

## **Opportunities for Young People**

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### **1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report outlines the current range of activity in relation to opportunities for young people with particular reference to looked after and accommodated children and children affected by disability.

### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 To note the content of the report and to consider this information as part of the work plan of the PPG

### **3. DETAIL**

#### **3.1 *Background***

The Social Affairs PPG has selected 'Opportunities for young people' as a key priority within its workstream for the coming period. It is suggested that in line with the corporate plan this priority is focussed in the first instance on the needs of young people who are looked after and accommodated by the authority and young people who are affected by disability. This would assist the authority in fulfilling its duties as a Corporate Parent for looked after children and assist in the governance arrangements for services to vulnerable young people.

- 3.2 At the present time the authority has a well established set of planning and governance arrangements for children's services. This detailed in Appendix 1 and is complemented by formal reports going to the Council's Executive. There is now an opportunity for this to be effectively supplemented by more detailed consideration by members, through the PPG, of the position of looked after children and children with disabilities.

#### **3.3 *Looked After Children – baseline information***

- (i) Services delivered

- 3.4 All children who are looked after and accommodated by the authority have an allocated social worker who amongst their other duties will have a responsibility for the assessment of the child's needs and care planning to meet these needs.

- 3.5 Children become looked after through two main routes. Firstly through an order from the Children's Hearing which will stipulate why the child has to be looked after (the 'grounds') and where the child will reside. Children who are looked after and accommodated will generally reside either in: residential care within or outwith the authority area; foster care; or with extended family (kinship care) These arrangements can only be changed by reference back to a Hearing and with its agreement.
- 3.6 The second main route to children becoming accommodated is where this is by parental agreement under Section 25 of the Children (Scotland Act) 1995. This is sometimes referred to as 'voluntary care' and does not involve a children's hearing although the obligations for assessment and care planning are the same.
- 3.7 The authority currently has three of its own residential children's units which are based within the authority area. These are: Shellach View in Oban which can accommodate six young people; East King St in Helensburgh which can take seven and Dunclutha in Dunoon which currently can take nine young people.
- 3.8 In addition a number of young people are placed in external residential schools either through disability or because of social care needs.
- 3.9 The authority has 48 foster carers who offer looked after children a family based placement.
- (ii) Numbers of people involved
- 3.10 There are currently 92 young people who are looked after and accommodated by the authority. Of this number 52 are placed in foster care within the authority, 23 in external residential school placements and 17 within our own units. 22 of the total number of 92 children are accommodated by way of voluntary measures (S25) with the remainder being through children's hearing orders along with a small number accommodated by way of other formal legal arrangements such as parental responsibility orders.
- 3.11 Of the 23 looked after children placed in external facilities 13 are by way of children's hearing orders with the remaining 10 placed in specialist provision because of their profound disabilities.
- 3.12 The figure of 92 looked after and accommodated children represents a significant increase from this time last year when

the figure had decreased to 66 children at the end of 2008. This increase in numbers has been analysed in some detail and reflects growing needs in two main areas: firstly younger children who have suffered poor parenting and neglect arising from parental substance and alcohol misuse and secondly; older teenagers who had been displaying very emotionally damaged behaviour which may have exacerbated by neglect or abuse at an early age as well drug and alcohol use as a teenager. The affects of this type of parenting can often give rise to damaging and self harming behaviour by young people and require skilful and sensitive responses by carers.

(iii) Budget

3.13 (a) The budget for the local authority units are:

Dunclutha - £847,600  
Shellach View - £619,320  
East King Street - £596,596

(b) External residential schools:

Social care/Children's hearing placements - £1,030,388  
Children with disability - £1,175,144

(c) The budget for foster care is: £ 762,735

(iv) Operational Issues/Difficulties

3.14 The main issues currently facing the service relates to the significant increase in numbers of children who are looked after and accommodated from this time last year. This increase has put pressure on all aspects of the service including budget overspends in relation to external placements and foster care in particular. It has also significantly increased the workload for the area teams as they respond to the needs of the young people. One notable area of success has been the foster care strategy approved by the Council in 2007. This strategy has led to a significant increase in carers from a baseline of 32 to the current figure of 48. This has resulted in over 50% of looked after children being accommodated within family placements.

3.15 This latter figure does not include the 42 children who are currently subject to children's hearing or other legal requirements and who are placed with kinship carers. The authority supports the majority of these placements with regular payments along with social work intervention. As part of the concordat commitments these arrangements must be formalised

by 2011/2012. This has presented a fast growing area for the service and is likely to be a significant commitment in the years to come.

- 3.16 The authority is currently giving consideration to the role of a children's champion to assist in its response to looked after and accommodated children. If this role is approved it will provide additional focus for this area of activity and help to ensure that the needs of looked after children continue to be a priority for the council.
- 3.17 *Children affected by disability – baseline information*
- (i) Services delivered
- 3.18 The authority has established a dedicated authority wide social work team for children affected by disability. This team consists of four social workers, with one based in each of the areas and a Team Leader. It undertakes an assessment and care planning role in a similar way to area team social work staff. The specialist nature of this work however means that it would be difficult to develop the expert knowledge required within a generic setting. The team has been in place for almost two years and feedback from parents and carers has been almost universally positive with families being particularly appreciative of the existence of a specific named person who they know will have a degree of specialist knowledge about disability .
- 3.19 The team facilitates the delivery of a range of services including community support packages, residential respite and in the most profound cases will assist in the assessment of any requirement for full time out of authority placements. It also provides support to the network of parent led voluntary groups in place across the authority.
- (ii) Numbers of people involved
- 3.20 There are currently 45 young people in receipt of community based packages with 18 young people receiving residential respite. In addition there are 17 young people placed in full time external facilities due to the profound or complex nature of their disabilities. This figure of 17 includes 10 children who are formally looked after by the authority as outlined in paragraph 3.11. The remaining children are placed by way of education legislation and are not considered to be formally looked after.

(iii) Budget

3.21 The budget for Community Support Packages: £ 325,428

The budget for residential respite: £223,728

The budget for support to community groups: £211,429

(iv) Operational Issues /Difficulties

3.22 The main issue for this service is how to respond to the increasing levels of need for support services along with an increasing level of expectation. The strategy adopted by the service has been to develop services at each of the points along a continuum of support ranging from social and recreational support through personal care to intensive arrangements involving residential provision. Through this approach the service has sought to minimise demand on high cost provision by supporting as many families as possible at the less intense end of the continuum. This approach has been generally successful although there remains consistent pressure to deliver more intensive support arrangements as more profoundly disabled children are supported at home. As funding becomes increasingly restricted it is likely that there will be pressure on the levels of support that can be provided at the less intense end of the strategy with funds having to be diverted to support more intensive packages.

3.23 As a further development within this strategy the Council has agreed to the establishment of a new residential respite facility in the grounds of Parklands School. This facility will be run in partnership with Sense Scotland and will maximise to respite available to families. It is hoped that this facility will be open to receive families during the summer of this year.

3.24 Partnership working is a crucial aspect of the work with families who have a child affected by disability and the service is currently participating in a multi-agency review of how these services are delivered. This review is due to report its initial findings during February and it is likely to recommend a number of changes to the way services are organised to maximise a joined up partnership approach

#### 4. **CONCLUSION**

4.1 The role of the local authority as a corporate parent for looked after children, and in supporting children affected by disability are amongst its most important functions. As this report outlines the past year has seen a significant growth in the number of children becoming looked after and accommodated and in levels of support required for children with disabilities. The development of our response to these areas will be a continuing priority for the service in the coming period

#### 5. **IMPLICATIONS**

*Policy:*

*Financial:*

*Legal:*

*Personnel:*

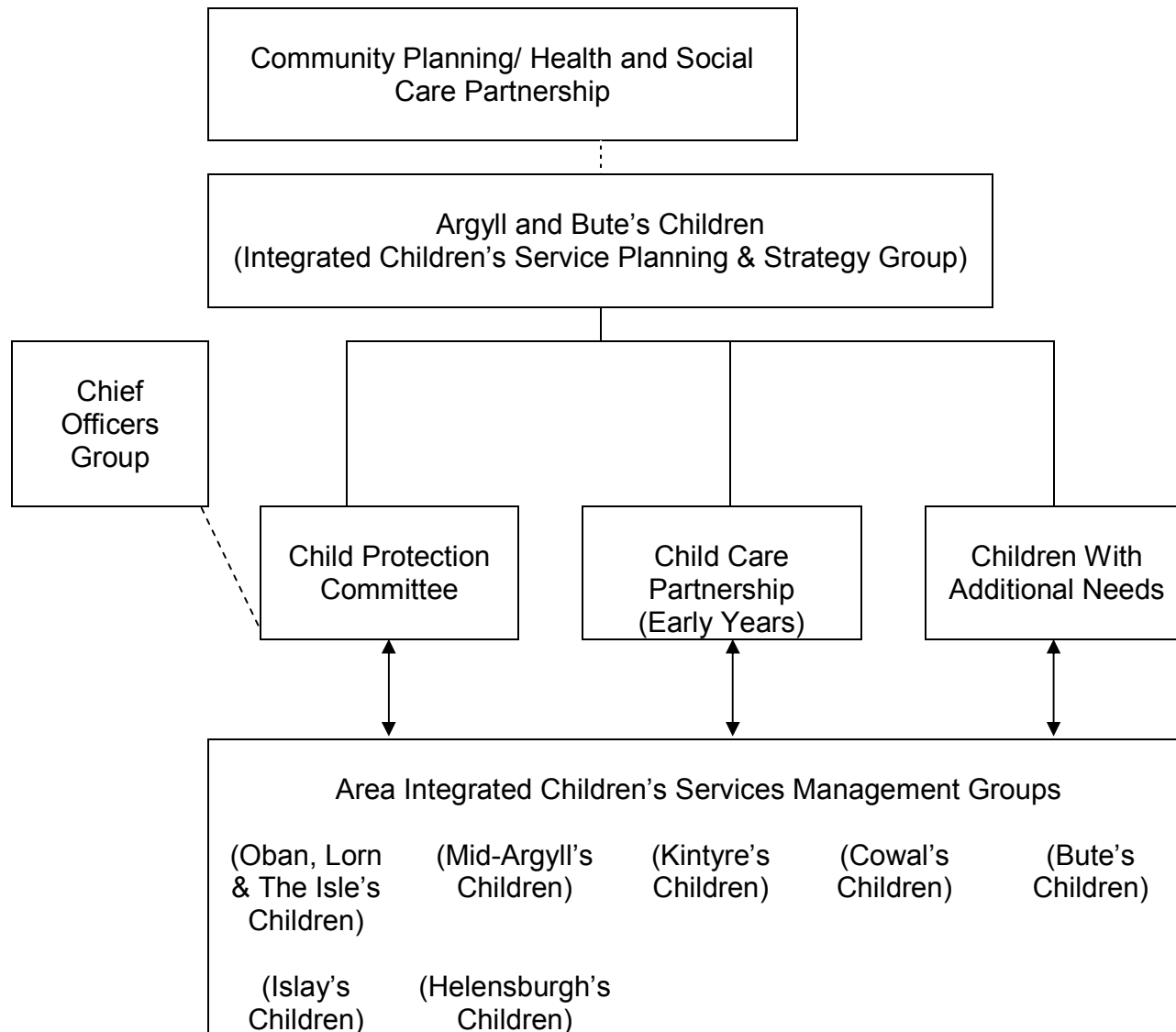
*Equal Opportunities:*

Director of Community Services

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### Children's Service Planning Structure



## **Role and Function of Children Service Planning Groups**

*Argyll and Bute's Children* – this group has three core functions:

- (i) The commissioning, publication, reviewing and monitoring of Argyll and Bute's integrated children's service plan.
- (ii) The development of integrated children's service systems including: the further development of FUSIONS, the response to GIRFEC, integrated assessment, and the operational implementation of integrated working.
- (iii) Ensuring consistency of service and policy development across the three thematic groupings. Argyll and Bute's children would consider the minutes of each of the thematic groups meeting and receive a report from each Chair, or their representative at each meeting.

### *Child Protection Committee/Chief Officers Group*

These groups are formed with their own constitution and have responsibility for the development and oversight of interagency child protection services within Argyll and Bute

### *Child Care Partnership*

This group has its role defined by Scottish Executive guidance in relation to the development and support of early years and family support services. Although this is currently under review in line with the Government's Early Years Framework.

### *Children With Additional Needs*

This group's role is to consider policy and service development in relation to: children affected by disability; children with additional educational support needs; youth crime; children affected by substance misuse or domestic violence; children with health needs (including mental health); young carers, or any other needs arising out of a child's health, educational or social circumstances. A key focus of the group is on inter-agency responses to areas of need including an active engagement with the voluntary sector and parent led groups.

### *Area Groups*

These groups have a key role in ensuring the implementation of policy and practice developments at a local level in relation to the three thematic service areas. The groups would monitor the progress and effectiveness of services and feedback an operational perspective on their development. This would include the identification of unmet need and suggestions for new areas of service development. The groups do not consider the case



circumstances of individual named children, as this is the remit of other fora such as Joint Support Groups, case conferences etc, with their focus being on the development of integrated working practices at a local level.

**Douglas Dunlop**