

<i>item:</i>	4
<i>report:</i>	CYP09/09

IMPLEMENTING SWEET 16 – REPORT BY CHILDREN’S COMMISSIONER by Bill Alexander

Summary

This report provides an update on implementation of the ‘Sweet 16?’ report by the Children’s Commissioner, on the age of leaving care. It includes proposals to support children returning from out of authority care situations in a new intensive resource currently known as Northern Lights, managed by Barnardo’s, and also for developments in supported accommodation.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Scotland’s Children’s Commissioner published ‘Sweet 16? – The age of leaving care in Scotland’, in March 2008. This report reviewed the support available to care leavers across the country, and particularly examined the availability of housing support. It advocated that looked after children should be encouraged to remain in appropriate care and housing settings for as long as possible, to assist them into future provision when they were more fully prepared.
- 1.2 As Highland provided a case study for the review, and faced particular challenges, it included a particular focus on the situation in the authority, albeit there were no specific recommendations.

2. Update to the review

- 2.1 The Children’s Commissioner undertook an evaluation of responses to ‘Sweet 16?’ in February 2009, which will be published at a future date.
- 2.2 Highland’s response emphasised the commitment of elected members to act as good corporate parents to looked after children, including the arrangements for designated ‘champions’ in each Area to act as a focal point for the interests of all children. It made clear that the Council was committed to an improvement agenda for looked after children as part of the integrated children’s services plan.
- 2.3 The response also acknowledged the need to develop and sustain aftercare provision within the authority. It indicated that there had been a number of developments over the last year, including:
 - Dedicated housing for care leavers.
 - New and additional housing support services.

- A joint protocol detailing roles and responsibilities and a throughcare pathway, between Housing Services, the Social Work Service and Barnardo's (the lead support provider).
- 2.4 It confirmed the need for further aftercare facilities, and that we are at an advanced stage in planning:
- More-independent living facilities, directly attached to children's units;
 - Local authority accommodation adjacent to children's units, where young people who are accommodated can have trial assessment periods;
 - Housing association accommodation provision, for young people moving on from supported lodgings and supported accommodation, and with ongoing support.
- 2.5 In its own response to the 'Sweet 16?' report, Barnardo's, which is the leading provider of aftercare services in Scotland, stated that:
"Highland Council was specifically mentioned in the 'Sweet 16?' report. Barnardo's Scotland is aware of some significant changes since the launch of 'Sweet 16?' particularly in regard to the development of a range of accommodation options for young people which will go some considerable way to improving the record on the use of bed & breakfast accommodation. There has also been the development of an Inter-Agency Housing Protocol which is expected to be implemented in the near future."
- 2.6 The full text of Highland's response to the Children's Commissioner is attached as **Appendix 1**.

3. Developments in supported accommodation

- 3.1 Proposals have now been prepared by officers of Highland Council and Barnardo's to progress some of the aftercare facilities identified above. These are documented in **Appendix 2**, and include:

- Raigmore, Inverness – Locality House

This accommodation, in the proximity of a residential unit, will be allocated to Barnardo's by Housing & Property Services. Young people will be eligible to access the accommodation when they have reached a reasonable level of competence and confidence in relation to independence skills but require the opportunity to practice these skills in a supportive but authentic environment. Young people will receive training input and have opportunity for supported trial overnight stays. Although the accommodation is primarily for training purposes it is envisaged that it could be used periodically to provide accommodation for young people in emergency crisis situations

- Waterloo Place, Inverness – 4 self contained flats

These flats from Albyn Housing Association will be available to young people for a maximum of two years who are moving on from Planefield House and supported lodgings. They will be in a self contained block with a private entrance.

- 3.2 Set up costs are available for the furnishing and equipment for this accommodation. Rental costs will be met from the existing Throughcare and Aftercare Budget.
- 3.3 Staffing and related costs for support from Barnardo's will be around £40,000 per year, and around £17,000 start up costs, and it is proposed that these are identified from within the out-of-authority placements budget.

4. Northern Lights

- 4.1 As part of the 2009/10 efficiency measures, Barnardo's have been commissioned to develop an enhanced residential service to enable 5 identified young people to return from out of authority placements where a direct return home is not a possibility. This resource will then help support these young people into settled and appropriate aftercare facilities. It is provisionally known as 'Northern Lights'.
- 4.2 This facility will require to be both a complex and an intensive service, providing resilient support to a small group of young people who present significant challenges to all services. It will need to meet high social care needs, as well as work with other local services to address significant health and educational issues.
- 4.3 Barnardo's are developing the model for the service in consultation with Highland Council and NHS Highland officers. This work now requires full-time commitment, and it is therefore proposed that a Project Manager is now recruited to lead the initiative, with a view to establishing the facility before the end of this financial year.
- 4.4 The full year costs of this post are included at **Appendix 3**. It is proposed that part year costs of £50,000 should be identified from the out-of-authority placements budget.

5. Corporate Parenting Seminar

Members of the Joint Committee should further note that these and other issues will be considered at a corporate parenting seminar, which has been arranged for the afternoon of Thursday 25th June. This event will provide information and advice about the corporate parenting role, and will involve the Scottish Government and Who Cares? Scotland as well as young people themselves.

Recommendation

The Joint Committee is asked to agree to support these initiatives and to allocate funding from the out-of-authority budget in 2009/10 of £50,000 for the Northern Lights Project Manager and £57,000 for the supported accommodation developments.

Bill Alexander

Head of Children's Services



PROGRESS ON SWEET 16? LEAVING CARE ISSUES

Local Authority Responses to the Commissioner's Questions

I would be pleased to receive your responses to the following questions on the impact of the *Sweet 16? The age of leaving care in Scotland Report*. (Please use the continuation sheet provided if necessary)

I would be grateful if you could **please complete by Monday 23rd February** and return to SCCYP, 85 Holyrood Road, Edinburgh EH8 8AU.

If you require an electronic version of this feedback form please contact Sareta Puri, Sareta.Puri@sccyp.org.uk or call 0131 558 3733.

Kathleen Marshall
Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

Please complete the following details.

NAME OF LOCAL AUTHORITY: Highland

NAME OF CHIEF EXECUTIVE: Alistair Dodds

Please also provide the

**NAME OF THE PERSON
COMPLETING THIS FORM:** Bill Alexander

DESIGNATION/POSITION: Head of Children's Services

PROMOTING RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Have you engaged with councillors to promote their responsibilities as corporate parents (Recommendation 3)? If so, please say how.

The Council considered its corporate parenting responsibilities at a full Highland Council meeting in December 2007. The report is available at <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/committees/thehighlandcouncil/2007-12-13-thc-min.htm>

Elected members fully endorsed the commitment to act as good corporate parents, and made arrangements for designated 'Champions' in each Area to act as a focal point for the interests of all children within Council business. The Council also committed to an improvement agenda for looked after children as part of the integrated children's services plan.

That meeting of the Council also approved the use of additional funding to develop and sustain aftercare provision.

All subsequent matters for the Council in relation to looked after children, including in relation to implementation of *GIRFEC*, have been set within the context of the corporate parenting role. Most meetings of the Highland Council and NHS Highland Joint Committee on Children & Young People have addressed aspects of this role. This has included both service and policy developments.

Elected members have requested a seminar to further consider in detail how they may fulfil the corporate parenting role. This is in the process of being arranged with Scottish Government representatives and Who Cares? Scotland.

2. Have you engaged with Housing services to emphasise their role as part of the corporate parent (Recommendation 12)? If so, please say how.

Housing & Property Services are represented on the strategic planning group for looked after children, and also on the strategic planning group for throughcare & aftercare. These groups contribute to the Children's Services Plan.

Housing & Property Services have assisted with the development and implementation of a number of service and policy initiatives. These have included:

- Dedicated housing for care leavers.
- New and additional housing support services.
- A joint protocol detailing roles and responsibilities and a throughcare pathway, between Housing Services, the Social Work Service and Barnardo's (the lead support provider).

The Director of Housing & Property Services is one of the Council's Chief Officers that has helped form a Chief Officers Group to better co-ordinate support for the transitions of all young people into adulthood across the agencies of the community planning partnership. Housing issues have been identified as one of the key workstreams for this group.

The needs of care leavers are also included in the Council's Homelessness Strategy. Significant reports on these matters were provided to members of the Joint Committee on 14 March 2008 and 28 November 2008.

3. Have you engaged with education colleagues about the funding of children in residential schools (Recommendation 10)? If so, please say how.

There is a joint social work and education budget for the funding of children in residential schools.

Recommendations for placement in residential school must be evidenced by an integrated assessment, and endorsed by both Education and Social Work Service managers. They are considered by a joint group, chaired by the joint Head of Service, and then have to be jointly agreed by both Directors.

MOVING FORWARD

4. What steps are you taking with social work and care staff to promote 18 rather than 16 as the age for leaving care (Recommendations 3, 4, 5)?

This is an explicit policy position, supported in a range of activities, documents and in staff training. In particular, it is an integral approach within the transitions policy, the developing joint protocol referred to above, and implementation of *GIRFEC* and *More Choice, More Chances*.

A range of services continue to be developed to more appropriately meet the needs of looked after and accommodated children at ages 16 and 17, thereby supporting them in care settings.

Further, Housing staff have committed to working with colleagues to reassure looked after and accommodated children that they should not feel forced into making premature decisions about housing options, but that they can be supported as appropriate through various stages towards a tenancy.

5. What steps are you taking to provide better/ more appropriate accommodation for care leavers (Recommendation 7)?

The March 2008 Committee report agreed the development of a standard supported lodgings scheme across the authority, organised by Barnardo's, and a new supported accommodation facility for 5 young people in Inverness. Both are now operational.

We are at an advanced stage of development of further sets of proposals, involving:

- More-independent living facilities, directly attached to children's units;
- Local authority accommodation adjacent to children's units, where young people who are accommodated can have trial assessment periods;
- Housing association accommodation provision, for young people moving on from supported lodgings and supported accommodation, and with ongoing support.

6. What steps are you taking to implement the recommendation that young people should not have to be made "homeless" in order to be regarded as a priority for housing allocation (Recommendation 13)?

The aim of the joint protocol is that care leavers should not apply as homeless on leaving care, and neither will they be accommodated in homeless accommodation. Their housing application will receive appropriate priority when it is deemed that they are ready to move to a permanent tenancy.

7. What steps are you taking to facilitate young people coming back into care for short periods of support (Recommendation 16)?

We have always done this where possible, but we recognise that it has not always been possible. Accordingly, the developments referred to in Question 5 above will all provide flexible facilities for this purpose.

GATHERING STATISTICS

8. How many care leavers in the current financial year have been discharged from care into:

Care leavers are not discharged from care into either bed & breakfast accommodation or hostels for the homeless. However, because of subsequent changes in circumstances, they may move into such accommodation at a later date.

At the last audit, two former care leavers were living in bed & breakfast accommodation that had been arranged by the Council (none were in hostels for the homeless). Both occupied accommodation that was safe and had use of kitchen facilities. One had sole use of toilet and washing facilities; the other shared these facilities. Both were on the housing register for permanent accommodation.

Both are supported by Barnardos Springboard as they have complex needs and it is unlikely that they would be able to manage to sustain a tenancy at the current time.



**PROPOSAL TO EXPAND ACCOMMODATION
OPTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE WHO HAVE BEEN
LOOKED AFTER AND ACCOMMODATED**



1. INTRODUCTION

The development of a range of accommodation options which fulfil our statutory responsibility and ensure the safety and well-being of our young people who have been Looked After and Accommodated has been a significant gap in our Through and Aftercare services for some time now. Whilst we have recently developed our Supported Lodgings Service with Barnardos Springboard there is still much to do in terms of providing a range of suitable options. This proposal goes some considerable way in addressing this need and demonstrates a genuine commitment to our determination to fulfil our corporate parenting role and responsibilities.

This report is the outcome of working groups and consultation including young people, practitioners from residential units and Barnardos and a cross-section of managers.

We are still investigating other options and recognise that this is just a start but the two options discussed in the report meet some recommendations from The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum and Sweet Sixteen, the recent report from the Children's Commissioner.

2. BEST PRACTICE

The Scottish Throughcare and Aftercare Forum has developed a range of quality indicators for best practice in relation to a number of areas in TCAC one of which is accommodation. It recommends that a range of suitable accommodation options are developed in partnership with other relevant organisations and that the choice of accommodation should be based on the young person's need and that young people should be prepared to take on the responsibilities of independent living. It further recommends that accommodation protocols are developed and shared across relevant agencies. Our Inter-Agency Housing Protocol for Highland is at the final draft stage and should be available in the very near future.

Sweet Sixteen, the recent report from the Children's Commissioner, highlights the gaps and challenges around current practice in relation to young people leaving care in Scotland. A number of urgent key recommendations were made in relation to accommodation which we have taken account of in this proposal.

3. SERVICE DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

Raigmore – Locality House

This accommodation will be in the proximity of the Ashton Road residential unit and will be allocated to Barnardos by Housing Services, a three bedroom property has been identified. Young people will be eligible to occupy this accommodation for training purposes when they have reached a reasonable level of competence and confidence in relation to independence skills but require the opportunity to practice these skills in a supportive but authentic environment.

Community Support staff will be undertake a training programme with young people covering a range of skills that are essential for young people to acquire to enable them to transition to independent living.

These staff will also be available on a roster basis to provide support to young people having the opportunity of trial overnight stays and will concentrate their efforts in the morning, teatime and bedtime which, from experience, seem to be the times young people require most support, encouragement and help to manage boundaries.

It is also hoped as a secondary function to use the accommodation on an emergency basis for young people for a period of up to one month. Effective assessment and review processes are essential to provide the throughput rate we would require to keep this resource does not become blocked.

Waterloo Place – 4 self contained flats

These flats are available from Albyn Housing Association and will be available to young people for a maximum of two years who are moving on from Planefield House and supported lodgings. They will be in a self contained block with a private entrance.

Once again the Community Support staff would work with these young people although it is expected that their needs would be less intense than those of the Locality Flat.

Effective assessment and review processes are crucial to the success of these placements particularly given the imposed time limit. We should, by this time, be looking at an allocated tenancy or perhaps a return to a more intensive experience for those who have developed additional needs or experienced a setback.

4. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

We will require set up costs for the furnishing and equipment for all the accommodation described in this report* Housing Department will ensure their property in Ashton Road is ready for use by providing it with a starter pack including floor coverings.

Accommodation rental costs will be met from the existing Throughcare and Aftercare Budget.

* The attached budget pertains to the Raigmore flats and does not cover any associated costs with the Waterloo road flats

5. AIMS AND OUTCOMES

Aim

The primary aim of the service will be to provide training opportunities for young people who have been looked after are offered a training programme including supported trial overnight\ 24 hour stays in accommodation which will enable them to develop the skills and confidence to successfully achieve their own tenancy. Short term emergency placements for former looked after an accommodated young people will also be provided as a secondary function. Only one emergency placement will be provided at any given time. Whilst the

accommodation is used on an emergency basis training sessions with other young people will continue but trial overnights stays will not be available.

Outcomes

1. Increased numbers of young people making successful transition from residential care to independence
2. Improved development of young people's social, emotional and practical skills.
3. Improvement in the emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people.
4. Reduction in young people who have been involved in tenancy failures; multiple tenancy failures.
5. Increase in the number of young people sustaining employment, community living and further education
6. Eradication of the use of bed and breakfast accommodation for young people who have been looked after.
7. Reduction in the vulnerability of young people and increased ability to face the risks and challenges that society presents.
8. Increase in the employment opportunities by corporate parents including Highland Council.

5. BUDGET

<u>Description</u>	<u>Start up Costs</u>	<u>Budget 2009/10</u>
Food		3500
Personal Requisites		100
Recruitment Costs	4500	
Insurance - Staff		1140
Payroll Costs		29640
Private Vehicle Expenses		200
Public Transport		100
Property Management Costs		600
Cleaning (Materials)	200	150
Furniture & Equipment - Purchases	10600	500
Furniture & Equipment - Repairs		250
Telephone - Equipment	450	0
Telephone - Call Costs		300
Mobile Phone Costs		50
Books		100
Training		900
VAT Input Costs	2360	500
VAT Recovery	-2360	-500
Finance Administration Costs		150
SUB TOTALS	15750	0 37680
Management Charge	1260	2250

TOTALS

<u>17010</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>39930</u>
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Appendix 3

Northern Lights Project Manager (full year costs)

Salary including Employers Costs		£51,520
Travel and Subsistence		2,250
Training		150
Other costs (FCR)		
Insurance	£180	
People dept	850	
Property & Facility Mngt	100	
IT	<u>880</u>	<u>2,010</u>
Sub Total		£55,930
Management Costs		<u>4,300</u>
Total Costs		<u>£60,230</u>