

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	18/11/2016
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
TITLE OF REPORT	Review of Residential Childcare
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/16/069
CHECKLIST COMPLETED	Yes

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. The purpose of the Committee Report is to share the conclusions of the Review of Residential Childcare and to outline and seek approval for the proposed changes to the model for service delivery.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that Committee approve the proposed purpose, structure and role of residential childcare and the residential estate, in meeting the needs of Aberdeen's looked after children.
- 2.2. To inform Committee of the changes of designations of key posts which better reflect the needs of the service and the updated workforce regulatory requirements set out by the Scottish Social Services Commission.
- 2.3. To Inform Committee of the revised staffing structure set out in Appendix 1.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Proposed changes to staffing structure will be achievable within the existing budget allocation. The changes to grading described will be enacted on an incremental basis, reflecting the timeframe for the initiation of the requirement to attain the new standard for residential childcare qualification.
- 3.2. The business case report requesting authority to change designations and grades has been remitted to the Finance Policy and Resources committee of 1/12/2016

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. More effectively meet our statutory duties towards in care and care experienced young people.
- 4.2. Effectively meet wellbeing needs.
- 4.3. Retain a future focus in terms of meeting our workforce development needs in relation to SSSC workforce qualification standards.
- 4.4. Enable young people from the local communities of Aberdeen to retain this sense of identity and maintain significant relationships.
- 4.5. Improve outcomes from key transitions and limit the number of placement moves young people experience.
- 4.6. Ensure best use of resources and outcome from investments in our workforce and estate planning.

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 5.1. The Review of residential childcare provision concluded in 2015, with recommendations which are positively impacting on the outcomes experienced by young people. At inception, the review focused on; the admissions procedure, agreeing the role and function of each of the Children's Homes; the impact and suitability of Proact SCIP as the preferred behavioural management strategy.
- 5.2. Further revision of the above identified contemporary objectives which have provided a refocus for service priorities, taking account of wider national drivers. These have included; workforce development; investment in the residential estate and placement capacity in light of emerging trends. The latter indicates that young people stay in local children's homes for longer periods and have multiple complexities. These factors suggest that to be effective, residential child care should be underpinned by a clear theoretical basis and that this should be able to be practiced across the residential workforce, as an ethos of care.
- 5.3. In addition, Scottish Govt have initiated the recommendations of The National Residential Child Care Initiative Report; Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures (2009). Stating that the quality of the residential workforce is fundamental to how 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. "The changing profile of children in residential care and the complexity of their needs demand an increasingly skilled, competent, confident and qualified workforce".
- 5.4. The recommendation to improve outcomes has been linked to both establishing a standard for the residential workforce and raising the level of professional

qualification to join the residential childcare workforce. Introducing an SCQF Level 9, will raise the level of qualification held by the residential workforce from HNC/SVQ level 7, to ordinary degree level. This will take effect from October 2017, initially in respect of those joining the workforce and those with staff supervisory and management responsibilities. Following this, from October 2019 to residential practitioners who seek to renew their SSSC registration.

- 5.5. Nationally, the expansion of alternative family care has supported decreased use of residential child care, given poor outcomes for younger children, favouring the development of fostering and alternative family placements. Both local practice and national overview indicate that, despite well known and researched limitations, residential care remains relevant and positive for a number of young people. This group are characterised by their complexity and history of breakdown of family placements.
- 5.6. Local trend data indicate that the use of children's home placements has declined by on average 28% over a 2 year period. Reflecting the better development of alternative to care services and placement decision making.
- 5.7. There has been option appraisal of the physical resources which form the residential estate, offering an in parallel overview on the resources best placed for future investment and those where repurposing is proposed (see appendix). Residential placements and therefore estate occupancy has been significantly impacted upon by workforce recruitment. Low staff numbers leading to the temporary removal from the estate of one home. Staffing levels are presently operating at 66% of our available posts. Placement occupancy levels are operating at approx. 80% of current capacity.
- 5.8. Benchmarking across linked local authorities has offered comparison with staffing structures and served to demonstrate the favourable position in Aberdeen in terms of grading and pay scales for the residential childcare workforce. Recruitment challenges appear to be a feature of the nature of the North East economy.
- 5.9. Residential Childcare services are robustly inspected and transparent in their commitment to practice which reflects the values enshrined in National Care Standards of:
 - Compassion
 - Ambition
 - Respect
 - Equity
- 5.10. Care Inspectorate inspections of our local homes, demonstrate an incremental improvement in grading reflecting our increasing effectiveness in applying these principals.
- 5.11. Residential childcare is pivotal to the delivery of the wider children's social work service and needs to link to key objectives to be functionally aligned to the core aims of the service. Many young people who are accommodated in our care

present challenging and distressed behaviour due to attachment difficulties and trauma. Some of these young people feel so emotionally disorganised, and out of control that they spend their lives trying to feel safe by attempting to control everything around them. (Hughes 2008)

- 5.12. Local experience reflects national trends, in that those children we accommodate have increasingly complex emotional and mental health needs and have been exposed to multiple episodes of early disruption in their care, which they have experienced as traumatic. Children who have significant attachment disorders often benefit from care where there are fewer peers and a higher ratio of carers.
- 5.13. Key trends indicate that those children placed in local homes increasingly do so as part of permanency planning processes and require long term care. For example, 66% of young people accommodated locally have been so for over 12 months. 34% have been in a local home for under 12 months. The above suggests that young people are increasingly becoming accommodated in local provision as part of a permanence plan and that there has been fewer placements where young people have experienced a family crisis prior to becoming accommodated. This factor influences local provision, when children may present on an unplanned shorter term basis. In both meeting their needs and preventing the destabilisation of existing placements by introducing a child who may manifest acute distress. Therefore in planning the capacity of the estate, it is important that children in both groups are offered placements which best meet their needs for stability, consistency, continuity.
- 5.14. Evidence based approaches to the delivery of care should be reflective of an ethos of care which is shared across the workforce and accepts that young people may show their distressed feelings through behaviour. It is proposed that the residential workforce have a core skill set informed by child development. The preferred model for this has been identified, based on attachment and child development theories, that is, 'dyadic developmental practice' (DDP). This is a complimentary intervention to systemic family therapy, the approach underpinning Reclaiming Social Work Units and childcare practice across children's social work.
- 5.15. Dyadic developmental practice is a model increasingly being deployed across the alternative family and residential childcare workforce; is delivered from an evidence base which links early childhood attachment, recovery from trauma and emotional wellbeing. The practice model has been utilised by a growing number of local authority children's services with favourable evaluation.
- 5.16. The impact of enhanced duties as part of our responsibilities for Continuing Care, allowing young people to request to remain in placement up to 21 years if this meets their needs, to be reflected in a flexible range of placement options for this group. Young people who benefit from continuing in residential care are more likely to be returning to Aberdeen from external placements and respond best to professional responses which are sensitive to these prior experiences.

5.17. In planning for the change to regulation of the workforce, Aberdeen City are in a favourable position in terms of the proportion of existing residential childcare staff who have either a Social Work Qualification or degree level qualification. With approximately 52% of the present workforce awarded a qualification in social work. At this stage the full details and financial support from Scottish Govt has not been shared with employers.

5.18. This means that we agree that:

5.18.1. As outlined in the appendix the Residential Children's Home estate will have provision for 36 placements; with the capacity to designate one children's home as offering close support, with fewer placement numbers and higher ratios of staff; initiate option appraisal for one building within the estate and further embed approaches to placement gatekeeping which allow children to be offered care which can meet their needs and is increasingly therapeutic in nature and design.

5.18.2. Average placement use is currently around 80% of the proposed placement provision. Therefore there will be no effective loss of placement capacity, with one building being considered for re-designation as close support.

5.18.3. There will be a graduated transition to this position, as estate planning takes account of the purchase of the building occupied by the home at Kingsfield which will require refurbishment and therefore access to the building designated as close support for a period of decant.

5.18.4. Workforce recruitment will follow an assessment centre model which as a longer term strategy and in conjunction with the proposals for grading and investment in staff development, should lead to improvements in recruitment and retention.

5.18.5. There will be progressive workforce development, seeking to initiate and embed cultural change in the delivery of residential childcare. The workforce are already engaging in transformational change processes and are engaged across the staffing structure in the identification of an underpinning set of values and principals which inform our ethos of care and which will support improved outcomes within a dyadic developmental practice model

5.18.6. The proposed staffing grading structure removes the existing differential in the pay scales to create a flatter structure, allowing incremental reward and progression to grade 12 linked to residential staff attainment of the Degree in Residential Childcare.

5.18.7. The introduction of Team Leader posts to replace the Senior Support Worker role, acknowledges the enhanced level of operational leadership expected to support and further develop changes in work culture and practice, in addition to modernising and updating the residential service management structure.

5.18.8. Introduction of a Clinical Practitioner post reflects the wider aims within systemic practice. Within residential childcare the post will support, planning and delivery of complex interventions, hold residential teams to the principals of therapeutic practice and child development and in time support the delivery of DDP training. This post will have a key role in ensuring that the residential workforce is well equipped to manage their exposure to young people who have self-regulation difficulties.

6. IMPACT

6.1. In terms of the customer experience, the priority for the service is to:

- improve the care experience and future life chances 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 this care experienced group.

6.2. Improving Staff Experience, the service aims to:

- ensure that residential staff have equal knowledge, skills, values and status as other professionals within the wider children's services workforce;
- promote a culture of learning and professional development of the individual, the team and the service.
- promote professional practice which is enabling of safe care and located within a cycle of practice improvement and quality assurance.

6.3. Improving our use of Resources – recommendations

6.3.1. Effectively meet our statutory duties towards in care and care experienced young people.

6.3.2. Effectively meet wellbeing needs.

6.3.3. Retain a future focus in terms of meeting our workforce development needs in relation to SSSC workforce qualification standards.

6.3.4. Enable young people from the local communities of Aberdeen to retain this sense of identity and maintain significant relationships.

6.3.5. Improve outcomes from key transitions and limit the number of placement moves young people experience.

6.3.6. Ensure best use of resources and outcome from investments in our workforce and estate planning.

6.4. Corporate - Performance Indicator.

6.4.1. Children have the best start in life.

6.4.2. Children are safe and responsible.

6.4.3. Children are respected, included and achieving.

6.4.4. Improve the life chances of children, young people at risk.

6.4.5. Improve the healthy development of young children particularly those most at risk.

6.4.6. Improve the life chances of looked after children.

6.4.7. Reduce use of out of authority/specialist placements.

6.4.8. Children, young people and their families are supported to stay together.

6.4.9. Sustain long term change by focusing on the prevention of our reduction in health inequalities.

6.5. Public
EHRIA submitted.

7. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

7.1. As outlined above, interventions which are effective are enshrined in an evidential basis, which is reflected in our proposed investment in workforce development, facilitating the workforce to maintain support to those young people with higher levels of complexity; expand the range of effective services. This is a high skill basis for undertaking this work, intervention with vulnerable children and young people is an area of potential high risk.

7.2. 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. There is a significant reputational risk to the council of not having a quality residential child care service in place.

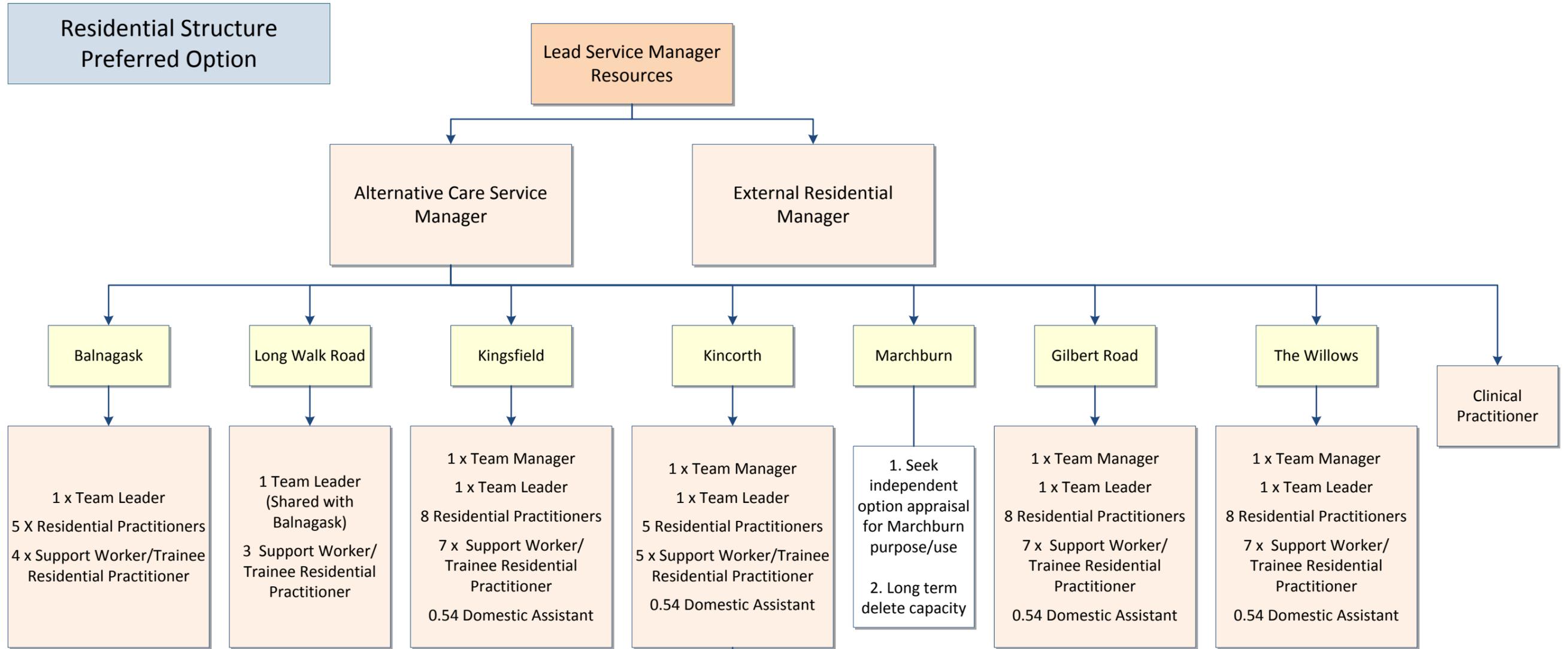
7.3. The implementation of the revised model will ensure that the council discharges its duties and powers effectively and develops a quality residential child care service thus mitigating the risks highlighted above.

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Staying Put Scotland , Proving Care Leavers with Connectedness and Belonging (The Scottish Govt 2013)
- Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy Toward a Comprehensive Trauma Informed Treatment for Developmental Trauma Disorder Hughes D(ddp Network 2014)
- The National Residential Childcare Initiative; Higher Aspirations, Brighter Futures (The Scottish Govt 2009)

9. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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Establishment		
External Residential Manager	G15	1
Clinical Practitioners	G14	1
Team Managers	G15	4
Team Leader	G14	5
Residential Practitioners	G12	34
Support Worker / Trainee Residential Practitioner	G11 / G12	33
Facilities Assistant	G9	1
Senior Support Assistant	G9	1
Support Assistants	G8	2.68
Domestic Assistant	G4	2.7
	FTE	85.38
Current Establishment		91.06

SUMMARY - PROPOSED ESTATE CAPACITY	
	Option 2
Kingsfield	5
Kincorth	3
Marchburn	0
Gilbert Road	6
The Willows	6
Balnagask	2
Long Walk Rd	2
Linksfield	5
Action for Children	7
Total	36

Reduce capacity to three placements

