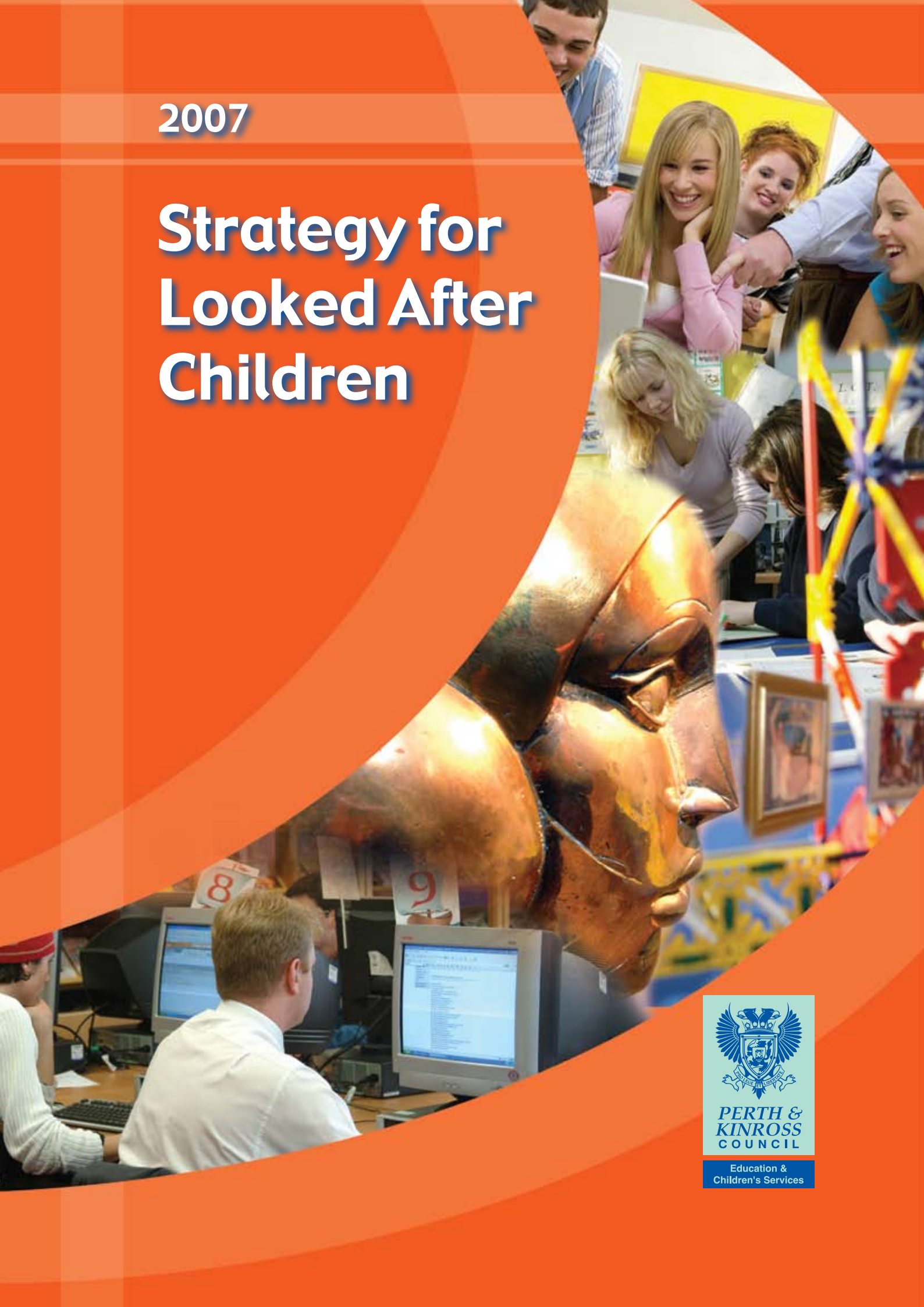


2007

Strategy for Looked After Children



**PERTH &
KINROSS
COUNCIL**

Education &
Children's Services

Introduction

This strategy is a major priority for Perth & Kinross Council in its corporate parenting role for Looked After Children who need to have the best possible care and supports as close to home as possible.

We will seek to work in partnership with children and families and all relevant partner agencies to achieve the priorities set out within this strategy and provide children with improved opportunities to enjoy their childhood and succeed in adult life.

The Strategy

Our Vision

“Our vision is of a confident and ambitious Perth and Kinross with a strong identity and clear outcomes that everyone works together to achieve. Our area will be vibrant and successful; a safe, secure and healthy environment; and a place where communities are nurtured and supported.”

Values

Our values are:

- openness, honest and integrity*
- fairness and compassion*
- mutual trust and respect*

Purpose

Our purpose is to:

- promote safety and wellbeing*
- improve learning and achievement*
- enable active engagement in communities*

Objectives

Our objectives are to:

- keep individuals safe and protected*
- improve health and wellbeing*
- develop the range and quality of learning experiences for all*
- raise standards of performance and achievement*
- develop active and responsible citizens*
- develop caring and confident communities*

This strategy links to the Policy Framework for Education & Children's Services through the following Policy Statements: Change and Improvement, Learning: Realising Potential, Integrated Working, and Inclusion and Equality.

Rationale

A child may become Looked After for many different reasons, including protection from harm.

We provide a range of services to meet needs where the Children's Hearing considers it is in a child's best interests to be the subject of a supervision requirement or where the Council has a duty to 'share the care' to meet identified needs. These services include support at home, foster care and residential care.

We recognise that every individual child who is Looked After deserves to have the best opportunities to enjoy their childhood and develop into confident and successful adults.

We have, as a Council, corporate parenting responsibilities and with our partners we need to use the many resources which are available to us to help the children achieve these opportunities.

Background

Too many Looked After Children across Scotland are disadvantaged and too often are denied opportunities for a stable home life and access to good health and education services. All children who are Looked After and accommodated have experienced the trauma of separation from their birth family and have experienced events in their lives which will have affected their development.

Families, for many different reasons, may not have been able to promote their children's safety and wellbeing. They may need intensive support to help them gain or regain the confidence and skills we need as parents. Children may not be able, because of experiences, to feel they can make the emotional attachments to help them develop and need the help of skilled adult carers, social workers and other professionals to help them regain trust and confidence. Children may not be able to achieve at school and the particular skills of teachers and other professionals may be required to be able to achieve and celebrate success of different kinds.

No one service or agency can by itself make the changes happen. We all (families, services and agencies) have to 'share the care' and help our children grow with confidence.

We recognise that we must now further support the development of our Looked After Children through working together, in the areas defined within the strategy, to achieve the best possible outcomes, enabling them to become caring, confident and contributing members of the community.

Strategic Priorities

In the area of Early Intervention and Family Support, we will:

- review links of Early Years and Surestart with Looked After Services;*
- develop and implement policy on rehabilitation and parental contact;*
- contribute to the development of a multi-disciplinary work setting through individual group and family work;*
- implement the evolving care plan and consistent use of LAC (Looked After Children) forms within web based operational guidance;*
- continue to develop the preventative role of the Re-Integration Team to avert need for residential school/secure unit;*
- develop consistent models of intervention and prevention both with in-house services and partner providers.*

In the area of Raising Achievement, we will:

- promote the improved understanding of all professionals and carers about the needs of Looked After Children to enable them to enjoy their learning and achievements.*

In the area of Foster Care and Kinship Care, we will:

- implement revised foster carer payment scheme linked to Fostering Network recommended allowances;*
- adjust criteria for payments and amend protocols on variable payments;*
- extend specialist/full-time carer scheme in accordance with need and resource availability;*
- develop improved systems for assessing and supporting the needs of Kinship Carers;*
- improve number and quality of carers to promote local placement choices;*
- implement new requirements arising from the Adoption and Children (Scotland) Act 2007.*

In the area of Residential Services, we will:

- reconfigure residential child care team to provide outreach and intensive family support service in partnership;*
- progress business case for replacement residential provision through upgrade of 'The Cottage';*
- work within Education & Children's Services and Property Services to obtain and develop former Almondbank Hostel as multi-disciplinary setting;*
- take account of the outcomes of consultation on model of care;*
- put in place staff development programme for residential team based on new roles and responsibilities;*
- further develop systematic approaches to purchasing placements from external organisations;*
- provide residential respite accommodation over 7 days for children with disabilities in partnership with Glebe School Residential Team;*
- develop capacity for out of hours support for carers through the residential strategy.*

In the area of Throughcare Services, we will:

- work with Housing Services to find solutions to avert problems experienced by young people in locating suitable housing;*
- develop City Centre Throughcare Drop-In Facility;*
- reduce number of young people entering NEET (Not In Education, Employment or Training) group.*

In the area of Corporate Parenting and Children's Rights, we will:-

- promote corporate parenting;*
- develop children's rights, linking the Children's Rights Officer, Who Cares Scotland, young people and Youth Council.*

Taking the Strategy Forward

The strategy pulls together the different strands of work which together will make a difference to the outcomes for Looked After Children.

Through re-shaping our service to put more emphasis on the support of children and families in their own homes and communities we aim to empower individuals and families to take more control of their own lives.

Through the increased commitment to the fostering service and the Kinship Carers more community based family alternatives will provide positive family experiences for Looked After Children.

Through re-configuration of the residential services there will be a new opportunity to retain a live connection between the child accommodated in a crisis and their family, with the resources available to address family issues directly, across 7 days and 24 hours.

Focussed attention on Throughcare Services will provide a clear direction for a nationally under-resourced service for young adults who have left care. They urgently need continued support to avoid homelessness and move into adulthood with the help of their peer group and supportive adults and agencies.

Finally, greater attention to our Corporate Parenting responsibilities will increase the awareness of all to the needs of Looked After Children and lead to a more positive understanding about how we 'share the care' with parents and carers, and occasionally take full parental responsibility.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Project teams will take forward each strategic priority area, reporting regularly to the Senior Management Team and the Lifelong Learning Committee on progress.

Resources

There is no doubt that the Looked After budget is one of the most turbulent and hard to manage given the impact of resourcing high cost individual placements. Nationally, accommodation figures have risen by over 8% in the last two years. Council services are best placed to assess needs and provide a range of services in the community which can reduce the need for accommodation. The aims of the Looked After Strategy are consistent with the aims of good budget management to use resources to the best effect, finding as many answers as possible close to a child's family, school and community.

Conclusion

It is in the interests of Looked After Children and their families and the communities in which they live that progress is made within each of the priority areas outlined in this strategy.

The strategic direction will help to ensure that children and their families receive the help they need when and where they need it.

Through the commitment of all involved real progress will be achieved.