

<i>item:</i>	5
<i>report:</i>	CYP18/08

## UPDATE ON OUT OF AUTHORITY PLACEMENTS ACTION PLAN by Bill Alexander

### Summary

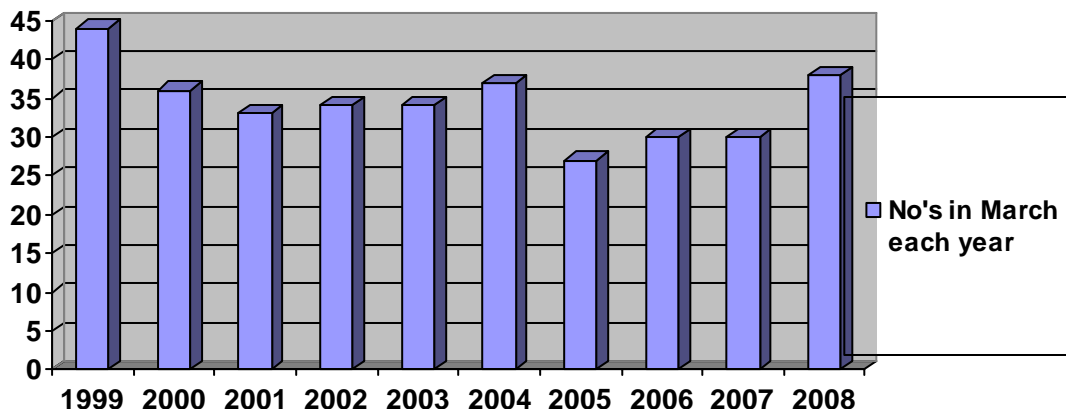
This report provides an update for members on progress on actions being taken with regard to out-of-authority placements. It includes proposals to secure Service Level Agreements for enhanced educational provision at Glachbeg Croft, and for emergency care provision at Cromlet House.

### 1 Introduction

- 1.1 This report is the latest in a series, updating the Joint Committee on the pattern of out of authority placements, and on progress with regard to the established action plan to manage these placements. The last update was provided in September 2007.
- 1.2 The Joint Committee has recognised that many authorities are experiencing this particular pressure, and has helped raise this matter at CoSLA.

### 2 Background: Out of Authority Placements

- 2.1 As at the end of April 2008, there were 38 looked after children in such placements. This compares with 30 in March 2007, reflecting an increase in placements towards the end of the calendar year 2007.
- 2.2 The trend in placements over recent years is shown below:



- 2.3 This group now includes a significant number of young people in external care placements in two locations within the authority boundary.
- 2.4 As ever, the Joint Committee is also supporting a small number of young people and 18-21 year olds in specialist external education placements.
- 2.5 As previously reported, there are three principal reasons for the increased expenditure on out of authority placements, which are likely to be reflected in the experiences of other authorities.

2.5.1 The escalating cost of placements in recent years, largely as a consequence of regulatory demands by the Care Commission and HMle.

2.5.2 A gradual but steady increase in the number of young people with significant disabilities, including communication disorders and associated challenging behaviours, who require higher level support arrangements. This group has continuing high level needs into adulthood.

2.5.3 Pressure on in-house care resources as a consequence of increased numbers of looked after children, resulting in use of independent services.

### **3 Out of Authority Placements - Actions**

Chief Officers have continued to take a series of measures to manage the pressure on out of authority placements.

#### **3.1 Placement process**

All placements are now considered first at Area level by the newly established Service Managers Groups, and then by the Residential Placement Group chaired by the Head of Service. They then have to be approved by the Directors of Education, Culture & Sport and Social Work.

#### **3.2 Review of placements**

Increasingly, all placements will be managed as part of the streamlined Getting it Right for Every Child process. As part of this, The Highland Council has agreed an enhanced Quality Assurance and Review infrastructure.

All placements have been reviewed on an individual basis, and further by Area Service Managers and Chief Officers.

### 3.3 Promotion of alternative measures

Officers have continued to promote alternative measures, to prevent an out of authority placements. In recent months, this has included the award of a significant direct payment to one family.

It has also involved the use of an emergency care placement at Cromlet House in Invergordon, and additional educational services at Glachbeg Croft in North Kessock. It is now proposed that these arrangements should be formalised with Service Level Agreements.

The provision of an emergency care placement at Cromlett House complements the facility already available in Inverness, and provides a long-term replacement for the facility previously provided in Conon Bridge. Other than the Council, this private organisation is the only provider of residential care in Ross-shire, where the greatest demand for such provision exists. The cost of £92k can be met from the dedicated budget for this service.

Glachbeg Croft uses outdoor and practical activities to provide a structure within which young people with high levels of additional needs can develop life and social skills including literacy, numeracy, information technology, problem solving, self confidence and practical rural skills. This provision has proved effective with pupils who are otherwise difficult to engage educationally. It is proposed to put in place a service agreement for approximately £11k, initially for the financial year 2008-09, funded from the specific monies allocated for implementation of the Additional Support for learning legislation.

### **Recommendation**

The Joint Committee is asked to consider the issues raised in this report, and to agree that Service level Agreements should be established for Cromlett House and Glachbeg Croft.

**Bill Alexander**

Head of Children's Services