

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education and Children's Services</b>
DATE	<b>17 November 2016</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Out of Authority Placements: Children's Homes and Residential Schools</b>
REPORT NUMBER	<b>ECS_16_067</b>
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	<b>Yes</b>

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

The purpose of this report is to detail the following:

- The Council's current position in respect of out of authority placements
- The actions that Education and Children's Services are taking to reduce the number of out of authority placements
- To provide information on the costs per child of an out of authority placement
- The improvements from the development of the Centre for Excellence and implementation of the Inclusion Review

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

Elected members are asked to note the work undertaken by officers to transform social work and inclusion services to provide both appropriate care and effective education for our most vulnerable children and keep them within Aberdeen City wherever possible.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

#### **3.1 Out of Authority budget and forecast**

The out of authority budget is funded across Education and Children's Services and totals £6,517,635. Children's Social Work contributes 60% and the Education Inclusion Service contributes 40%. This percentage reflects the costs for both care and education when a child is placed out of authority.

#### **3.2 Use of the out of authority budget**

The out of authority budget includes the cost of the following provision:

- Residential Children's Home placements

- Residential School placements
- Secure care
- Education placements
- Additional support, normally in the form of PSA support, when a looked after child or young person is in an out of authority mainstream school.
- Respite care provision for children with high support needs

Decisions to place a young person in secure care can be taken by the Courts but are funded from the out of authority budget making them difficult to predict. Aberdeen City currently has two young people in secure care. The average cost of a secure placement is £5,663 per week (£294,476 per year). The Chief Social Work Officer reviews the need for secure placements against legislative criteria every three weeks.

### **3.3 Average costs per child placed out of authority**

Although variable, depending upon the needs of the child, the average cost for each vulnerable child or young person being placed out of authority with an external provider is £250,000 a year.

It is considerably more cost effective to provide education and care in Aberdeen City. A placement in an Aberdeen City children's home costs £3,430 a week (£164,054 a year). This excludes additional support costs and education provision

### **3.4 Budget trends**

The current OAP budget is a historical budget which has been affected by prior year savings proposals, and does not reflect changes in demographic trends, complexity of need, and annual increases in residential fees.

## **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Comparisons with other Authorities**

The number of children and young people in out of authority children's homes is broadly in line with our comparator authorities. However, where we differ, is in the numbers of children placed in out of authority foster care and in local kinship care arrangements. A priority, therefore, is to increase the number of local ACC foster carer and kinship care placements.

It should be noted, however, that there are a number of children who require out of authority, specialist care and this will always remain the case. These are children who require close supervision, high staffing ratios and therapeutic input. For these children it would neither be safe, nor in their best interests to be cared for in Local Authority provision.

### **4.2 Reducing out of authority placements through transformational change**

This work cannot take place in isolation and is contingent on the following:

- The implementation of Reclaiming Social Work with its emphasis on keeping children within their families wherever possible
- The implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusion Review, ensuring our looked after children are supported in mainstream education and receive the learning support they require
- The opening of the Centre of Excellence in August 2016 leading to a reduction in the number of children with complex needs requiring an out of Authority placement
- Close collaboration and co-design across Education and Children’s Services in respect of supported provisions for vulnerable children and young people
- The re-design of our residential children’s homes and alternative to care services

### 4.3 Legislation and Guidance

Children’s Social Work is a statutory service that operates within a clear legislative framework as follows:

- Foster Children (Scotland) Act 1984
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995 (sets out many of the duties, powers and responsibilities local authorities hold in respect of their looked after children and care leavers)
- Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001 (Enhances the provision of services to children and young people who cease to be looked after or accommodated)
- Young People Leaving Care in Scotland Regulations 2003 (Sets out the aftercare services for young people who have been in care. Also provides for throughcare preparation for young people leaving care)
- Looked After Children (Scotland) Regulations 2009 (Sets out what should be included in a child’s plan. Also includes legislation around foster and kinship care)
- Children’s Hearings (Scotland) Act 2011 (Governs the children’s hearing system. The Act updates the old system and strengthens the place of children, ensures better support for families and ensures consistency across Scotland)
- Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 (updates the legislation on planning for children, corporate parenting, aftercare, continuing care, kinship care and the adoption register)

## 5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

### 5.1 Number of children in out of authority placements

Total No of Looked After Children	No in OOA children’s homes	No in OOA Children’s Home with Education	No in OOA foster care	No in OOA residential schools

550	7	11	146	12
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Since 2012 there has been a 2% increase in the number of children in residential care.

## 5.2 The age profile of children and young people placed out of authority

Age of child	12 or 13 years	14 years	15 years	16 years	17 years
Number of children	12	10	11	7	3

## 5.3 The needs of children and young people placed out of authority

Almost all children who are placed out of authority have experienced significant trauma in their lives, which impacts on their cognitive ability, their ability to learn and their capacity to form positive relationships. Resulting behaviours can be misinterpreted and add to the level of both vulnerability and distress they experience. Statistically children who have experienced trauma are less likely to experience long and happy lives.

## 5.4 Reviewing out of authority placements

At the end of 2015, a team of officers from the social work and inclusion teams collaborated to review all out of authority placements involving both education and care provision. The collaborative nature of the approach provided a platform to:

- analyse the quality of education and care prior to decisions being taken to place a child in an out of authority provision;
- reflect on the out of authority provisions that best improved outcomes for our children and young people to help us determine the type of supports needed to prevent children being placed out of authority; and
- Plan how best to return children to education and care in Aberdeen City.
- plan how to reduce the numbers being placed out of authority

## 5.5 What we learned

The process highlighted:

- a direct link between a high number of different educational/care placements experienced by the child or young person and the likelihood of being placed out of authority;
- the possible correlation between a lack of continuity of education placement and the number of different care placements leads to children and young people experiencing a high number of exclusions;
- the impact on key transition points; and
- the relationship between a high number of care and education placements and the prevalence of risk taking behaviours that may lead to an out of authority placement

Off-site education provision in Aberdeen has been made available to some of these children and young people, but this often led to a limited educational experience both in terms of peer group and curriculum and is not leading to better outcomes,.

The reviewers noted a need to:

- Create an independent reviewing team in Children's Social Work to provide robust oversight and challenge of all care planning for our looked after children – with particular emphasis on those placed out of authority. This is now in place.
- Increase kinship care opportunities. It is a key function of the reviewing team to ensure that placements with extended families are fully explored. Where appropriate kinship allowances will be paid.
- Redesign the Children's Specialist Services Forum based on best practice across Scotland. The Forum is an Education and Children's Services decision making forum for out of authority placements. This will be implemented by the end of 2016.
- Provide a strong focus on the care planning for all young people in out of authority placements aged 15 and 16. These young people will either be returning to Aberdeen City, or moving towards independent living in other parts of the country. This will result in a reduction in out of authority expenditure over the next 12 to 18 months
- Continue to implement Scottish Government Permanence and Care Excellence (PACE) methodology to improve planning and decision making timescales for children who cannot live within their families. This will impact in the longer term and will reduce the numbers of children being admitted into local authority children's homes in the future

And for the education and inclusion service to:

- improve Aberdeen's universal and targeted offer to maintain education and care placements to foster a sense of belonging
- continue to develop the continuum of provision ensuring that links with local schools are maintained
- improve the quality of transition planning
- Continue to support education placements through the provision of a Virtual School Head Teacher (VSHT).
- work to reduce the number of exclusions, particularly for Looked after Children
- review risk assessment processes to support planning arrangements
- develop Support Hubs to provide opportunities for shared placements, reducing removals from role

- improved planning for children and young people including ensuring appropriate risk assessment processes support staff and children to move forward confidently, and
- Improve partnership working.

## **6. IMPACT**

### **Improving Customer Experience**

Children's Social Work operates within a legislative framework and is targeted towards the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in Aberdeen City – the vast majority of whom are required to work with us on a compulsory basis. Implementing Reclaiming Social Work and the redesign of our residential and intensive support services will significantly contribute to improving the experiences of the people with whom we work. Our key aim is to maintain children safely within their communities, networks of support and families wherever we can, and reduce reliance on out of authority provision.

Early implementation of the PACE methodology has resulted in Aberdeen City being featured in a Scottish Government video to promote effective permanency planning nationally.

Children's Social Work continues to develop intensive family and community services to support more effective intervention.

Pathway plans based on assessed need are being progressed for 15, 16 and 17 year olds to ensure that transitional supports are identified with the young person. Consideration is being given to what support might be needed for the young person to return to kin or whether another residential or housing support is needed.

It is likely that some 16 and 17 year olds will leave placements within the next few months; we must be mindful of the 'Staying Put' agenda that encourages young people to move on into independence when able to do so.

The development of ASG Partnership Forums, enhancement of the range of outreach services, earlier intervention by specialist services, development of partnership working and more targeted approach to providing short term therapeutic interventions is helping children and young people maintain links with their local schools. These links reduce the likelihood of an educational breakdown resulting in an out of authority placement. This sense of belonging and engagement will improve outcomes for children and young people.

By improving early intervention and support, more children and young people will be able to:

- Maintain a place in Aberdeen City, close to family and peers
- Improve outcomes for looked after and care experienced children and young people

### **Improving Staff Experience**

Staff recruitment and retention remain a key priority for children's social work and for staff within educational establishments. Reducing the amount of time travelling to out of authority provision, improving the quality of care planning and the review of looked after children will increase staff satisfaction in their work and validate the skills and experience they bring.

Close partnership working between education and children's social work services at all levels will ensure that capacity is increased by pooling expertise and nurturing a climate of mutual trust and support.

### **Improving our use of Resources**

Investing in our own services and staff through Reclaiming Social Work, residential redesign and the review of our commissioned services, are evidence of our approach to the responsible use of public funds. In particular, the effective procurement and commissioning of services going forward clearly prioritises improving outcomes and measures the impact of commissioned services to ensure best value.

The Children's Specialist Services Forum (CSSF) makes financial decisions on all out of authority residential placements. The review of CSSF purpose and process is currently underway and will conclude in December 2016. Proposed new processes include more rigorous options appraisals and the establishment of bi-monthly business meetings with colleagues from Finance and Commissioning and Procurement to help track and monitor processes and budget.

The restructure of the Pupil Support Service has led to a reduction in management positions. This will enable an increase in the number of staff available to work directly to work with children, young people and their families to address their health and wellbeing needs.

Investing our resources in improving our education provisions and creating a more flexible continuum of provision improves our ability to intervene early and avoid the need to source a resource from out with the City.

### **Corporate**

Work clearly aligns with the Local Outcome Improvement Plan.

1. Children have the best start in life – children in Aberdeen City are healthy, happy and safe, and enjoy the best possible childhood
2. Children are safe and responsible – children and young people are safe from all forms of harm
3. Children are respected, included and responsible – children and young people are listened to, respected, valued and involved in the decision-making process
4. Safe and resilient communities – Aberdeen City is a place where people are safe from harm

Aberdeen City Council's ambition to support every child, irrespective of their circumstances, to grow, develop and reach their full potential will be partially realised through the on-going implementation of Reclaiming Social Work and on-going implementation of the recommendation of the Inclusion Review. Equity of access and opportunity is central to this development.

The relevant key area from the Social Outcome Agreement is as follows:

Ensuring that every child and young person in Aberdeen City enjoys being young and at the same time feels safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected responsible and included.

## **Public**

Our approach to securing the best residential provision for our looked after children in Aberdeen and the best use of public funds is designed to provide assurance to the residents of Aberdeen City.

## **7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK**

In order to ensure improved use of resources Elected Members are asked to support the longer term transformation impact of:

Reclaiming Social Work

The redesign of our children's homes

The development of our alternative to care services

The implementation of PACE methodology to improve permanent care decisions for children

The redesign of our procurement and commissioning processes in Children's Social Work, and

The implementation of the recommendations of the Inclusion Review.

The impact of these transformational changes will not be seen for 3 to 5 years, whilst the impact of the PACE programme is 10 years.

By retaining our children and young people within Aberdeen City, we will need to ensure our staff are equipped to manage higher levels of risk. We are therefore investing in increased AIM 2 (risk management) training; are running a practice development session on risk with a leading academic in late October 2016, and are working closely with the Centre for Youth and Criminal Justice to develop a multi-agency understanding of, and approach to, risk.

## **8. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

## **9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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