

1 September 2020

Agenda Item No. 6

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## Education & Children's Services Directorate Plan

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Report by: Carrie Lindsay, Executive Director of Education and Children's Services

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Wards Affected: All

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### Purpose

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The purpose of this report is:

- To review the Council's statutory responsibilities for strategic planning of services for children and young people.
- To present the Agile Action Plan for 2020-21, which the Directorate has developed to meet these requirements in a way that best supports the Directorate's approach to recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Council's reform agenda.

### Recommendation(s)

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The Education and Children's Services Sub-Committee is invited to approve the approach taken by the Directorate and to endorse the Agile Action Plan 2020-21.

### Resource Implications

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The resources required to implement the Directorate's priorities for improvement will be met from within existing budgets.

### Legal & Risk Implications

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The publication of the Education & Children's Services Directorate Agile Action Plan 2020-21 satisfies a number of legal requirements on Fife Council. In particular, the plan meets the statutory requirement on Fife Council:

- To publish an annual improvement plan for Fife schools within the National Improvement Framework.
- To play a lead role in strategic planning of partnership children's services.

### Impact Assessment

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The Agile Action Plan 2020-21 Plan outlines the Directorate's key priorities for improvement over the coming year. These align closely with the improvement priorities of the Fife Children's Services Partnership. Whilst these will support

improved outcomes for all children and young people, they have a particular focus on: closing the attainment gap for children living in socially disadvantaged areas; and improving life chances and opportunities for Fife's most vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people (including those living in child poverty, looked after children and the care experienced).

## Consultation

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The development of the Education & Children's Services Directorate Agile Action Plan has been informed by a range of ongoing consultation and engagement activities with children, young people and staff, undertaken both by the Directorate and the wider Children's Services Partnership.

## 1.0 Background

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- 1.1 There are a range of statutory and national policy requirements relating to strategic planning for children and young people in Fife. Key amongst these are:
- The statutory requirement for Fife Council to produce an annual improvement plan for schools, in support of the National Improvement Framework – arising from section 3F of the Standards in Scotland's Schools etc Act 2000.
  - The statutory requirement shared by Fife Council and NHS Fife to play a lead role in strategic planning of children's services at a partnership level – arising from Part 3 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
  - The statutory requirement shared by Fife Council and NHS Fife to contribute to meeting Scotland's child poverty targets, via local child poverty action reporting – arising from s.13 of the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017.
  - The statutory requirement shared by Fife Council and NHS Fife to secure children's rights by giving effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – arising from Part 1 of the Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.
- 1.2 The Education & Children's Services Directorate Plan provides the means by which Fife Council: undertakes strategic planning of services for children and young people; meets the various statutory requirements summarised in paragraph 1.1; and supports the improvement of wider partnership children's services across Fife.
- 1.3 Since it was established in 2014, the Education & Children's Services Directorate has produced a 3-year strategic plan, closely aligned to the 3-year timescale required for partnership planning of children's services. The most recent plan covered the period September 2017 - August 2020 and was aligned with the Fife Children's Services Plan 2017-20.
- 1.4 Work to update the 3-year strategic plans for both the Directorate and the Fife Children's Services Partnership were undertaken at the end of 2019 and during the early part of 2020.

- 1.5 As part of the work undertaken to inform development of a new Directorate Plan, a review of outcomes was undertaken in early 2020. Key outcomes from this review were used to develop a summary Standards & Quality Report (SQR) for the 2019-20 school year (see appendix 1). The summary SQR was used to inform consultation with school leaders and other Directorate staff groups on the development of new long-term improvement priorities.
- 1.6 Feedback from staff identified a desire to ensure a close alignment between the improvement priorities for the Directorate and the wider children's services partnership. Following consultation with both groups, a new set of long-term, strategic improvement priorities were identified to support strategic planning in the period 2020-23. The Directorate version of these improvement priorities is illustrated in appendix 2. They reflect:
- The need to improve key aspects of wellbeing for children and young people (specifically, **safety**, **wellbeing** and **opportunity**).
  - The importance of mitigating the impact of **poverty**, a key barrier to improving life chances for children and young people.
  - The importance of improving key aspects of the way that we work as a Directorate – and in partnership with others – to better support children, young people and families. These have been described in terms of four **key enablers** for better outcomes, which cover:
    - **Rights, engagement and participation.**
    - **Empowerment, prevention and early intervention.**
    - **Support for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged.**
    - **Support for the system.**

## 2.0 The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic

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- 2.1 Before planned work to finalise a new 3-year Directorate Plan could be completed, the Covid-19 pandemic struck and lockdown occurred.
- 2.2 From March through to May the Directorate was involved in supporting the Council's initial, emergency response to the pandemic, providing key services for children, young people and families.
- 2.3 As the summer approached, planning for the recovery phase began to take a higher profile. It was clear that the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was likely to create a highly dynamic context throughout the 2020-21 school year. The Directorate recognised, in light of this fact, that an agile approach to planning would be required for the immediate future. Work was undertaken to develop an Agile Action Plan for 2020-21.
- 2.4 The Directorate's Agile Action Plan 2020-21 is a live document, which will be kept under continual review by the Directorate's Leadership Group and updated, as required by Directorate staff. Updates to the plan will be made available to this sub-

committee and to other elected members and will be published online, as they are developed.

- 2.5 It is clear from evidence gathered during the Covid pandemic that the improvement priorities illustrated in appendix 2 continue to provide an appropriate framework for planning at the current time. Key challenges, like closing the equity gap in outcomes for children living in poverty, remain as important as ever (if not more so). The Directorate's Agile Action Plan has, therefore, been developed within the framework provided by the long-term improvement priorities outlined in appendix 2.
- 2.6 The Directorate's Agile Action Plan has been developed alongside planning work undertaken with the wider Council. It aligns with the Plan for Fife and the overall policy priorities for medium-term reform. The four overall Fife Council policy priorities that have been agreed to guide medium-term recovery and areas for reform are:
- Tackling poverty and crisis prevention
  - Leading economic recovery
  - Addressing the climate emergency
  - Sustaining services through new ways of working

The Agile Action Plan also follows the agreed principles for all Council services to *Restart & Improve, Service Redesign and Reform*, where there is the opportunity to maintain or improve outcomes through a different approach.

### **3.0 ECS Directorate Agile Action Plan 2020-21**

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- 3.1 The Education & Children's Services Agile Action Plan 2020-21 can be found at: [https://www.fife.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0035/83897/Education-and-Children-Services-Agile-Action-Plan.pdf](https://www.fife.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0035/83897/Education-and-Children-Services-Agile-Action-Plan.pdf)
- 3.2 The Action Plan outlines the way that the Directorate will progress its key strategic priorities and areas of reform, including:
- The Belonging to Fife strategy
  - School Attainment & Closing the Gap
  - Employability & Positive Destinations for all our school leavers.
  - Integrated, multi-disciplinary working at local level
- 3.3 The Action Plan also describes the way that the Directorate will help deliver key elements of the national improvement agenda for children and young people, including:
- The National Improvement Framework for Schools.
  - Action planning in relation to Children's Rights and Poverty.
  - The agenda emerging from the Independent Care Review.
- 3.4 Progress against the plan will be reported through the Education and Children's Services Sub-Group on key aspects of the Directorate's strategic priorities and areas of reform.

## 4.0 Conclusion

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- 4.1 The Directorate is confident that the approach it is adopting to strategic planning in the current context will help the Council to fulfill its statutory obligations in a way that best enables recovery and reform, helping to support better outcomes for children and young people.
- 4.2 The Education and Children's Services Sub-Committee is invited to approve the approach to strategic planning that is being taken by the Directorate and to endorse the Directorate's Agile Action Plan for 2020-21.

### List of Appendices

1. Summary Standards & Quality Report for the 2019-20 school year.
2. Improvement Priorities for 2020-21.

### Report Contacts

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## Appendix 1 – Education & Children’s Services Directorate Standards and Quality Report 2019-20: Key Messages



The table below summarises the outcomes reported by the Directorate during the 2019-20 school year. It does not reflect any outcomes reported after June 2020 (in particular, the CfE & SQA results for 2019-20).

Priority Area	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
 <p><b>Attainment</b></p>	<p>There has been a sustained improvement in attainment for literacy &amp; numeracy for P1, P4 and P7 (CfE declarations).</p> <p>There have been significant improvements for the attainment of school leavers in the key skills of literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>There has been a general, long term improvement trend in school leavers achieving one or more Highers.</p> <p>There have been long-term improvements in the achievement of awards (grades A-D) at SCQF level 5 (e.g. 3, 4 or 5 National 5 awards).</p> <p>School &amp; pre-school inspection outcomes compare well with national.</p>	<p>The rate of improvement is slowing for attainment in literacy &amp; numeracy at SCQF levels 4 &amp; 5</p> <p>Attainment of school leavers achieving awards at SCQF levels 1-4 is improving for only the highest attaining</p> <p>The proportion of school leavers achieving pass grades (grade A, grade B, grade C) at SCQF level 5 have been improving at a slower rate than awards generally.</p>
 <p><b>Equity</b></p>	<p>There has been a significant closing of the attainment gap for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy &amp; numeracy at SCQF level 4</li> <li>• Literacy at SCQF level 5</li> <li>• School leavers achieving one or more Higher</li> </ul>	<p>Progress is slowing in closing the attainment gap for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Literacy &amp; numeracy in P1, P4 &amp; P7 (CfE declarations)</li> <li>• Numeracy at SCQF level 5</li> <li>• Achievement of 3, 4 or 5 awards at National 5</li> </ul> <p>Feedback from both schools and pupils highlights a need to further strengthen support for learning, including feedback to learners.</p> <p>There is evidence of increasing child poverty in the already poorest neighbourhoods in Fife.</p>

Priority Area	Strengths	Areas for Improvement
 <p><b>Wellbeing</b></p>	<p>Progress has been made in developing a strategic approach to support better emotional wellbeing of children and young people. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The development of the Our Minds Matter Framework across Fife Partnership</li> <li>• A workstream within the South East Improvement Collaborative</li> </ul> <p>There is a reducing use of exclusions by schools.</p> <p>All primary schools are achieving the required two periods of PE.</p>	<p>Feedback from children and young people continues to highlight the need to improve support for confidence, resilience and emotional wellbeing. This will require ensuring that recent developments (e.g. Our Minds Matter) are implemented effectively at local level.</p> <p>Improvements in school attendance levels will be needed, if further improvements are to be achieved in closing the attainment gap.</p>
 <p><b>Employability</b></p>	<p>The proportion of young people aged 16-19 years old who are participating in the economy has seen a sustained increase over recent years.</p> <p>The proportion of school leavers initially entering a positive destination from school has significantly improved.</p>	
 <p><b>GIRFEC</b></p>	<p>Further development of the Home 2 Fife strategy has helped to bring significant numbers of young people back to Fife, from purchased placements elsewhere.</p> <p>Educational outcomes for LAC compare well with national.</p> <p>All registered care services were evaluated as good or better</p>	<p>There continues to be a significant financial pressure arising from purchased placement costs.</p> <p>The Belonging 2 Fife strategy is being developed to ensure that more vulnerable children and young people are able to stay at home, with family and within their local community.</p> <p>Educational outcomes for LAC are still lower than for their peers.</p>
 <p><b>Communities</b></p>	<p>Evaluation of the Directorate's A Better Connected Directorate has been generally positive.</p>	<p>Further development of ABCD will should help empower communities across Fife.</p>

## Appendix 2 – Improvement Priorities for 2020-21

### Priorities for Improvement

*Our main focus for improving the life chances of Fife's children & young people*

#### Safety

By working together we will protect our children and young people

#### Wellbeing

By working together we will support and promote the health & wellbeing of 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 child poverty on Fife families

### Key Enablers

*What we need to do to help make these changes happen*

#### Rights, Engagement & Participation

We will work with our children, young people & families, striving always to hear their voice and to recognise their rights

#### Empowerment, Prevention & Early Intervention

We will change the way that we work together, with families, & with communities, to develop our collective capacity to recognise and meet need by building strength within families

#### Support for the Most Vulnerable & Disadvantaged

We will ensure that our most vulnerable & disadvantaged children, young people & families are identified and appropriately supported

#### Support for the System

We will learn from our response to the Covid-19 pandemic, to improve our recovery planning and to build our capacity for future improvement