

<i>item:</i>	4
<i>report:</i>	CYP14/07

CHILDREN'S PLAN AND LOCAL OUTCOME AGREEMENTS by Bill Alexander

Summary

This report provides an update on proposals for the preparation of *For Highland's Children 3*, including as part of a further local outcomes model with the Scottish Government.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Children's Plan is a statutory requirement, which must set out how agencies will collaborate to provide services for children within each authority.
- 1.2 The last two generations of the Children's Plan have involved Highland in an exercise with the Scottish Executive, as part of the development of new planning guidance for all Scottish authorities. On each occasion, this was linked to the development of new outcome targets.
- 1.3 *For Highland Children's 1 2001 – 2004* (FHC1) was the first generation of Children's Plans to be based on a community planning framework.
- 1.4 *For Highland's Children 2 2005 – 2008* (FHC2) involved a further significant revision of the model, such that it:
 - embraced both universal and targeted services;
 - was built around the new vision for children - that they were to be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected & responsible, and included;
 - provided a comprehensive inter-agency, outcome targets framework;
 - would be the basis for all Scottish Executive Departments to consider local activity and performance in delivering services, before any additional information and returns were requested.
- 1.5 FHC2 has continued to be a live management tool, co-ordinated by a Lead Officers Group and a structure of strategic planning groups (Appendix 1). This process is supported by a seconded Integration Manager and reported to Chief Officers through the Head of Children's Services.
- 1.6 The evolving Children's Plan is updated and maintained at www.forhighlandchildren.org.

2 Children's Planning Guidance

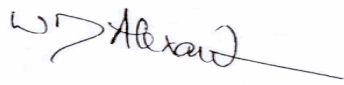
- 2.1 Albeit the next generation of Children's Plans is due by April 2008, the Scottish Government has yet to provide further guidance.
- 2.2 Over the last three years there have been a number of consultations involving Highland and some other authorities. These consultations had confirmed the view of Executive officials that:
"the primary purpose of the plans is to address local needs and priorities and that local partnerships will wish to retain the flexibility to tailor the plans to their requirements. Our intention remains to incorporate as many policy areas in the planning framework as possible and to use the plans both as a means of setting out forward plans, objectives, planned outcomes/targets and reporting on progress and outcomes from the previous year."
- 2.3 Executive officials had also prepared a Quality Improvement Framework for integrated children's services, building on the model included in *For Highland's Children 2*, and which they intended should become:
"embedded in self-evaluation within and across services, along with other key information in updated plans, to underpin joint inspections of children's services"
- 2.4 More recently, Highland was invited to discussions that also involved Edinburgh, Stirling and Aberdeen City Councils, with a view to further developing the Children's Planning process within an outcomes agreement model.
- 2.5 This was because the previous Executive's "Transforming Public Services" programme included streamlining bureaucracy (particularly around planning requirements and performance reporting), reviewing funding streams, and an approach based around improving outcomes, rather than focusing on inputs and processes.
- 2.6 As part of this, officials had been working with a number of authorities to develop outcome agreements at both generic and thematic levels. As well as the involvement of the four authorities as pathfinders for children's services, two Councils and two community planning partnerships were involved in discussions around a broader model for local services.

3 The approach of the new Scottish Government

- 3.1 In her recent meeting with senior Highland Council members and officers, the Cabinet Secretary for Education & Lifelong Learning made clear that the new Scottish Government is committed to an outcome focussed approach to service delivery.
- 3.2 The Cabinet Secretary also confirmed in her address to the 'Building Better Childhoods' conference at Aviemore that the Government would seek to agree an outcomes framework with local authorities that included both local and national priorities, and that this is regarded as an empowering process that enables an appropriate relationship between national and local government.
- 3.3 Officials in the newly reorganised national administration have confirmed that they are still considering whether there may be a model of pathfinder authorities, or whether all other authorities will be expected to adopt the new children's planning model within the same cycle.

4 *For Highland's Children 3*

- 4.1 In the meantime, it is important that Highland agencies prepare the objectives and targets that should be included within *For Highland's Children 3*.
- 4.2 It is proposed that this should continue to be based on an outcomes model, bringing together national and local priorities. As far as possible, we would hope that this model would be the basis for the future inspection of integrated children's services.
- 4.3 It is intended that *For Highland's Children 3* should build on the existing framework, and that this provides the basis for integration with any developing national outcomes model.
- 4.4 It is proposed that each strategic planning group should review the improvement objectives and delivery strategies within its responsibility during the second half of 2007, and that there should be a process of cross-cutting consultation with service users in appropriate forums, and with managers and practitioners at an Area/CHP level. Wherever possible and appropriate, this should integrate with ongoing agency service planning processes.
- 4.5 It is envisaged that this will provide a draft *For Highland's Children 3* early next year, which should be the subject of a dedicated Joint Committee seminar.
- 4.6 It is also envisaged that further national guidance should be available at this stage, to allow the final framework for the new Children's Plan to be developed early in 2008.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Alexander", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Bill Alexander
Head of Integrated Children's Services

