ABSTRACT

This report informs elected members of the production of a joint policy statement by the Scottish Government and COSLA focusing on Early Years and Early Intervention. They believe the development of a National Performance Framework assists them to set out targets that future policies can target in more detail. To help ensure they are addressing the correct issues they are consulting on the identified tasks within the framework. The consultation period on this proposed policy was short and ended on 18 April having only commenced in early March. This report is therefore brought to committee for homologation. A copy of the full response is attached to this report at Appendix A.

1 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Education and Social Work and Health Committees note the contents of this report and homologate the response to this consultation.

2 INTRODUCTION

This framework for early years and early intervention represents the first joint policy development between Scottish Government and COSLA since the Concordat was established in November 2007. Early intervention is a key element in the government’s approach to improving the lives of our communities and has relevance across a wide range of social policy. Children and young people are a natural focus for early intervention work. The focus of the framework indicates that national outcomes cannot be achieved through a ‘business as usual’ approach and transformational change is needed. Transformational change, it is believed, will come through a focus on early years and early intervention, with high targets to be set for all, while ensuring early identification of risks and taking action to address these risks.

A number of common themes required to improve outcomes for children and young people are identified within the framework. These include:

- Linking strategy and policy clearly to the national performance framework;
- Working more closely with delivery partners on strategy and action;
- Positive opportunities, empowerment and capacity building;
- Focus on prevention, risk identification and early intervention;
- Opportunities for action at individual, environmental (family, community, society) and service level;
- Personalisation of services and joining up at individual level to address a range of needs;
• Breaking cycles of poor outcomes;
• Managing transitions effectively.

The framework is clearly linked to other key national drivers including “Getting it Right for Every Child”, The Government’s Economic Strategy, and Curriculum for Excellence and Better Health, Better Care.

3 COMMENTS FROM ANGUS COUNCIL

Comments on the framework on behalf of Angus Council were sent to the Scottish Government by the Directors of Social Work and Health and Education. The comments noted that:

• Angus Council welcomes the development of the framework and the opportunity to provide feedback to this consultation, specifically, in relation to the key tasks.

• The proposed National Framework encompasses many priority areas currently being addressed and progressed in Angus. The framework will strengthen this work by providing a policy context and national direction.

• The tasks and themes fit well with the proposed children’s services planning structure in Angus and will enhance our opportunity to deliver positive outcomes for children and young people.

• While the high level tasks within the framework are welcome, some are quite broad and vague. The tasks would benefit from being more specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and timely (SMART) in their meaning. It is recommended that the proposed tasks should be more action focused leading to improvements and positive outcomes for children and young people.

• The framework references a primary age range of 0 to 8 where we in Angus believe an early intervention element to the strategy should cover children from 0 to 16 years. The strategy should encompass all children, encouraging their right to play, be cared for and learn – things that do not stop at 8 years of age. The Scottish Government’s objective to create a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth will not be possible if parents and carers are not able to access quality, affordable childcare for all ages.

As part of the response Local Authorities are invited to express their interest in having a representative on one or more of the proposed task groups. Angus Council has expressed an interest.

A copy of the full response is appended to this report.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications arising from this report. Future financial Implications will be brought to Committee when the policy is produced.

5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no Human Rights implications arising as a result of the recommendation contained in this report.
6 CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, the Director of Corporate Services, the Head of Finance and the Head of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7 CONCLUSION

Angus Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on this proposed National Framework and looks forward to being kept informed of developments with regard to the final framework due to be published in the autumn of 2008.

It is recommended that elected members homologate the response to this consultation.

R Peat      J Anderson  
Director of Social Work and Health    Director of Education

NOTE: No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above report.