

The Highland Council
ADULT AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES COMMITTEE

19 February 2014

Agenda Item	12.
Report No	ACS/26/14

Alternatives to Out of Authority Placements

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

Summary

This report updates Members on further 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.

1. Background

- 1.1 As reported in a separate report to this meeting of the Committee, the overall number of looked after children in Highland has reduced significantly over the past 20 months, albeit there was an increase in the last three months of 2013. In April 2012, there were 157 Looked after children at home, and 370 away from home. In January 2014, there were 131 and 345 respectively.
- 1.2 As has also been reported to Committee, the definition of children in 'out of authority placements' used over the years, no longer reflects the full use of this budget. In addition to the continued use of spot-purchased placements in residential schools, there are spot-purchased placements in new, independent children's units within Highland, as well as commissioned placements in these units.

2. Current Placements

- 2.1 There are presently a total of 67 placements funded from the out of authority budget, which involve:
- Spot purchased care or care and education placements - 45
 - Commissioned care placements - 16
 - Education only placements - 6
- 2.2 The 45 young people in spot purchased care or care and education placements, come from the following Areas of the authority:
- Mid Area: 6, plus 6 in Disability team
 - North Area: 3, plus 1 in Disability team
 - South Area: 18, plus 3 in Disability team
 - West Area: 8

3. Placement Exit Plan Assessment

- 3.1 During January 2014, an analysis was undertaken of 66 children currently out of area and in spot-purchased and commissioned beds within Highland, to identify future intentions from their current and ongoing plans.
- 3.2 From the total of 66 children assessed, 44% (29) were in spot-purchased placements out with the Highland area. From these, 52% (15) had return plans in place. 38% (11 children) had nowhere suitable in Highland to return and 10% (3 children) had only recently gone into placement.

Percentage	Number	Description
52%	15	Exit plan to Highland in place
38%	11	No appropriate specialist provision in Highland
10%	3	Just gone out of area & situation being assessed
100%	29	TOTAL

- 3.3 Further assessment is being made of the 11 children currently out of authority for whom there are no suitable specialist provisions currently in Highland. A significant cohort has an attachment diagnosis whilst another group have an Autistic Spectrum Disorder. This information will be factored into provision planning for the programme to find alternatives to out of area placements.
- 3.4 It is proposed that this assessment of exit plans be carried out cyclically in order to assist the Council in planning for future provisions and provide Members with a richer view of the out of authority picture.

4. Provisions and Services for Returning Young People from Placements

- 4.1 Placements paid for by this budget fall into 3 categories: Care-only, care and education and education-only.
- 4.2 Current care-only and care/education returns to Highland are made through: foster and supported lodging placements, the Council's residential units, the Barnardos residential unit, the Highland Homeless Trust's unit and The Orchard in Inverness cares for a small number of children on a permanent basis.
- 4.3 As the new provisions detailed later in this report come on-stream they will be added to existing data collection and reporting.

5. Provisions and Services for Avoiding Placements

- 5.1 Whilst the use of these provisions to return children from outwith Highland can be measured, it is not possible to quantify the exact numbers that have avoided going out of authority.

- 5.2 Provisions in Highland which assist the avoidance of out of area placements include: Airport House in Wick, Bridgend in Alness, the Black Isle Education Centre, The Bridge in Inverness, An Cala in Fort William, support bases in schools and the more recent development of Nurture Rooms and units such as Doorways in Inverness. These establishments provide part-time support to young people with social, emotional and behavioural needs.
- 5.3 A variety of other interventions are utilised across Highland for this cohort of young people from early years through to primary and secondary such as: Roots of Empathy Training, Activity Agreements, Family Firm, Abriachan Forest School, Glachbeg Education Centre and Cycletherapy amongst others.
- 5.4 The Review of Additional Support Needs is taking account of the use and future use of these various facilities and approaches.

6. Utilising Existing Council Properties/Services to Return Young People

- 6.1 To ensure there are sufficiently varied provisions for young people of differing needs to return to in Highland, additional accommodation and service options are being further explored. Council properties are being assessed for their capacity to either return young people from placement out of area, or avoid them going, whilst maximising the opportunity to save the Council money.

6.2 School House(s) for young people with support needs

- 6.2.1 A former school house in Inverness is undergoing minor refurbishment to enable a young person to return from an out of area placement in March 2014.
- 6.2.2 The young person will receive a level of support to remain in the house under their own tenancy for up to 18 months, until considered able to move to their own unsupported tenancy or to Throughcare and Aftercare supported accommodation. When the young person moves on, the house will become vacant for another young person currently out of area.
- 6.2.3 It is estimated that returning this young person from placement will save the Council over £150,000 in revenue costs per annum. The option of using additional school houses for the same purpose will continue to be assessed by this project.

6.3 Council Houses as move-through accommodation for residential units

- 6.3.1 The Housing Service is sourcing suitable 3-bedroom Council properties near Council Residential Units as move-through accommodation for unit residents.
- 6.3.2 One such house is 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 they know.
- 6.3.3 These houses can also be used to return young people from out of authority

placements, and housing breakdowns, and as emergency accommodation for young people in Through & Aftercare.

6.4 Crisis House for Residential Units

6.4.1 A crisis house is being sought in the Highland area, to 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.

6.4.2 Discussions are taking place with a third sector organisation who may wish to discontinue their lease of one Council property for another in Highland which would free-up a suitable provision for the crisis house. Further details will be brought to this committee as they become available.

6.5 School Hostels

6.5.1 School Hostels are being assessed for their capacity to accommodate children who present for refuge, senior pupils whose parents are moving, children with chaotic home lives and possible cohorts of young people at risk from going out of authority.

6.5.2 Initial cost analysis of hostel accommodation compared to spot-purchased and commissioned in-Highland residential accommodation demonstrated favourable savings for the Council. It should also be noted that freeing up in-Highland residential beds could avoid a child going out of area.

6.5.3 The possibility has been discussed with Hostel Management and several hostels have been considered capable of accommodating such cases though several issues require further examination.

6.5.4 Key issues include the fact that hostels are not open at weekends and holiday periods, therefore additional staffing would be required or alternative accommodation found for those young people who require it.

6.5.5 Current hostel registration is for accommodating young people who attend the feeder High school and return home at weekends and school holidays. If a 52 week provision is desired, a different registration would be appropriate. In addition, the Council would need to be cautious about the impact on young people when others go home for weekends and holidays and the provision of a 'home' environment. Senior Managers are to meet with the Care Inspectorate to discuss the matter further

6.6 Adult Services Supported Accommodation

6.6.1 The possibility of housing young people of 16+ within Adult Services Supported Accommodation is being considered. This would enable young people with additional support needs to be housed within supported accommodation in Highland two years before they would previously have been eligible. This reduces the number of placement moves for young people and

is intended to reduce stress as a direct result.

7. Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill

- 7.1 The Scottish Government recently announced that from April 2015, young people in residential, foster or kinship care who turn 16 will be entitled to remain looked after until the age of 21. This is being made possible under new provisions proposed for the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill presently going through Parliament.
- 7.2 The Bill will have considerable implications for Local Authorities as young people are to be encouraged to remain in care for longer.
- 7.3 The Bill is also increasing the responsibility for the Local Authority to assess and meet the needs of young people in Through & Aftercare until the age of 26. The financial implications for Highland are not clear, however the Council provided the Scottish Government with both financial and statistical data in relation to these proposed changes.
- 7.4 Guidance was provided by the Government in October 2013: [Staying Put - Providing care leavers with connectedness and belonging](#) which seeks to give Local Authorities assistance in supporting looked after children to remain in care, until they are ready to transition to greater independence.

8 New Provisions and Services

8.1 Throughcare and Aftercare Service Tender

- 8.1.1 In order to meet its new statutory responsibilities as stated in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, it is intended to tender for a new supported lodging service in Inverness, for young people who are 16+ years.
- 8.1.2 The service would be for those young people who meet Throughcare and Aftercare criteria and/or come through the Council's Homeless Prevention Team.
- 8.1.3 The service is to have a minimum of 5 and a maximum of 10 supported lodging beds within the same establishment, which can be purchased by the Council on a spot-purchase basis.
- 8.1.4 A minimum of 2 hours of support per young person is to be provided each day as determined by the Child's Plan and the Supported Lodges Panel; to enable the development of independent living skills.
- 8.1.5 However in order to enable the return to Highland of young people in out of authority placements, the provider must be able to provide additional support hours to those young people who are assessed as requiring this, and staff must have sufficient training and experience to cope with young people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, Autistic Spectrum Disorder and/or challenging behaviour.

8.1.6 It is intended that the successful provider will also provide a telephone on-call service, an evening drop-in facility and outreach support for young people who have used the service and moved onto independent living.

8.1.7 It is intended to let the contract notice in March 2014, with the new service commencing between October 2014 and April 2015, dependant on whether the company selected already has a base in Highland. Costs will be met by rents and Housing Benefit, throughcare support costs, and some funding diverted as necessary from the out of authority budget.

8.2 Life Changes Trust Application

8.2.1 The Council is working with the NHS and partners in the voluntary sector to apply to become a Life Changes Trust 'Whole Place Community' and receive grant funding.

8.2.2 The bid developed in consultation with young people, consists of a one-stop-shop/skills academy in Inverness and a mobile unit that would cover other areas for all young people who are 16+, not exclusively those in Throughcare & Aftercare.

8.2.3 The one stop shop/skills academy would have clinics where young people could access health, employability, life skills, advocacy, legal, housing and peer mentorship guidance and support. The possibility of social enterprise and employability options for young people within the one stop shop/skills academy is also being investigated.

8.2.4 The Life Changes Trust is hosting a meeting in Inverness in March to discuss the fund and how to proceed with application.

8.3 Residential Unit for Young People with Autism

8.3.1 As reported to Committee in November 2013, 18% of the total annual spend on Out of Authority placements (between £1.5 to just under £2m) goes towards funding specialist autism placements. A total of 26 children were out of authority for ASD in the last 3 and half years and these young people tend to stay out of area until their late teens.

8.3.2 As a result, the possibility of a small residential unit on the site of Inverness Royal Academy is being investigated and a suitable site footprint has been determined at the edge of the school site. The unit is likely to be for 4/5 young people in their teens and will be a separate build to the school.

8.3.3 Currently, there is a line in the Council's capital programme allocated to this project of £800,000 but this is likely to be insufficient. It has been requested that the Housing Service carryout a feasibility study to confirm the estimated capital costs.

8.3.4 Once these are determined, it is recommended that a Project Board be developed to ensure that the appropriate Officers of the Council and NHS are involved in the development and design of the unit. The Board will make recommendations to Members on cost and other vital considerations such as running the unit in partnership, the level of needs best served by the unit, whether young people will be returned to the unit from out of area placements and/or whether children at risk of going out of authority are identified.

9. Implications

9.1.1 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.

9.1.2 It is estimated that the planned return of a young person from out of area placement to a former school house will save the Council over £150,000 in revenue costs per annum.

9.1.3 The Council is to tender for a new Throughcare supported lodging service in the inner Moray firth for young people 16+ with the contract notice being let in March 2013.

9.1.4 A feasibility study is to be developed by the Housing Service for the proposed residential unit for young people with autism on the site of Inverness Royal Academy in order to determine capital costs required.

9.2 Legal: Contracting a new supported lodging service for young people will assist the Council in meeting its new responsibilities detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill as young people are to be encouraged to remain in care longer.

9.3 Equalities: The projects detailed in this report will enable the authority to continue to meet its equalities duties.

9.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever:
The proposal for a new residential unit and Throughcare service will marginally increase the Council's overall carbon footprint through increased energy and waste disposal. However, these proposals will significantly reduce travel and associated costs relating to transport to and from provisions out-with Highland.

9.5 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 and endorse the further scoping work undertaken to date to identify alternatives to out of authority placements for the young people of Highland.

Bill Alexander
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Date: 25/01/14

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