

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	EDUCATION AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES
DATE	14 September 2017
REPORT TITLE	Review of Residential Child Care
REPORT NUMBER	ECS/17/048
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1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an updated report on the progress of the Children's Residential Service Redesign, originally outlined and agreed at ECS Committee on 17 November 2016.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

It is recommended that the Committee -

- (a) note the progress in relation to progressing the staffing restructure within the Children's Residential Service; and
- (b) note the impact of change on work practices and implications for improved outcomes.

3 BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

- 3.1 The following summarises developments and the progress within Children's Residential Services, since the Committee Report submitted on 17 November 2016. The purpose of the November 2016 Committee Report was 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, including; 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. To make this the case in Aberdeen City the following actions have been progressed.

4. ETHOS OF CARE

- 4.1 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 as distressed with challenging behaviours due to attachment difficulties. 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).

- 4.2 Local experience reflects national trends, in that children who are accommodated often have increasingly complex emotional and mental health needs. These children have often been exposed to -numerous episodes of early disruption in their care, which has been traumatic. Children who have significant attachment disorders often benefit from care where there are fewer peers and a higher ratio of carers.
- 4.3 To promote a practice which is increasingly therapeutic and reflective of contemporary research, a calendar of awareness raising and specific workforce development training is being delivered for Aberdeen City Council by Scottish Attachment in Action. This will be delivered to both the residential work force and the Alternative Family Care Service, (whose focus is on identifying and supporting foster and adoptive care placements). All residential staff have a three day cohort date to undertake this training which will further embed our ethos of care. In addition two conference events have been agreed which will allow the approach to delivering care to be shared with a wider audience of stakeholders.
- 4.5 In combination, this offers up to 240 training places in terms of conference and cohort options.
- 4.6 The training draws on the approach enshrined within Dyadic Developmental Psychotherapy (DDP) which is to provide attachment parenting responses from our staff to young people who we look after. With specific reference to looked after children in residential care who have often been negatively impacted by early experiences of abuse, trauma and neglect. The aim of this specialised training is to better equip our workforce and attune their responses to the needs of the young people we have in our care. In the longer term we aim to improve outcomes for this group and potentially prevent escalation of negative coping strategies which can lead to future harm and disadvantages in adulthood.
- 4.7 An additional benefit of commissioning staff training and development of this type is that it will have a unifying impact on the residential workforce, shift their perception of their status and consequently should lead to better retention of personnel as staff recognise the investment made in their development.

5. RESIDENTIAL STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

- 5.1 Attracting and recruiting into the residential childcare workforce has historically encountered challenges. This reflects the already well documented factors which have served to bias job market preferences away from social care and social work professions in North East Scotland. The vacancy level for residential childcare has demonstrated some recent improvement; however the overall level of vacancy in terms of staffing establishment is at 20% below staffing establishment capacity, with vacancies across both promoted and operational grade posts.
- 5.2 The residential service recruitment strategy is supported by a strategically themed working group which has sought to broaden interest in joining the residential workforce, targeting students undertaking HNC Social Care level

qualifications, in addition to those completing higher level qualifications. It is planned to further develop a strategic approach to match skills and qualifications to meet the essential gaps in our workforce. In particular, to potentially develop approaches which, for example, may encourage males into the social care workforce.

6. JOB TITLES

- 6.1 The new job titles and job profiles of Residential Practitioner and Trainee Residential Practitioner have been introduced (the job title of Support Worker continues to apply to those staff members who do not have a degree level qualification in Social Work). It is planned and anticipated that the Support Worker job title will be phased out as individuals complete the anticipated SQA level 9 qualification.
- 6.2 The post of Senior Support Worker has been deleted from the staffing structure and replaced by the post of Team Leader. Interviews have taken place for the remaining management team vacancies in respect of two Team Leader and one Clinical Practitioner posts and interviews for these positions will continue until preferred candidates have been identified.

7. STAFF MATCHING MEETINGS

- 7.1 Matching meetings have now taken place with all employees within Children's Residential Services. This provided an opportunity to meet with individuals, to discuss the new job titles and profiles, in addition to sharing suggestions, providing clarification and allaying any confusion in relation to the process of change and the individual impact of the nationally and locally supported proposed SQA level 9 qualification in Residential Childcare.

8. BUILDINGS AND ESTATE

- 8.1 Refurbishment works at 311 Clifton Road are now complete and the commissioned provision delivered on our behalf by Action for Children is now operational from this site. Modernisation and updating of the physical resources within our children's home estate is being progressed. Staff recruitment challenges has limited the number of children's homes which are in operation. There are presently 23 young people accommodated in our local homes. There is limited capacity to accommodate additional young people, given the challenges outlined in terms of staffing provision. .
- 8.2 The limitations in our capacity to accommodate additional young people in need is an area of concern given both, the expansion of statutory duties to support young people where they remain in placement as an agreed Continuing Care plan and with regards to our duties in terms of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014. In addition utilising our local provision to better meet and respond to complex need and reduce the use of externally purchased provision is also of concern. Further scoping will be required.
- 8.3 The proposals presented and agreed at committee in November 2016 are being progressed and prioritised, with indications of success in terms of workforce

development and culture shift progression. Strategic issues concerning recruitment to the workforce at sufficient levels remains a wider challenge and subject to a long term sustained approach, further aligning the service to the wider goals and outcomes of children's social work.

9. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report. The report presented to the Finance Policy and Resources Committee on 1 December 2016 provided a comprehensive analysis of the financial implications of this new staffing structure.

10. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 To more effectively meet our statutory duties towards young people in care and in terms of the care experienced by young people as set out in the Children and Young Person Scotland Act (2014).
- 10.2 The council has a range of duties and powers which it must discharge and were it not to do so it could face legal challenge and sanction. More significantly vulnerable children and young people could be at risk of an increased level of significant harm. There is a significant reputational risk to the council of not having a quality Residential Child Care Service in place.
- 10.3 The implementation of the revised model will ensure that the council discharges its duties and obligations effectively and develops a quality residential child care service, thus mitigating any potential risks highlighted above.

11. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

11.1 Financial

The financial risk is in the recruitment to the residential workforce, as this will impact on the capacity of the service to care for children and young people.
Medium risk.

11.2 Employee

Workforce development and training has been viewed very positively by the service. The level 9 qualification has been paused by the Scottish Government and failure to deliver this training opportunity may have an impact on the recruitment and retention of staff.
Low Risk

11.3 Customer / Citizen

Young people who are being cared for in the children's homes are choosing to stay and the age range has increased. This is reflective of the care being offered.
Low Risk.

11.4 Environmental

The options appraisal that was completed considered the use and function of each of the children's homes.

Low Risk

11.5 Technological

No risks have been identified.

No Risk

11.6 Legal

As stated in the report the Children and Young people (Scotland) Act 2014 places duties on local Authorities in their care of young people to support them to "stay put".

Medium Risk

11.7 Reputational

There is to be a route and branch review of residential childcare in Scotland and the redesign of the service may offer the opportunity to share the good practice that is developing in the city.

Low Risk

12. IMPACT SECTION

12.1 Technology

The Council recognises that enabling technology is central to innovative, integrated and transformed public services.

13. IMPACT

13.1 Economy

- The delivery of an attachment based, informed residential care service is considered innovative. The delivery of the Service will be research based and reflects the high skills and existing knowledge of the residential childcare workforce. It will 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.

13.2 People

- Young people in our children's homes are respected, included and achieving. They are listened to, valued and their views are reflected in decision making.
- The approach to planning and delivering residential childcare is innovative and effectively maximises the skills of the workforce and their capacity.

- An Equality and Human Right Impact assessment has been completed, demonstrating the alignment of the approach in our residential care to a key Education and Children Services equality objective in promoting young people's rights within an environment which protects and enhances wellbeing
- This is an investment in our young people and will serve to assist them in having better outcomes, particularly in respect of their mental health and potential for emotional growth.
- Effectively meet our statutory duties towards young people in care and the care experienced by young people.
- Retain a future focus in terms of meeting our workforce development needs in relation to SSSC workforce qualification standards.
- Enable young people from the local communities of Aberdeen to retain a sense of identity and maintain significant relationships.
- Improve outcomes from key transitions and limit the number of placement moves young people experience.
- Promote a culture of learning and professional development of the individual, the team and the service.

13.3 Place

- The redesign of residential child care and the potential for young people to remain in our care until the age of 21 and to support continued relationships with family and community

13.4 Technology

- A website is being developed for care experienced children and young people in partnership with SHMU. The website will be developed input from young people and will be accessible to young people to improve engagement and consultation.

14. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Hughes, D 2013 Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties (Coram, BAAF)

15. APPENDICES (if applicable)

Ethos of Care

<http://thezone/nmsruntime/saveasdialog.asp?IID=39946&sID=431>

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