

The Highland Council

Education, Children and Adult Services Committee 12 November 2014

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| Agenda Item | 20. |
| Report No | ECAS 59/14 |

Alternatives to Out of Authority Placements

Report by Director of Care and Learning

Summary

This report updates Members on the progress of projects within the programme to find alternatives to out of authority placements for Highland children.

1. Background

- 1.1 The overall number of Looked after children in Highland has continued to reduce since 2011/12. The table below shows that there were 712 Looked after children in Highland during 2011/12 and by 2013/14 this had reduced to 673.

| Year | Total No. of LAC in year | Total No. of LAC with a Residential Placement in year | Percentage of LAC in a Residential Placement | Average No. of Spot-Purchased LAC Placements in year |
|---------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| 2013/14 | 673 | 136 | 20% | 45 |
| 2012/13 | 708 | 140 | 20% | 45 |
| 2011/12 | 712 | 132 | 19% | 41 |

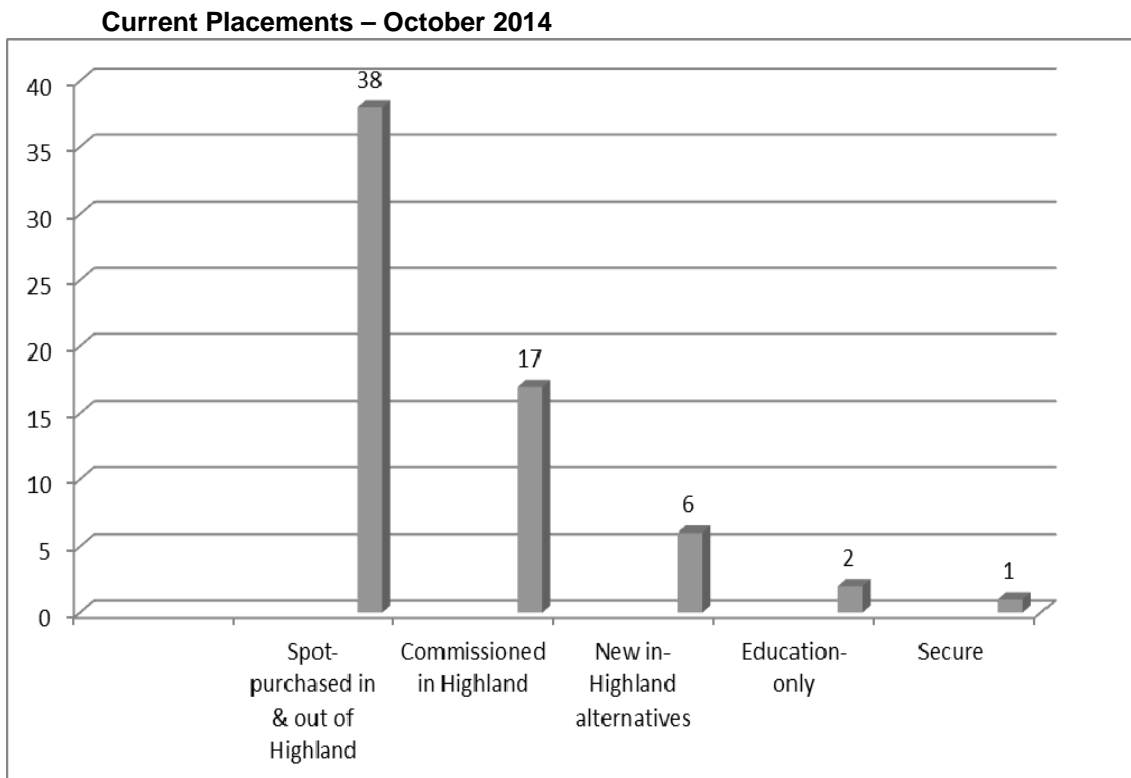
- 1.2 As the total number of Looked after children has reduced, there has been a small increase in the percentage of looked after children accommodated in a residential placement, from 19% in 2011/12 to 20% in 2013/14. These placements include: Council residential units, residential schools, commissioned beds in local private units and secure placements.
- 1.3 A rise is also seen in the average number of spot-purchased residential placements for looked after children, with 41 in 2011/12 and 45 in 2013/14.
- 1.4 Placements continue to involve young people with troubled histories and challenging behaviour, and increasing numbers of children with significant learning disabilities and/or communication difficulties.
- 1.5 In order to reduce spend from this budget and keep young people in Highland, an additional 12 placements were commissioned within the area in 2012. These placements are utilised before spot-purchased places, unless a young person requires a high level of specialist care necessitating an out of area placement. This is saving £0.375m per annum, and keeping children more local to their communities.

1.6 A number of private care providers have also moved into the Highland area since 2012/13, enabling the Council to spot-purchase placements for young people closer to their families and communities, and avoiding additional costs such as travel and education associated with out of area placements.

2. Current Placements

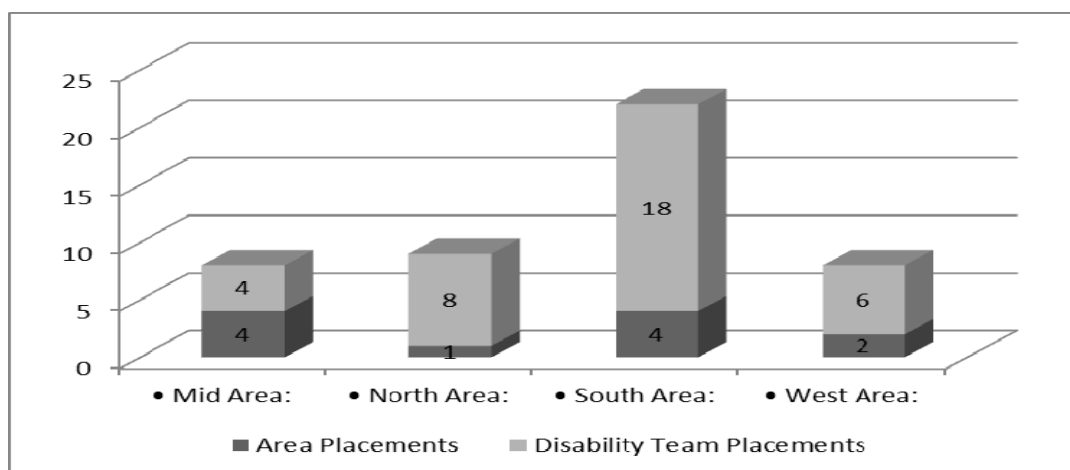
2.1 As has been reported to Committee, the definition of children in 'out of authority placements' no longer reflects the full use of this budget. In addition to the continued use of spot-purchased placements in residential schools outside of Highland, there are spot-purchased placements in new, independent children's units within Highland, as well as commissioned placements in these units as already detailed.

2.2 There are presently a total of 64 placements funded from the out of authority budget, which involve the categories shown in the table below. Six children who were previously out of the area are now living in new in-Highland provisions.



2.3 The 64 children involve 47 young people in spot-purchased placements, from the following Areas:

Areas in Highland Young People Are From – October 2014



3. Placement Exit Plan Assessment

- 3.1 During January 2014, a full analysis was undertaken of the 67 children who were out-of-area or in spot-purchased and commissioned placements within Highland, to identify future intentions for their on-going plans.
- 3.2 In July 2014, further assessment found that from the 67 original young people, only 21 (31%) were out with the Highland area, and from these 11 have return plans whilst 10 are deemed to have no suitable provision to return to within the authority. This relates to their particular needs, circumstances and Child's Plan.
- 3.3 This indicates that by July 2014, only 15% of the 67 children assessed in January remain out with the Highland area with no suitable return provision. There is therefore significant confidence that plans are in place to return all young people for whom a provision exists in Highland and scoping and planning continues for the development of in-area specialist resources as detailed later in this report.
- 3.4 It is worth noting that a number of the young people whose achievements were celebrated at the Care Awards on 22 October, had returned from out of authority placements.

4. Active Returns to Highland and Associated Savings

- 4.1 In addition to the six young people returned to new local resources reported to Committee in May and August 2014 at an estimated saving of £0.791M, additional provision has been found within Highland for a further three young people. One had previously been out of authority and two young people came from Highland Council Residential Units, enabling the future return of another individual from out with Highland. This provision includes a Council housing property, a supported flat and a local residential college. In total, it is estimated that a saving of £0.150m will be achieved full year compared to the cost of the former out of authority placements.
- 4.2 Significant activity has been focussed on successfully transitioning young people of 16+ years back to Highland, with properties identified to accommodate these individuals and agencies to assist with support. This is also the age group for whom learning semi-independence skills is most

appropriate, in preparation for young adulthood.

4.3 Further cost effective returns to Highland are planned to take place in the period from November to March, through identifying additional suitable Highland provision and matching this with appropriate young people.

4.4 Whilst considerable effort has been focussed on returning young people to new provisions in Highland, and total savings from these returns are estimated at £0.941M in 2014/15, new placement costs estimated at £1.530M for the full financial year have overshadowed these savings. Gatekeeping of new placements continues to be closely monitored by the Residential Placement Group and the Head of Children's Services chairs regular meetings to review the Alternatives to Out of Authority Placements Programme Plan, to ensure that progress is reviewed and this area of work given priority throughout Management.

5. Analysis of New Placements January to July 2014/15

5.1 In order to understand why new placements were necessary and to seek any possible improvements, an assessment of the 11 new placements since January 2014 has been carried out. Key findings include:

- All 11 young people are between 13 -16 years old;
- 8 of the 11 young people are male;
- 7 of the 11 young people are out with Highland and 4 are in Highland;
- 9 of the 11 young people are in spot-purchased placements;
- 5 from the 11 young people were in a residential placement in the Highland area in their previous placement;
- 5 of the 11 were emergency placements;
- 2 of the 11 young people have returned to Highland since July 2014;
- 3 of the 11 are deemed to have no suitable return provision in Highland;
- Challenging behaviour is the most common feature of these new placements.

5.2 This new placement analysis is being used to inform new procedures and services and analysis of placements in commissioned, spot-purchased, Council residential units, kinship and foster care are being assessed to understand common needs, minimise moves, increase support and identify the optimum cost effective solutions for young people.

6. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

6.1 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 included in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.

6.2 The Act is also increasing the responsibility for the Local Authority to assess and meet the needs of young people in Through and Aftercare until the age of 26. This will have implications for Local Authorities as young people are to be encouraged to remain in care for longer, which will result in higher numbers of young people 16+ requiring accommodation. This is the subject of a separate report to this Committee. Further information and guidance is expected from the Scottish Government in early 2015.

6.3 In order to meet these new responsibilities and in addition to the Council's wish to bring young people back to Highland, Council effort is being focussed on acquiring a more varied stock of properties to meet the needs of these young people.

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

7.1 Council properties are being assessed for their capacity to either return young people from placement out of area, or avoid them going out, whilst maximising the opportunity to save the Council money.

7.2 School House for young people with support needs

7.2.1 As reported to committee, a former school house in Inverness underwent minor refurbishment to enable a young person to return from an expensive placement in April 2014. The young person has experienced a largely positive placement and has applied for a housing property tenancy whilst another individual has been identified to move in to the school house from another expensive placement. Additional school houses and Council properties continue to be assessed by this project.

7.3 Council Houses as move-through accommodation for residential units

7.3.1 Two temporary properties have been secured to serve as move-through flats for the Council's Residential Unit in Dingwall and the Ashton Road Unit in Inverness. Both properties have undergone minor works to enable two young people to occupy them.

7.3.2 The Community Development Service in Dingwall have sourced a 3-bedroom Council property to act as the permanent move-through house for the Council's residential unit whilst five properties in Inverness are being assessed for suitability to serve the same permanent purpose for both the Leault and Ashton Road units.

7.3.3 These properties will serve as more appropriate accommodation for older Looked-after children rather than mixing younger and older children in Council Residential Units. They also free-up space in units to return children from placements out with Highland.

7.3.4 The move-through houses offer Looked-after young people the opportunity to experience a tenancy, whilst still being attached to the unit and staff they know and as a result are successful in maintaining future tenancies.

7.4 Killen Old School House, Black Isle

7.4.1 Children1st wish to discontinue their lease of Killen Old School House and the Care and Learning Service intends using the property as a provision to return up to two children from out of area placements. The lease is currently being amended and the property registered with the Care Inspectorate.

7.4.1 Further work is required on the proposed staffing of this facility but it is likely to be formulated from residential unit relief staff.

7.5 Adult Services Supported Accommodation

- 7.5.1 The possibility of housing young people of 16+ within Adult Services supported accommodation continues to be considered. This enables young people with additional support needs to be housed within supported accommodation in Highland before they would previously have been eligible, reducing the number of placement moves and associated stress to the young person.

7.6 School Hostels

- 7.6.1 School Hostels have been assessed for their capacity to accommodate children who present for refuge, senior pupils whose parents are moving and children with chaotic home lives.
- 7.6.2 Current hostel registration is to accommodate 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 plan to meet with the Care Inspectorate to discuss the matter further.

8. New Provisions and Services

8.1 Throughcare and Aftercare Service Tender

- 8.1.1 As reported to this committee, in order to meet its new statutory responsibilities as stated in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, 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 including those returning from residential placements in and out of Highland and those who come through the Council's Homeless Prevention Team.
- 8.1.3 In order to reduce placement costs the Council has identified suitable core and cluster properties for up to 10 young people. A long term lease will be negotiated with the Council's Community Development Service. The properties are not deemed suitable for Council housing.
- 8.1.4 It is intended that the new service would commence before the end of the Summer 2015. Costs will be met by rents and Housing Benefit, through care support costs, and some funding diverted as necessary from the out of authority budget.

8.2 One-Stop-Shop Skills Academy

- 8.2.1 The Council intends applying to Barnardos and the Life Changes Trust for a one-stop-shop/skills academy in Inverness and a mobile unit that would cover other areas for all young people who are 16+.
- 8.2.2 The bid developed in consultation with through care and after care young people, consists of one property with clinics where young people could access

health, employability, life skills, advocacy, legal, housing and peer mentorship guidance and support.

- 8.2.3 It is hoped that the Council will be able to provide a suitable property for this venture in Inverness. Two possible buildings have been identified and are being further assessed for suitability. Both have remained uninhabited for a number of years and are not deemed suitable for Council housing. The Council also hopes to make this venture mobile across Highland.

8.3 Residential Unit for Young People with Autism

- 8.3.1 As previously reported to Committee, between £1.5 to £2m goes towards funding specialist autism placements every year. As a result, the possibility of a small residential unit on the site of Inverness Royal Academy is being assessed. The unit will be for 4/5 young people in their teens and will be separate to the new school.
- 8.3.2 The exact siting of the unit is to be discussed with school Senior Management as the new school build affected the suitability of the original site. Once confirmed a Project Board is to be developed to ensure that the appropriate Officers of the Council and NHS are involved in the development and design of the unit.

8.4 Columba 1400 Leadership Course, Skye

- 8.4.1 Fourteen young people and three staff with connections to Through care services recently completed a Columba 1400 Leadership Course including a six day residential on Skye. Run over a six month period, the course aims to give increased direction to young people from challenging backgrounds.
- 8.4.2 Data on outcomes shows that 75% of young people attending this course go on to positive destinations compared with 35% who did not attend.
- 8.4.3 Feedback from Highland young people was positive with several gaining employment since the course and most reporting increased self-confidence. A number of the attendees are now working with the Council to influence future Through care services.

9. Implications

- 9.1 **Resources:** It is estimated that using alternative provisions within Highland for three young people will save the Council over £0.150m in revenue costs per annum.
- 9.2 Considerable effort has been focussed on returning young people to alternative provisions in Highland and total savings from these returns are estimated at £0.941M in 2014/15. However new placements costs estimated at £1.530M have overshadowed these savings. Gatekeeping of new placements will continue to be closely scrutinised.
- 9.3 The Council is to tender for a new Throughcare supported lodging service in Inverness for young people 16+ which should be operational by Summer 2015. Core and cluster properties have been identified in Inverness.

- 9.4 Two properties are being assessed in Inverness to serve as a one-stop-shop Skills Academy for through care young people.
- 9.5 **Legal:** In order to meet new responsibilities detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Bill, effort is being focussed on acquiring a more varied stock of properties to meet the needs of Looked after young people. Contracting a new supported lodging service will assist with this.
- 9.6 **Equalities:** The projects detailed in this report will enable the authority to continue to meet its equalities duties.
- 9.7 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** The proposal for a new residential unit, Throughcare supported accommodation and a one-stop-shop Skills Academy 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.
- 9.8 **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 significant. If the Council does not develop financially beneficial alternatives within the Highland area, the risk will continue for this budget.
- 9.9 **Rural:** The key ethos driving the Alternatives to Out of Authority Placement Programme is to provide new services which enable young people to remain as close to their communities in Highland as possible. Where there is sufficient numbers of children in a rural location to enable a new service to be financially viable, this will be pursued.
- 9.10 **Gaelic:** There are no implications.

10. **Recommendation**

10.1 Members are asked to:

- note the progress of projects to identify alternatives to out of authority placements for the young people of Highland.
- note that there is significant confidence that plans are in place to return all young people for whom a provision exists in Highland and further cost effective returns are planned between November 2014 and March 2015, through identifying additional suitable Highland provision.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

Date: 4 November 2014

Author:

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