

Mark Armstrong

Depute Chief Executive, Chair Corporate Parenting Board, Angus Council.

Welcome to Angus Integrated Children's Services Getting It Right for Looked After Children, Young People and Care Leavers in Angus, Corporate Parenting Board Progress Report 2017-2020 (extended to March 2021). Due to the impact of Covid-19 the decision was taken to extend the action plan to March 2021. This report details the work of corporate parents in Angus towards improving services for care experienced children and young people. Many of our care experienced children and young people in particular care leavers face difficulties which place them amongst the most disadvantaged in Angus which is why it is so important we provide the care, stability and support they need to help our young people achieve their ambitions.

The United Nations on the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is an international treaty that sets out specific human rights for children up to the age of 18 years old. It reflects the particular needs, vulnerabilities and potential of children. These include a broad range of rights from the right to play, the right to be listened to and take part in decisions, through to the right not to be separated from their parents unless it is in a child's best interests. The UNCRC is clear that all children should be able to exercise all of their rights without discrimination on grounds such as disability, sex, ethnicity, age, religion or sexual orientation. Along with the Scottish Government who are implementing the UNCRC incorporating it into Scots law we want to ensure we recognise, respect and promote children's rights across Angus.

In 2016 the First Minister of Scotland announced an Independent Review of Care ('the Care Review'). The Care Review was conducted between 2017 and 2020 driven by those with experience of care and culminated in the publication of seven reports including 'The Promise' which set out what needs to change in the care system to ensure children and young people grow up loved, safe and respected.

We as corporate parents want the best for our children and young people in Angus. We are proud of their achievements and value their support and feedback helping us to get it right for previously cared for, currently being cared for and future care experienced children and young people. We in Angus must uphold children's rights as detailed in UNCRC, do everything we can to be part of the change for care experienced children and young people by keeping 'The Promise'.

Voices of our care experienced young people

Over the course of our most recent consultation event held in January 2021 we had 17 young people provide us with feedback on their experiences whilst in care. The feedback was received via case studies, interviews, emails/letters and drawings and collages created by our young people. Things young people valued and attributed to good experiences were consistent and supportive relationships with carers and other trusted adults, honesty and understanding. For some young people changes in social worker and moves in placements were still a concern. For a few young people they felt a loss of personal and family identity for example personal history not fully recorded and shared with the young person (i.e. dates and names on photos). Many young people asked for better support to manage relationships including with brothers and sisters, wider family and staff and some felt their voice was not being heard and listened to in meetings and in making decisions.

From earlier consultation in 2019 up to 2021 young people have asked us to consider how we engage with them creating opportunities that are accessible and child centred, we need to consider the environment and importantly take action on what they say and communicate back changes and progress on our actions.

Through individual feedback and collective group participation consultation over the last three years there have been three key areas which have come through strongly are areas of focus for corporate parents in Angus, these are:

- Early identification, management and support for care experienced children and young people mental health and wellbeing concerns.
- Stigma felt by our care experienced young people in all areas of their lives, young people and the Care Review tell us we need to start with the language and vocabulary used by all professionals.
- Longer term support for employment and education opportunities, we needed to better understand the destinations of our young people beyond leaving school. Opportunities for young people for work experience, volunteering etc should be available at an earlier stage and for longer as formal qualifications and further education aren't felt to be within the reach of all of our young people.

Contents

| | | |
|-----|--|-----|
| | FOREWORD BY THE CHAIR OF THE CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD – MARK ARMSTRONG, DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, ANGUS COUNCIL | p2 |
| 1 | Angus Corporate Parent Action Plan 2017-2020, extended to 2021- Background | p5 |
| 2 | Looked After Children Statistics and Trends | p5 |
| 3 | Governance and Corporate Parenting Strategic Leadership | p6 |
| 3.1 | Corporate Parenting Lead Officers Group | p7 |
| 3.2 | Young Person's Group | p7 |
| 4 | Summary of Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2017 - 2021 | p8 |
| 4.1 | Priority 1 | p8 |
| 4.2 | Priority 2 | p10 |
| 4.3 | Priority 3 | p12 |
| 4.4 | Priority 4 | p14 |
| 4.5 | Priority 5 | p16 |
| 4.6 | Priority 6 | p17 |
| 5 | Priorities for 2021 to 2024 | p19 |
| 6 | Conclusion | p20 |

Angus Corporate Parent Action Plan 2017-2020, extended to 2021

1. Background

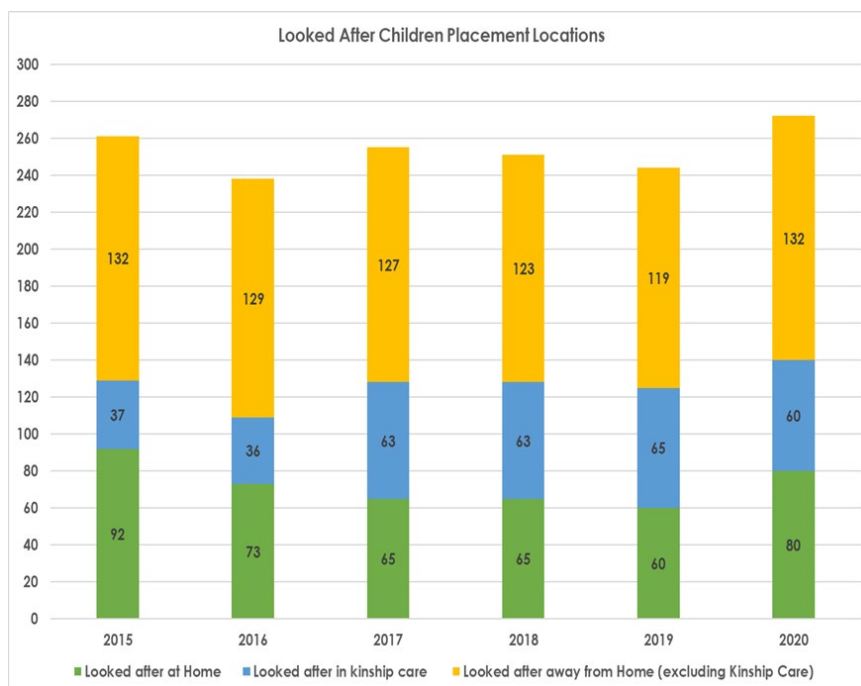
Angus corporate parenting board set out a three year action plan (2017 to 2020) with six priorities based on the views and experiences of looked after and care experienced young people in Angus. The progress on actions in the plan were supported by the members of the corporate parenting board and corporate parenting lead officers' group.

Although work began on the reporting of the 2017 to 2020 action plan in January 2020 with the aim of providing a progress report by April 2020, due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic the decision was made in line with the [Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families](#) to roll the current corporate parenting action plan on for 1 year to March 2021.

During the life of the action plan the Scottish Government commissioned an independent care review which culminated in the creation of [The Promise](#). The Promise identifies areas of improvement for all corporate parents across Scotland to ensure the experiences for care experienced children and young people meets their needs and respects their rights. Many of the priorities in our 2017-2020, extended to 2021 overlapped with the findings of the care review and will feature in our updated plan for 2021-2024 enabling us to continue to build on the progress of the last three years.

2. Looked After Children Statistics and Trends

In Angus approximately 1.1% of the population of children up to age 17 are looked after (this does not include those who have previously been cared for with around 80 young people in receipt of active after care services at any one time). The total number of children looked after across Scotland has gradually fallen over the last seven consecutive years. The number of children looked after in Angus in 2019 was 244 a decrease of 2.8% from 251 in 2018. The national downward trend is not reflected in the most recent figure for Angus where we had an increase from 244 as at 31 July 2019 to 272 children looked after as at 31 July 2020 an increase of 11.5% the highest number over the last five years.



87% of young people who are looked after away from home entered an initial positive destination, compared to 56% of young people who are looked after at home.

Attendance rates for children looked after at home are lower than those looked after away from home in both primary and secondary schools

Looked after children are far more likely to be excluded from school, compared to other learners often resulting in a loss of learning, potential for negatively impacting on home life or placement.

Current data clearly highlight's the need for a focus on the needs of our children and young people looked after at home to better understand the reasons for poorer outcomes and ensure the right support is provided in a way that best meets family's needs to support their children.

Data for Children Looked After, Child Protection and Eligibility for Aftercare services is collected by Scottish Government for the period 1 August to 31 July. This information is available at local authority level on Scottish Government website, Children's Social Work Statistics (<https://www.gov.scot/publications/looked-after-children-statistics-2019-local-authority-benchmarking-tool/>)

3. Governance and Corporate Parenting Strategic Leadership

Governance of Corporate Parenting in Angus is managed through the multi-agency Children and Young People's Leadership Group. The Corporate Parenting Board is chaired by Mark Armstrong, Depute Chief Executive Angus

Council. The Board is attended by a range of senior managers from both the statutory and third sector and includes a number of elected members.

3.1. Corporate Parenting Lead Officers Group

Guided by the Corporate Parenting Board the Corporate Parenting Lead Officer Group is chaired by Kirsty Lee, Service Leader Children Protection and Review, Children, Families and Justice. The Lead Officer Group have responsibility to drive the actions in the Corporate Parenting Action Plan forward and ensure that the particular needs of care experienced children remain central to the work of other planning groups, including those developing services which work directly with care experienced children, young people and those in Continuing Care or Aftercare, and those services aimed at preventing children and young people becoming looked after. Membership of the Corporate Parenting Lead Officers Group includes managers from across the partnership.

3.2 Young Person's Group

In Angus we have worked with Who Cares? Scotland to promote advocacy and engagement for all our care experienced children and young people although we recognise there is still a need to target support to those harder to reach young people living at home and in kinship care.

Since 2017 Who Cares? Scotland has supported a group advocacy model in Angus called the TOOT (Ten out of Ten) Group. The Chair of the Corporate Parenting Lead Officer (CPLO) Group maintained close contact with the eight young people in the group to hear about matters that affect them, report back to the young people on our work and improvement progress.

Supported by the TOOT group, a consultation with young people took place in 2018 seeking views about best methods of engagement. This survey had a positive response with 38 young people who told us what would work for them. Engagement was encouraged with rewards. For example, two young people selected to experience 'a day with a corporate parent'. The feedback from the survey told us group participation only suited a very small number of young people; the preference is to offer a range of opportunities where support is offered to facilitate participation, as well as one to one sessions with fun as the focus! Based on the views of the young people our consultation work has included activity-based events to meet, engage and have fun with corporate parents; examples are a sports event at a local rugby club and a pizza making

event at Arbroath college, graffiti art night as well as individual meetings with the Chair of the Board and Chair of the CPLO Group. Key themes from these events have heavily shaped our priorities and are routinely reported to the Lead Officer Group to influence their agenda.

From the young people's groups, we now have three care experienced young adults who have become Corporate Parenting Advisors to the corporate parenting board and lead officers' group. The Advisors have had opportunities to get involved in consultation events as well as influencing service development such as involvement in the recruitment of staff and design of a new children's residential home in partnership with Aberlour Trust. The Advisors have control over what and how they are involved ensuring they influence the areas they feel strongly about.

4. Summary of Corporate Parenting Action Plan 2017 - 2021

4.1. Priority 1

We will listen to what you have to say and ensure you are involved in the decisions that affect your life.

This has been a key priority over the last three years with several initiative projects taking place to ensure that children are provided with different opportunities to share their views, to ensure they are listened to and their views are acted on, influencing decisions both for individual young people and improvements across children's services.

We recognised that advocacy, availability and choice remained an area for development. As part of the expansion of advocacy services Angus Council agreed to make an additional £60,000 annual investment in advocacy for children, young people and families which has allowed us to work in partnership with Angus Independent Advocacy (AIA) to provide Family Advocacy as well as recruiting an additional young person advocate for children. We have also continued to commission individual advocacy and group advocacy from Who Cares? Scotland. Young people's views gathered from this work have fed into the improvement work across all services involved in supporting care experienced children and young people. The expansion of advocacy services will ensure we continue to promote the rights of care experienced children and young people to express a view and have that view given due weight.

Children's voices are central in the decision-making during children's planning meetings through the use of an independent chairperson Review Officer whose role it is to ensure that the child's voice is heard and taken account of during decision making and care planning.

The independent Review Officers were involved in piloting a test of change PREpare – Partnership, Relationship, Empowerment. The pilot ran from October 2019 to April 2020 with positive results for the families and children who participated. PREpare takes a strength-based approach during family discussions before the case conference together with individual work with the children being considered at conference. The approach was found to greatly improve both the experience of the family and the quality of the relationship and engagement in the child protection plan. Feedback suggests the model is empowering for children and their families promoting their right to freedom of opinion and expression (ICCPR, UNCRC) and to parent their children with support of agencies around them.

The learning from PREpare highlights the importance of being creative in our engagement with children and families. The Review Officers continue to create space and time to engage with families before meetings, while there is still work to do to develop this approach we also need to take the opportunity of flexibility created by Covid-19 restrictions to build on a mix of digital and face-to-face approaches, offering more choice and control for the children, young people and their families.

We developed the My Views app as a tool to help young people amplify their voice. Two young people sat on the project board with Angus Council's Digital Enablement Team and Children's Service. We developed and tested the app in partnership with staff and young people throughout 2019. The My Views app was launched at the start of 2020 unfortunately the impact of the pandemic crisis has had a negative impact on the App's use which has been lower than expected. The App will be relaunched in 2021 with staff being encouraged to support all care experienced young people to access the App which gives them a simple, easily accessible way to have their voice heard. The relaunch will involve a training programme for staff as well as a relaunch for young people. Training and awareness raising will support the voices of our young people to be better heard not only at their meetings but whenever they chose to share their views.

4.2. Priority 2

We will find the best possible place for you to live that matches what you need and help you to stay in touch with people who are important to you.

The Incredible years and strengthening families parenting programmes have been running to support families to stay together or return children home where possible. Alongside parenting programmes early years staff have been trained in 5 to thrive as part of our early intervention services. We have increased our provision of respite care for children; in care, at home and in other care placements such as foster or kinship care.

As part of children's service redesign in 2018/19 the Kinship team and Kinship Panel were established in April 2019 to assess kinship carers, offer advice and guidance as well as providing practical support for families undertaking the care of a child or young person. The Kinship team formed a support group in 2019 which is well attended. All kinship carers can now access; the support group, training, advice as well as financial assistance, supporting children to remain within their extended families. Support is also available from the local Kith n Kin Third Sector support group for kinship carers. The kinship worker from Kith n Kin has recently become a member on the corporate parenting lead officer group strengthening the voice of families at the lead officer group. The kinship team are developing their role into one of link workers which will enable families to access ongoing support following their approval as kinship carers, promoting stable long term placements for children within their families, respecting a child's right to family life.

As at 31 July 2018, 12% - 31 children experienced 3 or more placement moves this decreased to 7.7% - 21 young people as at 31 July 2020. Our data tells us the number of children looked after away from home who have experienced 3 or more placements in a year, has been more positive over the last few years despite ongoing challenges in recruiting enough foster carers for children. It's important we continue this improvement as we know that for some children, moves and lack of stability is still a significant issue, an issue that has been raised by young people themselves during consultations.

There is continued recruitment for foster carers in order to provide good quality care across a variety of household types to better match children's needs. The 'support carer' scheme has allowed the extended family of our foster carers to be able to provide respite provision in a more natural way rather than the child moving to another placement thereby reducing the number of placement moves children experience, an issue highlighted by young people through our participation events.

Our inhouse residential houses have a continued system of review and improvement driven by; inspection reports, audits and consultations with young people living in the homes, their families and professionals involved with young people. The latest inspections reports show good and very good grades from the care inspectorate and all suggested areas for improvements have been taken forward.

Looked after care reviews and other planning meetings for children provide further opportunities to review the experiences of young people living in our residential care homes and identify development opportunities.

Staff training has been expanded for all residential staff to include secure base parenting models for example Theraplay and attachment training. Residential staff have also been involved in a training programme run by the Educational Psychology team who have provided information on topics staff identified a need to develop their knowledge. This alongside the information gathered from surveys completed by the young people informed the development of a training package for staff which included attachment, grief and bereavement, child development, and understanding nurture and the impact of early trauma.

Services for children looked after continue to focus on maintaining stability for children either at home, within their extended family or within their care placement with a range of supports now targeted towards our children and young people whose placement is unstable, minimising the risk of breakdown and importantly further disruption for young people. This was reaffirmed as a priority during the review of Children Families and Justice Service in 2018/19 when the need for a flexible, responsive resource to meet the needs of children, young people at risk of becoming accommodated or those already looked after, at risk of placement breakdown was highlighted.

The Enhance team was formed in April 2019 following the restructure of Children Families and Justice Service. During the first year a total of 51 children and young people and their families received support. The service provides a range of interventions using a strength based and secure base approach to support family functioning and parenting capacity to enable families to remain together or to be reunited. The service aims to reduce the numbers of children being accommodated away from home; support a child returning home or to their community; support a child where their placement is at risk of breakdown. Supporting children and their care givers promotes children's right to a stable, nurturing home.

Hillcrest Futures is providing an early intervention service for children and families affected by substance misuse, offending and or/anti-social behaviour

with the option of providing intensive support where required. The service responds to the needs of children and young people aged 5-18 years who have experience of parental substance misuse, poor parental mental health and who may be living in households where there is domestic violence. The services offered by Hillcrest will be therapeutic and trauma informed and focus on building resilience and reducing risk for children.

Aberlour has been commissioned to provide Sustain an Intensive Family Support flexible service, providing 7 day a week support including evenings to families with children 0-12 years. Working closely with Enhance the service will support children to remain at home or in placements where possible. The service will engage with parents to improve their capacity to care for their children, provide practical parenting skills and help build families abilities to engage with their community. The service is flexible in its intensity and will encourage the building of family routines, resilience and improve parental confidence.

Angus Council has invested in a range of family support and intensive services for children, young people and their families. The development of services to support child looked after at home has been critical with a steady upward trend since 2016 where there were 73 children looked after at home as at 31 July rising to 80 young people as at 31 July 2020.

4.3. Priority 3

We will help you to achieve your best at school and in all places where you learn.

Local and national data highlights the poor attainment outcomes for some care experienced young people which is why it is so important additional support and opportunities are provided for young people who are looked after both at home and away from home. Inclusion and education are priorities for all our care experienced children and young people. There have been several improvement changes within education to support children, young people in care or at risk of being accommodated including:

- Early learning and childcare flexible provision to support development for eligible 2 year olds. This national education scheme is in place but within Angus the provisions was extended to offer placements with childminders who can offer more flexible support.
- Parents and carers have been supported through the development of a resource bank that they can use to develop their own knowledge and in turn support the young people in their care. The resources have been

developed to meet the specific needs of the young people that require additional support.

- Providing support to designated managers for looked after children in each school is a key part to the inclusion plan designed by the Educational Psychology team. Training has been provided to staff within schools and signposting to CELCIS in order to expand further on the base training. A handbook for designated managers has been drafted and the final version will be available to provide support and guidance to all senior managers in school who undertake the designated manager role. All care experienced children and young people in schools have an Individualised Education Plan (IEP). The IEP is prepared with the child, young people, parents and carers, and covers not just academic work but also their social and emotional wellbeing. Through these individual plans we are working towards the full-time educational needs being met through tailored planning.
- There has been targeted interventions and mentoring for groups and individuals to work towards closing attainment gaps.

The Through Care Aftercare (TCAC) team supported 49 young people in 2020 to apply and be successful in gaining a place within further education. Some young people have also been supported to access modern apprenticeship schemes with several accessing guaranteed interviews through the Angus Works scheme.

We have used nationally allocated LAC Attainment Challenge Funds, to create a multidisciplinary Inclusion Support team. This includes an Education Psychologist and three dedicated inclusion support workers working in partnership with residential staff, young people and their families to focus on improving educational outcomes for children and young people looked after. The team set up in 2019 link closely with Skills Development Scotland, Angus Works, 16Plus and Voluntary Action Angus to create a network of opportunities to enhance inclusion and raise attainment for our care experienced young people. In the first year of the project, over 30 young people were referred for support with over half of the referrals being for children at home or in kinship arrangements. Early evaluation is showing some positive outcomes although we note that Covid and home education arrangements have had an impact on the progression of the work.

Within Skills Development Scotland (SDS) a Corporate Parent champion has been appointed and a mini action plan was developed for the last quarter of 2020/21. Part of the action plan was a service wide review about what it means

to be care experienced and how to best serve those young people. The team have offered placements through Mini Angus Works for care experienced young people. A Corporate Parenting Team Yammer group has been set up and is working well as it is allowing for better support and sharing of information in the service nationally across the whole of Scotland.

In 2020 Angus Council included care experienced young people in the criteria for the guaranteed job interview scheme, this includes care leavers (up to the age of 26) and young people who have been in kinship care, foster care or any type of residential care or who are looked after at home on a compulsory supervision order.

4.4. Priority 4

We will take care of your wellbeing and encourage you to be healthy and active.

Through the provision of a LAC nurse all children now have a health assessment within 4 weeks of moving into care and are registered with a GP and dentist. The LAC nurse will ensure all children's immunisations are up to date and medical needs are being addressed. The LAC nurse responsibilities is met through the school nurse service, skilled practitioners who have the knowledge and the skills to provide early intervention on health matters including sexual health and mental health and wellbeing. Young people are given a strengths and weaknesses questionnaire to fill in and within 12 weeks this information is used to form part of a mental health and wellbeing assessment.

The physical activity strategy aims to give looked after children and care experienced young people opportunities to take part in sporting, cultural and leisure activities. During 2019 we worked as corporate parenting partners with ANGUSalive to develop a process for free family access for care experienced children, young people to access to sport activities. We ran a pilot scheme in the Arbroath area aimed at getting more looked after young people regularly exercising at gyms and using local pools. While the uptake was low those who accessed the opportunities reported really positive gains. Rollout of the initiative was delayed due to the restrictions of Covid-19 during 2020. Further work is required to better understand the barriers to uptake to ensure we develop an expansion plan for 2021/22 now we are in a position to move forward with restrictions starting to lift.

Through the Active school's team pupils have access to a number of extra-curricular sport activities. The team have positively targeted looked after children which has resulted in an increase in looked after children accessing

activities. The team continues to look at ways to improve care experienced young people's engagement with the service.

Work has taken place in partnership with Angus Integrated Joint Board to support better understanding of the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACE's) and to raise the profile and needs of our care experienced young people. This has been particularly important for young people moving on from children's services into adult care services. A multi-agency transitions group has been established which can support vulnerable young people transitioning into adult service, many of whom have complex needs, coexisting conditions who previously may have experienced difficulties accessing the right support to meet their individual needs at a point in their life where there are vulnerable.

The impact of Covid-19 pandemic raises serious concerns regarding the impact on young people's mental health and wellbeing. Hillcrest Futures has recently been commissioned by Angus Health & Social Care Partnership to provide a mental health and wellbeing peer support service in General Practitioners (GP) surgeries across Angus for adults 16+. Following consultation with young people to better understand their needs this service is being extended to include young people age 11 to 16 years old. Peer workers will offer one to one support for up to three appointments, and provide information, self-management tools, provide social, emotional or practical support, with a focus on strengths and working towards recovery. This service is being delivered by Penumbra in South Angus and Hillcrest Futures in North Angus.

Evidence of the impact of Covid restrictions highlights care experienced young people and care leavers as most at risk of mental health impacts due to experiences of loneliness and social isolation during lockdown which were exacerbated by lack of digital access particular for those looked after at home and in kinship care. We have invested in services which are able to support children's recovery from the trauma they have experienced including the rollout of CEDAR a therapeutic groupwork programme over 12 sessions supporting the recovery of children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse alongside a concurrent groupwork programme for their mothers. We are currently exploring how we can commission specific recovery support for children experiencing trauma so support can be tailored to the individual needs of a child, young person.

4.5. Priority 5

We will ensure you have a lead professional who visits you regularly and works with you and others to provide you with an assessment of your needs and a clear, up to date plan.

In order to meet this priority, the importance of relationship based practice informed the restructure of children's service, implemented in April 2019. The change to four locality teams has ensured a greater emphasis on locality working, stronger local connections and central to this relationship based practice. Referrals to locality teams who can provide either a short term or long term service minimises transitions in workers and teams for children and families, decreases delays in assessments progressing and provides children with a lead professional with whom they can build a trusting relationship.

A new recording system (Eclipse) allows for better recording of information and improves the quality of the information we are sharing with families and professionals involved. The outcomes and plans for young people have been made clearer with specific, manageable, achievable, realistic goals and actions which are time limited. The changes support young people to be fully included in setting and achieving their desired outcomes. The lead practitioner is responsible for ensuring that the plan meets the needs of the young person and that their voice is heard throughout the process.

The lead professional can be any one of several professionals in the young person's life. The Through Care After Care team and the professionals involved from the inclusion team are taking this role on more often which is showing benefits for young people. The lead professional plays a key role in helping to reduce the number of moves in placement that the young person has as well as access from a permanence worker to assess whether a permanent move is appropriate for the child. The Permanence team are focussed on moving younger children (under five years of age) into permanent care placements promoting long term security for young children.

All agencies identified in a child's plan have a responsibility to the young person to ensure that they are fulfilling their actions in a timely manner and are working with the young person and the people in their lives to remove any barrier that are preventing them from achieving their goals. Senior managers are responsible for ensuring that the actions within the child's plans are followed through at each stage of the plan. To ensure that plans are of a high quality a training programme has been introduced to ensure all lead professionals are able to produce good quality assessments and plans.

The Quality and Reviewing Officers are testing out ways that better brings together the necessary people to ensure that the plans that are made, support the needs of the young people and are of a high quality. They have had a focus towards supporting engagement in school through improved attendance.

PREPare is a test of change to improve children and parental engagement in the child protection planning and decision making process, ensuring the young person has a voice and the family are encouraged and enabled to be part of the safety planning for their child/ren where there are child protection concerns.

The PREPare pilot ran from October 2019 to April 2020 with positive results for the families and children who participated. Strength based family discussions before the Case Conference together with individual work with the children being considered at conference was found to greatly improve both the experience for the family and the quality of the relationship and engagement in the child protection plan. Feedback suggests the model is empowering for children and their families promoting their right to freedom of opinion and expression (ICCPR, UNCRC) and for parents to parent their children with the support of agencies around them.

As we move into the next plan, Angus children services have confirmed an additional investment in resources to support relationship based practice; this involves ensuring there are appropriate services to allow front line social workers to focus on the needs of children, reduce workers caseloads which allow them to provide more direct support to families.

4.6. **Priority 6**

We will support you to have a positive transition into adulthood.

The Through Care and After Care team (TCAC) and housing services have completed a range of works that have aimed to give care experienced young people a positive transition into adulthood.

The TCAC team take on the lead role for creating pathway plans with care experienced young people. The team works in partnership with young people to identify need and how this is best met as they move into adulthood. They advocate strongly for the rights of care experienced young people and promote the national recommendations for young people to 'Stay Put'. The team works in a person centred way to help young people develop independent living skills; set up their homes; access education, training or

employments and also support them to access essential services during the transition period from children to adult services. TCAC also offer diversion from prosecution for young men aged between 16 and 18 as an alternative to entering the adult court system in accordance with the principles underpinning the draft Youth Justice Strategy 2017. The team took the lead for supporting two Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children who were placed in Angus. During recent inspections the supported living accommodation provided by the TCAC was rated as good and very good. Towards the end of 2020 the TCAC team consulted with care experienced young people, adults engaged with the service regarding a new name for the service which would be less stigmatising acknowledging The Promise (Scotland's Independent Care Review) notes that the words used to describe young people's lives and experiences can exacerbate low self-esteem and is stigmatising. The team had anecdotal evidence that when a referral was made for an 'Aftercare Service' this increased anxiety for some young people who wished to remain in their current home as it was perceived as a service which moved young people on. The preferred name by young people was Horizon with the majority noting that they liked the new name for the service.



One of the young people designed the logo to accompany the new name.

The services work in partnership with housing to provide young people with a range of housing options, and ensure housing solutions are sustainable by supporting care experienced young people to gain the skills needed to manage living on their own as well as providing flexible support on a day to day basis to manage issues as they arise. Any Angus young person leaving care is now exempt from paying council tax in Angus or the local authority where they are residing. To prevent homelessness, housing have increased the priority being given for care leavers applying for housing. As part of the improvement to housing options there is a 'stay put' option for young people to stay in foster care beyond the point where they are looked after. The changes made by the services has reduced the number of care leavers entering homelessness significantly over the past 5 years.

Transitions Group

In 2020 Angus Adult Protection Committee and Angus Child Protection Committee published the outcome of two significant case reviews (SCR), the findings of both cases [Isabelle and O18](#) highlight the need for the multi-agency partnerships in Angus to better identify and plan for transitions which meet the needs of all young people who have identified as having complex needs or there is a risk that some young people 'fall through the gap' between children and adult services.

A Complex and Co-existing Needs Group has been developed within Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (AHSCP) as a process for ensuring individuals with complex needs are having those needs met by the most appropriate resource. A Transitions Group, with representation from AHSCP and Children, Families and Justice and other partners, is undertaking work to consider the transition process for vulnerable young people into adult services. The focus of the group is to design support which is seamless for vulnerable young people transitioning to adult services. The SCR reports note the transitional process for young people leaving care can create anxiety for some and in some cases exacerbates their vulnerability and increases risk, highlighting the importance of this work if we are going to get transition to adult services right for this group of vulnerable young people.

5. Priorities for 2021 to 2024

As highlighted throughout this report the priority actions of the 2017-2020 plan were largely carried out and met the outcomes however it is important we better understand and evidence the impact of the changes on our care experienced children and young people. Moving forward the partnership not only needs to continue to monitor and evaluate the progress made we need to strengthen our commitment to work towards The Promise and upholding the Rights of the Child in our action plan for 2021-2024 to improve the lives of all the care experienced children and young people in Angus now and in the future.

At the time of writing, we are delivering promotional training on the Promise. As at 31st March, our Corporate Parenting Development Officer has delivered 3 multiagency awareness raising sessions on the promise with over 112 people from across agencies in attendance. The sessions have been well received with many requesting more information to inform and educate others in their service, we will continue to grow this approach.

Feedback from our children and young people in particular over the last year alongside local and national data has highlighted areas where we need to focus our priorities including:

- Early identification and support for young people's mental health and wellbeing
- Extending support and opportunities for young people leaving care
- Supporting young people's relationships with people who are important to them both within their families and with professionals
- A focus on improving services and outcomes for children and young people looked after at home

6. Conclusion

While progress has been made the new three year corporate parenting action plan needs to set out with higher ambitions to create excellence in the services offered to the looked after and care experienced children and young people in Angus.

Across Angus we need a greater focus on raising awareness of corporate parenting responsibilities across organisations and agencies to continue to build on the positive partnership working over the life of the last action plan.

Going forward the voices of our young people locally and the national voices of care experienced children and young people clearly identified in The Promise alongside our commitment to ensure that the rights of our children are upheld as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) must be at the heart of not only our priorities in the action plan but in everything we do. Children's rights and wellbeing matter now, more than ever and will be embedded into our recovery plans in response to the impact of Covid-19 on children's and young people's mental health and wellbeing.