

Children's Champion

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The planning for a Children's Champion is now underway with a meeting held on 11th November 2008 between Members, staff of the Children and Families service and looked after young people.

2. MEETING

- 2.1 The meeting in November was used as a forum for discussion with ideas put forward about how the involvement of Councillors could assist and enhance the work done with Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People. This looked at the two perspectives of:
- (i) Service delivery and
 - (ii) From the young people's point of view as service users
- 2.2 This meeting was also an opportunity for the young people in attendance to be informed about the work of the Council and, in particular, the Councillor's specific responsibilities. It was also an opportunity for Members to be told by the young people what their lives were like as young people in care. To assist in this process the young people were left on their own with the Councillors which appeared to work well.

3. MEETING OUTCOMES

- 3.1 It was agreed that structured meetings such as this were possibly not the best environment for young people to speak and put their ideas forward. To overcome this it was suggested that more young people from each area be nominated to meet on their own and with the Councillors in a more informal setting.
- 3.2 The young people also asked for the Councillors to attend some 'in house' meetings held by the young people at the Children's Units.
- 3.3 The Councillors said that they would do what they could to address any issues and assist where they could but that they would require a structured approach to their work with the Looked After and Accommodated Children and Young People

- 3.4 The young people also suggested greater contact among the residents of the units and suggested joint holidays away from the units and visits to other units with overnight stays where space permitted. These suggestions were made on the basis that the young people from across the area could meet and share ideas.

4. **FUTURE DIRECTION**

- 4.1 To facilitate progress on the implementation of the Children's Champion it was agreed that the young people would meet separately with some direction and guidance from staff to discuss this and come back with their ideas. A further meeting would then be convened to discuss the information put forward by the young people and formalise this into a structure for a Children's Champion.
- 4.2 The date set for this process was originally mid February 2009. Unfortunately because of the Christmas break and staff leave there will be a slight overrun with completion of the implementation now anticipated to be by 28th February 2009

5. **SUMMARY**

- 5.1 In line with the role and remit of the Children's Champion, as outlined in the original proposal, a structure for the implementation and ongoing work of the Children's Champion is now being completed. The anticipated completion and implementation is 28th February 2009
- 5.2 With the assistance of the young people, the nominated Councillors and the staff of Children and Families, a policy will be forwarded to the Head of Service – Children and Families for ratification
- 5.3 All who have been involved with this project have expressed optimism that the Children's Champion will further enhance the lives of looked after and accommodated children and young people.

6. **IMPLICATIONS**

Policy:

Financial:

Legal:

Personnel:

Equal Opportunities:

Director of Community Services

For further information contact:

**Rodger Wilson
Service Manager – Resources
13 East King Street
Helensburgh
G84 7QQ
Tel: 01436 677186
e-mail: rodger.wilson@argyll-bute.gov.uk**