ABSTRACT

This report provides elected members with an overview of the position of looked after children in Angus in order that they can meet their responsibilities under the Corporate Parenting Strategy.

A copy of the Progress Report is attached.

1. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Strategic Policy Committee notes the content of this report.

2. BACKGROUND

Angus Council’s Corporate Parenting Strategy ‘Getting it Right for Looked After Children in Angus’ was introduced in May 2009 (Strategic Policy Committee 5/5/09 report no. 390/09). The strategy defined the collective and individual responsibilities that those acting on behalf of the authority have towards looked after children and established key priorities to improve the lives of this group of children.

The priorities and commitments contained within the strategy provide a solid base for the authority and its partners to take action to improve the lives of Looked After and Accommodated Children. The Children’s Services Executive Group (CSEG), on behalf of the Angus Community Planning Partnership, has an overall responsibility for the delivery of the key priorities. The remit of ensuring that the commitments given are progressed lies with the Joint Action Group for Looked After Children which reports into the CSEG.

3. PROGRESS TO DATE

The Joint Action Group for Looked After Children have developed a local delivery plan and a set of outcomes and measures which they are using to demonstrate how well the needs of looked after and accommodated children are being met. The attached progress report summarises what has been achieved to date.

Key Priorities:

- Delivery of a training programme using the Scottish Government’s ‘We Can and Must do Better’ materials.

- A renewed focus on strategies to reduce the exclusion of looked after children from school, based on a detailed analysis of information about children being excluded in Angus and linked to the new national exclusion guidelines.
• Development of better systems for gathering the views of looked after children about the services they receive.

Outcome Measures:

• A high proportion of looked after children report that they feel ‘safe’ and ‘happy’ in their placement.

• The percentage of looked after and accommodated children in Angus who are being offered a health assessment is higher than in most other areas. The take up rates for the assessments is high and a high proportion of the children describe themselves as ‘feeling healthy’.

• A similarly high number report they are getting on well at school and attainment levels compare favourable with national figures.

• There were a significant number of exclusions during 209/10 – although the action taken in relation to this issue has reduced this number considerably.

• A high percentage of looked after children say they feel ‘involved in their care plan and can influence decisions’.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Many of the priorities and commitments made in the report involve a review of current service delivery and a redeployment of existing resources throughout the authority and wider partnership.

A number of the priorities and commitments, however, may involve implementation which will be contained within existing revenue budgets or will be highlighted within the council budget setting process in due course.

5. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

There are no human rights implications associated with this report.

6. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

The issues dealt with in this report have been the subject of consideration from an equalities perspective (as required by legislation). An equalities impact assessment is not required.

7. SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT

This report contributes to the following local outcomes contained within the Single Outcome Agreement for Angus:

Outcome 5 – Children and young people in Angus enjoy the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health.

Outcome 8 – Children are protected from abuse, neglect and harm by others at home, at school and in the community.
8. CONSULTATION

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

R PEAT
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK AND HEALTH

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.

SW&H/RP/AM