

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Education Operational Delivery Committee
DATE	17 January 2019
REPORT TITLE	The Inclusion Review and Out of Authority Placements
REPORT NUMBER	OPE/19/040
DIRECTOR	Rob Polkinghorne
CHIEF OFFICER	Graeme Simpson
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TERMS OF REFERENCE	1.1

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report was requested following a report presented by the Chief Internal Auditor to the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee of 8 May 2018 which reviewed progress with implementing the applicable recommendations of the Inclusion Review.
- 1.2 The Service were asked by the Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee to bring a report on the changes made as a result of the Inclusion Review to determine the impact on out of authority placements.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Committee note the actions which have been carried out to date.

3.1.1 BACKGROUND

The Audit, Risk and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 8 May 2018 instructed the Lead Service Manager to present a report about the outcome of the impact of the Inclusion Review on out of authority placements.

- 3.1.2 The Inclusion Review predominantly looked to build a stronger universal educational offer to all children and young people. Building a strong universal offer reduces the need for more specialist interventions, including educational placements out-with the authority. It is therefore incumbent on the Local Authority to ensure that every effort is made to support children to remain in their local community and local education provision.
- 3.1.3 The decision to place a child in an out of authority placement is made only after careful and extensive professional consideration. This consideration will look at all aspects of a child's circumstances of which schooling, while important, is but one of many factors to be considered. Separately the decision to place a child

in an out of authority placement is often determined by a Children's Hearing; Court or Educational Tribunal. Where any one of these bodies makes such a decision the Local Authority must implement their decision.

- 3.1.4 When social work and/or education staff consider an out of authority resource might be necessary to meet a child's needs their professional assessment is fully considered by the Children's Specialist Services Forum (CSSF). The CSSF is made up of senior officers from ICFS, Health and Social Care Partnership and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). The CSSF ensures that every possible effort is made to support children to remain locally but also recognises that from time to time such resources will need to be secured to keep the young person safe and for their complex needs to be met.
- 3.1.5 Improving our support of children who are looked after and care experienced was a key recommendation of the Inclusion Review. The appointment of the Virtual School Head Teacher was a key response to this identified gap. Additionally, the opening of Orchard Brae school along with the development of a skilled staff group has allowed for more children, including looked after children to be supported to remain in the community. Previously many of these children would have been placed in expensive out of authority resources.

PROGRESS TO DATE

3.2.1 ESTABLISHING A VIRTUAL SCHOOL

Aberdeen City appointed the first Virtual School Head Teacher (VSHT) in Scotland, who took up post in December 2015. The VSHT has a key role in championing the needs of Looked After and Care Experienced children and young people, monitoring data to inform improvement, raising awareness of Corporate Parenting responsibilities as well as challenging and supporting the provision of effective and personalised educational plans. The VSHT is a member of the ICFS Children's Specialist Services Forum and works closely with colleagues from across the Cluster to help develop shared working practices. More integrated ways of working have brought greater educational rigour and accountability to the requests received from other local authorities for funding to support children and young people currently out of authority.

- 3.2.2 A review of the Virtual School, which was carried out in June 2018, provided positive feedback as well as clear action points which are currently being taken forward. In addition to this review, an annual Standards and Quality report is produced by the Virtual School. The Standards and Quality Report provides a detailed analysis of educational outcomes for children and helps to inform the development of high level improvement priorities. This process of yearly evaluation and planning ensures that the Virtual School responds to emerging trends as well as looking at the particular needs of cohorts of learners. The Virtual School will continue to use data to inform a highly targeted approach.
- 3.2.3 The priority given to the educational attainment of looked after children is reflected in the refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan and delivery of this will be overseen by the Integrated Children's Services Board.

3.3.1 ORCHARD BRAE SCHOOL

The opening of Orchard Brae school in August 2017 has enabled the development a multi-agency service to be delivered to children with severe and complex needs. The co-location of services has enabled an enhancement of professional skill and knowledge across staff with different professional roles. This service, along with other enhanced provision within mainstream settings, has enabled the Local Authority to be well placed to meet the needs of children who historically would require an out of authority provision to have their educational needs met.

3.3.2 Over the past eight years there has been a 50% reduction in the number of children with complex disabilities accessing out of authority schools (on both a residential and day basis), who are now being supported to remain in the community. 22 in 2011 compared to 11 in 2018.

3.3.3 It is of crucial importance that we continue to collaborate across the cluster and with colleagues in health to ensure that we collectively analyse and refine the partnership system and our practices to prevent needs from escalating. Officers across ICFS welcome the focus on Looked After and Care Experienced children and young people in the refreshed LOIP. Additionally, the focus within the refreshed LOIP on mental health and wellbeing is strongly welcomed. CAMHS have a vital knowledge and skill set to offer to better meet the needs of young people who exhibit poor mental health.

3.4.1 REVIEW OF THE POLICY ON EXCLUSION

A revised policy on exclusion has been in place since August 2017. The Policy has supported a decrease in the number of exclusions across the city. More needs to be done to consistently embed good working practices across all schools. Data around exclusions, including those of LAC, continues to be carefully monitored on a monthly basis to enable appropriate support and challenge to realise improvement.

3.5.1 DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS

Staff across Integrated Children and Family Services in conjunction with the wider partnership, have refreshed the tiered intervention framework. This now includes a range of practical guidance and bespoke and highly evaluated training to support practitioners. This work continues to realise more consistent working practices across the partnership and is currently being extended to include all planning required for children including the provision of Coordinated Support Plans for many Looked After Children.

3.5.2 Education Support Officers provide bespoke support to schools in relation to this and the child protection agenda in order to improve the quality of planning for vulnerable children and young people. The Virtual School is developing new quality assurance arrangements to supplement these arrangements and offer assurance that schools are meeting all legal duties.

3.5.3 There is clear evidence of increasing numbers of partners actively engaged in case work around individual children and young people. Improved collaboration has led to the needs of our Looked after and Care Experienced being at the forefront of all of those who support children and families across the City. This

has resulted in the needs of our Looked after and care experienced young people featuring strongly in the refreshed Local Outcome Improvement Plan. This is welcomed by all colleagues in ICFS.

3.6.1 INCREASING FOCUS ON THE MENTAL HEALTH AGENDA

A multi-agency review of the national mental health strategy has led to the identification of a series of necessary actions and improvements. This includes the need to establish more effective primary prevention and early intervention to support children with mental health needs to limit escalation.

3.6.2 ICFS, in collaboration with partners, are working to increase understanding of mental health needs across universal services and also equip colleagues to provide targeted support through the delivery of appropriate interventions, including those of a therapeutic nature. Colleagues across the ICFS service have pooled resource in order to commission services to support the widening of provision and welcome the high profile childhood mental health has in the refreshed LOIP.

3.6.3 Premises have now been secured to enable the provision of a wellbeing service, this new service will enhance our continuum of provision for vulnerable learners. The aim of the service is to provide bespoke pathways and interventions for learners and their families preventing an escalation of need which can have the potential to cause education and care arrangements to breakdown placing the child at risk of being placed out with the authority.

3.7.1 PROVISION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

A range of professional learning opportunities have been provided and have often been supported by policy or guidance. Officers continue to evaluate the impact of all professional learning and update programmes based on the yearly audit of professional learning needs received from schools.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

4.1 All costs have been met from current budgets.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Local Authority has many legal duties including those of:

- The Standards in Scotland's Schools Act 2000
- The Education (Additional Support for Learning) (Scotland) Act 2004
- The Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014

5.1.1 These legislative drivers have been considered as work has progressed. The work undertaken to date and the proposed National Improvement Framework Plan satisfies these legal duties.

6. MANAGEMENT OF RISK

	Risk	Low (L), Medium (M), High (H)	Mitigation
Financial	Risk of not having sufficient resource to meet the costs of OOA Placements.	L	Looking at data in a multi-agency way will improve our understanding of vulnerabilities in the systems.
Legal	Failure to deliver on legal duties detailed in 5.	L	On-going professional learning to clarify our obligations.
Employee	Risk of employees feeling overwhelmed by expectations	L	Guidance to be succinct and align with other partnership documents wherever possible.
Customer	Risk of not achieving outcomes for children and young people.	L	The changes to our provision enable primary prevention and early intervention thereby reducing potential risk.
Environment	No risks identified		
Technology	No risks identified		
Reputational	Risk of not effectively meeting the needs of all learners.	M	Closely monitor and quality assure progress.

7. OUTCOMES

Local Outcome Improvement Plan Themes	
	Impact of Report
Prosperous Economy	Improving outcomes for children and young people will support a prosperous economy
Prosperous People	Improving outcomes for children and young people will support a prosperous economy

Design Principles of Target Operating Model	
	Impact of Report
Customer Service Design	The activities undertaken to date and the planned next steps promote an understanding of the circumstances of individual children and young

	people to ensure that personalised support is available to them.
Organisational Design	Improved use of resource in the system.
Governance	Overseen by Chief Officers and by the Education Operational Delivery Committee.
Workforce	On-going clarity of expectations.
Process Design	Monitoring arrangements ensure that any vulnerabilities in the system are quickly addressed.
Partnerships and Alliances	Significant partnership work is key to addressing the needs of our learners and the team is committed to building on existing relationships.

8. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Equality & Human Rights Impact Assessment	Not required
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Not required
Duty of Due Regard / Fairer Scotland Duty	Applicable

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

10. APPENDICES (if applicable)

None.

11. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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