

ANGUS COUNCIL

SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE - 13 NOVEMBER 2001  
EDUCATION COMMITTEE - 20 NOVEMBER 2001

LEARNING WITH CARE:  
THE EDUCATION OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER AWAY FROM HOME BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

JOINT REPORT BY THE DIRECTORS OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the work which has been undertaken by officers of Education and Social Work departments in response to the report produced by HM Inspectors of Schools and the Social Work Services Inspectorate in respect of children looked after away from home by local authorities.

**1 RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that the Committees for their respective interests:

- i) note the details of the Action Plan which has been produced in response to the nine key recommendations of the report (copies of which are available for perusal in the Members Lounge);
- ii) instruct the Directors of Education and Social Work to produce periodic updates of progress in respect of the detailed Action Plan.

**2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Scottish Executive report "Learning with Care: The Education of Children Looked After Away from Home by Local Authorities" is the result of an inspection undertaken jointly by HM Inspectors of Schools and the Social Work Services Inspectorate in 1999-2000.
- 2.2 The report concludes that the education of looked after children is not as good as it should be and, in particular, the Inspectorate highlighted a number of instances where local authorities had failed to carry out their duties to ensure that all children looked after away from home had care plans and placement agreements in place as specified in the legislation. The Inspectorate believe that effective implementation of the relevant legislation will help to improve joint working between Education and Social Work Services and have detailed a number of specific recommendations which all local authorities are required to address.
- 2.3 The report acknowledges the positive steps being taken by some local authorities and members will be pleased to note that a number of steps have already been taken in Angus to facilitate joint working in respect of this vulnerable group of children. Specifically, a link teacher, jointly funded by Education and Social Work has been in place since August 1999 and, as a direct consequence of this innovative move, a substantial amount of effective joint working has been developed in respect of looked after children within and outwith Angus.

**3 BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 Research indicates that children looked after away from home are at a particular educational disadvantage. In comparison with their peer group they tend to be behind in their overall attainments, leave school with fewer qualifications and be more at risk of being excluded from school.

- 3.2 In the guidance documents accompanying the Children(Scotland) Act 1995 authorities were enjoined to ensure that children who are looked after have the same educational opportunities as all other children including access to further and higher education, and to other opportunities for development. It is in this context that the nine key recommendations of the Inspectorate report have been made.
- 3.3 The recommendations, and the actions required to implement these recommendations effectively in Angus, are detailed in the appendix to this report.

#### **4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 There are no financial implications which arise directly as a result of this report. Any further developments which will lead to costs being incurred will be the subject of separate reports to the respective committees.

#### **5 HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 There are no Human Rights Act implications arising directly from this report. However, as a consequence of developing more effective strategies for dealing with looked after and accommodated children away from home, it is envisaged that the Council's services in this area will be further strengthened.

#### **6 CONSULTATION**

- 6.1 The Chief Executive, Director of Law & Administration and the Director of Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

#### **7. APPENDIX**

- 7.1 Action Plan prepared in response to "Learning with Care: The Education of Children Looked After Away from Home by Local Authorities."

JIM ANDERSON  
DIRECTOR OF EDUCATION

BILL ROBERTSON  
DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**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.

#### **APPENDIX**