

Agenda Item	11.
Report No	CLH 08/19

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Care, Learning and Housing

**Date:** 24 January 2019

**Report Title:** **Placement Services Change Programme Update**

**Report By:** Interim Director of Care and Learning

### **1. Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 This report summarises progress against the agreed plan for the Placement Services Change Programme, which is designed to redirect resources to develop services locally in Highland for Looked After Children and to address their education outcomes.

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are asked to:

Scrutinise and comment on the progress to date against the Programme Plan.

### **3. Development of Highland Resources**

- 3.1 Properties previously developed by the Alternatives to OOA Programme are having support staff assigned by a contracted third sector organisation to enable the return of 16+ year old young people to Highland. This is enabling young people from the South and Mid to return to their local area with their needs being met at a much reduced rate to OOA placements.
- 3.2 Agreements on the suite of services to supplement school placements and enable the return of identified young people from OOA is progressing and now lead by the teacher appointed to work on the education of Looked after children. This work will be underpinned by the new Attainment Challenge Funding for Care Experienced Young people. Services include specialist outdoor learning and support to re-integrate young people into school. Outcomes include increasing numeracy and literacy, developing boundary setting behaviour, increasing confidence and learning rural and horticultural skills which can lead to obtaining SQAs and National qualifications. They also seek to develop coping strategies for preparing the Young Person for a return to school, work experience placements, attending college or full time employment.
- 3.3 This area of work was programmed and agreed by this committee in Dec 2017 and has subsequently been added to the Placement Services Change Programme. Specific projects will be reported to this committee as they progress further.
- 3.4 Discussions are ongoing with Development and Infrastructure regarding the suggestion made at this committee that the Council explore the possibility of providing placement accommodation in new housing developments. The Alternatives to OOA Placement Programme already has a suite of properties being built for LAC moving out of residential care and this will be increased into the future to accommodate Care Experienced Young People moving into their own tenancies.
- 3.5 Final agreement about a dedicated, expanded CAMHS service for Looked After young people has not as yet been reached with NHSH and the Council deliberating the method of payment. It is hoped that the service will be confirmed by NHSH in the next few months allowing for lead-in time necessary to recruit to the new service.
- 3.6 The Placement Services Change Plan includes the development of a new model of emergency residential provision and multi-agency assessment. The first main hub for this new model is in Fodderty in the Mid Area, and the building called Arach is now occupied by the Service Manager and Residential Manager. The employment of residential staff is experiencing considerable delay due to the Council's current hold on recruitment. Two prospective foster carers are being assessed to work from the hub and it is hoped they will be available from Feb 2019. When the hold on staff recruitment is lifted, the team will schedule an open day and information evening to meet interested prospective employees.
- 3.7 A number of new residential staff have been employed in Caithness in advance of securing a North hub building and have enabled the return to the north of a young person currently out of area. The development of a north hub will be developed further later on in the next year of the Programme plan.
- 3.8 The Programme Plan also includes the development of additional residential provision in order to return young people from OOA placements. With the aid of Development and Infrastructure a number of properties have been identified and assessed with one considered to be suitable for a 5-bed children's unit. If progressed further information

will be brought to this committee.

- 3.9 A comprehensive Communication Plan has been devised for the Programme with a suite of actions including area briefings and team presentations, internal communications and meetings with C&L Area and Children's Services Managers. Recording clips of Council Residential Unit Managers talking about the successes of children that have been returned to live in alternatives to OOA placements has also been included. These are extremely powerful testimonies about the care given in Highland that can change children's lives immeasurably. The plan also includes a seminar for Members on the Placement Services Change Programme which will be brought to Members attention in 2019.

#### **4. Progress on enabling young people to return to Highland**

- 4.1 Since Care & Learning staff were briefed on the new programme in June 2018 and new PSCP team members joined in August and October, 11 young people have been enabled to return and there are plans for at least 8 others to move between Jan-June 2019. Whilst this has avoided significant OOA costs for these 11 cases, the pace has not been sufficient to significantly reduce the total number of placements as 9 children have come into spot purchased placements during the same timeframe. In April 2018, there were 48 spot purchased placements and at Dec 20th there are 46. This has meant the total spend on placements has not reduced as planned and the development of new services in area has had to be scaled back substantially to compensate for the continued overspend.
- 4.2 The planned reduction in placements has taken longer than expected due to the new Placements team coming on stream later in the financial year; time spent disseminating the returns process to family teams and assessments of children and negotiations with family teams taking significant time. The complex nature of adverse childhood experiences that our young people have endured, means that careful planning and transitions from one placement to another has taken longer than first anticipated. The Placement team will continue to work alongside the Family Teams on promoting our own resources and securing the return of our children and young people to the Highlands.
- 4.3 The development of new in-area services has also taken time and the individualised packages of support and education required have not always been in place for all children identified for return. This has improved since the team member employed to develop education packages joined in October however there continues to be a difficulty in returning young people who require attending our Special Schools as the young people were excluded from them in the first place.
- 4.4 As demonstrated by the numbers above and looking back on recent years, new in-area services are required to stem the flow of children coming into purchased placements. Without these new services, the effort to return children will likely be matched by the number going OOA. The development of Arach, the temporary residential and outreach service will be the vital component of the programme for reducing the numbers of children coming into residential care. The staffing for Arach is currently on hold due to the Council's recruitment freeze.
- 4.5 Existing in-area provisions tend to be filled by in-area children requiring residential accommodation which means there are fewer beds to use for returning OOA young people. There have been issues with unit management, staff illness and the mix of young people in units which has impacted on the ability to return children. Lead

Professionals have also questioned the quality of in-area provisions for returning their young people as a result of these issues.

- 4.6 There is an ongoing issue of adults remaining in Children's units in Highland who should transition at 18 years old. There have been 6 young adults in children's units during this financial year and significant time and effort has been expended working with Adult Services to transition these individuals. 2 still remain in children's units utilising 3 bed spaces. The full cost of equivalent OOA beds are not met by NHS, only the actual costs of Highland Council unit bed costs. With the advent of the Joint Transitions Team, further collaboration with NHS is possible on placements for young people with disabilities who will need adult service support. Discussions have started to enable Highland Council to purchase support for 16+ year old young people to enable a move to their 'adult placement' before the age of 18. This should assist with reducing the number of over 18's remaining in Children's units and makes beds available to return children from OOA.
- 4.7 There have been a number of secure placements this financial year for young people at risk of significant self-harming, risk to others, substantial mental health issues, risk of exploitation and drug taking. These are the most expensive placements and in-area options are most difficult to develop for these young people.
- 4.8 In returning children and young people to our own resources and home has caused some alarm for our purchased providers. We are continuing to work with these providers in order for the child and young person to be at the centre of these decisions and care planning.
- 4.9 In order to change a young person's accommodation, a Children's Hearing Panel must be convinced that the return package meets that child's needs as effectively as the OOA placement and this can be difficult. In addition, the panel has the power to recommend an OOA placement and the Council must adhere to this.

## **5. Financial projection**

- 5.1 The current projected spend for 2018/19 for Purchased Placements is £14.3M, which represents an estimated overspend of £3.9M for the year, based on current information. The initial Business Case taken to this Committee in March 2018, projected a total spend of £13.27M. 11 young people have returned via this programme, however the pace has not been sufficient to significantly reduce the total number of placements as 9 children have come into spot purchased placements during the same timeframe. The initial Business Case planned for x12 children to return and zero new placements therefore it's clear that the programme has almost achieved the planned return number but has been hampered by the need for new placements.
- 5.2 Spending commitments on new Programme projects have been substantially reduced for this financial year to reflect the continued cost of spot purchased placements.
- 5.3 We are unable to factor in future return dates until plans are confirmed for individual young people, but confidence continues that expenditure will reduce as the Programme plan gains traction.
- 5.4 In particular the development of the residential hub Arach in Fodderty would stem the flow of children coming into residential care and the associated high costs as it will enable outreach staff to work with children in their family's home as opposed to taking them into residential care.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Resource**

This is covered in section 5 above.

### **6.2 Legal**

In order to meet responsibilities detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act, effort has been focussed on acquiring a more varied stock of properties and services to meet the needs of Looked after young people in their Highland area.

### **6.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)**

The ethos driving the 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.

### **6.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever**

The proposals for accommodation and services in Highland will marginally increase the Council's overall carbon footprint through increased energy usage and waste disposal. However, these proposals will significantly reduce travel and associated costs relating to transport to and from provisions out-with Highland.

### **6.5 Risk**

There is the continued risk (seen across the UK) that the number of children requiring to be looked after continues to increase which has significant cost implications. Spot purchased placements have an average cost of £230,000 per child per year. The increase of for example x5 children per year into purchased placements can cost over £1.15M extra for that year. If the Council does not develop financially beneficial alternatives that meet the needs of these children within the Highland area, the risk will continue for this budget.

### **6.6 Gaelic**

No issues have been identified.

Designation: Interim Director of Care and Learning

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