

Agenda Item	13.
Report No	PEO 49/17

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** People Committee

**Date:** 6 December 2017

**Report Title:** **Corporate Parenting**

**Report By:** Director of Care and Learning

### 1. **Purpose/Executive Summary**

- 1.1 The report covers a range of matters related to Highland Council's statutory responsibility for Corporate Parenting, including a range of improvement activity and issues impacting on cost and service delivery.

### 2. **Recommendations**

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. support the proposal to the Community Planning Partnership to establish a Corporate Parenting Board.
- ii. agree to recommend to Council an exemption from Contract Standing Orders to enable the continued use of spot-purchased placements for Looked After children.
- iii. note the ongoing work to improve outcomes and reduce costs for Looked After Children.

### 3. Corporate Parenting

- 3.1 Whilst Councils have always had a statutory duty for children in care (Looked After), this was strengthened with the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, which named 24 public bodies as Corporate Parents. The definition in the associated statutory guidance is given as “An organisation’s performance of actions necessary to uphold the rights and safeguard the wellbeing of a looked after child or care leaver, and through which physical, emotional, spiritual, social and educational development is promoted.” This applies up to the age of 26 years.
- 3.2 Young people who are or have been Looked After are increasingly referred to as Care Experienced Young People (CEYP). They have often experienced many adverse experiences in life, and often go on to experience profound disadvantages into adulthood as a consequence. As Corporate Parents, we have responsibility to:
- Understand the issues CEYP face and assess their needs.
  - Actively engage with and listen to CEYP.
  - Promote the interests of CEYP providing them with the care, support and opportunities experienced by their peers.
  - Collaborate with other Corporate Parents to improve the way we work with and for CEYP.
- 3.3 There are currently around 500 Looked After children and young people in Highland. The latest breakdown of data is provided in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.4 There is a requirement on all Corporate Parent bodies to produce a Corporate Parenting plan. It’s anticipated that the Highland Council plan will be presented to Committee in January 2018, and will incorporate all existing plans to improve services for CEYP.

### 4. Strategic approaches to improve outcomes

- 4.1 One of the 13 Improvement Groups for children’s services is designated for Looked After Children, and is chaired by the Head of Children’s Services. There is an improvement plan and the meetings are well supported, with the plan being active and wide-ranging. This plan now also incorporates several actions which arose from a Council Redesign review of these services. This highlighted the need to work across established professional groupings, as education emerged as a high priority along with continued development of placement resources and a renewed emphasis on foster care. There is now a LEAN project in Fostering and Adoption, which is seeking to bring efficiencies and ultimately to increase the number of available foster carers. A second review is now considering commissioned services, including those for Looked After Children, and this will report shortly.
- 4.2 Highland has in place a CHAMPS Board (Children have Amazing Minds, Personalities, Potential and Stories) where some CEYP and senior professionals meet together, develop relationships and understanding, discuss challenges in the Highland area and develop new initiatives. It would be helpful to have increased Member involvement on this Board.
- 4.3 An example of the work of young people on the CHAMPS Board is at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EjCqgayyD0M&feature=youtu.be>  
CHAMPS also has its own Twitter account at: <https://twitter.com/HighlandCHAMPS>
- 4.4 Whilst there have been notable successes through CHAMPS, this model is being

reviewed to ensure that it continues to take forward the Corporate Parenting responsibilities.

- 4.5 It is felt that there is a need for a stronger strategic leadership function to:
- Oversee the development and implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan(s) of the various agencies;
  - Ensure that those Plans are informed by the CHAMPS, and active engagement with CEYP in a range of ways, underpinned by a Participation Strategy for Highland's CEYP;
  - Support the implementation of the Care Leavers Covenant which was endorsed by the Community Planning Partnership.
- 4.6 It is therefore proposed that a Corporate Parenting Board be developed, to report to the Community Planning Partnership. The outline of this is attached at **Appendix 2**, and Members are asked to agree that this be taken forward to the CPP.
- 4.7 Highland Council has enabled the creation of a one-stop shop hub for the support of CEYP. This will be located at Clachnaharry, Inverness, with an anticipated opening at the end of January 2018. It will offer a meeting place and facility for tailored support to be provided in a young-person friendly environment, and represents a major investment in our young people - who are helping to design the service.
- 4.8 As part of the Member development programme, a seminar on Corporate Parenting is planned for 26<sup>th</sup> January. This will have input from *Who Cares? Scotland* about the life experiences of young people in care, and will provide an opportunity to learn more about a wide range of initiatives to improve services in Highland.
- 4.9 As part of the Council Redesign, Children's Services are assessing the viability of a new model for services. The 'No Wrong Door' model is a child-centred Hub where a young person can access relevant services – support to remain at home, residential, fostering, kinship or bespoke accommodation packages through assessment following referral from their Lead Professional.
- 4.10 The service would be built around a residential provision which has the capacity to accommodate a number of young people in emergency situations and the ability to manage short-term crisis. These resources would be within the same building, but separated. This would create a holding service where assessments could be undertaken and preparation made for the follow-up placement. This might be a return home for many young people, and a current model working in North Yorkshire is avoiding significant costs for that Local Authority by avoiding young people going out of authority.

## **5. Residential placement activity**

- 5.1 The increase in projected spend of £2.7m on the Purchased Placement budget is due to a number of factors. Firstly, there has been an increase in the number of Looked After Children in Highland, from around 450 in January 2017 to 501 in November. Data from across Scotland is currently being sought to establish whether there has been a rise nationally, but the Scottish Government data is not published until 2018.
- 5.2 Such increases arise from time to time, and numbers can vary as families move in and out of the area. Some authorities suggest that numbers of looked after children are now being impacted because of prolonged austerity.

- 5.3 Out of Area placements have also risen in recent months, following three years of reduction, and despite 20 children now being supported to live back in Highland in much less expensive placements.
- 5.4 The projected spend may alter before the year-end, due to continual fluctuation in the number of children in residential care. For example, for the first quarter of 2017/18 there were two placements in secure care requiring a 2:1 staffing ratio, each at a cost of £445k per annum, which has put considerable pressure on resources.
- 5.5 A trend towards higher cost placements has contributed significantly to the higher spend, estimated to have added £0.5m to the in-year cost.
- 5.6 In addition, there have been a significant number of young people in secure or step-down care at an average cost of £285,000 per child per annum.
- 5.7 New purchased placements in recent months have mainly been for young people with Additional Support Needs and challenging behaviour, who couldn't be supported in mainstream or specialist schools in Highland. Young people are generally placed out of area for the following reasons:
- Decisions at a Children's Hearing, particularly when there may be parental pressure for a residential school placement;
  - Secure care placements or small homes with a high staffing ratio are required when children are deemed a risk to themselves and/or others;
  - Children with significant emotional and behavioural needs and/or high-performing Autism Spectrum Disorders and challenging behaviour, who require specialist residential care and schooling.
  - Children with significant hearing or sight impairment, who are best served within a school of their peers;
  - Children with complex disabilities in specialist provisions with the care and expertise they require.
- 5.8 Some of these placements have been required because NHS Highland has faced continuing challenges supporting some young adults to move into more appropriate accommodation, and local placements have not been available to Highland Council.
- 5.9 Last financial year, the budget for placements was split into a Purchased Placement budget and an Alternative to Out of Authority budget. The 'Alternative' budget funds a large number of new provisions which have been developed to return young people from residential schools out with the area. This is estimated to be avoiding costs of £1.6m per year. One successful initiative is the small residential unit established in Ross-shire, where the costs caring for two young people and providing bespoke education is considerably lower than the residential school costs for their previous placement, saving £120,000 per year.

## **6. Procurement of Residential placements**

- 6.1 Whilst there is considerable ongoing effort to develop alternatives to purchased placements, there is always going to be a need to spot-purchase residential placements.
- 6.2 There are contracts in place, following tender, with Aberlour, Barnardo's and Y People to provide placements and move-on support for young people, but other placements are needed either in Highland (as the number of providers expands) or out of area. The needs of young people vary individually and often several providers are contacted

before a placement is offered. Emergency or short-notice placements occur frequently, therefore it is not possible to use contracted provision exclusively.

- 6.3 Colleagues in the Corporate Resources Service have advised that an exception is required from Contract Standing Orders to facilitate such placements. Members are therefore requested to approve an exemption on the basis that “the requirement is not readily obtainable from more than one supplier, service provider or contract, and it can be demonstrated that no equivalent is available” (Reference Section 2 (i) (a) of the Contract Standing Orders.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Resource**

Considerable effort has been focussed on returning young people to alternative provisions in Highland, and total costs avoided from these returns are estimated at £1.633m in 2016/17, as compared with the young people remaining in placement. However new placements within the year overshadow these avoided costs. Gatekeeping of new placements continues to be closely scrutinised. The plan (separately reported to Committee) to improve the education of Looked After Children may require budgets to be used more flexibly in future to prioritise this group of children.

### **7.2 Legal**

The report outlines a number of actions designed to address new responsibilities detailed in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act.

### **7.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)**

The projects detailed in this report will enable the authority to continue to meet its equalities duties. Care Experienced Young People are likely to mainly come from disadvantaged families.

### **7.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever**

The continued development of resources in Highland will marginally increase the Council's overall carbon footprint through increased energy and waste disposal. However, these proposals will significantly reduce travel and associated costs relating to transport to and from provisions out-with Highland.

### **7.5 Risk**

External placements are costly to Highland Council and the pool of young people at risk from going out of authority for their care and education is significant. If the Council does not develop financially beneficial alternatives within the Highland area, the risk will continue for this budget.

### **7.6 Gaelic**

There are no implications.

Designation: Head of Children's Services

Date: 23 November 2017

Author: Sandra Campbell

Background Papers:

**Current LAC numbers (November 2017)**

<b>Responsible Family team</b>	<b>Number</b>
Caithness	67
East Ross and Disability	71
Inverness Central, Badenoch and Strathspey	60
Inverness East and Nairnshire	32
Inverness Health and Disability	18
Inverness West	92
Lochaber	43
Mid Ross	34
Skye, Lochalsh, Wester Ross and Assynt	35
Sutherland and Disability North	21
Youth Action Central, South and East	16
Youth Action Inverness, Badenoch and North	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>501</b>

### **Corporate Parenting Board proposal**

#### **Purpose**

1. To promote the corporate parenting role of statutory agencies and to promote awareness of the duties towards care experienced young people in the Highland area.
2. To consider matters brought forward by the CHAMPS board and assist with the related action plan.
3. To take forward the Care Leavers' Covenant and support the Corporate Parenting plans of statutory agencies.

#### **Membership**

To include elected members, senior officers of relevant agencies, care experienced young people and representation from key Third Sector agencies that support care experienced young people.

#### **Responsibilities**

1. To maintain a strategic overview of all developments, plans, policies and strategies for care experienced young people and make appropriate recommendations for action.
2. To ensure there are good working arrangements between services and agencies in support of the plans and strategies.
3. To provide a forum for care experienced young people to influence policy and to share their experiences of services they've received.
4. To promote the Corporate Parenting role and responsibilities across all relevant bodies in Highland.

#### **Accountability**

To the Community Planning Partnership.

#### **Operational arrangements**

1. The chair will be agreed by the Community Planning Partnership.
2. The meetings will be minuted and the minutes provided to the Community Planning Partnership.
3. The Head of Children's Services will act as Lead Officer for the Board with assistance from other senior officers and will facilitate the drawing up of the agenda and supporting papers.
4. The Looked After Children Improvement group will provide regular updates on its improvement plan.
5. The CHAMPS board will nominate young people to sit on the board to represent the views of Care Experienced Young People across Highland and to act as a conduit with CHAMPS.
6. The board will put in place appropriate ways to involve young people to ensure that their engagement is maximised and meaningful.

#### **Frequency of meetings**

Meetings will be held quarterly.