

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education and Children's Services
DATE	1 June 2017
REPORT TITLE	Continuing Care
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/17/035
DIRECTOR	Gayle Gorman
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT:-

The report requested by Committee on the cost of continuing care in residential, fostering and kinship placement.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is asked to:

- i to note the steps taken to implement continuing care for young people who are looked after and accommodated on their 16th birthday should they request to remain in their placement; and
- ii to request the Head of Children's Services to submit a report to the Committee in March 2018 detailing the costs of continuing care during the first full year of implementation of Part 11 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014.

3. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES / OTHER HEADINGS AS APPROPRIATE

3.1 In October 2013 the Scottish Government published the "**Staying Put Scotland**" guidance, which gave a clear message that young people should not be forced to leave local authority care before the age of 18. The guidance highlighted the positive impact maintaining relationships had for care leavers on improving their long term outcomes. It also drew upon practice experience that showed longer, carefully planned transitions at a point when the young person was ready, as opposed to a defined age, delivered improved outcomes.

3.1.2 The Children & Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 imposes a new duty on local authorities to provide "continuing care". Young people who are 16 years of age and are accommodated by the local authority can now request to

remain in their existing placement up to the age of 21. This will apply to children placed in kinship; foster and residential care placements (excluding young people placed in secure care).

3.1.3 There is a presumption that the local authority will provide continuing care unless to do so would not be in the child's interests. Should the carer indicate that they are unable or unwilling to provide a continuing care placement then the duty will not apply. This would not remove the responsibility on the local authority to provide Aftercare support to the young person. This can include the provision of an alternative suitable placement but this would not be deemed a continuing care placement.

3.1.4 Although a young person in a continuing care placement would no longer be deemed to be a looked after child they would be entitled to the same support as if they were looked after.

3.2 Numbers of young people who are eligible for continued care in 2017 / 18 are

	18 year olds	17 year olds	16 year olds
Children's Homes		2	6
Foster Care		5	6
Kinship Care		1	1
External Children's Homes / Residential Schools		4	8
Locally Commissioned Children's Homes & Throughcare		2	2
External Foster Agency Care	1	4	16
	2	18	39

3.2.1 It is unclear at this stage how many of the organisations with whom purchased placement are provided will offer continuing care however it is stated in the National Fostering Contract that placements and rates would be negotiated with individual agencies.

3.2.2 Aberdeen City Council foster care and kinship care placements cost £226.75 per week and a placements in a children's home is £3,500.00 per week.

3.2.3 If continuing care is not offered or requested by a young person beyond the age of 16 years Aftercare Services will continue to be provided.

3.2.4 Aberdeen City Council Foster Carers will be supported to offer continuing care although the option of offering supported lodging continues to be available to carers.

- 3.2.5 Continuing care placement will limit the numbers of available placements for younger children and young people who need to be looked after and accommodated.
- 3.3 The services that assess and support kinship carers are under review so that aspects of the services can be refocused to support children and young people to remain within families.
 - 3.3.1 The drive to recruit staffing to children's homes continues so that all available placements can be offered in the city, accessing the full capacity we can provide.
 - 3.3.2 The PSP for Intensive Support will be operational later this year and the focus will be, where appropriate, to support children and young people to return safely to the care of their family. This should have a positive impact on reducing the number of throughcare requests.
- 3.4 At present only one eligible young person has requested continuing care in a local resource, however it is anticipated that this number will increase. At the present time these numbers cannot be predicted.
 - 3.4.1 Children and young people are being made aware of their right to request continuing care during the Looked After Child (LAC) Review.
 - 3.4.2 When a young person requests continuing care a welfare assessment will be undertaken to ensure that the placement will continue to meet their needs.
- 3.5 Work with the Financial Inclusion Team has begun to look at income maximisation for young people and carers.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The full financial implications of implementing continuing care are not yet known given the stage of implementation and the number of variables that will be considered with regard to the young person's circumstance for e.g. employment, further education.
 - 4.1.1 The numbers of young people who can request a continuing care placement is known for the years 2017 / 18 however given that young people remain in the placement while aged 16 there are no certainties about the potential demand beyond this age. The number of 14 and 15 year olds currently in care does indicate potential demand for services increasing in future years.
 - 4.1.2 There is no agreed payment rate for continuing care as part of the National Fostering Contract and this will be negotiated on an individual basis.
 - 4.1.3 All placements, both local and external placements will take account of the young person's rights to receive benefit payments and / or employment status.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 places a duty on the Authority to offer continuing care when requested and assessed as meeting the young person's needs

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

- 6.1** Potential for financial risks of delivering continued care cannot be quantified at this time. This is a low risk as only one young person has requested continuing care from a local resource however the risk will increase should more young people request to "stay put".

- 6.1.2** There may be a reduction of local resources (places) available in children's homes and fostering placements. This is a high risk given that the recruitment challenges in the city for residential and foster carers, mean that we cannot currently extend this offer.

- 6.1.3** There will likely be an increase cost for external fostering and residential placements. Unable to identify the risk level at this time however given the commercial nature of external providers the risk will be monitored.

7. IMPACT SECTION

- 7.1.1** The risk of not implementing Section 11 of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act could lead to a legal challenge by the Young person and reputational challenge to the Council. An EHRIA was completed in respect of this report.

- 7.1.2** Continuing care promotes better outcomes for young people who request and are supported to remain in their current care placement.

- 7.1.3** Continuing care supports young people make a positive transition in to adulthood including maintaining good mental health and wellbeing, to maintain relationships with family and community and engaging with education, learning and employment.

7.2 Economy

The recruitment of residential and foster carers increases employment opportunities for local people.

The stability of the care to children and young people significantly improves outcomes and life opportunities. Young people in continuing care placements will also be supported into engage with education and learning opportunities and into employment.

7.3 People

Young people will be involved in developing resources to be shared with others about how to request continuing care

“Young people leaving care continue to have poor outcomes despite the efforts and investment by services. Research clearly shows us that the transition period towards interdependence is when young people are most vulnerable. This is the time when responsible corporate parenting can make a difference to a care leavers lives.

Key Principles

Delaying the exit out of care for young people until they are sufficiently skilled and emotionally ready is not a new phenomena. The Staying Put approach takes this idea further. It demands needs led assessment and promotes the importance of consistent positive relations.

1. Young people are encouraged, enabled and empowered to remain in positive care settings until they are ready to move on.

[Aberdeen City Council] will ensure that young people are aware of their right to remain in their placement and give them the opportunity to exercise that right.

2. No looked after young person leaves care without the skills and support necessary for success. As is done with their own children, individuals with Corporate Parenting responsibilities will ensure that a looked after young person leaves their care placement with the practical skills and positive support networks that underpin successful adult life.

3. Local Authorities and their Corporate Parenting Partners will have made explicit their commitment to the Staying Put Scotland approach.

[Aberdeen City Council's] children's service plans and other relevant planning documents will be clear about the commitment to care leavers and support for the Stay-ing Put approach.” Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum (STAF)

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

The report is in response to a request made by the Sept 2016 committee report on the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

9. APPENDICES (if applicable)

None.

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