

The background of the slide features a large, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver's coat of arms. The crest includes a crown with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a ship, top-right: a stag, bottom-left: a ship, bottom-right: a grizzly bear), and a banner at the bottom with the motto 'A NE FOR A'.

Agenda Item 6

Provision of Housing and Support For Care Leavers

Falkirk Council

Title: Provision of Housing and Support For Care Leavers
Meeting: Executive
Date: 13 March 2018
Submitted By: Director of Children's Services and
Director of Corporate and Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Executive with a progress update on the provision of accommodation options and support for care experienced young people and the development of the Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol (Appendix 1).

2. Recommendations

2.1 The Executive is asked to:-

- (1) note the Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol for care leavers;**
- (2) note the progress in developing housing options for care leavers;**
- (3) request a further progress report.**

3. Background

- 3.1 On 17 November 2016 the Scrutiny Committee considered the conclusions and recommendations from the Scrutiny Panel established to review outcomes for looked after children. The recommendations of the Scrutiny Panel were subsequently agreed by Executive on 29 November 2016. This report specifically deals with the following recommendation:

"Children's Services and Corporate and Housing Services report back to Members before the end of March 2017 on the provision of housing and support for children leaving care"

A report was submitted to the Executive on 21 March 2017. This report provides an update on progress to date.

- 3.2 Children come in to Local Authority care for a variety of reasons. They have often experienced neglect, abuse and trauma that resulted in them having to leave the family home. These early childhood experiences impact on young people's emotional development and it is recognised that they often need longer term support than young people who are not care experienced, particularly during times of transition.

- 3.3 Nationally, research shows that outcomes for care leavers tend to be poorer than their peers in terms of:-
- health and wellbeing;
 - stable housing/secure base;
 - education, training and work opportunities.
- 3.4 Locally, these poor outcomes have been compounded by a lack of suitably flexible housing and support options which enable young people to gradually develop their skills and independent living skills as they transition out of care.
- 3.5 On-going lack of suitable move on accommodation and support options, coupled with the extended right to remain in a care placement to 21 years, inevitably leads to significant cost increase and budget pressures across the Council.

Residential and foster care placements are expensive and they are not always suitable to a young person as they become older and naturally seek more independence and choice.

If alternative options are not available, young people who may otherwise choose to move on to more independent living will not do so, in turn blocking local resources for a younger cohort of children in need of care.

- 3.6 Legislation and policy have developed in recognition of the specific needs of care leavers, particularly the need for graduated and extended transitions. Young people now have the right to remain in their care placement to age 21 (Continuing Care) and to receive Aftercare support until the age of 26. Local Authorities are also required to establish joint Housing and Social Work Protocols to ensure the best possible outcomes for care leavers.
- 3.7 The agreement of a Protocol is crucial in providing a platform for Housing and Social Work Services to collaboratively develop accommodation and support options.

4. Considerations

4.1 Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol

- 4.1.1 Housing and Social Work Children's Services have agreed a Protocol to support development of housing and support options for care leavers and ensure early identification and interventions where there are difficulties. The Protocol provides guidance on Falkirk Council's Corporate Parenting responsibility for Falkirk's care leavers and outlines the strategic and operational arrangements between Services. It is underpinned by the principles of Corporate Parenting.
- 4.1.2 The Protocol has been developed to ensure that young people leaving care will:-
- receive as much information, choice and control as possible;
 - be able to make mistakes and not run out of options;
 - be supported to succeed;
 - have access to flexible support that adapts to meet their needs;

- be encouraged to continue to access supportive relationships with professionals;
- experience an approach from Housing and Social Work Children's Services which supports their needs, understands their issues and is thoroughly based on the principles of Corporate Parenting.

4.1.3 The Protocol is committed to achieving the following outcomes:-

- plans will be person centred and include the views of the young person;
- young people will be offered flexible support which adapts to meet their needs;
- young people leaving care will live in a safe community environment within good quality accommodation;
- young people will be able to learn from their experiences and never fall out of options.

4.1.4 The Protocol has been agreed by the Champions Board Participation Group. It is linked to our key strategies and embedded in practice. Promoting care leavers housing options is fundamental in ensuring they are provided with good quality, affordable, sustainable accommodation.

4.2 **Housing Care Leavers**

4.2.1 Housing and Children's Services are currently developing an innovative and flexible range of housing options that will give care leavers a choice of accommodation and support. This, in conjunction with existing provision, will assist the Council in progressing Children's Services "Closer to Home" strategy.

4.2.2 The model under development is based on Barnardo's "Care Leavers Accommodation and Support Framework". It describes the care leavers' journey towards independence in 5 stages:-

- 1) preparation for the reality of housing options;
- 2) planning young people's support and accommodation with them;
- 3) reducing housing crisis;
- 4) accessing housing and support as needed;
- 5) accessing and successfully managing longer term move on and support options.

4.2.3 The model underpins the aims of the Protocol by detailing:-

- a consistent approach for care leavers transitioning from care placements;
- a flexible range of housing options and support;
- holistic approaches tailored to the individual;
- young people can develop independent living skills to promote tenancy sustainment.

4.2.4 Following analysis of relevant data, housing and support options currently under consideration include:-

- a 3 bedded, first stage interdependence resource, providing a high level of support as an alternative for young people who might otherwise opt for Continuing Care;
- a multi-bedded, second stage resource, providing single or double occupancy accommodation with less intensive levels of support for young people who are closer to managing independent living.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol was presented to the Champions Board Participation Group in January 2018. The young people provided feedback and recommended changes. Their input was incorporated into the document before it was finalised and the Champions Board have agreed it.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 It is expected that there will be financial benefits and efficiencies on the alternatives to current provision which is costly and unsustainable. As options are explored, the financial costs and appropriate funding streams will be examined to ensure minimum costs are incurred.

Resources

- 6.2 It is anticipated that no additional resources will be required, with any additional provision being met within existing resources and staff structures.

Legal

- 6.3 The Council must ensure it meets the legal obligations set out in the Children and Young People (Scotland Act).

Risk

- 6.4 The joint Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol reduces risks to young people in ensuring that no-one will fall out of options. It negates risks associated with the Council's failure to meet the statutory requirement to agree a Protocol.

Equalities

- 6.5 There is currently no requirement for an EPIA as the group affected by the Protocol and options are not subject to protected characteristics.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.6 There are no sustainability or environmental impacts identified.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 This report describes progress in agreeing a joint Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol for care leavers. The effectiveness of the Protocol will be monitored by the Champions Board and amended as required.
- 7.2 Work on progressing housing and support options to meet the needs of care leavers at different stages in their transition to independence is underway.

For Director of Children's Services

Director of Corporate & Housing Services

Author: Cathy Megarry, Children & Families Service Manager, 01324 504647,
cathy.megarry@falkirk.gov.uk

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Appendix

Housing and Social Work Children's Services Protocol

List of Background Papers:

None

**HOUSING
AND
SOCIAL WORK CHILDREN'S SERVICES
PROTOCOL
2018**

FOREWARD

This Protocol has been agreed between Falkirk Council Housing Services and Children's Services. It provides guidance on Falkirk Council's responsibility for Falkirk's care leavers and describes the strategic and operational arrangements and liaison between agencies supporting corporate parenting.

The Protocol has been agreed by the Champions Board Participation Group and Elected Members.

For terms of reference, "young person/young people" will relate to all care leavers who fall within the corporate parent responsibility, therefore within the scope of this Protocol.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Falkirk Council is committed to encouraging and empowering Looked After young people to remain in a positive care placement until they are ready to move on, and to actively support and facilitate them to maintain positive supportive relationships with their carers when they leave.
- 1.2 Falkirk Council recognises that safe, settled and sustainable accommodation and support is a crucial foundation for achieving positive outcomes for care leavers, and is committed to all young people having access to accommodation appropriate to their assessed needs when leaving care.
- 1.3 Falkirk Council is committed to providing a range of accommodation and housing support options which meet the needs and wishes of care leavers.
- 1.4 This Protocol aims to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach to the accommodation and support needs of care leavers. It is based on the principles of *Housing Options Protocols for Care Leavers (Scottish Government 2013)* and *Staying Put Scotland (Scottish Government 2013)*.
- 1.5 This Protocol reflects the priorities identified in the following plans:-
 - Falkirk's Community Planning Partnership
 - Strategic Outcomes Local Delivery Plan 2016-2020
 - Local Housing Strategy 2017-2022
 - Integrated Children's Services Plan
- 1.6 This protocol reflects the Legal duties of the Council as set out in:-
 - Adoption Act
 - Children & Young People's (Scotland) Act 2014
 - Children (Scotland) Act 1995
 - Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001
 - The Support & Assistance of Young People Leaving Care (Scotland) Regulations 2003
 - Housing Scotland Acts 1987, 2001, 2010 and 2014
 - Homeless Persons Interim Accommodation (Scotland) Regulations 2002
 - Homelessness etc (Scotland) Act 2003

2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 Services will recognise that a young person's wants and needs should be at the heart of all planning and decision-making. They will be listened to and their views taken into account.
- 2.2 Statutory responsibilities and good practice guidance highlight the need for corporate parents to ensure practice is underpinned by legislation and guidance, and that this should inform all policies with care leavers.
- 2.3 Every effort should be made to prevent care leavers from becoming homeless. Appropriate planning must take place to ensure that both the housing and support needs are met by a range of agencies working in partnership.
- 2.4 In order to provide the most effective service to young care leavers, information may need to be shared among corporate parents. This should be done timeously and proportionally: "the right information at the right time". The Data Protection Act 1998 does not prevent information sharing where this is reasonable and expected, and in the interests of the individual concerned.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Section 60(a) sharing information, advises that corporate parents must, in so far as reasonably practicable, collaborate with each other when exercising their corporate parenting responsibilities where they consider that doing so would safeguard or promote the wellbeing of children or young people to whom this Part applies.

- 2.5 A range of accommodation and support options will be available to eligible young people on leaving care and up until their 26th birthday.
- 2.6 Processes used by corporate parents will enable young people to make successful and sustainable transitions out of care, into independent living.
- 2.7 Young people must be made aware of the full range of options available to them, including being able to stay in their care setting until their 21st birthday (Continuing Care).
- 2.8 As responsible corporate parents, partners should ensure that the young person is supported to make the accommodation of choice a success.
- 2.9 Corporate Parent's commitment to tenancy sustainment and the need to help prevent homelessness is crucial.

3. OUTCOMES

The Protocol will achieve the following outcomes:-

- All plans will be person centred and include the views of the young person.
- Young people will be offered flexible support which adapts to meet their needs.
- Young people leaving care will reside in a safe community environment within good quality accommodation.
- Young people will be able to learn from their experiences and never fall out of options.
- Corporate parents will share the responsibility of the young person
- Young people will be informed, have choice and be in control.

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4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Housing Services and Children's Services will work proactively together to develop and sustain a range of accommodation and support options to meet the needs and wishes of care leavers. Both services will ensure staff understand the Council's corporate parenting responsibilities and provide appropriate joint training opportunities for staff in relation to the particular needs of Looked After children and care leavers.

4.1 Children's Services Responsibilities

- Seeking the views of young people in line with the GIRFEC planning process.
- Identifying a Lead Professional for the young person.
- Progressing the young people's plans, including contingencies.
- Ensuring the young person has access to advocacy services.
- Regularly reviewing progress to ensure that housing and support meets the young person's needs.

4.2 Housing Services Responsibilities

- The provision of quality housing options advice at least 6 months before leaving care and after to assist a positive transition.
- Award maximum priority within the Allocations Policy to all young people leaving care.
- Ensure care leavers are identified on Housing Management System in order to ensure all Housing Services staff are aware of their specific needs and liaise with relevant partners.
- Collaborate with other housing partners, including Registered Social Landlords, to raise their awareness of their corporate parenting responsibilities and to develop a range of suitable, quality accommodation for care leavers.

4.3 Together we will

- work collaboratively to meet the needs of care leavers;
- identify gaps in service provision;
- develop and sustain a range of accommodation and support;
- focus on tenancy sustainment through early identification of tenancy difficulties and agreeing actions;
- promote independent advocacy.

5. HOUSING AND CHILDREN'S SERVICES OPERATIONAL GROUP

This group will meet on a monthly basis and will comprise representatives from Social Work and Housing.

The group will have the following purposes:-

- review operational matters and day-to-day management arrangements;
- consider the accommodation and support need of care leavers at least 6 months prior to leaving care;
- identify young people who are experiencing difficulties in their accommodation at the earliest stage and agree actions;
- escalate complex concerns and suggest solutions to the Strategy Group;
- report outcomes for young people to the Housing & Social Work Strategy Group for review and planning purposes on a quarterly basis;
- report performance of the Protocol to the Housing & Social Work Strategy Group for review and planning purposes on a quarterly basis.

Young people will be informed when their circumstances will be discussed and have the right to attend the group.

6. STRATIGIC ACCOMMODATION NEEDS GROUP

This group will meet quarterly and will:-

- report progress to the Children's Commission Leadership Group to ensure the Protocol is meeting the needs of care leavers;
- agree actions in relation to care leavers whose needs cannot be met through standard Protocol.

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7. EMERGENCY ACCOMMODATION

- 7.1 Any placement into emergency accommodation will take into account the need for protection stability and support and they will be placed in the most appropriate facility available as an interim measure.
- 7.2 A Team Around the Young Person meeting will be held, within 3 working days, at which the most suitable option will be identified.

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8. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Complaints from young people in relation to the operation of this Protocol will be dealt with in line with Falkirk Council's complaints policy. Appeals in terms of the allocation of housing and housing support will be dealt with in line with the appeals processes already established in allocation, homelessness and related policies.

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9. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The effectiveness of this Protocol will be monitored and evaluated by the Strategy Group reporting to the Children's Commission Leadership Group.

Any amendments will be made annually and will take into account of feedback from the Champions Board and young people directly involved in the processes.

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