

## **Copeland Borough Council.**

### **Children and Young People's Plan – April 2007.**

#### **DRAFT DOCUMENT V3 FOR CONSULTATION.**

##### **1) Introduction.**

The aim of this plan is to outline Copeland Borough Council's current position in responding to the Children Act 2004, and to outline the approach to be adopted regarding this fast moving agenda. The Children Act 2004 is considered as the legal underpinning of 'Every Child Matters'; with five key themes identified. These are:

- Be Healthy.
- Stay Safe.
- Enjoy & Achieve.
- Make a Positive Contribution.
- Achieve Economic Well-Being.

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on key agencies to make arrangements to ensure that their functions are discharged with regard to the need to safeguard and promote the wellbeing of children. Within the Act, a child is defined as anyone who has not yet reached their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Cumbria County Council has a statutory obligation to produce a Children and Young People's Plan, and initially responded by producing a Core Strategic Plan for the period 2006-2007. This has now been reviewed and, along with feedback received from a Joint Area Review carried out in 2006; a draft Children and Young People's Plan for the period 2007 to 2010 has just been published (February 2007). This is available at [www.cumbriacc.gov.uk](http://www.cumbriacc.gov.uk).

In addition to the County Council's lead role, there are a number of requirements placed upon District Councils, including Copeland Borough Council. These cover the following two main areas:

1. There is a duty to co-operate (as a key agency) to improve the well-being of children.
2. There are statutory guidelines on making arrangements to safeguard and promote the well being of children.

##### **2) Duty to Co-operate – the current position.**

In practice, there are a number of functions that are carried out by Copeland Borough Council, across a range of statutory and non-statutory services that promote the well being of children.

These functions include:

## **Cultural and leisure opportunities.**

The Council's sports and arts development functions are managed through a newly created Cultural Services department. This department directly delivers both arts and sports activities for young people, initiatives include school holiday sports programmes, coaching courses for young people, volunteer development with sports clubs, theatre workshops, dance sessions and arts focussed projects such as urban art development. The department also support agencies with a youth focus, sports clubs, and youth groups.

Formalised links are in place through the School Sports Partnership network to ensure the Council's development activity is complimenting school based activities; an example is the development of a Healthy Lifestyles programme to encourage young people to take part in physical activity and eat fruit and vegetables. Within the arts sector, the Council actively supports the Creative Partnerships programme that provides opportunities within the school setting for arts based programmes.

The Cultural Services department also guides the development of the partnership with Leisure Copeland; a charitable trust that is part of North Country Leisure and that manages the Council's leisure facilities. These are the Whitehaven Sports Centre, Copeland Pool, Whitehaven Civic Hall and Cleator Moor Bowls Centre and All Weather Pitch. These built facilities provide a much needed venue for young people to participate in sport and recreation.

## **Regeneration (Tourism Development).**

Within the Regeneration Section, The Beacon provides the museum service for Copeland as well as supporting education, tourism and the arts. Currently under redevelopment, from August 2007 The Beacon will provide an interactive learning environment which supports educational achievement and lifelong learning opportunities for all ages. In addition to new galleries based on the National Curriculum, The Beacon also offers guided tours, town trails, activity sessions, outreach sessions and lectures, artifact loan boxes and document packs, video conferencing sessions to schools and colleges, family activities, arts and crafts "Beaconeer" workshops and the Young Archaeologists Club for Copeland.

The Beacon also acts as the lead organisation in the Cumbria Coast Learning Network, a partnership of museums, libraries, archives and attractions which aims to develop and promote available lifelong learning services including those for children and young people. Its partners include Allerdale Borough Council, Carlisle City Council, South Lakeland District Council, Cumbria County Council as well as independent cultural operators.

## **Regeneration (Housing).**

The Council has a statutory duty to provide accommodation for young people who are homeless, in priority need and unintentionally homeless. Copeland has just received £15,000 of central government funding to support a mediation service particularly aimed at young people. From 1 April 2007 all young people who have been asked to

leave home by their parents will be offered family mediation in the hope that conflict can be resolved and the young person can go home. For those young people who genuinely have no home to go to the Council works in partnership with Whitehaven Community Trust to ensure temporary accommodation can be provided with 24hour support.

Officers are currently working in partnership with Children's Services, Connexions, Pathways and housing providers developing a protocol for those young people who may 'slip through the net'. A young person's panel is being established so those children leaving care or those who present with particular problems can be offered the support they need to get a tenancy and then sustain it.

### **Regeneration (Planning Policy).**

One of the principal objectives of the Council's Planning Policy is to ensure that all new development contributes to achieving sustainable communities. This includes all age ranges but there are particular forms of development relevant to children and young people. For example where improvements can help reduce the levels of outward migration from the area which was a feature of among the younger age groups over the last 20 years or so. In terms of housing, dealing with affordability issues, improving housing environments and promoting better design quality are identified as priorities. There are policies to extend and protect facilities for day nurseries and childcare, all levels of education and training, and health services. Improving opportunities for recreation and leisure is the subject of a Development Plan Document now in preparation which targets young people, especially in wards with the highest levels of socio-economic stress and there are policies to assist access to all community services and facilities as regards cycling, walking and public transport.

It has been identified that the planning system needs to improve its ability to engage with children and young people. To address this need, the Council has recently submitted a new Statement of Community Involvement to the government which sets out how it will engage all sections of the community in the production of policy documents and in dealing with planning applications. This will include working with the West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership on developing the Community Gateway and in particular in using a young people's network.

#### ***TO INSERT REGENERATION ACTIVITY IN THE AREAS OF:***

- *Community Renewal.*
- *Neighbourhood Management.*
- *Employment initiatives.*

### **Parks and Open Spaces.**

The councils outdoor fixed play provision is managed through the Open Spaces department. Formalised play links are in place through the Cumbrian play network, which is currently being underpinned through the development of a Cumbrian wide play strategy promoting play opportunities for children and young people. An example of this development is the delivery of Play England Big Lottery Play

Initiative, which is based on the recommendations of the 2004 play review “Getting Serious About Play”, which defines children’s play as ‘what children and young people do when they follow their own ideas, in their own way and for their own reasons’.

The green space partnerships with Town and Parish Councils, Greenspace friends groups, Bloom groups and schools, enables the Open Spaces department to deliver a number of physical activities for children and young people. Initiatives include the development and provision of children’s play and teen spaces, promotion of the outdoor sports pitches (football, tennis, bowls), delivery of the “learning through landscapes” initiative, this particular initiative provides the opportunity for children and young people to interact with the natural environment, by undertaking such activities as tree and bulb planting, designing and planting of floral displays, ecology studies, nature conservation projects.

### **Environmental Health.**

The Environmental Health Department have entered into a formalised arrangement with Cumbria County Council (Education Welfare Services) relating to the employment of young persons. This arrangement was christened CHAW (Child Health at Work). Essentially if one of our Officers becomes aware of any safeguarding issues in any premises they notify Cumbria County Council using an agreed form and procedure. This initiative by Copeland Borough Council has received national recognition.

### **Community Safety.**

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 requires local authorities to consider crime and disorder reduction and prevention and fear of crime levels in the exercise of all their duties, activities and decision making. The council is a key partner in the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP). The partnership works hard to impact on the health, education and safety of all of its communities across West Cumbria. Hot spots for crime, disorder and fear of crime levels tend to be highlighted in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Violent crime is a priority for the CDRP; drugs, alcohol, bullying and the affects of domestic violence have both been included in the current community safety strategy, and action plans have been developed to reduce incident numbers.

The Anti Social Behaviour task group is working closely with the Children Services at Cumbria County Council to audit youth activity, identify the gaps and plan future activity to provide diversionary activities for young people.

Departments within the council are becoming more aware of the Prevent and Deter and Intervention Panels. These panels have been introduced to help keep youth crime low, and make an impact on reducing rates of re-offending.

### **Human Resources.**

Officers in the Copeland Human Resources Department work with schools in providing work experience placements for children, and actively support careers

fairs. As an employer we are committed within the new Corporate Plan to providing traineeships of various sorts for youngsters.

... but every decision that the Council takes should be considered in light of its impact on children and young people.

This principle has been enshrined in the Copeland Borough Council Corporate Plan 2007 – 2012 and identified as target 2.4.5 ‘Respond to the statutory guidance in relation to children and young people and the Every Child Matters green paper when the guidance is produced.’

A new Local Area Agreement, “Cumbria Agreement” has also been developed through the Cumbria Strategic Partnership that outlines the progress that will be made in Cumbria within the Children and Young People block. The Council alongside key partners has a joint responsibility to work towards achieving the targets identified within this plan, and for the first time each service is identifying its contribution to this process through the 2007-8 service planning process.

In addition to Copeland Borough Council’s delivery of services, the Council works in partnership with a number of agencies to develop activities and support for children and young people and their families. These partnerships range from District Council representation on the West Local Planning Group (one of the four main sub-groups of the West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership) to the Sport and Physical Activity Alliance for the Copeland Borough Council area.

### 3) Safeguarding and Promoting the Wellbeing of Children.

In order to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, the Children Act 2004 states that arrangements should be made that:

- All staff in contact with children understand what to do and the most effective ways of sharing information if they believe a child or family may require targeted or specialist services in order to achieve their optimal outcomes.
- All staff in contact with children understand what to do and when to share information if they believe that a child may be in need, including those children suffering or at risk of significant harm.
- This duty continues to apply if the Council contract out services.

Arrangements are being put in place, led by the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership, to develop an Information Sharing Index (Children’s Index) through the provision of information databases. This work is ongoing (at February 2007).

The purpose of these information databases is to facilitate contact between professionals who are supporting individual children or who have concerns about their development, well-being or welfare with the aim of securing early, coherent, intervention. The Council could be required to provide information for inclusion in the database.

A Local Safeguarding Children Board has been established and contains representation from all partners with a duty to co-operate. The District Council representative on this Board is John Eagan from Carlisle City Council. The aim of the Board is to ensure that each local area has a coherent approach to safeguarding children based on contributions from all key agencies, and that this approach is managed effectively.

The authority must cooperate with the Board partners in establishing the Board and the Board partners each have a reciprocal obligation to co-operate with the local authority.

#### 4) Areas for Development in Copeland.

It is clear from the current position outlined in sections 2) and 3) that a number of steps are required for Copeland Borough Council to take a pro-active and positive role in delivering services for young people.

<b>Issue.</b>	<b>Action Required.</b>
Ensure that actions agreed for District Councils at the Children and Young Peoples Strategic Partnership are communicated to Copeland BC. (NB – District Council rep is Gillian Bishop, Chief Executive @ Allerdale BC).	Head of Leisure and Environmental Services and Cultural Services Manager to receive information and action as appropriate.
Ensure that actions agreed for District Councils at the Local Safeguarding Children Board are communicated to Copeland BC. (NB – District Council rep is John Eagan @ Carlisle City Council).	Cultural Services Manager to make contact with John Eagan and ensure that Copeland is included in communication networks.
Designate formally a Lead Member and Lead Officer for Children and Young Peoples issues.	Proposed as part of covering report to Executive on 24 <sup>th</sup> April 2007.
Raise understanding of the duty to cooperate in promoting the wellbeing and safeguarding of children within Copeland members and Officers.	Develop an area on the intranet and promote its use. Included in the Cultural Services service plan for 2007-08.
Audit what we already do and how it aligns with the five key themes identified within Every Child Matters.	Included in the Cultural Services service plan for 2007-08.
Develop a Children and Young People's action plan, with clear priorities and resource implications identified.	Included in the Cultural Services service plan for 2007-08.
Share information with other key agencies as the Children's Index is developed.	Evaluate requirements of Information Sharing Index and implement when appropriate. Included in the Cultural Services service plan for 2007-08.
Support and actively participate in development of the Member and Officer network in Cumbria.	Lead Member and Lead Officer with relevant support

	to attend West Cumbria Local Strategic Partnership CYP Local Planning Board and Westlink Partnership Board.
Develop bespoke documentation relating to Children and Young People, for example a Child Protection and Safeguarding Policy.	Being developed by Human Resources.
Work with other agencies – health, CDRP, police, education, voluntary sector, youth services to develop signposting pathways.	To be determined.
Develop a forum for Children and Young People to actively participate in shaping of services.	To be determined.

### 5) Conclusions.

TO FOLLOW.

### 6) Suggestions for Further Reading.

- DFES – The Role of District Councils in improving Outcomes for Children.
- Cumbria County Council – Children and Young People’s Plan 2007 to 2010 (draft February 2007).
- Cumbria Local Area Agreement – the “Cumbria Agreement”.
- Every Child Matters green paper (2003).
- [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk). This is a web based resource which, as well as providing downloads of all specialist guidance documents, gives valuable information on how each sector and service can make a difference to the lives of Children and Young People.