

**ANGUS COUNCIL**

**STRATEGIC POLICY COMMITTEE - 3 SEPTEMBER 2013**

**CHILDREN'S WELLBEING RESEARCH PROJECT**

**REPORT BY STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE**

**ABSTRACT**

This report advises elected members that Angus Council is one of four Scottish Councils invited by the Scottish Government to be part of a research project that aims to enhance the safety and development of children and young people through the gathering and analysis of comprehensive child wellbeing data. By using data as a critical tool for change, the project aims to support local planning partners to identify and quantify key developmental outcomes, risks and protective factors and to prioritise areas for improvement.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) note the commitment and ongoing work of the Children's and Learning Partnership to integrate the principles of GIRFEC and the Early and Effective Intervention agendas into all aspects of our children's services delivery;
- ii) approve our participation in the Scottish Government funded children's wellbeing research project and approve a contribution of £46,000 towards this work (The value of the Scottish Government funding for the work in Angus is in the region of £90,000);
- iii) note the draft questionnaires and consent letters appended to this report.

**2. BACKGROUND**

The Angus Community Planning Partnership has an ambitious agenda to give every child in Angus the best possible start in life. Angus has embraced and implemented locally a range of national policy agendas around supporting children and young people to develop to their full potential, including the national Getting it Right For Every Child Agenda (Report No.'s 300/11 and 118/12) and the Early Years Framework (Reports No 163/11 and 59/10). In so doing Angus has sought to develop innovative and best practice approaches to getting it right for every child and has seen improvements in services and in interagency working. The Angus Children's and Learning Partnership continues to seek to ensure that the principles of GIRFEC and the Early Years Framework deliver tangible benefits for local children.

The new Child and Young People Bill (Report no. 413/13) will introduce new duties on local authorities around joint working and reporting on outcomes. The Bill seeks to clarify and embed existing joint working arrangements to ensure that public bodies jointly consider how to improve the wellbeing of the children and young people in their area. In terms of outcomes reporting local partners will be required to report on a common set of high level outcomes based around the SHANARRI wellbeing indicators. Given our local commitment to national drivers around earlier and more effective intervention it is important that we are able to track the impact of our services upon children, young people and their families.

As a part of its wider agenda to support and improve strategic commissioning activity in children's services the Scottish Government has made funding available to a small number of local authorities to participate in a project to collect data about the needs and wellbeing of children in their local area. By using data as a critical tool for change the project aims to support local planning partners to identify and quantify key developmental outcomes, risks

and protective factors and to prioritise outcomes for improvement. The project includes the services of a highly respected children's research charity, the Dartington Social Research Unit (SRU), as well as project management support provided by practitioners experienced in implementing epidemiological processes and supporting change initiatives.

### **3. CURRENT POSITION**

The Angus Single Outcomes Agreement and the Angus Integrated Plan for Children and Young People's Services give a commitment to giving every child and young person the best possible start in life and to providing the support needed to enable them to realise their potential and provide a sound basis for achieving our aspirations for local children, families and communities.

The Angus Children's and Learning Partnership aims to improve outcomes for local children, families and communities by identifying needs and then building services around those needs. Central to developing services is the recognition that service planning must include children and young people and the Council has made a commitment to engage and consult children and young people in the planning and development of services. To date Angus has used a variety of consultation and qualitative survey methods to ascertain the views and experiences of children and young people and their carers which has proved useful in giving an insight into perceptions and satisfaction with services. However Angus has less well developed information in respect of the needs of children and young people and on the impact of services on outcomes. Robust outcomes information would enable Angus to quantify its achievements and to effectively target future activities towards those families and communities most in need. The capacity to measure the impact of our services upon children, young people, their families and communities would be of tremendous benefit both in terms of driving ongoing service improvement and facilitating more efficient application of resources.

The Children's Wellbeing Research Project will deliver for Angus detailed information about the needs of our children and young people drawn from a community survey of a statistically valid sample of local families across the authority for children aged 0–8 years and from comprehensive well being survey's of children and young people aged 9–11 years and 12 -17 years.

Participating in research will provide very detailed and reliable information in respect of children and young people's health, social behaviour, emotional wellbeing, engagement to school and perceptions of local communities. It will also provide information about a range of developmental outcomes, risk and protective factors.

The survey will provide important information about children's wellbeing at different ages and stages of development such as positive parenting experiences; the transition to school; positive relationships with peers and social adults; social skills; emotional wellbeing and capacity for self-regulation; physical health and positive behaviours such as avoidance of offending, risk taking and substance misuse. The information will help us to plan services that can provide earlier support for children and their families, with a view to preventing future issues such as poor achievement at school and anti-social / offending behaviour.

The outcomes from the research will allow Angus to:

- Consider how children's well being varies across different communities within Angus;
- Consider how children's well being varies within and across the different agencies in contact with children and young people;
- Quantify the needs of children and young people in Angus;
- Identify priority outcomes for improvements;
- Develop and implement interventions targeted to those who need them most;
- Help inform resource allocation decisions
- Development a clear service re-design plan that effectively targets need and delivers best quality interventions;
- Help Angus to achieve maximum return on investments in services; and
- Compare and benchmark outcomes in Angus with other authorities across Scotland.

Repeating the research in future years will allow Angus to:

- Report on outcomes and improvements in outcomes for children and young people;
- Identify the impact of service on outcomes; and
- Realign resources to reflect changing need and the effectiveness of services provided.

With regards to prioritising resource allocation the project will compliment existing work Angus Council is currently undertaking in this area.

#### **4. PROPOSALS**

It is proposed that Angus accept the offer from the Scottish Government to be part of the Children's Wellbeing Research Project.

Scottish Government funding for the project covers the tools and expertise of the Dartington Social Research Unit (SRU), wellbeing survey's of all children aged 9 – 11 years and 12 -17 years and practical project implementation support in the form of two experienced professionals seconded from a local authority. The value of the Scottish Government funding for the work in Angus is in the region of £90,000. The national budget for the project is such that local authorities who wish to participate will need to fund the cost of the community survey work for the 0-8 years population. The best quote for this work in Angus is £46,000. While Angus could choose to proceed only with the fully funded elements of the project, we would be left with a significant gap in our knowledge about the wellbeing of young children and this would have obvious implications for our capacity to effectively plan for the future.

It is important to note that the data collection will only be as useful to Angus as its application to a wider process of service re-design and revision of existing investment strategies for children's services. The gathered survey information is a means to enable Angus to achieve its over-arching objective which is to improve outcomes and get it right for all of our children. The Dartington Social Research Unit will require Angus to commit to a journey of change and to use the survey data to inform a joint community planning approach to developing a new strategic vision for children's services. The expectations of Angus and its partners along with the Scottish Government and Dartington will be set out in a memorandum of understanding to be agreed in the coming weeks.

#### **5. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The proposal will deliver for Angus research about the needs of our children aged 0 – 8 years drawn from a statistically valid sample of local families across the authority. The research will be conducted via specially trained staff going door-to-door to personally interview a group of parents and carers. The survey being used is a scientifically validated tool which effectively measures key developmental outcomes, risk and protective factors for young children.

The Dartington Social Research Unit (SRU) will also provide use of their on-line survey tool for children aged 9 – 11 years and 12 -17 years. These short surveys will be offered to all school children on an opt-out basis and based on work already completed in Renfrewshire and Perth and Kinross, it is realistic to expect uptake to exceed 80 per cent. The surveys provide reliable information about young people's health, social behaviour, emotional wellbeing, engagement to school and perceptions of local communities, as well as signalling a range of developmental outcomes, risk and protective factors. The SRU will provide bespoke analysis of these results which will include results for each individual school.

The surveys are confidential and results are anonymised so that no information can be linked to individuals. Parents will receive letters advising them of the surveys and have an opportunity to prevent their child's participation if they so choose.

The survey tools developed by Dartington are properly validated using scientific means and have been successfully implemented in Scotland (Renfrewshire and Perth and Kinross), England and the United States of America. The tools are comprised of several validated instruments (such as the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire and Kidscreen) and as such local Angus results can be compared with Scottish, UK and international benchmarks providing valuable context around our information.

Copies of the draft survey questionnaires and the parental consent letters are appended to this report.

**6. PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

**7. RISKS**

This report does not require any specific risk issues to be addressed.

**8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The funding implications arising from this report is the contribution of £46,000 towards meeting the costs of the community survey work in respect of the 0-8 years population. This will be met from existing revenue resources within the People Directorate.

**9. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

There are no Human Rights implications arising from this report.

**10. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

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

**11. ANGUS COMMUNITY PLAN AND SINGLE OUTCOME AGREEMENT**

This report contributes to the following local outcome(s) contained within the Angus Community Plan and Single Outcome Agreement 2011-2014:

- Our children and young people are confident individuals, effective contributors, successful learners and responsible citizens
- We have improved the health and wellbeing of our people and inequalities are reduced

**12. CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Head of Corporate Improvement and Finance and Head of Legal and Democratic Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**13. CONCLUSION**

The Scottish Government is offering Angus the opportunity to participate in a project which aims to enhance the safe and healthy development of our children and young people and better involve local communities in service planning through the gathering and analysis of comprehensive child wellbeing data. The data will be collected using reliable, validated tools administered via community and school based surveys of children aged 0 to 17 years and will provide an overall picture of how our children are developing. The surveys are based around SHANARRI indicators and will identify key developmental outcomes, risks and protective factors.

The Scottish Government is providing approximately £90k worth of services and support to deliver the project. This comprises the use of research tools and analysis expertise from the Dartington Social Research Unit along with project management and hands-on implementation support. Angus will be required to contribute £46k to fund a professional market research company to undertake a representative community survey of local families with a child aged under eight years. The project will provide critical tools to support work already ongoing in Angus to improve the quality and effectiveness of services we provide to our children and families and to achieve maximum return for our investment in early intervention and prevention activity.

**MARGO WILLIAMSON**  
**STRATEGIC DIRECTOR - PEOPLE**

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

**People/MW/TA**

List of Appendices:-

[Appendix 1](#) – Item Construct Dictionary: Community Wellbeing Survey (0-8);

[Appendix 2](#) – Item Construct Dictionary: Bolt On School Wellbeing Survey;

[Appendix 3](#) – Item Construct Dictionary: Core School Wellbeing Survey;

[Appendix 4](#) – Parent Consent Letter 12+

[Appendix 5](#) – Parent information and consent letter – Primary children