

The Highland Council
Education, Children and Adult Services Committee
27 August 2015

Agenda Item	27.
Report No	ECAS 73/15

Use of Residential Placements Including 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 and to address the number of children in residential care and provides current data on the budget, placement numbers and the needs and circumstances that necessitate Out of Area Placements.

1. Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

- 1.1 Since April 2015, young people in residential, foster or kinship care who turned 16 this financial year have been entitled to remain looked after until the age of 21. This has been made possible under new provisions included in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.
- 1.2 The Act has also increased 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 has 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. The Council has received a total of £0.285M from the Scottish Government to help implement the New Act.
- 1.3 In order to meet these new responsibilities and in addition to the Council's wish to bring young people back to the Highland area, effort is being focussed on acquiring and adapting a more varied stock of properties and supports to meet the needs of these young people.

2. Intensive Assessment of Residential Placements

- 2.1 It has been understood that whilst Looked After Children (LAC) numbers have been reducing in recent years in Highland, the percentage of LAC in residential care placements, rather than foster care, kinship or placement with parents, is around 10% higher than the national average.
- 2.2 Over the last 6 months, a group of Managers has met monthly to more fully analyse Highland Council's use of residential care and the impact this has on Out of Area placements. Improvement methodology techniques were utilised to detail the key issues and develop actions. It was felt optimal to divide the work into two improvement areas:
 - Increase the Number of Children Returning from Out of Area Placements;
 - Reduce the Number of Children Entering Residential Care.

- 2.3 Driver Diagrams were produced which help develop actions to achieve these two main aims. Actions were compared, and those that were felt to have the highest likely impact were identified to be progressed first. The group of nine Care-Experienced Young People now working for Highland Council were included in this consultation.
- 2.4 The following were identified as actions which would most increase the number of children returning from Out of Area Placements:
- Tender for supported core and cluster support flats for 16-26 year olds;
 - Increase use of supported flats for 16-26 year olds;
 - Ensure appropriate education provision to meet needs in mainstream, on/off-site provisions and additional interventions;
 - Increase number of young people with an additional support need transferring to adult service at 16-18 years;
 - Assess whether alternative mix of in-Highland units would be more appropriate;
 - Research outcomes of young people placed Out of Area;
 - Improve placement matching and focus on quality.
- 2.5 The following were identified as actions which would help reduce the number of children entering residential child care:
- Ensure appropriate education provision to meet needs in mainstream and on/off-site provisions and additional interventions;
 - Develop intensive support for families to keep children at home;
 - Set up a working group to implement dedicated mental health support for children at risk of residential childcare;
 - Improve embedding of Practice Model by focusing on the Childs Plan and improve joint working – earlier and more focused intervention;
 - Improve the assessment and management of risk.
- 2.6 All actions will be added to the Looked After Children Improvement Plan and their progress will be measured within that framework. The majority sit with the Out-of-Authority Programme Manager and are in progress, the remainder have been allocated to other officers to lead.
- 2.7 Under the action to: Assess Whether Alternative Mix of In-Highland Units Would be More Appropriate, the Care and Learning Service is piloting a new approach to using spot purchased beds in Highland. In one of the larger private units, typically 5 spot purchased beds have been used at any one time. Research has shown that 75% of children placed there came from home and 59% returned home after an average of 167 days. Therefore it is felt there may be scope to work with suitable families to retain children at home and also to reduce the length of stay for children placed there.
- 2.8 As a result, only 3 of the 5 beds are being utilised, which it is hoped will facilitate a reduction in spot-purchase bed spend of around £0.200M per annum. Further information will be brought to Committee when available.

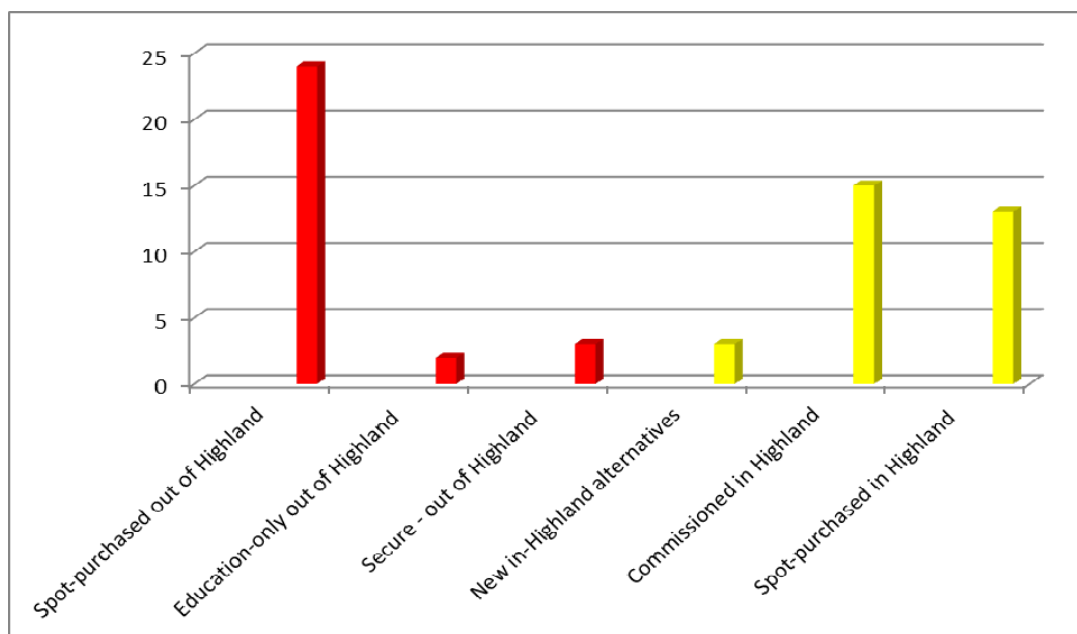
3. Placement Numbers

- 3.1 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.

3.2 There are presently a total of 60 placements funded from this budget, which involve the categories shown in the table below and includes both spot purchased and commissioned placements.

Current Placements – July 2015



3.3 From the 60 placements, 52% of children (31) are in placements within Highland and 48% (29 children) are out with the area in a variety of specialist placements. In January 2015, 50% of the then 64 children were in Highland and 50% placed out with the area. This demonstrates a marginally improved picture, with a reduction in the number of children funded from this budget at this time. However, the situation remains fluid with the number of placements changing weekly.

4. Performance Reporting of LAC in Out of Area Placements

4.1 Previously Performance Management reporting for this budget consisted of spot-purchased placements whether in or out of the Highland area. Due to the Council's focus on returning young people to the area, a decision was made to alter the reporting to spot-purchased placements out with Highland only. This explains the lower figures shown in the performance reporting table below from December 2014 but note that the (previously reported) number of spot purchased placements was also showing a reduction.

4.2 Number of LAC in Spot Purchased Placements Out of Highland

2014/15										
Month	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
In Highland	49	41	41	32	28	27	27	25	27	29

5. Age Profile of Young People

- 5.1 As reported to Resources Committee, assessment has been carried out on the age profile of the young people paid for by this budget in March 2015 as compared with March 2014. A peak was visible in numbers of 16 year olds in 2014 (18 young people) that in 2015 are 17 years old (13 young people). Once this group of young people move through the system there should in theory be a correlating reduction in placement numbers should there be no significant increase in placements.

6. Budget In Recent Years

- 6.1 The pressure in the Looked After Children budget fluctuated during 2014/15 with a final outturn of £10.495M. As can be seen in the table, the £1.470M overspend on the £9.024M budget constitutes the lowest overspend in 4 years.
- 6.2 The Council has provided an uplift of an additional £0.972M for 2015/16 to more accurately reflect the ongoing annual spend of between £10.495M - £10.710M despite the intense effort to manage the number of placements.

OOA Budget, Spend and Overspend 2011/12–2015/16			
Year	Spend	Annual Budget	Overspend
2015/16		£9.997M	
2014/15	£10.495M	£9.024M	£1.470M
2013/14	£10.655M	£9.064M	£1.590M
2012/13	£10.710M	£8.174M	£2.536M
2011/12	£9.236M	£7.524M	£1.712M

- 6.3 Considerable effort has been focussed on returning young people to alternative provisions in Highland and total costs avoided from these returns are estimated at £1.391m in 2014/15, as compared with the young people remaining in placement. However, new placements within the year overshadowed these avoided costs.

7. Needs and Circumstances Necessitating Out-of-Authority Placements

- 7.1 At committee in November 2014, Members asked for further information on what needs and circumstances prevent children and young people from being placed in resources within Highland.
- 7.2 The Care and Learning Service uses a number of Out of Authority provisions due to their capacity to provide specialist care and support which are ideally suited for young people with specific needs. There is recognition that there will always be a need for out of Highland placements for a small number of children, but the Out of Authority Alternatives Programme seeks to determine what provisions could be replicated here in area.
- 7.3 Young people are generally placed out of area for the following reasons:
- Placements are at times dictated by Hearings and Panels;
 - Secure care placements are required when children are deemed a risk to themselves and/or others;
 - Children with significant hearing or sight impairment are felt best served by being placed within a school of their peers;

- Children with complex disabilities are placed in specialist provisions with the care and expertise they require;
- Parents can put pressure on the Council to place their children in out of area residential schools;
- Children on the autistic spectrum, in addition to other complex co-morbidities, are placed in specialist provisions with the care and expertise they require;
- Children with complex Social, Emotional and Behavioural Needs at times necessitate specialist residential care and schooling.

7.4 In addition to developing provisions and projects through the Out of Authority Programme (detailed later in this report), young people placed outside Highland are continually monitored for the possibility that they can return to a suitable provision in area. Previous analysis of return planning in 2014 highlighted that exit plans existed for two thirds of young people placed out of Highland (20 young people), for the remaining third (10 young people) it was felt that no suitable provision and/or support was in existence at the time.

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

8.1 Council properties continue to be 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.

8.2 School House for young people with support needs

8.2.1 Utilising a former school house in Inverness as a supported accommodation enabled a young person to move from an expensive placement in April 2014. Costs avoided amounted to £0.252m per annum as compared with the young person staying in their previous placement. Another young person has moved into the house vacating a commissioned bed in Highland which will be used by another young person and avoid a further placement.

8.3 Council Houses as move-through accommodation for residential units

8.3.1 Two properties are serving as temporary move-through flats for two young people for between 6 to 9 months each, again allowing the Council to avoid expensive placements. The Council paid only rent for these properties and minimal support staffing costs.

8.3.2 Community Services in Dingwall has sourced a 3-bedroom Council property to act as the permanent move-through house for the Council's residential unit. This is due to be fully operational with a young person moving there from the Oakwood unit in September 2015. The Alternative to Out of Authority Programme has paid £21,000 to bring the property to standard and there will be an on-going rental cost however the house will be staffed using existing residential unit employees.

8.3.3 A property on Old Perth Road Inverness is to become the move-through house for the Ashton Road and Leault units in Inverness. A young person is due to move in September 2015. Again rental costs will be payable and there will be support staff costs but these are estimated to be a fraction of the out of area placement cost.

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

8.4 Intensive Support House, Wick

8.4.1 In order to meet the needs of young people locally rather than further south in Highland, a house belonging to Care and Learning in Wick is being used as a pilot to provide intensive residential support to young people who are not suited to the residential unit. The house became fully staffed and operational at the end of July 2015 and staffing and running costs are estimated at £0.140m per annum as compared with two full year placements at an average total of £0.360m.

8.5 Intensive Support House, Killen Old School, Black Isle

8.5.1 Children 1st have vacated the Killen Old School House and the Care and Learning Service intend using the property as a provision to return up to two children from out of area placements. The Care Inspectorate requested that a further ensuite be added to the property which is currently being completed. Staffing and running costs are estimated at £0.140m per annum as compared with two full year placements at an average total of £0.360m.

8.6 Adult Services Supported Accommodation

8.6.1 The possibility of housing young people of 16+ within Adult Services supported accommodation continues to be considered in order to reduce the number of placement moves and associated stress to the young person.

8.6.2 In discussions with Adult Services colleagues, it has been identified that there may be a mismatch between the needs of the young people with the most complex needs, and the model of provision on offer. This has meant long delays in the planning for some young people and is beginning to impact on the capacity in children's services, whilst some young people aged 18 years wait for a suitable resource to be identified. Discussions will continue to find a solution.

9. New Provisions and Services

9.1 Supported House for Children with Disabilities

9.1.1 At Resources Committee in January 2015, the Care and Learning Service was granted permission to purchase a former Police house opposite the Orchard Children's Respite Centre in Inverness.

9.1.2 The location of the house means it can serve as move-through accommodation for older children living permanently at the Orchard. This will also enable young people to be supported by the staff they already know. Consequently it will make space available within the Orchard to enable the Council to keep young people in Highland at risk of requiring a specialist Out of Area placement due to their disabilities.

9.1.3 The house is semi-detached with four bedrooms, with a front garden and rear parking. Purchase and disability alteration works will be funded by the Alternatives to Out of Authority Programme capital budget.

9.1.4 Staffing and running costs of the house are estimated at £0.150m to be met by the Out of Authority revenue budget as compared with two full year specialist placements at an average total of £0.400m.

9.2 **Throughcare and Aftercare Service Tender**

9.2.1 As reported to this Committee, in order to meet its new statutory responsibilities as stated in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, the Council is to tender for a new supported lodging service in Inverness, for young people who are 16+ years.

9.2.2 The service will 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.

9.2.3 In order to reduce costs suitable Council-owned properties were identified for up to 8 young people at Old Perth Road Inverness. Negotiating the end of the lease with the current holders has taken considerably longer than expected and a long term lease is being negotiated between Care and Learning and the Council's Community Services.

9.2.4 It is intended that the new service will commence by Summer 2016. Costs will be met by rents and Housing Benefit, through care support costs, and funding diverted as necessary from the out of authority budget. These costs have been significantly reduced by utilising Council housing. The properties are not deemed suitable for general Council housing due to their location.

9.3 **Residential Unit for Young People with Autism**

9.3.1 As previously reported to Committee, the Council spends £1.5 to £2m towards funding specialist autism placements every year. As a result, the development of a small residential unit on the site of Inverness Royal Academy is being assessed. Funding of £2m over 3 years has now been identified for this project within the Capital programme from 2017-2019. Running costs and staffing would be a revenue pressure for the Care and Learning Service.

9.3.2 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. 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.

9.4 **One-Stop-Shop Skills Academy**

9.4.1 The Council has made a funding application with Barnardos to the Life Changes Trust for a one-stop-shop/skills academy in Inverness and a mobile unit that would cover other areas in Highland for young people who are 16+.

9.4.2 The bid developed in consultation with care-experienced young people, consists of one property where young people could access health, employability, life

skills, advocacy, legal, housing and peer mentorship guidance.

- 9.4.3 The Care and Learning Service has secured a property in Inverness adjacent to the Cameron Youth Centre on Planefield Road. The Council had a previous lease with the Trustees and due to the property being uninhabited for a number of years, the Council is liable to pay dilapidation costs. Other required works are being scoped to bring the property up to standard and Officers are working with care-experienced young people employed under the Family Firm scheme.

10. Implications

10.1 Resources

- 10.1.1 Considerable effort has been focussed on returning young people to Highland, and the total costs avoided from these returns are estimated at £1.391m in 2014/15, as compared with the young people remaining in placement. However new placements within the year overshadowed these avoided costs. Gatekeeping of new placements continues to be closely scrutinised.
- 10.1.2 Three properties at Old Perth Road Inverness have been identified to act as the core and cluster houses for the Supported Accommodation for young people of 16+ years. Costs will be significantly reduced by utilising these Council properties and payments will be met by rents and Housing Benefit, through care support costs, and funding diverted as necessary from the out of authority budget.
- 10.1.3 A property close to the Orchard Respite Centre in Inverness is estimated to cost £0.260M to both purchase and make the necessary alterations to suit young people with disabilities. Whilst there will be a revenue pressure from the running costs and staffing of this facility, effort is being made to keep this to a minimum by combining staffing with Orchard personnel whenever possible. In addition this provision will enable the Council to avoid costs of Out of Area Placements frequently in the order of £0.250m per child per annum and keep more young people with disabilities in the Highland area.
- 10.1.4 A feasibility study is being conducted to estimate costs for dilapidations and works required to bring the house owned by the Cameron Youth Centre up to Scottish Housing Quality Standard. The house is to be leased to serve as a One-Stop-Shop Skills Academy for care-experienced young people.
- 10.1.5 The Service is piloting a new approach to using spot purchased beds in Highland by reducing the use of 5 spot purchased beds in one private unit to 3 beds. It is estimated that this will avoid costs of over £0.200M per annum.
- 10.2 **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.
- 10.3 **Equalities:** The projects detailed in this report will enable the authority to continue to meet its equalities duties.
- 10.4 **Climate Change/Carbon Clever:** The proposals for units and houses in Highland 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.

10.5 **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 significant. If the Council does not develop financially beneficial alternatives within the Highland area, the risk will continue for this budget.

10.6 **Rural Implications:** The ethos driving the Alternatives to Out of Authority Placement Programme is to provide alternative 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 service to be financially viable, this will be pursued such as the Intensive Support house in Wick.

10.7 **Gaelic:** There are no Gaelic implications.

11. Recommendations

11.1 Members are asked:

- to note and comment on the progress of projects to identify alternatives to out of authority placement provisions for the young people of Highland
- to note that the Programme continues to identify and facilitate returns to Highland for young people and the Council benefits from the reduced costs arising from this
- to note the wider programme of work to address the need for residential care and the type of residential care which will be needed in future

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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