

ITEM No ...3.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE
REPORT ON: CORPORATE PARENTING PLAN
REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE
REPORT NO: 340-2018

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update on the Corporate Parenting Plan 2017-2020 which was approved by the Children and Families Services Committee held on 25 September 2017 (Article III of the minute of the meeting and Report No 310-2017 refers). This includes details of the implementation of statutory requirements and associated costs relating to Continuing Care as outlined in a further Committee Report approved at the Children and Families Services Committee held on 30 October 2017 (Article VI of the minute of the meeting and Report No 374-2017 refers). The report also outlines the proposed targeting of additional Scottish Government funding to continue to improve outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Members:

- Note progress made in the implementation of the Corporate Parenting Plan and improving outcomes for Looked After Children and Care Leavers
- Note responses to the requirements of Continuing Care including the management of financial implications
- Note the proposed targeted use of additional Scottish Government funding to help address ongoing priorities and continue to improve outcomes
- Instruct the Executive Director to provide a further update report in 12 months on the Corporate Parenting Plan and Continuing Care

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The Scottish Government provided an additional £1.2 million to support implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and parity of payment for kinship carers. In addition to this the Scottish Government has also allocated a further £272,800 (£409,200 in a full year) to support improvements in health, wellbeing and educational attainment for looked after children and care leavers and work is on-going to determine likely spend.
- 3.2 However the successful implementation of Continuing Care has placed strains on placement capacity and led to more young people being accommodated in external residential placements which both limits their contacts locally and is considerably more expensive. This contributed towards a projected £3.1 million overspend in 2017-2018 and a range of actions have been progressed to address this over the last 12 months.
- 3.3 These actions have led to external residential placements reducing from 42 to 31 and associated costs reducing from £7.7 million at the start of 2017/18 to a projected £7 million as of October 2018. This £700,000 reduction has been achieved by returning some young people to Children's Houses, investing in additional staffing to continue to help prevent placement breakdowns and working with the Third Sector to support young people in their own placements or with family members. As a result, the projected spend for the financial year 2018-2019 is now on balance. It is anticipated that these costs will continue to reduce over the next three years as the actions taken have further positive impact.
- 3.4 Future increases in Continuing Care placements will potentially involve budgetary pressures. As young people will start and end such placements voluntarily and placement types and costs will also vary, it is not possible to precisely quantify the financial implications. It is projected that the maximum number and increases in costs over the next 2 financial years will be 112 and £584,472 in 2019-2020 and 140 and £796,155 in 2020-2021. It is anticipated that these increases will be offset by ongoing reductions in the overall external residential care costs.

4 MAIN TEXT

- 4.1 Each Local Authority has a statutory duty to implement a Corporate Parenting Plan for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. As part of Continuing Care, young people aged 17 years can now remain in the same placement with the same support until they are aged 21.
- 4.2 Locally, partners have ensured that strategic plans have a focus on Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families 2017-2020 includes Looked After Children and Care Leavers as one of 5 key priorities and this is reflected in the City Plan, Council Plan and the more detailed Corporate Parenting Plan. The Children and Families Executive Board has overseen implementation of the plan through a new Corporate Parenting Partnership which consists of senior representatives from Children and Families, Neighbourhood Services, NHS Tayside, Police Scotland, the Third Sector and Dundee and Angus College.
- 4.3 In the last 12 months, the number of Looked After Children has continued to decline, from 555 in 2017-18 to 519. It is believed that this reflects developments in respect of Team Around the Child, which aims to provide proportionate support to prevent problems from escalating. It is a positive trend and should be further improved through the successful implementation of other initiatives, such as the GIRFEC Improvement Programme and the targeted use of Pupil Equity Funding.
- 4.4 In relation to Looked After Children and Care Leavers, a range of inter-related and inter-dependent actions have been progressed and/or initiatives introduced by the partnership. These should, over time, promote sustained improvements in health, wellbeing and attainment outcomes. The list below is not exhaustive but provides an indication of those actions along with some details of quantitative and qualitative measures to give an indication of their cumulative impact:

- 4.4.1 **Provide safe, secure, stable and nurturing homes** – the Fostering and Adoption Team and all Children's Houses have received Care Inspectorate grades of Good and Very Good over the last 12 months. All placements are reviewed by independent Reviewing Officers and children and young people also have access to advocacy support to help address any concerns. For external placements, the service uses an Approved Provider Framework as a means of ensuring practice standards are met.

The Children's Houses have worked with the Educational Psychology Service on developing nurturing and trauma informed practice. This involves identifying, addressing and reducing environmental triggers to trauma induced difficult or adverse behaviour and responding appropriately to such behaviour when it occurs. The evaluation indicates this has led to improvements in the stability of placements and the attendance and performance of young people at school.

In order to build internal capacity, the service is working with a local Third Sector organisation to develop a local building for placements and this is currently being costed as invest to save measure. Two satellite flats linked to Children's Houses have been established with Neighbourhood Services. Whilst living in a Children's House, young people gradually occupy one of the flats and continue to receive outreach support as they move towards independence. This enables them to maintain crucial, supportive relationships.

In order to help increase numbers of internal Foster Carers, a new website has been developed.

Almost half of our Looked After Children are placed with Kinship Carers and internal Foster Carers. This is important because, if those young people do progress into Continuing Care as young adults, ensuring allowances are based on income maximisation and reflect other sources of income is likely to significantly reduce costs. This approach was approved by Elected Members in the previous Committee Report in October 2017 and such placements will continue to be monitored to ensure payments reflect this.

- 4.4.2 **Positive relationships with family, friends, professionals and other trusted adults** – building on the Champions Board, a new Engagement and Participation Strategy has been developed. This extends methods of engagement to more children and young people to ensure they have a voice both in relation to their own support and in the future design and delivery of services for others. Every effort is made to retain children locally.

Plans are underway to roll out the principles of the school based Champions Board model already in place at Morgan Academy and Head Teachers are developing informed approaches towards the use of Attainment Challenge funding to support and enhance wellbeing and educational improvement.

A Breakthrough Mentoring Scheme is now operational in 6 schools and will be running in all 8 secondary schools by December 2018. The scheme is presently working with over 60 children. It involves matching volunteer mentors with the interests of young people, working with them in school and accessing work experience and/or shadowing opportunities.

There has been an increase in the number of Care Leavers accessing support from the Aftercare Team and the team is presently working with 138 Care Leavers aged 18-26 years. The team has also engaged a number of Care Leavers in a group called '4 Change'. This group has played an active role in the City's Champion's Board to help inform the delivery of services for Looked After Children and Care Leavers. The group has met with the First Minister and played a role in securing Scottish Government policy and funding for college bursaries and the removal of Council Tax for Care Leavers aged up to 26 years.

- 4.4.3 **Uphold and promote the rights of Looked After Children and Care Leavers** – a service is commissioned from Who Cares? Scotland to provide independent advocacy, consultation and participation opportunities for children and young people. In the last 6 months, Who Cares? provided independent advocacy to 51 young people and attended 28 Children's Hearings.

Group-based support is offered to all young people in our Children's Houses through monthly meetings allowing young people to speak openly about their experience of care and raise any issues that they feel need addressing. Young people have also engaged in the Champion's Board Young Person's Participation Group and attended the Who Cares? Time to Shine Festival, holiday trips and a 'Ceilidh' for National Care Day.

The service also supports children and young people to record their views in relation to their Child's Plans.

- 4.4.4 **Increase positive educational outcomes and attainment** - since 2014-2015 there have been improvements in the number of exclusions but the last session saw a rise. To support sustained improvements, a new Inclusion Policy has been agreed with Head Teachers and states that exclusions must not occur without prior approval from the Chief Education Officer or Chief Social Work Officer. It is underpinned by an agreed Charter for Looked After Children, which outlines a number of commitments including:

- Ensure all Looked After Children have a single Child's Plan
- Develop nurturing approaches in all nurseries and schools
- Implement new practices to support transitions from primary to secondary school
- Further develop the range of alternatives to exclusion through city-wide resources.

There have also been some improvements in attainment levels but they have similarly fluctuated in some years and it is recognised that progress has not been high, sustained or fast enough, particularly in relation to SCQF5. The Charter is also designed to help address this, along with the targeted use of Scottish Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Funding to provide extra support. A designated Education Officer is working with individual schools to ensure they routinely use performance data to adapt and improve approaches.

- 4.4.5 **Ensure that 'care' is an experience in which children and young people are valued as individuals and where support addresses their strengths as well as their needs** - all Looked After Children have plans in place that are reviewed through Review Officers and, where appropriate, Children's Hearings. These plans are regularly audited and future audits will also involve Who Cares? Scotland carrying out consultation with individual Looked After Children using the new Health and Social Care Standard.

- 4.4.6 **Ensure that LAC and Care Leavers physical and mental health concerns are identified early and addressed quickly** - Review Officers ensure that registration with a GP and Dentist are completed at initial Looked After Child reviews; that all Looked After Children receive timely health assessments; and that advice and guidance to support childhood

health and weight are available for parents and carers. Tayside NHS have redesigned the School Nurse role that now incorporates health assessments for LAC at home or kinship care.

4.4.7 Increase number of LAC and Care Leavers in education, training and employment (positive destinations) - overall, the proportion of Care Leavers entering a positive destination after leaving school has improved but this remains lower than their peers and they are less likely than others to sustain this beyond 6 months after leaving school. The co-location of the Throughcare and Aftercare Team and Discover Work Service is providing opportunities to address this by giving Care Leavers instant access to employability advice and a fast track route to employability services. To enhance this further, before Looked After Children leave school an enhanced transition guarantee offers key worker support and access to employability training. To provide additional targeted support, a programme on life skills for those with more significant and complex issues and a programme on employability for those closer to the jobs market have been developed and have led to young people entering work or college. The Council is updating recruitment processes to guarantee interviews for Modern Apprenticeships for Care Leavers aged up to 29 years. Since April 2018, the Council has also allocated 29 Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive (SERI) funded places to support MAs or jobs for people with additional support needs. To date, 4 Care Leavers have been supported into these opportunities. The Discover Work Service has also introduced a locality based approach to identifying and engaging with young people in negative destinations. A pilot in the east of the city has reduced the number of young people whose destination was unknown by 100 and there are plans to replicate the approach across the city.

4.4.8 Reduce the number entering the youth/criminal justice systems – there have been positive trends overall in fewer young people becoming involved in the youth and criminal justice systems. Where they do become involved, there has been an improved balance towards the greater use of Diversion from Prosecution, increases in the successful completion rate of Community Payback Orders and reductions in prison sentences. At present, the data cannot be segmented to specifically refer to Looked After Children or Care Leavers but this will be addressed over the next 12 months.

4.5 To support improvements in the health, wellbeing and educational attainment of Looked After Children and Care Leavers the Scottish Government has allocated additional funding. Locally, a total of £272,800 is being allocated for the remainder of this financial year and £409,200 for a full year. In order to help address ongoing priorities. Work is on-going to determine best use in order to build capacity across a number of key areas. This will be informed by the first year of implementing the Corporate Parenting Plan, the use of data and feedback from services.

4.6 In the first 12 months of implementing the Corporate Parenting Plan, there have been a number of significant developments and achievements. This includes all Children's Houses and the Fostering and Adoption Team being rated as Good or Very Good; an agreed Charter for Looked After Children in schools; a new Inclusion Policy; expansion of the Breakthrough Mentoring Scheme; development of the Champions Board; Council Tax exemption; College Bursaries; Trauma Informed Practice across different service areas; and joint work on positive destinations. The Council is also in discussion with the Chair and staff from the Independent Review of Scotland's Care System to look at how we can work together to put their early findings in place locally to support improvements in practice for care experienced young people. All of this should help to accelerate progress.

4.7 The outcomes for Looked After Children have also improved but not at the required scale and pace, particularly in relation to SCQF5 and positive destinations. However there have been a number of positive developments including the funding of 29 places through Scotland's Employer Recruitment Incentive to support the creation of a job or modern apprenticeship for young people with additional support needs, the delivery of a life skills programme for young people with significant and complex needs and the co-location of the Throughcare and Aftercare Team with Discovering Opportunities providing care leavers with instant access to employability advice. In addition the Council has also ring fenced funding to support additional Modern Apprenticeship opportunities for care leavers. All of these should help to accelerate progress.

4.8 The Council has also effectively managed new legislative requirements in relation to Continuing Care and successfully addressed a budgetary deficit caused by increases in children and young people being placed in external residential placements. Going forwards, it is proposed that, as more young people now become eligible for Continuing Care and associated costs potentially increase, a full review of payments to external residential placements, Foster Carers and Kinship Carers is carried out informed by key principles including equity, fairness and affordability.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Sustainability, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Anti-Poverty, Equality Impact Assessment and Risk Management. There are no major issues.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

The Council Management Team have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.

Paul Clancy
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

October 2018

