

The Highland Council

ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE
13 November 2013

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ACS/103/13

Alternatives to Out of Authority Placements - Scoping Report

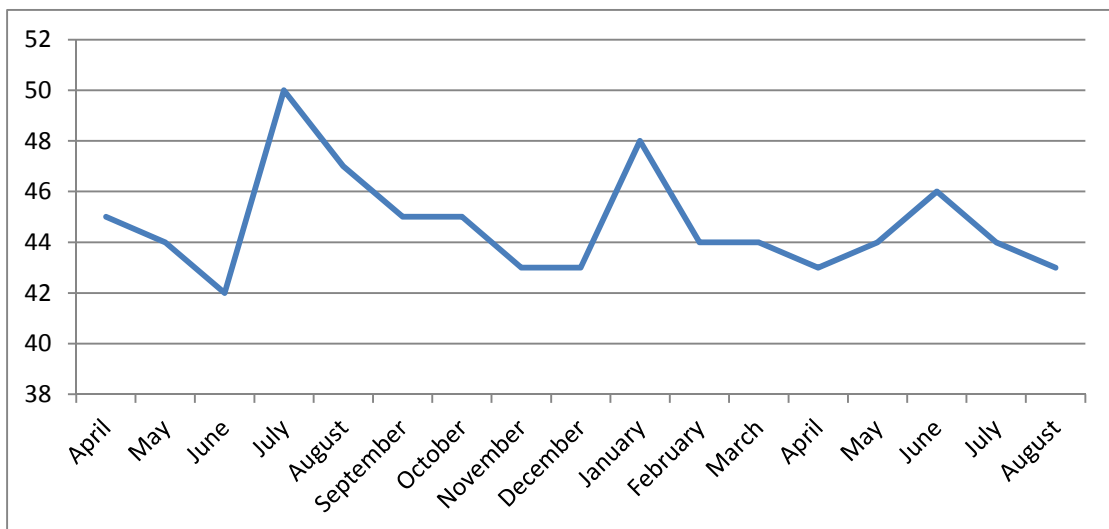
Report by Director of Health & Social Care and Director of Education, Culture & Sport

Summary

This report highlights key issues associated with out of authority placements and details the exploratory activity that has taken place to date to define the scope of the programme to find alternatives to out of authority placements for Highland children. Consultations have taken place with key staff and visits to provisions both in education and health and social care settings have been undertaken to determine short, middle and long-term potential projects.

1. Background

- 1.1 As reported to Committee in September, the overall number of looked after children in Highland has begun to fall very significantly over the past 18 months. In April 2012, there were 157 Looked after children at home, and 370 away from home. In August 2013, there were 126 and 346 respectively.
- 1.2 However, the number of children in spot purchased specialist placements, such as residential schools and independent children's units, has not reduced in a similar way.



- 1.3 There has also been the establishment of an additional 16 commissioned beds, as shown below in the July 2013 revenue monitoring report.

GROUP	NUMBER	PROJECTED SPEND IN 2013/14
Spot Purchase LAC	43	8,243,142
Spot Purchase Education Placements	6	359,230
Commissioned Care Homes	11	1,220,137
Throughcare (Northern Lights)	5	744,553
Other	CHAS & hospital ed.	35,145

- 1.4 These placements continue to involve young people with troubled histories, albeit the number with offending behaviours is reducing, as the success of the Youth Action Service continues. They also involve increasing numbers of children with significant learning disabilities and/or communication difficulties, often associated with challenging behaviour.

2. Current Policy, Strategy and Action

- 2.1 In response to these challenges, Highland Council has developed a variety of services and provisions to help mitigate young people leaving Highland, or to facilitate their return. These have included the modernisation of Council provided residential care for children and the Intensive Fostering Scheme, as well as the new commissioned services, including the through-care residential unit in partnership with Barnardos.
- 2.2 The Orchard in Inverness has developed the capacity to care on a long term basis for a small number of young people, plus additional respite provisions in Skye and Wick provide Highland parents, carers and children with short breaks which play a vital part in helping families cope.
- 2.3 Nurture rooms and bases in mainstream schools and off-site education provisions have been established or enhanced to provide support to young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- 2.4 There is considerable confidence that a significant number of young people have been assisted to remain in Highland due to these services, albeit it is impossible to quantify the numbers that have avoided going out of authority.
- 2.5 Given the continuing high numbers, escalating costs, and the priority to support looked after children nearer their home communities wherever possible, the Council agreed a secondment of Programme Manager, to pursue alternatives to out of authority placements. This work is now developing, and new opportunities are being identified.

3. Out of Authority Placement Data Analysis

- 3.1 The initial discussions with practitioners indicated the need to look at children with autism, as a group who should be prioritised for any early developments.
- 3.2 With specialist autism provision in mind, data on out of authority placements from the last three financial years (2010/11 – 2012/13) has been analysed.
- 3.3 As can be seen in the table below, the total cost of out of authority placements between 2010/11 and 2012/13 was £28.7 million, of which over £5 million (18%) was spent on autism placements, amounting to between £1.4 million and £1.8 million annually.

Out of Authority and Autism Placement Costs 2010/11 – 2012/13				
Year	Total OOA Costs	%age difference from previous year	Total Cost of Autism Placements	Autism Costs as %age of Total
2012/13	£10,727,998	15%	£1,687,514	16%
2011/12	£9,156,973	3%	£1,478,525	16%
2010/11	£8,847,593	-	£1,887,202	21%
2010/11 - 2012/13	£28,732,565		£5,053,241	18%

- 3.4 The table below indicates that from 2010/11 to 2012/13, between 15% and 17% of all out of authority placements were for young people with autism.

Out of Authority and Autism Placements 2010/11 - 2012/13					
Year	Total OOA Placements	Autism Placements	%age of Placements that were for Autism	Total OOA Children	Children with ASD
2012/13	119	18	15%	100	17
2011/12	113	18	16%	85	13
2010/11	103	18	17%	83	15
TOTAL 2010/11-2012/13				174	25

- 3.5 A total of 25 children were in autism placements over the last three and a half years. A higher number of placements than children are shown as some children were in more than one placement per year.
- 3.6 14 of these 25 children (56%) were between 14-17 years old on entering placement. All children who left placements during these three years were 16 or above on leaving, and 13 of the 25 children (52%) remain in placement at this time. This highlights that a high proportion of young people with autism require residential care in their teens and tend to stay in out of authority placements until their late teens/early adulthood.
- 3.7 The table below shows that between 2010/11 and 2012/13 the majority of autism placements were for children from the North and South Areas. This data is critical for developing business cases for new Highland provisions.

Autism Placements by Geographical Area			
Area	2010/2011	2011/2012	2012/2013
North	8	10	5
Mid	2		5
West	2	1	1
South	3	2	6
Total Children	15	13	17

4. New Developments

4.1 Residential Unit for Young People with Autism

- 4.1.1 Many of the families of these children with autistic spectrum disorder have faced challenges at home, and the children have faced them at school, such that they require a holistic, residential placement.
- 4.1.2 The possibility of a small residential unit for children with autism on the site of the new Inverness Royal Academy is currently being investigated. A suitable site footprint has been determined at the edge of the school site close to the planned Additional Support Needs (ASN) base but as a separate build to the school. In this way the Council is seeking to maximise the opportunity of utilising its own land coupled with the added value of being close to the new ASN base with the potential for staff cross-over this poses.
- 4.1.3 The residential unit is likely to be for four to five young people, a size favoured by the Council as it mirrors a domestic dwelling with as close to a familial environment as possible. Should it progress, it is likely the unit will cater for teenagers as data demonstrates this is the age range of most children when they enter autism specific out of authority placements.

- 4.1.4 Defining the level of need of the young people attending this new provision poses a challenge, although past out of area data in addition to information on children known to the Disability Teams will greatly assist decision making. There is a clear financial advantage to providing for the most complex cases as these are typically the most expensive. However there needs to be confidence that suitably qualified staff can be attracted to work in such a specialist provision. The possibility of working in partnership with support agencies whose expertise can be drawn upon to help provide such staffing will be explored further.
- 4.1.5 The optimum process for identifying young people must also be considered as in terms of revenue, if individuals were returned from out of authority, the budget could follow them. However if specific children at risk of going out of authority were identified, this poses a revenue budget feed challenge.
- 4.1.6 In terms of capital funding provision, there is currently a line in the Council's capital programme allocated to this project of £800,000, but taking account of the recent tender for the new children's unit in Wick, this would not be sufficient for a unit at Inverness Royal Academy.

4.2 Through-care and Aftercare Service Proposals

- 4.2.1 Discussions are taking place between Childrens Services, Adult Services and Housing Services to determine optimum through-care and aftercare housing options for looked after young people, including those returning from out of authority placements.
- 4.2.2 Service proposals have been received from local organisations that wish to provide specialist supported accommodation and linked supported flats for young adults. These services would provide assistance for young people requiring support, guidance and mentoring before moving onto their own independent tenancies.

4.3 Utilising Council Properties

- 4.3.1 The possibility of utilising Council properties is being assessed for capacity to either return young people from placement out of area, or avoid them going, whilst maximising the opportunity to save the Council money.
- 4.3.2 School Houses are being assessed as accommodation for young people being returned from out of authority. Currently there is limited accommodation in Highland with support staff for children with specialist needs. Use of these houses would be dependent on making material changes to the buildings.
- 4.3.3 The option of a Crisis House for Council Residential Units is being explored, as this could provide focussed intensive support with a high staff ratio, to children who are not coping in residential care. This provision would be intended to avoid these young people going out of authority.
- 4.3.4 Council Houses are being sought as move-through accommodation for looked-

after young people placed in Council residential units. One such house is already linked to the Council's residential unit in Wick, and has proved successful in helping young people maintain future tenancies. The move-through house offers looked-after young people the opportunity to experience a tenancy, whilst still being attached to the unit and staff that they know. Life skills can be developed, and mistakes can be made in a safe environment, without the risk of failing a tenancy - which both assists the Housing Service and demonstrates better corporate parenting.

- 4.3.5 School hostel accommodation is being considered for children who present for refuge, children with chaotic home lives and possible other cohorts of young people at risk from going out of authority. Several hostels have some accommodation capacity and all strive to provide a homely atmosphere. It is also likely that even with an increased staffing requirement, hostel placements would be less costly than either Council owned or private residential unit placements.

5 New Policy, Strategy and Actions

- 5.1.1 A number of other initiatives to avoid out of authority placements and return young people are also being examined.

5.1.2 Transition Planning with Adult Services

Data on young people known to the Disability Teams forms the basis of a new Complex Case Planning Forum between Adult Services and Childrens Disability Teams, who are now meeting quarterly to better plan for the transition back to Highland of young people currently out of authority.

5.2 Guidance on Making Placements

- 5.2.1 Staff proposing to make an out of authority placement must firstly ascertain whether there is any suitable alternative within Highland, and the final decision is subject to scrutiny by the multi-disciplinary Residential Placement Group (RPG) requiring the agreement of the Directors of Health & Social Care and Education, Culture & Sport.

- 5.2.2 In order to ensure all efforts are being made to review whether young people can come back into area, staff are to be encouraged to review cases cyclically and report progress to the RPG.

- 5.2.3 With the intention of providing further guidance to staff, it is felt that supplementary information and links to good practice would be beneficial. This information could include examples of flexible packages of care that have enabled young people to remain in Highland and also listing all interventions available in area.

- 5.2.4 This guidance could also list the external provisions deemed appropriate by a multi-disciplinary group tasked with visiting each out of authority establishment, and be kept up to date by staff working with the provisions such

as Social Workers, Quality Assurance & Reviewing Officers and Educational Psychologists.

5.3 Additional Support Needs Review

5.3.1 In addition to young people with special needs and disabilities, a large proportion of those placed out of authority have significant social, emotional and behavioural needs that cannot currently be met in Highland. Nevertheless on and off-site educational provisions and other interventions can play a key role in keeping children with such needs within the authority.

5.3.2 The interim report of the Additional Support Needs Review (ASN) reported to this Committee in August, recognised that these provisions have been ad hoc in nature, evolving in response to identified local need. The Review is looking at this issue and will provide guidance about how these services might be developed.

5.4 Columba 1400, Skye

5.4.1 Columba 1400 run a nine month course, which aims to give inner confidence and direction to young people and staff, involving a week long residential in Skye and work on a community-based project on their return.

5.4.2 Data on outcomes shows that 75% of young people attending this course go on to positive destinations, compared with 35% not attending.

5.4.3 Those who might benefit from the course would include young people:

- In Council residential units,
- In through-care and aftercare,
- Returning from out of authority placements,
- Attending off-site education centres, Activity Agreements/Family Firm.

5.4.5 The course would cost the Council £15,000 for 16 individuals, as the Columba 1400 organisation fundraise 50% of the total costs. Staff are considering whether they have specific youngsters who might be interested and benefit from such an opportunity.

6 Implications

6.1 Resources:

Consideration will need to be given to the funding of any revenue and capital developments, that can achieve better outcomes for young people and long-term savings for the Council.

6.2 Should Managers identify suitable young people and staff to attend the Columba 1400 course, it is intended that the cost will be paid from the out of authority budget.

6.3 Legal: There are no legal implications arising from this report.

- 6.4 Equalities: The projects detailed in this report will enable the authority to continue to meet its equalities duties.
- 6.5 Climate Change/Carbon Clever:
The proposal for a new residential unit will marginally increase the Council's overall carbon footprint through increased energy usage and waste disposal. However, siting the facility close to other relevant facilities such as Inverness Royal Academy new ASN Base and Drummond Special School reduces the environmental impact from travel as much as practicable.
- 6.6 However, these proposals will significantly reduce travel and associated costs relating to transport to and from provisions out-with Highland.
- 6.7 Risk implications:
External placements are costly to Highland Council and the pool of young people at risk from going out of authority for their care and education is growing. If the Council does not develop financially beneficial alternatives within the Highland area, the risk will continue for this budget.

Recommendation

Members are asked to note the scoping work undertaken to date to identify alternatives to out of authority placements for the young people of Highland.

Members are asked to endorse the development of the unit at the Inverness Royal Academy, subject to further consideration of revenue and capital implications, and to endorse continued work on the other proposals in this paper.

Bill Alexander
Director of Health and Social Care

Hugh Fraser
Director of Education, Culture and Sport

Date: 25/10/13

Author: Malina MacDonald, Programme Manager:
Alternatives to Out of Authority Placements