

<i>item:</i>	9
<i>report:</i>	CYP06/08

AFTERCARE SERVICES

By Bill Alexander

Summary

This report provides an update on progress on developments in aftercare services and addresses issues raised at the last meeting of the Committee.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the November meeting of the Committee, members were informed of the outcomes of a joint review of leaving care services, particularly focusing on aftercare and housing support. That report identified themes that had emerged during the review and explained the current support available for throughcare and aftercare for young people. It also identified issues for further development including the need for strategic leadership, improved planning for individual young people, availability of housing support and the review of mental health services.
- 1.2 The report stated that although systems and services were in place for assisting young people leaving care, they did not always work in the most effective and seamless way, and a more co-ordinated strategic approach was required. A joint member-officer working group was proposed to examine these issues in more detail.
- 1.3 The Joint Committee agreed to seek further reports that made specific proposals with regard to:
 - sustaining the current level of service provided by Barnardo's Springboard;
 - the need to identify a senior officer within Highland Council to have lead responsibility for throughcare and aftercare;
 - streamlining the management of young people's finances;
 - the feasibility of workers within Criminal Justice Services taking responsibility for some young people.
 - new housing services, with support, to fill the gap between residential or foster care and temporary and permanent accommodation;
 - the review of mental health services, including how they could better meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers.
 - the need for a Working Group.
- 1.4 This report provides an update on these various matters.

2. Sustaining the current level of service provided by Barnardo's Springboard

- 2.1 At its meeting in December, the Highland Council considered a report on its responsibilities for looked after children, and all members committed to acting as good corporate parents.
- 2.2 The Council was informed that the current funding arrangement with Barnardo's Springboard for aftercare services concludes in March 2008, and that additional funding was required to sustain the level of service that has been provided for the past three years.

2.3 The Council agreed to allocate one-off Scottish Government funding of £83,000 for corporate parenting to sustain the Springboard service into 2008/09.

3. The need to identify a senior officer within Highland Council to have lead responsibility for throughcare and aftercare

3.1 The Housing & Social Work Committee considered the final elements of the reorganisation of children's services at its meeting earlier this week. This included a post of Resource Manager for looked after children and child protection, with lead responsibility within the Council for throughcare and aftercare.

3.2 As part of the preparation for this development, Council officers have been working with colleagues in Barnardo's to agree a joint protocol for the management of throughcare and aftercare services. This protocol is intended to detail the particular responsibilities of staff in Children's Services and Criminal Justice Services, and in the Barnardo's Springboard Service. It aims to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of services by:

1. Ensuring that Strategy is developed and implemented for corporate parenting services
2. Ensuring that Policy, Procedure and Guidance are developed and produced in partnership with professionals and Young People
3. Ensuring that a Lead Professional is identified for each young person
4. Ensuring assessment, planning and review processes fulfil statutory responsibilities and are in line with the Getting It Right for Every Child Framework.
5. Ensuring a philosophy of Self Evaluation and Quality Assurance in line with *How Good is Your Throughcare & Aftercare Service?* (HMIE 2007)
6. Ensuring there are accountable and clear audit trails in relation to Financial Support.

4. Streamlining the management of young people's finances

4.1 Council officers have met with Barnardo's Springboard to develop arrangements to better streamline the finances of care leavers. These discussions have identified key elements that are being incorporated into the proposed protocol for managing throughcare and aftercare services.

4.2 It is intended that Barnardo's Springboard should as far as possible, manage the finances for those young people that they have responsibility for. This will ensure that there is more seamless management of the support that young people need to set up their own homes and also for any necessary emergency activities.

4.3 As part of this, accountable systems and clear audit trails will be put in place, that will allow the Council to ensure appropriate expenditure on an ongoing basis.

5. The feasibility of workers within Criminal Justice Services taking responsibility for some young people

5.1 Criminal Justice Services have identified a lead manager for aftercare services. It is intended that this person will be involved with colleagues in Barnardo's and Children's Services, in appropriate areas of policy and service development and in operational management, to ensure a more seamless approach to service delivery for some young people.

5.2 It is envisaged that this will enable individual workers within Criminal Justice Services to be lead professionals for care leavers in appropriate

circumstances, which will include those who are on probation orders for more than 12 months. (Springboard would normally retain lead professional responsibility for a young person on a Probation Order under for 12 months).

- 5.3 Springboard will negotiate and agree those tasks they will retain for a young person where the lead professional is within Criminal Justice Services. In addition, where appropriate, on the completion of a Probation Order, there will be provision for the transfer of lead professional responsibility back to Springboard on a planned and structured basis.

6. New housing services, with support, to fill the gap between residential or foster care and temporary and permanent accommodation

- 6.1 Proposals continue to be developed for two particular initiatives, to help put in place the rungs on the ladder for care leavers between a care placement and their own tenancy. These involve:

- A supported lodgings scheme
- Dedicated hostel accommodation

6.2 A supported lodgings scheme

The development of a supported lodgings scheme could build upon the existing partnership between Barnardo's and Highland Council, to enhance service provision to vulnerable young people and meet a clear gap in service provision.

The supported lodging scheme would recruit, assess the suitability of, train and support up to 15 supported lodging providers (approved host families and individuals providing accommodation within their own homes). The supported lodging providers would be committed to helping young people develop personal skills for living independently. The approach should be pro-active and focussed on prevention of young homelessness, rough sleeping and the use of bed and breakfast accommodation.

Within the current caseload in Springboard, 11 young people living in B&B accommodation could be appropriately placed as part of this scheme.

Indicative costs are currently being worked out with Barnardo's, including how these might be realised from changes to existing budgets. It is proposed that a specific and costed report is presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

6.3 Dedicated hostel accommodation

Discussions have also taken place about dedicated hostel accommodation for care leavers, involving the identification of an appropriate building and the necessary revenue demands.

Identifying suitable permanent housing solutions to allow care leavers to move on from hostel accommodation will be critical. Care leavers already receive a high degree of priority for housing within the Council's allocation policy. This also involved the possibility of access to housing association vacancies. It is also important that appropriate housing support services are available tailored to individual needs.

Again, it is intended that a specific costed report should be presented to a future Joint Committee.

7 The review of mental health services, including how they could better meet the needs of looked after children and care leavers

7.1 The review of mental health services is the subject of a separate report to this meeting of the Joint Committee.

8 The need for a Working Group

8.1 Since the November meeting, there has been discussion with senior members of the Committee about the possible value and role of a joint member-officer working group on aftercare services.

8.2 It is recognised that a working group would allow the close involvement of some members in the detailed implementation of issues in relation to this key group of service users.

8.3 However, it is also suggested that a member-officer group could create additional bureaucratic processes, and might confuse management and governance arrangements.

8.4 It is therefore proposed that these matters continue to be managed for the time-being through a high level officers group, and that progress continues to be reported regularly to the Joint Committee.

8.5 There will have to be further consideration of the membership and responsibility of the existing Throughcare & Aftercare Strategy Group, and how this relates to developments as part of For Highland's Children 3.

Recommendations

The Joint Committee is asked to note this report, comment on any issues that arise from it, and to seek further reports on the development of housing support services.

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