of children and young people.

The outputs from the Review were published on 5 February 2020 and followed almost two years of work and engagement. Over 5,500 care experienced children, young people and adults, and people working and caring within the system were directly involved. These voices have been central to the work of the Review.

At the Review’s conclusion, five reports were published which together propose the foundation for a new approach. The emphasis is on a system that delivers care to children and young people, including the prevention of family separation. One built on relationships, rights, care and respect rather than processes and one that puts children’s experience at the centre of all activity.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the findings and proposals arising from the Independent Care Review;
- (ii) Note the work of the local Corporate Parenting Board in their early engagement with the Independent Review and proposed engagement in planning for future change;
- (iii) Note the multi-agency support and buy-in needed to improve outcomes for our looked after children and young people.
- (iv) Direct the Director of Children, Families and Justice to bring a report on service specific implications following consideration of the findings by the Angus Integrated Children’s Services Group and associated partnerships.

**2. ALIGNMENT TO THE ANGUS LOCAL OUTCOMES IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Angus Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2030:

- Children are given the best start in life;
- Physical, mental and emotional health and wellbeing is improved;
- There are more opportunities for people to achieve success.

**3. BACKGROUND**

The Independent Care Review published their reports on 5 February 2020. This has been helpfully published as five key documents:

- 3.1 The Promise:** reflects what over 5,500 care experienced children and adults, families and the paid and unpaid workforce told the Care Review about the way the current system impacts on lives. It sets out a case for what Scotland must do to make sure its most vulnerable children feel loved and have the childhood they deserve. There are 80 specific recommendations built upon the following 5 principles:

- **Voice:** When children speak, adults must really listen to them. Adults must make sure that children are included in decisions about their lives.
- **Family:** If children are living with their family and are safe and feel loved, they should stay there. Their family should be given all the help they need to stay together. If they need extra help when things get difficult, they should get it.
- **Care:** If children cannot stay with the adults in their family, they will stay with their brothers and sisters. The home they live in together will be a place where they feel safe and loved. It should be their home for as long as they want and need it to be.
- **People:** Relationships are important. Adults must make sure children are able to stay close to the people they want to and keep in contact with them. Adults must also help children make new relationships as they grow up. Sometimes adults need some help too. The adults who are close to children must get the help they need to make sure they can do their best for children.
- **Scaffolding:** Help and support must be there for children and families whenever they need it. It must also be there for the adults who are close to children and families. It is important everyone knows where to go for help and that it is ready when it is asked for.

**3.2** The Promise has far reaching implications for corporate parents across every agency, including all aspects of the Council. Investment in early intervention and the provision of intensive family support services are highlighted as clear priorities to keep children and families together. Once children come into care, stopping unnecessary moves, creating stability and doing much more to keep siblings together, all feature heavily. These are areas that will require significant investment and a cultural change across all agencies.

**3.3** The normalisation of care through our use of professional language, the criminalisation of children and young people and the need to stop the use of restraint for children in care, are all highlighted as areas for change to stop the further traumatising and stigmatising of children who experience the care system.

**3.4** Implications for the paid and unpaid workforce are potentially significant and the focus of the report is on how individuals are developed and empowered to deliver real care. To have more individual autonomy in decision making about children's care. The need to work together with empathy, compassion underpinned by knowledge and values and to work across traditional boundaries to ensure that children experience strong, positive relationships that are long-term, is strongly emphasised.

**3.5** The other reports published include **The Plan** which explains how the change that the Review has outlined needs to happen and indicates the broad range of people and agencies who need to be involved to realise the ambition of the plan. The next two reports are **The Money** and **Follow the Money** which detail how Scotland can invest better in its children and families. There is a clear recognition that the provision of adequate support to keep families together requires significant additional investment. The final report, **The Rules**, gives a view on the current legislative framework, the impact it has on how the system is experienced by children and families and outlines how it must change to achieve **The Promise**.

**3.6** The Review sets out the socio-economic cost of ongoing failure to address the significant inequalities experienced by children, young people and families who are in need of support. The plan recognises the next ten years as being the time to achieve step change in how all children and young people grow, develop and thrive.

## **4. CURRENT POSITION**

**4.1** Angus Council are a partner in the Angus Corporate Parenting Board. Our plan, Getting It Right for Looked After and Care Experienced Child and Young People in Angus, is currently being revised for 2020 – 2023 and the publication of the Review will further inform this work.

**4.2** The aspirations of the Review are wide reaching and long-term. They cannot be delivered in full at a purely local level. However, there are aspects of the findings that we can and have started to consider locally and we will ensure that these are reflected in our local improvement work whilst the national conversation on the outcome of the Review and any implementation process is ongoing.

- 4.3** Whilst the Review is a national level document, its findings challenge us to be ambitious in our work to plan and deliver improvements in local support for children and young people, including to prevent family separation in the first place. This work will need to be multi-agency to deliver the changes in outcomes for children and families.
- 4.4** Council officers supporting our corporate parenting work, have committed to partnering with the Review, and any subsequent implementation arrangement, in the development of a national operationalised implementation plan and will continue to work with partners to achieve improvement across the whole system.
- 4.5** It is also important to note that whilst the Review took place at a national level, some of the voices were those of children, young people and adults from Angus. Including young people we continue to have duties and responsibilities toward. The time and commitment they have personally given to helping improve services is hugely appreciated.
- 4.6** During the process of the Review, Angus Corporate Parenting Board engaged with the ‘Stop-Go’ work. This aims to make day-to-day improvements in local provision based on what the Review heard about what works, what needs to stop happening, and what needs to be considered further for improvement.
- 4.7** We have worked together with local care experienced young people and partners of the Angus Corporate Parenting Board to explore the Stop-Go messages and identify local priorities within this. Relationships, respect and rights are identified improvement themes with specific reference to sibling relationships, income and whole community acceptance and support. We are currently developing these priorities and actions for our Corporate Parenting Plan 2020 – 2023 which will be reported to Council in due course.

## **5. PROPOSALS**

- 5.1** It is proposed that the findings of the Independent Care Review are noted and used to inform our local corporate parenting plan. It is further proposed that we will engage with the national work on implementation of the Review.

## **6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report.

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List of Appendices: [Independent Care Review](#)