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<b>Report To:</b>	<b>Policy &amp; Resources Committee</b>	<b>Date:</b> 22 September 2009
<b>Report By:</b>	<b>Corporate Director Environment &amp; Community Protection</b>	<b>Report No:</b> ECP/DIR09/019
<b>Contact Officer:</b> Neil Graham		<b>Contact No:</b> 2709
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Our “Corporate” Children (OCC) – Employment, Training and Housing Opportunities</b>	

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## 1.0 Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to introduce the subject and to recommend measures which may be taken to ensure that children who are the full responsibility of the Council are provided with access to employment, training and housing opportunities. To simplify the language, we will refer to them as “Our Corporate Children” (OCC).

## 2.0 Summary

2.1 The CMT, in January 2009, agreed to the formation of a short life working group to investigate options for progress. The group members are:-

Neil Graham; Environment and Community Protection (Chair)  
Sharon McAlees; Social Work  
Allan Wilson; Human Resources  
Shaun Lundy; Economic and Social Regeneration

2.2 The group has met at least fortnightly since the end of January 2009 and it is now felt that a permanent Corporate Group needs to be established to oversee this area of the Council’s responsibility.

2.3 Inverclyde Council are the Corporate Parents for children who for various reasons have nobody to act on their behalf. As such, there is a need to increase the level of care to them and respond to government initiatives designed to improve their social and economic prospects. The role of ‘pushy parents’ for ‘our’ children needs to be taken in a more serious way.

2.4 A wide range of opportunities are being proposed for this small group of OCC. It is intended that the proposals will go some way to breaking the cycle of low take-up of employment and training and lost potential, as well as deal with their housing needs as they move into adult life.

2.5 The outcome statistics for OCC show that a lot more needs to be done by the Council to impact on the situation – the status quo is not an option any longer.

2.6 In separate discussions, the local Housing Associations have all agreed to offer housing to any of OCC recommended to them by Neil Graham/Sharon McAlees. This will be done under delegated authority by each Housing Director and moves away from the current practice of using homelessness legislation to house OCC.

2.7 It is proposed to incorporate all these proposals into a Charter for OCC, to be jointly signed by the Chief Executive and the young person on the occasion of their 15<sup>th</sup> birthday. This Charter will summarise the Council's commitments to its child and will include a section on what the child will do to help him/herself.

2.8 Looked-after children experience a range of barriers. They themselves report feeling stigmatised. It may well be the case that this group of young people are experiencing discrimination. The Council has an opportunity to address this.

### **3.0 Recommendations**

3.1 The Committee approves the proposals designed to place OCC in a stronger position to seek gainful employment/training/further education. These measures could be introduced while the young person is still at school or, if left school, not in employment:

- HR advisor – training on recruitment and selection
- Occupational Health Service – well person clinics etc
- Tutor – concentrate on three r's
- ICT advisor – training in modern technology
- Social Worker – anticipate employment aspirations
- Inverclyde Leisure – encourage exercise/sport involvement
- Corporate sponsor brings all elements together

3.2 The Committee agrees the variety of options available to assist OCC to find employment:

- Get Ready for Work
- Skillseekers
- Modern Apprenticeship
- Seasonal Employment
- Permanent Employment

3.3 The Committee commits the Council to do all in its power to guarantee a job or training opportunity for OCC.

3.4 The Committee notes other matters detailed in paragraph 7 below.

3.5 The Committee agrees that OCC be given access to the Internal Vacancy Bulletin in their final year at school.

3.6 The Committee agrees to remit the prospect of funding for OCC in relation to tuition, travel, books, dress, sport, driving lessons, occupational health etc, to the next budget-setting period.

3.7 The Committee notes the co-operation of the local Housing Associations in terms of dealing with the accommodation issues facing OCC.

3.8 The Committee agrees to roll this out to our Partners in the Inverclyde Alliance.

3.9 The Committee agrees to the proposal to establish a "Charter for Our Corporate Children" which summarises what the Council will do to help the young person and what the young person will do to help him/herself; and agrees to the establishment of a Corporate Group of senior officers, chaired by the Chief Executive or his nominees, to oversee the implementation and review of this Charter.

## 4.0 Background

- 4.1 The publications *Looked After Children and Young People: We Can and Must do Better* (Scottish Executive 2007) and *These Are Our Bairns* (The Scottish Government 2008) are intended to raise awareness of the issues children in care face and to establish a range of measures designed to improve their prospects.
- 4.2 The Scottish Government and local government are committed to improving the life outcomes for all children however, have special responsibility for those young people who are “looked after”.
- 4.3 This special responsibility has become known as *corporate parenting*. This report deals mainly with employment and training opportunities for OCC, but reference is made to accommodation in recognition of the importance of stability in that area.
- 4.4 Most of OCC will have experienced childhood trauma emanating from early years separation from parents/siblings or/and abusive relationships with adults. Typically they are likely to have had mobile lives with many changes of addresses, schools and significant adults in their lives. For many this will have resulted in a loss of self belief in their own abilities with a resulting loss of confidence. It is notable that despite such adversity the young people nonetheless demonstrate resilience.
- 4.5 On average in Inverclyde 15 - 20 young people in care leave school each year. In 2007/2008 these young people find themselves in:

(Inverclyde school leavers % in brackets)

Higher education	(33%)	6%
Further Education	(30%)	16%
Other Training	(7%)	14%
Employment	(20%)	6%
Unemployed	(8%)	46%
Not known	(1%)	1%
Prison		11%

- 4.6 The Council launched its Children’s Champion scheme in 2007 to try to improve the lives of some of OCC but it is now recognised that much more needs to be done.
- 4.7 (a) The greatest difficulty facing OCC, once they have been taken into care, in general is the lack of emotional support. Normal parents not only do everything that is suggested in this report when their children are approaching adulthood but also provide emotional support through the process. It is clear that OCC have no such person in their lives to provide that emotional arm to see them through what many regard as the toughest part of growing up.
- (b) Professor Bob Holman, retired Professor of Social Work and a recognised child care specialist, recently wrote in his “Society” slot in the Herald.....young people “need close attachments to wiser and stronger figures when they are fearful or bewildered. Carers need to be people with a personal, emotional investment in them”. In summary, he concluded that “you can’t have relationships without emotions”.
- (c) The Council needs to find a way of ensuring that this emotional gap in the lives of OCC, particularly as they near adulthood, is filled. It is anticipated that the proposed Charter will help in this regard.
- (d) The Council should evaluate our internal processes to ensure that they do not discriminate against OCC.

For example, the Seemis system in Education Services is capable of aggregating data in respect of children from minority ethnic backgrounds because it is important to ensure these children's experiences are positive.

The system does not appear capable of doing this for OCC where it is known that, as a group, they are consistently under-attaining.

(e) Equally, the Council should proactively promote equal treatment for OCC by addressing any barriers identified with partner agencies.

## **5.0 Programme for Improvement**

5.1 Best practice indicates that, in order to positively influence a young person's employability, the following should play a part:-

1. Assist each young person through the recruitment and selection process
  - Mentor/coach – HR officer attached
2. Enhance each young person's core employability skills
  - Concentrate on three r's
  - Mentor/coach – education extra tuition
3. Enhance access and understanding of Information Technology
  - Mentor/coach – ICT support
4. Anticipate each young person employment aspirations/suitability
  - Encourage young person to make suggestions – Social Work support
5. Improve attendance and engagement in out of school activities
  - Mentor/encourage – Inverclyde Leisure support
6. Bring 1-5 above together
  - Attached mentor to young person – meet on regular basis

5.2 Best practice indicates that a young person who decides on the employment or training route on leaving school can benefit from one or a combination of the following:

- The Get Ready for Work Programme
  1. Young people are recommended for inclusion by Careers Scotland
  2. No entry qualifications are required
  3. Programme last one year – extensions can be granted – how?
  4. New Programme for 23 young people – maximum 6 months placement – to enquire who runs and how get on to?
  5. All young people are paid £63.99 per week
  6. Non certified training is available to young people
  7. Participating partners – Inverclyde Leisure/various council community centres
  8. Young people can access Inverclyde Council Internal Vacancy Bulletin
- The Skillseekers Programme
  1. Young people apply via Council's web site or by contacting Careers Scotland
  2. Entry qualifications are needed – Level 2 SVQ – English/Maths at level 3 or 4
  3. Young people are paid as 5 (above)
  4. Trainees can be placed across the Council
  5. Can move into Modern Apprenticeship Programme once employment secured and SVQ level 2 attained
  6. Participating partners – all our services – anyone
  7. Young people can access Inverclyde Council Internal Vacancy Bulletin

- The Modern Apprenticeship Programme
  1. Young people must hold employed Trainee status
  2. Young people are paid the rate for the job
  3. Young people work towards SVQ level 3 – entry qualifications as 2 above
- Work Experience – preparation for employment
  1. For looked after children of school age (15+years) or registered in full time education
  2. Offers work experience placements outside term time based within the Council
  3. A choice of the number of days and length of time dependant on placement
- Seasonal Employment
  1. Certain Council services increase core workforce temporarily
  2. Opportunities for manual work, eg. gardening
  3. Application direct to service
- Mainstream Employment
  1. Vacancies are advertised in the Internal Vacancy Bulletin
  2. Wide variety of posts available some of which may be appropriate for OCC

## **6.0 Outcomes for this year's OCC who leave school at the end of June 2009**

Of 20 young people identified:-

- 2 young people are progressing to S5 in their existing schools.
- 1 young person is enrolling at James Watt College.
- Seasonal work with the Council has been secured for 2 young people with 1 further opportunity pending.
- 3 young people are pursuing administrative posts within the Council; this will continue to be monitored.
- A funding package is being researched to create an opportunity for 1 young person to work with the Council's Corporate Communications and Public Affairs Service. This young person has an HND in graphic design.
- Pursuing a modern apprenticeship for 1 young person is being explored; this young person was studying 8 GCSEs in a school in England when his placement broke down. He was unable to convert this in time with the Scottish system. Efforts are underway to determine if his lack of formal qualifications can be overcome to allow him to apply for a modern apprenticeship course.
- 4 young people are being referred to the 'Getting Ready for Work' programme.
- 1 young person is in prison.
- 4 young people's care plans continue to be very unsettled and will require ongoing intensive support in other areas of their lives as the priority at the moment.

All of these young people's circumstances will continue to be reviewed on a monthly basis.

## **7.0 Other Issues**

- (a) Transport to work:
- Recognise potential problem
  - Take time to detail public transport possibilities
  - Consider if any passing Council vehicles
  - Provide temporarily
- (b) Minor criminal convictions:

- The same criteria used when appointing staff would be applied when selecting suitable placements i.e. not a barrier to employment
- (c) Partners – encourage placements etc:
- Further Education colleges
  - National Health Service
  - River Clyde Homes
  - Voluntary Sector
  - Inverclyde Leisure
  - Careers Scotland/Skills Development Scotland
  - Meet with Partners to discuss
- (d) Funding and Resources:
- Clothing for interviews
  - Books for study
  - Transport
  - Sport equipment
  - Driving - lessons
- (e) Reward Attendance
- (f) Support for Service/managers/supervisors:
- Guidelines on how to support young person – attached as appendix
  - Meet with managers regularly – share experiences
- (g) Accommodation being addressed with the help of the local Housing Associations
- (h) Barriers:
- criticism from variety of sources – why “guarantee” employment for this group
  - employment law – equality of opportunity concerns – appointments on merit
  - no authority guarantees permanent employment
- (i) College/Further Education:
- sponsor and support through further education
- (j) Occupational Health:
- Access to Council’s service

## **8.0 Our Corporate Children’s Charter**

- (a) It is proposed to incorporate everything that the Council will do for OCC into a Charter with a summary of expected outcomes for the young person.
- (b) It is proposed that the Charter will contain 2 parts. The first part will summarise the Council’s commitments and the second part will be for the young person to say, in their own words, what they hope to do to help deliver the agreed outcomes.
- (c) It is proposed that the Chief Executive and the young person jointly sign the Charter on, or as close as possible to, the young person’s 15<sup>th</sup> birthday.

## **9.0 Implications**

### 9.1 Finance:

Financial Implications – There are no immediate financial implications arising from this report as all costs will be contained within a variety of existing Service budgets.

9.2 Human Resources and Legal – similar issues for both services. Legal opinion is there could be an issue with respect to equal opportunities if we do not have a competitive selection process for candidates for vacancies. In addition other groups may take umbrage at preferential treatment being afforded to one disadvantaged group at the expense of other equally valid groups.

## **10.0 Consultation**

10.1 The Corporate Management Team fully supports the recommendations in this report and sees it as an integral part of our “Children’s Champion” Scheme.

INVERCLYDE COUNCIL

OUR CORPORATE CHILDREN'S CHARTER



## FOREWORD

Inverclyde Council has a well established Corporate Parenting Policy, one aim of which is to support our corporate children and young people to achieve their ambitions.

Elected Members and Senior Officials are fully committed to ensuring that children and young people reach their potential and are given the same opportunities as any good parent would provide for their own children.

As a council and with our community planning partners, we are committed to ensuring that all our services are responsive to meeting the needs of children and young people in our care throughout their childhood and as young adults. Part of our approach is to promote a more positive view of the children and young people in our care, challenge and remove the stigma they face and at the same time, enhance each individual young person's sense of their own rights and responsibilities.

As a council we are dedicated to improving outcomes for children in our care. We are dedicated to establishing and maintaining a culture across our services that provide the highest standard of health, wellbeing, education, career and housing to our corporate children.

This charter sets out the range of ways that the council and partners can intervene to help young people at the point at which they are beginning to plan for their future as young adults. The charter will involve an agreement to be drawn up for each young person entering their S.4 year.

This agreement will set out what the council and partners can do to help the young person achieve their potential and what the young person, with help and support, can do to make the plan work. It would be my intention to ask the Chief Executive to sign each plan personally and to be advised regularly on the progress of each plan.

The charter outlines a range of ways that young people can be helped. There are many more opportunities to improve outcomes. Creativity and imagination coupled with determination and modest resource can make a difference. Research has consistently told us that committed individuals prepared to champion children can make a significant difference to their lives.

When the children and young people who leave our care are confident, resilient, skilled and equipped to face adult life; when they have jobs and decent housing, we know we will have succeeded.

Signed.....Leader of the Council

# Our Corporate Children's Charter

## **Getting The Most From School And College**

Whether you attend school or college, staff from the council will be available to make sure you get the very best. This may mean extra support from your guidance teacher. You may have missed some areas and could benefit from help from a specialist teacher. You may have particular talents that with some extra tuition you could reach an ambition. Your key worker will help you to work out what you need to do the best you can and the council will do what they can to make sure it happens.

## **Healthy And Happy**

The council has a whole range of sports and leisure opportunities for young people. The council wants all young people to make use of these. You will be given an opportunity to try out all the different kinds of sports and leisure pursuits on offer and you can decide on any that you really enjoy. Once you have done that you will get a pass that lets you get involved with your chosen activity. If you need any special equipment the council will arrange for someone to speak to you about this and try to help you get this.

## **Getting Ready For Work**

The council and other agencies can do a lot to help you get ready for work. For example, if there is a particular job you want to do and you need a specific certificate to do it, the council will try to help you get it. Learning to drive will mean you can apply for more jobs, so this may be something you could get help with. Having the right clothes for interviews always makes a good impression and you could get help with that. Some young people just need a bit of confidence and there is help with that too.

## **Getting A Job**

There is a lot the council can do to help you get ready for work. You will be linked with a member of staff from the Human Resources department. They can give you help with things like filling out application forms for jobs, preparing for interviews and how you can present yourself.

Human Resources staff can also help you find out about any vacancies the council has, including skill seeker posts and work experience placements.

The council employs people in all kinds of jobs from lawyers, ICT staff, gardening, librarians, electricians, home helps, cooks and many more. If you have thought about a career and would like to try it out, you should speak to someone from Human Resources. If you know already what job you want to do, you should talk to your Human Resources advisor and your keyworker and between you, you can make a plan to make it happen. If you keep your side of the bargain the council will do what they can to make it happen.

### **Help With Housing**

When you and your key worker agree that the time is right for you to set up your own home, the council will be there to help and support you with this. The kind of help you can expect will include making an application for housing, organising the things you need to move in to your new home, helping you to settle in and getting to know your neighbours. Staff will be there to help and support you as long as you need to.

### **Getting Rid Of Barriers**

The council wants all of our young people to do well. This charter is for all care leavers. No matter what you think might be in your way, we will try to help you sort it out. You may have a disability or some form of special needs. You may have spent some time in secure care or you may still have other kinds of problems. What the council wants to do is to help get rid of any barriers in your way and help you get on with living life to the full.

### **Participating**

The council can do a lot to help you develop your talents and your skills and hopefully help you to find the right job or career, make sure you have a decent place to stay and have the opportunities that all other young people have. To make this really work you need to participate. You know best what you want to achieve and what you need to do to achieve it. You need to spell this out. Don't sell yourself short, be ambitious. Stick to what you agree and tell people if you don't think it's working or the plan needs to change. The council will try to get you the help when you need it.

**I ..... (Young Persons Name)**  
**..... Aged**

.....

Have had explained to me the things that staff in the Council will do to help me over the next few years to either get a job or the training or qualifications I will need to do the job I would most like to do in the future.

**The main things I would like to achieve over the next three years are:**

To achieve my goals. I will meet regularly with my mentor and my Pathways Co-ordinator  
I will agree to information about my circumstances being discussed by staff in the Council.

**I will** (specific actions)

**Signed** ..... **Dated** .....

**I, John Mundell, Chief Executive of Inverclyde Council**

Have read and give my approval to the Councils plan to help ensure.....  
Is able to achieve their goals over the next three years.

The progress of this plan should be reviewed periodically by the xxx group and  
an annual report of progress provided to me in September of each year.

I would also like - (and any specific comments ) attended to \considered.

The Officer responsible for progressing this agreement is:

.....

**Signed.....Dated.....**

**1<sup>st</sup> Review date**