

Annual Statistical Report – Children and Families 2007/08

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an analysis of the Scotland wide statistical returns for Looked After Children and Child Protection Services for the period 2007/08

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 To note the position in respect of the national statistics for looked after children and for children in need of protection
- 2.2 To note the comparative position of children within Argyll and Bute in relation to this information

3. DETAIL

- 3.1 Each year the Scottish Government publishes a breakdown of a range of statistical information in relation to both children who are looked after and children in need of protection. This report highlights the key information within these reports and the position of Argyll and Bute Council in comparison to other authorities across Scotland.

3.2 *Looked After Children*

- 3.2.1 At 31st March 2008 there were 14,886 children looked after in Scotland, an increase of 6% from 2007. This represents the highest figure since 1983. Of this figure 4,480 were in foster care, 1613 in residential care with the remaining children looked after at home or in their wider family.
- 3.2.2 At this time there were 208 children looked after within Argyll and Bute representing 1.1% of our 0 – 18 population, against a Scotland wide rate of 1.3%. In line with national figures we have more boys than girls who are looked after and are just under the national rate for children looked after who have a disability (9% and 10% respectively)
- 3.2.3 The majority of our children (123) are looked after at home or with wider family with 39 placed with foster carers and 46 in residential care. It remains a priority for

the service to reduce the proportion of children placed within residential care and there has been some success in achieving this for 2008/09 with the current figures indicating that of the 71 children looked after and accommodated at the beginning of January 2009 39 were with foster carers and 32 in residential care.

3.2.4 In respect of children leaving care the authority was only one of six to have 100% of it's young people leaving care with an active Pathway Plan and a Pathway Co-ordinator. The Scottish percentages being 55% and 57% respectively. Similarly 100% of children leaving care were still in touch with services compared to 72% nationally and 93% were in employment, education or training compared to 42% nationally.

3.3 *Child Protection*

3.3.1 During 2007/08 there were 12,382 child protection referrals nationally, an increase of 4% from the previous year. These referrals resulted in 2,294 children being placed on Child Protection Registers across the country.

3.3.2 As at 31st March 2008 there were 43 children placed on the Child Protection Register within Argyll and Bute. This represents a rate of 2.8 per thousand 0 – 15 population, and compares to national rate of 2.7 per thousand

3.3.3 This figure of 43 is a snapshot as at 31st March 2008 and numbers on the Child Protection Register fluctuate with the current figure standing at 34.

3.3.4 The main categories of registration during 2007/08 were for physical neglect and physical injury and this position is reflected in the statistics within Argyll and Bute whereby of the 43 children registered at the year end 17 were for physical injury and 13 for physical neglect.

3.3.5 The underlying factors involved in child protection activity in Argyll and Bute similarly reflect national issues with the majority of investigations undertaken within families where there are incidents of alcohol and substance misuse and domestic violence. A number of preventative strategies have been developed to try to address these underlying causes but it is too early as yet to determine evidence for the effectiveness of these measures.

4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 The publication of the national statistics provides a useful opportunity to compare activity within Argyll and Bute to authorities across Scotland and with the national averages. It is clear from this information that Argyll and Bute performs very well in some areas of activity and it also highlights areas where we require to shift the emphasis of our services. Performance in these areas form part of the development plan for Social Work Services and further analysis will be provided through these processes during 2008/09.

5. **IMPLICATIONS**

Policy: None

Financial: None

Legal: None

Personnel: None

Equal Opportunities: None

Director of Community Services

For further information contact: Douglas Dunlop
Head of Service – Children & Families
Kilmory Castle
Lochgilphead
PA31 8RT

Tel: 01546 604526