

SE15. Following the Public Pound: Services To Children & Young People – 2019/20 Annual Reporting Statements

The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services providing an update regarding the work of the external organisations that receive funding, providing services to children and young people, and fall within the Following the Public Pound reporting and monitoring arrangements from April 2019 to March 2020.

Funding was provided by Children's Services to external organisations to provide services which could not readily be provided by the Council. As part of the Following the Public Pound arrangements, reporting statements were prepared by the relevant monitoring officer for consideration by the Scrutiny Committee (External).

Organisation	2018/19	2019/20
Aberlour Early Years Outreach	£159,060	£159,063
Aberlour Family Support Centre Langlees	£110,937	£110,937
Barnardo's	£500,000	£500,000
Home-Start Falkirk West	£28,014	£28,014
NHS Forth Valley CAMHS Clinical Psychologist for Looked After Children	£64,904	£33,100
NHS Forth Valley Speech & Language Therapy	£465,040	£465,040
One Parent Families Scotland Falkirk	£82,523	£82,523
Quarriers Children's Rights Service	£86,200	£86,200
Transform Forth Valley Time For Us	£38,869	£38,869
"Who Cares?" Scotland Advocacy Service	£27,970	£27,960
TOTAL	£1,563,517	£1,531,706

Robert Naylor gave an overview of the report. The committee then considered the monitoring officers' reports.

The committee first considered the Aberlour Early Years Outreach Project and noted that it provided services in part of the Council area - it did not support for example the Braes area. Members asked whether as a charity which was funded by the Council it should provide a service Council-wide. Robert Naylor confirmed that this was the case - however this was a legacy arrangement, and in fact there were a number of legacy arrangements whereby funding was provided for services across the Council area that

focused on specific groupings. It was the Services intention, as part of the Closer to Home project, to move from a funding model to a commissioning model. As part of the project the Service would move to delivering core services and commission services for those areas where there were gaps. Lesley James concurred and added that there were benefits in working with large organisations such as the Aberlour Trust who did have funding from other sources. She recognised the point made by members that the picture was fragmented at the moment in terms of family support for Social Work. Closer to Home would see support that families can access without delay. Cathy Megarry added that the point is to provide urgent assistance. In terms of Aberlour, Falkirk received more funding than most other Local Authorities and the work of Aberlour has been invaluable. The project was easy to access and was targeted at those who most need it. Support was available in the Braes area, but she conceded that overall, the provision was fragmented.

In regard to performance the committee noted that 20 families had not engaged and a further 23 families had had initial assessments but had chosen not to pursue further support and asked if the reasons why this was the case were known. Cathy Megarry stated that the Service would not be aware of the reasons. Members also asked for more information on the benefits of infant massage, which had been taken up by 82 families. Cathy Megarry stated that a benefit of this programme was that it acted as a gateway in many cases and allowed families to access the service and from there to receive wraparound care and support.

The committee noted that the service had begun to recruit volunteers in 2019 to extend the support available to service users and to new users and asked if the programme had been successful. Cathy Megarry stated that she did not know the detail on the outcome but did confirm that a key part of the organisation's strategy was to utilise volunteers as they were cost effective.

The organisation had been awaiting confirmation of additional funding for two Service managers. In response to a question in regard to the funding of the posts, Cathy Megarry confirmed that funding had been applied for from two organisations and that the posts were a joint venture between Children's Services and Aberlour for crisis response services. This was a cost effective way of providing an essential service. Similar ventures had been trialled successfully in Perth & Kinross and the Scottish Borders for example and had reduced the number of children coming into local authority care. This was a good example of the benefits of the Council's longstanding relationship with the organisation.

The committee then turned to the Aberlour Family Support Centre - Langlees project and made the same point as before in regard to Council wide provision. Mr Naylor repeated his response that this was part of the legacy arrangements which would be tidied up by the Closer to Home initiative which would standardise provision through core services and commissioned services.

In regard to the services offered, members asked for more detail on the Art Therapy sessions which were held in partnership with Queen Margaret University. Cathy Megarry advised that this was part of the students' placements and there was no cost - it helped the children express themselves after experiencing trauma and had been beneficial. The relationship was good for both the Council and the students. She added that the family centre had been established in an area of high need but the agreement between the Council and the centre was that it would reach out beyond the Langlees area if there need in other areas. Members responded that there was bound to be a need elsewhere and welcomed the standardised approach described by the Director earlier.

The committee then turned to funding and asked what the impact would be if the Council reduced the funding to the organisation. Cathy Megarry stated that the services would need to be provided and Children's Services would have to find a way to deliver the services in-house. There were opportunities within Children's Services to realign budgets however these services were vital – they provided less stigmatised settings for families to engage at an early stage and without this there would be an increased need for more intervention at a later stage. However, Children's Services would struggle at the moment to provide the services should the funding be reduced or withdrawn.

The committee next considered the Home-Start Falkirk project. Members noted that the project did not receive significant funding but provide a valuable service. Again, however members noted that it seemed to focus on only some of areas – Denny, Bonnybridge and Banknock. Cathy Megarry confirmed it was a relatively small organisation based in the Denny area but it did take referrals from elsewhere. In fact it was called Home-Start Falkirk West.

The committee then turned to the Clinical Psychology Service for Looked after Children. Members queried the decrease in funding in 2019/20 which was £33,100 compared to the previous year which was £64,904. Gayle McIntyre explained that a clinical psychologist had reduced their hours in the period and this had resulted in reduced costs. She explained that although CAMHS provided specialist services it had been considered that Looked After Children had often significant mental health requirements that were not always met by mainstream mental health services and as a consequence this partnership arrangement had been established with CAHMS. In addition to providing specialist services there was a much reduced waiting time from referral to appointment with this service. She conceded that in the period in which a clinical psychologist had reduced their hours the waiting list had been longer but now that another psychologist had been appointed this had improved. There was a clear early referral process from Social Work to the service, which reduced paperwork and waiting lists.

Members agreed that there were clear benefits in the service provided but asked why it was funded by Children's Services rather than the NHS itself. Robert Naylor stated that there was an ongoing discussion with NHS Forth Valley in regard to the range of services provided by the NHS for children - such as nurses in Schools, Early Years intervention and this included the

role of CAHMS. The Scottish Government had provided funding to reduce waiting times. The Service had, as corporate parents, recognised the needs of Looked After Children and had sought to find a way to meet their needs without a 26 week waiting list (for mainstream CAHMS services). The aim of the service is to provide quick and easy access for children who need early support. There was a national debate ongoing about the ways in which NHS and Local Authority resources could be better shared, for example through better joint management arrangements. It was largely a structural issue around the NHS's decision making arrangements which were not localised. As a consequence, Local Authorities end up making local arrangements such as this. There was a clear need for the service he added and that was why the arrangements had been made with NHS CAHMS. Lesley James concurred with the assessment of the national picture and its impact locally. The point was to support those who were in most need quickly. Arguably the service should be embedded in mainstream CAHMS, but it had been necessary to put the additional service in this way. Members asked, given this, that the NHS did not seem to have a responsibility for Getting It Right For Every Child as the Council did. Mr Naylor stated that the CAHMS target was 18 weeks and the Scottish Government had provided additional funding to the NHS for staff recruitment to reduce the gap. There was a drive to reduce waiting lists nationally. The NHS was, he said, committed to Getting It Right For Every Child

Decision

The Committee approved the report and acknowledged progress by the external providers in meeting the Council's priorities.