**Brief 2A: Poverty in the Early Years**

1. **Introduction:** 
   1. Commissioning practice within Education & Children Services is aligned to Fife Council’s Monitoring & Evaluation Framework. The Framework is clear that any organisation in receipt of a recurring grant in excess of £10K must make a fresh application every three years. The current commissioning cycle is due to conclude in April 2024, at which point a new cycle shall begin.

* 1. Commissioning priorities for 2024-27 have emerged from a high-level Strategic Needs Analysis (SNA), which reaffirms existing commitments to support families to remain safely living together through the provision of early intervention supports at the additional stage of the Child’s Wellbeing Pathway and targeted supports at the Intensive stage.   The SNA comprised three distinct elements (1) Policy Mapping & Analysis (2) Population Needs Assessment (3) Resource Analysis. The SNA reaffirms existing commitments to support families to remain safely living together through the provision of community embedded, family facing models of support.
  2. Combined, these activities have helped to establish that poverty in the early years, unsupported caring responsibilities, disability, domestic abuse, mental health and substance use are the main vulnerabilities which cause suffering and distress within the family unit, lead to family breakdown and fresh experiences of trauma and loss. The work detailed within the SNA establishes that recovery is best supported through models of support which are family inclusive, rights- based, and which focus upon and promote the ‘wellbeing’ of the whole family unit.
  3. This brief sets out Commissioning priorities to in regard to Poverty in the Early Years.

1. **National & Local Drivers, Legislation, Best Practice …**

2.1 UNCRC:

The Convention contains 54 articles which set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children everywhere are entitled to. The Convention recognises the family unit as the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and especially children: the convention provides clear parameters to member states about how they should protect and assist all families to stay safe and healthy together within an atmosphere of happiness, love & understanding.

Articles two, three, twelve, twenty-four, twenty six, twenty seven and thirty nine are particularly relevant to the delivery of this brief.

2.2 Alternative Care Guidelines:

The UN published the Guidelines in 2010 to support member states to reduce the number of children and young people who were being removed from their families. Drawing upon the UNCRC, Section II of the guidelines rearticulates that the family unit is the natural environment to support the growth, wellbeing and protection of children and that member states have a duty to support parents in their caregiving role.

Section IV contains a broad range of information and guidance about the policies and services which member states are expected to implement to (I) promote family care in its broadest sense (ii) prevent family separation (iii) promote family reintegration. The approach described within the ensuing paragraphs focus upon family inclusive supports, including …

* Family strengthening services
* Parenting courses and services
* Promotion of positive parent-child relationships
* Family support techniques which include one to one home visits and groupwork with other families.

2.3 Children & Young People Scotland Act (2014):

The Children & Young People Scotland Act (2014) is a key part of the Scottish Government’s strategy to make Scotland the best place in the world to grow up and is underpinned by the UNCRC, the Alternative Care Guidelines and GIRFEC National Practice Model. Part 12 of the Act places a duty on Local Authorities to provide services for Children who are at risk of becoming looked after and stipulates that this must include support services for parents in their care giving role. Part 18 of the Act incorporates the definition of wellbeing established within GIRFEC (SHANARRI) onto a statutory footing.

2.4 Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC):

GIRFEC is The Scottish Government’s National Practice Framework designed to support the ‘wellbeing’ of children and young people within the family unit. GIRFEC contains a definition of Well-Being as Shared, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included. The Framework provides services and practitioners with a shared language for assessing, promoting and safeguarding the wellbeing of children & young people against these eight indicators.

2.5 The Promise:

The Promise identifies Poverty as the main structural vulnerability which drives children, young people and families into the care system, noting that children growing up in poverty are over-represented on the child protection register and are more likely to be removed from their families. A key feature of the desired response is the provision of community embedded, family facing supports based upon the 10 principles of whole family supports.

2.6 2.6 Routemap & National Principles of Holistic Whole Family Support:

The Scottish Government established a national working group to take forward recommendations made within The Promise regarding Whole Family Supports. The emerging Routemap contains high-level principles alongside actions for, and measures of success for local authorities and associated partners to draw upon. The overarching vision contained within the document is that …

*Every family that needs support gets the right support at the right time to fulfil children’s right to be raised in their own families, for as long as it is needed.*

2.7 Scottish Government Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan:

The Delivery Plan is strongly aligned to both the Promise and to GIRFEC. It recognises that supporting families with their well being needs is an essential aspect of mitigating against the impact of Poverty. The Delivery Plan commits to GIRFEC as the Framework for the assessment of need and support planning and commits to the principles of Whole Family Supports established within the Promise as a means of supporting well-being.

2.8 Children Services Plan 2023-26:

The Children’s Services Plan confirms Fife Council’s ambition to make Fife ‘*a place where every young person matters’.* Informed by the UNCRC, GIRFEC & The Promise, the plan contains five high level improvement priorities which are …

1. Health & Well-Being
2. Children’s Rights
3. Equity & Equality
4. Supporting Families
5. Our most vulnerable children & young people

The plan contains high level commitments and actions to embed and achieve these priority areas.

2.9 Fife Child Poverty Action Report

Fife’s Child Poverty Action Report establishes that the people most likely to be affected by poverty includes

* lone parent families,
* families where the youngest child is aged under 1
* families where the mother is younger than 25,
* families with more than three children,
* families with more than 1 of the experiences described above

1. **Service Model** 
   1. The Service Model should be cognizant of recent policy, research and evidence of what works to improve outcomes for children and families in the early years.
   2. This service is focused on prevention and support for families with young children (**0-8** **yrs.**) where there are indicators of vulnerability which if not addressed will lead to breakdown, crisis and statutory measures. A key driver is for children to remain within their family and community where it is safe to do so.
   3. The service model should be strongly aligned to both the National Framework Principles for Holistic Whole Family Support and GIRFEC National Practice Model. Other essential aspects include …

* A flexible model which is adaptive to a range of needs and circumstances
* Available within the family home including evenings and weekends
* Practical 1-1 advice through a coaching, modelling and nurturing approach
* Group work to increase knowledge understanding and skills
* Promotes the health, well-being and development of children
* Responsive to the caregiver’s well-being and mental health
* Enhances care giver’s skills, capabilities and confidence
* A single point of contact to support engagement with Universal services
* Connects families with local opportunities and wider networks
* Supports transitions to EL&C and School
  1. Fife Council has commissioned Fife Voluntary Action to lead on a review of existing children and families support which is aimed at establishing the conditions where the views and experiences of children, young people and families are central to system transformation and funding of future children’s services in Fife so that in turn children and families in Fife experience better outcomes and are able to thrive.
  2. This work is being undertaken using a co-production approach with the involvement of children, young people, and families alongside both third sector and statutory sector providers. The project is in its early stages but is expected to produce recommendations in March 2024. Commissioned Services will be expected to align their own models to the findings from this work as it emerges and adopt recommendations aimed at informing the future planning, design, delivery and commissioning of family support services in Fife.

1. **Outcomes** 
   1. To deliver this brief the service will require an outcomes/performance framework with tools to evidence the progress of children and families based on the impact of interventions. The outcomes for this service are:

* Improvement in children’s wellbeing, safety and resilience
* Improvement in parenting, family functioning and relationships
* Improvement in caregiver’s confidence
* Improvement in family circumstances including environmental
* Improvement in access to universal services and community resources

**5. Eligibility & Referral Criteria**

5.1 The service will be provided to children 0-8yrs. and families in each of the 7 localities in Fife within the features outlined in section 3

5.2 The pathway to the service will follow Fife’s Child Wellbeing process and will include referrals at:

* an early intervention level at stage 1 of the Child’s Well-Being pathway. This will require a single agency assessment by the named person identifying early intervention and support to avoid escalation of needs and concerns. Regular review of support will be essential in line with the child wellbeing process and child’s plan to support a multi-agency coordinated approach

* multi-agency meetings such as Child Protection Case Conferences, Looked After Reviews to mitigate against family breakdown and vulnerabilities which could result in children being on the ‘edge of care’

**6.Scale & Cost**

6.1 Drawing upon service levels established for the current commissioning cycle (2021-24) and routine monitoring data, it is anticipated that the service will work with between 60 to 100 families within each of the 7 Fife wide localities.

6.2 The budget envelope established for the delivery of the Brief is £1,147,831

**7. Networking & Communication**

7.1 Collaborative working to improve outcomes is a key requirement and the service should have a proven track record of working effectively on a multi-agency basis building strong relationships with a range of statutory and non-statutory services

7.2 The service should be visible and have a community presence across the 7 localities in Fife, contributing to local networks, sharing good practice and influencing service delivery and development both at a local and strategic level.

7.3 The service should provide detailed information on the service model and interventions raising awareness of provision and the ability to work in a flexible and agile way.

**8. Continuity of Care**

8.1 The service provider will be expected to provide consistency of staffing both in levels and personnel for children, young people and families, particularly through periods of absence, sickness and holidays. The service will share their organisation’s comprehensive recruitment, induction and workforce development programme for staff members of this service. This should evidence capacity building with the staff team to use effective evidenced based interventions for the specified groups.

**9. Risk Management**

9.1 For each service user, identify all situations which involve elements of risk to themselves or others, and evidence the planned response which attempts to reduce and control the risk/s.

9.2 To manage risks effectively the service must have policies and procedures on the following:

* Operational policy reflecting equalities legislation
* Staff absence and management policy
* Recruitment policies and procedures
* Procedure for lone working and working in service users’ homes
* Use of volunteers
* Risk assessment and management
* Dealing with accidents and incidents
* Responding to distress related behaviours
* Protection of vulnerable groups including both an Adult and Child Protection Policy
* Confidentiality Policy
* Training and staff development
* Job description and details of duties
* References and enhanced disclosure check for staff
* Procedures for the supervision, appraisal and disciplinary of staff
* Whistleblowing policy

**10. Recording & Monitoring**

10.1 The service must have a record management system in place compliant with GDPR guidelines with a workforce who are knowledgeable and competent to record accurately in respect to direct contact and reports for all groups.

10.2 Information regarding the overall service provided may be requested by Fife Council at any time for example, how many hours have been worked, the type of contact that took place, the work involved, changes to service plans/interventions, complaints, successful/unsuccessful outcomes and the reasons for these.

10.3 Records kept should ensure that information on the outcomes for the service can be collected for evaluation and analytical purposes

10.4 An Agreement Monitoring Meeting will be held every quarter and a report submitted to the meeting by the service.

10.5 The grant will be monitored via Fife Councils Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, a Link Officer will be appointed to work closely with the service. The Link Worker will be supported by the Social Work Service Monitoring Officer

**11. Complaints**

11.1For each quarterly Agreement Monitoring Meeting the service provider must provide a report detailing the following information:

* The number of complaints the service provider has had during the previous quarter, by type of complaint
* The number of complaints in respect of service provision funded by Fife Council
* The outcome of the service providers investigation
* The number of complaints which were upheld and details on complainants who were satisfied/unsatisfied with the outcome
* General changes to the service providers policies and procedures as a result of complaints and progress with implementing any changes
* The service provider will be required to co-operate in any investigation of a complaint as requested by Fife Council and to remedy any concerns that Fife Council has regarding the provision of the service