

**REPORT TO: CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLES SERVICES COMMITTEE ON
14 APRIL 2010**

**SUBJECT: STRENGTHENING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND PARTICIPATION
IN MORAY**

BY: DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report advises Committee on a proposed framework to inform, support and monitor developments in our approach to engagement, participation and rights regarding children and young people in Moray.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the exercising of functions of the Council under the Children (Scotland) Act 1995.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Committee is asked to :-

- (i) Consider actions taken to date in relation to supporting children's rights and creating opportunities for young people to influence the detail of the services they receive.**
- (ii) Consider and endorse the initiatives being considered to develop approaches further, as outlined in APPENDIX 1.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Children and young people have a right to their voice being heard and to influencing the decisions that affect their lives. If they are involved in active participation, our services will be more effective, better targeted and more cost effective.
- 3.2 Whereas the Moray Community Planning Partnership has well established means of consulting the wider community in Moray, the Children and Families Social Work Service has not had a consistent strategy for consulting service users and engaging them in service development. A range of positive developments have occurred in recent years which have had an element of success in influencing for example the assessment process, the content of staff training and the design of services but these have not all been coherently articulated or fully evaluated.
- 3.3 One of HMle's main points of action in their report on Child Protection Services following their inspection in 2008 was that we needed to increase the involvement of children in decision making about their lives and consult them on the development of services to protect children. In their interim follow-through report in June 2009, inspectors acknowledged that there had been some very positive improvements but noted that more limited progress had

been made in consulting young people in the development of services to protect children.

- 3.4 Actions taken and initiatives planned will together ensure that children and young people are increasingly expected and enabled to be involved in the design, delivery and the evaluation of either Moray Council's services or those that are commissioned and delivered on the Council's behalf. The actions set out in the attached development plan (**APPENDIX 1**) are designed to build on existing good practice and will prioritise resources to promote a better co-ordinated programme of participation and engagement with children and young people.

4. **AIMS, BENEFITS AND OBJECTIVES**

4.1 The **Aims** of this approach are to ensure that:-

- Routine service delivery processes give us a steady, reliable flow of accurate information about the views of service users;
- We record, store and analyse this information in ways that enable us to understand it and to use it in service development;
- The ways in which we manage relationships within service delivery processes build confidence amongst service users that their views are important and are given proper consideration, even in those situations in which there is disagreement about the safety and best interests of vulnerable children and young people;
- Our staff are accomplished at involving service users in making plans to meet their needs;
- We have a range of means, and staff that are confident in using them, to involve service users effectively in broader service development;
- We evaluate interventions in terms both of outcomes for service users and their experience of using and working with our services;
- Our staff can evidence using the outcomes of research and evaluation to inform service development.

4.2 The **Benefits** of this approach are to ensure that:-

- Children and young people are able to better understand particular services and how to influence them;
- Children and young people benefit from new and better services that are more responsive to their needs;
- Information can be gained from children and young people about their changing attitudes and needs, their views as to what constitutes quality in the services they receive and the barriers they experience to accessing them;
- Young people can bring fresh perspectives and new ideas about services and policies; and
- Services and policies can be designed, delivered and evaluated based on actual rather than presumed needs thereby ensuring that scarce resources are effectively targeted.

4.3 The **Objectives** of this approach are to ensure that we:-

- Further develop our culture of valuing children and young people's views and are proactive in facilitating their participation;
- Increase the number of children and young people receiving child protection services who report they have had opportunities to participate in decisions about their own lives and that they are satisfied with the process and the effect of their participation; and
- Expand the range of opportunities for children and young people to have a say about the nature and delivery of services to themselves and their peers.

5. EXISTING DEVELOPMENTS

- Moray Council has a contract with Children 1st which funds a Children and Young People's Rights Worker and, more recently, a Child Protection Advocacy Worker. Apart from supporting children and young people in relation to their attendance and participation at e.g. hearings and reviews, this service has been used to ascertain the views and wishes of young people with regard to parental contact, staff have attended social work team meetings to explain their role and explain the referral process and they have contributed to Local Integrated Assessment and Planning (LIAP) training sessions.
- Moray Council has a contract in place with Who Cares? to provide 7 hours of support per week for young people who are looked after, more usually to those in residential care. The Children 1st Young People's Rights Worker offers their services to young people across Moray and more often to those young people looked after in foster care. This arrangement is not exclusive and any young person who is looked after can seek advocacy or support from either service. The Who Cares? service includes providing information, advice and support to young people in care in relation to their rights and one to one contact with young people in residential care as appropriate to enable them to participate in planning for their future.
- Our new Integrated Assessment Record – 'The Child's Plan' has a stronger focus on the views and wishes of service users, differentiating between what they see as the realities of their situation, what they would like to be different, what they would want to do or to be done to make things different.
- Moray's use of Realist Evaluation methodology ensures that there are systems in place to capture clear and reliable information, from the perspective of service users, on the kinds of outcomes we are most and least successful in achieving. Realist Evaluation also identifies what services and interventions contribute to achieving or not achieving those outcomes. This methodology is being used by Area teams, the Youth Justice Team, the Integrated Drug and Alcohol Service and all of our voluntary sector partners. As part of a timetabled roll-out, it is planned to ensure that all existing and future child protection cases are using this process.
- The implementation of LIAP includes feedback forms for children and parents, as well as practitioners and these feed into the ongoing evaluation of the new processes.
- Participants in Child Protection Case Conferences and Reviews are being asked to complete feedback forms recording their views of the process in

which they have been involved. These are completed at the time and collected by the relevant minutes secretary.

- The Co-located Child Protection team has created feedback questionnaires for children, parents and professionals to gather feedback about their experience of working with the team. The team has collated the first six months' questionnaires and produced a report. There was a very high rate of return and demonstrated a remarkably high satisfaction rate.
- Children 1st were invited to undertake a consultation exercise (in collaboration with the Council's Fostering & Adoption Team) of the fostering and adoption service from a young person's perspective. Whilst comments received through the consultation process generally reflected a high level of satisfaction with the support they received, a few issues highlighted were helpful in contributing to further service development. A working group will be formed to progress matters and further consultation with children & young people is planned.
- CTC Associates delivered an annual report and evaluation of Youth Justice Services in Moray to the 20 May 2009 meeting of the Children & Young People's Services Committee. The report contained feedback both from service users and their parents. The second annual report will contain similar information. The 2010-12 Youth Justice Strategy arising from the CTC evaluation will be consulted on with a group of service users identified by the Council's Young Justice Team.
- The Throughcare & Aftercare team consult regularly with service users on Supported Lodgings Placements to ensure they meet their needs. The team has conducted a social evening and implemented a questionnaire to elicit views on improvements to the duty service particularly for young people living outside Elgin. Care leavers in Moray are considering with the team the establishment of a Care Leavers Group.

6. DEVELOPMENTS PLANNED

6.1 **APPENDIX 1** outlines a number of initiatives to develop Rights and Engagement further specifying needs, timescales, resources and success measures.

6.2 The development plan focuses on three key areas:

- Strengthening children's rights and representation;
- Evaluating services and demonstrating impact; and
- Ensuring decision making is better informed by the views of children and young people.

Areas of development will include:-

Complaints

Changes will be made to procedures surrounding both the Corporate Complaints Procedure and the Social Work Complaints procedure to ensure that young people who wish to make a complaint are advised of or supported to contact specialist advocacy or rights services. Changes will also be made

to leaflets and online information to support greater awareness of the help available.

Service Evaluation

It is proposed that an Annual Report on Rights and Representation will be prepared by the Chief Social Work Officer; informed by feedback from Children 1st, Who Cares? and both complaints handling processes. The report will identify emerging themes and issues as well as outlining what actions have been taken to address these concerns along with the known impact of the changes made.

Informing Policy and Practice

A Children and Young Person's Reference Group will be established, chaired by the Chief Social Work Officer and meeting twice a year. Supported by Children 1st and Who Cares?, the Group will enable young people to have their say on the challenges, issues and barriers facing young people as well as an opportunity for them to comment on and challenge services on the design and effectiveness of the support they receive. Issues raised will be considered by Children and Families Social Work's Operational Managers Group as well as reflected in the Annual Report on Rights and Representation.

7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/Service Improvement Plan

- (i) National Outcome 15 – our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs;
- (ii) Service Priority 3.5 – Improving Workforce, Standards and Infrastructure;
- (iii) Service Priority 4.1 – Improving key delivery processes and
- (iv) Service Priority 4.5 – Increase our capacity for self-evaluation

(b) Policy and Legal

There are no legal implications. Although there are no immediate policy implications arising from this report, the on-going work outlined at 6 above may result in revised or new policies being presented at future Committees.

(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report and any costs associated with implementing recommendations will be met from within existing budgets.

(d) Consultations

The Corporate Complaints Officer, Head of Children & Families & Criminal Justice, Deborah Brands, Principal Accountant, Katrina McGillivray, Senior Personnel Adviser, Rhona Gunn, Acting Principal Solicitor (Litigation and

Licensing) and Members of Children & Families Division Strategic Leaders Group have all been consulted and are in agreement with this report. Children 1st have also been consulted and their views incorporated into the report.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 To secure better outcomes for vulnerable children and to effectively meet their individual needs, services need to reflect the people who access them. This report outlines a range of measures to consolidate and further develop initiatives designed to strengthen the rights of children and their participation in service design, recognising the importance of not depending on one rigid model of engagement but using a wide range of participatory techniques.**

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Background Papers: With author
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RIGHTS & PARTICIPATION DEVELOPMENT PLAN 2010-12

ACTIONS & TASKS	Lead Person	Start Date	End Date	Resources	Success Measure
1. Strengthening Children’s Rights and Representation					
1.1 The Corporate and Social Work Complaints literature to be reviewed/amended following consultation with School Pupil Councils to improve accessibility and signpost young people to appropriate advocacy and support.	Corporate Complaints Officer	On-going	June 2010	Existing Resources	Complaint literature including user guides updated.
1.2 Availability of advocacy services and contact references to be included in revised Complaints Procedures.	Corporate Complaints Officer	On-going	June 2010	Existing Resources	Complaint Procedures revised.
1.3 Young service users to be automatically advised of advocacy support available when requesting a Complains Review Committee.	Corporate Complaints Officer	On-going	April 2010	Existing Resources	Clear advice to signpost young service users is available.
2. Evaluating Services and Demonstrating Impact					
2.1 An Annual Report on Rights and Representation to be prepared informed by advocacy services and complaints detailing impact of feedback.	Chief Social Work Officer	Collate Nov/Dec 2010	Report March 2011 to Children & Young Persons Services Committee and Smarter Theme Group.	Existing Resources	Report delivered, considered and appropriate follow-up evidenced.

ACTIONS & TASKS	Lead Person	Start Date	End Date	Resources	Success Measure
2.2 A twice yearly sample of Integrated Assessment Records will be undertaken to consider the main issues raised by service users and reported to Children and Families Social Work's Operational Managers Group (OMG).	Performance and Strategy Manager	July 2010	On-going	Existing Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audits completed • OMG minutes evidence consideration of audits and action taken.
2.3 All Child protection cases will fall into the scope of the Realist Evaluation methodology.	Performance and Strategy Manager	Currently 50%	On-going but 75% by June 2010 100% by September 2010	Existing Resources	Reliable data on the effectiveness of all interventions in child protection cases generated with evidence of impact considered at OMG.
3. Ensuring decision making is better informed by the views of children and young people					
3.1 Establish a Children and Young Persons Reference Group	Chief Social Work Officer	May 2010	September 2010	Existing Resources	<p>A planning meeting will have taken place by 31 May, 2010 and the inaugural meeting of the Group will have taken place by end September 2010.</p> <p>Thereafter, minutes of OMG and Annual reports on Rights & Representation will reflect issues raised by Group members.</p>

ACTIONS & TASKS	Lead Person	Start Date	End Date	Resources	Success Measure
3.2 Secure through Children 1 st a policy proofing role in relation to emerging policies and procedures as existing resources allow.	Casework Services Manager	On-going	May 2010	Existing Resources	Committee reports will evidence that consultation has been sought and comments reflected in proposed policy.
3.3 Through the Inter-Agency Training Group, Children 1 st and Aberlour will deliver workshops to staff to raise awareness of the most effective ways to engage with young people to ensure they can fully participate and be heard within multi-agency planning meetings.	Social Work Training Manager	Initial pilot and course accreditation by June 2010	On-going	Existing resources	Pilot delivered, training accredited and on-going training programme delivered – feedback from young people more positive regarding their experience of planning meetings.
3.4 To commission through the Scottish Drugs Forum, the delivery of a User Involvement Training Pack in Moray. This will include increasing the understanding of staff across agencies of how to more efficiently involve young service users, who are affected by parental substance misuse in decision making processes.	Drug and Alcohol Development Officer	May 2010 (for finalisation of training pack)	May 2011 (training programme delivered)	Existing resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training pack finalised • Training days delivered and evaluated • Evidence gained through case audits that increasing numbers of young people affected by parental substance misuse have been given the opportunity to participate in decisions that affect their lives

