

ITEM No ...6.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE –
30 OCTOBER 2017

REPORT ON: RESIDENTIAL AND CONTINUING CARE BUDGETARY
PRESSURES

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICE

REPORT NO: 374-2017

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 This report provides an update on the position in relation to resourcing for Looked After and Accommodated Children including the provisions of new Continuing Care legislation following Report No 230-2017 presented to Committee in June 2017. This Report details the actions taken this financial year to address the over spend described in the previous report, further actions to be taken and the predicted budgetary implications. The report also seeks approval for the financial approach proposed in relation to funding Continuing Care placements.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Committee is asked to:
- i. Note the updated position regarding actions proposed in the previous report see (Appendix 1)
 - ii. Note the proposed actions in this report to address the issues
 - iii. Approve the proposals in relation to Continuing Care payments as outlined in section 4.14 to 4.16.
 - iv. Note that the financial position will continue to be reported via the revenue monitoring reporting process to Policy and Resources Committee.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The revenue monitoring position for financial year 2017/18 based on expenditure to 31 August 2017 shows a projected overspend of £3.1m for Looked After Children (£3.5m for Children and Families Service overall). This is a reduction from an overspend of £6.1m for Looked After Children (£5.5m for Children and Families Service overall) in financial year 2016/17.
- 3.2 The estimated maximum cost of Continuing Care is £1.5m in 2017/18 which is reflected within the £3.1m projected overspend.
- 3.3 £1.2m has been provided by Scottish Government to support the implementation of the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 and kinship care parity.
- 3.4 The Children and Families Service will continue to work towards returning suitable young people to local placements in Dundee and minimising external placements.

4.0 MAIN TEXT

4.1 The previous report highlighted a higher than average proportion of Looked After Children and Young People in the City and an increasing reliance on external residential placements primarily because the requirements of Continuing Care mean

children can remain in care beyond their 16th birthday. The report noted that placement stability is highly important for all Looked After and Accommodated Children regardless of whether they are placed locally or externally. It was recognised that there will always be a need for external placements due to the specific requirements of some children and young people but that more needs to be done to retain children locally. This has been the focus of the action plan outlined in the previous report, which has been overseen by a working group consisting of representatives from Children and Families Service, Neighbourhood Services and the Third Sector.

- 4.2 In respect of reducing the overall numbers of Looked After Children, the service has been working with NHS Tayside and the Third Sector to provide more targeted support for children and young people who have been identified as having additional needs. This involves a range of preventative measures, such as support to Named Person's to enable them to identify and effectively respond to concerns; work with the Third Sector to develop locality based family support hubs; and the targeted use of Pupil Equity Funding on projects which holistically address personal and social needs. These measures are intended to address concerns before they escalate and sustain a downward trend in the numbers of Looked After Children in the City. The numbers of Looked After Children are declining and are now consistently below 600. Most new admissions to care relate to 0-5 year olds where there are child protection concerns. There has been a significant increase in the number of these children being placed with internal foster carers.
- 4.3 In terms of placement decisions for children and young people at immediate risk of becoming Looked After or already in a placement, the service has reviewed the existing governance arrangements which consider both admissions to care and external placements. A Resource Admissions Panel (RAP) which considers potential admissions to care has been extended to include representatives from Third Sector organisations we commission services from to ensure that, where appropriate, we are maximising the use of community resources and providing appropriate family based support. A Residential Resources Management Group (RRMG) which considers all requests to place children externally and oversees any subsequent placements, has also been extended to include representatives from the Third Sector and Educational Psychology. This is similarly designed to ensure that we make the best use of local resources and retain children and young people in local placements where appropriate. The Third Sector has been particularly helpful in adapting their services to meet the needs of young people in local placements.
- 4.4 Care Plans for Looked After and Accommodated children continue to be reviewed by Independent Reviewing Officers and are also subject to a range of scrutiny measures through, for example, Children's Hearings and Adoption/ Permanency Panels. In addition, the service commissions advocacy services from Who Cares, all of which ensures decisions made about children and young people are in their best interests.
- 4.5 In order to try and reduce the number of placement breakdowns in our own children's houses and minimise the need for subsequent alternative placements, each house now has a designated Educational Psychologist who will support staff in their work with young people.
- 4.6 In order to build local accommodation capacity and increase the range of options for young people, 3 satellite flats have also been secured in partnership with Neighbourhood Services. The flats are linked to our children's houses to enable young people to move into a more independent but supported environment. This is a relatively new concept and significant work has had to be done with the regulatory bodies to ensure compliance with Looked After Children Regulations. Work has

been undertaken to identify appropriate young people and introductions are underway. The intention is to offer a stepped approach to young people moving towards independence.

- 4.7 Senior Managers have reviewed the children in external residential placements and 11 young people have returned to Dundee since April 2017. Some have returned to their family, some are being supported by the Third Sector through existing commissioning arrangements and others have returned to children's houses.
- 4.8 The numbers of children who are accommodated has reduced and in the last year there has been significant reductions in the number who are placed in external residential care coupled with an increase in those who have returned to the City.
- 4.9 It is however important to note that the number in external placements is not static with children moving placements or leaving care and other children being admitted to care and placed externally. Currently there are 33 looked after children in external residential placements and our assessment is that 7 children will return to Dundee in the current calendar year. These movements have been reflected in our projected overspend of £3.1m in paragraph 3.1. There are a further 3 children expected to return by the summer of 2018. The service will continue with the measures outlined in this report to minimise future external placements.
- 4.10 In addition to this there are 28 children who are provided with educational support outwith Dundee. This support can help the young person's attendance at school and therefore maintain family placements.
- 4.11 Although the Service always aim to meet a young person's education requirements within Dundee, there are occasions when agreement is reached that an external school is deemed the most appropriate resource. Since the last Revenue Monitoring, additional costs of £200k have been included in the projections in relation to education placements and support.
- 4.12 In terms of fostering, we continue to work with our neighbouring authorities on recruitment. Currently we have around 90 carers who care for over 140 children. With around 80 placed with external carers, these are predominantly permanent placements.
- 4.13 Work is ongoing to determine the viability of building an additional children's house. Much of the focus has been on increasing capacity to deal with young people moving towards independence and Continuing Care but we have a number of younger children with additional complex needs who are accommodated outwith the City and we need to ensure we are planning for this group. Consequently, it is likely that any additional facility will be geared more towards the particular needs of this group.
- 4.14 The numbers of young people remaining in care beyond their 16th birthday has increased in line with the intention of the Continuing Care legislation. A review of our looked after population over the next few years suggests that there will be around 50 young people each year will be eligible to request Continuing Care from their 16th to their 21st birthday, with the majority being in foster or kinship care and in exceptional circumstances, external residential care. As children and young people may or may not decide to request Continuing Care and there are no historic trends, it is difficult to project exactly how many will remain in placements up to their 21st birthday and the associated financial implications. The cost of Continuing Care has been calculated based on a snapshot of current numbers of looked after children and assuming they remain in care until they are 21 years old the estimated

maximum cost would be is £1.5m in 2017/18 which is reflected in the projected overspend of £3.1m for Looked After Children.

- 4.15 However, Guidance on Continuing Care is clear that carers should not be disadvantaged by continuing to care for young people beyond their 18th birthday. Current fees for foster carers are £155.13 per week with an allowance of £235.80 being paid for young people aged 16-18 years. It is proposed that the fostering fee remains the same; that the allowance also stays the same but is calculated on the basis of income maximisation which would include, for example other sources of income, such as paid employment and benefits entitlements. Our financial projections assume existing looked after children remain within a suitable care setting to meet their needs and in some cases to support the move to independent living.
- 4.16 Work to ensure kinship carers have parity of payment with foster carers has now been completed using an approach based on income maximisation. This means that all kinship carers are assessed by Welfare Rights to assess their entitlements and it is estimated that almost half a million pounds was generated in unclaimed benefit entitlement. It should be noted that not all children who receive a kinship allowance will be classed as Looked After which means these children are not subject to Looked After Children Reviews and will not be entitled to continuing care beyond their 18th birthday. Systems have been put in place to ensure information on these young people is up to date and payments are not made when a kinship placement ends.
- 4.17 A benchmarking exercise will be carried out to identify areas of best practice and share ideas with other authorities. Agreement has been reached with two comparator authorities around benchmarking and sharing best practice.

5.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

6.0 CONSULTATION

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

7.0 BACKGROUND

- 7.1 None.

Paul Clancy
Executive Director of Children and Families Service

October 2017

APPENDIX 1

	Action	Task	Timescales
1	Improve support to kinship carers	Create dedicated resource to support kinship carers	Completed
		Achieve Parity with payment with foster carers using income maximisation approach	Completed
2	Improve capacity of internal foster carers	Intensify work on recruitment alongside neighbouring authorities	Ongoing
		Explore options around a more strategic, collaborative approach to commissioning with neighbouring authorities	Ongoing
		Explore alternative models of service provision including social enterprise approach	Ongoing
3	Improve approaches to Permanency planning	Develop structured mentoring scheme for team permanency work Joint training with SCRA to be progressed Interface between New Beginnings and Permanence Team to be strengthened.	4 mentors identified and permanency forum established. Joint training with SCRA on-going In place
4	Improve capacity of children's houses to meet changing demands	Create additional capacity by securing satellite flats linked to each of our children's houses	3 flats secured thus far. Young people identified and being introduced to the flats.
		Seek approval and begin preparing for construction of an additional children's house and agree refurbishment timescales for existing houses	Summer 2017 onwards
5	Improve co-ordination of services to care leavers	Increase supported accommodation for care leavers in partnership with Action for Children and create capacity for 10 additional places	Completed
		Review model of Through Care and After Care	Ongoing
6.	Improve Information	Undertake benchmarking in relation to models and costs of looked after children	End of Winter 2017 Council areas identified
		Formalise centralised systems for reviewing children in external placements.	Completed
		Finalise Staffing Budget and payments to third sector providers including governance and escalation arrangements.	Completed

