

<i>item:</i>	7
<i>report:</i>	CYP37/09

NORTHERN LIGHTS

By Bill Alexander

Summary

This report updates Members further on the work being undertaken to establish an intensive care and learning resource in Highland, to enable the return of children from out of authority placements, and to help achieve identified efficiencies. While consultation continues, Barnardo's has drafted proposals and provided costings that confirm that this is a viable proposition.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Joint Committee has been committed to supporting young people as far as possible through resources based within the authority, and this involves keeping those number of children in out of authority placements as low as possible to meet assessed needs.
- 1.2 Further, the Highland Council has agreed savings in 2009/10 and 2010/11, based on returning a number of young people from such placements to a new intensive care and learning service, known as Northern Lights. The Committee agreed in March 2009 to fund Barnardos' to progress this development, including through the appointment of a Project Manager.
- 1.3 This work has continued, and it has reached the stage where Barnardo's must acquire a property for this service, to meet our stated timescales.

2. Background

- 2.1 When children are placed in specialist provision outwith Highland, the links with their home communities and networks are inevitably fractured, and they often find it difficult to re-establish relationships and networks when these placements come to an end.
- 2.2 In addition, there are obvious challenges for social work, health and education staff in sustaining close and effective support for young people when they are placed at a considerable distance. This also makes planning for the return more difficult, and sometimes it takes longer than it might as a direct consequence of this.
- 2.3 These various factors impact on many of the young people and their communities when they do eventually return. Unless young people can

be reintegrated back with their families, or supported in more independent settings, with prospects of ongoing education or learning, there is a strong likelihood of offending and other problematic behaviours.

- 2.4 Further, the delay of returning young people to Highland has additional costs. Current placement costs for this group of young people are between £2,700 - £4,600 per week, not inclusive of additional specialist support and the associated costs of maintaining the placement.
- 2.5 Barnardo's Scotland proposes to deliver an enhanced residential service that will return children to Highland and, where possible, back to their families or to local residential or foster care placements with dedicated educational support.
- 2.6 This proposal builds utilises Barnardo's considerable experience of delivering services to the most vulnerable children and young people in Scotland, and on our existing partnership in Highland of some 6 years. It also utilises Barnardo's role as throughcare and aftercare provider in Highland, and enables added value by the linkage between these services, and with the associated new *Barnardo's Works* development.

3. Northern Lights

- 3.1 The Northern Lights proposal has been developed as a collaborative process between Barnardo's and practitioners across Highland agencies. The most recent planning document is attached,
- 3.2 Costings are included in the planning document that indicate the total costs of Northern Lights as £1,465k. These costings illustrate the potential savings for two different groups of five children in current placements, at the least and most expensive ends of the range of provision.

		<u>2010\11</u>	<u>2011\12</u>	<u>Total Savings for Period</u>
Current costs	Group A	1,107,600	1,107,600	2,215,200
	Group B	878,800	878,800	1,757,600
Northern Lights Costs	Group A	732,553	732,553	1,465,106
	Group B	732,553	732,553	1,465,106
Savings to The Highland Council	Group A	375,047	375,047	750,094
	Group B	146,247	146,247	292,494

- 3.3 Clearly, the realisation of this level of savings is dependent on being able to identify and maintain the maximum number of children in placement at Northern Lights, who would otherwise have been in residential school.
- 3.4 It is intended that work commences soon to begin the particular young people who may be supported to return to the authority as part of this initiative. Accordingly, while Barnardo's have examined the local property market, they now require to take the necessary steps to purchase or lease a building.

Recommendation

The Joint Committee is asked to agree that Barnardo's are now given authority to acquire the property to proceed with Northern Lights.

Bill Alexander
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