

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education &amp; Children's Services</b>
DATE	<b>28 January 2016</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Review of Residential Child Care</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/15/052</b>
CHECKLIST RECEIVED	<b>Yes</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To inform Committee of the outcome of the review and redesign of the Residential Child Care Service that has been informed by the Residential Child Care Review of 2012 and the Reclaiming Social Work model.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee:
- i) Note the approaches to improve the care experiences of children and young people who are being cared for in the City's children's homes by developing attachment led practice and embedding systemic approaches in the service in line with the Reclaiming Social Work Model
  - ii) Remit the required changes in the staffing structure for the residential childcare service to implement the redesign to the next Finance Policy and Resources Committee for approval.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The proposed new staffing structure for the residential childcare service has been enhanced to ensure its compatibility with the Reclaiming Social Work model and has therefore been developed within this financial context.
- 3.2 The revised structure will contribute to shifting the balance of care away from costly external placements to supporting children and young people within their own communities.
- 3.3 The costs associated with of training for residential staff are included in the February 2015 report to Committee as part of the implementation costs of

Reclaiming Social Work.

- 3.4 The costs associated with the revised structure will be detailed within a full Business Case which will be placed on the agenda of the next Finance Policy and Resources Committee.
- 3.5 The maximum additional spend to existing budget is £124,429 at top of the grade, but is likely to be lower when taking staff grades into account. The Business Case provides details of the additional expenditure will be met.

#### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The primary legislation that places statutory duties and responsibilities in relation to children looked after and accommodated, is the Children (Scotland) Act 1995, Children's Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 and the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. There are also associated regulations and guidance that the local authority must follow. For example, the Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009.
- 4.2 Accommodation for looked after children is a regulated care service in terms of the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. In addition, Children's Homes are also subject to the National Care Standards for Children's Residential Services and are inspected by the Care Inspectorate.
- 4.3 The local authority is the corporate parent to all looked after children and young people. The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 has recently extended the duties and responsibilities placed on local authorities towards care experienced young people, particularly in relation to its corporate parenting role. However, it also contains a duty to provide care for young people who request to remain in care up to the age of 21, as well as support for those who require it up to the age of 26.
- 4.4 Amongst the key areas for improvement that the Joint Inspection Report of Services for Children and Young People in Aberdeen, published in March 2015, identified, was the need to "*complete the review and redesign of residential care for children and young people ensuring that staff are skilled to meet the needs of the children and young people they are caring for*" (Care Inspectorate, 2015). This has been included in the subsequent action plan.
- 4.5 National Guidance for the External Management of Residential Child Care Establishments in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2013) states that "*The external manager has a lead role in achieving the "culture change" envisioned by the national Residential Child Care Initiative (NRCCI). They must champion residential child care, promote partnership working and ensure congruence within a continuum of care services for children and families.*" This is crucial in the context of promoting the cultural shift that will result in more of our young people remaining in their communities, within our care where necessary, as part of Reclaiming Social Work.
- 4.6 'Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures', the overview report of the National Residential Child Care Initiative (NRCCI) published in 2009 following a strategic review of child care services in Scotland, produced a blueprint for

their future development and direction. Although it details the skills and qualifications that all residential child care workers must have the implementation plan has not yet been agreed.

## **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

### **Review of Residential Child Care:**

- 5.1 A review of residential childcare services was commenced in 2012 and made recommendations for improving the service. This included a:
  - Review of the Admissions Procedure
  - Agreeing the role and function of each of the Children's Homes
  - Continue to use Proact SCIP as the strategy for managing the complex behaviours of the children and young people being cared for.
- 5.2 All aspects of the review that are outlined are being implemented and reviewed.
- 5.3 The consultation and engagement events for staff within the residential service were held back in January 2015 with the Senior Management Team with a further consultation with Trade Unions in November 2015.
- 5.4 The Children's Rights Officers supported the consultation exercise with children and young people and their views have been taken into account during the review of the service.
- 5.5 The implementation of Reclaiming Social Work model of service delivery has led to changes to the management of the Residential Service. There is a newly appointed Service Manager and Lead Service Manager who will work with the team to continue to lead, manage and develop the service.
- 5.6 The Reclaiming Social Work Model supports staff undertaking systemic training including residential staff. A number of staff have completed or are currently participating in the 18 day systemic training. In addition to the 18 day training, a 6 day systemic training is being pursued for other staff within the Children's Social Work service.
- 5.7 It is proposed to create a Clinical Practitioner post for the residential service to promote and sustain systemic practice within the service. It is also proposed to create an External Residential Manager post to support current manager to promote best practice within the service in accordance with the recommendations from the national guidance as set out in point 4.5 above,
- 5.8 Children and young people who are cared for and accommodated in Children's Homes have a range of needs and experiences that may include:

- Trauma
- Neglectful care
- Emotional, physical or sexual abuse
- Experience of loss, bereavement
- Parental substance or alcohol misuse
- Domestic Violence
- Substance or alcohol misuse by the child or young person
- Risk of sexual exploitation
- Offending Behaviours
- At risk of absconding and placing themselves at risk

Many of the children and young people may also have experienced multiple traumas.

### **Current provision:**

5. 9 Aberdeen City has experience of providing residential care locally, across a small number of Children's Homes. This provision exists within a continuum of support to children, young people and their families, delivered locally that aims to maintain family relationships and connections to communities.

5.10 Each of the Children's Homes is registered with the Care Inspectorate and provides a range of places and functions. These are:

<b>Name of Establishment</b>	<b>No of children &amp; young people cared for</b>	<b>Function of the unit</b>
Kingsfield	5	Mixed gender, aged 12 – 18 years
Marchburn (nb. Currently being used by Action for Children during the refurb of Clifton Road)	6	Mixed gender, aged 12 – 18 years
Gilbert Road	6	Mixed gender aged 12 – 18 years
Kincorth	5	Girls and Young Women 12 – 18 years
Balnagask Road	2	Satellite Provision Also used by Throughcare
Long Walk Road (Currently used by Action for Children during refurb of Clifton Road)	2	Satellite Provision Also used as respite provision
Willows	6	Throughcare 16 + years

<b>Total number of care places when fully operational</b>	<b>32</b>	
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- 5.11 There are currently two commissioned services: Barnardo's and Action for Children. Barnardo's offer 6 residential care placements to children aged from 8 years old; whilst Action for Children are commissioned to offer 10 throughcare placements, although this number has been temporarily reduced due to the relocation of services to Marchburn during the refurbishment of the building at Clifton Road. The costings for the commissioned services are not included in the service budget.

#### **Workforce Development supported by the External Residential Manager:**

- 5.12 The recruitment and retention of staff who choose residential child care as a career choice has been challenging. A new recruitment approach is being piloted with the opportunity to further develop and expand if it proves successful. This included the development of a robust induction plan and mentoring by experienced colleagues.
- 5.13 The development of a learning culture within the Children's Homes, with a focus on attachment theory and systemic approaches to working with children and young people will be supported by a Clinical Practitioner and the management team.
- 5.14 The plan will lead to a comprehensive staff development and training plan that ensures staff have the skills and training to work with children and young people with a range of complex needs and will review the current practice model of de-escalation techniques and positive management of behaviours for children and young people who have experienced trauma.
- 5.15 Further development of the service will be undertaken in conjunction with the Centre for Excellence for Looked After Children (CELACIS).

#### **Revised Staffing Structure:**

- 5.16 The NRCCI Overview Report states that the quality of the residential workforce is fundamental to how children and young people experience care and that a well-equipped and supported workforce is critical to ensuring that children and young people are provided with the best possible care. This view is shared and underpins the proposed revised structure.
- 5.17 The recruiting of residential child care workers is a challenge, both locally and nationally. Although recruitment of staff reflects the SSSC requirements for the posts, as stated in the NRCCI report, "*The changing profile of children in residential care and the complexity of their needs demand an increasingly skilled, competent, confident and qualified workforce.*"

- 5.18 A review of the National Standards for Residential Care in Scotland, including the qualifications of all residential care staff and managers has recently been completed. Whilst the implementation of the revised Standards has yet to be announced by the Scottish Government, this will have a significant impact for the current and future workforce.
- 5.19 The current and revised staffing structure for residential childcare service is attached at Appendix 1 and 2 respectively and will be fully detailed in a Business Case to Finance Policy and Resources Committee. Staff and Trade Unions have been consulted throughout this review.
- 5.20 The proposal to the changes of job titles and designations is in keeping with other areas of Children's Social Work Service and more accurately describes the role and tasks that are required.
- 5.21 It is proposed that the External Residential Manager post be located within the Policy, Practice and Improvement Team within Children's Social Work as this will offer the objectivity the role requires. The External Residential Manager will be a champion for residential child care and ensure that effective safeguards are in place for children and young people as well as being a significant support to the Management Team.
- 5.22 The revised staffing structure will provide clarity of roles and responsibilities between the Residential Social Workers and the Support Workers recognising the strengths and skills that each bring to the posts.
- 5.23 The Clinical Practitioner's post will play a critical role in supporting teams to imbed systemic approaches and attachment led practice into their work with children and young people.
- 5.24 The increase in Support Assistant hours and the addition of the Senior Support Assistant will reduce the administrative tasks of professionally qualified staff.
- 5.25 There has been a re-evaluation of the Relief Support Worker job profile and the outcome of this was an increase in grade from Grade 8 to Grade 10. It is hoped that this will make the post more attractive and will lead to improved recruitment and retention of staff.
- 5.26 The implementation plan for the revised staffing structure will commence following approval of the business case.

#### **Residential Management Team:**

- 5.27 The review highlighted the need for the Management Team of each Children's Home to be visible and available to support the work of the team. In accordance with the new job roles and profiles in the Reclaiming Social Work Model, Children's Homes Team Managers will be expected to be available out of office hours and at weekends when and if required. It is not intended

that they should form part of the shift rota, but that they should be available on the occasions when their support is required. Team Leaders will have the same contractual working hours and pattern as the current Senior Support Workers.

5.28 It is proposed that within each Children's Home that there will be a Residential Social Worker on shift who will have lead responsibility for the team if the Team Leader / Team Manager is not on shift. This is reflected in the proposed regrading of the post.

5.29 The Service Manager and Lead Service Manager for the residential service will be actively involved in service and workforce development.

## **6. IMPACT**

6.1 **Improving Customer Experience** – The priority for the service is to:

- improve the care experience of the children and young people in the Children's Homes;
- support them to maintain family relationships and stay connected to their communities;
- support children and young people realise their aspirations and recognise their achievements; and to
- support the mental health and wellbeing of the children and young people.

6.2 **Improving Staff Experience** – The priority for the service is to:

- ensure that residential staff have equal knowledge, skills, values and status as other professionals within the wider children's services workforce;
- to promote a culture of learning and professional development of the individual, the team and the service.

6.3 **Improving our use of Resources** – The priority for the service is to:

- ensure that the Children's Homes offer a homely environment that is well maintained, safe and comfortable for the children and young people who are living there;
- ensure that children and young people have good health and wellbeing and that this is being promoted by offering a healthy diet and lifestyle including leisure activities;
- utilise the clinical practitioners post to offer the best possible mental health support to the young people in our care
- reduce the number of children and young people who are placed in out of authority placements; and to
- work in partnership with other Children's Services partners including 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector.

6.4 **Corporate** – The priority for the service is to:

- ensure that Corporate Parenting responsibilities are promoted across all public sector organisations.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

- 7.1 Work with vulnerable children and young people is an area of potential high risk. The council has a range of duties and powers it must discharge and were it not to do so it could face legal challenge and sanction and vulnerable children and young people could be at risk of increasing significant harm.
- 7.2 There is a significant reputational risk to the council of not having a quality residential child care service in place.
- 7.3 The implementation of the revised model will ensure that the council discharges its duties and powers effectively and develops a quality residential child care service thus mitigating the risks highlighted above.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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