



Brief 1

Children, Young People and Families (Service Brief for Rights & Advocacy for Looked After children)

1.0 Introduction & Background

1.1 The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and the policy driver Getting it Right for Every Child inform service development and delivery across the partnership in Fife to improve outcomes for children, young people and families in Fife. The recent Children (Scotland) Bill focuses on improving processes for children and young people affected by contact and residence decisions and is fully compliant with the United Nations Convention on the Rights the Child (UNCRC).

1.2 The Plan for Fife and the Children's Services Partnership Plan set out partnership objectives and priorities for improvement. The Children's Services Partnership agile action plan (2020-21) re-confirms these priorities:

- **Safety** – by working together we will protect our children and young people
- **Wellbeing** – by working together we will support and promote the health and wellbeing our children and young people
- **Opportunity**-by working together we will improve the life chances of our children and young people
- **Poverty** -by working together we will mitigate the impact of poverty on Fife families

1.3 Rights, Engagement and Participation are key areas for improvement in the Children's Service Partnership Plan, a core element is children's rights within the context of the UNCRC and the requirement for public bodies to report back every 3 years on steps to embed elements in practice.

1.4 Children's Rights Legislation in Scotland -A quick reference guide 2019 provides a comprehensive overview of both Human Rights and Children Rights including the challenges and barriers to fully realise these, children and young people:

- have limited political and social power
- are dependent on adults for food, shelter, clothing, care and protection
- are subject to rules that do not apply to other population groups
- are vulnerable to ill treatment, coercion and control by adults
- are key users of public services, though not often asked to contribute to the planning, design, development, delivery and evaluation of those services
- are often excluded from or unable to access effective complaints mechanisms when things go wrong

1.5 The implementation of the Child Rights and Wellbeing Impact Assessment recording tool (CRWIA) is important across the partnership to identify, research, analyse and record the impact of legislation, policy and practice on children's rights and wellbeing.

1.6 Article 12 of the UNCRC and section 122 of the Children's Hearing (Scotland) Act 2011 confirm every child has the right to be heard in matters affecting them and to participate in the life of their family, community and society, this is particularly important for children and young people who are looked after due to formal measures. Key rights for children within the UNCRC include:

- Protection Rights - to be safe
- Provision Rights - to be well looked after
- Participation Rights - to have your say and be listened to

Children and young people who cannot be looked after by their own family should:

- be looked after properly, by people who respect their religion, culture and language
- have their situation reviewed regularly
- have the same rights as all children and young people when they seek asylum or have refugee status

1.7 Part 9 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 focuses on Corporate Parenting duties for public bodies to uphold rights and improve wellbeing for children and young people who are looked after or leaving care.

1.8. The Independent Care Review (ICR) confirmed within the **Promise** that the **voices** of children and young people provide the foundation to reform, change and improve the care system. It states:

“children must be listened to and meaningfully and appropriately involved in decision-making about their care, with all those involved properly listening and responding to what children want and need. There must be a compassionate, caring, decision-making culture focussed on children and those they trust”.

The ICR also considers the use of language within the formal care system and how this can be a barrier to engagement and a relationship-based approach, this includes the use of the term Corporate Parenting Board.

1.9 Education & Children's Services and specifically the Children & Families Social Work Service has a key responsibility for improving outcomes for Fife's most vulnerable children and families. Phase 3 of the Children and Family Strategy 'Belonging to Fife' is informed by the recommendations within the ICR and include:

- The voice of children and young people must be at the heart of practice, supported by a right to live within their families and community
- Shifting the profile of care away from high cost placements towards better support for children and young people at home or wider family
- Better alignment of services for all including care experienced children, providing a 'scaffolding' of support around needs

- Services need to be agile, responsive, family focused and community facing
- Support to all children but with a priority for those in most need due to risk and adversity to prevent the possibility of family breakdown and need for formal care.

1.10. The contribution of the Third sector in achieving these objectives is important alongside a requirement for review and system redesign across current delivery models. The independent review of Third sector services in 2019 provided recommendations which have been considered within wider strategic re-commissioning plans for E&CS to achieve the above priorities.

2.0 Service Model

2.1 The service model should be cognisant of legislation, policy, evidence and research to improve outcomes for children and young people in Fife who are looked after;

- at home
- away from home, in a foster/residential or secure placement
- in kinship
- in continuing care.

2.2 The service should be underpinned by the guiding principles specific to rights in the UNCRC (Article 2,3,6,12):

- non-discrimination
- the best interests of the child
- right to life, survival and development
- right to express views, have them given due weight considering age and maturity

2.3 The service should demonstrate a person-centred approach to empower children and young people to know and act on their rights as part of the children planning process (Childs Plan). It should also increase the accountability of individuals and organisations who are responsible for respecting, protecting and fulfilling these rights.

2.4 The service should contribute to improvement in wellbeing outcomes for children and young people through an active engagement, participation, person centred advocacy model ensuring children and young people's voices are at the centre of service planning and delivery.

2.5 This service is focused on providing information, advice and advocacy about rights for children and young people who due to their circumstances may not feel included, listened to or understood by adults who play a part in their life both within the family, wider community and professional system.

2.6 The components of the services delivery model should evidence and include:

- an approach which builds confidence and increased awareness of rights

- information adviceline for children and young people
- empowers children and young people to express views on needs and wishes on matters which are important to them
- supports active engagement and participation in decision making meetings such as Children's Hearings, Looked After reviews, education meetings
- is innovative and creative supporting increased engagement of children and young people individually and on a group basis
- increases participation and engagement in services such as social work, education, health, training and employment
- provides accessible verbal, written and web-based/digital information on rights, legislation, services, policy, national groups
- mechanisms led by children and young people to actively feedback their experience of services either informally or formally
- contributes to practice, service and policy improvement through active involvement in local and strategic groups
- provides analytical data to help support service improvement and delivery, including collective issues reporting
- promotes a rights-based approach and model across the children's services partnership in Fife
- raises awareness and knowledge of the service across the children services partnership

3.0 Outcomes

3.1 To deliver this brief the service will require an outcomes/performance framework with tools to evidence the progress of children, young people on the impact of interventions. The outcomes for this service are split into two distinct groups based on the support for children and young people and service improvement / quality assurance.

Outcomes for Children and Young People

- Improvement in children and young people's awareness and understanding of their rights leading to improved wellbeing

- Improvement in children and young people's confidence and ability to express/share views
- Improvement in children and young people's engagement, participation and understanding in decisions which affect them
- Improvement in children and young people's active involvement in meetings
- Improvement in children and young people's engagement with services
- Improvement in children and young people's active participation and feedback to local and strategic groups

Outcomes for Service Improvement

- Increased availability of analytical feedback of the lived experience of children and young people who are looked after
- Increased awareness of rights across the children services partnership
- Improvement in collaborative working to promote and embed children rights

4.0 Eligibility of Service Users

4.1 The service will be provided to Fife's children and young people looked after in and out with Fife within the features outlined in section **2.0**

4.2 The service will develop information for children and young people and wider partnership to raise awareness of rights. This will also support the active engagement and participation of children and young people to improve outcomes.

4.3 In line with GIRFEC and the Getting it Right in Fife Framework (GIRIFF) children and young people can access the service, through direct contact via the service information helpline.

4.4 A key objective across the children services partnership is for children and young people to be actively involved and contribute to their child's plan. For this to be meaningful, good communication is essential, on this basis referrals can be made, when criteria is met, by children and young people, named persons in universal services or the lead professional who is likely to be the child or young person's Social Worker. Additionally, a referral may be an outcome of a Looked After Review or LAC planning meeting

4.5 The Intensive Community Support Panel (ICSP) is the current forum to actively review the deployment of scarce resources across Fife. Many of the most vulnerable children and young people receive other support services due to wellbeing needs and risks. On this basis the ICSP will be the forum to review the effective coordination of this service.

4.6 It is anticipated that the service will work with between **250-300** children and young people per year and that the exact number will be monitored and managed through performance reporting in the Service Level Agreement

The model of delivery will inform the number of service recipients within the budget envelope

5.0 Networking and Communication

5.1 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

5.2 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.

5.3 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.

6.0 Continuity of Care

6.1 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.

7.0 Risk Management

7.1 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.

7.2 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 accident and incidents
- Handling challenging behaviour
- Protection of vulnerable groups including both an Adult and Child Protection policy
- Confidentiality policy
- Training and staff development
- Job descriptions and details of duties
- References and enhanced disclosure check for staff
- Procedures for the supervision, appraisal and disciplinary of staff
- Whistleblowing Policy

8.0 Recording and Monitoring

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

8.2 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.

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

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

8.5 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

9.0 Service support and development

9.1 Fife Council will identify an appropriate officer to link with the service provider in relation to ongoing support and development of provision.

10.0 Complaints Procedure

For 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

11.0 Fife Council Education & Children Services has set a 2021/2022 budget for this service at between £250,000 - £300,000